



DIVSI Study on Areas and Forms of Participation on the Internet

A summary of current
scientific knowledge



Hamburg, April 2014

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Introduction

Of clicktivists and genuine activists: What does Internet participation mean?

The select committee "Internet and the Digital Society" appointed by the German Bundestag worked for two years to acquire understanding of the Internet - in its repercussions and practical applications. The process itself prompted the most obvious investigation: German citizens were asked for their participation to let their own ideas and comments influence the work. The result is evident at a glance: 12,579 members of the online platform "EnqueteBeteiligung" (www.enquetebeteiligung.de) submitted 494 proposals, left 2,356 comments and cast 14,602 votes.

But a second glance prompts the question: Is it good or bad, a little or a lot, helpful or a burden, and, above all, what has become of this kind of civic participation? Although it is possible to narrow down the response to some of these questions by taking a closer look at the website, many aspects remain unclear.

This is not merely true of this participation platform; it applies equally to almost everything that happens on the Internet under the term "participation". The rise of digitisation and connectivity has transformed the term into a buzzword, removing its precise coordinates along the way to widespread popularity. So it is high time to take a closer look, to debunk a few myths revolving around the idea of participation.

First myth:

We are always on the lookout for ways to participate

There is no doubt that participation is an integral element of the social Internet's DNA; but do we use it? The Milieu Study (2012) conducted by the German Institute for Trust and Security on the Internet (DIVSI) revealed: a "participation gap" persists in Germany. The group of "Digital Outsiders" especially, which still accounts for roughly 40 % of the population, remains fairly inactive on the Internet. And in the same way that a minority of people become activists in real life, the "Pareto principle" applies just as much on the Internet, also: there is a vital few and a trivial many.

Second myth:

Participation is always equatable with political activism

It is entirely judicious in traditional media and communication research to express reasonable doubts as to whether the clear distinctions

between information and entertainment are accurate. This applies all the more to the Internet. Many boundaries between what previously had been considered clear boundaries between motives for, and forms of, use are becoming increasingly blurred on the Internet. There are two entirely different forms of engagement on the Internet. Politics represents the most important area of participation, at least in terms of the corresponding scope of academic and public appraisal. Nevertheless, forms of engagement that are not attributable to the political realm are not necessarily apolitical or uninvolved. The Internet yields impressive forms of "peer production" that stand for participation in business. The Net also releases a creative force in the area of art. New teaching and learning platforms (e.g., MOOCs) are among the examples of participation in the education sector. And people who use Internet forums to share experiences of their common illnesses are also involved in a kind of participation. So politics is just one of the fields that involves connectivity, and others are equally worthy of consideration.

**Third myth:
We all use the same Internet**

Technically speaking, it's true. We all move through one and the same Net, use standardised Internet protocols and IP addresses to navigate, frequently on just a handful of popular platforms. But there are no standards when it comes to what people do on or with the Internet. Instead, here the Net reveals its capacity for non-central and dynamic avenues of development: Surfing and posting, mailing and downloading, skyping and chatting, consumerism and creativity – all of this is possible on the Net. It places the platform and the instruments at our fingertips; but what we use them for is up to us. "I'm online" – twenty years ago it was new and a valid statement to describe the next stage of technological development. For some time now we have used the Internet – as the global computer network – for a broad variety of undertakings: For instance, we use the World Wide Web via HTTP and browsers, share our experiences via social networks such as Facebook or Twitter (Web 2.0), become customers in proprietary systems like the Apple platform iTunes and sometimes rove through domains that are hidden from the eyes of the general public such as the Dark Net. Wherever we look there are people participating. But they are involved in a wide range of things on a variety of activity levels that may differ extensively in terms of their purpose and form.

Fourth myth:**Participation is always desirable and good**

This is a fair assumption, but it is a very normative perspective and also not consistently true. Firstly, the Internet users in Germany tend to belong to groups with a higher socio-economic status. Secondly, participation has more than just its positive sides. Between these lines there are unremarkable or less spectacular forms of participation that play out in the simple acts of shopping on the Net, playing online games or working. It appears that the traditional understanding of participation is unsuited to some forms of engagement: For instance in the political realm when it comes to "clicktivism" or "slacktivism"¹, in which participation is no more than "liking" a protest movement on Facebook. By the same token, excessive participation in our social intercourse may lead to the fragmentation of public structures when the high stakeholders only perceive what pertains to, and suits, their interests. Equally, too much participation may quite simply prompt an overload: "Information overkill" and "techno-stress" are the consequences.

Fifth myth:**The Internet changes everything or nothing**

This is how the discussion of new technologies goes: Two extreme perspectives quickly form, and the truth is usually found somewhere in-between. The Internet does not suddenly transform everyone into an activist, neither politically nor socially. But we are adopting an overly simplistic stance if we assume that the main point of online participation is to ease our consciences by clicking on the Like button. Let's remember: As a "mass medium", the Net is less than ten years old. So we are all venturing forth into a new era that most certainly will experience fundamental changes thanks to the Internet. But it is a marathon, not a dash. We need to take breaks en route, pause for reflection and look forwards to see where the path will take us.

Our summary of research into the topic area of participation on the Net shows: There are three rough concepts that require more in-depth analysis and that will help understand that participation on the Internet is a rich and multifaceted concept. The Net is an enabler; primarily,

¹ A hybrid of the words "click" and "activism". Describes the use of electronic media – primarily social media – for a social concern. Critics are concerned that non-committal or essentially inefficacious "clicks" on the Internet may replace real-world engagement. The neologism "slacktivism" is a hybrid of the words "slacker" and "activism".

therefore, it delivers access to information. It can be integrative and hence offer opportunities for interaction, dialogue and connectivity. It can also empower, allowing us to engage in cooperative forms of interaction in our processes of design and decision-making. The three forms of participation reveal more than just shades of difference. And we will have to distance ourselves from a few received wisdoms in order to understand and interpret them correctly.

We see also: The Internet provides us with extremely varied forms of participation. Some of them exhibit similarities with what the term has meant traditionally; but others open up entirely new doors and perspectives. It is increasingly difficult to draw a clear line between analogue and digital, offline and online participation. The boundaries are becoming blurred. More and more people are choosing nonconformist methods of participation on the Net, beyond the familiar institutionalised forms. Indeed, perhaps the term "participation" itself no longer entirely matches what it describes in the Internet age. Maybe we should speak instead of "connective action" (Bennet & Segerberg, 2012)?

It is worthwhile to leave behind some of the aforementioned myths to acquire a greater understanding of what actually drives people to become involved on and with the Net. Participation is not always equatable with substantial activity or important decisions such as those involved in elections. Participation may also be simply using the Net to purchase lipstick in support of an AIDS charity or by "liking" something on Facebook merely to draw attention to the pros and cons of a particular concern. And statistics alone are meaningless. Are a million "likes" worth as much as 100 votes in an election? And who decides whether they are?

Digging trenches in the understanding of participation, accepting only a conventional understanding and reducing it to political activity, means refuting the intentions or opportunities of many people to play an active role in a digital, connected life. This would be a fairly arrogant – and in many respects quite inaccurate – stance when we consider the new opportunities for engagement that the Internet offers. After all, it is not always a question of more, faster, farther. How much people undertake in which period of time to display their engagement in a certain process via the Internet is meaningless in terms of their personal benefit or indeed contribution on a grander scale. So what was that again with the select committee "Internet and the Digital Society"?

Miriam Meckel
St. Gallen, March 2014

I. Participation on the Internet

The following chapter provides an overview of the aims and methods of this study. It identifies fields of participation on the Internet that in the past have caught the attention in the area of research.

Participation 2.0 – does it really exist?

Why should the Internet influence how people participate in social interaction and the process of making decisions? Early on, authors started referring to the opportunities of, and potential for, participation that the Internet offers to broad swathes of the population (White, 1997; Davis, 1999; Hacker, 1996). This focused on the conviction that above all, the Internet would facilitate access to a broad variety and ample reservoirs of information – hence contributing to an informed, educated and motivated civic society.

Quickly, however, authors drew attention to the fact that precisely the rich diversity of the Internet may distract people from actually becoming involved (Putnam 1995), that new digital forms of participation may replace the traditional forms or that by no means would all users exploit the putatively broad online access to information to anything like an equal extent (Hargittai, 2010). But then the hope for a participative effect of the Internet received new impetus – impetus that is primarily attributable to technological developments associated with the term "Web 2.0" and social media.

While the Internet 1.0 enabled access to a hitherto unseen breadth of information and sources, the Web 2.0 created unprecedented opportunity for independent publication of information (O'Reilly, 2006). Social media make it child's play to post texts, photos, audio files and videos on the Internet. All users need is a few clicks to create their own Net presence, a platform to disseminate their own thoughts, analyses and opinions on the Net and hence to communicate with the world at large (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The users connect with each other via these platforms, create networks and establish communities. In this way, the "social aspect" became increasingly important on the Internet. A popular term here is the "participative Net".

Therefore, participation is found in the DNA of Web 2.0 and is indeed its defining property. But what do participation and joining in actually mean on the Net? What do users participate in; which users participate; and which forms of participation can be identified? Online participation remains a recent phenomenon. It follows that much of it is murky – research on participation on the Net is still in its early stages of development. The DIVSI Milieu Study (2012) succeeded in revealing that within the German population, chasms remain in the ways in which the Internet is used – but that the attitudes and mentalities of users, their self-assurance, trust and security concerns weigh heavier than the question of technical access to the Net. Numerous non-users, also sceptical and reticent Net citizens ("Digital Outsiders"), remain in digital Germany.

So is it too early to assume that the new media are changing our society? Spectacular, individual examples – from the election of President Obama to the Twitter and Facebook revolutions during the Arab Spring – created a burgeoning, utopian hope. But many of these hopes are not quite as fanciful as they may seem. New media always change the manner in which societies communicate, and hence how they function. So new media inevitably leave their marks on society. The Internet and Web 2.0 will prove no different. And the changes brought about within media technology are rarely

as exciting as those found in the fabric of society. Therefore, the question is not: Facebook or Twitter? And instead: What changes do the media opportunities introduce to our attitudes and habits?

What is already clear today is that social media are used for like-minded people to make contact and to establish more or less permanent communities (Woodly, 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008; Gil de Zuniga et al., 2010). Altogether frequently, common concerns are defined and mutual action coordinated within these communities (Wilson & Peterson, 2002). So sharing experiences in online networks comes with benefits for participants that are also described as "social capital" (Ellison et al., 2007; Adler & Kwon, 2000; Putnam, 1995). This social capital may emerge within the communities, but also in that the communities themselves form a group and become outwardly involved. Social media provide diverse platforms to define interests, and they facilitate participation in public agenda setting (Foot & Schneider, 2002; Towner & Dulio, 2011; Wattal et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, it is entirely justified to raise doubts that these observations give occasion for utopian hope. Social media can lead to fragmentation within civic society when each interest group establishes its own media biotope (Bennet & Iyengar, 2008). This may cause social disconnection and polarisation (Scheufele et al., 2006; Woodly, 2007; Nie et al., 2010). Established social institutions might start to unravel when people increasingly shun permanent forms of activism (Dahlgren, 2005). Not every form of online participation makes a successful transition into the offline world; instead they peter out in a mere manifestation of "clicktivism" or "slacktivism" (Morozov, 2009). An excessively imbalanced spread of participatory activity may create a situation in which just a few extremely well-connected people monopolise the online debate (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2010; Brandtweiner et al., 2010). In Germany, also, people with high socio-economic status exhibit a greater degree of aggressive and strategic handling of new media (DIVSI, 2013a).

It becomes apparent: Not only is the research area of participation on the Internet a recent development, it is extremely broad-based and complex – at times appearing even contradictory. Convinced that new media leave their mark on the face of society and influence the habits of those living therein, the DIVSI research programme "Participation on the Net" intends to make an academically substantiated contribution to the public debate on Internet participation. In this, the spotlight will be trained on the conditions, forms and consequences of online participation.

Aims of the research project

Drawing on a broad theoretical and empirical basis, the DIVSI research programme "Participation on the Net" is intended to make a contribution to how the public at large perceives the opportunities for participation that the Internet offers – and what this requires. It lays a foundation for the fields of science, business and politics to conduct their own analyses and make independent decisions which in future will enhance the opportunities to participate on the Internet. In order to accommodate the complexity of the topic, the research programme will include a series of studies that gradually build on our understanding of participation on the Internet.

This study presents a first step in this undertaking. It provides insight into where research is today, and to do so collates current insight from a variety of disciplines. Therefore, it produces an overarching analysis of what research momentarily considers to be "participation on the Internet", which

aspects of this participation are eminently noteworthy and what challenges are viewed as particularly exigent.

The key questions upon which this study focussed were, in particular:

- Is the Internet changing the opportunities that citizens have to participate in social decision-making processes?
- Which forms of participation are currently undergoing analysis?
- Which disciplines are involved in their research?
- Which specific questions are tackled?
- Is there a common understanding of what "participation" and "digital worlds" signify?
- Is a new culture of participation evolving? Which constituent parts may it possess?

One of the most substantial contributions that the study will make is considered to be the clarification of terms, hence improving the accessibility of this area of research for social debate. Analysis reveals that a broad range of disciplines are involved in researching participation on the Net. It follows, therefore, that the terms applied to, and the understanding of, "participation" and digital environments on the Net are equally diverse. Different areas focus on entirely different conditions or attribute varying repercussions to the question of participation. This prompts the necessity to illustrate common ground, to elaborate central insight, to sharpen the definition of terms and hence to prepare the field for further research into participation on the Net.

Defined in one sentence, this study is intended to serve interest into the following insight:

Which areas and forms of participation currently exist on the Net, what are their conditions and what their consequences?

Method

The insight presented here is based on a systematic analysis of German and English-language literature. The method applied to the analysis has ramifications for the selection of studies and hence the insight that the analysis will yield – for this reason it warrants a brief description.

Systematic literature analysis is particularly well-suited to acquiring a comprehensive overview of where research stands in a particular field. In this case, "literature" describes the sum of academic studies published (also: "publications"). Unlike in standard literature analysis, the authors do not include the studies based on their prior knowledge or preferences; instead the studies are determined

largely according to the method selected (Denyer & Teranfield, 2009; Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011; Webster & Watson, 2002). In this case a key word search was conducted in a series of databases that enable an extremely broad selection of international studies across a variety of disciplines. The following four databases were used in this case:

- ISI Web of Knowledge
- ProQuest
- EBSCO
- Mendeley

These databases include studies published in reputable journals that apply a double-blind peer review process. In this, academics are installed as reviewers to assess the quality of a study submitted, without being aware of the author's identity. By the same measure, the authors are not told who is selected as reviewer to assess the study. This process is designed to ensure that the review of a study, which ultimately decides on acceptance and publication (or rejection), possesses the requisite independence. Mendeley, the fourth database, is an exception as it does not contain a comprehensive collection of studies from certain publications; instead it represents a collection and selection of studies chosen by the platform's users – almost exclusively academics. It was included in spite of this anomaly as it represents a kind of social online platform that survives due to participation by the users.

The following key words were used to search publication titles in English-language literature: (Online OR Internet OR Digital OR Social Media) AND (Participation OR Engagement). The search yielded 1,806 hits. A multi-stage selection procedure was applied in order to identify the studies included in this group that possess particular relevance to the research question on hand. 840 duplicate entries were deleted in the first stage. The second stage involved removal of 295 studies that proved irrelevant to the topic, meaning that despite mentioning the key words in their titles they did not address questions of participation on the Internet. The remaining studies were categorised based on areas of research. The third stage of selection featured analysis of the abstracts for each study and the removal of all studies that dealt with the use of a very specific online platform (overly narrow understanding of participation in the use of one platform) or that analysed general access to the Internet (overly broad understanding of participation in Internet use). The remaining 190 studies were analysed in their entirety.

German-language literature was analysed based on the same procedure. The key words selected here were: (Online OR Internet OR Digital OR Social Media OR Soziale Medien) AND (Partizipation OR Beteiligung). In this case the search identified 566 hits containing 45 duplicates and 341 evidently irrelevant studies or studies with an overly narrow or broad structure. Here the studies were categorised based on research areas also, and 180 studies were ultimately analysed. A public Internet search complemented the two systematic surveys in order to include current insight and associated studies. For reasons of lucidity, it is not possible for this report to include all of the studies analysed. Hence the results presented here should be considered an excerpt from the literature included, summarising the key insight acquired.

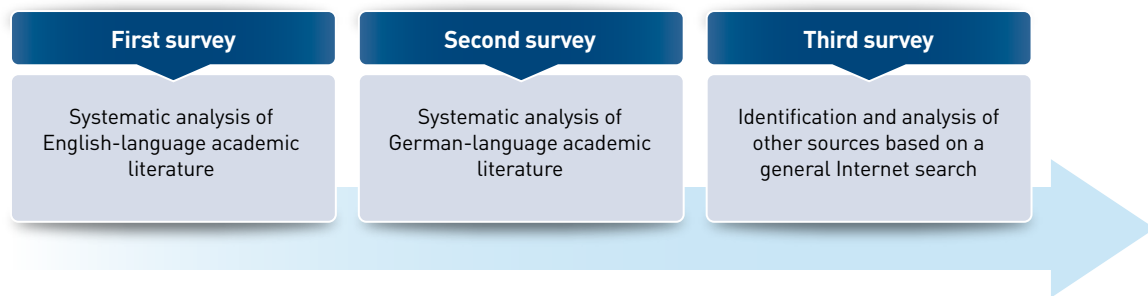


Figure 1: Analysis methodology

Forms of participation

What does "Internet participation" mean? This report documents the rich variety of areas and forms of participation on the Net. Therefore, it introduces a field, starts to apply structure and thus creates an initial overview. It is not possible to provide a conclusive definition of terms, however. The forms of participation considered in the research are too diverse for this to be feasible. Additional conceptual work will be necessary in order to delineate "the" participation on the Internet and to define its forms.

Nevertheless, an assumption that broad access to the Internet exists in Germany is justified. EU statistics indicate that 84 % of the German population use the Internet, 64 % daily (EUROSTAT, 2013). A 2013 ARD/ZDF online study shows that on average, Germans use the Internet on five days per week. The average daily Internet use is 169 minutes – the Internet is already the most intensively used medium in the group of under 30-year-olds, ahead of TV, radio and print media.

According to BITKOM (2012), the users spend the lion's share of their online time (31 %) in social media or on multimedia platforms. An analysis of behaviour in the use of the Internet conducted by the US provider Forrester Research (2012) classifies Internet use based on the degree of activity. It shows that 69 % of Internet users in the EU-7 states visit social media as a means of acquiring information, while 50 % maintain a presence in social networks. Roughly one third of users post comments, assign ratings or provide similar assessments or feedback. Also, one quarter of users actively post their own content on the Net, whether it be texts, photos, music or videos.

This distinction is equivalent to the idea of an activity or "participation ladder" (cf. Fig. 2). It states that forms of participation are distinguishable based on their degree of activation. On the lowest level we find informative participation, denoting the collection and absorption of information. The second rung involves various forms of commentary or response – among them ratings, feedback, comments and also "likes". The third rung, also the highest, describes active participation in the sense of introducing personal ideas, contributions or proposals.

The described forms of participation match different forms of Internet use (Haller et al., 2011). Motives for use such as information, entertainment/pleasure and commentary/active communication are distinguished regularly, whereby there are certainly connections between these forms of use: There is a positive correlation between informative Internet use and other forms of use; it acts like a foundation or condition for active participation (Haller et al., 2011; Hwang et al., 2006; Wang, 2007).

However, repercussions are also identified in the opposite direction: Active participation promotes absorption and processing, also interpretation, of information.

Time and again it is evident that the various forms of participation and use are spread unevenly: Active use may certainly be common, but it remains a minority phenomenon when compared with more pervasive uses such as information and also entertainment (Albrecht, 2006).

This is the reason for the proposal of strategies to promote participation (cf. Fig 3): "Enable" means to provide access to information; "Include" describes the creation of opportunities for interaction and forms of entering into dialogue; finally, "Empower" involves the provision of cooperative forms of interaction such as involvement in structural and decision-making processes.

It is necessary to widen the horizon to consider not merely the technological, but above all the social conditions and frameworks of participation, precisely because active participation cannot be taken for granted (yet?). As described earlier, new media also create new fields of opportunity to engage in participation processes. But to what extent are they used for active participation? For what purpose and by whom? Frequently, the debate around participation on the Net is based on an implicit, normative foundation that deems to be positive the greatest possible human participation in social interaction and decision-making processes. However, it is warranted to at least note that this is by no means self-evident, and instead represents the outcome of political-philosophical and cultural influences associated with a certain perception of (Net) citizenship (Bennett et al., 2011).

In light of this normative, positive assessment of social participation and the consequent appreciation of innovation within media technology as an opportunity for deeper and/or more expanded participation, it is necessary to understand which areas and forms of participation exist and are already in use today. The following section presents the areas of participation identified in the literature analysis. The next chapter will then take a closer look at these areas, and will set about analysing the individual forms of participation, their premises and repercussions.

Areas of participation

The method described earlier, in particular categorisation of localised literature according to research areas, enabled the direct identification of those areas of participation on the Net that have attracted noteworthy attention within the field of research. These are the following five areas:

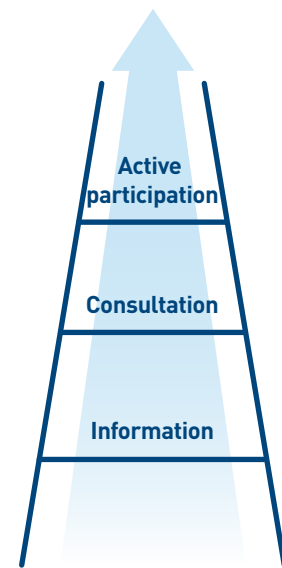


Figure 2: The rungs in the "participation ladder"



Figure 3: Strategies to promote participation

1. **Politics:** participation in political decision-making processes.
2. **Business:** participation in value creation processes.
3. **Culture:** participation in creative processes of generating meaning.
4. **Health:** participation in healthcare and the treatment of illnesses.
5. **Education:** participation in processes involved in training and the acquisition of skills.

Figure 4 provides an overview for the scope of English-language literature available on these five areas of research, measured against the number of studies identified as relevant.

Similarly, Figure 5 shows the scope of research in German-language literature. It is evident in both cases that research in the area of political participation predominates. The DIVSI Opinion Leader Study (2012) had already shown that in terms of its political contexts, the Internet is associated with civic participation, while barely one third see these links in the realms of business or science. Indeed, political participation is alone among the five areas identified that can be considered an established field of research with a uniform understanding of terms and phenomena, a substantial theoretical foundation and something akin to a communal tradition of research. In other words: In this field, academics see themselves truly as researchers into "participation on the Internet", quoting each other and also using a quite clearly delineated, common foundation in literature and theory.

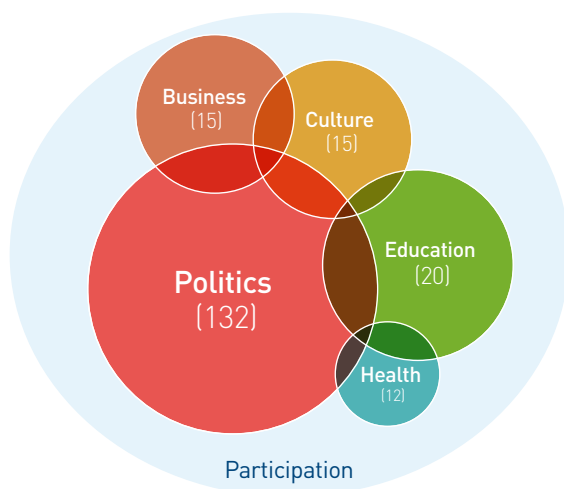


Figure 4: Areas of participation (number of studies in English-language literature)

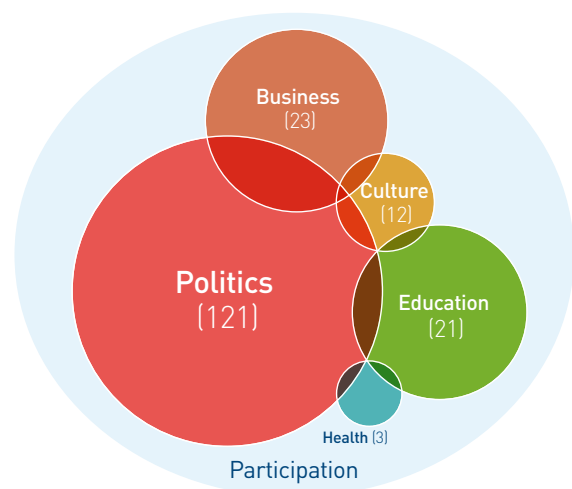


Figure 5: Areas of participation (number of studies in German-language literature)

It would not be appropriate to speak of established fields of research in the other four areas – business, health, culture and education. In each case here we find topical focuses exhibiting points of intersection concerning questions of participation on the Internet, among them open innovation, online courses or patient information forums. However, these focuses are not considered based on a common understanding of new options for participation on the Internet. Although some form of participation may be relevant here, it is not in the spotlight of research. In some cases it is perfectly clear that the area of research is not even aware of the links between the phenomena analysed and Internet-driven changes with regard to participation in social interaction and decision-making processes, and hence that these aspects represent a more immersive social phenomenon.

On the one hand, this fragmentation and isolation of research into participation across the smaller areas of analysis fails to produce any dynamic establishment of theories concerning participation on the Internet – unlike in the field of political participation. The studies rarely refer to each other, and indeed only do so within narrow topical areas. All too frequently there is a dearth of consideration when it comes to related insight produced in other studies, however contextual they may be. On the other hand, the imbalance manifest across these five areas may indeed create the impression that "participation on the Internet" is equatable with political engagement. Any widening of this focus requires that the related fields of research develop self-assurance and hence that a form of self-discovery takes place, underlining that a common research into forms of participation on the Internet most certainly takes place in the areas of business, culture, health and education.

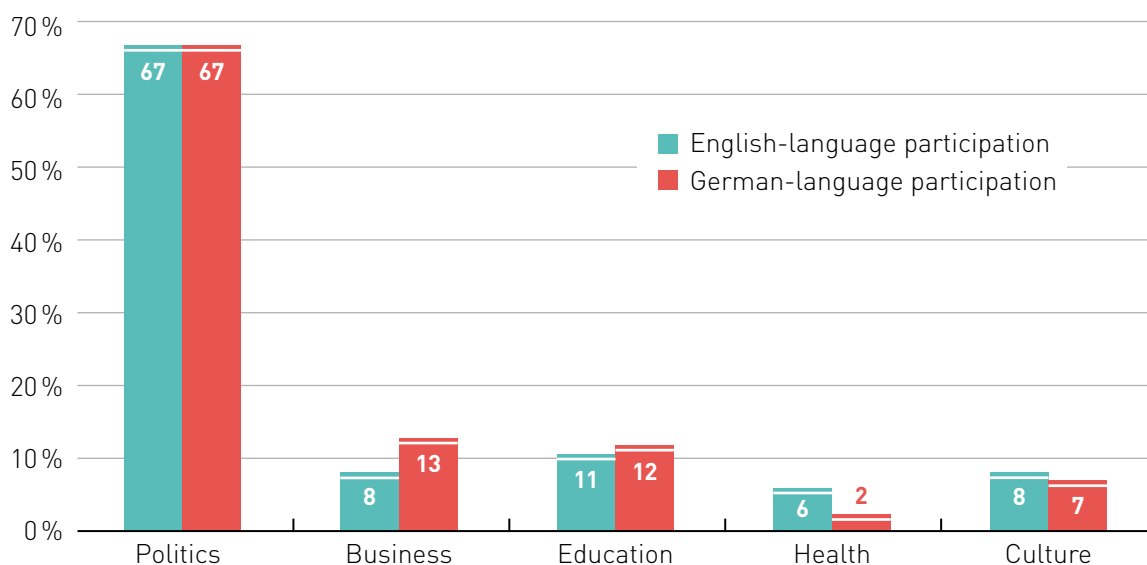


Figure 6: Areas of participation (percentage spread of the studies)

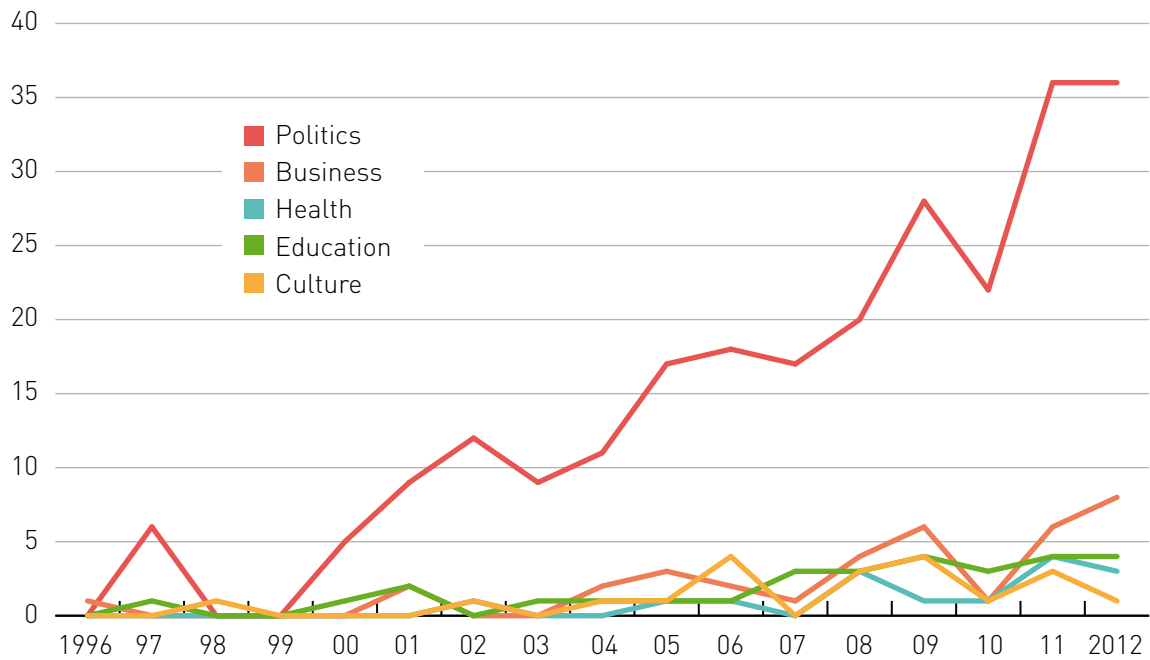


Figure 7: Development of research areas (number of studies published per year (DE & EN))

The inadequate process of self-discovery and definition within participation research across the smaller study areas is expressed equally in how the respective literary foundation has developed. Figure 7 documents the dynamic growth seen in the research area into online political participation. The other areas exhibit a marginally positive development that nevertheless falls some way short of growth seen in the political sphere. The following chapters in this report will shine a spotlight on the focal points and insight within the five areas and will seek to identify common understandings.

II. Participation in politics

The following chapter provides an overview of the largest area identified within participation, namely online participation in the field of politics. Within this context, participation in politics will be taken to mean a participation in political decision-making processes, although the numerous studies exhibit a fairly broad understanding of what the political field actually describes. English-language literature makes a common distinction between participation shown in civil society and political participation, whereby the latter refers to political decision-making processes in a narrow sense of state politics and the former also includes pre-state processes that may nevertheless exhibit a political character.

What does online participation mean in politics?

A common definition for "participation", widely applied in this field, speaks of "actions designed to influence, or to impact directly or indirectly on, politics" (Verba et al., 1995). Numerous definitions state that actions within political participation are always based on an underlying intention to bring about, or change, political decisions. Nevertheless, an astonishingly large number of the studies reviewed fail to include any explicit definition of what participation means. It is quite common for political and civic engagement to be examined together. Hence, some definitions of participation are broader and also include actions that do not refer to politics, among them volunteer work and neighbourhood organisations: "Civic engagement refers to citizens' individual and collective involvement in public affairs" (Park & Perry, 2008).

In many cases the mere act of seeking political information – e.g., googling government information – is viewed as a form of participation (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Online participation in politics covers a broad spectrum of other activities, also. They extend from actions known equally in the offline world – signing petitions or casting votes – to activities only possible on the Net, such as writing blogs. Activities that are analysed most frequently include: searching for or reading political information, donating, contacting political institutions or even establishing contacts there, conversations on political topics, participation in political events, sharing photos, videos or audio files, protests and boycotts, also polls (Best & Krueger, 2005; Calenda & Meyer, 2009; Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Emmer et al., 2012; Hoff, 2006; Hoffman, 2012; Jugert et al., 2013; Kahne et al., 2012; Kaufhold et al., 2010; Kavanaugh et al., 2008; Krueger, 2002; Livingstone et al., 2005; Oostven & Besselaar, 2004; Oser, Hooghe & Marien, 2012; Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Vissers et al., 2012; Ward et al., 2003).

The different forms of participation in politics exhibit varying degrees of institutionalisation. More traditional, strongly institutionalised forms are frequently less elaborate and drain fewer resources than more recent, less institutionalised forms. Additionally, offline participation differs from online participation in several areas. Offline participation (above all in established democracies) encompasses a defined number of options, among them voting, becoming involved with a party, signing petitions, striking or taking part in protest marches. In comparison, participation on the Internet has decidedly nebulous outlines and is also in a state of constant change. The boundaries here lack clear definition.

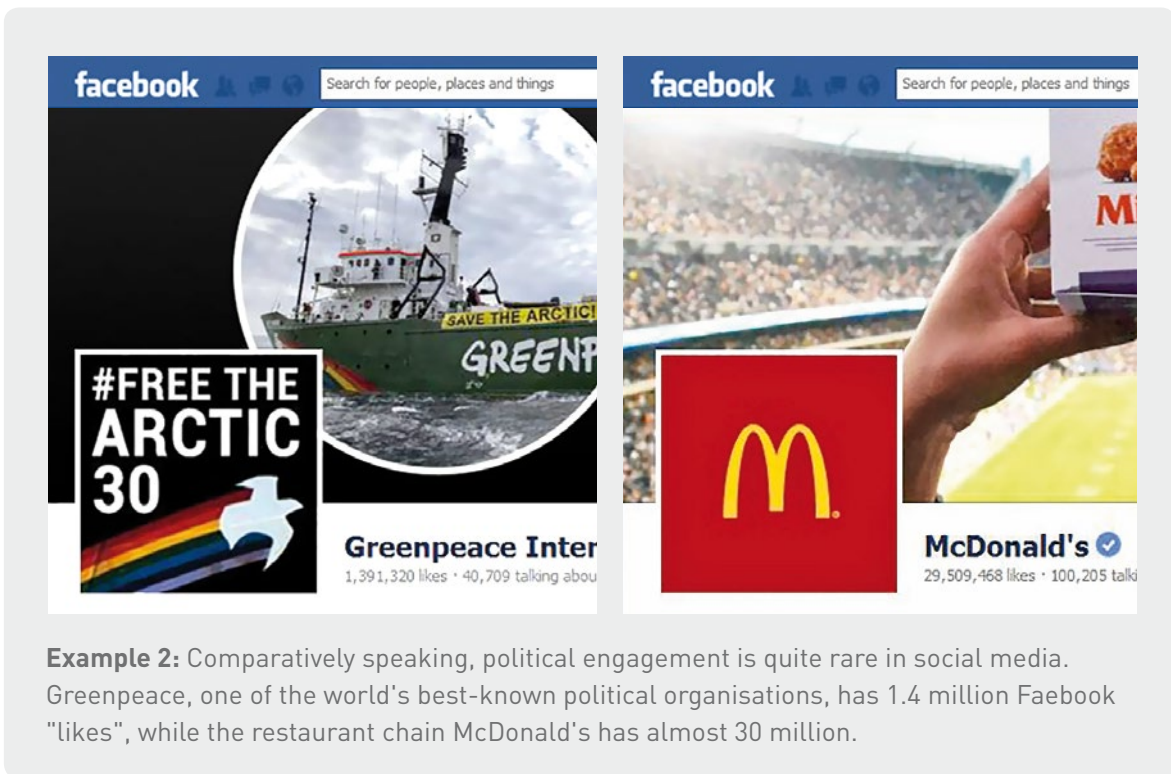
The literature analysed reveals that the last five years have seen a strong focus on political participation in social media. Increasing numbers of studies examine the users' political activities on social media or in blogs (Conroy et al., 2012; de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Macafee & De Simone, 2012; Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Zavestoski et al., 2011). This goes hand in hand with a debate on which activities can indeed be considered forms of participation – or are no more than signs of "slacktivism", i.e., symbolic participation (Ritzi et al., 2012). Critical voices claim that merely clicking on a "like" on Facebook does not represent any actual participation and serves only to ease one's conscience or – even worse – as a form of self-presentation (Morozov, 2011).

The small number of empirical studies that look into this question paint quite a varied picture. Vitak et al. (2011) show that low-level forms of participation such as "liking" content on Facebook or political status updates were not just commonplace among students at an US-American University, but that they also indicated manifestations of offline participation involving substantially greater resources such as engagement with a political organisation. Conroy et al. (2012) arrive at similar conclusions. They analysed membership of political organisations on the Internet and how this reflected on participation beyond the Net; their data also indicated a positive correlation.

A substantial number of studies in this area of literature focus on activities among young users (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett et al., 2011; Bridges et al. 2012; Burwell, 2010; Calenda & Meijer, 2009; Collin, 2008; Dahlgren, 2011; Kann et al., 2007; Kaun & Guyard, 2011; Lariscy et al., 2011; Livingstone, 2008; Spaiser, 2012; Vromen, 2008). Frequently they take in debates on political disillusionment or ignorance on the part of the adolescents and young adults, analysing whether the Internet can indeed produce an activating effect among this population group.



Example 1: In 2012, the sophisticated online campaign launched by the NGO "Invisible Children" encouraging the arrest of the warlord and war criminal Joseph Kony achieved a hitherto unseen degree of viral dissemination in social media. At the same time it was criticised for its ineffectiveness and purely symbolic character.



Example 2: Comparatively speaking, political engagement is quite rare in social media. Greenpeace, one of the world's best-known political organisations, has 1.4 million Facebook "likes", while the restaurant chain McDonald's has almost 30 million.

How widespread is online participation in politics?

As we have seen, the research field into participation within politics is by far the largest of all five areas identified. Indeed, participation on the Internet is frequently equated with political engagement. It is noticeable that there are pronounced regional differences across the realm of publication. For instance, by far the largest share of English-language literature deals primarily with studies conducted in English-speaking territories, while German publications focus on their own language area. It is quite rare for studies in the German language area to find any reception at all in English-language publications.

Most empirical studies indicate that political and civic engagement on the Internet is not particularly widespread (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006). Nevertheless, the engagement does differ according to form and intensity of activities examined – and according to the country in question. A current study shows that 16% of the population in the United States have posted images or videos on political or civic topics in the last twelve months. Further, 34% of the US-American population has used the Net to perform at least one of the following four activities over the last twelve months: sign a petition, contact a member of parliament, write a reader's letter or post a comment on a message or a blog post (Smith, 2013). One fifth of the population has participated in all of these forms over the last twelve months.

At the moment there are no matching figures available for Germany. The empirical evidence currently available suggests that in general, online political participation is not quite as widespread as it is in the United States: A study by Emmer et al. (2012), based on a representative sample of the

population in 2010, shows that Germans are more likely to become involved outside of the Net than they are to do so online. The authors distinguish between political information, political discussion and political participation (or participatory communication). Low average values for activities such as discussion and participation suggest that most citizens are slow to engage in politics on the Internet. However, there was a pronounced rise in the level of activity observed between 2002 and 2010. Merely political participation in a narrower sense, including actions such as "signing online petitions" or "writing reader's letters", showed stagnant values.

A representative study of the population conducted by the Allensbach Institute (IfD) in 2011 came to the conclusion that 70% of the population does not use the Internet for political participation. Roughly 20% shows limited political engagement – i.e., can be activated for selected topics. Merely 10% belongs to the "Political Net Activists" (Köcher & Bruttel, 2011). The actual dispersion of specific activities analysed is usually in a single-digit percentage range. Only 7% of the population has at some time written an email to a member of parliament, while no more than 2% has used a blog on a personal homepage to express political opinions. The study shows that the most widespread forms of political engagement on the Internet are "taking part in an online petition" (15%) and "taking part in a vote, e.g., on a current affairs site" (14%). The willingness to participate is also quite meagre. Only 20% of the respondents were able to imagine using social media to communicate on political topics, while 18% could envisage membership in a political group there (Köcher & Bruttel, 2011).

What changes online participation in politics?

A central question within literature is whether the Internet by and large strengthens or weakens political and civic engagement beyond the Net (de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Two opposing theories have dominated this debate for some time: On the one hand the cyber-activists assumed that the Internet has a positive influence. Previously marginalised or politically disinterested sections of the population now have the new opportunity to express themselves and become involved within a purposeful framework. In consequence, there was talk of a "mobilisation theory" (cf. Best & Krueger, 2005; Oser et al., 2012; Park & Perry, 2008). The opposing perception – sometimes known as the "crowding out hypothesis" – predicted that the Internet would be more likely to drain civic participation and engagement. Instead of throwing their weight behind communal and political goals, the users would subsist in a lonely environment in front of their screens (Putnam, 1995).

Ultimately, though, a third perspective took hold in the middle ground of this debate: The "normalisation theory" asserts that the Internet has barely any impact on the prevailing participation ratios, and that in the end everything will remain as it is (cf. Carrara, 2012; Park & Perry, 2008 for an overview). This view was expressed in a slightly modified form in the "amplification theory" (Norris, 2000). This proposed that the politically interested and committed would benefit most from the options for participation available on the Internet – in other words they would be used primarily by the well-educated elites, seeking in this way to heighten their involvement (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2005). In contrast, those without involvement and the disinterested would barely use these options at all. This would then widen the existing divide in political participation.

Empirical studies identified a positive effect of Internet use and participation on political engagement beyond the Internet. This effect was identified across a range of different cultural contexts



Example 3: Social networks such as Facebook facilitate alternative forms of political participation, for instance the organisation of protest marches or consumer boycotts.

(Hwang et al., 2006; Kwak et al., 2006; Wang, 2007). Political participation on the Net may also reveal positive ramifications for civic engagement (Stern & Dillman, 2006). A meta-analysis by Boulianne (2009) examined 38 studies that focussed on the influence of the Internet on political and civic engagement. Although the meta-analysis discovered barely any negative effects, it failed equally to discover any clear and distinct, positive overall effect. This supports the normalisation theory while seeming to refute the crowding out hypothesis. A literary overview by Anduiza et al. (2009) also came to the conclusion that although widespread Internet use has a positive influence on online forms of political participation, its effects on offline participation are negligible.

Qualitative or case studies also fail to identify any negative repercussions of the Internet on political participation; instead – quite the contrary – they generally identify positive effects (Collin, 2008; Davis, 2010). They focus increasingly on more recent forms of political participation and hence exceed the scope of most quantitative studies that most commonly focus on traditional forms of participation on the Internet and beyond. Studies that specifically analyse social media come to similar conclusions: Broadly speaking, they identify positive effects of social media use on both political participation and civic engagement (Conroy et al., 2012; de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

The necessity to distinguish between different forms of (political) participation is an important insight found in research on online political engagement and the effects of the Internet on political participation. Although there may be a meagre or indeed no correlation between Internet use and traditional forms of engagement and participation (such as strikes, protests or elections), it can nevertheless foster more recent forms that usually relate to very specific topics or challenges

(Davies et al., 2012). Here, Livingstone (2008) sees a central insight in research conducted to date. She calls for a broader understanding of what participation means, moving beyond traditional forms such as voting and elections to integrate new phenomena such as politically-motivated consumerism. Hence, it is fair to expect that new forms of organisation and coordination within stakeholder groups, also forms of activism beyond the scope of established channels and institutions such as parties and associations, will feel the keenest influence on political participation due to use of the Internet (Dahlgren, 2011).

Besides distinguishing between various forms of participation, it is also important to differentiate within Internet use itself (Moy et al., 2005; Polat, 2005; Xenos & Moy, 2007). Whereas early studies tended to consider Internet use as an undifferentiated factor, more recent analyses have increasingly started to apply classifications to types of, and motives for, Internet use. Numerous authors call for a differentiated appreciation of Internet use (Dutta-Bergman, 2006; George, 2005; Hampton et al., 2011). Benchmarks applied without differentiation to Internet use and access to technology are unable to consider the variety of influences found in the different forms of use. For instance, reading online newspapers or becoming involved in online communities stimulates political engagement to a greater extent than perusing entertaining videos on YouTube (de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Kim, 2007; Moy et al., 2005). Bakker & de Vreese (2011) ascertained that use of the Internet for informative purposes such as reading news has a positive effect on political participation online and offline, while the consumption of entertainment offered on the Net has a more negative repercussion (cf. de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Holt et al., 2013; Wang, 2007).

Moy et al. (2005) distinguish between seven forms of Internet use: seeking information, email, domestic use, political use, social use, consumerist use and community-based use. Of these forms, only seeking information, email, political use and community-based use impact positively on civic engagement. Active and social forms of Web use appear to foster civic engagement and political participation. Membership in politically-oriented Facebook groups has proven a distinct predictor for political participation outside of the Internet, also (Conroy et al., 2012). Besides an overly generalised consideration, it has proven equally problematic to analyse Internet use in an isolated form: Consumption of different media reveals a mutuality of influence. It is also known that the consumption of newspapers, for instance, is strongly associated with civic engagement and political participation (de Zúñiga et al.,



Example 4: Sometimes the Net is viewed primarily as an extension of traditional forms within political participation, for instance volunteer work during an election campaign – here the Barack Obama campaign in 2008.

2009; Krueger, 2002; Moy et al., 2005; Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010). Hence it is also relevant to ask how Internet use affects the consumption of other media.

What are the conditions for online participation in politics?

A number of studies in the area of political participation show distinct differences in how the population exploits the opportunity to make active use of the Internet – a form of “participation divide” opens up (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008). Quite frequently this divide runs along socio-demographic lines such as age, gender and status. Therefore, not all citizens participate with the same probability or frequency – a finding that applies in equal measure to online and offline worlds. Demographic characteristics prove helpful in predicting the likelihood of political interest and participation (Best & Krueger, 2005). Using Great Britain as an example, di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) show that online and offline political participation overlap significantly – but fall short of complete congruence. Kaufhold et al. (2010) indicate that persons involved in online participation tend to be more biased and exhibit less trust in traditional media compared with those who participate offline.

Current studies reveal substantial differences in terms of education: In the United States, political participation ranges between 10% for persons without high school graduation to 50% among college graduates (Smith, 2013). There are also clear dividing lines when it comes to age and income. A respectable 44% of the population in the United States aged 18-24 are politically involved on the Internet, while the figure drops to just half, or 22%, in the group aged over 65. Similar tendencies are revealed in a consideration of political participation in social networks such as Facebook. Age and education play significant roles here, also: While only 23% of persons without school leaving qualifications are politically active, the number of politically active college graduates is more than half (51%).

Like in the United States, there are also substantial differences between the social milieu in Germany. Younger age groups are far more likely to be involved online, while the older generation participates offline. But the group of young, politically interested persons in particular (aged 16-29) is quite prone to combining online and offline engagement. Hence it would be incorrect to assert that online participation is crowding out offline engagement. Instead they are complementary. The relatively small group of “political net activists” tends to be male, young, well-educated and in a high income bracket (Köcher & Bruttel, 2011, p. 50). Therefore, the findings on political participation outside the Net and on Internet use in general are confirmed (DIVSI, 2012).

In addition to demographic factors, the study also considered aspects such as political interest, political self-belief (i.e., the belief in one’s own ability to bring about political changes) and political knowledge as drivers behind political participation online. It is suggested that political interest and political self-belief in particular play an important role (Albrecht, 2006; Conroy et al., 2012; Jugert et al., 2013; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Krueger, 2002; Spaiser, 2012; Xenos & Moy, 2007; Zvestoski et al., 2011). In contrast, a study conducted by Best and Krueger (2005) indicates that digital competencies especially are pivotal to political participation online, and that civic and political competencies occupy a more marginal position. It is evident that this finding does not apply to offline participation, where digital competencies possess scant relevance and the influence of civic and political competencies predominate. Thus, the context within which participation takes place necessitates the satisfaction of specific conditions.



447,810

CITIZENS FROM AROUND THE WORLD SAY

**ENOUGH
IS ENOUGH**

**STOP THE BRUTAL ETHNIC
CLEANSING IN SUDAN!**

Example 5: The Internet-based activism platform "AVAAZ" organises political campaigns around the world. Currently it is the largest and most influential network of online activists – most of them young.

Trust is another important condition for participation (Uslaner, 2004). A lack of trust among users is a key barrier for participation, especially with regard to new technological applications. For instance, this applies to eVoting, and online polls; although 50% of Germans can envisage taking part (DIVSI, 2013b), they still feel substantial misgivings (Carter & Belanger, 2012). Trust is also an important factor when it comes to concerns with regard to monitoring and state control, e.g., in cases of anti-government protests (Earl, 2012; Krueger, 2005; Mercea, 2011). Nevertheless, these effects sometimes take a quite surprising turn. For instance, Krueger (2005) shows that in the United States, persons who hold opinions that deviate from the majority are more likely to be politically involved if they feel that the government may be watching their actions. In contrast, the perceived monitoring situation has no influence on political participation on the Internet among persons who support the government's policies.

Nevertheless, despite the scope of insight described here, a significant need for further research in the area of political participation online remains. In particular there is a lack of integral, theoretically grounded methodologies suitable to consider aspects such as lifestyles, habitus, social milieus or political socialisation (cf. Jugert et al., 2013; Spaiser, 2012). Currently it is also quite rare to find a combination of various analysis methods and data sources. Empirical studies often resemble a patchwork quilt consisting of very specific questions that remain inadequately interrelated. Further, few studies so far have taken into account the (socio)psychological characteristics such as extraversion or sociality. The study conducted by Evans and Ulbig (2012) presents an interesting exception here: The authors imply that sociality plays a stronger role in political participation on the Internet than it does offline. It is equally noticeable that a large number of studies concentrate on young citizens while neglecting older sections of the population. A cross-cultural study by Xie and Jaeger (2008) from the United States and China suggests that older persons – even if they have access to the Internet – remain extremely sceptical when it comes to the options for online participation itself. This is another reason why many eGovernment services fail. Political participation using mobile applications remains a topic that has seen almost no research so far. Substantial studies on this topic are found neither in English-language literature nor in its German counterparts.

III. Participation in business

The following chapter provides an overview of current insight in the area of online participation in the field of business. Online participation in business is taken to mean Internet-brokered or -assisted participation in the economic value creation processes. This may include communication with established companies, although this need not be the case.


What does online participation mean in business?

Since the 80s, research into economics has focussed intensely on the question of which interest groups or stakeholders should be listened to by company management – and in which way (Freeman, 1984). These questions are frequently associated with the aim of establishing longevity in company management or of strengthening a company's social or ecological responsibility (Carroll, 1979, 1991, 1999; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2006). Concentrating on the concerns of specific stakeholders facilitates the management task of understanding and addressing abstract social concerns (Clarkson, 1995). For companies, the traditional stakeholders include their customers, employees, shareholders, branches and local communities, also the public sector and media representatives (Hill & Jones, 1992; Post, Preston & Sachs, 2002).

Identifying and handling relevant stakeholders are based on a variety of perceptual filters (Pedersen, 2006). Different stakeholders may be apportioned different levels of importance, depending on a company's identity, culture and strategy. In this, the vehemence with which the stakeholders express and put forward their interests is one influential factor. New media offer stakeholders new opportunities to become organised, to coordinate their activities, to formulate their interests and to make them known to the public at large – or to the companies in question. Therefore, as is the case within online participation in politics, it is fair to speculate whether new media prompt new forms of influence and participation in business affairs and thus produce a new, participative dynamism between companies and their stakeholders.

An analysis of pertinent literature shows that the question of online participation in business has not been dealt with in any depth. Among the studies identified, a large proportion (almost two thirds of the studies) focus on the relationship between companies and their customers. Hence, participation in business is viewed strongly within a marketing context. It follows therefore that the studies look at how new media can improve communication between providers and customers or indeed customer service itself, for instance by introducing interactive elements (Greve, 2011). These studies suggest that participation and interaction can indeed enhance customer satisfaction (Dabholkar & Sheng, 2012; Sashi, 2012).

A further noteworthy area of research extends beyond amelioration of customer management in the meaning of customer service and considers how to integrate customers within a company's value creation process. It indicates that new media enable customer integration as early as in the development of new offerings, in the design of products and services, in structuring these offerings and also in their sales and marketing. This produces collaborative value creation processes that are also dealt with under the term "co-creation" (Ramaswamy, 2008; Sawhney et al., 2005; Chaney, 2012). In this, the role of the consumer changes to involve stronger activation – at least in some senses the consumer becomes a producer. The English neologism coined for this idea is that of a "prosumer", combining



BMW ConnectedDrive

Customer Innovation Lab

Freude am Fahren

Willkommen im Customer Innovation Lab.

Nehmen Sie teil an der Entwicklung von Telematik- und Online-Diensten und Assistenzsystemen der Zukunft! Das Customer Innovation Lab dient als multimediales Werkzeug und hilft Ihnen bei der Kreation neuer Dienstideen. In diesem Pilotprojekt von BMW ConnectedDrive haben Sie die Möglichkeit BMW direkt zu kontaktieren. Ein Expertenteam von BMW wird Ihre Vorschläge evaluieren und selektieren. Danach werden sie von anderen Teilnehmern bewertet.

Ich bin bereits registrierter User in dem Customer Innovation Lab.

Viel Spaß bei der Teilnahme.
Drücken Sie jetzt bitte auf „start“ (rechts unten).

Example 6: The "BMW Innovation Lab Portal" enables users to communicate ideas for the development of new assistance systems and services directly to the provider.

elements of "consumer" and "producer" (Hellmann, 2009). Understood in this way, participation in business moves beyond personalisation or customisation of offerings to suit customer wishes. Customers are given the tangible opportunity to become creatively and productively involved (Chang et al., 2009). The Creative participation in the development of new offerings is also discussed under the descriptor "open innovation" (Buhl, 2008; Ramaswamy, 2008; Franquet et al., 2011).

How widespread is online participation in business?

Given that research into online participation in business is essentially focussed on specific case examples, there is not much data available on dispersion within this form of participation. Case analyses concentrate on the success factors inherent to a targeted address and inclusion of interested stakeholders, especially customers, in the corporate value creation process. To date there has been no systematic survey on the use of participative opportunities among relevant companies or their acceptance on the part of the stakeholders addressed in this way.

Within case studies, it has become generally accepted that a certain minimum degree of participation is necessary on a platform in order to benefit from the "wisdom of the masses" (Buhl, 2008). Online communities display a specific inward dynamism in which a very small group of protagonists are extremely active – not least to order and structure the community. Another small number of protagonists generate creative input, while the broad masses of members fail to contribute any significant amount of creative initiative and are far more likely to participate merely as commentators or in providing ratings (Shirky, 2008). It follows therefore that a certain minimum participation is needed to generate, and filter out, actual innovation or solutions from the mass of contributions.

Accordingly, numerous studies focus on how to support user engagement on specific platforms, and not on participation in value creation processes as a social phenomenon. Forrester Research (2012) shows that roughly one quarter of all Internet users are active creatively or productively by publishing their own content on the Web, while approximately one third act as "critics" by commenting

on, or rating, content provided by others. However, this survey includes all areas of participation – so at the present time it is not possible to say how many citizens are creatively or critically active in the field of business specifically.

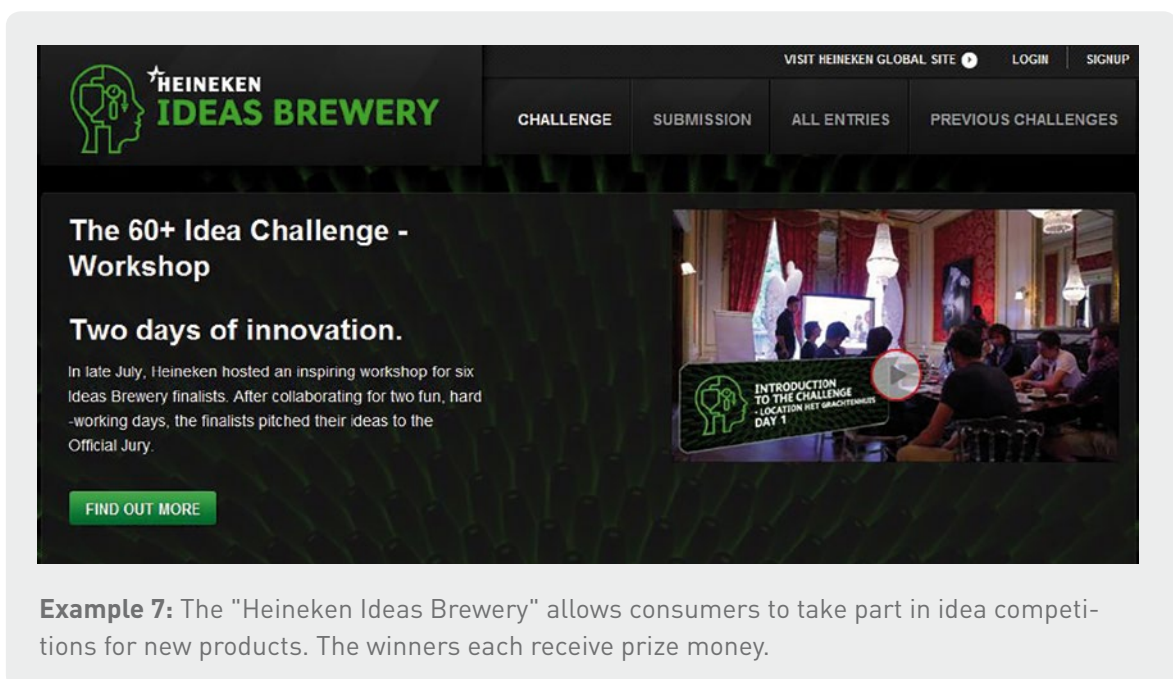
What changes online participation in business?

Research so far has dealt primarily with the question of online participation in business from an economic perspective. Thus, the principal focus has been on repercussions for the companies in question. In this it is standard practice to ask after the benefits that a company may acquire from the inclusion of its stakeholders and customers in particular. These benefits include:

- new business models;
- customer loyalty and customer satisfaction;
- word of mouth propaganda;
- increase in revenue.

Using Internet participation as a means to systematically analyse the development of new business models is particularly difficult – the main focus is on examples of successful innovation. These examples of success show that digital media do indeed enable innovative, participative business models. But these examples do not permit any statement on the spread or number of innovative initiatives.

Studies suggest that the integration of customers in processes of design and creation offers companies a variety of benefits: Among customers, participation creates a sense of shared responsibility




The screenshot displays the Heineken Ideas Brewery website interface. At the top left is the Heineken logo and the text "HEINEKEN IDEAS BREWERY". To the right are navigation links: "VISIT HEINEKEN GLOBAL SITE", "LOGIN", and "SIGNUP". Below these are four menu items: "CHALLENGE", "SUBMISSION", "ALL ENTRIES", and "PREVIOUS CHALLENGES". The main content area features a dark green background with a grid pattern. The headline reads "The 60+ Idea Challenge - Workshop" followed by "Two days of innovation." Below this, a short paragraph describes the event: "In late July, Heineken hosted an inspiring workshop for six Ideas Brewery finalists. After collaborating for two fun, hard-working days, the finalists pitched their ideas to the Official Jury." A green button labeled "FIND OUT MORE" is positioned at the bottom left. On the right side, there is a video player showing a workshop session with a play button overlay. The video title is "INTRODUCTION TO THE CHALLENGE - LOCATION MET GRACHTENHUIS DAY 1".

Example 7: The "Heineken Ideas Brewery" allows consumers to take part in idea competitions for new products. The winners each receive prize money.

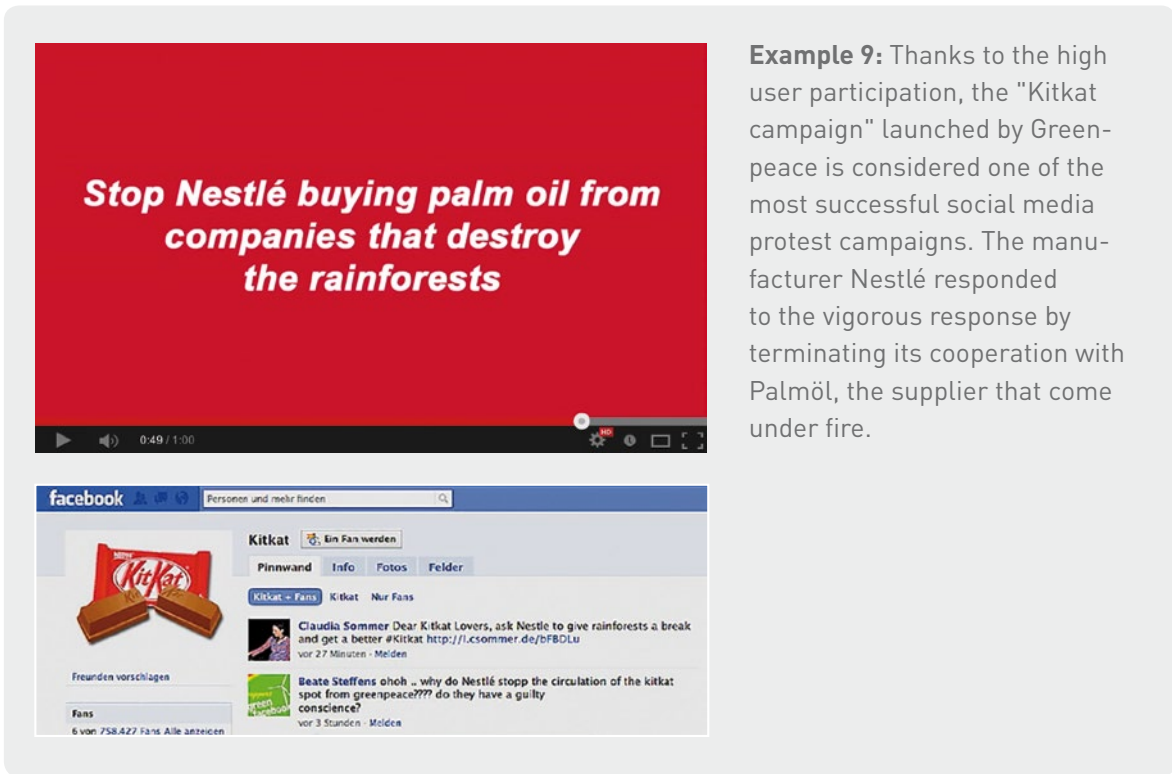
and affiliation ("organizational citizenship") (Yen et al., 2011). Customers display substantial attentiveness and also greater loyalty when brought into the design, creation or dissemination of products and services (Chaney, 2012). In these cases customers are no longer just buyers involved in a swap function in dealings with companies, which in itself is inherently characterised by a certain degree of distrust. Instead they perceive themselves as cosignors of an offering. This encourages them voluntarily and on their own initiative to endorse the product or service, for instance in the form of word of mouth propaganda or "viral advertising" (Riegner, 2007; Chaney, 2012).

Only a few studies approach the question of participatory options that are open to other stakeholders, besides customers. And this although a number of examples are certainly available of how critical groups use new media to spread their message by word of mouth propaganda, also (Bieber & Lamla, 2005). Voluntary, viral communication is by no means always a blessing for the company concerned (Sashi, 2012). So companies are called on to respond adequately when faced with critical reports. Time and again, overreactions and attempts to mislead merely reignite criticism and ensure even wider dissemination (Campbell et al., 2012).

An international study shows that companies use their websites principally to address customers and shareholders (Adams & Frost, 2006). Thus, addressing other target groups or stakeholders, for instance to communicate sustainability, is not considered an urgent goal within online communication. In most cases, also, company websites are not seen as an instrument for interactive communication with stakeholders – instead they serve merely to unilaterally broadcast company information. Nevertheless, a broad range of opportunities to observe the behaviour of target groups on the Net, to systematically analyse their responses and hence to acquire information on the needs and demands of relevant stakeholders already exist (Elgün & Karla, 2013).



Example 8: The user-driven "Doritos Viralocity" campaign generated approx. 7 million views on YouTube. At times the channel was the most frequently viewed sponsored channel on the platform. As a result the earmarked revenues were exceeded by 24 %.



Example 9: Thanks to the high user participation, the "Kitkat campaign" launched by Greenpeace is considered one of the most successful social media protest campaigns. The manufacturer Nestlé responded to the vigorous response by terminating its cooperation with Palmöl, the supplier that come under fire.

By the same token, stakeholders certainly recognise the potential that new media offer in making themselves heard (Kane et al., 2009). For instance, social media are used to share information and in this way to critically monitor how companies behave. The time available to respond in the event of perceived misconduct is shortened accordingly. At the same time, social media facilitate the dissemination of critical reports throughout a diverse and widespread community.

It is all the more astonishing, therefore, that such a small number of studies are interested in the critical analysis of possible shifts in power based on new forms of participation available on the Net. It is not even necessary to consider prominent examples of online criticism voiced towards companies (so-called "shitstorms"). The forms of co-creation and open innovation that are welcomed by companies also involve a political dimension. It is not without reason that customer "empowerment" is mentioned in this context (Weiber & Wolf, 2012). By necessity, permitting participation by external parties in the design, creation or dissemination of products and services shifts power away from the company and toward these cooperation partners (Riegner, 2007; Chang et al., 2009). The easy accessibility of new media and the associated public platform for groups lacking in the necessary resources usually require the companies to exercise mindfulness and in some cases to engage in an interactive dialogue. This helps reduce asymmetric power structures (Sawhney et al., 2005).

Economic analyses indicate that cooperation between companies and external stakeholders also leads to a displacement in value creation potential. In other words: Customers or other partners cooperate with the company if they can extract a reward from this collaboration. Companies may indeed have to fork out the lion's share of this reward, for instance when stages in the value creation process no longer take place within the company and are instead placed in the hands of the cooperation

partners (Chaney, 2012). In most cases, though, the hope is that all parties involved will benefit from the cooperation and that new net value will be created (Franquet et al., 2011). It is likely that the increase in responsibility and affiliation on the part of the cooperation partners will cushion any risk of losses on the company side (Yen et al., 2011).

The creative industries, in particular the music and film industry and journalism, present an interesting showpiece for online participation in business and its critical repercussions (Franquet et al., 2011; Hanekop & Wittke, 2008; Neuberger et al., 2009). In this sector, innovation, driven by new media, frequently leads to "disruptive" effects, meaning it calls into question the traditional business model. New media are characterised by their capacity to enable creative use by a wide audience and hence to facilitate the production and dissemination of media content. In the past, recording and distributing music, photos, videos or journalistic content have been the exclusive preserve of professional producers drawing on suitable and frequently expensive equipment. Now, however, virtually universal Internet access and online publication platforms have transformed any user into a potential media producer (Chaney, 2012).

Research into the disruption of traditional business models involves looking at the examples of music piracy, self-promotion by musicians and photographers, also so-called "guerilla journalism" (Nguyen, 2006). Above all, these activities divert revenues away from traditional providers. It would be incorrect, nevertheless, that these new forms of creative participation must always be detrimental for previous providers. Once more it is true that the activation and inclusion of customers in the creative processes will boost their attentiveness and loyalty (Chaney, 2012). This produces new value creation processes, provided the business model is modified accordingly.



Example 10: The "Contributor Portal" at Shutterstock allows users, whether novices or experts, to transfer their photos and films to the online service and thus to reach a large circle of potential customers. The images are checked for quality and then released; the copyright holder receives an agreed amount for each purchase.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning an interesting observation made in an American study: It states that more active use of the Internet goes hand in hand with greater involvement on the capital market (Bogan, 2008). The Internet offers interested users a broad variety of relevant information to underpin any investment decision. It also facilitates access to financial institutions (online banking/brokerage). Hence, citizens find it easier to make investments. The greater the Internet use, the more the users will invest in joint stock corporations. Therefore, participation on the Internet will influence the balance of power in the world of business, provided the users perceive their financial involvement not merely as an investment and instead make use of their rights of co-determination. And this will open up a wealth of potential for researchers to investigate the repercussions of online participation in business.

What are the conditions for online participation in business?

It is quite rare for studies into online participation in business to investigate the socio-demographic conditions underlying the participation itself. A contributory factor in this is almost certainly that a uniform understanding of what participation entails does not exist in this area. Interaction in customer relationships, participation in co-creation and open innovation or the independent production and dissemination of creative products are predicated by a variety of interests, motivations and abilities. Statements on the conditions underlying participation will remain more or less impossible as long as these distinctions and their interconnections remain unclear.

Nevertheless, it becomes evident by the same token that the motives and hence the psychological drivers are important stimuli behind participation. Studies in the field of business informatics have shown that the perception of utility and user-friendliness is influenced substantially by the willingness to make use of an application (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2000; 2003). Further, user attitudes influence their willingness to participate. Users who display significant openness towards new technologies and who apply a playful attitude in approaching Internet offerings are more likely to be willing to engage in online interaction with a company than those plagued by substantial concerns and fears, for instance with regard to their privacy and security on the Net.

Socio-cognitive studies have shown additionally that subjective self-efficacy can foster or obstruct a user's online engagement (Compeau et al., 1999). Environmental influences, and above all user experiences, may contribute to users feeling confident – or otherwise – when approaching certain activities on the Net. And the willingness among users to engage will rise proportionately with the instrumental nature of prevalent influences and their own appreciation of personal skills.

Ultimately, also, user motivation is of interest when it comes to cooperation with companies. A frequent distinction is made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Users frequently possess extrinsic motivations and hence are looking for tangible benefits when they become involved in design and production processes within companies. It is worth remembering, though, that an excessively extrinsic incentive, for instance a cash payment, curtails motivation (Shirky, 2008). Quite frequently indeed it is an intrinsic incentive, for instance the thrill of the challenge or peer respect, that provides motivation to participate. Investigating these contexts represents a strength in the research of online participation in business that may prove of interest to other areas, also.

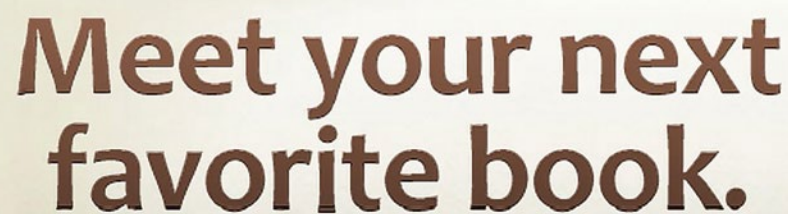
IV. Participation in culture

The following chapter presents key insight within current research into online participation in the area of culture. Participation in culture aims to produce meaning. It is based fundamentally on an interaction between users who share multimedia content.

What does online participation mean in culture?

Participation in the area of culture often involves productive engagement: The protagonists create something, although the primary objective is not commercial (Ryu et al., 2009). What remains essentially unclear is how to delineate this "something": Some authors consider the mere act of generating meaning, understanding or insight to be a creative act (Deuze, 2006). Creativeness is certainly a key element when it comes to participation in culture. On the Internet, the main focus is on content produced and communicated by means of media. On a base level, even a conversation can be an expression of participation. This is why a large number of studies in this area look into online communities, so interest and discussion groups, that engage in communication on cultural topics in a wider sense.

Above all social media place a spotlight on creative processes focussing on the reworking or deconstruction of existing commodities, their combination and reconstruction using the constituent elements (Deuze, 2006). Tinkering, combining, so-called "bricolage", are enabled in particular by the simplification in sharing content (audio, image, video) that social platforms enable. This also clarifies why the question of intellectual property is so hotly disputed in the digital realm: Is the deconstruction and subsequent re-composition of existing melodies and/or images an act of piracy or a creative product with its own inherent cultural value? Numerous authors in this area of research into participation on the Net appreciate the value of user "empowerment" and the communal creative process that this enables. Culture on the Net is meant to be primarily "bottom up" (Castells, 2001).

The Goodreads logo is displayed in a lowercase, sans-serif font. It is positioned at the top left of a light beige rectangular area that serves as a background for the text below.The text "Meet your next favorite book." is centered within the beige background. It is written in a large, bold, dark brown serif font, with the first letter of each word being capitalized.

Example 11: The online community "Goodreads" is dedicated to sharing reading tips. Users can search for books, publish book reviews, communicate with other users and join virtual book clubs.



Example 12: The social media art project "Masterpiece 2.0" emerged from the interaction between an artist and visitors to his website. The artist painted a multi-layered canvas, taking instructions from the visitors. This produced art based on the principle of interaction found in social media.

Even if creative participation is a linchpin of online culture (Cook et al., 2009), some analysts emphasise the significance of supportive activities: The Net promotes sharing information and experience and hence facilitates the outpouring of creative energies. Online communities that focus on instruments or software offerings to produce music are an example here. Participating in these communities is what enables a broad variety of these creative acts. So forums of this kind also fulfil a facilitatory function when it comes to participating on the Net.

Online participation in culture covers a vast range of contentual objects. Music, film, philosophy, religion and forms of expressing one's identity, including fan culture, are among the objects of research. Research also looks into various types of Internet use. Entertainment, information and sharing may be among the motives that prompt participation (Ryu et al., 2009; Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006). Accordingly, some studies transfer established theories of "uses and gratifications" to online participation in culture, as these aspects are directly linked to the media use itself. This approach is based on the assumption that media are used to satisfy a specific need – and so it differentiates these needs.

Motives relating to identification and affiliation frequently represent the focal point of investigation, given that the production of meaning is an elementary factor within participation in culture (McKenna & Bargh, 1998). Hence, online participation is guided by the user identity and by the same measure is a tool within self-discovery and the development of self-awareness – quite frequently through engaging with groups, for instance in online communities. Thus it is possible to distinguish between functional motives (including information and entertainment) and social motives (for instance affiliation) (Alon & Brunel, 2007). Investigations of online communities suggest that users frequently establish contact to the online offerings for functional reasons, but once there develop a personal relationship. With time, the social motives for use take the place of their functional counterparts (Ewing, 2008).

Therefore, the motives for use influence the form of participation. Users with a strong sense of affiliation contribute more frequently to online debates. The depth or richness of contributions, on the other hand, is enhanced by greater experience or a longer period of affiliation (Nov et al., 2009). Accordingly, some studies attempt to distinguish online participation in culture based on the type of engagement. And these studies reveal an extremely broad spread in the incidence of these forms of participation.

How widespread is online participation in culture?

In the cultural field, also, the degree of participation is subject to a so-called "power law distribution". In other words: A small number of extremely active users generate a large proportion of the contributions, while some active users provide occasional contributions and the lion's share of users are rarely active and tend to engage in passive consumption (Nov et al., 2009). This shows plainly: The mere opportunity for creative expression, supported and fostered by new media, does not necessarily prompt their actual use.

Erwing (2008) makes a helpful distinction between participants in creative communities. His typology is based on an established online terminology and describes six groups in particular:

1. **Lurkers:** Passive users who primarily consume contributions by other users and do not make any active appearance themselves.
2. **Newbies:** New members who visit the platform for functional reasons, investigate it curiously and post initial contributions (often questions).
3. **Regulars:** Regular users who have become acquainted with the platform, are developing a sense of affiliation and who periodically post contributions, not least as a form of bonding.
4. **Elders:** Experienced users who perceive themselves as pillars of the community, answer a large number of questions and not least hold a moderating function.
5. **Legacies:** Former elders withdrawing gradually from the community, who may occasionally intervene and whose word carries substantial weight in the community.
6. **Trolls:** Troublemakers who deliberately use provocative, frequently absurd, contributions to goad other users into emotional responses.



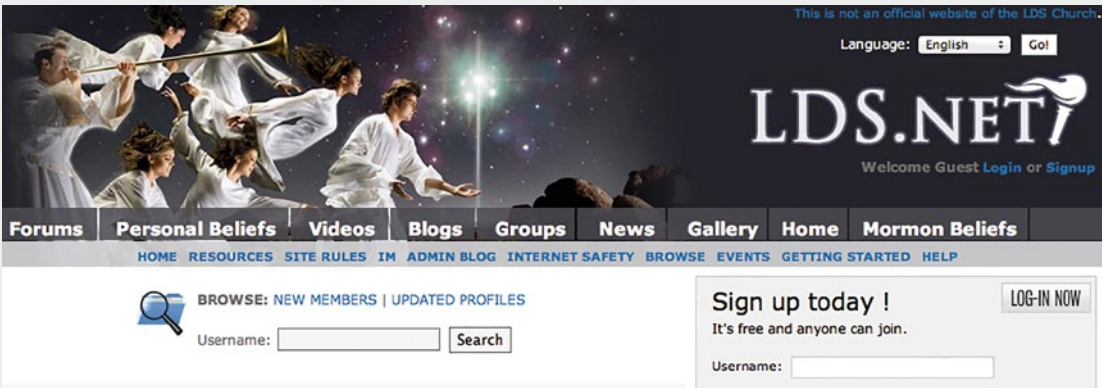
Figure 8: Warning signs on the net
Don't get involved with trolls!

Quite frequently the so-called "Elders", the community members located on the higher levels of the productivity scale and who make a substantial contribution to the existence of the community, are particularly interesting. They contribute significantly to the identity, but also the functionality, of a community thanks to their facilitatory and directive role. So to say, they shape its purpose and its face (Ewing, 2008). Many of their contributions are not contentual, and are instead intended to ensure that the community functions smoothly and remains coherent in purpose. This facilitatory role also affords them substantial power. Decisions on censorship, the exclusion of members or the promotion of topics are within the remit of Elders (Holt & Karlsson, 2011). Hence, the purpose and the statement of a creative community or action are not based necessarily on a broad "democratic" basis, and instead on the lively engagement by a few members. A phenomenon that doubtless retains its validity in areas beyond online participation in the area of culture.

What changes online participation in culture?

The widespread perception of online participation in culture as the communal production of meaning is not least due to the fact that creative online communities are often autotelic in what they produce. As we have seen, there is a social benefit in addition to the functional benefit. Soliciting a response to a question that draws attention to a personal contribution is an example of functional benefit; another would be requesting an appraisal or feedback from other community members (Cook et al., 2009; Nov et al., 2009). Although these functional purposes are also "social" in that they involve interaction with other members, their aim is to achieve progress in a creative project.

In contrast, the longer a member remains involved in a community, the greater the importance of membership itself and the sense of affiliation this produces. The autotelic quality found within these communities is based on social support and the establishment of identity – whether it be merely through the choice of a specific name or take the form of mutual self-reassurance (Ewing, 2008; Rajagopalan, 2011). This function of online participation possesses a particular significance for smaller and marginalised groups within society in particular, for instance sexual, ethnic or religious minorities (Alon & Brunel, 2007; Kissau, 2008). In these cases, participation on the Internet can produce greater self-acceptance and self-assurance, while providing an escape from perceived isolation (McKenna &



Example 13: "LDS.net" is an online network run by the Mormon faith group, used to publish and share mutual testimonies of beliefs.

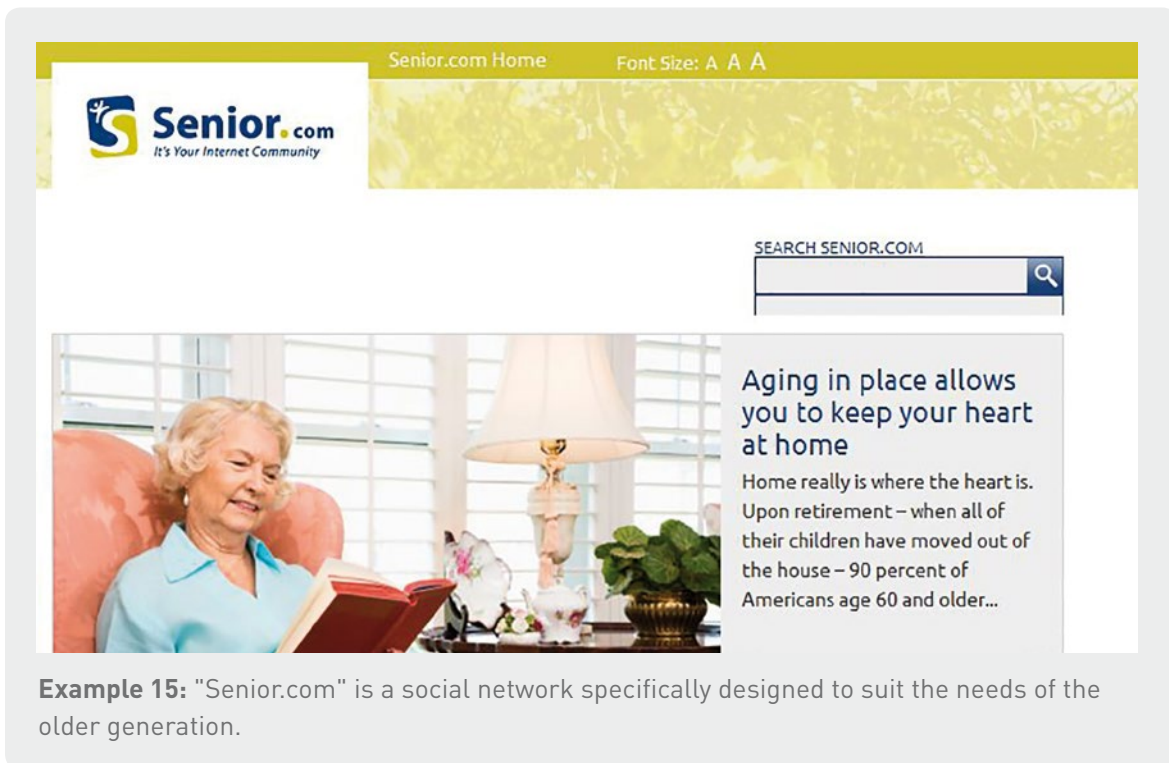
Bargh, 1998). In this sense, surfing the Internet and searching for a suitable community represents an act of digital self-discovery and identity-formation (Helland, 2002).

Online communities are an interesting instrument of dissemination and support for the providers of cultural commodities. Communities of this kind can be meeting places for friends, enthusiasts and fans to come together, share experience and become organised. Once they are members of an online community, fans experience a greater sense of affiliation, even if in physical terms they remain far removed from the object of their adulation and his or her activities (Bennett, 2012). Here we find voluntary word of mouth propaganda and viral communication similar to what is seen in the area of participation in business. Again and again, fan communities of this kind tend to take on lives of their own – sharing within the community and the sense of affiliation are then more important than the original subject of discussion (Rajagopalan, 2011).

Equally, this addresses a possible drawback with regard to online participation in culture: It is quite rare for online engagement to take root in the offline world. Online communities possess a narrow topical focus, beyond which the members have few things in common. Therefore, online "friendship" between community members rarely transitions into the offline world (Nonnecke et al., 2006). By the same token: Active members in an online community experience greater satisfaction and more benefits than passive members such as "Lurkers" (Nonnecke et al., 2006). Once more the social benefits are felt most keenly in marginalised groups (Alon & Brunel, 2007), a fact that sometimes prompts these groups to use the Internet for particularly active and interactive communication (Helland, 2002).

Ultimately there is the hope that active sharing on the Net, also the functional and social support found in online communities, will continue to simplify the use of new media and hence contribute to their creative application. In this way, new media can prompt broader, more active cultural

Example 14: Ambitious and independent musicians can use "Bandcamp" to create their own profiles to help familiarise a broad audience with their album releases. Bandcamp takes a 15 % cut in all revenues generated in this way.



Example 15: "Senior.com" is a social network specifically designed to suit the needs of the older generation.

engagement, lower the barriers to access and produce a wider selection and broader promotion of creativity (Ryu et al., 2009). Ultimately, though, extensive empirical research will be necessary to analyse whether these hopes will be fulfilled.

What are the conditions for online participation in culture?

There is only a small number of studies available that focus on the conditions for this kind of engagement, as online participation in culture represents merely a small area of research. As in other areas there may be a negative correlation between the age of users and their level of online engagement. In other words: The younger the users, the more likely that they are to be culturally engaged on the Net (Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006; Ho et al., 2008). This is not least due to the fact that younger users exhibit a higher level of experience and subjective perception of their own competency (Ryu et al., 2009).

Participation in the area of culture is often associated with a significant degree of complexity. For instance, posting a video involves the individual stages of shooting, cutting, encoding, saving and sharing (Ryu et al., 2009). What this requires lends credence to the assumption that this area will manifest a particularly distinct "participation divide" (Ho et al., 2008; Götzenbrucker & Franz, 2010). As mentioned earlier, the frequency of participation is spread according to the power law distribution. A few very active users dominate what goes on.

The underlying social motives behind use itself is an important driver within cultural participation. For instance, the more a user is integrated within an online community, the greater the likelihood of active participation. This may be due to encouragement through interaction with other users, or also peer pressure (Ryu et al., 2009). Age may be an influential factor here, also. Older users are less

inclined to communicate creatively as they tend to be less involved and have fewer social contacts online (Ryu et al., 2009).

Cultural drivers of online participation in culture were also identified: In this, it became apparent that different national cultures exhibit different levels of openness toward a range of participation forms (Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006). The particularly high degree of activity observed among minority groups is also linked partially to cultural motives, suggesting that social marginalisation makes a group more ideologically charged and leads to a greater effort invested in communication and mobilisation (Farrell, 2011). However, this does require the users to possess the necessary skills (Götzenbrucker & Franz, 2010).

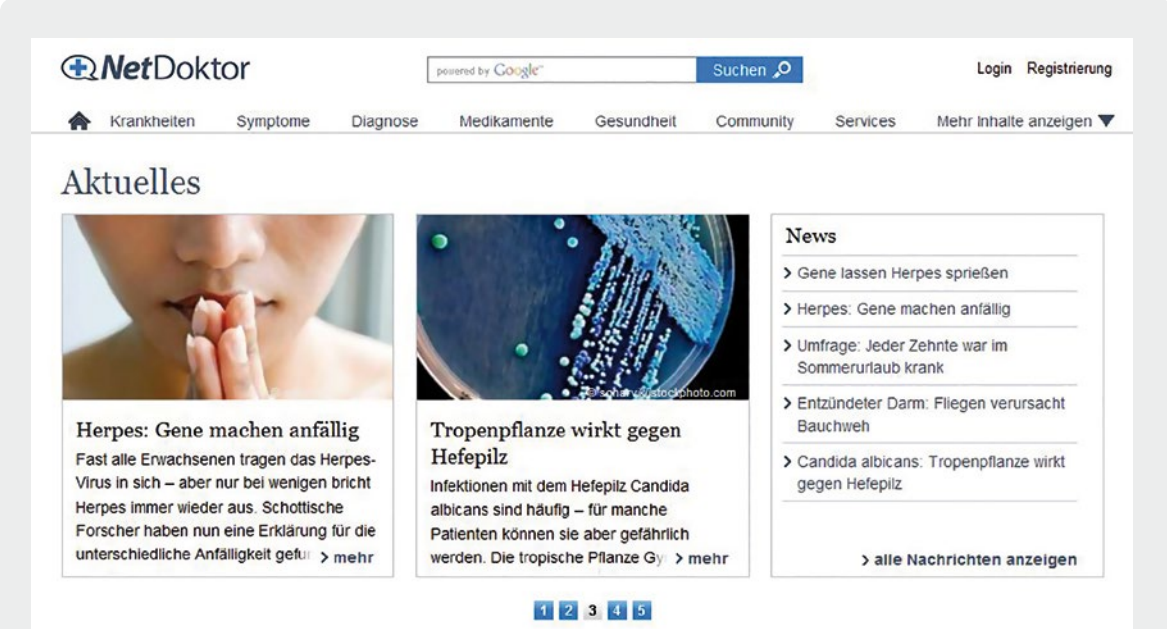
V. Participation in questions of health

Participation in questions of health occurs when users take to the Internet to acquire greater understanding of their personal state of health and to treat afflictions. This may be by communicating with healthcare providers, but can also involve nothing more than sharing information with other interested persons and sufferers. The following chapter presents the central insight acquired within research into the area of online participation in questions of health.

What does online participation mean in questions of health?


Today the Internet represents one of the most important sources of information when it comes to questions of health: A large proportion of Internet users at least sometimes use the Net to search for information relating to staying healthy or treating symptoms (Schubart et al., 2011). The first stage of participation involves those afflicted seeking information. The Internet plays a key role on this level. The simple, permanent access to information relating to a wide variety of questions of health means that users are able to gain greater understanding of their own state of health – and hence acquire broader discernibility in questions of sensible courses of treatment.

The term "empowerment" is of key importance in a context with participation in questions of health. User empowerment takes place across a variety of dimensions. First, patients have access to greater quantities of information; they have new, additional opportunities to assess their own state of health. This means they are able to take a more active, self-determinant role in the treatment of diseases. However, "empowerment" does not take place merely as a form of self-monitoring and in



The screenshot shows the NetDoktor website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "powered by Google" and a "Suchen" button. To the right are links for "Login" and "Registrierung". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with items: "Krankheiten", "Symptome", "Diagnose", "Medikamente", "Gesundheit", "Community", "Services", and "Mehr Inhalte anzeigen". The main content area is titled "Aktuelles" and features two main article cards. The first card is titled "Herpes: Gene machen anfällig" and includes a sub-headline "Fast alle Erwachsenen tragen das Herpes-Virus in sich – aber nur bei wenigen bricht Herpes immer wieder aus. Schottische Forscher haben nun eine Erklärung für die unterschiedliche Anfälligkeit gefu" and a "mehr" link. The second card is titled "Tropenpflanze wirkt gegen Hefepilz" and includes a sub-headline "Infektionen mit dem Hefepilz Candida albicans sind häufig – für manche Patienten können sie aber gefährlich werden. Die tropische Pflanze G" and a "mehr" link. To the right of these cards is a "News" section with a list of articles, each with a "mehr" link: "Gene lassen Herpes sprießen", "Herpes: Gene machen anfällig", "Umfrage: Jeder Zehnte war im Sommerurlaub krank", "Entzündeter Darm: Fliegen verursacht Bauchweh", and "Candida albicans: Tropenpflanze wirkt gegen Hefepilz". At the bottom of the news section is a link "> alle Nachrichten anzeigen". Below the article cards is a pagination bar with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Example 16: Interested persons and sufferers use "NetDoctor" to find information on illnesses, their symptoms and methods of treatment. Not always to the delight of the attending physicians.



Gerade online: 302 Mitglieder

mama community *informieren & spaß haben*

FORUM CHAT COMMUNITY REGIONAL FLOHMARKT BABYSITTER RATGEBER FUN SHOPPING Google™ Benutz

willkommen bei uns! Kostenlos Mitglied werden

Thema	Letzter Beitrag
★ 8. Monate altes Kind trinkt nichts!!!	shelyra
★ Erfahrungen mit Vileda Ultramat Set?	nespa
★ FASCHING - als was geht ihr und euere	schlatz

Jetzt Mitglied werden!
100% kostenlos


Example 17: "Mamacommunity" is an online community for pregnant women, mothers and women who would like children. At its heart we find a forum in which members share tips on questions relating to pregnancy and motherhood.

communication with healthcare providers; instead its principal realm is in sharing information with other sufferers.

Studies on participation in questions of health are frequently focused on examples of self-help. Like in the area of participation in culture, this takes place in online forums and communities. Although the numbers of users in online self-help groups are low (less than 10% of Internet users), they represent a particularly interesting example of participative engagement on the Internet (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2011). In many cases lay persons even create the informational offerings. In addition, lay persons offer mutual help and support in questions of health, especially when they suffer from the same symptoms. Interactive self-help on the Internet produces a new form of healthcare: decentralised and bottom-up.

At times these forms of participation prompt concerns with regard to the maintenance of professional standards in the treatment of illnesses. Critical voices are raised that self-diagnosis and treatment can be risky at times if they comes about by communicating with other sufferers. There are reports in some cases that professionals in the healthcare system have found the patients' new self-assurance and Internet-assisted (apparent) knowledge a burden (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2008; Hiller, 2012).

Distinctions can be made in terms of the functional motives behind engagement in the area of online participation in questions of health, also. Users frequently go online to search for information. But mutual help and emotional support are considered immense benefits, especially in self-help forums and groups. Illnesses often come with social stigmata – so those afflicted are thankful if they are able to share their concerns and experience openly (Ginossar, 2008; van Uden-Kraan et al., 2009). As fellow sufferers, it is not rare for particularly engaged online users to hold a quasi-expert status; they are particularly committed to the cause and to the concerns relevant to the illness.



Example 18: The self-help page "Cancer Buddies Network" is a meeting place for users directly or indirectly affected by cancer where they chat or use a forum to share experiences and provide mutual support.

How widespread is online participation in questions of health?

There is a very distinct spread across the rungs of the "participation ladder" when it comes to online participation in questions of health. Information on health-related topics on the Net is among the most widespread forms of use – over half of the Internet users take their place on this rung (Schubart et al., 2011; Eichenberg, 2011). Offerings and experience are occasionally rated on the Internet, also; some users share their recommendations – but far fewer people are found on the consultation rung nevertheless. Finally, actual and active participation, for instance in self-help groups, is an exceptional phenomenon (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2011). However, this may be due to the fortunate fact that certain symptoms that prompt active sharing of experience are not particularly widespread throughout the population.

The dispersion of motives for participation exhibits a similar structure. The motive of seeking information is particularly widespread; but motives concerning the representation of interests, mutual support and pooling of experience are significantly less frequent (Ginossar, 2008; van Uden-Kraan et al., 2009). Users whose symptoms cause suffering or lead to isolation are most likely to become engaged in online self-help groups (Rodgers & Chen, 2005). Subjective uncertainty, also, a perceived lack of personal competency or a sense of lacking information motivate users to become actively engaged on the Net (Han et al., 2012).

What changes online participation in questions of health?

The central descriptor for online participation in questions of health is "empowerment" – the process of strengthening users or patients. Users who become engaged with questions of health on the Net perceive themselves to be better informed and recipients of greater social reinforcement. Users who suffer from an illness report that they find it easier to cope with their disease, that their mood improves, and that they feel more optimism when it comes to appraising the outlook on their own



Example 19: The website "Pink Ribbon" has a forum and a variety of blogs to address topics relating to all aspects of breast cancer. It also communicates and coordinates activities scheduled for the offline world.

state of health (Rodger & Chen, 2005; Hoybye et al., 2010). In contrast, users who are not engaged tend to avoid dealing with their illness. They feel more fatalistic in the assessment of their personal situation (Hoybye et al., 2010).

"Empowerment" is not merely an objective question of information and education: It is also a question of attitude. Nevertheless, the question of whether a sense of greater control and competency and a boost in optimism triggered by online participation may themselves impact on a person's state of health remains largely inconclusive. But engaged patients frequently feel able to make better decisions concerning their personal health and the treatment of their illness, and they appreciate greater therapeutic autonomy (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2009). Hence one could say that they emancipate to become something akin to enlightened consumers (Sandaunet, 2008). This is not least due to a greater subjective assessment of personal competency and a boost in self-assurance (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2008).

In many cases these positive repercussions of participation on the Internet are rooted in social interaction on the Net. Engaged users have a sense of belonging to a community – so once more we find a correlation between online participation and identity formation. Compared with less active users, patients who actively engage with a thematically focussed online community consider this topic to be an integral element of their identities. The social dynamism associated with group membership therefore impacts on self-perception (Sandaunet, 2008).

In some cases this dynamism may lead to a form of activism, for instance when group members agree to coordinate in the representation of their interests to the outside world (Ginossar, 2008; van Uden-Kraan et al., 2008). In particular, there are studies on this phenomenon that use the example of breast cancer and political activities intended to fight the disease. Another, albeit controversial, example is found in anorexia communities in which those afflicted engage in supportive discussion on their eating disorder and share tips on how to maintain or hide their condition (Cierpka et al., 2011).

Even if it is fair to assume that "empowerment" due to online participation will strengthen patient power in their dealings with healthcare providers (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2008), it would be incorrect to conclude that this will automatically lead to tension or burdens – for instance in the relationship between physicians and patients. Informed patients who believe they have control over their treatment, meaning they support the therapy selected, exhibit greater confidence and optimism in their appraisal of treatment success. They are more prone to accepting their situation and tend to remain more consistent in sticking to the treatment schedule (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2009). It follows that medical research is investigating new treatment philosophies that build to a greater extent on informing and involving the patient. Instead of accepting treatment based solely on their respect for a physician's authority, treatment is then selected in a process of consultation with the patient and then carried out in a spirit of partnership as a mutually agreed procedure.

By the way: There are online communities for groups other than patients. The value of online participation for family members of those afflicted has also been investigated. It was shown that engaged users appreciate the emotional support they receive in these communities above all. It follows, therefore, that they report on a greater sense of well-being compared with non-users (Tanis et al., 2011; Hiller, 2012). The question of whether single patients exhibit a greater or lesser tendency toward online participation remains largely unclear. While a family environment can provide support and hence reduce the necessity of online engagement, a lack of understanding in the same setting will increase the perceived need to share with outside parties.

Again it is true that online contacts rarely transition into the offline world (Rodgers & Chen, 2005). Although a shared concern may be sufficient to establish a sense of community online, it often remains an inadequately broad foundation for actual friendship. Indeed, users who seek and find their primary source of information and support tend even to withdraw from relationships in the real world (Epstein et al., 2002). It follows, therefore, that participation on the Net comes with risks. These may extend to the emergence of new pathologies due to false use of the Internet, for instance an "information overload", concentration difficulties or also excessive information consumption ("infobesity") or Internet addiction (Schieder & Lorenz, 2012; Eichenberg, 2011).

What are the conditions for online participation in questions of health?

Once more we find that age is a driver for participation on the Net: Young users are more likely to participate in questions of health. There is a similar situation in terms of user experience: "The greater the experience, the more active the participation" is the rule of thumb (Steinmark et al., 2006; Han et al., 2012; Rodgers & Chen, 2005). Gender appears to exert an opposite influence on participation in questions of health compared with what is observed in political participation: Women are more likely to be engaged online than men (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2011).

It is worthwhile taking a differentiated look at the influence of the users' socio-economic status on their online participation. It is known that this aspect affects the prognosis for recovery – irrespective of their Internet use. Hence, a higher socio-economic status positively affects prognosis for recovery (Hoybye et al., 2010). Patients with a lower socio-economic status feel less well-being and more stress when faced with their disease (Epstein et al., 2002). It is generally accepted that the socio-economic status also promotes online participation – which means that those persons who already start from a better initial position also benefit from the opportunities offered on the Internet (Hiller,



Example 20: "Youthhealthtalk.com" is a platform to address questions of health relating specifically to young people based on the experience of those afflicted.

2012). Conversely, Internet users with a lower socio-economic status perceive greater subjective benefit from participation: Above all they appreciate the increase in information and competency they find on the Internet (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2009).

In general, widespread availability of the Internet lowers the access barriers to information on questions of health. It is logistically and psychologically easier to find help and support on the Internet in questions of health concerns (Tanis et al., 2011). The greater the need for information and the perceived lack of competency, the more the users will be active on the Net (Han et al., 2012). It follows, therefore, that the Internet should represent an opportunity for users with a lower socio-economic status.

As described earlier, the influence of household size is unclear when it comes to online participation. Young users in single-person households exhibit particularly high activity (Han et al., 2012). Nevertheless, users who receive encouragement to do so from their social environment, which may include their own household, are also particularly engaged (van Uden-Kraan et al., 2011).

Finally, user attitudes towards the Internet also influence their online engagement. While the Internet may, at first glance, reduce the access barriers to helpful services, the anonymity it provides also simplifies the location of suitable services, even when dealing with stigmatised diseases. But for this to happen the users must trust the Internet: The greater the concerns with regard to security and privacy on the Net, the lower the probability of participation in questions of health (Han et al., 2012).

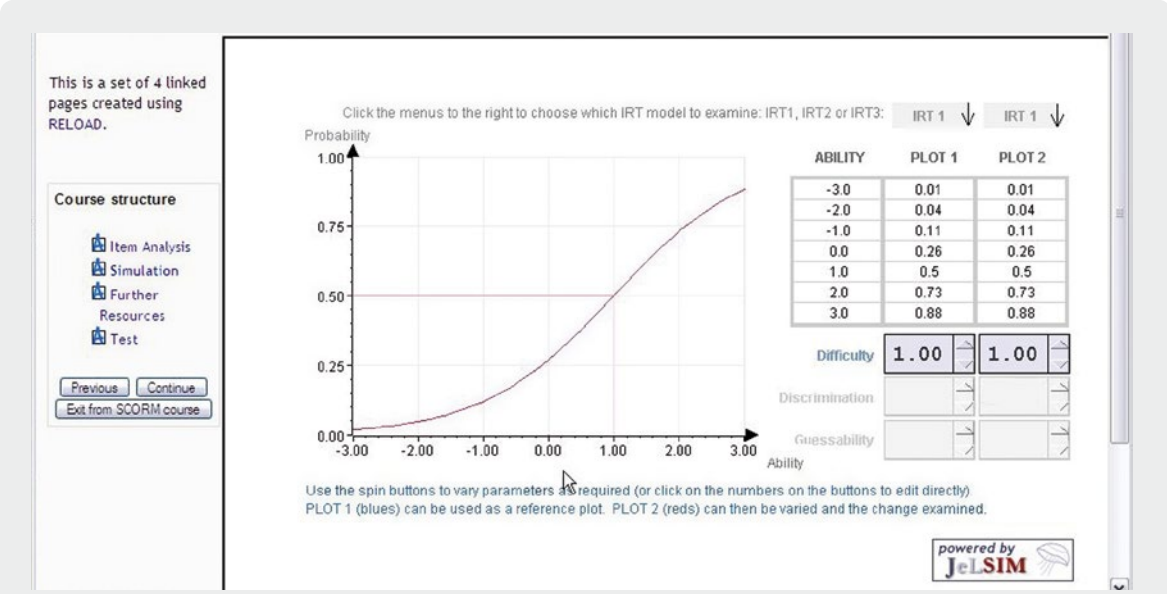
VI. Participation in education

The following chapter describes the central insight acquired within research into the area of online participation in education. Participation in the area of education describes new access opportunities to educational services that the Internet enables. This includes new forms of teaching and learning communicated via the Internet, which with increasing frequency are also tied in with innovative pedagogical concepts.

What does online participation mean in education?

"The Internet offers learning at any time, in any place and for anyone", is the optimistic assessment by Robinson and Hullinger (2008). Major players in the digital world such as Google and Wikipedia are synonymous with access to countless sources and the accumulated knowledge found within the online community. The Internet is an instrument of communication and of conveying knowledge. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a large number of academics have become interested in the effects the Internet has on learning and education. The research area into participation in education is large, second only to political engagement, although by a long measure. Numerous studies investigate the specific platforms or instruments used in online learning and the associated learning success. But this study was particularly concerned with the extent to which the Internet promotes participation by users.

There is no doubt that the Internet lowers the access barriers to information and knowledge. Potentially, this may increase participation in education (Rambe, 2012; Davies & Graff, 2005). New forms of learning emerge, adapting and blending to suit the different needs of students. For instance, computer-assisted learning forms can prevent disadvantages associated with face-to-face learning such



This is a set of 4 linked pages created using RELOAD.

Course structure

- Item Analysis
- Simulation
- Further Resources
- Test

Previous Continue
Exit from SCORM course

Click the menus to the right to choose which IRT model to examine: IRT1, IRT2 or IRT3: IRT 1 ↓ IRT 1 ↓

ABILITY	PLOT 1	PLOT 2
-3.0	0.01	0.01
-2.0	0.04	0.04
-1.0	0.11	0.11
0.0	0.26	0.26
1.0	0.5	0.5
2.0	0.73	0.73
3.0	0.88	0.88

Difficulty: 1.00 1.00

Discrimination

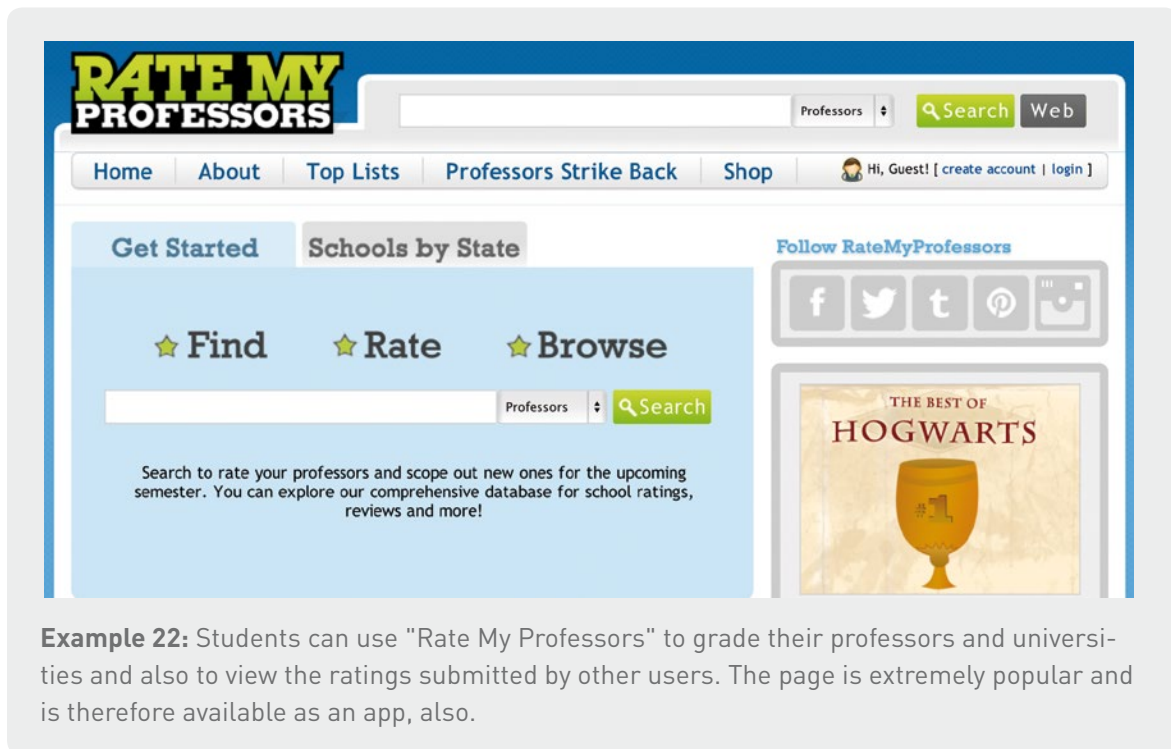
Guessability

Ability

Use the spin buttons to vary parameters as required (or click on the numbers on the buttons to edit directly)
PLOT 1 (blues) can be used as a reference plot. PLOT 2 (reds) can then be varied and the change examined.

powered by JeLSIM

Example 21: "Moodle" is an open source learning platform that enables cooperative teaching and learning.



as peer pressure, intimidation and such like. The terms of teaching and learning are also becoming increasingly vague on the Internet: Self-teaching is commonplace here, for example when referencing terms or locating a technical text. In contrast, traditional learning forms are becoming increasingly scarce. It is indeed possible that online learning now has few similarities with concentrated study at school.

Hence the participatory effect of the Internet serves to strengthen the student and, in relative terms, to weaken the traditional learning structures – which again represents a form of "empowerment" (Kidd, 2011; Erstad, 2006). "Clients" in the educational sector develop greater independence and autonomy, while the teacher loses influence. Some authors now consider the teacher to be no more than a "facilitator" who here and there will intervene to steer a largely self-controlled learning process (Reimer, 2003; Duncan et al., 2012; Mayrberger, 2012). "Student-centred learning" is a pedagogical byword in the Internet age (Arbaugh, 2000; Hratinski, 2008).

Here the social component possesses particular importance: New media support and facilitate communication between the students and collaborative forms of learning (McBrien et al., 2009), producing something akin to a co-creation of knowledge and learning – entirely along the lines of the Wikipedia swarm intelligence. Communication between students also means transparency and comparability. In the same way that teacher grade student performances, the students are perfectly candid in assessing the performance of their teachers on the Net (Asselin & Moayeri, 2011). This also represents a shift in power within the process of learning.

It goes without saying that online participation in education requires a certain competency for use. This prompts the interesting question as to how this competency required for learning can be

Example 23: "Coursera" is still a young enterprise; it offers online courses and compiles services by other providers. Some of the courses are free, while others are subject to charge. A series of leading international education providers are currently cooperating with the platform.

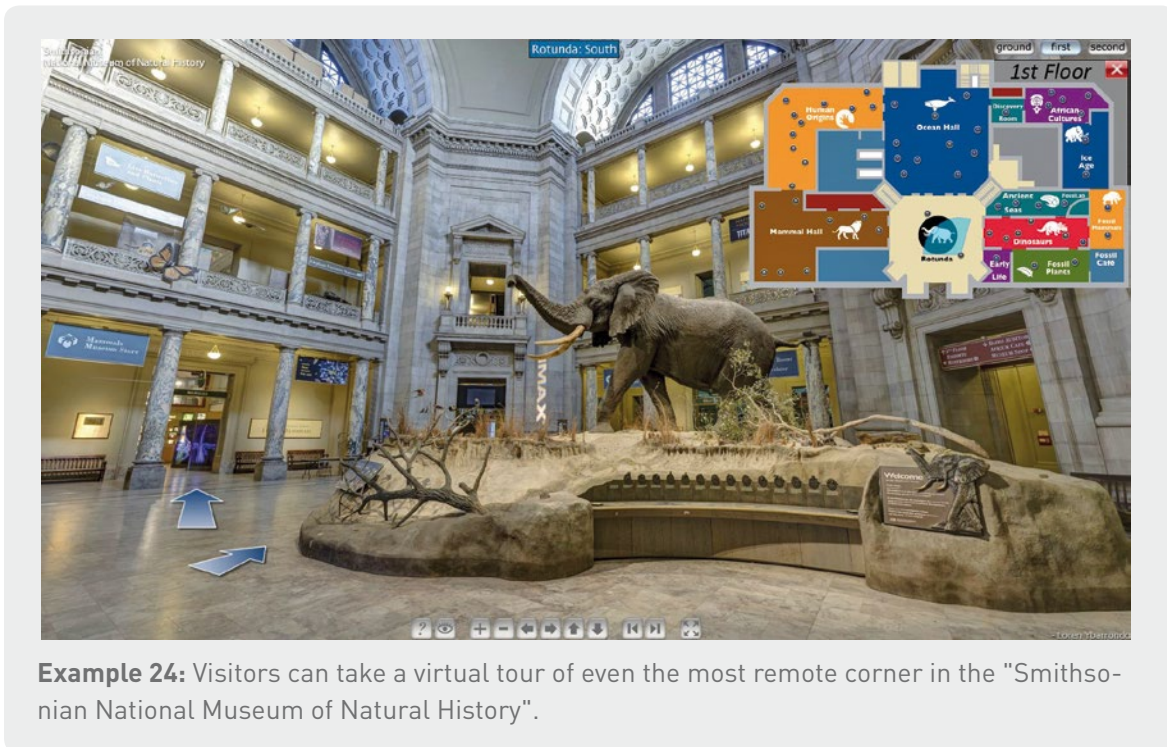
acquired, and how successful the traditional learning process can be in communicating new Internet competencies.

How widespread is online participation in education?

The rungs of the "participation ladder" crop up again in the area of education. Once more, the first, basic rung representing information is the broadest: A British study revealed that 90% of all students aged between 9 and 19 use the Internet to obtain information in a context with learning (Livingstone & Bober, 2004). Hence, use of the Internet among students is far more widespread than among teachers. An American survey revealed that 76% of teachers use new media for teaching purposes, but mainly to trace student activity and to gather information (Asselin & Moayeri, 2011). Not only do students exhibit greater activity on the Internet, the use itself shows far more diversity (Erstad, 2006).

In general, though, transferring experience of Internet use in everyday life to an educational context proves difficult. Asymmetries in competency between teachers and students present a further challenge here. Teachers repeatedly put up resistance (Erstad, 2006). Schools belonging to the state education system in particular prove to be among the less flexible social institutions – learning forms, pedagogical concepts, curricula and examination forms are slow to change, while innovation remains repeatedly bogged down in complex political manoeuvring (Livingstone, 2010).

Quite frequently this is a question of cultural hurdles: Institutions in the education sector – whether they be schools, universities or museums – typically assume a hierarchy of knowledge. Those providing the services possess the knowledge that the clientèle seeks to acquire. "Empowerment" and participation are uneasy bedfellows with the systems in operation at educational institutions (Kidd, 2011; Mayrberger, 2012). Sometimes, though, the inhibitions facing a spread



Example 24: Visitors can take a virtual tour of even the most remote corner in the “Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History”.

of online participation in education are entirely mundane in nature: Internet-based learning requires an adequate technological infrastructure and assumes a willingness among established providers to invest and implement procedural changes.

Taken together, these factors create a situation in which educational participation remains more of an exception on the higher rungs of the participation ladder. Another British study shows that only 20% of the population actively use the Internet for training or education purposes. This means that education ranges among the less widespread purposes for using the Internet (White & Selwyn, 2012).

What changes online participation in education?

It is frequently assumed that the Internet facilitates participation in educational services. However, this is not dependent merely on whether indeed educational institutions develop and offer online services: The characteristics or skills among users may also facilitate, or obstruct, educational participation on the Net – the following section will deal with this aspect in greater depth. But what happens if online participation in education succeeds? What changes will this bring?

Studies conducted on online educational services show that the underlying technical conditions influence how effective the platform can be. Above all, a distinction is made between synchronous and asynchronous platforms. This reveals that synchronous communication, meaning direct communication between teachers and students, also among the students themselves, positively affects the learning success (Duncan et al., 2012). In particular, synchronous communication creates a sense of stronger involvement among the participants, prompting them to become more active and to participate to a larger extent (Hratinski, 2008).

Studies conducted so far suggest that online education should not be shy of a comparison with offline services. Comparative studies confirm that students in online courses show greater engagement than those taking offline courses (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). A reason for this may be that online courses are more self-managed and hence require greater self-discipline. On many occasions online participation is associated with better examination performances (Davies & Graff, 2005; Stewart et al., 2011). It is indeed possible that active online participation acts as an indicator for a student's motivation, which in turn exhibits a positive correlation with performance in examinations. At this point there may be a positive self-reinforcement effect, as successful students frequently show greater online participation and are more prone to interactive communication (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Participation in online offerings does not show any negative repercussions on offline participation when online and offline elements are provided simultaneously (Stewart et al., 2011).

However, the insight described here commonly assumes that there are hierarchical structures of teaching and learning. What is considered here is therefore a typical school or study context, which takes place partially or entirely on the Internet. By contrast, participation in education produces further repercussions whenever previous structures and processes are called into question. This is true in particular when the Internet fosters collaboration between the students. In these cases the students establish networks of relationships to suit their needs, and the interaction and dialogue enabled therein shape the learning experience (Hratinski, 2009). Students possess greater autonomy in these networks (McBrien et al., 2009). The learning experience centres around the students, their decisions and collaboration (Arbaugh, 2000; Hratinski, 2008; Erstad, 2006).

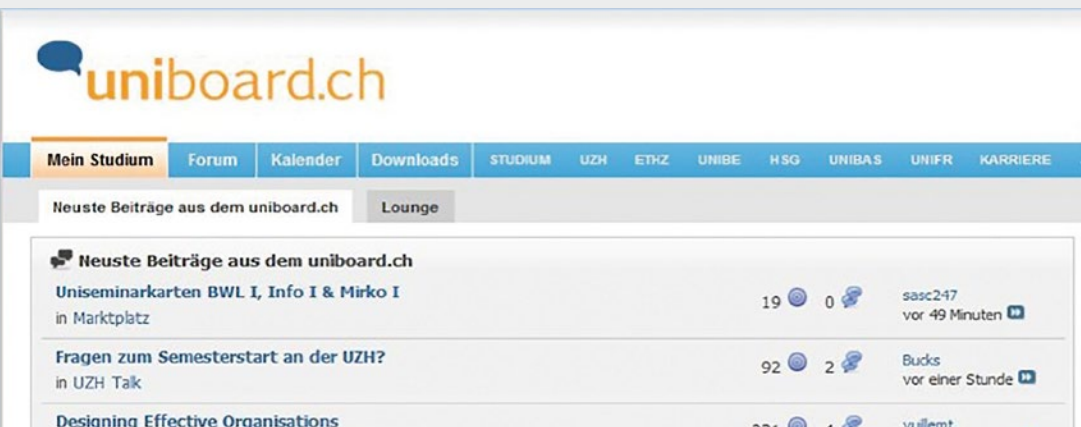
The Internet supports sharing between students even in situations that the educational provider did not intend. An example of this is the controversy around rating teachers and professors on the Net (Rambe, 2012). So even if there are no specific offerings for communication between students, it cannot simply be prevented. This is the reason why more recent pedagogical concepts define the role of the teacher less as the provider of information and more as that of a facilitator (Reimer, 2003; Duncan et al., 2012). The Net holds countless places where information can be found; the pedagogue is characterised by guiding or facilitating the process of information acquisition. Therefore, this is not a unilateral transfer of knowledge, as the Net in particular offers teachers the opportunity to learn from other participants (Asselin & Moayeri, 2011).

It goes without saying that the online world of education is far from perfect. Online participation in education most certainly comes with challenges. Among them is once more the question of intellectual property. It is not uncommon in an online learning environment to source content quickly, without clarifying legal entitlement (copyright, trademarks, etc.). There are occasional warnings, also, that as a learning environment, the Internet holds far too many distractions and that as a result the students may suffer from lapses in concentration and attentiveness (Rambe, 2012). Asynchronous online communication can produce delays and misunderstandings (Hesse & Giovis, 1997). New examination forms must be established, as fresh forms of cheating spread quickly among students (Grell & Rau, 2011). Individual studies tackle the question of whether online learning – entirely bereft of physical communication or face-to-face study – may lead to isolation among students. It is certainly true that participants in online courses engage in less intensive communication with their colleagues than those taking offline courses (Rabe-Hemp et al., 2009). But by the same token: The options found on the Internet introduce greater sociability and interaction to distance learning than was the case in pre-digital times (McBrien et al., 2009).

What are the conditions for online participation in education?

A glance at the socio-demographic conditions of educational participation on the Net reveals familiar structures. Younger students are more active than older citizens. This is particularly true of creative or productive forms of Internet use (Correa, 2010). Gender distinctions show that male students use the Internet more intensely in a private capacity. They also believe themselves to be more capable than their female colleagues. But this does not mean that educational participation on the Net is a male preserve. Quite the opposite. Women use online courses more frequently than men, possibly because they are easier to accommodate in their professional lives (Caspi et al., 2008). Female students are more actively involved in learning environments (Arbaugh, 2000); they communicate more and make greater use of collaborative functions (Erstad, 2006; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008).

The development of adequate skills to participate in educational opportunities on the Internet presents a particular challenge. A high appreciation of one's own competencies and a playful attitude towards the Internet promote participation in online offerings (Spence & Usher, 2007). But which competencies are needed for this participation? Besides eLiteracy, the ability to use the Internet, the necessary competencies include those that promote the use of several platforms and a multimedia environment. Creativity and sound judgement – with regard to the quality and credibility of educational offerings – are also among the core competencies in online education (Kimber & Wyatt-Smith, 2010; Grell & Rau, 2011). A "literacy of empowerment" is fostered, meaning the ability to create, collaborate and participate critically, given that online participation in education is based not least on autonomy and independence (Asselin & Moayeri, 2011). It remains to be seen whether traditional offerings with- in education are able to strengthen these competencies.



The screenshot shows the uniboard.ch forum interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Mein Studium', 'Forum', 'Kalender', 'Downloads', and a list of university departments: 'STUDIUM', 'UZH', 'ETHZ', 'UNIBE', 'HSG', 'UNIBAS', 'UNIFR', and 'KARRIERE'. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled 'Neuste Beiträge aus dem uniboard.ch' with a 'Lounge' sub-tab. The main content area displays a list of posts:

Post Title	Location	Replies	Views	User	Time
Uniseminarkarten BWL I, Info I & Mirko I	in Marktplatz	19	0	sasc247	vor 49 Minuten
Fragen zum Semesterstart an der UZH?	in UZH Talk	92	2	Bucks	vor einer Stunde
Designing Effective Organisations		231	4	vullent	

Example 25: "Uniboard.ch" is one of the online forums that students use to share experiences and provide tips and assistance on lectures and courses.

Summary

The opportunities of participation on the Internet come associated with a wide variety of hopes. Will the join-in media lead to a join-in society? All too often the insight into these questions is based on insular examples, while prognoses remain speculative. This study presents an overview of participation on the Internet. It shows the forms and areas of participation that research has focussed on so far.

What becomes clear first of all is that the topic of participation on the Internet is clearly gathering pace – the number of recently published studies has risen exponentially. Second, it is obvious that political participation dominates the question of participation on the Internet. This area is larger than the sum of all other fields of participation, based on the number of publications.

Finally, it is equally evident: The question of participation on the Internet remains inadequately accessible. A common understanding of terms is lacking. What does "participation" mean exactly? Where does it start, and where does it end? Where should the lines be drawn between "apparent" and "real" participation? And what does "on the Internet" even signify? Where are the boundaries between the digital lifeworld – and what impact will they have on our analogue life together?

Numerous blind spots remain, even in the well-established research area of political participation. Here also, there are chasms in the understanding of participation on and outside of the Internet. The drivers and barriers for participation are extraordinarily difficult to identify as two phenomena come together here: skilled use of the medium (Internet) and the various forms of participation. For instance, younger people tend to use the Internet with greater frequency, while older people are more politically interested. So what does this mean in terms of participation on the Internet? Certain phenomena overlap, also, among them self-assurance and actual ability – all of this necessitates a prudent, theoretically and conceptually grounded, empirical approach within research.

An advantage of the method selected here is that it provides a broad overview of the academic discourse concerning participation on the Net. It becomes clear in this way that participation is more than just political participation – it takes places across a variety of different life areas. And in these different areas it sometimes has different drivers and effects.

So the Net is in a state of flux, and user behaviour is changing. The new media are leaving marks on our society – as media always do. Some of these marks become visible in the overview provided here:

Horizontal, not vertical

Our institutions and organisations are built on hierarchies. People find themselves constantly in hierarchical, vertically structured relationships: as citizens facing politics, as students facing teachers, as patients facing their doctors. The new media now make it noticeably easier for people to share. Countless people come together in social networks and online communities based on similar interests. We are all able to maintain larger networks of relationships than would be possible via purely offline relationships alone. It is far easier to find people on the Net who are in a similar situation or who share similar interests.

In this way, the Internet fortifies the horizontal relationships within our society. Participation does not automatically mean protesting against them "up there". First of all it involves forging links with the others "down here". The formation of networks and communities is among the participatory effects the Internet produces and that have become the focus of substantial interest. It appears a constant source of surprise that these communities take on their own lives, so to speak.

What can one say about a fan community so enamoured with itself and its members that the film star or band that the members are fans of fades entirely into the background? What happens when patients provide each other with support and treatment tips – without any contact with the physician? What if students help each other and ignore the teacher? It is not always possible to translate this horizontal strength into vertical momentum. Neither does the Net call into question every form of hierarchy. But it is becoming increasingly clear that hierarchical influence is waning.

Strength through community

Membership in a community goes some way towards influencing the self-perception and world views among users. By becoming a member, users define to a certain extent who they are or would like to be. These identities experience mutual reinforcement within the community. In extreme cases this may lead to disconnection from the "outside world". Interpreted positively, the social dynamism within the communities generates constructive energy.

Interests become claims within communities. Self-assurance emerges along with the ability to externalise interests. However, the strength of a community is not necessarily directed outward. Self-help is an aspect of participation on the Net that has seen high levels of study. And "empowerment" grows from this self-help, improving the ability to handle one's own needs and challenges with aplomb – whether it be as a student, an artist or a cancer patient.

"Empowerment" is a common thread running through research into participation. Yet nevertheless it remains as complex and multifaceted as the term of participation itself. How is "empowerment" defined and measured? What are its effects? Does "empowerment" lead to social transformation – should it strike fear into established institutions? Many questions remain unanswered. But the following is clear: Participation on the Internet is based on a social dynamism that carries the individual and hence has psychological roots, also.

An uneven ladder

Differentiating the term of participation is an important step in analysing participation on the Net. Here the participation ladder is a helpful approach, as it shows that information itself can be an initial form of participation. There should be no doubt that broad access to information is among the strengths of the Internet. It follows, therefore, that a broad understanding of participation will automatically show that the Internet leaves clear marks on participation.

But it is equally evident: The next rungs on the ladder become increasingly narrow. In all areas, information is the most widespread form of participation. Effectively it develops at the same rate as Internet use in the population itself. But do the citizens actually take the next step towards consultation or even active participation? Studies to date suggest: not really.

Active participation on the Net appears largely to be a minority phenomenon. Therefore, a narrow understanding of participation would most likely suggest that the Internet has a weak influence on participation. This would be particularly true if participation is taken to mean the offline decision-making processes in established institutions. For instance, Internet use does not directly prompt more people to exercise their right to vote.

It is certainly true that the participation ladder is slanted. Some areas of research suggest a power law distribution within participation: A few active users engage in very strong participation, some less active users participate a little and a large number of inactive users tend to remain passive. Is this distribution on the Net any different to the offline world? Is it problematic? What are the consequences of the participation divide between the hyperactive and the tag-alongs? How does this affect the quality of participation processes?

There are a large number of unanswered questions here, also. What becomes clear, though, is that users assume a variety of different roles on the Net, and that these roles come with different degrees and also different kinds of participation. It is certainly possible that no one of these roles is superior to the others – it might indeed be a question of the right blend for participation to work properly.

Analogous blind spots

There is an English saying that every problem looks like a nail if all you have is a hammer. Similarly, studies on participation on the Internet are at risk of producing lopsided results if they are overly narrow in their understanding and measurement of "participation". Many studies on the way in which the Internet influences civic partnership take participation to mean involvement in offline decision-making processes by established institutions. For instance do larger numbers of active Internet users vote, visit the doctor, or are they more committed at school?

These questions are interesting, no doubt. But blind spots may emerge if we fail to look beyond these aspects. Participation on the Internet exhibits a distinctly horizontal dimension, and hence takes place primarily among users in their own networks and communities. Is this form of participation irrelevant, just because it calls into question the established hierarchies?

Conducting a precise analysis of participation on the Internet is a daunting challenge: What if the familiar yardsticks for participation are simply inappropriate for the Net? What if participation on the Net is different to offline? How then can we recognise it? What if our understanding of participation – also due to new media – is changing? How can this new dynamism be academically "captured"? And what if this dynamism is so gradual or subtle that we quite simply fail to notice how established institutions are called into question?

Academia does not have to reinvent itself faced with the new media, but neither may it stand still. This analysis shows that a large number of innovative research projects are setting about analysing the Internet on an international stage and are investigating with substantial openness how our participation on the Net is changing. Although it is gathering pace, research in this area remains nascent, and is still searching for suitable yardsticks and instruments of analysis.

Participation is not ownership

Research shows, as indicated by the image of a slanted ladder, that by no means all users exhibit the same degree of participation on the Internet. For a long time, studies concentrated on the "digital divide" within society: Who is "on", and who isn't? Hence the focus was on access to the Internet. Even today there are socio-demographic differences manifest in the use of the Internet, but now, increasingly, the question is no longer who is "on", but what they do once they are there.

An overview of areas of participation on the Internet show that socio-economic characteristics impact on online participation. The age factor runs as a common thread through all areas. Younger users are more active than older users. In most cases this goes hand in hand with a greater experience of use and a higher subjective appreciation of personal competencies. It follows that younger users show greater openness to more complex forms of participation such as those that the join-in media permit than older users. Nevertheless it would be incorrect to claim that youth and participation are synonymous. A whole series of other factors exist – for instance political interest in the question of political participation, as this interest tends to increase with age.

Other factors such as gender and education show a variety of effects: In the field of educational participation, the level of education itself appears evidently unsuitable as a distinctive characteristic, as the starting situation remains the same. This is quite different in questions of health or political participation, where engagement increases parallel to education. The influence is murky in the area of cultural participation, as entertainment-oriented participation is obviously not driven by education.

Gender exerts a positive or negative influence on participation, depending on the area in question. Political engagement, for instance, appears to be a male preserve, while women dominate participation in education. It is clear that further studies and differentiations are necessary to identify the drivers behind, and barriers to, participation on the Internet. The differentiation applied here is a first step towards greater understanding. Others will follow.

Unanswered questions

This study is part of a comprehensive research programme on "Participation on the Net". The literary analysis provides an overview of where research currently stands. It enables the identification of research areas that are, at the same time, fields of online participation. It also shows commonalities and differences between the research areas and more or less established insight into Net participation. Thus we are able to see which insight we currently do not possess and which unanswered questions future empirical studies should address.

These include:

- How widespread is participation in the different areas of society? Which citizens prefer to participate in which areas?
- Which motives or attitudes foster or obstruct participation on the Net?
How important are trust and security? Which general conditions influence their assessment by citizens?

- What are the socio-demographic conditions for participation in the different areas? What makes them distinct? What does the "participation divide" look like on the Net?
- If "empowerment" is an important element of participation on the Net, how can it be defined? What influences it, and what are its conditions? Does a "participative habitus" emerge?
- How can forms and degrees of participation be distinguished? From which threshold of objective or subjective involvement is it valid to speak of actual participation? Is it necessary to draw a line between horizontal and vertical participation?
- In which forms of participation is there a successful transition from online into the offline world, and in which areas? What must happen for participation on the Net to change established social institutions?

DIVSI will continue to conduct studies to enrich debate on the form, meaning, potential and challenges of participation on the Net by contributing academic insight, and hence will provide the social protagonists with a foundation upon which they may structure the necessary framework conditions.

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DIVSI studies



DIVSI U25 Study (2014)

The DIVSI U25 study was first to provide profound responses to questions relating to the behaviour of the young generation with regard to the Net. In addition to the forms of use, the analysis focused on the logics of thought and action, also the lifeworld background.



DIVSI Study on Freedom versus Regulation on the Internet (2013)

How safe do Germans feel on the Internet? How much freedom and self-determination do they want? How much regulation are they calling for? The study draws a detailed picture of how the Germans use the Internet and what their perceptions of opportunities and risks truly are.



Decision-Maker Study on Trust and Safety on the Internet (2013)

What do executives feel about the Internet? To which protagonists do they attribute responsibility and how is their responsibility perceived? What do they say about the needs for security and freedom? The study is the first to elucidate what opinion leaders and those persons who contribute substantially to how things work think about the Internet.



Opinion-leader Study "Who structures the Internet" (2012)

How well do opinion leaders know their way around the Internet? How do they assess their own influence? Which opportunities, fields of conflict and risks does this produce? Leading representatives from the fields of politics, business, administration, science and associations were interviewed face to face.



Milieu Study on Trust and Security on the Internet (2012) + update (2013)

The milieu study is the first to differentiate the contrasting approaches to the topic of security and data privacy on the Internet in Germany, based on a population-representative typology.



Figure 9: The team at the MCM2 Chair

Institute for Media and Communications Management (MCM), University of St. Gallen

The =mcm institute is an internationally recognised research, qualification and consulting centre for media and communications management as well as for culture and media. We help students, researchers and decision makers in business and society meet the challenges of the digital age. The =mcm Institute comprises the four Chairs of Communications Management, Corporate Communications, Culture and Media and Social Media and Mobile Communications.

In its research and teaching the Chair for Corporate Communications (MCM 2) at =mcm institute combines aspects of strategic management with communication and from this approach anticipates how the communications work of organisations can react to the challenges of the new media and media uses.

The MCM2 Chair uses the results of its research to help find responses to the questions that concern leaders within business, politics and society. On the one hand, our research work covers traditional fields of communication management such as corporate image and reputation, internal communications and public affairs. On the other hand, we analyse new developments in corporate communications, which are driven in particular by the new social media.

About DIVSI

IT increasingly permeates the state and society as a whole. The Internet is now practically indispensable in many areas of everyday life. A key task for the future, therefore, will be to foster and secure the trust that people feel towards the Internet. It is a question of enabling use of a modern technology within a safe environment. As an institute, we seek to play a key role in this development.

German Institute for Trust and Security on the Internet (DIVSI)

- ... sees itself as forum that initiates open and transparent dialogue to foster trust and security on the Internet and to enliven the debate through providing new aspects.
- ... promotes interdisciplinary dialogue and networks between academia, business, society and politics.
- ... supports science and research and in this way seeks to help in the investigation and analysis of potential risks within electronic communication and transaction.
- ... engages in education to nurture sensitisation on the part of users, intending to enhance trust and security on the Internet.

German Institute for Trust and Security on the Internet is a non-profit enterprise within Deutsche Post AG.

DIVSI core concepts

Trust is an important driver of human actions. This is true of everyday life, also of specific activities on the Internet. Put concisely, trust has two meanings: trust in something, or trust in a person. Therefore, in addition to the ability to be familiar with the reliable workings of an object, the term also expresses the human emotion of sensing trust. Both factors are decisive in how we use the Internet. This is why DIVSI views trust as a core concept in the discussion of opportunities and risks inherent to the Internet.

Every human being has a fundamental need for security. In differing extents it defines our individual actions and our patterns of use. Very few of us can judge how safe it is to use the Internet. How secure individual users feel is dependent firstly on the technology itself, and secondly on a consensus as to how we should move safely through the Internet. In this, the topic of data privacy holds special importance. A "regulated" form of security, once it extends beyond a certain level, can lead to restrictions on personal freedom. Hence, a free and democratic society must at all times maintain balance between security and freedom.

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