

A horizontal banner image with a green tint. It is divided into three sections: the left section shows a close-up of a person's face on a screen; the middle section shows a large satellite dish; the right section shows a group of people sitting around a table, looking at a laptop.

A Social Milieu Approach to the Online Participation Divides in Germany

Christoph Lutz

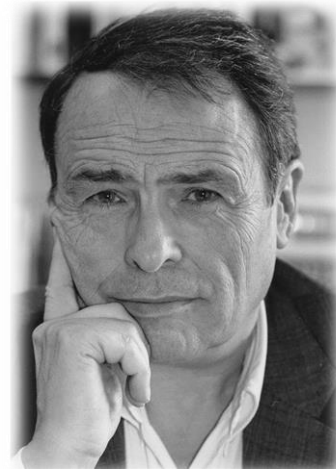
Connected Life Conference
Balliol College, Oxford
4 June 2015

Intro and Overview

- Research in the tradition of **digital divides** research
- **Milieu perspective** absent in digital inequalities research
- Drawing on **Bourdieu** as theoretical framework

Online participation is the creation and sharing of content on the Internet addressed at a specific audience and driven by a social purpose.

(Lutz, Hoffmann, & Meckel, 2014)



Qualitative Study

- **Focus groups and online communities:** 12 groups with 8 participants per groups

*How do citizens from different Internet milieus define and conceptualize online participation and engagement?
Does the everyday understanding match the academic understanding?*



Cooperation with Sinus: Internet milieus

Digital Outsiders

Internetferne Verunsicherte



Überforderte Offliner bzw. Internet-Gelegenheitsnutzer. Selbstgenügsamkeit, Sittlichkeit und Anstand. Bedürfnis nach Schutz und Kontrollmechanismen.

Ordnungsfordernde Internet-Laien



Bürgerlicher Mainstream mit Wunsch nach Ordnung und Verlässlichkeit. Defensiv-vorsichtige Internet-Nutzung.

Digital Immigrants

Verantwortungs- bedachte Etablierte



Aufgeklärtes Establishment mit Führungsbewusstsein. Selektive Internet-Nutzer. Verantwortungsorientierte Grundhaltung gegenüber digitalem Fortschritt.

Postmaterielle Skeptiker



Zielorientierte Internet-Anwender mit kritischer Einstellung zu kommerziellen Strukturen und „blinder“ Technik-Faszination.

Cooperation with Sinus: Internet milieus

Digital Natives

Unbekümmerte Hedonisten



Fun-orientierte Internet-User auf der Suche nach Entertainment und Erlebnis. Unkonventionell – nicht risikosensibilisiert.

Effizienzorientierte Performer



Leistungsorientierte Internet-Profis mit ausgeprägter Convenience- und Nutzen-Orientierung. Professionalisierung als Leitprinzip.

Digital Souveräne

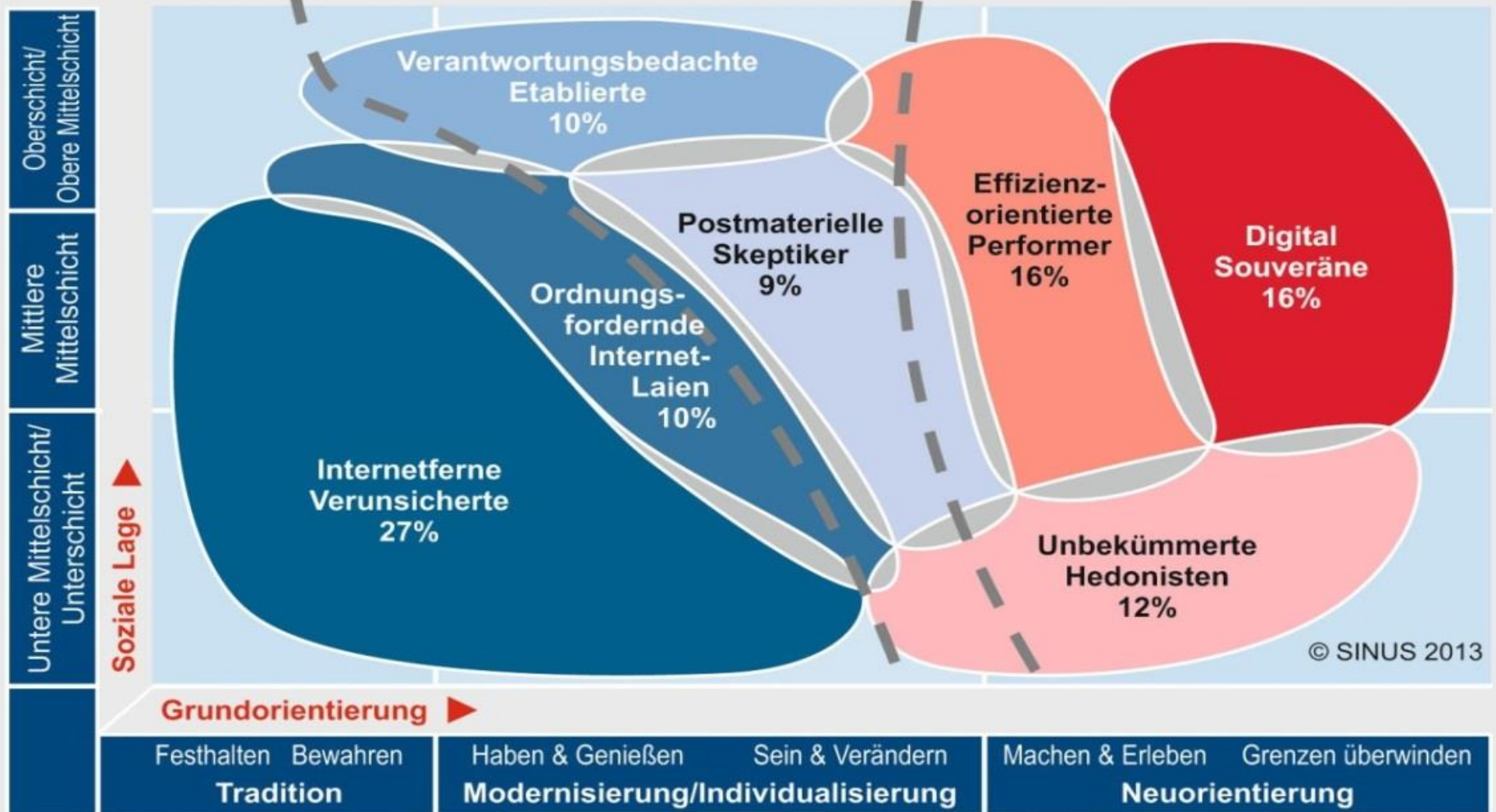


Digitale Avantgarde mit ausgeprägter individualistischer Grundhaltung. Suche nach Unabhängigkeit in Denken und Handeln.

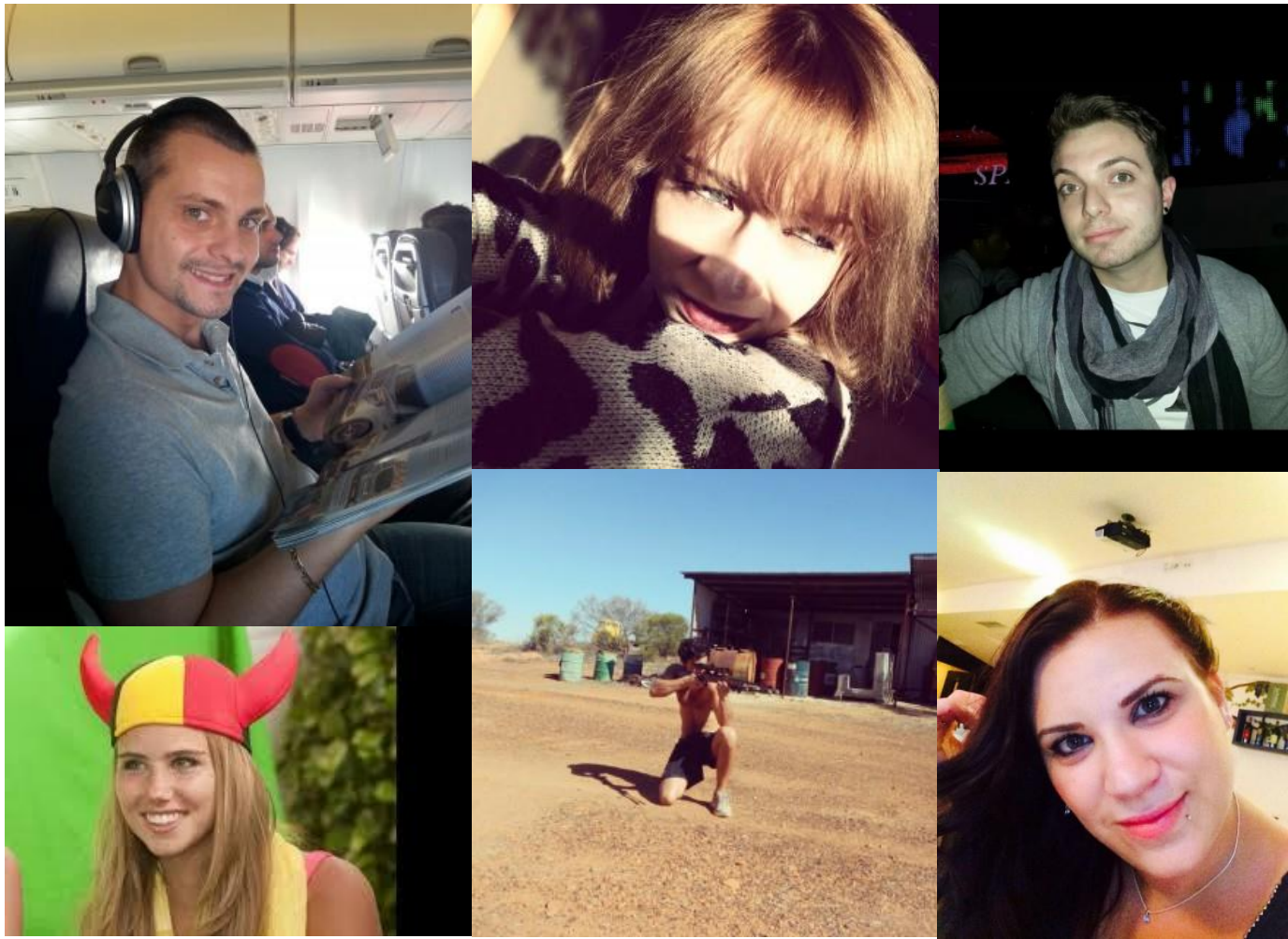
Digital Outsiders (37%)

Digital Immigrants (19%)

Digital Natives (44%)



Group 1: Natives



Group 1: Natives

- **Pragmatic approach** towards online communities
- Online participation more pronounced than in groups 2 and 3
- But there are also some **skeptics**

I am not actively participating on any Internet site or platform, because I try to stay away from the virtual world as much as possible and not miss the real life. I only use the internet when i need information; communicate with friends, or want to buy or sell something (Patrick; carelss hedonist)

Group 1: Natives

- Large differences between milieus
- **Facebook task** suitable to carve out the differences, e.g., between careless hedonists and digital sovereigns

Well, I see ads, new photos of family and friends. What I also see are short videos of my favorite series «Berling tag und Nacht». (Vanessa; careless hedonist)

My start profile basically replaces the daily newspaper, because through selected connections I receive updates and news reports. (Denis; digital sovereign)

Group 2: Immigrants



**rausgehen
ist wie
fenster
aufmachen
nur krasser**

Group 2: Immigrants

- Somewhat **more interaction** than in group 1
- Large **variance** in participation intensity and scope
- **Age effects** affect the forms/domains of participation

My interests, information and appointments in my function as a youth adviser in the Alps association can be found on the homepage www.alpenverein-hochtaunus.de. [...] I'm actively engaged on this site because I myself and my son (in the youth group) climb and because I can best give my tasks in youth work to interested families via the homepage. (Sibylle; responsible established)

Group 3: Outsiders



Group 3: Outsiders

- Intense interaction, sometimes on a very personal level
- Largest variance in how the tasks were solved
- Most active users in online communities, but also **most skeptical** ones

I'm very often on Deutschlandradio Kultur. That's enough, i don't need anything else. (Joachim; law-and-order Internet amateur)

I equate registering with active action in the sense of engagement. (Thorsten; law-and-order Internet amateur)

Main Findings and Take Aways

Large **differences** in participation depending on milieu

High status $\neq$ high engagement

Cultural/Horizontal aspects very important

Bourdieu's theory useful in this regard



Discussion



Additional ideas, experiences and inputs for the online-offline triangulation? Does it make sense to combine offline focus groups and online communities in one article?

How to best «sell» the milieu typology that originated in a non-academic context?

How much theorizing?



**Thanks for your
Attention**

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