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---**First draft**---

Digital divides? Political Participation of young people in the digital world.

<u>Abstract</u>

According to recent investigations, unconventional political participation misses social equality in political representation. However, an unbiased perception of people's interests is crucial for democracies. Therefore higher rates of participation do not consequently imply a higher level of democratic quality. Whenever existing forms of political participation differ from the institutionalized rules and habits and new ways of participation emerge, the typical questions on political participation are discussed: who does and who does not participate in the discussions about the social and political development of a society and what are the reasons therefor? In this respect, emerging forms of political participation have to be evaluated with regard to the problem of social representation particularly in contrast to established forms of political participation.

At the moment we undergo a keen development in political participation and political protest due to the enhancements of the internet as a Social Web that reduces the limits of time and space and changes political communication. Since the emerging of the internet every development in the digital world goes along with the hope of levelling social inequalities (Norris, 2003). Especially in the context of the process of participation, social media platforms offer a wide range of chances to participate. From slacktivism to self-organization of online petitions or protests, there are different levels of participation intensity available on the Internet. Furthermore, the availability of internet almost everywhere and every time lowers the costs of participation. In fact we can observe an increasing use of online sources for political activity and mobilization. Thus the recent technical developments regarding the Social Web strengthen the

expectations to mobilize social groups to participate in the political process that abstain from voting or other forms of offline-participation (Norris, 2003).

However social and political science lack of differentiated empirical investigations on these new forms of political participation. On the one hand, measurement in empirical studies seems not to catch systematically all the different intensities and ways of online-participation. On the other hand few empirical proof has been initiated so far.

The Bavarian Youth Council (BJR) conducted a survey on different forms of social and political participation in 20 Bavarian towns and cities in February/March 2017 (random samples in the 20 local authorities, n ~ 1.000, target population: inhabitants at the age of 14-27). The survey includes an extended operationalisation of online participation as well as offline-participation and theoretical relevant indicators for analysing differences in mobilization-levels of social groups (Networks, resources, civic skills; Gabriel/Völkl, 2008).

This paper will discuss the first results of this study on e-participation in comparison to offline-participation with the focus on the influence of socio-economic resources (Verba/Nie, 1972) and civic skills (Campbell/Gurin/Miller, 1954). Can we indeed observe a mobilization of social groups that refuse to participate offline due to the new forms of unconventional online-participation?

1. Theoretical framework

a) Political participation on the internet

Since the emerging of the internet every development in the digital world goes along with the hope of levelling social inequalities (Norris, 2003). The availability of digital access through mobile devices separated from time- and space-references allows people to participate in the political process. According to rational-choice theory (Downs, 1957; Hill, 2002), the lower costs especially of time through the flexibility of digital participation should lead to higher levels of participation (Verba et al., 1995). Since then the hopes of mobilizing social groups for political information und political participation due to the lower costs of participation (mobilization) have not been confirmed. Instead of mobilizing, political engagement in the internet reinforces social stratifications (reinforcement) (Norris, 2003). However theses research results had some desiderata left. On the one hand few empirical prove has been made so far. Research on political participation in general, but on e-participation in particular has not

been in the focus of research in political science, political sociology or political psychology (Hoecker, 2001: 230). On the other hand research designs on political e-participation often had a narrow definition of political participation on the internet that did not include differentiate e.g. forms of expressing political opinions. Measurements on political e-participation so far did either include only few aspects of e-participation in measurements of political participation in general (Schneekloth, 2010), or not differentiate the ways of political expressions in the Social Web (Reinders, 2014). So far, established social surveys lack of differentiated research on political e-participation.

Basing on Verba's et al. broad definition of political participation that is described as „activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (Verba et al. 1995, S. 38), the paper bases on a wider definition of political participation (cf. Gabriel/Völkl, 2008: 270; Gaiser et al., 2012; Kaase, 1997:160; Verba et al., 1995: 38; Verba & Nie, 1972; 2). In that sense the definition of political participation includes not only direct political action but also means to influence discussions in order to express its political opinion. Analogue to the differentiation of offline-participation with different participation levels, Baringhorst suggest in her "pyramid of participation in the Social Web" a differentiation of political online activities according to the requested resources (i.e. time and money) for participating (Baringhorst, 2014).

Figure 1: Levels of political participation
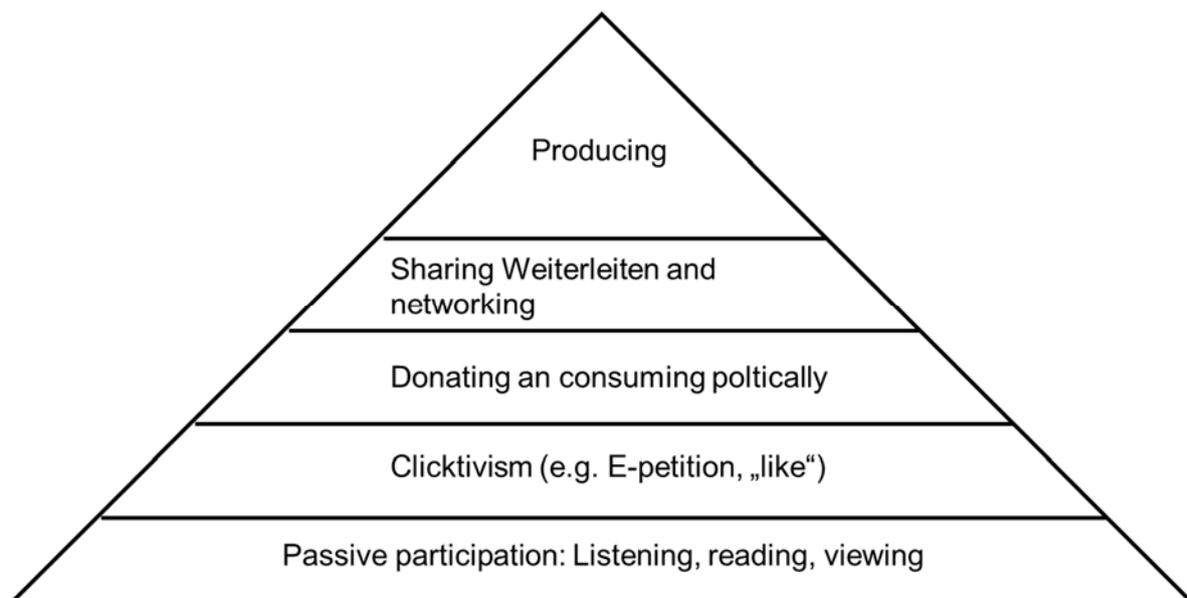
Source: Own figure according to Baringhorst, 2014: 105

Leaving out the passive forms of participation as political information according to the underlying definition of political participation as a "produsage" (Baringhorst, 2014) of political contents, political e-participation on the lowest level is defined as "Clicktivism", e.g. making a statement to proposals of other persons. This includes pushing a like-button as well as signing petitions with the intention to express its political opinion in order to influence political discussions and the political process. More resources for differentiated reflection of the contents and further discussions are needed for political consumption and sharing contents. The highest level of political e-participation according Baringhorst (2014) are the measures of political influence that creatively produce political content, e.g. reporting on blog. Anna Soßdorf (2016) showed that this differentiation of political e-participation proves statistically relevant for explaining political e-participation of youth at the age of 14-19 years.

b) Civic Voluntarism Model

Literature on quantitative-empiric research on political participation reports differentiated results concerning the main factors that influence the willingness to participate in political life. On the one hand this partly contradicting results base on different intentions and research interests that lead to different research designs and operationalisations of political participation. On the other hand the form and therefore the concept of political participation underlies continuous change.

Within its long research tradition, political science, as well as research in educational science, developed theories for describing political participation especially of young people.

First research designs basing on Almond und Verba (1963) focused on socio-economic parameters for explaining political participation that have been summarised in Verba and Nie's (1972) model of the *„Socio-economic Status"* (SES). According to Verba/Nie, socio-economic preconditions generate a set of attitudes that support or hinder political participation (Verba /Nie, 1972, S. 18. ff., S. 125ff.). Persons with a higher SES tend more to participate in the political process than persons with a lower SES. The SES is operationalized by the level of education, income and profession, frequently only by using one of these three indicators (ibid. S. 125ff.).

Barnes et al. (1979) argue that the positive correlation between education and the willingness to participate in the political process bases on the cognitive abilities that come along with higher levels of education. Cognitive abilities enable to cope with the complexity of the political process even if these skills have not been taught directly. Verba and Nie (1972) enlarge this baseline-model by social, psychological and

structural aspects: „The individual's decision to participate and how to participate depends on his social circumstance – the set of social characteristics that defines his ‚life space', where he lives, what he does for living, his education, his race, and so forth" (Verba/Nie, 1972, S. 19). Generally the concept of resources includes those socio-economic and socio-demographic attributes that constitute as objective structural attributes the individual's options of political action (Gabriel/Völkl, 2008, S. 290; Hoecker, 2001, S. 227): level of education, income, occupation, age and sex.

Research results to not report a stable influence of sex on political participation. However many of the studies report an higher level of conventional political participation of men whereas women tend to higher levels of unconventional political participation (Caballero, 2005; Fischer, 2000; Gaiser et al., 2012; Gaiser/de Rijke, 2006; Klein, 2006; Oesterreich, 1992; Schneekloth, 2002; Schneekloth, 2010; Verba et al. 1995). A broader consensus can be found on the influence of education. Apart from different operationalisations of political participation, a constant influence of education on political participation has been reported (Almond & Verba, 1963; Barnes et al. 1979; Gabriel/Völkl, 2008; Gaiser et al., 2012; Klein 2006; Nie, Powell & Prewitt, 1969; Schneekloth, 2006, 2010; Verba et al. 1995).

Verba et al. (1995) criticized that the concept of *Socio-economic Status (SES)* indeed shows elementary effects but lacks of theoretical explanations for the correlation between socio-economic and social-structural resources on the one hand, and political participation on the other hand (Verba et al. 1995, S. 281). The *Civic Voluntarism Model* evolves a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms. Therefore the authors do not ask for the conditions to participate but for the reasons for not participating:

"In thinking about why some people are active while others are not, we find it helpful to invert the usual question and to ask instead why people do not take part in politics. Three answers immediately suggest themselves: because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked" (Verba et al., 1995, S. 15).

Rather than socio-economic resources (*can't*), civic skills (*don't want to*) (Verba et al., 1995, S. 269) are according to Verba et al. the crucial factors that hinder people to participate in the political process. Gabriel/Völkl (2008, S. 290) subsume the civic skills as motives. These skills, like internal and external efficacy (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954), political interest and political knowledge are learnt during life course and motivate to participate politically as well as (positive) orientation towards institutions. However the empirical proves on the influence of civic skills are relatively poor. Due to

the problematic of measuring, i.e. refusing the answer, there is little empirical prove on the influence of political knowledge, while the few studies report a positive influence of political knowledge on political participation (Verba et al., 1995). Gabriel (2004) reports a positive influence of internal efficacy on political participation for western Germany, whereas he can report this correlation only for conventional political participation on the basis of the European Social Survey 2001 (Gabriel/Völkl, 2008). They additionally report a negative influence of external efficacy on political protest for Western Europe. Reinders (2013) reports a positive effect of political-self-concept (i.e. internal efficacy) on conventional and unconventional political participation for youth at the age of 14-15.

Furthermore the authors extend the SES-Model by the factor of social networks *(nobody asked).* Research on the influence of social networks on political participation has a long tradition in US-American political science research as well as educational science (Almond/Verba, 1963; Verba/Nie, 1972; Nie et al., 1969; Youniss & Yates, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1999). Youngest research designs in Germany report a stable influence of civic engagement on the willingness to participate in the political process (Reinders, 2014). Figure 2 summarizes the relevant indicators for political participation for the following model.

Figure 2 shows an overview over the predictors of political participation
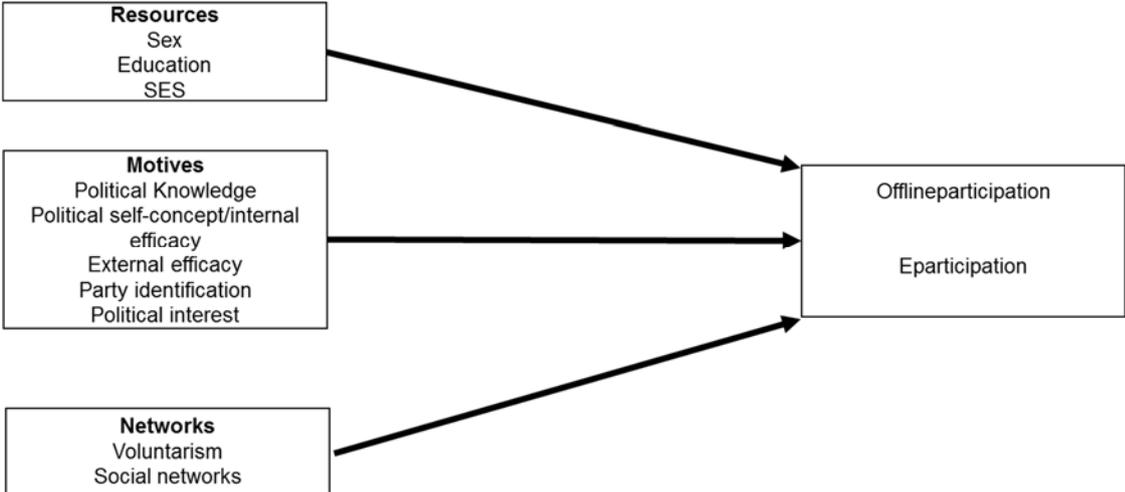
Source: Own figure according to Gabriel/Völkl, 2008

2. Hypotheses

This paper focuses on predictors of resources and civic skills and proves its influences on offline-participation in contrast to e-participation and proves the following hypotheses according to the mentioned theoretical foundations.

Resources

H_1:   Men tend to higher levels of political participation as women.

H_2:   People with higher levels of education show higher levels of political participation than people with lower levels of education.

H_3:   The perceived economic status has a positive influence on political participation.

Civic skills

H_4:   Individual's political interest has a positive influence on political participation.

H_5:   Higher feelings of external efficacy have a positive influence on political participation.

H_6:   Higher feelings of political self-concept (internal efficacy) have a positive influence on political participation.

H_7:   The higher the trust in political institutions the higher the willingness to participate politically.

H_8:   These predictors show lower influences on e-participation than on offline-participation (mobilization).

3. Methods and Research Design

The underlying research was designed to evaluate the e-participation pilot-project "Political participation of young people in Bavaria" of the Bavarian Youth Council (Bayerischer Jugendring K.d.ö.R; BJR). The BJR is a mainly state financed public organisation that supports youth work in Bavaria. It consists of 33 youth organisations on the state level, 40 on the regional and 334 youth organisations on the local level. It has an organizational structure on 96 local and 103 regional organizations (Kreis- und Stadtjugendringe) according to federal organizational units. Apart from financing youth work in the state of Bavaria the BJR has the task to provide advices on different topics in youth policies and youth work. Therefore the BJR accompanies ten municipalities in seven regional units (Landkreise) by conducting local e-participation projects with

empirical research. The study has been executed by the author of the paper. The main focus of this study is to explain differences in political offline- and e-participation. Before starting the e-participation projects in ten Bavarian municipalities in April 2017, the BJR conducted a Computer-Assisted-Web-Interview (CAWI) between 27th of January and 31th of March 2017. The municipalities in which the survey has been conducted, are part of the pilot-project. The municipalities had to apply at the BJR to take part in that pilot-project, however all applying communities have been accepted. The survey has additionally been conducted in ten further municipalities that have been parallelized by the indicator of community size (Dahl/Tufte, 1973) in the same local districts on the second level (Landkreise) to control the regional context and the size of the municipalities as influencing factors for political participation on macro-level. The city of Schwabach that does at its size not belong to a local district (kreisfreie Stadt) is parallelized with Ansbach, a city at almost at the same size in the same regional district on the third level (Regierungsbezirk). The parallelization within the same local district guaranties equal basic conditions for local youth work as youth work is administrated at the local district level. The municipalities taking part in the pilot project and the ones parallelized are displayed in table 1:

Table 1: Municipalities for the sample

Municipality (pilot-project)	Population (31.12.15)	Parallelized Municipality	Population (31.12.15)	Regional district
Biessenhofen	4061	Mauerstetten	3801	Landkreis Ostallgäu
Donauwörth	18972	Nördlingen	19841	Landkreis Donau-Ries
Edelsfeld	1888	Königstein	1697	Landkreis Amberg-Sulzbach
Lengfeld	10600	Heidingsfeld	10429	Kreisfreie Stadt Würzburg
Markt Geroda	835	Sulzthal	872	Landkreis Bad Kissingen
Münnerstadt	7628	Burkhardroth	7570	Landkreis Bad Kissingen
Obermichel-bach	3230	Seukendorf	3079	Landkreis Fürth
Schnaitten-bach	4188	Freudenberg	4195	Landkreis Amberg-Sulzbach

Municipality (pilot-project)	Population (31.12.15)	Parallelized Municipality	Population (31.12.15)	Regional district
Schwabach	40428	Ansbach	41212	Regierungsbezirk Mittelfranken
Stein	14500	Oberasbach	17000	Landkreis Fürth

With the selection of in total 20 municipalities the data offers a multilevel research design to control for theoretically relevant indicators on level 2, as the community size, in further investigations.

The units at the micro level have been selected by random sample on the bases of residents' registration office. The sample size for each municipality has been 300 people, while in the huge cities of Schwabach and Ansbach 500 have been selected and in the small towns of Edelsfeld, Königstein, Markt Geroda and Sulzthal all people of the target population have been contacted as it were less than 300. Target population are all inhabitants of the municipalities at the age of 14 to 27. The target population under the age of 18 has been contacted via the legal guardian. Therefore the target population of the survey are all inhabitants at the age of 14 to 27 in the 20 selected municipalities in Bavaria.

The letter contained the link and a QR-code for the CAWI-website that has been based on limesurvey-software. The respondents had the possibility to ask for a PAPI-questionnaire, what has been used by seven respondents. The sample had a unadjusted gross sample size of 6.000 people at the age of 14 to 27 years with 1018 valid interviews (response quote of 17,0%)[1]. The average age of the sample is 20.0 years (sd = 4.1) with 49.0% men and 51.0% women responding the questionnaire.

The survey contains theoretically relevant indicators of socio-economic and socio-structural circumstances (resources), civic skills and networks. It also contains a broad operationalization of e-participation as well as offline-participation.

The descriptive statistics and the OLS-regression have been conducted with IBM SPSS 22.

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[1] The adjustment of the gross-sample by the sample that could not be reached due to invalid mailing addresses is outstanding.

4. Operationalization

a) Political Participation

As explained in chapter 1a, the survey is based on a broad definition of political participation. Therefore, to measure the level of offline-participation, the survey uses the indicators of the Allbus 2008 (GESIS - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften) that defines the lowest level of political participation as stating its opinion up to high level engagement in political parties. The instrument has been widened by an item of direct democratic participation. The following 13 items are therefore used to measure political offline-participation (for the original wording see appendix 5):

If there is a topic, that is important to you and you would like to state your point of view concerning social or political topics, to take influence:

Which of these possibilities **beside the internet** would you use?

Stating it's opinion (in the circle of friends or at the working place), voting, taking part in public discussions, active membership in citizens' initiatives and parties, contacting politicians or officials, taking part in non-authorized demonstration, taking part in authorized demonstration, non-voting as sign of protest, voting other party than the close one as sing of protest, signing a petition, boycott of products, taking part in direct democracy (own developed item).

For measuring political e-participation a new instrument has been developed. Starting point is the definition of political participation as measure to influence decisions (see chapter 1a). By law, voting and modes of direct democracy are forms of political participation that are only conducted offline in Germany. Therefore these forms of voting, protest voting and direct democracy are no e-participation forms in Germany and not included in the scale. Furthermore aspects of organizational working structures, e.g. if these are online or offline - for instant in none of these organizations a just online-based active memberships in practice – are not in a focus and not separate included in the scale. According to Baringhorst's pyramid of participation (see 1a; Baringhorst, 2014), passive participation as political information is included in the survey but not as part of the participation scale as participation is understood as actively trying to influence the political process. The operationalization takes into account that, apart from WhatsApp, there are no common Social Media platforms that are used by all young people (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, 2016). Therefore the verbalization of the single items are not related for specific Social Media platforms. Additionally e-participation is not differentiated according to the content. In contrast du Soßdorf (2016) the forms of creative produsage are not

differentiated. These forms are proposed to have low participation rates as this forms of political e-participation rely on a high level of political participation. Forms of e-participation are conclusory understood as forms opinion-stating that are specific for digital debates as figure 3 shows. The introduction of the e-participation scale has been adopted of the offline scale (for original wording see appendix 6): If there is a topic, that is important to you and you would like to state your point of view concerning social or political topics, to take influence:

Which of these possibilities **on the internet** would you use?

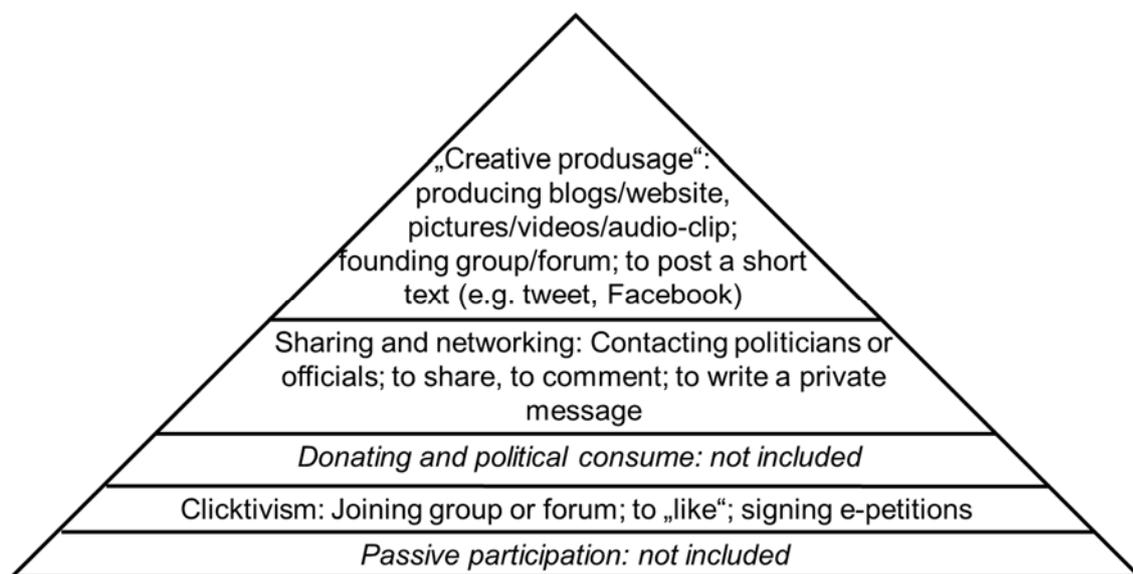Figure 3: Operationalization of political e-participation

Figure 3: Own presentation based on Baringhorst (2014)

As the underage persons in the survey partly did not have the possibility to practice some of the participation modes (not only due to legal restrictions but also because of the stage of youth where young people undergo the process of political socialization), political participation – offline and online – is measured as prospective willingness to participate in the political process.

b) Independent Variables

The included predictors for political participation are operationalized as follows:

Resources

Resources are operationalized by age, educational achievement and sex. As the target population of the survey for most instances does financially depend on other persons

mainly their parents, the feeling of current deprivation is used as indicator for the economic status instead the individual's income.

Civic Skills

For the operationalization of external efficacy the three-item scale has been used with a four-stage scale. For measuring internal efficacy/political self-concept, two scales have been conducted in the survey. Besides the three-item scale of internal efficacy, the scale of political self-concept (Krampen, 1991), shortened by Christoph/Reinders (2010), has been measured. Since the sample has been quite young, the scale of Christoph/Reinders (2010) has been used for the model as it originates from studies in youth research and empirically proves more reliable (Cronbach's-α = 0.77 for internal efficacy and 0.88 for political self-concept). This scale consists of for items with a four-stage scale and is highly correlated to the internal efficacy scale (correlation = 0.81***). Political interest is measured on a five-stage scale with a single item. Institutional trust consists of three dimensions that are included separately in the model.[2] The first dimension is built by the items of constitutional court, German Bundestag, Federal Government, Federal President, police and political parties (Cronbach's-α = 0.86). The second dimension represents the latent construct of trust in institutions at local government level: city council, mayor and municipal council (Cronbach's-α = 0.90). The items for the last dimension are self-constructed and present the trust in institutions of the civil society on different levels: organizations of the civil society, regional civic alliances for action and local citizens' initiative (Cronbach's-α = 0.66).

5. Results

This chapter represents the descriptive results of the dependent variables of political online- and offline-participation as well as the statistic values of the whole scales. In a second step two two-step hierarchical OLS-Regressions compare the influence of the theoretical relevant constructs of resources and motives on political offline- and online-participation that have been included in the survey.

a) Descriptive Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive of each single form of political participation online and offline. The single forms of participation - online and offline - are ranked according their level of respondent's willingness to participate that way.

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[2] Factor analysis, promax rotation, KMO = 0.86

Table 2: Descriptive results of political participation online and offline

Item	Offline Mean 14-27 (Stddev)	Online Mean 14-27 (Stddev)
Voting	0.80 (0.40)	
Opinion	0.77 (0.42)	
Direct democracy	0.65 (0.48)	
Signing petition (offline)	0.61 (0.49)	
Signing e-petition (online)		0.59 (0.49)
To Like		0.50 (0.50)
Authorized demonstration	0.37 (0.48)	
Opinion: private message		0.36 (0.48)
To share		0.36 (0.48)
Boycott of products	0.34 (0.47)	
To comment		0.30 (0.46)
Joining online-groups		0.29 (0.45)
Contacting politicians or officials (online)		0.27 (0.44)
Discussing in public reunion	0.24 (0.43)	
To post		0.19 (0.39)
Citizens' initiative	0.12 (0.32)	
Party	0.12 (0.33)	
Not-authorized demonstration	0.11 (0.31)	
Contacting Politicians or Administration (offline)	0.10 (0.30)	
Organizing e-Petition		0.10 (0.30)
Founding online-groups		0.07 (0.26)
Protest: voting other party	0.06 (0.24)	
Producing blogs/website/photo/video		0.05 (0.22)
*Protest: not-voting**	*0.04 (0.19)*	
Mean[1]	0.36	0.28
Standard deviation	0.19	0.22
Cronbach's-α	0.70	0.75
[1]p-value (T-Test): 0.00		
item has been excluded in the final scale		

The highest levels of participation is reported for the conventional forms of offline-participation. 80% of the survey participants tend to take part in elections, 77% would state their opinion in the circle of friends or at the working place and 65% would take part in direct democracy, which is possible on the state level and the local level in Germany. Concerning the offline-participation, the further ranked forms of participation are the items of taking part in authorized demonstrations (37%), the boycott of products (34%) and taking part in discussions in public reunions (24%). The lowest level of offline-participation are reported by the high-level forms of active membership in citizens' initiatives and parties (both 12%), taking part in unauthorized demonstrations (11%) and contacting politicians offline (10%), as well as forms of protest voting (6% consider to vote a different party as usual and 4% could imagine not to vote as a sign of protest).

Concerning the forms of e-participation most survey participants report the willingness to use the low-level forms of "clicktivism": 59% of the respondents would sign an e-petition and half of the respondents (50%) would rate contributions of other users in social networks ("to like") to state their point of view concerning social or political topics and influence the political process.

These forms a followed by the low-level "produsage" of contacting people by private messages (e.g. WhatsApp), which represents a lower-level form of political participation as it does not take place in a public space but a private one, and the disposition to share contents of other people or organizations (36%). For stating the own opinion on the internet, 30% of the survey respondents would comment contributions in social networks, join online groups or forums (29%) or contact a politician or official on a digital channel (27%). Producing own short texts like a post on Facebook or a tweet is considered to be used as means of political e-participation by 19% of the respondents. The lowest levels show the high-level forms of political e-participation, i.e. organizing e-petitions (10%), founding an online-discussion in groups or forums (7%) or producing a blog, a website or photos and videos to state political opinions.

The ranking of the e-participation forms by the survey respondents represents the theoretically deduced ranking order. The low-level forms of political e-participation that need the lowest level of resources, i.e. time and the lowest level of self-production of contents, show the highest rates among the survey participants. The "clicktivism"-forms of signing e-petitions and rating contributions of other users would be used by 50-59% of the participants. The mid-level forms of sharing and networking, i.e. contacting politicians or officials, to share, to comment and to write a private message, are

reported to be used by 27-36% of the respondents. Between the high-level "produsage" that would only be considered by 5%-10% of the survey participants stands the production of short texts as posts and tweets with 19%. The descriptive data of the survey respondents seems to represent the theoretical differentiation that has been formulated by Baringhorst (2014) (chapter 1a).

For building the offline-participation-scale the item of non-voting as protest has been left out since the reliability of the scale improves due to the low allocation of the cells in that item. Therefore the offline-participation scale consists of 12 items (out of 13) while the online-participation scale includes all eleven items that have been included in the survey. The overall mean for political offline-participation (0.36) is slightly higher than for online-participation (0.28). Taking into account that the scale for offline-participation includes the high-level forms of participation that have a binding character for the political institutions (voting and direct democracy), the difference seems not high. Leaving out these two items, the offline-participation-scale has an average of 0.28 like the online-participation scale.

Both participation-scales, offline and online, prove reliable, while the e-participation-scale proves a bit more reliable (Cronbach's-α = 0.75) as the offline-version (Cronbach's-α = 0.70).

b) Multivariate Results

For testing the hypothesis on political participation and getting evidences if there are different (social) stratifications on the different ways of political participation, a two-step hierarchical OLS-Regression has been executed on each of the two participation forms. The first step includes the indicators for the resources, which are the age of the survey participants, sex, educational level (with the reference of Secondary School) and the actual deprivation as indicator for the economic status. The indicators for the civic skills, i.e. political interest, external efficacy, political self-concept, and institutional trust are included in the second step. All the models on offline-participation as well as on online-participation are highly statistically significant.

The results are reported in table 2.

Model 1 on offline-participation, containing the indicators on resources, explains 8% of the variance with a positive but not so huge influence of the age: The older the population the higher the willingness to participate offline. While there is no statistic significant effect of the sex and the feeling of actual deprivation, there is an influence of

the educational status. In comparison to persons graduated from secondary school, pupils and persons with a university-entrance diploma show higher rates for political-offline participation. In contrast, alumni of Secondary School (5-9) show a tendency of lower willingness to participate offline.

Table 2: Multivariate Results on political participation offline and online

	Offline-participation		Online-participation	
Variable	**Modell 1**	**Modell 2**	**Modell 3**	**Modell4**
<u>Resources</u>				
Age	0.01***	0.02*	0.01*	0.00
Sex (1 = female)	-0.01	0.03**	-0.01	0.03*
Deprivation	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01
Educational level (reference=secondary school)				
Pupil	0.05*	-0.00	0.10***	0.06*
Secondary School (5 - 9)	-0.06+	-0.06	0.03	0.03
University-entrance diploma	0.08***	0.05**	0.11***	0.08***
<u>Civic Skills</u>				
Political interest		0.05***		0.04***
External Efficacy		-0.00		-0.01
Political self-concept		0.04***		0.06***
Trust in institution (federal level)		0.03***		-0.02**
Trust in institution (local level)		-0.01		0.00
Trust in institution (civil society organisation)		-0.01		0.03**
Constant	0.15	-0.11	0.09	-0.11
R²	0.08***	0.28***	0.04***	0.19***
N	890	890	890	890
+p ≤ .10; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001;				
Non-standardized coefficients				

Including the predictors for civic skills in model 2, the effect of age on offline-participation remains. Additionally we can observe an effect of the sex: young female show higher rate of political-offline participation as men. The effect of deprivation on political offline-participation remains meaningless. However, the influence of the education level differs from model 1. While people with university-entrance diploma still show a higher offline-participation rate, students do not differ from alumni of Secondary School any more.

In the case of the indicators on civic skills, three of the six show a statistically significant effect on political offline-participation. Thus the interest in politics has a positive influence on the willingness to participate offline. People with higher reported political interest show higher rates of political offline-participation. While the feeling of external efficacy has no influence on analogue participation, the confidence in its own ability to take part in the political process (political self-concept) has a positive influence. The willingness to participate offline also rises in dependency of the trust in institutions. The higher the trust in institutions on the federal level, the higher the willingness to participate offline. However, the trust in institutions on the local level as well as the trust in civil society organisations has no significant influence.

The entire model on political offline-participation including indicators on resources and civic skills can explain 28% of the variance. With a significant increase of 20% of explained variance from model 1 to model 2, the indicators of the civic skills prove more relevant as the indicators on resources.

Model 3 reports the influence of the resources on political e-participation. Age has a slightly influence on the willingness to participate in in the internet as well as the educational level. Compared to graduates of Secondary School, pupils and people with university-entrance diploma show higher levels of online-participation. Alumni of Secondary School (5 to 9) do not differ. Men and women do not differ in their willingness to online-participation as well as people with different perceptions of their individual deprivation. Model 3 including the variables of resources explains only 4% of the variance of political e-participation, while the model proves statistically significant.

Adding the predictors of civic skills the influence of the age on political e-participation disappears in model 4, whereas -like in the case of offline-participation- the level of e-participation differs according to sex: women tend to higher rates of online-participation than men. Both differences in the educational level remain significant in the final model: pupils as well as people with university-entrance diploma have a higher e-participation-rate than alumni of the Secondary School. According the civic skills, four of the six

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included predictors show a significant influence. The higher the political interest the higher the willingness to participate online. Additionally the political self-concept has a positive influence. The influence of trust in institutions differs in comparison to offline-participation. In contrast to offline-participation the effect of trust in institutions on the federal level is negative: the higher the trust in institutions on the federal level, the lower the willingness to participate online. Furthermore trust in civil society organisations proves statistically significant. Persons with higher trust in these organisations report a higher level of e-participation.

The final model on e-participation explains19% of the variance. As for the models of offline-participation, the predictors for the civic skills contribute a huge part for explaining the variance in online-participation and prove therefore more relevant than the resources.

There are some differences in the influence of the predictors on online- and offline-participation (model 2 and model 4). While there is an effect of age on offline-participation, there is no effect on e-participation. The effect of the educational level differs also. Thus in both models people with university-entrance diploma show higher participation rates, pupils only differ from graduates of Secondary School in the case of model 4 on online-participation. The greatest differences can be observed at the influence of institutional trust. While trust in federal political institutions has a positive influence on offline-participation, it proves negative on e-participation. There is an additional effect of trust in civil society institutions on online-participation that does not show up in model 2 on offline-participation.

All together the predictors seem to better explain the variance in offline- than online-participation.

6. Discussion

The results of the multivariate OLS-regression models give a differentiated view on the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 stated a higher participation-level of men. According to both models, women show a higher willingness to participate offline and online. As mentioned, research results are indifferent in the direction of the influence of sex. However the effects of sex on political participation refute hypothesis 1. As the online-scale does not include any forms of active organizational membership this effect could be explained by the higher willingness of women to participate unconventionally.

Hypothesis 2 on the influence of the education level has only partly to be rejected. Both models on offline- and online-participation report a significant higher participation level of people with university-entrance diploma in comparison to graduates of Secondary School, whereas there are no differences to graduates of Secondary School (5 to 9). Against the hypothesis, pupils show a higher e-participation level than alumni of Secondary School.

The influence of the perceived economic status, operationalized by the concept of actual deprivation, shows no influence at all. Thus the economic resources seem not to influence the willingness of political participation of the 14- to 27-year old young people in the selected 20 Bavarian municipalities. Hypothesis 3 proves wrong with the present data.

Concerning the factors of the civic skills two hypotheses can tentatively be confirmed for both forms of political participation: higher political interest and a higher confidence in the political self-concept (i.e. internal efficacy) lead to higher participation levels offline and offline (hypothesis 4 and 6). Surprisingly, hypothesis 5, that states a positive effect of external efficacy, has to be rejected as there can no influence be reported according to the current data.

The results show a differentiated view on the influence of trust in institutions on the willingness to participate in the political process (H7). Whereas, regarding offline-participation, the hypothesis of a positive influence can interim be confirmed for the federal institutions, the negative influence of this scale e-participation contradicts the theoretical considerations. The additional exclusive positive effect of trust in civil society organisations on online-participation gives the impression, that the willingness to participate online is partly be driven by a certain distance to the political and constitutional institutions and a closer relationship to organisations of the civil society.

According to the first results in that OLS-regression models, the differences in the influences of the predictors on the two forms of political participation seem not too huge. The data assumes a higher effect of the educational level on e-participation than on offline-participation. Furthermore a slightly higher influence of the political self-concept (i.e. internal efficacy) can be presumed on online-participation. However, apart from the institutional trust, the differences seem not too high. Nonetheless the question, whether the intensity of the influence of the single significant predictors vary between offline- and online-participation, needs to be answered by structural-equation modelling. The underlying data does only in the case of institutional trust suspect differences in influences.

In case of that young population of 20 municipalities in Bavaria included in the survey, the socio-economic status seems not to have that great influence on the willingness to participate in the political process - no matter of offline- or online-possibilities are used. For both dependent variables the predictors of civic skills contribute a higher explanation of variance than the factors of resources. Furthermore the economic predictor of deprivation has no influence. The little influence exercised by the predictors of resources is quite more interesting against the background of the underlying sample. Most of the people in the sample at the age between 14 and 27 undergo the process of political socialization in the stage of youth, the development of their political nature. This implies the development of the essential civic skills.

Altogether the differences in the magnitude of the influencing predictors in offline- and online-participation of young people according to the underlying sample seem not that high. Particularly socio-economic resources seem to lose influence on political participation generally of that young population. The little differences between the models on offline- and online-participation have to be tested in further research with structural equation modelling. However the underlying data does not suppose a mobilization due to digital ways of political participation nor does it suppose a reinforcement of social inequalities in political e-participation that exist in offline-participation forms.

Further investigation should introduce the third group of predictors on social networks, especially on the question of the role of social participation on political participation. As Reinders (2014) reports, civic engagement has a positive direct and indirect influence (moderated by the development of ideology and agency) on political participation in the stage of youth. As the sample consists of young people of cities as well as small municipalities and regions with strongly decreasing population figures (e.g. Landkreis Bad Kissingen) the influence of municipality size (Downs/Tufte 1973) could be especially behind the background of social inclusion and participation be interesting in a multilevel context.

The introduced measure of political online-participation seems to represent crucial dimensions of political participation. At least further investigations of the dimensions of political online-participation concerning the levels of resources required is needed.

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8. Appendix

1. Operationalization of political interest

V26	Wie stark interessieren Sie sich für Politik?
	Bitte kreuzen Sie nur ein Kästchen an!

Sehr schwach	Schwach	Mittelmäßig	Stark	Sehr stark
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Operationalization of internal and external efficacy

Items 1 to 3: internal efficacy, items 4 to 6: external efficacy.

V22	Nun geht es um Ihre Einschätzung zu politischen Fragen. Den folgenden Aussagen können Sie mehr oder weniger zustimmen. Inwieweit stimmen Sie der jeweiligen Aussage zu?	Stimme gar nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Teils/ teils	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
	Die ganze Politik ist so kompliziert, dass jemand wie ich nicht versteht, was vorgeht.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Ich traue mir zu, in einer Gruppe, die sich mit politischen Fragen befasst, eine aktive Rolle zu übernehmen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Wichtige politische Fragen kann ich gut verstehen und einschätzen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Die Parteien wollen nur die Stimmen der Wähler, ihre Ansichten interessieren sie nicht.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Die Politiker bemühen sich um einen engen Kontakt zur Bevölkerung.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Die Politiker kümmern sich darum, was einfache Leute denken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Operationalization of political self-concept

V24	Inwieweit treffen folgende Aussagen auf Sie zu?				
	Bitte machen Sie in jeder Zeile ein Kreuz!				
		Trifft nicht zu	Trifft eher nicht zu	Trifft eher zu	Trifft voll und ganz zu
	In der Bewertung politischer Dinge bin ich unsicher.	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Die Teilnahme an Diskussionen über politische Themen fällt mir leicht.	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Für Politik habe ich einfach keine Antenne.	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Das Denken in politischen Zusammenhängen liegt mir.	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Operationalization of institutional trust

V28	Uns interessiert die Frage, wie groß das Vertrauen der Menschen in verschiedene öffentliche Einrichtungen und Organisationen ist. Würden Sie uns bei jeder Einrichtung oder Organisation sagen, wie groß das Vertrauen ist, das Sie ihr entgegen bringen? Benutzen Sie dazu bitte folgende Skala, bei der							
	1 bedeutet, dass Sie ihr „überhaupt kein" Vertrauen entgegenbringen, 7 bedeutet, dass Sie ihr „sehr großes" Vertrauen entgegenbringen.							
	Mit den Zahlen dazwischen können Sie Ihre Meinung abstufen.							
	Bitte machen Sie in jeder Zeile ein Kreuz!							
	Wie ist das mit…	Überhaupt kein Vertrauen						Sehr großes Vertrauen
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	…dem Bundesverfassungsgericht	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…dem Bundestag	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…der Bundesregierung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…dem Bundespräsidenten	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…der Justiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…der Polizei	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…den politischen Parteien	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…der Stadt- und Gemeindeverwaltung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…dem Bürgermeister/ der Bürgermeisterin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…dem Stadtrat/Gemeinderat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	…den Medien	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	… (zivil-)gesellschaftlichen Organisationen wie Greenpeace oder amnesty international	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	… überregionalen Aktionsbündnisse wie attac oder Aktionsbündnis gegen TTIP & CETA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	… lokalen Bürgerinitiativen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Operationalization of offline-participation

V15	Wenn Sie in einer Sache, die Ihnen wichtig ist, Ihren Standpunkt zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen zur Geltung bringen, Einfluss nehmen wollen:	
	Welche der Möglichkeiten würden Sie dann **außerhalb des Internets** nutzen, was käme für Sie in Frage?	
	Bitte kreuzen Sie alle zutreffenden Kästchen an!	
	Seine Meinung sagen, im Bekanntenkreis und am Arbeitsplatz	☐
	Eine/-n Politiker/-in oder eine Beamtin/einen Beamten kontaktieren	☐
	Sich an Wahlen beteiligen	☐
	Sich an Volks-/Bürgerbegehren oder Volks-/Bürgerentscheiden beteiligen	☐
	Sich in Versammlungen an öffentlichen Diskussionen beteiligen (z.B. Bürgerversammlung, Bürgerdialoge, Planungsverfahren, Bürgerhaushalt etc.)	☐
	Sich an speziellen Beteiligungsformaten für Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene beteiligen (z.B. Jugendforum, Jugendgemeinderat, Jungbürgerversammlung etc.)	☐
	Mitarbeit in einer Bürgerinitiative	☐
	In einer Partei aktiv mitarbeiten	☐
	Teilnahme an einer nicht genehmigten Demonstration	☐
	Teilnahme an einer genehmigten Demonstration	☐
	Sich aus Protest nicht an Wahlen beteiligen	☐
	Aus Protest einmal eine andere Partei wählen als die, der man nahesteht	☐
	Beteiligung an einer Unterschriftensammlung	☐
	Aus politischen, ethischen oder Umweltgründen Waren boykottieren oder kaufen	☐
	Würde keine dieser Möglichkeiten nutzen	☐

6. Operationalization of online-participation

V18	Wenn Sie in einer Sache, die Ihnen wichtig ist, Ihren Standpunkt zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen zur Geltung bringen, Einfluss nehmen wollten: Welche der Möglichkeiten **im Internet** würden Sie dann nutzen, was käme für Sie in Frage? Und was davon haben Sie schon **im Internet** genutzt, woran waren Sie schon einmal beteiligt? Bitte geben Sie jeweils an, ob Sie diese Möglichkeiten nur im Bekanntenkreis oder auch öffentlich nutzen. *Bitte kreuzen Sie alle zutreffenden Kästchen an!*	
	Einem Politiker oder einer Partei eine **Nachricht schreiben** (z.B. E-Mail oder private Nachricht in sozialen Netzwerken)	☐
	Einer Person im Bekanntenkreis eine Nachricht schreiben	☐
	Eine Online-Unterschriftenliste **unterzeichnen**	☐
	Eine Online-Unterschriftenliste **organisieren**	☐
	Einer Gruppe oder einem Forum zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **beitreten**	☐
	Eine Gruppe oder ein Forum zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **gründen** (z.B. Facebook-Gruppe)	☐
	Einen Beitrag, ein Bild/Video oder einen Podcast zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **bewerten** („liken")	☐
	Einen Beitrag, ein Bild/Video oder einen Podcast zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **teilen** (z.B. Facebook-Beiträge teilen, Retweet)	☐
	Einen Beitrag, ein Bild/Video oder einen Podcast zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen im Internet **kommentieren**	☐
	Einen kurzen Textbeitrag zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **verfassen** (z.B. „posten", „tweet" etc.)	☐
	Einen eigenen Blog, eine Website, ein Bild/Video oder einen Podcast zu gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Themen **produzieren und im Internet veröffentlichen**	☐
	An einem Onlinebeteiligungsverfahren in meiner Gemeinde teilnehmen	☐
	Würde keine dieser Möglichkeiten nutzen	☐