

# 'Lazy Modernists'?

## New Types of Political Communication in Changing Media Environments

### Background

#### Internet Diffusion

Ten years after the advent of the Internet, it has conquered its place in the communication repertoire of citizens.

New forms of online communication emerged, particularly enriching the field of political communication and participation.

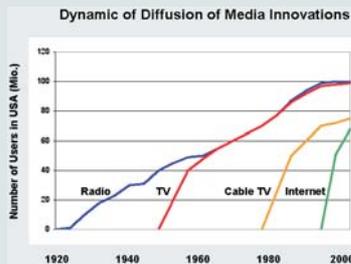
This leads to the question whether patterns of individual political communication are changing under the influence of the Internet:

Are there sub-groups in our society - presumably among the younger population - that have more strongly integrated the Internet in their political communication, and developed new forms of participation?

#### Research Questions

*How is the German population segmented with respect to their political communication?*

*What role does the Internet play in their communication patterns?*



#### Individual political communication

In a broad sense, political communication on the micro level includes three different kinds of communication of individuals about politics and political issues:

information	interpersonal	participation
- reading newspaper, - watching TV news, - requesting brochures, ...	- political talk with friends, - e-mail communication concerning politics, ...	- participating in political Demonstrations, - party membership, ...

#### Empirically based typology

A typology maps a population by use of specific variables, thus giving a more vivid impression than variable-based descriptions. Typologies serve descriptive and heuristic functions and are frequently used in political and communication research in order to uncover patterns.

Empirical construction of types: People with similar political communication habits are aggregated by means of factor and cluster analysis.

#### Method

Secondary analysis of data from a longitudinal panel survey in Germany (2005)

Data collection: CATI, RLD-sampling of the German population aged 16 and older (n = 1575)

Cluster analysis (Euclidian and average distance) resulted in five optimal clusters

### Results

#### General avoidance of political communication

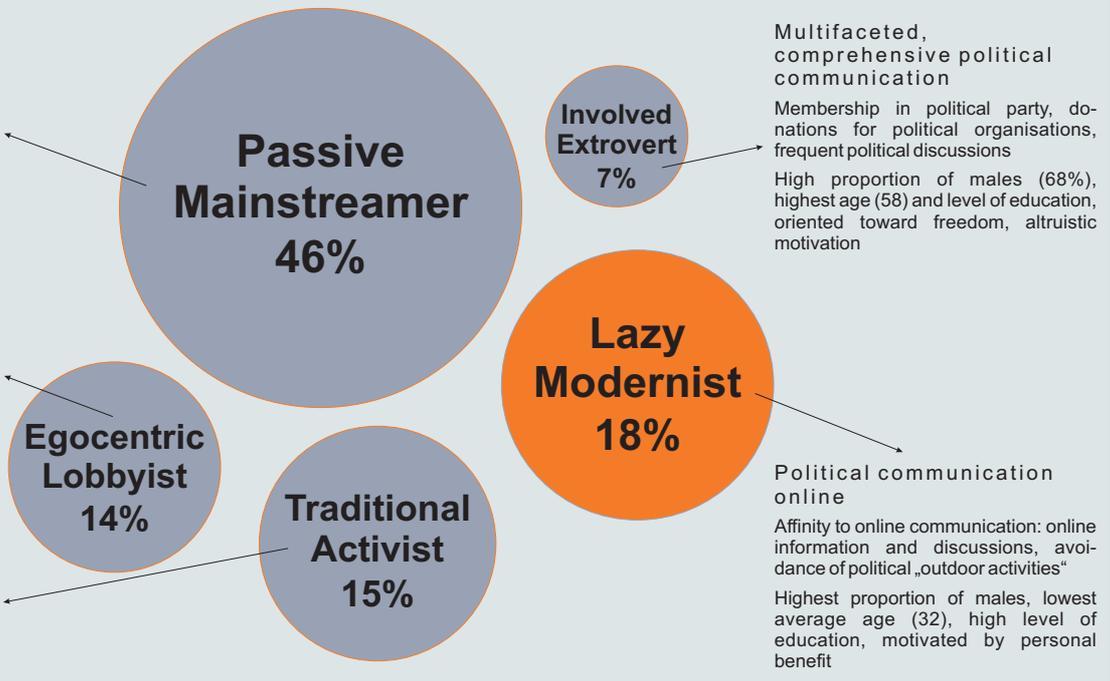
Low amount of political activities, average level of information communication: reading local newspaper  
Low income, fewest full-time employees, lowest orientation toward freedom

#### Limited amount of political communication

Workers' union membership, average voting participation, reading daily newspaper  
Mainly full-time employees, lowest level of education, safety-oriented, predominantly male

#### Multifaceted political communication

Low political Internet use, membership in local action group/animal rights group  
Highest proportion of females (60%), oriented toward equality, average income and education



### Conclusions

A new group of young and political active citizens is emerging - the **Lazy Modernist**.

His unique characteristic lies in a preference for Internet-based political activity using all forms of communication: search for information, interpersonal communication, and political participation. He is involved in society and not less politically interested than other types: He may be a forthcoming "**Political Online Elite**".

The rather low age of this group points toward a possible **generation shift**.

Further development depends on the **future establishment** of effective possibilities for electronic political participation and communication.