Geopolitical identity 2.0

The significance of regional, national and transnational roots in social network sites.

Bernadette Kneidinger
University of Vienna
Department of Communication

„Network society" = „global village"?

Mediatization of geopolitical identity – Two possible ways:

The (traditional) journalistic way in mass media

The more (subjective) way in social network sites

Question:
Globalization or/and Localization?
2 possible consequences:

1. Development of a „global identity" → decreasing importance of regional or national roots

2. Rediscovery of regional and/or national identity –> distinction from other nations.

The project

- Part of dissertation → Combination of content analysis (newspapers and Facebook pages) AND online survey (Facebook users and non-users)

- **Main aim:** geopolitical identity concepts in Facebook / of Facebook users

- **Methodology and data**:
  ◦ Content analysis: 124 Facebook groups/fan pages with reference to regional/national identity of Austria
  ◦ Online Survey: 638 Austrians (77% members of Facebook, 50:50 men/women, 32% migration background)

page description: „*Austrians avow themselves to their origin.*"

group/page name	Members (Nov. 2010)	Members (Nov. 2011)
I am from Austria	246.340	357.233
8.000.000 Österreicher auf Facebook!!!!! fast unmöglich????? =)	203.543	192.536
Österreich / Austria/ Autriche (2011 umbenannt *"Urlaub in Österreich/Holiday in Austria"*	187.583	277.057
schafft Österreich mehr Fans als Deutschland	134.875	239.733
ÖSTERREICH	109.493	191.088

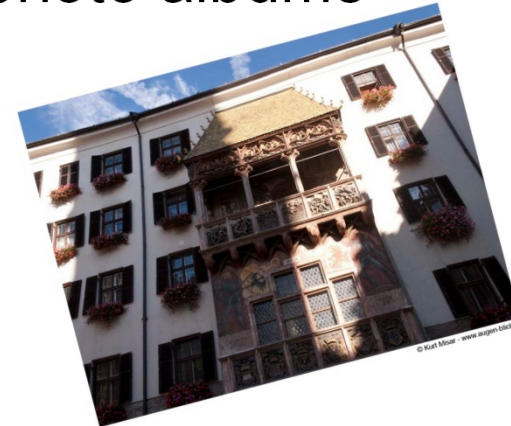## The content analysis

Facebook user in Austria: 2,6 Mio. (Nov. 2011)

Visualization and language use

Visualization: 53% of groupings use regional/national flag as symbol + other symboles in virtual photo albums (Newspapers only 5%)

Language: 38,5% of groups/pages regularly use Austriazism/dialect for wall communication
→ more dialect in regional oriented groups

Group name: „Ich bin Österreicher und sage: Paradeiser, Erdäpfel, Sessel und Pfiati!!!"

Group name: „do kau i mochn wos i wü, do bin i hea – do ghea i hin <3 Österreich"

Forms of National Identity

• much more expressions of national identity in Facebook than in newspapers
→ More openness and more subjective opinion expression

Percentage of forums / articles that contain…	Facebook (N=44)	newspapers (N=711)
Patriotic statements	80,0	32,2
Nationalistic statements	73,4	3,9
National proud statements	74,2	37,0

• Nationalistic statements hardly ever found in newspapers → quite frequently in Facebook

Average number of statements per forum:
• patriotic: 4,5x
• nationalistic: 2x
• national proud: 1x

National Identity and Multiculturalism

Facebook: xenophobic statements (30%) less frequent than nationalistic statements (73%), BUT quite frequent

Newspaper: xenophobic statements (6%) more frequent than nationalistic statements (4%), BUT very seldom

Close relation between nationalism and xenophobia

The findings…

Facebook: relative high frequency of pro-multiculturalism statements (27%).

→ Conclusion: Newspaper address migration in a quite neutral way, Facebook offers potential for a more diverse debate

The Survey

Levels of geopolitical identification	Types of national identity + corresponding phenomenons
Regional	Patriotism
National	Nationalism
Transnational	National pride
	Xenophobia
	Attitudes – EU-membership

- **1. Finding: age effects more important than Facebook membership!**
  - ◦ The older a user, the higher the attachment to the region.
  - ◦ The older a user, the higher patriotism, nationalism, national pride, xenophobia and the more negative are the attitudes towards EU-membership

Membership in Austrian specific Facebook pages

- ▸ 210 Austrian specific Facebook pages (Nov. 2010)

- ▸ expression of regional/national belonging by joining specific Facebook groups and pages

- ▸ 47% of Facebook users are members in such groups/pages → high importance for „virtual" identity construction

- ▸ **motives of membership**: „*to express with membership my belonging to Austria*" (mean=2,95, 4point scale); „*because I like the name of the group/page*" (mean=2,84)

National Identity and Austrian specific Facebook pages

	membership in regional or national Facebook grouping	N	mean	significance
patriotism	member	220	4,1307	***
	non-member	256	3,6202	
nationalism	member	221	2,7371	***
	non-member	258	2,1765	
national pride	member	220	3,4955	***
	non-member	251	3,0816	
xenophobia/ multiculturalism	member	223	3,1441	***
	non-member	257	2,4391	
attitudes toward Austrian EU-membership	member	223	2,9258	***
	non-member	258	3,4230	

5-point-scale, 1=not important, 5=very important

Identification level and Austrian specific Facebook pages

	membership in regional or national Facebook grouping	N	mean	significance
transnational identification: Europe	member	226	3,56	*
	non-member	259	3,80	
national identification: Austria	member	226	4,53	***
	non-member	260	3,99	
transnational identification: another nation besides Austria	member	222	1,65	*
	non-member	258	1,89	
regional identification: region/province	member	227	4,33	***
	non-member	259	3,66	

5-point-scale, 1=not important, 5=very important

Socio-demographic AND Media effects on national identity

Patriotism	Nationalism	Xenophobia
Media effects: - regional newspaper (+) - Austrian commercial TV channels (+) - foreign newspapers (-) - Membership in an Austrian Facebook group (+)	Media Effects: - German public TV (-) - Austrian commercial TV channels (+) - radio (+) - tabloid papers (+)	Media Effects: - quality newspapers (-) - regional newspapers (+)
Socio-demographic effects: - age (+) - political orientation (the more right, the stronger patriotism) - migration background (-)	Socio-demographic effects: - age (+) - political orientation (the more right, the stronger nationalism) - education (-)	Socio-demographic effects: - political orientation (the more right, the stronger xenophobia) - education (-)

Conclusion

- **Regional** and **national roots remain important** in the „network society"

- **Media** are important to **(re)build geopolitical identity**

- **Relationship** between **media usage** and **geopolitical identity construction**

- **Analysis of online communication** can give **additional information** about attitudes and experiences of citizens → combination of surveys and content analysis

Thank you for your attention!

Contact:
Bernadette Kneidinger
Department of Communication
University of Vienna
Email: bernadette.kneidinger@univie.ac.at