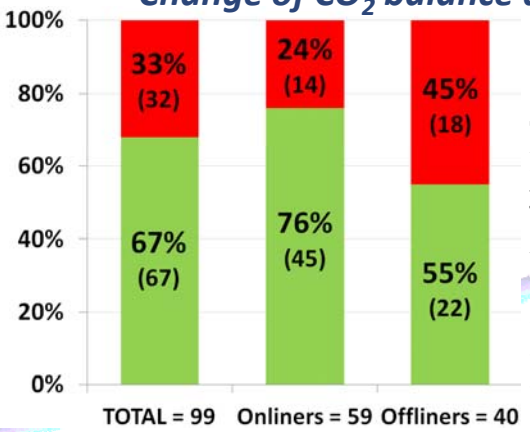
Will citizen participation contribute to climate protection?

Quality and effects of (e-) participation in the area of climate change

Change of CO_2 balance among citizen panellists



Worsened Improved

Two thirds of analysed participants - so far - have **improved their CO_2 balance** after one year. Almost all by 2 or more per cent.

Citizens informed by online-media as well as by CO_2 calculation and feedback on the Internet seem to be more successful in reducing their CO_2 emissions than participants using traditional media and peer-to-peer facilities.

(So far, 99 citizens have entered at least 6 periodic measurements in the German and Austrian panels.)

Background

For some time it has become clear that achieving ambitious climate protection targets is not possible without sufficient cooperation from consumers and hence changes in everyday practices in individual lifestyles.

A recent development is that governments are seeking the dialogue with citizens and are beginning to discover citizen participation, supported by new media, as a specific strategy for mitigating climate change and raising the performance levels in achieving climate targets.

Comparative research

DE	AT	ES
Bremen	Mariazell	Zaragoza
Bremerhaven	Bregenz	Pamplona
Wennigsen		

Comparative research will enable cross-municipality and cross- national comparison for the use and effects of (e-) participation in the area of climate saving in seven municipalities in three countries.

Research questions

The *impact* of citizen participation in the area of climate protection has not yet been researched. Hence it is not clear to what extent citizen participation may lead to long-term/sustainable improvements of the situation (e.g. change of behavior, reduction of individual CO_2 emissions).

- **Does participation make a difference?**
- **Does e-participation make a difference (online vs. offline)?**

Research questions will be answered by a quasi field experiment with seven rather identical citizen panels on climate saving.

Citizen panel: the concept

3-party contract

Local Admin. / Citizens / Enterprises

two years

reduce CO_2 - 2%/year

climate protection

- Newsletter
- Public meetings
- Consulting services
- **Periodic monitoring (CO_2-calculation)**

(data entry & feedback every 2 months)

Hypotheses

Main hypotheses of research are:

HYP1: "Information saves energy"

If you know the impact of your habits on your individual energy consumption will this lead to behavioral changes with less consumption?

HYP2: "Competition boosts CO_2 reduction"

Will your own ambition to improve your personal CO_2 balance be boosted by only the fact that you know the CO_2 balances of citizens in your neighborhood (and you want to be better than them)?

HYP3: "Participation effects are measurable"

Can the impact of participation clearly be measured through individual reduction of CO_2 and saved energy by use of CO_2 calculators?

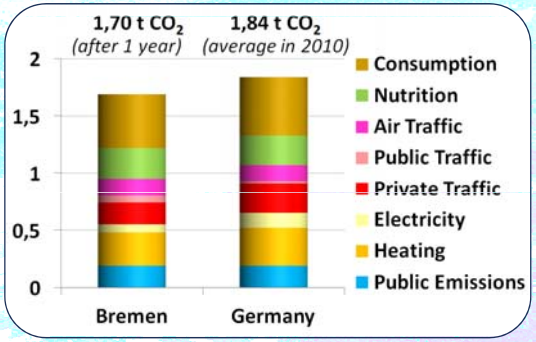
The e2democracy-project

environmental electronic democracy

The project provides continuous exchange of information and experience among participants and experts and collects and analyses climate-relevant consumption data every two months.

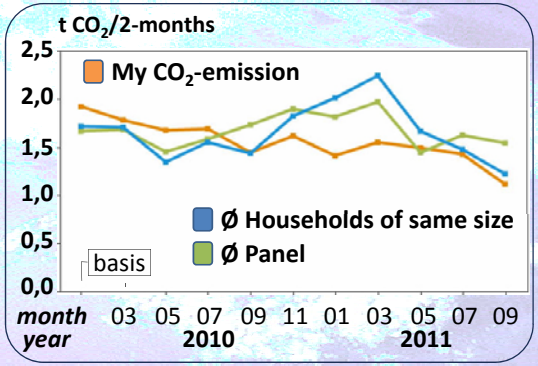
Achieved CO_2 reduction

After one year of monitoring, the citizen panel in Bremen achieved a CO_2 balance of 1,70 t CO_2 / 2-months.



Individual CO_2 balance

One example of feedback on the development of an individual CO_2 balance over time given to citizens:



Award

The UNESCO-Commission awarded the e2democracy research project a prize for its work performed for sustainable learning of citizens in the area of climate protection.

Supporters, further reading and contact

The e2democracy research project is supported by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and financed by the national organisations of research funding in Austria, Germany, and Spain. Research partners are: Institute for Information Management Bremen in Germany, Institute of Technology Assessment in Vienna, Austria, and University of Zaragoza, Dpt. of Accounting and Finance, in Spain. Project duration: 05/2009-11/2012.

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