University of Regensburg

Institute for Politcal Sciene

Professorship for political science research methods

Seminar: Globalization and Democracy

Instructor: Romy Escher, M.A.

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**Research Design:**

**Digital Infrastructure and Environmental Performance: Antagonists or team players?**

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***I.* Introduction**

Whilst talking about a few of the most ongoing and interesting social phenomena of the late 20th and the beginning 21st century, digital revolution and changing environment, a third societal process does inevitably come up sooner or later: globalization. As globalization is both having a huge impact and being reliable on digital and environmental change, the first two mentioned phenomena are tightly interconnected to the globalization process.

It is well-known that globalization without new ways of digital communication around the globe such as the internet or social media, to just name a few, would not be the society-influencing, daily-life-changing social phenomena by which modern society is deeply formed.[[1]](#footnote-1) Maybe the youngest or at least the most recently discussed phenomena is environmental change with its concomitants like climate change or water pollution. But despite the relatively new emergence of environmental change as a worldwide discussed topic, it is still strongly connected to both globalization and digital infrastructure. Nearly all the problems and challenges world society is facing because of the changing environment are globalized problems which can’t be solved by single states and mostly not even by continental groups.[[2]](#footnote-2)

But whilst the connections between globalization and environment and the strings between digital infrastructure and globalized social processes seem to be discussed and examined under a lot of scientific aspects and by different academic approaches, the codependence of digital infrastructure and environmental performance still seems to give room for empirical research and a data-based analysis.

But while one advantage of focusing on digital infrastructure and environmental performance is the above described rooms and possibilities for new empirical research, the area and the research topic are both largely extended ones. Therefore, and to live up to the common quality expectations of state-of-the-art empirical studies, this analysis does focus on three aspects of digital infrastructure influencing environmental performance of nations. These three aspects, that can be expected to be clarified and conceptualized during this study, are: Internet access and parcel shipping, internet usage and energy consumption and last, but not least internet access and environmental knowledge. These three branches of digital infrastructure should serve as explaining basics for the following questions: Do countries with a high developed digital infrastructure perform better or worse in environmental aspects? Or is the performance of countries regarding climate change and environmental problems even in some way dependent from its state of digital infrastructure?

In order to lead through the following empirical research, this question is trying to combine all interests and problems from above:

**How does digital infrastructure affect environmental performance?**

***II. Literature review***

*(Grundsätzlicher O-Ton, dass es wenig gibt)*

***III. Theory and/or hypotheses***

***IV. Empirical Design***

***V. References***

1. Clapp, Jennifer and Peter Dauvergne; Paths to a Green World; The Political Economy of the Global Environment; Massachusetts: 2011; S. 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ebd.: S. 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)