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Austrian Parliament Analyzer

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Affidavit

I hereby declare that the following dissertation "Austrian Parliament Analyzer" has been written only by the undersigned and without any assistance from third parties.

Furthermore, I confirm that no sources have been used in the preparation of this thesis other than those indicated in the thesis itself.

Linz, on November 20, 2015

Markus Hiesmair

Acknowledgment

Summary

Summary ...

Abstract

Abstract ...

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Abbreviations

ÖVP Austrian People Party (german: Österreichische Volkspartei)

SPÖ Social Democratic Party of Austrian (german: Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the most crucial requirements of a democracy is transparency. There are several ways how one can gain information about the current and past political activities in Austria. One of the best possibilities among them are the publicly available protocols of the national council sessions. In these protocols every word said in a session is written down and that makes up the corresponding protocol. Unfortunately, these protocols are very long and it is hard to gain meaning out of it, because of its plain and simple structure and the great amount of data.

To be able to analyze and visualize the activities and relations of the politicians and parties in a better way, during this thesis the protocols are being extracted, transformed, analyzed and visualized.

1.1 Research Goals

The protocols are currently available in semi-structured form - through HTML files. To be able to properly persist and analyze the data, the protocols have to be transformed into a fully structured form (e.g. Java Objects). The following elements will be extracted:

- Legislative periods and their sessions
- Politicians and their mandates
- Parliament clubs
- Discussions and speeches during the sessions

As soon as this is done, the extracted data should be persisted into a arbitrary relational database. Furthermore, some general and network analysis should be done on the data. The following list includes some of the analysis.

- Create a network graph which shows the relations among politicians and parliament clubs.
- Find groups of politicians (or parliament clubs) with the same attitudes.
- Analyze how homogeneous the attitudes of politicians of the same parliament club are.
- Find the politicians which take part in the most discussions.
- Find the most absent national council members.

In the final step the results should be visualized via a web application. The focus hereby lies in making the results as easy to understand as possible.

1.2 Austrian Parliament

In this section there will be a short overview over the activities and tasks of the Austrian parliament, so that in the following sections the basic process will be clear.

The parliament basically consists of two chambers, the national council and the federal council. The national council is elected through federal elections, whereas the federal council consists of delegates of the 9 provinces. Both chambers have different functions and their goal is to ensure that the decisions are in the best interest for the Austrian people [3].

1.2.1 National Council

The national council consists of 183 members, which can band together to form so called parliamentary clubs. Usually for each political party, which got elected in the national council, there is one parliamentary club, but that is no necessity. The tasks of the national council include law-making, controlling the government, seeking solutions for current problems, determining the budget and much more [3].

1.2.2 Federal Council

The federal council consists of 61 members. As the members are delegates of the provinces, their main duty is to represent their province and make sure the politics in the parliament are in the interest of the province they represent. To do so, they can raise objections against legislation of the national council, but most of the time the federal council only has the power to delay legislation and not to prevent it [3].

Chapter 2

Related Work

There are only a few works on analyzing political structures such as a parliament. One among them is a paper on network analysis of committees in the U.S. House of Representatives [2]. Porter and his colleagues tried to show the connections between representatives of the House and the committees and subcommittees, in which a big amount of the American legislation happens. Using techniques of network analysis they found out that there are certain correlations between communities and that there also high relations between a political position and the assignment to a committee.

In 2012, Amelio [1] also did a study on the voting behavior in Italy. She used multidimensional scaling, hierarchical clustering and network analysis.

Chapter 3

Design and Implementation

Overview... Architecture... General Components

3.1 Data Extraction and Transforming

3.2 Export into Database

3.3 Analysis

3.4 Visualization

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

4.1 Relations of Parliament Clubs

Graph + Explanations

4.2 Relations of Politicians

Graph + Explanations

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Future Work

Bibliography

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