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Lessons Learned from 11 Years of an E-Democracy Community: Governance vs. Community Development

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Recommended Citation

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ABSTRACT

We investigated the German democracy simulation website *dol2day.com* which is currently struggling to survive after active member count fell from 23.000 in 2003 to ca. 500 in 2011. An initial analysis of the community revealed a deep technical and social complexity and a rich history of changes driven by owners, community, or both. Most interestingly, because of the democratic nature of the platform, community members where involved in the administration and in the evolution of administrative processes, so that important lessons can be learned by aligning the history of major governance changes with the development of member counts.

In particular, we found that the community did not recover from a major backlash that happened between 2002 and 2003, independent of all governance changes. We therefore suggest a theory on community trust that may explain the backlash and should be tested in follow-up research on other communities.

Keywords

Virtual Community, Governance, Trust, e-Democracy, Grounded Theory, Longitudinal Study