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THE POSTMODERN I-AM-ME ORIENTATION

A representative survey on postmodernity and personality in Germany

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Content:

Does a fundamental change of socio-cultural and socio-economic patterns in highly developed states have an impact on peoples' personalities? Can we find some type of personality that is well adapted to the challenges of our time? To find some answers to these questions, this article discusses the theoretical background, main assumptions, methods, and main findings of a survey conducted in 2005 in Germany. The study brings together the phenomenology of the societal changes, often called postmodern, and the socio-psychoanalytical concept of „social character" formulated by Erich Fromm. His principal thesis is that character structures - or more commonly personality types - are not only closely linked to, but also governed by particular social and economic structures of a society. If this assumption is to be true, changes in social and economic structures should result in the emergence of new types of personality.

THE „POSTMODERN TURN" OF SOCIETIES

At the latest since the middle of the 20th century, we can observe several interacting dynamics of change in highly developed societies, which challenge the foundations of modernity: the nation state, the rationality and controllability of societal processes, full employment, growth of wealth, engendered division of labor and roles, the uniqueness of the subject and the idea of a coherent identity, just to name a few.

De(con)struction of concepts of modernity seems to be a common pattern. Concepts of unity, continuity, coherence and progress are replaced by contingency, discontinuity, fragmentation and reflexibility. They are landmarks of a new „worldly wisdom". This change becomes manifest in nearly all spheres or subsystems (in a Luhmannian sense) of society: art, culture, religion are as well affected as science, economy and politics[1]. Within society, groups and individuals are becoming subject and object of the postmodern transformation. Individuals have to deal with the impacts of societal change and have to adapt to new living conditions one way or the other.

Some of the main trends of the „postmodern turn" (Best / Kellner 1997) or „postmodern formation" (Frankenberger 2007) of society, are the following:

- The pluralization of values, norms, cultures and styles of life is paralleled by a loss of traditions, dissolution and liquidation of social structures, patterns of behavior, and moral values

- Emancipation and sexual liberation question the engendered division of labor

- Globalization or "Globality" (Sloterdijk) of economic, political and cultural interrelations is becoming visible in nearly all societies.

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[1] Law is probably the subsystem with the least adaption to postmodern change. This is not really surprising, as law is the fundament of states

- Closely linked with digitalization and informatization of economy and society, multiple opportunities of communication and interaction, sources of knowledge and construction of signification emerge.

- Especially welfare states face the challenges of the "end of the industrial age", the expanding service sector and the uncertainties of employment and labor conditions. These challenges imply and demand a reorganization of social systems.

- Within the framework of the end of the industrial age and the service revolution, we can observe a demand for flexibility and processes of mobilization of work, education, politics and social integration. In addition, the dynamics of the "risk society" (Beck 1986) and ecological devastation accelerate.

- With the diffusion, deconstruction and reformulation of patterns of time and space, commodities, values and knowledge, new kinds of spirituality, sense and significance beyond the almighty emerge. New and extreme phenomena as neo-fundamentalism, globalized terror and networked right-wing extremism appear on the ideological landscape of postmodernism.

Besides all changes, one should not deny nor forget continuous structures and patterns that are far from being postmodernized. They are to amplify the ambiguous demands individuals have to deal with. First, nation states still are the dominant political organizational structure. Second, achievement and performance, as the guiding values of modernity, are increasingly important in the new age. Third, the whole educational sector as well as bureaucracies and public administrations are adjusted to serve modern industrial societies and have by no means adapted to new challenges. Fourth, the increase of leisure time in modern societies is a central factor for postmodern dynamics. Growing amounts of time to spend made possible and fostered the development of huge entertainment industries that are typical for the postmodern "societies of adventure" (in German: Erlebnisgesellschaft: Schulze 1992). And last, but not least, postmodernity is unthinkable without modern urbanization. Despite the development of new means of communication and mass media, urban centers are the most likely places to find postmodern lifestyles and (every day) life worlds (Husserl).

These and other contemporary non-contemporaries / simultaneousness of dissimilarities are the patterns of ambivalence that form the framework of living in postmodern societies. And they include a series of challenges that have to be faced by individuals as well as institutions and organizations. As changes in societies and peoples' visible behavior can be observed quite easily within the framework of a phenomenology of change, as it was mentioned above, one could ask if there are effects that go somewhat deeper. In other words: In which way do societal structures and their changes have effects on personality structures and character traits of individu-

als? If so, do groups of people share common character structures directly linked to societal structures?

DEPTH EFFECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE:
THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CHARACTER

According to Erich Fromm, social character can be defined as the core of character traits that is common to most people of a society or class (Fromm 1970a/1977g, p.200). His main idea is that individuals living in certain social and economic conditions develop or internalize a corresponding character that is typical for these structures. The content of social character is determined by the functional requirements of a society. Societal structures form the individual character in a way that people want to do, what they have to in order to add to the persistence and functioning of the system. In "to have or to be?" (Fromm 1976a, p.299), Erich Fromm argues that character structures of the average individual and socio-economic conditions of a society are interacting, whereas the differences in modes of production and ways of living of societies or classes lead to different character structures. Thus, societies not only differ in modes of production, social and political organization but also in the kinds of social character they produce and require. In this context, Fromm does not deny inter-individual differences, but focuses on socially shared character orientations - and their functions. He distinguishes between individual character and social character. The first can be described as the entirety of features of an individual that in their unique combination form the individuals' personality. The latter can be defined as the core of character structures that are shared by most members of a group. The first then are variations of the core that depend on random facts as birth or life experience. Then, social character not only directs human interest and energy towards social necessities, but also locates and integrates individuals within their respective societies. From a Marxist point of view, social character and society interact and interdepend with ideologies and ideas to strengthen the shaping power ("Prägekraft") of socio-economic modes of production and ways of living within the formation of social character (Fromm 1992e, p.222) (Fromm 1947a, p.42-43).

Fromm differentiates character orientations according to effects referring to evolvement, growth and integration of psychic energies. Fromm described six ideal types (in a Weberian sense) of character orientations, that usually occur in reality in somewhat mixed types. Five of them can be considered as non-productive, while one is to be called productive[2]. Fromm assumes that social character types in capitalist socie-

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[2] The termn is not used in an economic sense, and therefor is not output-oriented, as most liberal- and neoliberal interpetations of Productivity are With productivity, Fromm associates mental health, individual growth, relatedness, spontaneous activity, biophily and maturity, to mention a few characteristics. For a brief overview on which main ideas Erich Fromm formulated on the concept of productivity,

ties are rather non-productive than productive (Meyer 2002). Non-productive character orientations can be defined by a dependence of experience and conduct of life on and the relatedness to external sources of energy, rather than on own psychic energy. According to Fromm this results in alienation from one's own powers, a process probably leading to a syndrome of regression, decay and ultimate downfall. To identify whether a real type orientation is productive or non-productive, the dominant orientation has to be identified. Referring to a systematization formulated by Rainer Funk (1995, p.25-29), the main characteristics of the five non-productive character orientations are outlined in brief[3]:

The *authoritarian character* orientation can be found in two complementary variations. The sadistic type is characterized by the quest / drive to dominate and control others as well as himself. He seeks to possess goods in an exploitative way. On the other hand, the masochistic type is dominated by the pursuit of submission, obedience and self-denial. He shows a receptive attitude towards goods

The *marketing character* can be characterized by a chameleon-like adaption to demands of the markets without developing deeper obligations or identifications. This type doesn't show commitment or emotions, because they would hinder him to serve his drive to be flexible and adaptive.

Narcissism or the *narcissist character* varies in the intensity. In the light version, a narcissist strives to instrumentalize other people in order to feel, look or be important and successful. Thus, the value of the others is measured in terms of usefulness for oneself. Strong narcissism is not interested in instrumentalization. For him a clear dualism exists: If you are not with me, you are against me. He either incorporates others or, in the case that they do not reflect his grandiosity, is hostile to them.

Necrophilia mainly manifests in destructiveness towards the self and others, as well as in consumption of goods.

SOCIAL CHARACTER AND POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Erich Fromm observed the heralds of the postmodern dynamics of transformation of late capitalism in the 20th century and formulated the marketing orientation as the respective socially typical character. But the full scale effects of the postmodern formation are a quite new phenomenon. According to Fromm, especially those individuals raised and socialized under postmodern conditions should show character traits with forms of alienation typical for postmodern societies. But what does this mean? Within the framework of individualization, pluralitization, subjectivism and aesthetiza-

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see http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/2003z-e%20Productiveness.pdf
[3] For more details see Fromm 1941a; 1947a

tion of individual life, with the dis-limitation of time and space through groundbreaking technological developments, with flexibilization and mobilization of labor and capital, with the growth of post-fordist production and services, with the capitalization of lifestyles, emotions and identities, new contingencies, opportunity structures and realities emerge in postmodern societies. Socioeconomic relations between providers and users are increasingly based on a logic of selling new realities and significations rather than commodities or services (Rifkin 2000). New interconnections between products, product-marketing and customer retention are established. Within these processes, values of a commodity or service are unlinked from their common use-value. On the other hand, a symbolic use-value is generated by adding emotions, images and identities to them. This generates an added value in comparison to the former use-value. Thus, the inscription of symbolic - and non-existing - attributes into goods and services is an extremely functional strategy of marketing, as on the other hand, there is an immense demand for means of identity-engineering in times of contingency. In short, products are getting an image. They are not only an expression of lifestyle, they are lifestyle. Commodities posess identities, that can be bought and transferred to the personality of the customer or user within the process of purchase. This implies the free constructability of identity by the means of economic exchange. Furthermore, these sales strategies produce desires for even more, better, newer offers of this kind. Suppliers create their markets by the means of manipulation of desires and identities of customers: Possibilities of self-responsibility, self-determination and self-orchestration are highlighted, while risks and constraints are conceiled. In these processes that are characteristic for the postmodern consumer society (Baudrillard 1998 [1970]), the socially desired and economically necessary self-determination beyond all boundaries, allegations and traditions, the "lust for self-determined, and self-related creation of realities becomes the main drive of post-modern individuals. Or as Rainer Funk (2006) nails it down to the point with his description of the so called postmodern I-am-me orientation: "The I-am-me oriented person strives passionately to determine himself or herself freely, spontaneously and autonomously, unconstrained by provisions or conditions, driven by a desire for a fabricated or artificially produced reality. The decisive motivation is a desire for a self-determined, I-am-me oriented fabrication of reality, more specifically, of the surrounding reality that is self-created" (Funk 2006, p.2).

Following this argumentation, the postmodern I-am-me Orientation might be found within groups and professions that take leading positions within postmodern change: those involved in developments and usage of new digital technologies and media - in IT, science, culture and arts.

Taking the complex logic of postmodern capitalism with the main pattern of offering and demanding realities, identities and lifestyles instead of goods and services seri-

ously, and analogous to Erich Fromms distinction of an active and a passive type of authoritarian character, the postmodern I-am-me orientation can be sub-classified in an active-offering and a passive-using variation. Not necessarily all postmodern individuals will produce and create realities and identities. Being part of these, entering the offered realities and identities is an expression of the same striving. In this way both types let the motto of Pippi Longstocking in the german-language soundtrack "Ich mache mir die Welt, wie sie mir gefällt" (I create the world the way I'd like it to be) materialize in different ways: The active I-am-me orientation can be characterized by acting out the production / creation of reality, the construction and dramatization of the own identity, while the passive I-am-me orientation is characterized by being part of produced realities and the usage of offers to experiencing identities and images. Both are the two sides of one coin and only with the existence of both of them will the logic of supply and demand in postmodern economy work.

"POSTMODERNITY AND PERSONALITY" - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY Above others we derived two general hypotheses concerning the existence of a postmodern personality from our theoretical assumptions and premises.

- The postmodern society produces a specifically postmodern character orientation. Following the logic of postmodern capitalism, it can be distinguished in an active and a passive type. Both types are empirically measurable on the basis of value orientations, motivations and self-concepts

- Both types are ideal types in a Weberian Sense, though, mixed types may occur.

In addition, we formulated eleven hypotheses concerning the two variants of the postmodern I-am-me orientation and their socio-demography (Frankenberger/Meyer 2008, pp 91-93).

Operationalization

One central methodological invention of the survey was the operationalization of the psychoanalytical concept of I-am-me orientation with quantitative methods. In an extensive pretest, 62 variables were tested to construct a small and precise scale for both types of postmodern I-am-me orientation and for an assumed productive character[4]. The final scales can be seen in tables 1.1., 1.2., and 1.3.: for the "active postmodern I-am-me orientation" (AIO scale), for the "passive post-modern I-am-me orientation" (PIO scale) and finally for the "productive orientation" (PO scale).

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[4] The data of the pretests were collected by the Research Group on Elections/Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Online (FGW-Online), Mannheim. From October 13 to November 3, 2004 an online-sample of 4500 Interviewees was selected randomly from a pool of registered persons. 1688 interviewees filled in the questionnaire. In addition to the variables in the test proper, socio-demographic data was captured.

The scales seek to capture central and typical dimensions of personality structures on the basis of value orientations, motivations and self-concepts. As subjectively expressed value orientations, motivations and self-concepts usually refer to more than one of the presented character orientations, they were clustered in several dimensions, that represent the character traits in question. They are not uni-dimensional and only together form a complex representation of the referred personality structure (Frankenberger 2007).

The scales were used in a survey of the character and development of social milieus, conducted by the SIGMA-Institute in June 2005. Field work was done by IPSOS Germany. The interviewees could assess the statements or variables on a scale ranging from 1 ("I do not agree at all") to 4 ("I strongly agree"). This scale is a so called "forced choice"-scale as it does not offer a neutral score in the middle between 1 and 4. 1100 inhabitants in Germany (selected by the "random-route"-method[2]) were interviewed personally. The sample is representative for inhabitants over 18 with a slight weighting of the variables age, sex, place of residence and size of household.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) between June and September 2005. One main interest was to find out whether the theoretically constructed types of personality could be empirically proved. For this purpose a factor analysis, more precisely a principal components analysis, including a varimax rotation, was conducted. One thesis of this study was that these factors are identical with the three types of personality. This was confirmed to a large extent by the results of the factor analysis.

Table 1.1.: The Active I-am-me Orientation Scale (AIO scale)

Variable ID	Variable name
V04	I really come alive when I'm shopping.
V06	Wherever I'm entertained I feel good.
V13	I combine totally different ideas and principles in my philosophy of life.
V14	For me, foreign cultures are a kind of treasure trove of things that inspire me.
V15	I'm me – always new, and always different.
V16	It's fun to stage original events from time to time.
V17	When I'm shopping, I love to give free rein to my creativity.
V20	I also work at night and at weekends to achieve my goals.
V21	I have a need to create something of my own in my job.
V22	I also want to be able to get out of a relationship at any time.
V23	In a relationship, each person should live according to their own rules.
V29	I'm fascinated by the idea of constantly redefining one's own personality.
V30	I like things that express something individual and distinctive.
V31	I think it's a fascinating idea to carry on developing your own personality.

Table 1.2.: The Passive I-am-me Orientation Scale (PIO scale)

Variable ID	Variable name
V01	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should express something totally individual.
V02	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should fit me and my friends.
V03	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should be totally trendy.
V04	I really come alive when I'm shopping.
V05	I'm always keen to experience something.
V06	Wherever I'm entertained I feel good.
V07	When it comes to the meaning of life, I take a lead from people and ideas I find convincing.
V08	In my attitude to life, I'm happy to follow other people's experiences.
V09	I simply find theme parks such as Disneyland boring. (negatively rotated)
V10	Some films or TV shows arouse strong feelings in me that I hardly experience otherwise.
V17	When I'm shopping, I love to give free rein to my creativity.
V24	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should match my personal lifestyle.
V29	I'm fascinated by the idea of constantly redefining one's own personality.

Table 1.3.: The Productive Orientation Scale (PO scale)

Variable ID	Variable name
V11	A team in which people get on brilliantly with one another is almost more important to me in my chosen profession than forging a career.
V18	If I really don't want to do something, I just don't do it.
V20	I also work at night and at weekends to achieve my goals.
V21	I have a need to create something of my own in my job.
V25	I only rarely experience boredom.
V26	I can easily be alone.
V27	It gives me extra energy if I'm able to make use of my skills.
V28	It's simply fun to achieve something.
V30	I like things that express something individual and distinctive.
V31	I think it's a fascinating idea to carry on developing your own personality.
V33	I can easily deal with conflicts in my job and my relationship.
V34	In my relationship, I'm frank about saying what I do and don't like about the other person.
V35	I can sympathize if another person is having psychological problems.
V36	Even if I have a different opinion, I listen to others and can understand their reasoning.

To find out the **empirical distribution of the three types of personality, factor scores**, which are calculated in the course of the principal components analysis, were used. As factor scores denominate all objects (interviewees) with regard to the extracted factors, they characterize the strength of the markers represented by one

factor. Factor scores are relational measures, which have to be interpreted as follows:

- Negative factor scores mean that an object has a below average value on this factor in comparison to the other objects.

- A factor score = 0 means an average value on this factor.

- Positive Factor scores mean an above average value in comparison to the other objects.

One peculiarity of factor scores results from the kind of mathematical calculation: Variables with a stronger mathematical relation to the respective factor have more influence on the calculation of factor scores. As a result, the so called marker-items, i.e. those variables loading highest on a factor and serving as a guideline for the interpretation of a factor, have a stronger influence on the factor scores than the others.

Table 2: Rotated Factor Matrix

ID		Komponente		
		1	2	3
V16	It's fun to stage original events from time to time.	0,702		
V05	I'm always keen to experience something.	0,617		0,415
V15	I'm me – always new, and always different.	0,602		
V14	For me, foreign cultures are a kind of treasure trove of things that inspire me.	0,599		
V17	When I'm shopping, I love to give free rein to my creativity.	0,550		0,366
V13	I combine totally different ideas and principles in my philosophy of life.	0,517		
V29	I'm fascinated by the idea of constantly redefining one's own personality.	0,513		0,321
V22	I also want to be able to get out of a relationship at any time.	0,509		
V31	I think it's a fascinating idea to carry on developing your own personality.	0,488	0,476	
V23	In a relationship, each person should live according to their own rules.	0,483		
V21	I have a need to create something of my own in my job.	0,474	0,393	
V20	I also work at night and at weekends to achieve my goals.	0,402	0,302	
V28	It's simply fun to achieve something.		0,722	
V27	It gives me extra energy if I'm able to make use of my skills.		0,698	
V36	Even if I have a different opinion, I listen to others and can understand their reasoning.		0,608	
V35	I can sympathize if another person is having psychological problems.		0,595	
V25	I only rarely experience boredom.		0,586	
V33	I can easily deal with conflicts in my job and my relationship.		0,566	
V34	In my relationship, I'm frank about saying what I do and don't like about the other person.		0,555	
V11	A team in which people get on brilliantly with one another is almost more important to me in my chosen profession than forging a career.		0,419	
V30	I like things that express something individual and distinctive.	0,391	0,412	
V26	I can easily be alone.		0,386	
V18	If I really don't want to do something, I just don't do it.		0,375	
V02	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should fit me and my friends.			0,683
V03	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should be totally trendy.			0,671
V01	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should express something totally individual.			0,665
V24	What I expect from a brand that's meant to appeal to me is that it should match my personal lifestyle.			0,550
V06	Wherever I'm entertained I feel good.	0,418		0,535
V04	I really come alive when I'm shopping.	0,425		0,434
V07	When it comes to the meaning of life, I take a lead from people and ideas I find convincing.			0,416
V09	I simply find theme parks such as Disneyland boring. (negatively rotated)			-0,374
V10	Some films or TV shows arouse strong feelings in me that I hardly experience otherwise.			0,370
V08	In my attitude to life, I'm happy to follow other people's experiences.			0,369

MAIN RESULTS

All statistical operations within the framework of a principal components analysis concerning sample adequacy, data structure and factor score matrices produced at least good results and underlined the applicability of a factor analysis[5]. The following principal components analysis was mainly used in a confirmative way und thus limited to three extracted components to prove the assumption that the three scales represent three largely independent personality structures. Due to this limitation to three components, explained variance was 33,955%. The rotated solution showed that ratios are quite equally distributed (Factor 1: 12,059%, factor 2= 11,859% and factor 3=10,038%). Table 2 shows the rotated components matrix with a limitation to 3 components (principal components analysis, varimax with Kaiser-normalization, rotation converged in 5 iterations). The results underline the existence of the three formulated personality types from a statistical point of view: all variables of one scale represent a personality type in their combined values. In addition, the factor matrix shows that there exist some connections between two personality types in regard to some variables. On the basis of the theoretical background, these links are plausible and thus the statistical overlappings make sense. T-Tests and ANOVA underline this interpretation: The three personality types' deviances of mean averages for variables of the related scale were in nearly all cases highly significant (t>0.01). The results of ANOVA showed that especially the variables with the highest factor scores differentiate very well. (F-values varied between 50,278 for V16 and 8,441 for V26. All F-values were significant at the 0.001-level. Null-hypothesis suggesting that there is no difference between mean averages of personality types for the respective variables can be denied with over 99% probability. Multiple Scheffé-tests further examined mean average deviances and confirmed the discriminatory power of the marker variables on at least the 0.05%-Level.

On the basis of factor scores for each questionee, the empirical distribution of the three personality types is as follows: Altogether, 19.8% of interviewees showed a strong above average-value of postmodern I-am-me-orientations and 10.3% a strong value of productive orientation.

- *10.2%* show a strong above average active I-am-me orientation,

- 9.6% show a strong passive I-am-me orientation,

- 10.3% show a strong productive orientation.

In addition, 8,7% showed a mixture of at least two strong orientations. In sum, this means, that 28,5% of questionees can be identified as postmodern I-am-me oriented.

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[5] Chi-square = 11751,395; df=360; Bartlett-significance=0.000; KMO-criterion=0.864. MSA-measures were >0.9 for 10 Variables, for 12 Variables >0.8 and for another eight variables >0.7

This is a strong confirmation of our main theoretical assumptions: the structures and changes in postmodern societies, described here mainly in their positive aspects, foster the development of new types of personality that are specific for this type of society.

Personality Profiles

Active I-am-me Orientation

This type is most likely under 40 Years old, having middle (33,9%) or high (37,7%) formal education. She (53.1%) or he (46.9%) is an above average freelancer (9,7%), Student (11.1%) or employee in public sector (13.5%) with middle or high (23.1%) income. He is most likely single, living alone or in households with 4 or more persons. Living and life conditions are pluralistic. "Classic" families can be found as well as single-households and flat-shares, whereas single households are slightly beyond average. Active postmoderns live in urban centers (42,6%) or in the nearest proximity. More than 2/3 posess a private or personal access to the internet, which is far above the german average.

Active I-am-me oriented individuals define and dramatize themselves and their world with passion and virtuosity. They invent theirselves permanently and hate to make any mid- or long term commitments. This creative aspect connects with sensation seeking. Active postmoderns want to stimulate, to animate and experience the world. Hence, they might be met in "hip" locations, clubs, bars and so on, that offer space and opportunities to present, dramatize and highlight themselves - the typical trendsetters with their restless appearance. For them, sources of inspirations can be found nearly everywhere - they combine and integrate, what they like. This includes lifestyles and philosophy as well as the the ways they acquire and use commodities and consumer goods. The only important criterion is "authenticity". Then a cuckoo clock can even be combined with Bauhaus crafts and buddhist insights do not interfer with aggressive neo-liberal capitalism. As in leisure time, active postmodern individuals show some noncommittal regarding friendship and partnership. Deeper commitments are constraints that are too narrow for them and their identity engineering. This explains the number of singles.

Passive I-am-me orientation

Women (67,8%) and men (32,2%) with a passive I-am-me orientation are beyond average under 30 years old, have lower formal education (50,5%), are housemen/housewifes (11%), workers (17,3%), employees in the public sector (19,6%) or unemployed (11,4%). They are overrepresented within the low and high income groups. Forms of living together are mainly distributed on average. She or he often lives in smaller villages with up to 5000 inhabitants and towns with 20 to 50 thousand inhabitants, but rarely in urban centers. The majority of them (52,4%) does not have

access to the internet. The difference between active and passive type concerning formal education, profession and income was even stronger than assumed. In contradiction to our suggestions, the passive type is below average in regard to internet access. Passive I-am-me orientation seems to be linked to the lower social ranks and is situated below the so called digital divide.

But the passive type has one thing in common with the active one: sensation seeking. They feel good in environments where they are provided with attractions. This underlines drastically their consumerism and the use of attitude towards experience and excitement. In contrast to the creative, dramatizing and engineering active I-am-me orientation, the passive type is the flexible, and trend following audience, that wants to belong to the "hip" ones. They define themselves through the adoption of the regalia and icons of the postmodern trade of significances and lifestyles. When one misses a trend, he or she risks social isolation and exclusion from the "Sinngemeinschaft". This applies to clothing as well as to furniture, beverages music, in short to all consumable goods and services. In this way, the passive I-am-me orientation defines his or herself through consumer style and often exceed their budgets. In these aspects they are very creative and innovative, but willingness to perform, obligation and consistency beyond the necessary are not their strengths. Work and profession are a necessary evil, filling the space between leisure time, that is dedicated to experience in all its facets.

Interpretation

On the basis of the empirical and statistical results, a consistent postmodern personality structure can be interpreted as empirically saturated in regard to both the active and the passive I-am-me orientation. Apart from result to consume pattern that are not illustrated here (see Frankenberger / Meyer 2008, pp.104-121), the following results underline that both types are the two sides of the postmodern coin: First, there is a link between active and passive type in the dimensions of sensation seeking and consumerism, but not in self.

This is somewhat different for the passive type: First there is a link between both types only in sensation seeking and consumerism, but not in self-definition. Second, the passive type shows a clear rejection of foreign cu-definition; Third, there are differences in the evaluation of foreign and own cultures. Fourth, the passive type is below the digital divide and thus is deprived from the most important communications channel of postmodernity, a fact that she or he compensates with excessive use of cellphones. Another difference seems to be the more or less strong refusal of achievement and willingness to perform by the passive type, represented by the rejection of variables 20 and 21. Together with variables 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8, this illustrates the different pathways of postmodern lifestyle and consumerism. Passive self-

definition is far more determined by the consumption of produced and offerend life worlds, whereas the active self-definition is rather more creative in consumerism. This underlines the plausibility of the dualism of provider and user and indicates some sort of "loser of postmodernization"-thesis: The passive I-am-me orientation does not gain any artistic leeway for self-definition from the postmodern conditions. Instead he or she finds his or herself drawn into new - this time postmodern - constraints that are mostly defined by consumerism.

CONCLUSION

The presented survey can only be a first step towards a full scale definition of the character landscape. As we did not operationalize all character orientations, as Fromm suggests, we do not know if there is any white spot on the landscape, and we do not know about the distribution of the other types. Further research is necessary to close this gap. If this were the case, we could measure two things: First, loopholes can be detected. These holes then would indicate that there exists one or more other types of social character not yet identified. When capturing the full scope of character orientations, an instrument to detect changes could be developed. Time series analysis then could show new developments within and across societies immediately.

Second, qualitative research has to be undertaken on the postmodern I-am-me orientation to triangulate the results of the quantitative study. This could include in-depth interviews as well as exploring the life world of the individuals in question.

But even if the results of the study are just a first step, one should not deny the impacts of postmodern personality on society and politics. Postmodern individuals show a fundamental lack especially of long-term committment. This might have consequences for societal as well as political organizations. Declining numbers of party and labor union membership (not only in Germany) might be an effect of postmodern kinds of engagement: short-term and self-centered. This does not suit the rather long-term character of programmatic parties and conservative unions. The fragmentation and pluralization of the party landscape and forms of political action in new "new social movements" (e.g. attac, so called flash-mobs or the political blogsphere), that emphasize the event-character of their activities can be interpreted as a logical consequence of postmodernization. Thus taking into account the persistence of formal institutions, it would not be astonishing if postmodern individuals would invent new informal ways of political communication, political action, and decision making.

Closely linked with this, but reaching far deeper and probably affecting the roots of our societies – the constitutional nation state and democratic rules of procedure in legislation and the executive branch - the impact of consumerization of cultural, social, political and individual life remain unclear. What norms and values do postmod-

ern individuals consider as irreducible? What kind of political and economic system do they prefer? The neoliberalization of many subsystems of society probably gives hints, to which end postmodernization will lead. The eleboration of a larger analytical framework of analyzing postmodern societies is necessary and knowledge of functions and characteristics of the postmodern I-am-me orientation could help to go further in this direction.

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