

The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion

**3 – 5 December 2009
Vilnius, Lithuania
European Capital of Culture 2009**

Input

**Workshop 3
Culture as a Means to Overcome Social Borders and Involve
Socially Disadvantaged Groups: Are Cross-Milieu Concepts and
Co-operative Projects Essential?**

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Civic Participation and Volunteerism – Lessons from a Milieu-Specific Perspective

1. Introduction: Trends of Volunteerism and Civic Participation in Germany

The relevance of volunteerism and civic participation as a basic component for a lively social democracy is widely accepted at present and has become a major theme for the social sciences since the turn of the millennium. The data gathered in a survey on volunteerism is often the basis for discussion in Germany (Gensicke et al. 2006). In addition, there are representative studies with limitations regarding regional extension and certain life phases, such as studies focussing on the volunteering of young adults (Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg 2005) and also concerning the participation of elderly people (bmfsfj 2005) – or also certain life areas (e.g. Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk 2007). The latest data on volunteerism and civic participation show that German citizens engage mostly in the areas “Sports and Exercising” (40% of all volunteers), followed by “Spare time and Socialising” (25%). In contrast, the area “Politics and Representation of Interests” has a fairly low relevance with 7% of all participations. Similar results can be drawn from the representative study conducted with the Ministry for Social Affairs in Baden-Württemberg in 2000: only three respectively four percent of all volunteers engage in the wider context of political parties or in the areas of “citizen initiatives, city (area) initiatives or citizen offices”.

From these surveys it can be concluded that – if the results are differentiated according to age groups – the 40-60 year olds have the highest levels of civic participation and volunteerism. If this group is analysed in more detail, it becomes obvious that not solely pensioners and retired persons are volunteering but also housewives/housemen as well as an increasing number of unemployed people (mainly in the eastern states of Germany). Interestingly, also persons who are still in education and training show a higher level of volunteering and civic participation. Between 1999 and 2004, the participation rates in volunteering and civic participation have increased significantly which is attributed to the higher activity of women aged between 60 and 69 years.

The documentation of the participation in volunteerism and civic participation functions as an important basis for understanding the underlying structures of civic participation. Based on this understanding, strategies can be developed to further promote volunteerism and support those who engage in volunteering. At the moment little is known about how the motives for participation and the structures of recognition and appreciation vary among the different groups. In order to find out, a differentiating analysis of volunteering and civic participation is necessary that takes into account the values and attitudes of those who think about volunteering and/or volunteer already.

The model of social milieus gives insight into such horizontal differentiation of society without losing sight of the important vertical structures of inequality. Next to classic research questions in the social sciences, research on social milieus is successfully applied in the areas of research about youth and education as well as in the research field of pastoral and theological issues (Tippelt et al. 2008; Barz/Tippelt 2007; Wippermann/de Magalhaes 2006). There are also some first efforts to analyse attitudes towards civic participation and volunteerism on the basis of this model (Sozialministerium Baden-Württemberg 2000; BCN 2009).

The model of social milieus is to be understood as a new instrument for analysing social structure and structures of social inequality. It analyses the plural and differentiated pattern of social positioning and describes its effects on socialisation and attitudes to certain areas of life.

2. The Positioning Model of Social Milieus

But what exactly are social milieus? Social milieus describe large groups of people that are relatively stable unities within a society. The persons belonging to one unity resemble each other in respect to the social status (education, income, professional status) as well as concerning basic values, attitudes towards life and lifestyles (Flaig/Meyer/Ueltzhöffer 1994). Members of a social milieu share comparable attitudes towards relevant life areas such as work, free time, relationships, consumption and every day life aesthetics. Only lately those milieu specific attitudes were explored that focus on further education, religion/church, language and communication (Wippermann/de Magalhaes 2006). Based on that it can be assumed that also the attitudes towards political and civic participation vary along the different life goals and life attitudes.

The combination of vertical (“passive dimension”) and horizontal structures of inequality (“active dimension”) is constitutive for the market research institution Sociovision in Heidelberg which can be accounted for as the founding father of the “Sinus-Milieus”. (Flaig/Mayer/Ueltzhöffer 1994). The positioning model of social milieus is regularly updated according to occurrences of social change; the latest model of social milieus consists of ten social milieus. It is important to mention that some milieus lie across the social status units so that more units are spanned at the same time (e.g. Modern Performers, GDR-Nostalgics, Traditionalists). As a result the groups are oftentimes taken together in social “milieu segments” independently from status definitions (Tippelt et al. 2008). Oftentimes the milieus are differentiated in leading milieus of society (Modern Performers, Post-Materialists, Establisheds), traditional milieus (Conservatives, Traditionals, GDR-Nostalgics), Mainstream-Milieus (New Middle Class, Materialists), as well as hedonistic milieus (Experimentalists, Escapists).

3. Social Milieus and their relation to Civic Participation and Volunteerism

Volunteerism and civic participation is closely connected to basic value orientations and attitudes of the population that – according to the results of social milieu research – vary with certain societal groups. So far and according to the author’s knowledge, there exists only one study that offers a holistic picture of the milieu specific differentiation in motivational factors of volunteers. This is a representative study conducted in West-Germany by the ministry for social affairs in Baden-Württemberg. It was called “lifeworld and civic participation – social milieu in civic society” (“Lebenswelt und bürgerschaftliches Engagement – Soziale Milieus in der Bürgergesellschaft”) and published in 2000. This study focuses on fields of activity, interests and motives of currently volunteering citizens and of potential volunteers. As the study was implemented only in West-Germany, the applied milieu model (see fig. 1) in this study focuses on western value orientations as defined in the differentiated models for East and West Germany by Sinus Sociovision in 2000.

The following paragraphs give an overview of the results concerning the fields of activity (who is committed in which fields?), the motivational structures of volunteer work (why is someone volunteering?) and also regarding the barriers to volunteer work (why is someone not volunteering at the moment?).

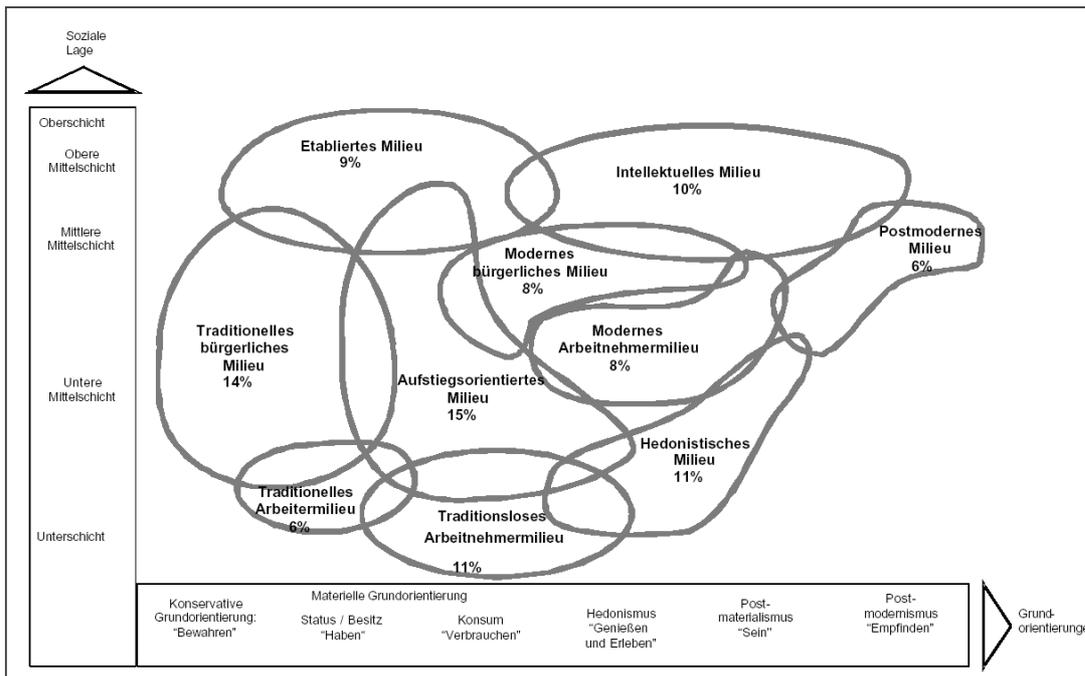


Figure 1: Model of Social Milieus for West Germany, 2000

In 2001 the different milieu models for East and West Germany were transformed into a milieu model for Germany as a whole (see fig. 2). Thus, in the comprehensive German model the three milieus of the societal centre ("Modern middle class milieu" – Modernes bürgerliches Milieu, "Aufstiegsorientiertes Milieu" – the Career Oriented and "Modernes Arbeitnehmermilieu" – Modern jobholder milieu) were aggregated to a group called "New Middle Class" ("Bürgerliche Mitte"); from the part of the Escapists that was financially better off a new group called experimentalists was separated; "Traditional working class" ("Traditionelles Arbeitermilieu") and "Bourgeois Working milieu" ("Bürgerliches Arbeitermilieu") were combined to a milieu called "Traditionals" and a very conservative, older part of the "Etablierten" was positioned as a very small milieu, the "Conservatives".

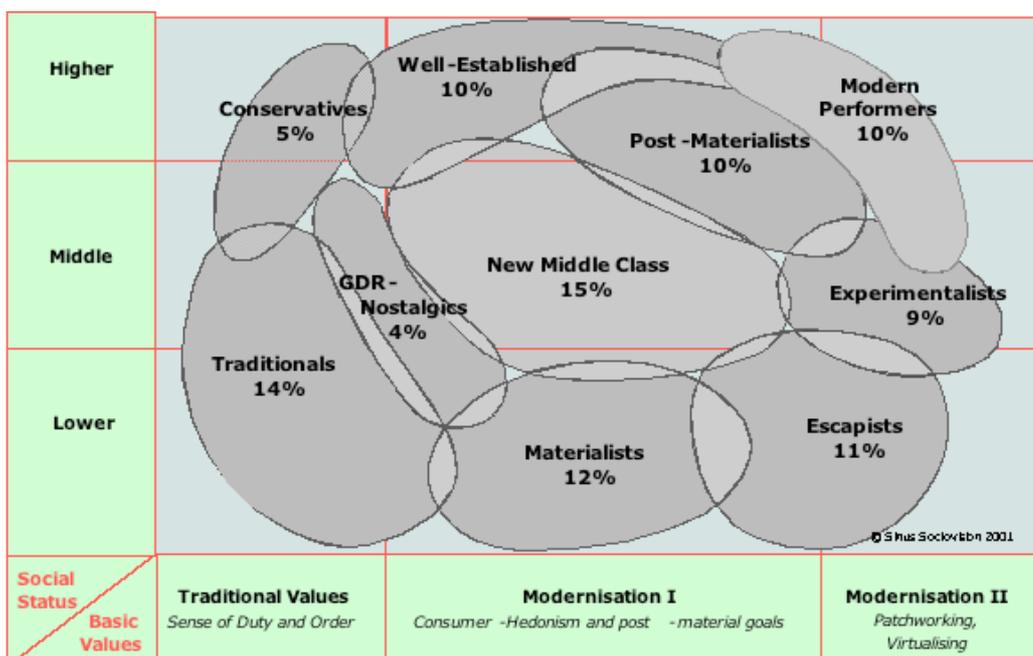


Figure 2: Model of Social Milieus for Germany, 2009

By combining the social milieus of eastern and western Germany a new milieu emerged: the GDR-Nostalgics and moreover, some milieus were named differently.

Who is volunteering in which fields and who is interested in what kind of commitment?

According to the results of this study more than every third person living in West-Germany volunteered at the time the inquiry took place (average: 37,3%, see Sozialministerium Baden-Württemberg 2000). This number is consistent with the latest numbers of the survey on volunteering that calculates a number of 36% (Gensicke et al. 2006). Furthermore, almost one third of the sampled population are prepared to “definitely” or “maybe” volunteer. If the data is differentiated according to social milieus, the traditional and conservative milieus volunteer more often than the average (Traditional workers milieu: 53%, Traditional bourgeois Milieu: 46%); volunteering seems to be less important to the post-modern milieus, such as the modern performers (26%). Though “politics” has a low position in the ranking of fields of activities for volunteers, 40% of West Germany’s population stated in 2000 that they are heavily interested or very interested in politics. The strongest political interest is articulated according to expectancy: 74% of the Intellectuals (“Intellektuelles Milieu”) approve their interest in politics, followed by the Established (“Etabliertes Milieu”) (61%).

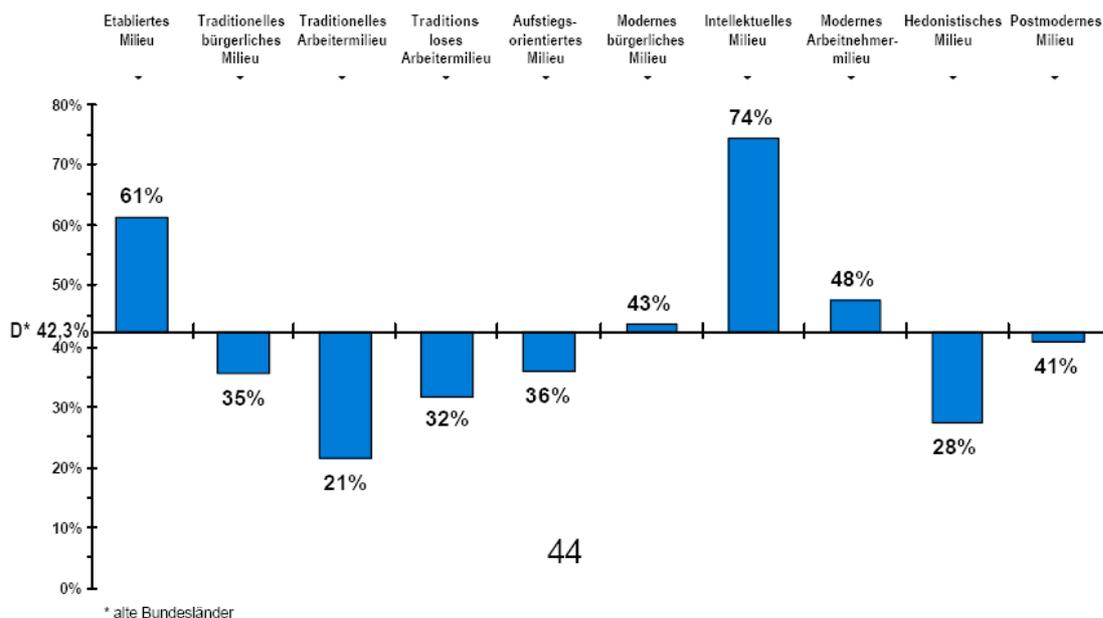


Fig. 3: Very strong and strong interest in milieu-specific differentiation (Ministry for Social Affairs Baden-Württemberg 2000, S. 44)

The most important real and potential field of activity are activities in associations and clubs on a regional level (36%) – this is probably also the category that includes the many activities in “Sports and Exercising” that are mentioned in the volunteering survey (Gensicke et al. 2006). 51% of the milieu of the Intellectuals (new model: Post-Materialists) state to be active in this field or have a strong interest to volunteer in this field; the lowest interests rates (27%) are to be seen with persons from the big middle class milieu “Modern middle class milieu”. The respondents show active involvement in the field of “social services” or say they have a strong interest for being involved (21,8%). Also in this field the intellectuals are very committed with 38%, while the Post-Modern milieu as well as the underclass milieu of the “Non-traditional workers” (new milieu: Materialists) (both: 13%) both regret to volunteer at the moment. Organisations that care for the protection of the environment, animals and nature are mentioned by modern and well-educated milieus mostly – especially by the post-modern

milieu (27%), the “Modern middle class milieu” (22%) as well as by the Intellectuals (26%) as the field they support actively or in non-material ways. This field turns out to have a subordinate relevance for more traditional and conservative milieus. A similar picture is presented by the results concerning the commitment to human rights organisations: the Intellectuals are far above average (34% compared to the average of 16,1%) as well as the postmodern milieu (30%) and the “Modern jobholder milieu” (22%).

Motivational Factors – Expectations on Civic Participation

Just like in other studies that were done before the cited study comes to the result that “appreciation” is the core motivation for volunteering. In principal, there is a so-called mix of motives or a bundle of motives at the basis of volunteering or civic participation; altruistic motives are mixed with selfish demands and the expectation to help shape or create something. The following figure shows the ten most important motives that were named by presently active volunteers (multiple answers were permitted).

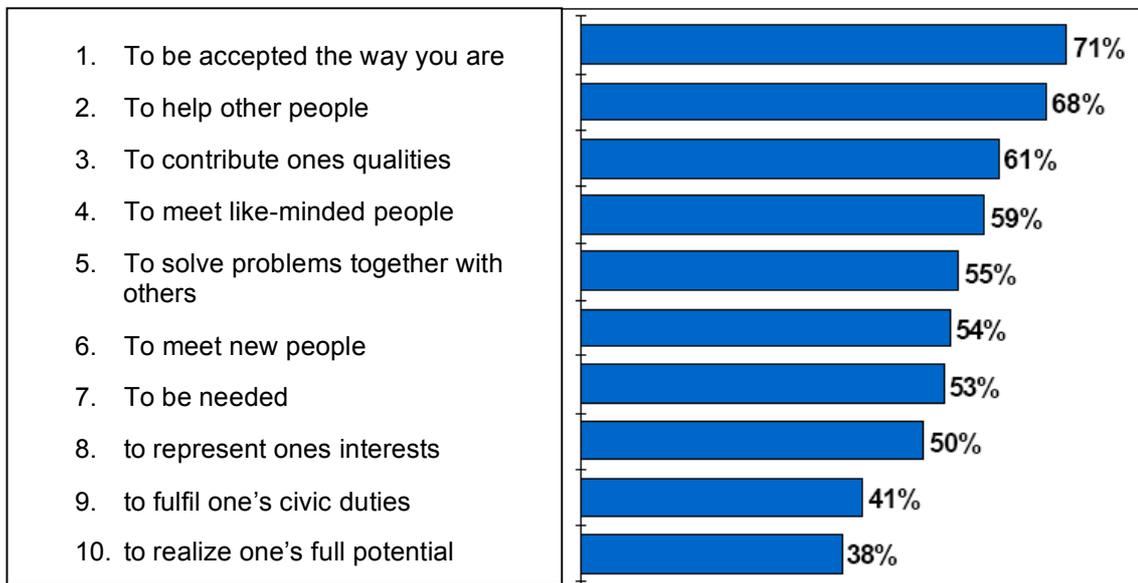


Figure 3: Motivational expectations of volunteers (“yes, absolutely”) (Ministry of Social Affairs Baden-Württemberg 200, S. 70)

Concerning the core motives (positions 1 to 3) there is a remarkably constant trend. Thus, there seems to be an inventory of expectations specific to volunteering but irrelevant of milieu affiliation. In addition to this, there are strong milieu-specific differentiations concerning the ranking positions succeeding the ones pictured in fig. 3. Thus, the traditional milieus tend to associate civic participation with more than 80% to the motif “fulfilling one’s civic duty”; whereas this motif is of minor importance to more modern milieus such as the “Escapists” (58%) respectively the postmodern (42%) milieu.

In contrast, the relevance of the motif “to realize one’s full potential” (average: 69,9%) is solely for “Escapists” and “postmodern” milieu above average (84% and 87%) whereas the more traditional milieus do not award too much importance to this motif (Traditional Workers Milieu: 43% and Traditional Bourgeois Milieu: 54%).

Barriers to Volunteering or Civic Participation

In a comprehensive milieu perspective, typical barriers are presented as consisting of fears and negative expectations: fearing to be used for other people's interests, fearing to be involved with people where there is no common ground for the volunteering activities, to be used in general and fearing to have to play a role and not be able to display one's usual behaviour. These are the fears and expectations of about one third of the studies' participants. Moreover, about one fourth of the participants articulate concerns about not having an insurance while working there or they are afraid of being used or "not being able to deal with each other in a relaxed way" (Ministry for Social Affairs Baden-Württemberg 2000, p. 79f).

A big part of the documented barriers is concentrated especially on two low status milieus: almost 50% of the Escapists say that they are afraid of being used, presenting "cheap labour" for the volunteering institutions and not being able to authentically participate; also classic barriers to participation (such as the fear of starting something new), fearing to not be able to fulfil the demands, are articulated very often by low status milieus. Almost identical main foci can be seen in the answer trends given by members of the non-traditional workers milieu. Also the fear of being asked too much, when asked to "contribute to public interests", is mainly articulated by low status milieus of traditional and non-traditional workers milieus. Consequently, exactly these milieus rarely get the impression that they "... are needed for civic participation." (Non-traditional workers milieu: 55%, traditional workers milieu: 51% vs. average: 64%) (Sozialministerium Baden-Württemberg 2000, p. 79f).

So far, there are only data on volunteering/civic participation as well as on the corresponding interests, motives and barriers for basic values/ data on the living conditions and environment within the framework of an older model of social milieus. The current model is used only for a short analysis on volunteering as far as the *typology of wishes* is concerned (BCN 2009).

According to this analysis, 9% of the participants are politically active. The members of the escapist milieu and of the experimentalist milieu say that they are politically active and lie above average with these numbers (19% and 18,7%). However, "Political Activity" seems not to be the higher order category for civic participation and volunteering because in looking at the category "volunteering", it becomes obvious that it is mainly the higher status milieus that are strongly engaged in volunteering (Postmaterialists: 22%; Conservatives: 16%; Well Established: 15%) while from the Escapists that participated in the study merely 3% were actively volunteering at the time the study was conducted. These results help to develop a more differentiated picture of the structure of those who participate but also of those who do not and more importantly why they do not participate.

Summary and Perspectives

In this article some very basic insights into the core results on social milieus and also in the results that are relevant for the strengthening of participation in volunteering were presented. This last paragraph will summarize some important findings and give a perspective in applying the model of the social milieus.

In taking a closer look at the research results on volunteering and civic participation there can be drawn a very positive picture: over one third of the population says they are volunteering. And in trying to further differentiate that result the model of the social milieus shows that mainly members of the more traditional and conservative milieus volunteer more than average. It can also be seen that there is a quite constant trend concerning the motives for volunteering since the most important three motives do not vary across the milieus. Nevertheless, only the first three ranking positions are that constant; on the following positions, there is a stronger milieu differentiation to be seen. But there are also insights on

the barriers to civic participation and volunteering: being used or not being needed, are quite common reasons to refuse the participation.

Overall, these results deliver important insights in the motives and expectations of those who already participate and can thus provide tools for volunteering organisations that contribute to strengthening further their participant's commitment. More importantly, the differentiation in social milieus offers an insight into the barriers, expectations and wishes of those who do not yet participate. Thus, if the participation rate for volunteering and civic participation is to be raised, those who offer possibilities to participate in volunteering need to consider how they can make their offers more attractive to these social groups. A better integration of those who do not yet participate was reached for instance in further education by applying the model of the social milieus (Tippelt et al. 2008). A social marketing approach based on the results presented in this article thus offers a very promising perspective for increasing participation in volunteering.

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