Bowling Alone or Making democracy work? Lifeworld and the Analysis of political action.

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Abstract:

Democracy depends on the participation of its citizens. But in analyzing participation and democracy, a core dimension is often missing: the "Lebenswelt" (lifeworld). As Lebenswelt encompass a specific reservoir of experience and knowledge, it is here where citizens develop their interests, habits and attitudes. (Schütz/Luckmann 2003). Hence, we suggest to include the concept in research on democracy and participation along the following central questions: Which Life Worlds can be identified? Which policies and dimensions do matter? How do Life Worlds influence the manner of political and social participation? What kind of impact does the specific Lebenswelt have on assessment/judgment/appraisal/evaluation of democracy?

This conceptual work is the basis of an empirical study with 300 face-to-face in-depth interviews in the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany conducted in 2013/14. Preliminary results suggest that there are patterns of participation and construction of political reality that are closely linked with individual life worlds.
Introduction: Bowling together makes democracy work?

Democracy depends on the participation of its citizens. Following Amitai Etzioni (1968), Sydney Verba and Joseph Nie (1972), Max Kaase, Samuel Barnes and Alan Marsh (1979), Benjamin Barber (1984), and others we are analyzing politics and polities of democracies by focusing especially on the participation aspect: Government by participation and government by discussion (Schmidt 2002). In doing so there is a long record in social sciences asking for the right determinants for analyzing participation and democracy (van Deth 2009), i.e. looking at the structures of the political systems or the attitudes of the people.

But where do people learn democracy? Do they learn it, as Robert Putnam (1993:176) suggests, in “singing groups and soccer clubs”? Are these small organizations really bringing together different social groups and social ranks in terms of learning democracy? While Putnam argues that cultural values, norms and socially generated trust and structures of social life like networks and clubs constitute organizational, behavioral and cultural layers of social capital, we are partly questioning this perspective. We argue that if people learn democracy, they do it where Putnam suggests them to do. We also suggest that whether people learn democracy or not is dependent on whom people are bowling with and where. Why? Because of one predominant trend in western civilizations: postmodernization (Featherstone 1991; Turner 1994; Inglehart 1997) of cultural and social life fosters fragmentation and particularization of what Alfred Schütz called “Lebenswelt” (Life world) (Schütz/Luckmann 2003).

According to Alfred Schütz, life world encompasses a specific (and individual) reservoir of experiences and knowledge. It is the place where citizens develop their interests, habits and attitudes. Therefor (political) interests are always culturalized interests. They are determined, and characterized by the specific horizon of experience, patterns of argumentation and conduct of living (“Lebensvollzug”) in everyday life.

Considering this, we suggest that life world becomes the core category for describing and analyzing subjective dimensions of political objectivity, as Norbert Elias (1978) puts it. At the same time, it is a vastly under-researched topic in contemporary approaches to political culture and democracy. This is even more puzzling, as it has high potential to explain phenomena contesting representative democracies. These
are for example the disenchantment with politics (and political apathy) of large groups of society on the one hand and the rising of the “Wutbürger” (angry citizen) demanding for more participation throughout Europe (from the struggle of the miners in Central Spain to the opposition to infrastructural programs in Southern Germany). The argument is that, because of the dissolution of traditional life worlds and the multiplication of life concepts in postmodernity, societies become even more fragmented. In sum, the resulting heterogeneity of life worlds and lifestyles does have a strong impact on politics, the evaluation of the quality of democracy (Beetham et al 2008) and forms of participation. Depending on what kind of interests, values and reservoirs for action are salient in the respective life world people are more or less (or even not) interested in politics and concrete policies, and are more or less (or not) addressed by and in support of the polity. Thus, it makes a difference with whom you bowl in terms of culturalized political interests and behavior. Hence, in the following sections, we propose a conceptual enlargement of research on democracy and participation to assess the varieties of life worlds, the themes and relations that are relevant to them and the way how specific patterns of orientation and motivation derived from the life world influence social capital, political participation and the evaluation of democracy. These questions are subject to a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative empirical study conducted in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg.

The Puzzle of participation

Modern democracy depends on the participation of its citizens. This participative interpretation of democracy is advanced by scholars like Amitai Etzioni (1968), Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (1972), Max Kaase, Samuel Barnes and Alan Marsh (1979) as well as more recent thinkers like David Beetham (1994) and Todd Landman (2008). As a consequence, government through participation and government by discourse and discussion (Schmidt 2000:252) become key concepts for analyzing processes and structures of contemporary democracies. In addition, determinants of participation and evaluation of political processes and structures within democracies as well as democracy as a “bounded whole” of norms and values become more and more important. They could provide possible explanations for the

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1 The Project “Demokratiemonitoring Baden-Württemberg” running from October 2013 until December 2014 is funded by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, a non-profit GmbH. (successor of the federal state foundation Baden-Württemberg)
uprising public distrust, skepticism towards politicians, political parties and political institutions in particular and a “spreading dissatisfaction with the institutions and processes of representative democracy” (Dalton, Scarrow and Cain 2006:1; c.f. Dalton 2004) in general that leads to declining electoral participation. But at the same time, we witness a growing variety of more or less new forms of political action: “more people are signing petitions, joining citizen interest groups, and engaging in unconventional forms of political action” (Dalton, Scarrow and Cain 2006:1).

There is a long track of social and political research asking for the right determinants for analyzing participation and democracy (van Deth 2009), i.e. looking at the structures of the political systems or the attitudes of the people. They make important contributions to the understanding of unequal and asymmetrical participatory patterns in modern democracies. Participation is socially fragmented and it depends on education and income. In fact, political participation is rather a phenomenon of middle and upper classes (van Deth 2009) than of the lower classes.

In the last decades, there has been a significant shift in at least three dimensions of political participation: Forms, modes, and fields of political action.

1) Forms of political action: Starting as early as 1979, Samuel Barnes, Max Kaase and others introduced the distinction between old and new forms of political action. They classified the first as conventional and the latter as unconventional (Barnes and Kaase 1979:409-477): sit-ins, mass-demonstrations, starvation blockades became more and more important for some parts of western populations. Conventional action like participation in elections, in turn, became less important. With the rising importance of social media in the 21st century, incidents like online-petitions, so called “shit-storms”, flash-mobs, boycotting and other internet-based forms of participation complemented the analogous spectrum of unconventional political action.

2) Modes of political action: There is a growing gap between those participating individually and those being involved in organizations and associations (van Deth 2012): Organizational activity becomes less important as a requisite for political participation. Instead, individualized modes of participation gain importance and reflect the fragmentation of political life and social coherence as a whole.
3) Fields of participation: People can participate in various spheres of action, namely what could be defined as the broad social field vice versa the narrower political field. Even though being contested concepts (cf. Ekman and Amnå 2012) both, civic engagement and political participation denominate the form of action in the respective field. Civic engagement can be defined as “voluntary work” (Ekman and Amnå 2012: 285) be it in the local community or not. According to Adler and Goggin 2005: 241) civic engagement “has to do with how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future”. Political participation, in turn, can be defined as “all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system” (Kaase and Marsh 1979: 42). Though the third dimension captures whether participation is (at least subjectively defined as) political or social.

Spanning a three-dimensional space, different types of participation can be identified in the participation cube presented in graph 1. Within the cube, different patterns of participation and political action can be graphically located.

Graph 1: the participation cube

Own compilation based on Ekman and Amnå 2012, van Deth 2012, Barnes and Kaase 1979
The fragmentation of participation is one result of a vaster social, political and economic transformation: postmodernization (Inglehart 1997; Featherstone 1991; Turner 1994; Ueltzhöffer 1999; Frankenberger 2007). Postmodernization forwards massive value changes including the dissolution of traditional values and life worlds and the amplification of life scripts. It brings about new patterns of value orientations that are not necessarily compatible with each other concerning basic values of concepts of collectivization and tolerance.

Postmodernization thus fragments communities and civil society as well as the points of reference of social relationships, integration, and trust. The newly emerging life worlds also have impact on political participation and the evaluation of politics, policies and polity.

**The transformation of political culture**

Starting with the seminal work of Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba on “Civic Culture” (1963), the political culture of a community becomes a core element of political research. They define political culture as “specifically political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system. (…) We to the political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population” (Almond and Verba 1963:13-14). Karl Rohe defines political culture more generally as the cognitive and normative map of the respective political world (Rohe 1994:1). Political culture then becomes one of the most important factors for the evaluation of the state of democracy. From a systems perspective, political culture is important for the stability of the political system. Political systems are stable if there is a fit between internalized values on the one hand and the institutionalization of politics on the other. For democracy to be stable and to survive a minimum of democratic values and norms has to be internalized by the population and there has to be a minimum of contentedness with the institutions, processes and outcomes of democratic policies among the vast majority of the population (Easton 1965, 1975, 1976; Dalton 2008). Most studies show, that there is enough diffuse and specific support for institutions,

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2 Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba define political orientations as „the internalized aspects of objects and relationships. In includes 1) cognitive orientation, that is, knowledge and belief about the political system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs and outputs; (2) affective orientation, or feelings about the political system its roles, personnel, and performance, and (3) evaluational orientation, the judgments and opinions about political objects, that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria with information and feelings” (Almond and Verba 1963:15)
processes and role takers within western democracies. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, there are also quests for more participatory possibilities in political processes, more responsiveness of political authorities, more transparency and accountability (e.g. Dalton, Cain and Scarrow 2006, Dalton 2008, Denk and Silander 2012). Taking these findings into account, the question of a “democratization of democracy” (Pateman 2012) gains importance in political science as well as in the public debate.

Culture and value orientations seem to be one important issue in this context (c.f. Lane/Wagschal 2012; Putnam 2007; Inglehart/Welzel 2005; Newton 1997). Studies analyzing value change state massive changes in value preference within the populations of western industrial societies. Ronald Inglehart (1997) describes this as a postmodern shift of values based on individual and collective economic and social security in modern welfare states. According to Inglehart, this includes a relocation of authority away from religion and state towards the individual. As a result, individual interests become more and more important and substitute collective authorities: “This new trajectory shifts authority away from both religion and the state to the individual, with an increasing focus on individual concerns such as friends and leisure. Postmodernization deemphasizes all kinds of authority, whether religious or secular, allowing much wider range for individual autonomy for the pursuit of individual subjective well-being” (Inglehart 1997: 74-75). Inglehart thus considers the maximization of individual well-being as one of the core elements of postmodernity: “(...) the core project is to maximize individual well-being, which is increasingly dependent on subjective factors. Human behavior shifts from being dominated by the economic imperative of providing food, clothing, and shelter toward the pursuit of quality of life concerns” (Inglehart 1997:76).

According to Helmut Klages (1993; 2001; Klages and Gensicke 1999) the postmodern value transformation is best described in terms of losses and gains. Whereas traditional and conformist values of duty orientation and acceptance (Pflicht- und Akzeptanzwerte) like obedience, subordination, orderliness and diligence lose importance, postmodern and individualistic values of self-actualization (Selbstentfaltungswerte) like individualism and personal autonomy gain importance. These developments mirror a vast individualization and pluralization of lifestyles, the “subjectivation” and a devaluation of normative ties and the rise of instrumental and utilitarian orientations towards others (Hepp 1996:4). As a result, manifold,
heterogeneous concepts of lifestyles and the Self emerge throughout western populations (Bilden 2007).

Apart from these insights the question what the politically important and relevant determinants for the construction of identity and life conduct are can only partly be answered by survey-based studies on political culture and value change (Rohe 1994). According to Karl Rohe, there are two main reasons for the limitation of survey-based research: First, even though it might not exist without individuals, culture as well as language has rather to be treated as a social than an individual phenomenon. Second, research based on methodological individualism is hardly able to grasp the underlying social mechanisms (Rohe 1994:4).

This is even more relevant in the light of participatory approaches to democracy like the one of Robert Putnam on social capital. Putnam defines social capital as „features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. […] Social Capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (Putnam 1995:664f). Social capital in the form of moral obligations, norms of generalized reciprocity, social trust and social networks (i.e. voluntary associations) constitutes the fundament for a vital economic and political system as well as for political integration (Putnam 1993; 2007, c.f. Offe 1999; Grix 2001; Portes 1998; Rothstein and Uslander 2005).

In “Bowling Alone” Robert Putnam introduces the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Whereas bonding social capital is exclusive and tends to strengthen closed communities and networks, bridging social capital is inclusive and fosters the integration of heterogeneous individuals and generates “broader identities and reciprocity” (Putnam 2000:22f; c.f. Field 2003:32f).

The role of bridging social capital becomes more and more important for social cohesion under postmodern conditions of fragmentation and pluralization. Even more so does “linking social capital”, a type of social capital introduced by Michael Woolcock (2001:13f). This type of social capital is even more inclusive, as it “reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available within the community” (Field 2003:42).

Taken together, these three types of social capital constitute a three-dimensional space of social capital, the “social capital cube”. On the x-axis, bonding social capital
can be low or high, the y-axis represents bridging social capital and the z-axis refers to linking social capital. The eight corners represent eight combinatory ideal types, where either type reaches a maximum or minimum. Number 1 represents the ideal type with all three dimensions being low (or: not existing) and number 8 represents the ideal type with all three dimensions being high.

*Graph 1: The social capital cube*

Most of the eight ideal combinations will appear also empirically. For example, in a globalized society, where people with their specific lifestyle living in London share more interests with their counterparts living in Paris and New York than with most of the people living in their immediate neighborhood, linking, and maybe bridging, capital might be high whereas bonding social capital can be low. Under postmodern conditions, social capital probably has to be more than trust and reciprocity in small communities and local voluntary associations in order to secure its role as fundament for democracy. We concede that there might be so called mixed types, where one of the dimensions is rather medium than high or low. We also concede that the case of zero social capital might be limited to sociopaths like Anders Behring Breivik. Some people and networks like The Mafia will create bonding capital. This fact points to a
wicket side of social capital. Even though Robert Putnam is aware of potential exclusive and particularistic forces of social capital, he argues that creating more social capital is generally positive (Putnam 2000:414). Other authors argue that “Social capital’s dark side” (Field 2003:70) can also have negative impact on social cohesion and generalized trust. Especially bonding social capital might reinforce inequality and the support of antisocial behavior (Field 2003:70f; Fukuyama 2001).

According to Putnam, we learn democracy in “singing groups and soccer clubs” (Putnam 1993:176; c.f. Schmid/Buhr 2011:313). Cultural values and norms, social trust and the structures of social life are the roots of social capital. Thus, the nucleus of social capital lies in the relations of individuals in everyday life. These, in turn, are more and more fragmented under postmodern conditions. Numerous empirical studies including large-n surveys like the World Value Surveys (cf. Welzel, Inglehart and Deutsch 2005 and more recently Delhey and Welzel 2012) or the European Social Survey (cf. Hooghe/Marien 2013; Uslander 2008) analyze values including the dimensions of trust and social capital (Maloney and Rossteutscher 2007; Meulemann 2008; van Deth 2003). They have produced a valuable database for comparative studies in political culture. Unfortunately, especially qualitative research on the roots and origins of social capital and trust in everyday life is rare today.

Life world as the nucleus of culturalized interests, trust and social capital.

Taking into account the distinction between the bonding, bridging and linking social capital and the fragmentation of postmodern life, we seriously question the optimism of Robert Putnam. Instead, we argue that we have to go back behind or under the concept of social capital and investigate the roots of social trust and reciprocity within the everyday life of people. To address this issue and to capture the social character of individually internalized culture and rationalities of action, we suggest to include the everyday life social context of individuals in the analysis of social trust. We use the concept of “Lebenswelt” (Life world) developed by Alfred Schütz (Schütz 1966; Schütz and Luckmann 2003). Everyday life constitutes the horizons of experience that create specific knowledge and where the individual relevance of specific topics and areas of knowledge are determined. Schütz argues, that the “world of daily life” constitutes “a biographically determined situation (...) within which man has his position, not merely his position in terms of physical space and outer time or of his status and role within the social system but also his moral and ideological position
(...) this biographically determined situation includes certain possibilities of future practical or theoretical activities which shall be briefly called the ‘purpose at hand” (Schütz 1970:73). According to Schütz it is clear that a normal adult does not develop his or her interests and preferences as a non-historical individual, but as a member of a historical community (Schütz and Luckmann 2003:506). Interests and especially political interests are culturalized interests and shaped by the horizons of experience, patterns of argumentation and conduct of life in the life world. Experiences in the life world determine and guide action, as they provide a specific set of reality, meaning and a stock of knowledge. This stock of knowledge socialized in interaction between individuals thus is socially determined. It represents the reality that modifies our action, and that is modified through action (Schütz and Luckmann 2003:33). Action in this context is the execution or actualization of a pre-designed experience (Hitzler 1997:115) that is rooted in the experiences made within the respective life world. For example, Ronald Hitzler distinguishes two forms of political knowledge: first, knowledge that enables political orientation and expression, and second, strategic knowledge enabling successful political action. Individuals obtain this knowledge in processes of social learning in their life world and use it for their orientation in the political field (Bourdieu) as well as for the formulation of options of action and their actual realization in political action. Political action in this context comprises all activities of citizens with the aim to influence political decisions and processes of decision-making (cf. van Deth 2009:141). In other words, individual political action strongly depends on what individuals experience in their immediate life world. Even more, the immediate life world determines the individual definition of what is political or not.

**Dimensions of the Life World**

The heterogeneity of life worlds has impact on the learning of democracy. This learning depends on the individual and biographically determined relational and motivational relevance and interests developed and actualized in the life world. Thus, life world becomes a core category for describing and explaining the subjective dimension of political reality (Elias 1978). Due to the complexity of everyday life, we have to separate analytical dimensions of the life world. Alfred Schütz (Schütz and Luckmann 2003) proposes a structuration along 1) a spatial; 2) a temporal and 3) a social dimension. In combination, they constitute the different layers of everyday life.
1) Spatial variation: The life world consists of the world at reach (or “at hand”) and the world in potential reach. The first includes all actual perceptions of things. They are remembered in terms of socially objectified typologies of meaning. The latter, again can be divided in two layers. The restorable world refers to all areas that formerly were at reach and can be considered as stable. These well-known and mostly direct social relations like the family and friendships can be actualized at any time (Schütz and Luckman 2003:73). Additionally there is the world outside the actual or restorable area that never was “at hand” but is potentially reachable. According to Schütz, the prospects of reachability diminish reciprocally with spatial, temporal and social distance of the respective layer to the core of the world at reach (Schütz and Luckmann 2003:75). In fact, all spatial distance can be interpreted as an obstacle to realization. Under postmodern conditions of transcendence of space and time this distance is transformed into a question of disposition of technical means like the internet. Schütz also points out that the spatial stratification of the life world includes a social dimension of intimacy vs. anonymity, strangeness vs. familiarity, social adjacency vs. distance. With a growing distance and anonymity the relevance of this part of the life world for the conduct of everyday life diminishes. The relevance of social and political life for individual action and creation of knowledge then depends on their permanent actualization.

2) Temporal variation refers to the dimensions of history and future, continuity and lasting, inevitability and the priority of “first things first”. Time limits the number of plans, actions, experiences an individual can take. This forces the individual to prioritize action along the inevitability of everyday life (Schütz and Luckmann 2003: 85). This leads to the prioritization of things, events and actions that belong the world “at hand”. Socially and spatially distant issues usually are less important.

3) As previously said, social variation is closely intertwined with spatial variation. The direct experience of the other constitutes and actualizes the intersubjectivity of the life world as such (Schütz and Luckmann 2003:109). These close relations are relevant for the culturalization of interests in as far as the people we have contacts with determine our experiences in the world at hand. The world at potential reach is represented by indirect experiences of
the social world. This includes the social world of our contemporaries we do not have close we-relations with (e.g. sovereign and tributary) as well as institutionalized realities and socially determined relations of meaning that are more or less anonymous and reachable. For example, people working in a concrete institution are potentially reachable whereas the capitalist economic system is not (Schütz and Luckmann 2003: 110-115). The more abstract a contemporary individual or institution is, the more relevant is the knowledge on the contemporary that is provided within direct social interaction. As consequence the peer-groups’ opinions are probably more important than objective facts in evaluating social and political institutions and role takers.

These three dimensions limit the situation and structure subjective experience. As a result “man finds himself at any moment of his daily life in a biographically determined situation, that is, in a physical and socio-cultural environment as defined by him, within which he has his position” (Schütz 1970:73). Furthermore, “the unique biographical situation in which I find myself within the world at any moment of my existence is only to a very small extent of my own making. I find myself always within a historically given world” (Schütz 1970:163-4). Subjective structures of relevance then are socially determined in two ways: first by the actual context of any social situation, and second by the socio-historic influences on individual biographies (Schütz and Luckmann 2003:342). All attitudes, plans, typologies, interpretations, i.e. the individual system of interpretation and motivation, have a social history. We argue that the actual interests, opinions, concerns of an individual reflects the patterns of interests and motivations and the stock of knowledge that are biographically determined in the respective life world. But how can we gather empirical knowledge on the differences in these patterns? We suggest that we have to decompose life world into different spheres of the conduct of everyday life in order to get grip on individual descriptions of life worlds.

According to Bodo Flaig, Thomas Meyer and Jörg Ueltzhöffer (1994) and Ulrich Becker and Horst Nowak (1982) life world consists of all spheres of experience people are engaged with every day and that are strongly influencing the development and change of attitudes, opinions, behavior and patterns of action (Becker and Nowak 1982: 247). In line with Schütz, Flaig, Meyer and Ueltzhöffer (1994:51) define life world as the bounded whole of a subjective reality, including work, family, leisure time, wishes, fears and dreams. Following this perspective, we refer to eight spheres
of the life world, that allow for identifying the representations of interest and meaning according to Schütz’ layers of the life world.

1) Work: Work and workspace represent a core part of the life world, as most people spend a lot of time with working. They do not only have immediate social contacts there but also different parts of the potential world are actualized continuously in economic transactions.

2) Family: Represents large parts of the immediate social relations in the world at hand. This is the nexus of social experience as such.

3) Social relations: immediate and potential social relations, including memberships in voluntary associations offer insight in the individual networks and their subjective meaning. Here reciprocal norms and values are internalized and actualized.

4) Consumptive goals and desires: One of the main features of postmodern societies is the aesthetization of everyday life (cf. Featherstone 1991)\(^3\). Together with recreational activities, consumptive goals are one main area of aesthetic expression of lifestyles and codes of the respective life world.

5) Leisure time

6) Perspectives about the future: What an individual regards as the world at potential reach, finds its expression in plans for the future. They represent individual aims in life and the evaluations of their chances to be realized.

7) Political values and orientation: As the foundations of political action, motivational structures and interests referring to politics find their expression in political values and orientations. Actively articulated values and orientations represent the stock of knowledge at hand that guides action in everyday political life.

8) Daydreams: offer insight in the imaginative inventory of people that complements the stock of knowledge and experience that guides action. They reach beyond

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3 In his analysis of “consumer culture and postmodernism”, Mike Featherstone (1991) highlights the process of a visible and tangible aesthetization of everyday life as a core central development within the „postmodern formation“ of contemporary societies (Frankenberger, 2007, 23-64). Featherstone (1991: 65) defines the postmodern experience as an “intensification of image production in the media and consumer culture in general”. He distinguishes three forms of expression of the aesthetization of everyday life: First, boarders between art and everyday life are erased; Second, life itself is turned into a work of art. This kind of art is mainly expressed through aesthetic consumerism: “This dual focus on a life of aesthetic consumption and the need to form life into an aesthetically pleasing whole on the part of artistic and intellectual countercultures should be related to the development of mass consumption in general and the pursuit of new tastes and sensations and the construction of distinctive lifestyles which has become central to consumer culture” (Featherstone, 1991, 66); Third, the primate of visuality.
realistic perceptions, for example imaginations of ruling the world, being able to fly, etc.

**Studying Life world and Democracy: Democracy-Monitoring Baden-Württemberg**

Assuming that life world is the nexus of political interests and participation, we use this theoretical background in an empirical study on the state of democracy in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Baden-Württemberg, Germany, has about 11 Mio inhabitants and a GDP/capita of approximately 37.500€. If we follow survey-results on participation like the European Social Survey and the Freiwilligensurvey (Gensicke and Geiss 2010) on participation and voluntary work, we can characterize Baden-Württemberg as a “garden of Eden” of participation with approximately 80% of the inhabitants being active. Most of the civic engagement takes place in sports clubs, churches and schools. So, in some way it makes representative democracy work as people rather did not claim much direct influence and participation in politics. In 2010-11, this picture changed in the context of huge infrastructural projects (Stuttgart 21 train station) and the aftermath of Fukushima. Suddenly, a widespread articulation of participatory demands emerged, and state elections 2011 brought about political change. Now, after more than 50 years of conservative governments (Christian Democrats) Baden-Württemberg is governed by a coalition-government led by the Green Party. Faced with this change, policy makers initiated debates on how to assess the state of democracy and public opinions more systematically.

Thus, political scientists from five universities in Baden-Württemberg developed a concept for a monitoring that includes and combines different methodological and theoretical approaches to analyze democracy and participation. The three pillars of the first wave are: 1) a representative survey of opinions of inhabitants on democracy and participation. Here 3000 inhabitants aged 15+ with German language proficiency were interviewed using CATI; 2) a study analysing effects of participation and participatory demands on municipal administrations and legislations using document

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4 The “Demokratie- Monitoring Baden-Württemberg” on the state of democracy is funded by the non-profit Baden-Württemberg Foundation.
5 https://www.statistik-bw.de/VolkswPreise/Indikatoren/VW_wirtschaftskraft.asp
6 These are the universities of Freiburg, Heidelberg, Mannheim, Stuttgart and Tübingen.
analysis and qualitative interviews, and 3) the study on life world and democracy presented here. The three pillars are considered to complement each other by triangulating different perspectives and methodological approaches in order to paint a more comprehensive picture of the state of democracy than it could be by using only one of them.

**Research questions**

Despite the fact that life world is the place where individuals build up their individual stock of political and social knowledge (Hitzler 1997:115), attempts to systematically analyze it from a political science perspective are rare (for some examples, see Berking and Neckel 1987; Patzelt 1992; Dettling 1995; Hitzler 1997)\(^7\). In order to contribute to a better understanding of the origins of trust, social capital and participation, we conduct field research based on 1) Alfred Schütz’ distinct layer of the life world, and 2) on the eight referential dimensions of everyday life proposed by Flaig et al (1997) outlined above. Taking into account these theoretical and empirical backgrounds, the aim of our research is three-fold. First, we intend to identify the core patterns and themes of different life worlds and the role politics, policies and polity play within the life world. On this basis, we then – secondly – propose a typology of life worlds a) by situating the different life worlds in the participation cube; and b) by locating them within the three-dimensional space of social capital that we derived from social capital approaches especially by Putnam and Woolcock (2001). Based on the results on the relations between life world, political knowledge and democracy we answer the following questions:

1. What different life worlds do exist?
2. What are the main points of reference in these life worlds? What parts of the life world are considered to be “at hand” or in potential reach respectively?
3. What kind of social capital is generated in the respective life worlds? Where can they be located in the cube of social capital? Do they foster bonding, bridging, or linking social capital
4. How do these Life world relationships influence the manner of political and social participation? What is their position in the participation cube?

\(^7\) In contrast, the everyday life world, mediated by everyday life aesthetics and concepts of lifestyle, is an integral part of quantitative and qualitative market research (c.f. Ueltzhöffer 1999). Unfortunately, these economically used models are at most partly useful for scientific analyses due to the lack of intersubjectivity.
5. What kind of impact does the specific life world have on the evaluation of the quality of democracy?

**Methodology: How to assess life worlds?**

Methodologically speaking, life world is a “bounded whole” that can only analytically be separated in different spheres, but has to be interpreted hermeneutically. Thus survey-based quantitative research has its limits when it comes to the genesis of individual values, opinions, social and political trust, and political culture as a whole. To get valuable information on the life world as the nucleus of political culture means to address relations and orientations in everyday life, patterns of interaction, stock of knowledge and causal mechanisms. Life world is a subjective construction. Thus, only the individuals living in this life world can bear witness to it. In other words, we need to ask people about their life world. Instead of a close questionnaire, qualitative or narrative interviews allow for capturing such information, as individuals can actively express their views and constructions of their life world. The resulting data allows for a control of consistency of interpretations, codes and orientations regarding the life world (cf. Willis 1977, Morley 1980, 1992). Based on a small questionnaire, guided interviews use the individual narrative as a source of data and at once allow for focusing on relevant dimensions. Data analysis then has to follow the logic of qualitative content analysis in order to identify patterns of meaning, relations and interpretation. Qualitative content analysis is especially powerful in structuring explorative data gathered from narratives and building typologies (cf. Kracauer 1952; Glaser and Strauss 1967).

We thus used a field manual that includes open questions on three main topics in order to stimulate and – in case – regulate the narration of our interviewees⁸.

1. Politics, Democracy and Participation: Here, we formulated thirteen questions concerning a) the individual definition of politics and democracy, b) the self-reception as a political individual, c) satisfaction with the political system as a whole, d) national, federal and municipal elections, e) the anticipation of participatory scope and possibilities, f) individual participation, its perceived efficacy and political status, g) interpersonal and institutional trust

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⁸ In addition to the questions, the field manual includes extensive information for the interviewers concerning the aims of the respective questions, potential follow-up questions and related topics in order to ensure the right direction of interventions into the individual narratives.
2. Values: This section includes four questions on a) Personal political goals, b) political beliefs, c) aims of life, and d) interpersonal trust and values.

3. Life world: In this part of the field manual, we use questions aiming at different aspects of the individual conduct of life. Here, we focus on the eight dimensions outlined by Flaig et al (1997) outlined above ant Alfred Schütz distinct layers of the life world.

This qualitative field manual was complemented by a standardized questionnaire on socio-demographic variables including age, sex, education, profession, income, religion, and nationality.

**Field work**

Fieldwork comprises approximately 300 qualitative face-to-face interviews in 14 municipalities in the federal State of Baden-Württemberg, Germany9. In a first wave, we have already done 150 qualitative interviews with residents aged 15 Years plus and a German language proficiency. The duration of the interviews varied from 25 minutes to 1:15 hours. In the second wave, we are currently running another 150 interviews. Interviewees are selected by a combination of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss) and a balancing of unequally distributed socio-demographic characteristics. First, we want to add information on aspects of trust and social capital as well as on life worlds. Second, we had an underrepresentation of workers, and persons with lower formal education in general, as well as of people with a migrational background (who constitute approximately one quarter of the population in Baden-Württemberg10

**Methods**

Interviews are transliterated according to simple word-by-word transcription rules11. In order to identify patterns of relations between individual constructions of Politics, Democracy and Participation, Values and individual life worlds, Content Analysis comprises two steps. The first step follows the basic logic of thematical coding (cf. Hopf, Nevermann und Schmidt 1985; Hopf 1995, Hopf und Hopf 1997). Starting from the field manual we develop and differentiate the three main categories Politics,

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9 Municipalities are selected in order to represent the different structure and regional disparities in the state: large, medium and small, rural and urban, administrative districts.

10 In 2012, 26.7% of Baden-Württemberg citizens were foreigners or Germans with a migrational background. (http://www.statistik-portal.de/BevoelkGebiet/Indikatoren/BV-BS_migranten.asp )

11 Transcriptions were done by the service provider transkripto.de.
Values and Life world. These categories then are “filled” and modified by the empirical material. The material (transliterated interviews) is coded according to the code manual, i.e. all parts of the text are coded according to their relevance for one or more of these categories. Parts that can’t be categorized into an existing (sub-) category, then provisionally form a new (sub-)category. Subsequently the categorical system is refined during the analysis.

In a second step, we conduct a typological analysis (cf. Schütz 1972; Kuckartz 1988, 1995; Kluge 1999) of political life worlds and their interdependence with the participatory types discussed above. This includes the introduction of dimensions, the identification of types and case analyses based on this typologization.

**Preliminary results**

As we still conduct the second wave of interviews, data is analyzed neither completely nor exhaustively yet. Nevertheless, there are some very preliminary results on trust, life world and democracy:

Asked for things important for living together in our society, most people actively reproduce

- Patterns of bonding social capital, concerning family and relatives, neighborhoods, help. But the motives are quite heterogeneous from altruistic to egoistic, from rational choice decisions to emotional motivations.
- Rather abstract patterns of bridging social capital: People often express more abstract norms of reciprocity, tolerance, respect, often related to the principles of equality and justice and of our democracy as such.
- Sometimes people display patterns of linking social capital (Woolcock): They use explicit references to the people of other countries or to worldwide, international „value-communities“.

Asked for persons they would trust when it comes to politics people often highlight themselves and their ability to form their own opinion. Others highlight their trust in experts, but not necessarily in their expertise.

There seems to be a division of political trust alongside a cleavage of how people define „democracy“. As opposed to people displaying “governemental-expertocratic”

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12 In order to secure inter-coder-reliability, interviews coded by two independent persons. In addition, code memos are subject to frequent evaluation in the research group.
definitions of democracy, there are people that defines democracy using “participatory-egalitarian” criteria. The first trust their advocates in representative democracy, but not necessarily their fellow citizens (They assume particular interests). The latter trust their fellow citizens and (partly) the system as a whole, but not necessarily their advocates/representatives.

The data reveals a strong linkage between work and participation. Political interests and participation often are closely related to the profession of the people. For example, a lawyer dealing with social legislation and especially social welfare systems is strongly interested in national politics and policy making, as social law is a national issue. Apart from her job, she gets involved in helping welfare recipients in her leisure time and is doing lobbying for them at the local level (e.g. helping them dealing with administration. Motivations thus are often both altruistic and self-centered. On the one hand, people profit in some way from their engagement in terms of job relevance, information and contacts. On the other, they have a strong desire to help others.

Personal relevance is another trigger of participation. People often are participating socially or politically when they are affected themselves by something. For example, they engage with self-help groups or care associations, when they or their close relatives suffer from some disease. Or they are active in schools and parents associations when they have own children. Some of them leave after some time (usually when the cause of their participation has vanished, e.g. children leave school. Others stay, indeed, and become anchors of the respective organization).

In some cases, we captured individual participatory biographies – from sports clubs to parents’ associations to care associations. This holds also true for political participation. Starting in the peace movement in the 1970ies, one interviewee now is active in voluntary consultancy for renewable energy and sustainable development.

**Conclusion**

One of the central ideas of Alfred Schütz was that life world and life form (*Lebensform*) are central categories for analyzing social order and power relations (Schütz and Luckmann, 2003; Schütz, 1981). According to Schütz and Luckmann
Lebenswelt is constituted in the interrelation of knowledge, action and communication of individuals. Within the life world, individuals refer to signs and symbols to express and communicate their life form (Schütz, 1981, 142-196). What a scholar of phenomenology can observe in contemporary societies is a process of fundamental change closely linked with the ideas of globalization and digitalization. This process affects political and social systems as well as it deeply transforms the life worlds of individuals. The theoretical approach of life world then offers a perspective for the explanation of different assessments, projected actions, and perceived chances for success of political action. Taking into account the postmodern heterogeneity of life worlds, learning democracy depend on whom you bowl with and where. Moreover does the knowledge of life world relations allow for an evaluation of politics and instruments of participation that aim at integrating non- or less participating groups in a society. If social capital, participation and democracy are to be developed in terms of a democratization of Democracy (Pateman 2012), we have to be aware of the configurations of heterogeneous life worlds as the nexus of political and social relations.

- Civic education did and does a good job. Abstract political trust and bridging social capital are high.
- This is transformed by individual experiences
- Bonding social capital is far more important and concretely relevant for individuals and their ways of participation.
- Bridging social capital and probably trust arise out of these experiences and probably out of individual participation-biographies.
- The way people define democracy is intertwined with social and political trust.
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