

Political orientation and participation – a longitudinal perspective

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1. Introduction

For empirical social sciences, the issue of the stability of political orientation and attitudes on a personal level and of the validity of the instruments used to measure this stability is of central importance. With the help of the panel data of the DJI Youth Survey, this paper analyses these issues on the basis of some selected topics.

The article not only focuses on methodological issues, but also tries to answer the following question: To what extent are changes noticeable over the course of one year? This second focus is possible as the panel study represents a re-survey of the same variables and interviewees and thus allows analysis of trends on a personal level. One explanation for the changes observed could be that the appropriation of public spheres and growing involvement in society terms of citizenship increase with age, especially during adolescence. On the level of developmental psychology and sociology of youth, this approach allows for an analysis of the extent to which civic competence and young people's interest and involvement in politics increases in only one year. On both the individual and aggregate level, however, the ambivalences, uncertainties, re-orientation and re-decisions typical of youth may also provide developmental results over time which are noticeable, yet so contradictory that they are almost impossible to explain.¹

¹ Contemporary history-related influencing factors, such as significant political events between 2003 and 2004, on either national or international level, might play a role in the context of a panel. In this case, however, influencing factors may be assumed to have been of minor significance as no mobilising events, such as federal elections, or internationally significant events took place. General survey problems, such as question-related learning or recall effects may occur, if panel waves follow in too close a sequence. In both cases, i.e. with learning and recall effects, interviewees' responses in the second wave are still influenced by the first wave. In our study, learning and recall effects are highly unlikely as the topics addressed were not very personal and the two waves were separated by

On the one hand, the main questions in this article thus address the stability of attitudes and expressions concerning the participation of young people, examined over a period of roughly one year, while on the other hand, the structures of participation are also analysed to verify their stability: To what extent does the structure of participation remain the same over the study period? To round things off, this contribution will finally review whether more modern forms of political participation are extending this repertoire of political participation or only broadening its already known dimensions.

Data basis

Our analyses and comments are based on the data of the DJI Youth Survey and the EUYOUPART study. The DJI Youth Survey is part of the continuous social reporting done at the German Youth Institute.² Repeated representative surveys have been conducted with similar or even identical questionnaires to enable analysis of changes in the situation of young people and young adults, their attitudes and behaviour. The DJI youth survey is a representative study, based on personal interviews, about youths and young adults aged 16 to 29 (in the third wave aged 12 to 29). The first wave conducted in 1992 (approx. 7,000 interviews) provided basic figures for the successive waves. The second wave was conducted in 1997 (approx. 7,000 interviews), the third wave with approx. 9,000 interviews in 2003.

The surveys included various topics such as: family situation, education, training and vocation, value orientations, gender role attitudes, political orientations (political and ideological positions, attitudes towards democracy, confidence in social institutions), political participation, political interest, membership in intermediate organizations etc. The main analytical perspectives were: Gender, social inequality, social change, comparison of eastern and western Germany.

For the study of EUYOUPART (see chap. 1) in Germany, the questionnaire was extended and further questions integrated into the survey. The extended questionnaire used the tried-and-tested instruments of the DJI Youth Survey (3rd wave 2003) (e.g. understanding of democracy, trust in institutions) and included supplementary subjects (e.g. questions about support and problems at school, the transition from school to vocational training, personal and health problems). In Germany, in November and December 2004, 1,037 15- to 25-year-olds were surveyed in face-to-face interviews conducted by the social research institute infas under the responsibility of the German Youth Institute (DJI). Interviewee selection was

^a a one-year interval.

² Basic reference: Gille/Sardei-Biermann/Gaiser/de Rijke 2006.

based on a sub-sample of the DJI Youth Survey. For this purpose, the addresses of young people were used who, during the 2003 DJI Youth Survey, had declared their readiness to participate in further surveys.³ Only the datasets of the 16- to 29-year-olds from the 2003 Youth Survey which included political participation and political attitude variables were used for the panel dataset of the 15- to 25-year-olds from EUYOUNPART. In light of the above, 800 of the 1,037 EUYOUNPART cases were used for the panel dataset.⁴

In contrast to the DJI Youth Survey, the EUYOUNPART sample is not disproportionate as far as east and west German Länder are concerned (viz. a ratio of 80% to 20%). Additionally, no further weighting was applied to correct age imbalance, as the analysis does not aim at providing representative statements for young people in this age group but intends to reveal the correlations and structures of attitudes and behaviour.

2. Questions of selectivity

The respondents of the panel dataset used in this comparative analysis represent a sub-sample of the 2003 DJI Youth Survey. In a first step, the extent to which this sub-sample complies with the sample interviewed in the DJI Youth Survey with regard to certain key characteristics is verified. This is because the selection process covered two stages: in the first stage, only those of the young people interviewed were selected who had agreed in the Youth Survey to participate in another interview later on – the “willing panel participants”. They made up approximately 70 % of the 2003 sample. In the second stage in 2004, approximately 1,000 people were selected to

³ The population of the EUYOUNPART sample thus consisted of young people aged 15 to 25 years at the time of the EUYOUNPART survey and who, in the 2003 DJI Youth Survey, had declared their readiness to participate in another survey. From this “pool”, the young people finally interviewed in the EUYOUNPART survey (cf. infas 2005) had been selected in a two-stage randomised procedure. This method has the advantage of surveying the interviewees’ responses at two different points in time and thus allows for comparative analysis of the results obtained in the 2003 DJI Youth Survey and the 2004 EUYOUNPART study.

⁴ 237 cases included in the Youth Survey had been 14 or 15 years old (15 or 16 years at the time of the EUYOUNPART project) and were thus excluded as they had been interviewed on the basis of the abridged, age-adjusted questionnaire for 12- to 15-year-olds in the DJI Youth Survey and did not therefore offer any comparative items for panel analysis. As the panel dataset included only 8 people aged 25 (people who were 25 years old at the time of both the Youth Survey and the EUYOUNPART project – most 25-year-olds had already turned 26 in the meantime), this age group was also excluded from comparative analysis with the Youth Survey (Table 1). This results in a case number of 792 young people who were aged between 16 and 24 at the time of the 2003 Youth Survey.

take part in the EUYOUNG interview. The specific readiness to take part in the interview may also have been due to various, not completely random factors. A comparison of the groups regarding some of the characteristics considered relevant, therefore, is to provide information about possible factors influencing selection during these stages.

The columns in Table 1 show the distributions of 16- to 24-year-olds who participated in the 2003 DJI Youth Survey (5,225 cases), the distributions of young people in this age group who, at that time, had expressed their willingness to participate in the panel (3,909 cases) and, last but not least, the distributions of young people finally included in the 2004 EUYOUNG survey (792 cases). The lines in the table refer to sociodemographic characteristics (region, gender, migration background, age, school leaving qualifications, employment status, domestic situation), attitude-related aspects (interest in politics, post-materialist orientation⁵) and membership in associations and organisations. The overview demonstrates that young people willing to participate in the panel are not different from the total sample as far as region, gender, migration background, employment status and post-materialist orientation are concerned. In terms of age, education, attitudes and memberships, the young people willing to participate in the panel differ only minimally from the total sample. The percentage of interviewees who had expressed their willingness to participate in another survey at a later date thus was only slightly higher among interviewees in younger age groups, interviewees who had a higher level of education, were interested in politics, and members in associations or organizations.

Table 1: Comparison of the samples 2003 DJI Youth Survey – 2004 EUYOUNG (column per cent) for the 16-24 year olds

	Sample	
<i>Tot</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>Intervie</i>
<i>al 2003</i>	<i>3 YS</i>	<i>wed in 2004</i>
<i>YS</i>	<i>willing to</i>	<i>EUYOU</i>
	<i>partici-</i>	<i>PART</i>

⁵ According to Inglehart, materialistically-oriented persons focus on traditional values, while post-materialist orientation focuses more on individual self-fulfillment and political co-determination, cf. Inglehart 1997. These forms of orientation are frequently (in the Youth Survey too) measured via four items regarded as political objectives and intended to rank the young people interviewed. The items are: "A. Maintain peace and order in this country", "B. More influence on the part of citizens on government decisions", "C. Fight increasing prices", "D. Protect freedom of speech". While post-materialists rank items B and D as being most important, materialist select the other two items. Individuals ranking one of the two materialist items, A or C, first, and one of the post-materialist items, B or D, second are considered mixed materialist (vice versa mixed post-materialist).

*pate in
panel*

Region	West	68	68	80
	East	32	32	20
Gender	male	51	50	54
	female	49	50	46
Migration background	1st generation	10	9	9
	2nd generation	10	10	11
	Native	80	81	80
Age	16-17	30	32	39
	18-19	23	24	22
	20-21	20	19	16
	22-23	18	18	17
	24	8	8	6
School leaving qualifications	no/basic school leaving qualifications	21	20	20
	Intermediary secondary qualifications	36	35	32
	University-entrance qualifications	43	45	48
Employment status	Pupils	29	30	36
	Students	10	10	10
	In vocational training	24	24	23
	employed	20	19	15
	Not employed/ employed on an hourly basis	9	9	10
	Unemployed	8	8	6
Living with parent(s)	Yes	73	74	80
	No	27	26	20
Interest in politics	Very strong	18	20	22

	Average	40	39	41	
	Very little	42	41	37	
Post-materialist attitudes	Materialist	13	12	11	
	Mixed materialist orientation	32	31	28	
	Mixed post-materialist	34	34	36	
	Post materialist	22	23	25	
Membership	Non-member	67	65	59	
	Member in 1 assoc.	23	25	27	
	Member in 2 assoc.	7	7	9	
	Member in 3 or more assoc.	3	3	4	
		n	5225	3909	792

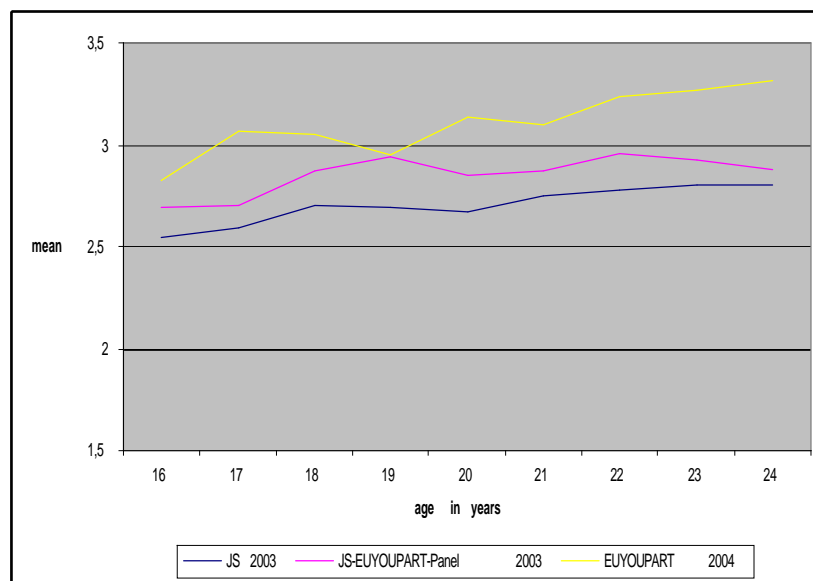
Source: DJI Youth Survey 2003, EUYOUNPART 2004

These tendencies are more pronounced in young people who actually participated in the EUYOUNPART interview (cf. third column of table 1). Compared to the DJI Youth Survey sample, a higher percentage of the following groups of young people are represented in the EUYOUNPART survey: the youngest age group by 9 percentage points, the group with the highest school leaving qualifications by 5, the group of young people interested in politics by 4 and the group who state that they are members of associations or organisations by 8 percentage points. In addition, young people still living with their parents are more willing to participate in a further survey or are simply easier to get hold of. This fits the fact that pupils were represented by a higher percentage, viz. 7 percentage points, in the EUYOUNPART sub-sample. The percentage of young people with a post-materialist orientation was only slightly higher.

Overall, selectivity tends to go more in the direction of younger people with a more pronounced political interest – a trend that also could be discerned in the 2003 Youth Survey, in which willingness to participate in such a survey was also characterised by a similar distortion. This was demonstrated through an analysis of the group of young people not willing to participate in another survey and comparison of the 2003 DJI Youth Survey sample with the targeted population (de Rijke, 2006). On the one hand, it may thus be assumed that older adolescents and young adults are more difficult to reach and motivate to participate in a face-to-face interview than younger adolescents are, and that interest in politics also increases the

willingness to participate in a second interview. In detail, however, how does interest in politics differ across the various age groups and sub-samples used in the analysis?

Figure 1: Interest in politics in the 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2003 DJI Youth Survey panel sample, 2004 EUYOUNG sample by age



Source: YS, 2003; YS-EUYOUNG-Panel, 2003; EUYOUNG 2004

Figure 1 shows interest in politics by age. The lowest of the three lines refers to all young people interviewed in the 2003 Youth Survey, the line at the centre to the interviewees of the EUYOUNG sample, i.e. the aforementioned sub-sample from the Youth Survey; both lines represent mean interest in politics of the respective age group at the time of the 2003 survey. The top line, by contrast, represents the responses given by the EUYOUNG panel sample at the time of the second survey in 2004.

This diagram reveals two aspects: it firstly confirms that the sub-sample of the youth survey panel shows stronger political interest overall and does so across all age groups, i.e. panel dataset selectivity by interest in politics exists at every age. The gradient also demonstrates that political interest increases with age. The top line of the graph also includes another aspect

which will be discussed below. The line illustrates political interest by age, stated by panel interviewees after one year, i.e. at the time of the EUYOUNG survey. Interest in politics is again stronger and thus reveals an age effect. This age effect, however, expresses an intra-individual increase in the interest in politics, i.e. a 'lifecycle effect' (even if observed over a period as short as only one year) which is found consistently across all age groups. The graph thus displays the selection effect in the panel subsample and the lifecycle effect in the panel.

3. On the stability of political attitudes

In empirical social research, the phenomenon of relatively stable aggregate or marginal distributions of political attitudes and relatively unstable attitudes on an individual level as measured by standard attitude scales has been known for some time (Kaase, 1983; Arzheimer, 2005). Kaase has coined the term "micro-macro puzzle" in this context, which can only be proved by means of panel data, but the time intervals between the relevant measurements must also be taken into account. Various reasons are quoted for this phenomenon of differences between aggregate and individual stability: A highly "radical", critical answer starts from the assumption that with respect to many political issues, many citizens do not really have an opinion at all and therefore tend to give random responses. In milder terms, one could say that political attitude objects show a low level of centrality⁶ and that firm, clear political attitudes which are stable over time are therefore rare (Kaase, 1983). On the other hand, it is pointed out that measuring instruments are unreliable and fraught with random errors which manifest themselves in varying results and thus a lower level of stability. Additionally, the low level of accuracy provided by the measuring instruments may result in random variations in responses provided by interviewees concerning their attitudes. Stability of attitudes reflected in the data is consequently low, with the degree of stability depending on what is considered a deviation within the scope of the response scale (cf. example on satisfaction with democracy outlined below). Anyhow, in the case analysed here with an interval of only one year, responses on political attitudes are expected to show only relative consistency. The studies on "stability of and changes in political attitudes in reunified Germany", based on three panel

⁶ "Centrality" may include: the significance which the subject of a question has in the management of personal interest, whether personal values and convictions are affected and whether an experience related to the subject of the question is available (Bachleitner/Weichbold 2007, page. 185).

waves carried out in 1994, 1998 and 2002, report differences in stabilities, with the definition of stability playing a major role and depending on the strictness of the criterion applied (cf. contributions in Gabriel/Falter/Rattinger, 2005).

Below, selected political attitudes derived from the concept of political culture (cf. Gille/Krüger/de Rijke, 2000) will be analysed under the stability aspect. The term “political culture” is used both for subjective references to politics, such as young people’s interest in politics, and their self-image as participants in the political process and the conviction of the political leadership’s openness towards the population. Also addressed are attitudes towards different political models, in particular democracy, and last but not least, the results achieved by politics as expressed in terms of satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions. The following items were selected for analysis: interest in politics, satisfaction with democracy “as it exists in Germany”, two items addressing individual political competence, four items focusing on young people’s perception of their influence on politics and the extent to which politicians cater to the interests of citizens (perception of the responsiveness of the political system) and evaluation of the trust placed in four political institutions (cf. table 2).

Interpretations of values measured in panel samples bear certain characteristics which complicate or prevent normal interpretations as, for example, in cross-sectional analyses. Comparisons of mean values (e.g. arithmetic mean, percentage figures) reflect gross changes in a group of people, i.e. they express an increase or decrease in a characteristic value, similar to cross-sections at various points in time on aggregate level. The individual level, which can only be examined in panel analyses, may be characterised by different changes or consistency, so that an overall trend does not emerge until all individual changes have been summarized. Identical aggregate-level values mean either that there have been no differences between the two points in time on the individual level or, if there are two groups of roughly equal size (whatever this size may be), that there has been an increase in one group and a corresponding decrease in the other group.

Correlation coefficients of one characteristic at two points in time express stable responses given by persons which include “relative consistency” or changes of individual differences over time” (Urban, 2002: 17). A high correlation coefficient means that responses given by individuals are relatively consistent over time, i.e. people with high values in the first interview have similar high values in the second survey, always in relation to the other people included in the study and independent from the general level of values (summarized in the mean value). An average increase or decrease in one variable may involve a similar level of stability, if all interviewees play a role in this increase or decrease (cf. examples provided

in Urban 2002, pages 13-15). At any rate, such a stability coefficient does not provide any information about changes in attitude. Taking these aspects of panel data into account, the following becomes evident for the variables as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Political attitudes 2003 DJI Youth Survey –EUYOUPART 2004⁷

	MV 2003	MV 2004	p	Coefficient of stability r
Interest in politics	2.82	3.05	**	0.57
Satisfaction with democracy	3.94	3.95		0.42
Good understanding of politics	2.80	2.97	**	0.48
Find politics too complicated	4.11	3.96	**	0.38
Politicians only interested in getting elected	4.17	4.19		0.40
No influence on what government does	3.77	3.66		0.27
Politicians don't care about people like me	4.13	4.15		0.22
There are only a few powerful people; everyone else does not have any influence whatsoever	3.74	3.55	**	0.39
Trust in German government	3.95	3.80	**	0.39
Trust in political parties	3.46	3.40		0.34
Trust in courts	5.16	5.05	*	0.32
Trust in European Parliament	4.38	4.03	**	0.43

Columns 1 and 2: Mean values 2003 and 2004; Column 3: p level of significance; t test for dependent sample ** p<0.01. * p< 0.05; column 4: coefficient of stability (Pearsons r)
Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey. 2004 EUYOUPART

The mean values firstly reveal an increase in interest in and understanding of politics. This may be regarded as a socialisation effect, according to which such an increase is expected with increasing age. The fact that this effect is noticeable even after the relatively short interval of only one year nicely supports this hypothesis which, as already shown in Figure 1, applies across all age groups.

No changes are noticed in young people's satisfaction with democracy and the items addressing responsiveness of the political system: i.e. politicians are only interested in getting elected, I have no influence on what

⁷ For exact wording of questions see Annex.

the government does, and politicians do not worry about “people like me“. By contrast, the number of young people stating that there are only a few powerful people decreases, a fact that may be interpreted as a reduction in the cognitively somewhat simple biased approach towards society. Trust in some of the selected political institutions, however, decreases, albeit on different levels. Trust in political parties, which has been very low anyhow, decreases to a noticeable but not significant extent. While this decline in trust in political institutions is observed among 16- to 25-year-olds (cf. Schäfer, 2006: 227), a comparison of 16- to 29-year-olds with the population older than 29 years shows, however, that younger age groups tend to display less trust than older age groups (cf. Krüger, 1995). Other studies failed to demonstrate a relevant age effect regarding trust in institutions in a sample of the total population (Schmitt-Beck/Rohrschneider, 2004).

As already mentioned, relative consistency of the mean values of characteristics, in this case political attitudes, at different points in time and in the same group of people (i.e. in a panel) must not be misinterpreted as a high level of stability on an individual level. Regarding the selected attitudes towards politics, analyses show moderate to low stabilities measured by means of Pearson’s correlation coefficient. Stability is most pronounced for the item of ‘interest in politics’ and least pronounced in some items relating to trust in the responsiveness of the political system. A closer look at the distribution of the survey responses, using the item ‘satisfaction with democracy’ as an example, an item for which the mean value did not change between the two survey dates, is intended to illustrate the aspect of personal stability (see table 3).

Table 3: Satisfaction with democracy 2003 DJI Youth Survey – 2004 EUYOUPART (total per cent)

2003 Youth Survey	EUYOUPART 2004					
	Very satisf.	Quite satisf.	Some-what satisf.	Some-what dissatisf.	Quite dis-satisf.	Very dis-satisf.
Very satisfied	0.4	1.5	1.5	0.3	0.1	
Quite satisfied	2.3	16.2	7.3	2.4	1.7	0.3
Somewhat satisfied	0.6	11.6	12.7	5.9	2.3	0.9
Somewhat dissatisfied	0.1	5.4	6.2	5.8	3.5	0.8
Quite dissatisfied		0.8	1.7	3.2	2.7	0.4
Very dissatisfied		0.1	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.4

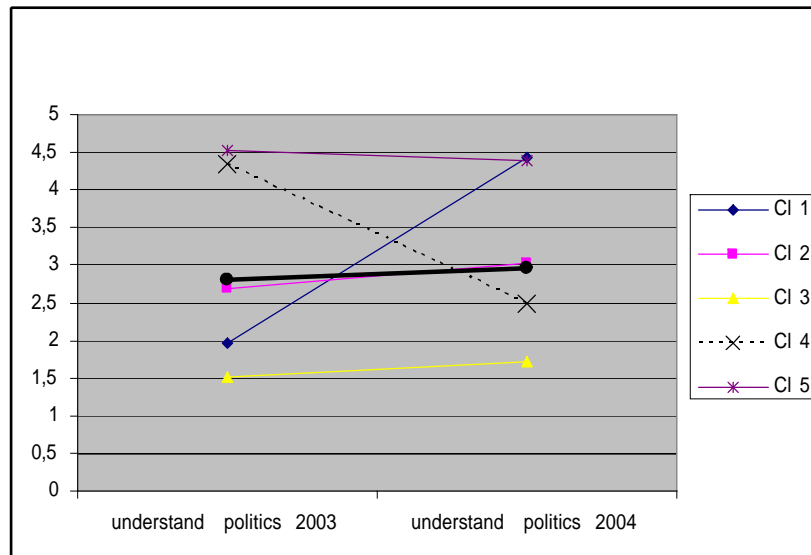
Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2004 EUYOUPART

Attitude stability can be defined with various levels of ‘strictness’. As explained above, the coefficient of correlation is a stability measure for “structural consistency” rather than for retention of or change in individual attitudes (cf. Gabriel/Rattinger, 2005). After all, a change in response behaviour spread evenly across the sample analysed would yield a high coefficient in the same way as actual consistency in responses would – the coefficient of correlation thus measures relative similarity of responses.

When we examine the responses to the “satisfaction with democracy” item, stability amounts to 38 % if strict criteria are applied (total of cells highlighted in grey): only this percentage of young people gave the same responses at both times. When we opt for a more liberal approach, however, while still considering a change of one scale point as the same attitude, stability is far higher, viz. 80 % (this approach was also applied by Gabriel/Rattinger, 2005 who used a five-point scale; attitude stability regarding satisfaction with democracy in their population sample amounted to 85 %, albeit after a four-year period). When we focus merely on the semantic difference of “satisfied“ versus “dissatisfied“, i.e. when we dichotomise satisfaction with democracy, attitude stability amounts to 72 %. Overall, a relative attitude stability can thus be assumed which is only lower when very strict criteria for response consistency are applied; this may impose too stringent precision requirements on the factual process of attitude measurement in social sciences.

Such individual changes are also noticed in characteristics displaying an increase in the mean value, e.g. in the “good understanding of politics“ item (questionnaire formulation: “I understand a lot about politics“). When one considers all six response options (scale from 1 – is not correct at all, to 6 – is completely correct), an improvement is noticeable in 38 % of interviewees, 36 % of interviewees gave the same responses at both times and 26 % gave a more negative response in the second survey. The trend towards an increase in understanding of politics between 2003 and 2004 which is reflected in the mean values quoted in table 2 thus includes a quite high percentage of young people who indicated less understanding of politics in the second survey. If one applies a more liberal approach, however, and counts only changes of two scale points and more, the corresponding values are 13 %, 79 % and 9 %, i.e. most changes differ by only one scale point.

Figure 2: Good understanding of politics – Results of cluster analysis of changes



Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2004 EUYOUPART

This variability of individual changes, though all in all a significant increase, can be made visible by performing a cluster analysis of these changes.⁸ Figure 2 presents some results. Groups of individuals (clusters) with an increase in a good understanding of politics between the two interview dates can be seen on different levels of this understanding (cluster 2 and cluster 3; in cluster 5, values are almost identical). Two groups show quite different developments, however: cluster 1 a high increase, and cluster 4 a quite distinct decrease. The moderate (significant) increase (see table 2) can be seen in figure 2 in the “mean” line. Cluster analysis thus visualises the variability of individual developments in the sample.

Thus, quite considerable stability variations are noted for individual items. What does the situation look like when it comes to correlations between characteristics and, to go even further, attitude structures which are recognisable by strong correlations between items which form a dimension or theoretical construct? Compared to individual instabilities in political attitudes, aggregate distributions and the relations between variables over time remain relatively stable according to Kaase (Kaase 1983). This fact can be tested, e.g. by means of the concept of political effectiveness in the

⁸ Quick cluster procedure (k-means method) with a 5 cluster result; the size of the 5 clusters are: cluster 1 73, cluster 2 245, cluster 3 241, cluster 4 88, and cluster 5 153.

already considered items.

Table 4: Efficacy 2003 DJI Youth Survey – 2004 EUYOUNG – principal component analysis

	PC 1	PC 2
2003 DJI Youth Survey		
Good understanding of politics		-0.85
Find politics too complicated		0.76
Politicians only want to be elected	0.78	
No influence on what government is doing	0.71	
Politicians don't care about people like me	0.72	
There are only a few powerful people while the rest does not have any influence whatsoever	0.73	
Explained variance of 2003 components	40.5	19.3
EUYOUNG 2004		
Good understanding of politics		-0.87
Find politics too complicated		0.74
Politicians only want to be elected	0.81	
No influence on what government is doing	0.79	
Politicians don't care about people like me	0.77	
There are only a few powerful people while the rest does not have any influence whatsoever	0.77	
Explained variance of 2004 components	48.1	17.9

Loadings below .30 are not displayed in the table.

Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey. 2004 EUYOUNG

The items asking for political understanding and young people's perception of the responsiveness of the political system must be characterised as two dimensions of an originally one-dimensional theoretical concept (used in research on American elections in the 1950s) (cf. Hoffmann-Lange/Krebs/de Rijke, 1995). At first, these items revealed close empirical correlations and were therefore summarised in one index. Soon, however, they came to be regarded as two separate dimensions, also empirically, and therefore treated accordingly. Table 4 uses principal component analyses to show the two-dimensionality of the items (which had already been included in the 1992

Youth Survey and were two-dimensional even then). The items also show an almost identical loading structure at both points in time. The correlation structures among the items describing the two dimensions of subjective understanding of politics and perception of the political system's responsiveness are thus more stable than responses given with respect to the individual items at both points in time.

4. Political participation – stability and comparability

So far, this contribution has focused on discussing aspects of and reasons for the limited stability of political attitudes. What is the situation concerning responses given in the interviews which refer to specific political participation?

One generally accepted definition of political participation is: "Political participation generally refers to activities by citizens in which the latter engage voluntarily, either alone or jointly with others, to influence political decisions" (Kaase, 2002: 350). The various forms of political participation range from "constitutional, conventional, legal and desired" (e.g. vote at elections, write letters to politicians) and "unconventional, legal but possibly considered illegitimate" (e.g. participation in strikes and demonstrations) to "unconventional, unconstitutional, bordering on the illegal" (e.g. squatting, participation in boycotts). The differentiation between conventional and unconventional political behaviour dates back to the "Political Action Study" (Barnes/Kaase, 1979) and was further fine-tuned and applied to adolescents and young adults in the "Youth and Government" study (Uehlinger 1988).⁹ The distinctions between the individual forms may be blurred and are subject to historical change (cf. Westle, 1994).

In the context of the DJI Youth Survey and EUYOUNG, political participation refers to a broad range of intentions and actual activities in the political arena – from voting at elections, to actively participating in a political party, participating in petitions, demonstrations and even boycotts and squatting. However, this contribution focuses below on those items which address similar forms of participation. The problem surrounding the stability of responses regarding political participation is further complicated by the fact that generally neither the items nor the wording of the

⁹ Following the definition phrased by Opp/Sievers (1998:65), conventional political participation refers to "periodically recurring institutionalised, traditional political activities" while unconventional participation is defined as non-institutional and irregular political activities. Watts (1996: 103) therefore refers to the latter as "non-institutionalised political tactics". These are also frequently referred to as forms of protest which may be further distinguished by the criterion of legality, i.e. whether they are in conflict with valid legal norms or not.

introductory questions which define the framework of the form of political participation have been kept completely identical. This problem is reflected in the results and relativises the advantage that these items do not ask for subjective attitudes but for facts, i.e. activities that have actually been carried out.

Table 5: Political Participation - Activity (in %)

2003 DJI Youth Survey		2004 EUYOUNG	
Let's assume you would like to exert political influence or make your viewpoint known on a subject that is important to you. Please go through all of the possibilities. Which of these have you already done and which of these have you not done before?		There are different ways of being politically active. Have you ever done any of the following activities?	
...written letters/e-mails to politicians	10.3	...contacted a politician	10.3
...participated in discussions at public gatherings	24.4	...attended a public meeting dealing with political issues	33.0
...taken part in a petition	61.7	...signed a petition	42.2
...participated in an authorised political demonstration	37.1	...participated in a legal demonstration	29.3
...participated in an unauthorised political demonstration	7.1	...participated in an illegal demonstration	3.8
...participated in a strike supported by a labour union	4.3	...participated in a strike	6.0
...supported a political party, citizens' action group or political group by donating money	9.0	...donated money to support the work of a political group or organisation	7.3
...written letters concerning political and social topics to newspapers, radio or television stations	9.9	...written or forwarded a letter/an email with a political content	14.3
...participated in events where property may be damaged	3.4	...participated in an event where property was damaged	2.0

...occupied houses, factories or government offices	1.1	...occupied houses, school/university buildings, factories or government offices	1.6
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Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey. 2004 EUYOUNPART

Table 5 presents the questions and response options included in the two studies which were related to political participation. A glance at the introductory questions of the 2003 Youth Survey and the 2004 EUYOUNPART project and the wording of the individual items shows that questions and response options are only roughly comparable. For the introductory question it is assumed, for example, that the phrases “exerting political influence” and “make your viewpoint known” may be regarded as equivalent to “being politically active”. Regarding the response options which ask about specific activities, the overview compares those items targeting the same form of participation and activities.

As participation activities are surveyed retrospectively, both studies include the categories “have already done” and/or “have ever done”, i.e. both studies ask for specific actions in the past. How long these activities date back in the past is irrelevant. Irrespective of the aforementioned restrictions regarding comparability, four response patterns are possible when analysing the stability of this “survey of facts”:

- Interviewees who responded in the Youth Survey that they had already “done” one of the actions listed above and responded in the same manner in the EUYOUNPART survey;
- Young people who did not respond in the affirmative in either the Youth Survey or the EUYOUNPART survey;
- Young people who responded in the negative for a certain form of participation in the Youth Survey but one year later responded in the affirmative in the EUYOUNPART project;
- Interviewees who stated that they had “done” an activity in the Youth Survey but no (longer) said so in the EUYOUNPART interview.

While the first three combinations of responses are logical considering the one-year interval, the last is not. Table 5, includes the percentage of young people who responded in the affirmative in the 2003 DJI Youth Survey, i.e. who had already engaged in (“done”) the activities asked for by the participation items, which means that in 2004 (EUYOUNPART) these values must be at least equal if not higher than in 2003 (Youth Survey), as the following can be assumed: If young people had already engaged in a participation activity in 2003 the same will apply one year later. This, however, is not the case with respect to the items asking about participation

in “petitions” and “legal” or “authorised demonstrations”, and in “illegal” or “unauthorised demonstrations”.¹⁰ In these three cases, the values for 2004 are lower than those for 2003. “Petition signing” is the clearest example of all three items and reveals the following: 32 % of young people stated in both surveys that they had already taken part in a petition, 27 % stated consistently in both 2003 and 2004 that they had never signed a petition, 11 % of young people responded in 2004 that they had signed a petition but not in 2003. Surprisingly, however, 30 % of young people who in 2003 said that they had taken part in a petition no longer did so in 2004.¹¹

Following the information given at the start, any interpretation of these discrepancies must start with the different phrases and formulations used. It is quite plausible, for example, that the terms “legal” or “illegal” used in EUYOPART 2004 have a stronger connotation to thresholds involving legal sanctions than the terms “authorised” or “unauthorised” used in the Youth Survey. But what explanation can be offered for the fact that some young people who stated with respect to the “petition” item that they “had already taken part in a petition” answer this question in the negative one year later? As no other item delivered a similar implausible result of such high percentage, the question arises as to which social elements and political behaviours were evoked in respondents’ memories or whether the way in which the question or the respective answer options were phrased may have caused respondents to think of different actions.

The assumption made at the start of the analysis, viz. that “being politically active” and “exerting political influence” or “making one’s viewpoint known” may be regarded as quasi-synonymous, must be re-considered in view of the “petition” item. “Being politically active” may thus be interpreted more in the direction of carrying out activities in a political party, while “exerting (political) influence” is associated with a broader, less restrictive meaning and thus results in higher values for political participation in the 2003 survey. The question arises as to whether this assumed, albeit indeed plausible, effect of the question wording also applies to other areas of participation apart from petitions. If this were true, it would manifest itself as a consistent pattern throughout table 5. This is not the case, however. A second attempt at interpretation starts with the wording of the answer categories. The wording “to take part in a petition” used in 2003 may definitely also be interpreted as to “initiate a petition”, i.e. in the

¹⁰ The affirmative responses to the questions asking about voting in elections, deliberately not voting and (political) boycotts in consumer behaviour were analysed in a similar manner. In these cases, the values of 2004 exceed those of 2003. Their comparability and stability is not pursued any further in this contribution.

¹¹ Such implausible responses are found for almost all of the listed items, with percentages especially high for participation in “illegal/unauthorised” demonstrations (18 %) or participation at public gatherings (10%).

meaning of proactive involvement in and implementation of a petition. In line with this argumentation, however, the percentage of responses in the affirmative would have to be lower in 2003 than in 2004. In this context, another, a third aspect will be addressed: Assuming that political participation, i.e. articulation as a responsible citizen, is regarded as desirable by society and that "participation" is interpreted more broadly than the "legal term" "to sign" (as a "legal act"), the "distortion" caused by influences of "social desirability" may have resulted in higher values in the first survey. On the other hand, however, 11 % of young people who answered in the negative in 2003 when asked whether they had already participated in a petition answered this question in the affirmative in 2004. This trend is not implausible, as the higher percentage may be associated with opportunities which had arisen in the meantime and with increased interest in politics. In view of the above considerations, however, the extent of this increase is surprising.

It is well known that item wording plays a major role in response interpretation. There is good reason for the exact wording being considered highly important in questionnaire development and for the fact that considerable differences in results are noticed when only minor changes are implemented (cf. e.g. Noelle-Neumann/Peterson, 1996).

Another element may also play a certain role. Hardmeier/Fontana (2006) recently published a review on "overreporting" and/or "misreporting" in the field of political participation as a "neglected problem" in empirical social research. Misreporting or overreporting include the phenomenon that surveys on voting behaviour asking about voter turnout in a specific election frequently deliver percentages that clearly exceed those supplied by actual election statistics (e.g. Ogris/Westphal, 2006). Three key reasons are quoted for this problem: firstly, social desirability plays a role in this context: In the above example this means that if people think society expects them to go to the polls, they tend to state in the interview that they have done so even though they know this to be untrue. Secondly, there is the problem of misremembering which may arise in certain types of questions, e.g. questions asking about the party people have voted for, and is especially frequent if the activity involved is not really significant for the interviewee. Last but not least, the third reason quoted is "source confusion", i.e. confusing intentions with actions or more or less intentionally misremembering, which also applies in cases of little significance.

These misreporting phenomena taken jointly with – or even reinforcing – the semantic ambiguities included in the wording variations may result in the inconsistent responses discussed earlier. The study, after all, deals with comparisons of responses over time, which although not carried out by interviewees themselves, still touches upon their history of events. This phenomenon, however, is probably better approached by qualitative research

or thorough validity studies referring to this subject (as suggested by Hardmeier/Fontana, 2006). At this point, the effects caused by variations in the wording of central questions (including the introductory question) and the misreportings associated therewith will probably be regarded as the key reasons underlying response distributions.

Stability of the structure of political participation

How can the forms of political participation be structured? This question had already been asked when social sciences first addressed the subject of political participation, and arose again whenever additional forms of politically-oriented actions became observable (cf. in detail e.g. Uehlinger, 1988). The thesis of the first “extension of the political participation repertoire” (Kaase, 2002) was, after all, the result of precisely this development and recording of “unconventional” forms of participation in the 1960s and 1970s. After that time, forms of political participation could be grouped into the following standard categories: conventional participation, unconventional legal participation and unconventional illegal forms of participation (e.g. Westle, 1994; Gaiser/de Rijke, 2000). The DJI Youth Survey also verified these three dimensions (with 18 items) empirically.¹² The EUYOUNG project used a differentiated typology (for 27 forms of participation) which was supported to some extent by cluster analyses (EUYOUNG, 2005) in all participating countries. This analysis now aims to investigate whether a similar structure can be recognized in the selected, relatively comparable items of political participation in both surveys, i.e. whether a certain stability of participation structures can be observed. The course of societal development, after all, may not only result in increases or decreases in certain forms of political participation, but may also alter perceptions or evaluations and thus lead to a re-grouping of the forms of participation, e.g. formerly unconventional forms may become associated with conventional forms. This may then cause a change in loading structures in a principal component analysis which aims at determining central dimensions from empirical correlations.

In a next step (discussed below), the analysis will then review the extent to which “new“ forms of participation, still to be outlined, may prove to be a new dimension of participation and thus an “extension of the political participation repertoire“, or may only be considered facets of the structures already known.¹³

¹² A detailed typology suggested and empirically substantiated by Uehlinger 1988 was used for example in the 1992 DJI Youth Survey by Schneider (1995). Klein (2006) also relied on this typology using the data of the 1992 and 1997 DJI Youth Surveys.

¹³ Principal component analyses to be regarded as both exploratory and heuristic are applied for this

Table 6: Political participation – 2003 DJI Youth Survey: Principal component analysis

	PC 1	PC 2	PC 3
Written letters/e-mails to politicians	0.71		
Written letters to newspapers, radio or television stations	0.70		
Donated money to political groups	0.49		
Taken part in petitions		0.76	
Participated in an authorised political demonstration		0.75	
Participated in public gatherings	0.40	0.56	
Participated in an unauthorised demonstration			0.77
Participated in events in which property was damaged			0.69
Participated in occupation of houses			0.49
Participated in a strike supported by a labour union	-0.33		0.38

Explained variance: 47%

Loadings below .30 are not displayed in the table.

Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2004 EUYOUNGPART

Table 7: Political participation – 2004 EUYOUNGPART: Principal component analysis

	PC 1	PC 2	PC 3
Contacted a politician	0.73		
Written a letter/e-mail, with political content	0.71		
Donated money to a political group	0.40		0.43
Signed a petition		0.63	
Participated in a legal demonstration		0.74	
Attended a public meeting	0.43	0.65	
Participated in an illegal demonstration			0.68
Participated in a political event where property was damaged	0.30		0.70

purpose, as variables are dichotomous and rounded off by cluster analyses as mainly used for evaluating the EUYOUNGPART questionnaire in this context. The following reflections must be regarded as an attempt to find some indications for the assumptions discussed.

Occupied houses, factories or government offices		0.59
Participated in a strike	0.51	0.33

Explained variance: 49%

Loadings below .30 are not displayed in the table.

Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2004 EUYOUNGPART

Tables 6 and 7 include the loadings of the first three components obtained in principal component analyses carried out on the comparable items of the 2003 DJI Youth Survey and the 2004 EUYOUNGPART survey. The three main types are essentially reflected. Conventional participation is addressed in this analysis with the focus on political communication (items addressing activities in political parties or a political office, which otherwise would also be centrally associated with this type, are not included in the items analysed here). Petitions and participation in authorised/legal demonstrations have the highest loadings in the category of unconventional legal participation, and also represented the central forms of political participation in this category in other studies. Finally, unconventional illegal forms of participation are characterised by participation in unauthorised/illegal demonstrations and political events where property was damaged. These two forms of political participation with the highest loading, i.e. which are the most characteristic of the dimensions, are verified in both surveys and thus indicate stability in participation structures in spite of the different wordings and distributions discussed above. The other items are less clear either because their loadings are lower or because they involved secondary loadings on other dimensions. This had already been revealed to some extent in the analysis of the 1997 Youth Survey, in which the list was more extensive and analysis referred to young people's readiness to engage in political participation, and, for example, expressed itself in the fact that participation in public gatherings was not clearly assigned to one dimension. Participation in a strike or a strike supported by a trade union also was not clearly assigned to one dimension. Participation in political events where property is damaged has a small secondary loading in the conventional participation category which is hard to understand. Overall, however, the results obtained for the selected items support the known tripartite structure in participation research and do so equally in both surveys, which can be characterised best by two items each.

5. On the extension of the participation repertoire

Over recent years, the hitherto valid forms of political participation have been extended by another variant of “unconventional” actions, which has therefore been included in research: political consumerism. This term refers to purchasing decisions which are not based solely on economic criteria but consider “political motives“ in the broader sense (Holzer, 2007). Supported by communication and organised campaigns, political consumerism refers to boycott campaigns against certain products or companies carried out for political reasons (for example to protest against unjust, poor working conditions in the manufacturing of certain products). However, supporting the consumption of certain products, e.g. fair trade products or products manufactured under fair conditions, may also be politically motivated and therefore understood as a “boycott”. In a broader sense, this may be interpreted as the “de-differentiation of economics and politics“, with the utilitarian ideas of the market being linked to dimensions of action which are not driven by financial, but by moral and political motives (fairness, sustainability, authenticity, solidarity, etc.); this is what the “moralisation of markets” thesis aims to express (Stehr, 2007).

These new forms may be regarded as a further extension of the repertoires of unconventional political participation and are considered by some authors to be the future of effective ‘sub-politics’ outside the narrower political system.¹⁴ In the EUYOUNGART project these new options were taken into account and further items added to the questionnaire. Similarly, additional forms were included which refer to scenes of youth culture and include the use of modern media technologies. In view of the fact that the world of new media is gaining in strength and the matter-of-factness with which new media are used by young people, this is another field towards which hope regarding the political participation of young people is directed.

The response distributions for these items to which subsequent analyses of the structure of political participation also refer are reflected in table 8. As one can see, some of these distributions are quite significant in terms of quantity.

Table 8: New items of political participation (in %)

2004 EUYOUNGART	
There are different ways of being politically active. Have you ever done any of the following activities?	
...distributed leaflets with political content	4.9

¹⁴ „Allein die Drohung, den Drachen des global organisierten Konsumenten von der Leine zu lassen, vermag Wunder zu bewirken. Vielleicht.“ (Beck 2005, page 122).

...boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	14.4
...bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	15.1
...written political messages or graffiti on walls	2.3
...worn a badge with a political message	10.8
...contributed to a political discussion on the Internet	12.8

Source: 2004 EUYOUNGART

Can these new forms of participation be fitted into the same typology as the “classic“ forms of participation or do they, in total, form a dimension independent thereof? Table 9 shows the loadings for the items included in this analysis which were surveyed in both the 2003 DJI Youth Survey and the EUYOUNGART survey plus for the new EUYOUNGART items with respect to the first four components.¹⁵ It becomes evident that the three dimensions of the analyses discussed above can be more or less reproduced, in any case for the two central items. In addition to and independently from the above dimensions, however, a separate dimension has emerged which is characterised most strongly by the two items referring to political consumerism.

Table 9: Political participation – 2003 DJI Youth Survey and EUYOUNGART: Principal component analysis

	PC 1	PC 2	PC 3	PC 4
Participated in public gatherings	0.50	0.39		
Taken part in petitions	0.67			
Participated in an authorized political demonstration	0.75			
Written letters/e-mails to politicians		0.65		
Written letters to newspapers, radio or television stations		0.61		
Donated money to political groups		0.55		

¹⁵ Here, the items of the 2003 Youth Survey also included in the 1992, 1997 and 2003 surveys were used as “basic structure”. After all, subsequent analysis is intended to investigate how these new items or forms of participation behave in comparison to these relatively stable structures.

Bought certain products for political reasons		0.80	
Boycotted certain products for political reasons		0.76	
Worn a badge with a political message		0.49	
Contributed to a political discussion on the Internet		0.40	-0.34
Distributed leaflets with political content			
Participated in an unauthorized demonstration	0.31		0.66
Participated in events in which property was damaged			0.69
Interest in Written political messages or graffiti on walls			0.60
Participated in occupation of houses			0.43
Participated in a strike supported by a labour union	0.35	-0.36	
<hr/>			
Explained variance: 43%			
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Italics: New items from EUYOUNG project. Loadings below .30 are not displayed in the table.

Source: 2003 DJI Youth Survey, 2004 EUYOUNG

Also included in this dimension, albeit with lower loadings, are the form of wearing badges as a public demonstration of political affiliations, and the discussion of political subjects on the internet (the latter had a negative secondary loading for unconventional illegal forms). This result refers more to the fact that these forms of participation are new and might therefore be interpreted as an extension of the political participation repertoire. As these forms also extend further in everyday life than other forms of political participation, they may also be interpreted as an expansion of politics beyond activities directed solely at the political system, its institutions and persons (cf. Beck, 2007).

By contrast, the item addressing political graffiti is not grouped in this dimension of a wider understanding of politics, but falls into the classic dimension of unconventional illegal actions. This appears plausible, as graffiti per se do not represent a genuinely new form of activity. The 1997 Youth Survey included a question asking for an assessment of violent political actions. The item addressed “spraying political messages on walls and houses” and could be interpreted jointly with other items in a dimension of unconventional approval of violence, i.e. a similar direction. The other additional item concerning the distribution of leaflets with political content, by contrast, cannot be placed in the four-dimensional component structure analysed here.¹⁶

¹⁶ If one tried to address this question by means of confirmatory factor analysis (using AMOS), another viable solution would actually result which allowed for definition of the 4 dimensions

Overall, the hypothesis that the political participation repertoire has become extended, at least by the dimension of political consumerism, may be regarded as confirmed. In conclusion, it may therefore be recorded that future studies on political participation should always also include elements of this dimension.¹⁷

6. Summary and outlook

This analysis has revealed only minor changes in political attitudes, most of which point in the direction of a plausible lifecycle effect in the sense that young people in adolescence become more involved in public life and civil society contexts as they grow older, and experience an increase in knowledge and motivation. Growing political interest and better understanding of politics, for example, is evident after an interval of only one year.

Strictly speaking, a high level of stability would have to be assumed for participation documented in the form of political activities reported by respondents. Relevant research, however, already points out, that empirics in social sciences do not let us hope for perfect results here and that evaluation of stability as appropriate or inappropriate may depend on the quality of the criterion used. Instability problems arising in individual items, however, become less significant when more complex indicators are used to survey the differentiated structure of political participation, which then ultimately proves stable over time after all. The wording, however, is important in longitudinal studies. Variations in the wording of questions or answer options may change the horizon of reflection of young people interviewed, and thus weaken instrument quality in terms of both attitudes and actions for panel analyses. The outstanding importance of wording plays a role in both longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses. While this may be important in a country where only one language is spoken yet where still, depending on the different situations in life, different concepts may be associated with one and

by two items each (two common evaluation criteria : chi-square 42.1/21 degrees of freedom ratio, $p=.004$; CMIN/DEF 2.0) By contrast, addition of the two new items, i.e. writing of graffiti and badge-wearing would reduce adjustment (chi-square 132.1/38 degrees of freedom ratio; CMIN/DEF 3.5) (cf. Backhaus et al. 2003). In view of the exploratory character and the dichotomous data, however, this result would probably be used less often.

¹⁷ While this dimension was included in the first wave of the European Social Survey which included a module on political participation, it had not yet been included in the 1988, 1998 and to some extent 2000 ALLBUS studies (German General Social Survey) which focused on political participation, and was only included in fragments in the ISSP questionnaire "Citizen and Government" of the ALLBUS 2004 study. The next ALLBUS study focussing on this subject is due in 2008.

the same term, the importance of wording holds all the more true for transnational analyses. These must then face the subject of equivalence and clarify the extent to which different institutional structures also open up different spheres of action, and how this can still be analysed and presented in international comparative analyses.

It has also become clear that more recent societal developments, for example the mobilisation of consumer power and the availability of modern communication technologies, must also be considered in the development of instruments to be used by social sciences. If one intends to reflect the changes in societal reality reasonably accurately, an extension of the behaviour repertoire should be followed up by a corresponding expansion of indicators. In the context addressed here, this has proved meaningful, in particular for political or ethical consumption.

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Annex: Questions addressing political attitudes, 2003 DJI Youth Survey (Tables 2, 3 and 4)

Interest in politics: “How strong is your interest in politics?” Response options: very strong/strong/average/very little/ not at all?

Satisfaction with democracy: “Now we’ve come to democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany. All in all how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the democracy which exists in the Federal Republic.” Response options: very satisfied/quite satisfied/somewhat satisfied/somewhat dissatisfied/quite dissatisfied/very dissatisfied/don’t know.

Items addressing the relationship with the political system: “On this list there are statements about citizens’ attitudes towards politics. For each statement please tell me in your opinion to what extent it is correct or incorrect. Please use the scale on the list for your answers.” Scale: from 1 – is not correct at all to 6 – is completely correct.

- A. I don’t think that politicians worry too much about what people like me think
- B. I understand a lot about politics
- C. People like me have no influence one way or the other on what the government does
- D. Politicians are only interested in getting elected and not in what the voters really want
- E. Sometimes I think politics is so complicated that a normal person can hardly understand it
- F. In our society there are only a few powerful people; everyone else has no influence on what the government does

Trust in institutions: “Now I’ll read a series of public institutions and organizations aloud. For each institutions or organization please tell me how much trust you have in it. Please use the scale for this. 1 means you have no trust at all in the institution, while 7 means you have a very large amount of trust in it.” (Additional answer categories include: cannot say, I don’t know this institution/ organisation)

- A Federal Government
- B political parties
- C courts
- D European Parliament