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Evidence based Social Justice? About a political Concept of Socialisation

The goal of my dissertation is to develop a concept of socialisation that combines assumptions of political sociology with questions of socialisation and milieu research. Discussions within this topic focus on ontological, epistemological and methodological problems that have not yet been resolved within the discourse. These problems are due to different views regarding linking and explaining the relationship between individuals and society. The battling and at present seemingly incompatible paradigms of the structuralist and individualistic approaches have resulted in a lack of empirically based solutions for either party. While scientists of milieu research (Bourdieu, Vester et al.) diagnose the habitus as an indicator of socialisation that has already been performed, questions of human development and the acquiring of milieu-specific dispositions remain unanswered (Liebau 1987, Bauer 2004).

On the other hand, analysis of self-development is a priority of socialisation research, which is explained by environmental interrelations. In fact, there is a possibility for structuralist milieu research to link micro and macro processes of socialisation in their own cluster, in a mesosocial layer. However, there are still paradigmatic barriers in order to speak in terms of individuation and human development in a kind of milieu-specific socialisation. A paradigmatic turn is absolutely essential to conquer these epistemologic contradictions. This is attainable by linking macro and micro perspectives, nevertheless, using an alternative approach to combining upward and downward conflation (Archer, 1995) to that of Bourdieu. This could be achieved through triangulation. It is not impossible to understand the complexity of socialisation processes, when we choose to examine it either through a structuralist or a individualistic perspective as the configuration of polity is inseparably interweaved with the development of human agency (Grundmann, 2006). Whilst instruments of political sociology reveal mechanisms of reproduction on a societal layer, the view for constitutive processes of social structuration is blocked. This is the reason why different theoretical perspectives can offer the right horizon of interpretation for each other.

The milieu approach of "everyday life" was founded by a German group of researchers (Vester et al. 2001). It is conceptually based on Bourdieu's theory of social space as well as results of lifestyle-studies from Sinus Sociovision combined with theoretical elements from Weber and Durkheim. The typological map of class cultures that was developed, was built up by a large investigation. Beside quantitative data regarding socio-economic-status and occupational position, schemata of habitus were examined through intergenerational interviews. By definition, social milieus are named as a group of humans, who share a common culture through a similar type of lifestyle. Individuals are

not subjects, only actors who are (unknowingly) reproducing societal frameworks. Due to the fact that the concept is based on Bourdieu's work towards reproduction of social inequality, it describes milieu specific positions and dispositions in social space, within this space classes are fighting for resources, power and domination.

In my proposal, these characterized social milieus shall be defined as contexts of socialisation, which are on the one hand distinctive in terms of disposability (capital) and practice (habitus) of resources. On the other hand they constitute a real life world, where experiences are made. Thus problems of selection are overlapping with questions of a specific kind of milieu socialisation (Bauer/Vester 2008, Bauer/Grundmann 2007). Accordingly, the term of social milieus could be used on a mesosocial layer as well. Processes of human development are consequentially embedded in different and milieu specific societal environments, which could be operationalised and examined through socio-ecology (Bronfenbrenner 1981). These social environments shall be identified as given social structures, which contain both opportunities and rules to abide by.

Thus, this question can be framed within the capability approach (Otto/Ziegler 2006). This is due to the fact that corresponding formal, informal and nonformal conversion factors will be analysed both, in interdependence of institutional and social mechanisms, as in personal processing. Contrary to trials in measuring capabilities in combination with the so called „Lebenslagenansatz“ (Leßmann 2006) the concept of social milieus makes it possible to measure social inequality in relation to capital (Bourdieu 1983) and symbolic barriers. If the habitus is not implied as an dependent variable, but rather examined in a way of „modus operandi“, the connection with the capability approach is made. Based on resources and schemata (Sewell 1992), freedom of action and processes of human development could be described in the interrelation of possibilities and capabilities. In advantage to the „Lebenslagenansatz“ the milieu approach does not measure merely resources and subjective interpretation, but specifies social practice in the dialectics of mental and social structures. This is important, because societal fights of classification are battled over these issues.

In regards to the interpretation of social problems, as well as for the political positioning of social work, the concept of social milieus offers a diagnostic and a reflexive instrument. For Bourdieu the theory of perception is fundamental for political theory. In the entanglement of position and perspective the 'doxic' way of everyday thinking is generated by social space of the habitus. In relational class theory, actors are neither noumenon objects of given structures, nor fully free subjects but they are both. This is due to an interplay of their relationship to each other, as a part of the social fields of pressure and power (Vester et al. 2001). Thus implies that every kind of practice already pursues political interests that should be ethically reflected.

In respect to social work this matters at all levels. In welfare policy milieu research offers an objective, that is to say, a reflexive instrument of knowledge, which: 1. reveals structures of social inequality as conditions of socialisation and human development; 2. describes mechanisms of their genesis; and 3. helps to plan restructuring and assistance in educational and welfare systems. In

view of the urgency of the neoliberal dilemma, which Bourdieu (1997) also characterized as an insolvable mandate of action, the function of social work has to be verified critically on the institutional level. In addition to the chance of changing, Bourdieu's scheme of socioanalysing offers a practical discharge of liability from this burden, which is a causal effect of the governmental displacement of social responsibility. Qualification by educational training and practical capability of social workers toward a milieu sensitive reflexive reflexivity could help professional actors to realise their social actions in a new way, and to conceptualize alternative strategies if necessary with the target group. In this way we recognise that paedagogic is also part of the social game, across which circumstances of symbolic violence will be secured (Bremer 2006).