

Milieus as analytical framework for political attitudes?

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Theoretical argument

...[T]hose who deny any significant relationship between culture and welfare policy take a lonely position. (...) [T]his does not mean, however, that at present the relationship between culture and welfare state has developed into an adequately theorized coherent field of study (Van Oorschot, Opielka, & Pfau-Effinger, 2008).

My suggestion is that milieus can contribute to fill this gap.

Problem and aim

Political attitudes, and welfare attitudes in particular, are dominantly explained either by objective criteria like socio-economic characteristics or socio-demographic variables or along ideological differentiations. We lack measurement at the group level.

Social class is one of the few concepts based on group membership with a more explicit theoretical background, but faced challenges over the last decades. Nonetheless, social class is a methodological and theoretically well established and developed concept.

My aim is to build on this account and integrate the stratification dimension implied in social class with a subjective dimension of evaluation - namely values. I argue that the new measurement is closely related to the theoretical debates around milieus.

The analysis presented today intends to evaluate the potential for political attitudes in context of comparative research.

Milieus a definition

Milieus are groups constituted by **sharing a rather stable and group specific set of values** and mentalities (Hradil 2012; Vester 2006) with an **increased level of communication** amongst group members (Schulze 2005).

The definition of milieus experienced a lively debate around the adequate dimensions over the decades which is ongoing. Hence, this definition is better understood as working concept than a theoretical milestone.

Lepsius defines milieus as: characteristics of social units which are established through the coincidence of several structural dimensions such as religion, regional tradition, economic position, cultural orientation, the class composition of the intermediate groups. A milieu is a socio-cultural object which is defined by the specific arrangement of these dimensions on a certain part of the population. (Mochmann & El-Menouar, 2005, p. 418)

Milieus in-between social class and lifestyles

Milieus gained little attention as potential predictor of behaviour and attitudes amongst quantitative orientated researchers for multiple reasons:

- wide range of definition attempts
- mostly very complex operationalizations necessary
- alternate theoretically closely related concepts easier to measure (social class, lifestyles)

Social class has a long tradition in sociology and is a core scheme to analyse social inequality (Marx, Weber and others). Despite different approaches and definitions a shared core of the concept as conflict-based stratification concept mainly orientated on economic resources.

Typically, life styles are defined as a pattern of actions within fields of behaviour which can be aestheticized, so that in the presented theoretical context they may appear mainly as an explanandum. (Rössel, 2007, p. 233)

Some historical landmarks

- Lipset and Rokkan (1967) introduce cleavages as central underlying concept of party systems in comparative research.
 - Inglehart (1977) observed a value change in Western societies towards self-expression (values) based on increased material security.
 - Beck (1986) suggest that groups lose importance as formative factors for individual behaviour.
 - Bourdieu (1987) develops a framework based on his habitus theory to integrate objective and subjective dimensions of **distinction**.
 - Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero (1979) provide with the EGP-scale an easy applicable measurement for social class.
- but** Staerklé (2009) points out that social groups matter for lay conceptualization of political attitudes.

Synthesis

Table 1: Comparison of class, milieus and lifestyle

	class	milieu	lifestyle
definition	shared core	wide variety	shared core
dimensions	objective	objective + subjective	subjective
measurement	along good measurable concepts like occupation	complex and multi-dimensional	multi-dimensional, but directly measurable
mechanism	conflict	distinction	distinction

An empirical attempt to track milieus

What I do NOT want to achieve:

- reinvent the "theoretical" wheel of milieus
- compete with research focusing on single countries

What I would like to end up with is

- an easily reproducible measurement construct for cross-sectional comparative research based on existing measures comparable to what the EGP-scale is for social class.
- a degree of stability in the measurement construct over time

Aim of the measurement / hypotheses

Sieben Meta-Milieus® in Westeuropa

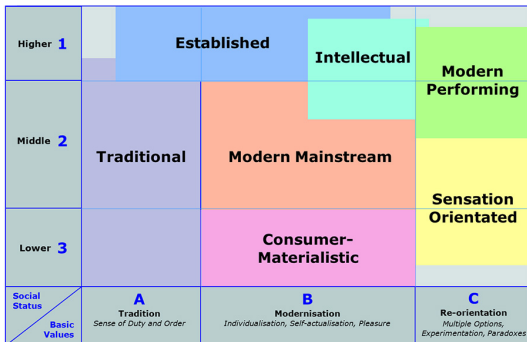


Figure 1: Sinus-Institut Heidelberg, 2011

Aim of the measurement / hypotheses

Capturing a two-dimensional space of stratification (status) and subjective motivations (values) to explain variance inside countries across milieus and similarities across countries along similar milieus.

- H1** The number of groups extracted is expected to be similar across all samples.
- H2** The group composition of samples from the same country show similar patterns on the indicators (stability over time).
- H3** The derived grouping has an explanatory power comparable to concepts like social class.

Data and method

European Social Survey round 1-5 including all samples available. In total, 124 samples have been included with a total of 33 different countries.

Measurement items:

obj.: International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) of occupation status (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, Treiman, & Graaf, 1992). (min=16 to max=88)

subj.: Parts of the the Human Value Scale (HVS, see Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004) - namely, Hedonism, Openness to Change and Conservation (12 items)

Latent class analysis (LCA) in R version 3.0.2 with the package poLCA by Linzer and Lewis (2011).

Strategy

Preliminary Strategy:

1. Run for each of the 124 samples multiple LCAs under the condition of 1-8 classes. Each of the 8 models per sample was estimated 10 times to avoid local minima.
2. Define the preliminary best fitting model by the minimum BIC across the estimated models per sample.
3. Use the estimated group membership to evaluate the predictive power of milieus for political attitudes

Problems and Todos:

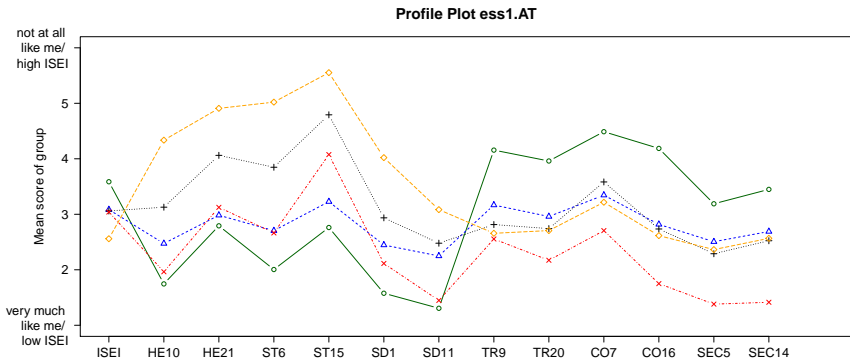
- How to communicate the large amount of information from the models?
- Ideally, there would be a measure of homogeneity inside the groups.

Results of latent class analysis (H1)

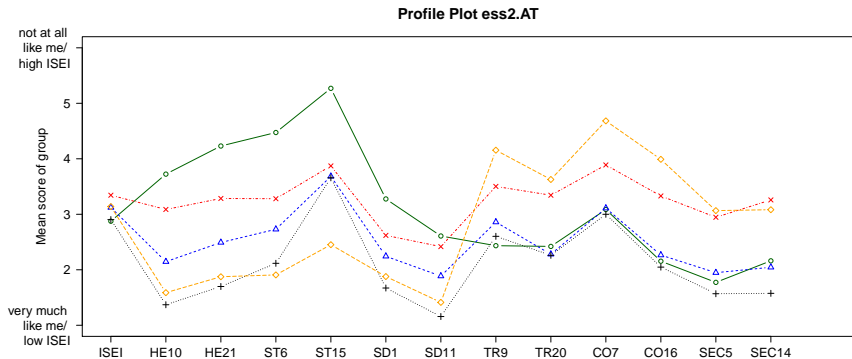
Table 2: Groups by ESS round based on minimum BIC

Groups by round	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Countries
ESS1	0	0	7	13	0	0	0	20
ESS2	1	1	10	13	0	0	0	25
ESS3	0	2	6	13	2	0	0	23
ESS4	0	1	7	15	3	2	1	29
ESS5	0	0	10	11	5	1	0	27
Sum	1	4	40	65	10	3	1	124
(Share in %)	(.8)	(3.2)	(32.3)	(52.4)	(8.1)	(2.4)	(.8)	(100)

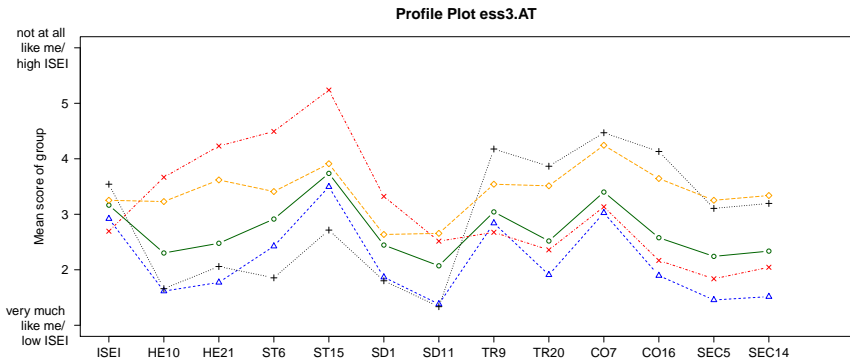
Assessment of profile plots (H2)



Assessment of profile plots II/III (H2)



Assessment of profile plots III/III (H2)



Relating milieus to attitudes (H3)

Bivariate linear regression models with independent variables:

- milieus as defined by the LCA analysis
- class along the EGP-scale (six-class version, see Ganzeboom & Treiman, 2013)
- ISEI & Treiman's Prestige scale (Treiman & Ganzeboom, 1990)

and dependent variables:

- redistribution: *Government should reduce differences in income levels (agree (1) - disagree (5))*
- equality: *Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish (agree (1) - disagree (5))*
- ImmEco: *Immigrants bad (1) or good (10) for economy*
- ImmCul: *Country's cultural life undermined (1) or enriched (10) by immigrants*

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Table 3: AIC for the different regression models for the ESS1 AT sample

IV	DF	Redistribution	Equality	ImmEco	ImmCul
Milieu	6	7702.989	7444.813	17931.18	17651.18
EGP	8	7696.172	7485.614	17910.16	17654.52
ISEI	3	7701.420	7503.380	17904.82	17656.91
TREI	3	7701.823	7518.219	17903.34	17654.02
indicators	15	7650.109	7339.271	17911.91	17666.93

Table 4: BIC for the different regression models for the ESS1 AT sample

IV	DF	Redistribution	Equality	ImmEco	ImmCul
Milieu	6	7736.555	7478.379	17964.74	17684.74
EGP	8	7740.927	7530.369	17954.92	17699.28
ISEI	3	7718.204	7520.163	17921.61	17673.70
TREI	3	7718.606	7535.002	17920.12	17670.80
indicators	15	7734.025	7423.187	17995.82	17750.84

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Table 5: Residual deviance for different regression models for the ESS1 AT sample

IV	DF	Redistribution	Equality	ImmEco	ImmCul
Milieu	1982	5003.301	4393.673	860618.0	747500.4
EGP	1980	4976.138	4475.805	849851.0	747254.6
ISEI	1985	5014.473	4538.788	851847.2	751929.4
TREI	1985	5015.488	4572.811	851210.1	750833.4
indicators	1973	4827.970	4128.816	844625.9	746654.1

Findings in the literature

Table 6 (Otte, 2005, p. 11)

Table 3: Erklärungskraft von Klassen und Sinus-Milieus bei der Erklärung der Parteipräferenz in binomialen logistischen Regressionen (ΔP^2 in %)

	CDU vs. SPD (N=29910)	Grüne vs. CDU (N=18224)	Grüne vs. SPD (N=19312)	FDP vs. CDU (N=15800)	REP vs. CDU (N=14811)	Nichtwahl vs. Wahl (N=40314)
<i>Bivariate Modelle:</i>						
M1: Klassenposition	3,8	5,2	7,0	2,0	3,9	0,8
M2: Milieuzugehörigkeit	4,0	14,3	6,7	3,5	5,7	0,9
<i>M3 bzw. M4: Multiple Modelle mit Kontrollvariablen*:</i>						
davon: Klassenposition	2,5	0,8	0,5	0,6	0,8	0,3
davon: Milieuzugehörigkeit	2,8	5,9	1,5	2,0	3,0	0,6
<i>M5: Multiples Gesamtmodell:</i>						
davon: Klassenposition	1,9	0,5	0,4	0,6	0,5	0,3
davon: Milieuzugehörigkeit	2,2	5,6	1,4	2,0	2,6	0,5

Anmerkungen: Klassenposition gemessen anhand der gegenwärtigen bzw. letzten beruflichen Stellung (11 Kategorien); Milieuzugehörigkeit nach Sinus (10 Kategorien). *Kontrollvariablen: Geschlecht, Schulbildung, Konfessionszugehörigkeit und Geburtskohorte. Pseudo-R² (P²) definiert nach McFadden. Alle Erklärungsbeiträge sind auf dem Ein-Prozent-Niveau statistisch signifikant.

Quelle: Eigene Berechnungen nach Otte (1998b: 95). Datenbasis: Sinus-Umfragen von 10/1995 bis 11/1996, Westdeutschland; nur Befragte mit deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit ab 18 Jahren.

Conclusions

- theoretical arguments convince me, but empirical findings not
- measurement construct shows some similarities with respect to H1 and H2
- results for H3 are not disastrous, but neither convincing
- making more complex assumptions (e.g MGLCA) is possible, but

do I chase ghosts?

**Thank you for your attention
&
any comments are welcome!**

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