

Gießener Beiträge zur Bildungsforschung

Sebastian Dippelhofer

Students' Political and Democratic Orientations in a Long Term View

Empirical Findings from a Cross-Sectional
German Survey

Heft Nr. 1, April 2012

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Vorwort

Mit der vorliegenden Reihe „Gießener Beiträge zur Bildungsforschung“ sollen Beiträge aus der Bildungsforschung bzw. -wissenschaft an der Universität Gießen veröffentlicht werden. Es soll ein möglichst breiter Blick über Themen, Problemfelder, Befunde sowie Diskurse vermittelt werden. Dabei wird ein interdisziplinärer Zugang angestrebt, um die Vielfalt der sich an der Universität Gießen damit beschäftigenden Wissenschaftler/innen herauszustellen.

Hierfür möchte die Reihe die Möglichkeit bieten, empirische Forschungsberichte, Beiträge zu methodischen Fragen, theoretische Überlegungen und Ansätze in Form von Werkstattberichten und Dokumentationen zu veröffentlichen. Sie versteht sich als Plattform für Autor/innen, relativ schnell und unkompliziert ihre Inhalte zur Diskussion zu stellen – das gilt auch für angehende Wissenschaftler/innen und schließt herausragende wissenschaftliche Abschlussarbeiten künftiger Lehrkräfte sowie von MA-Studierenden ein.

Wir freuen uns auf einen regen Austausch und spannende Beiträge.

Sebastian Dippelhofer

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1 Introduction¹

The preoccupation with the theme “Changing Values on Campus” received more public and scientific interest in the last few years – this is primarily reflected in a national and secondary in an international perspective. The context refers to the socio-political and democratic orientations of students.

Especially in Western European countries, this theme has a very high relevance. This is the case because their political system is constituted with democratic structures and values. Peoples’ political interest, participation and democratic beliefs are the key factors: on the one side because the social system relies on them in their existence as well as their values. On the other side they build up their sociopolitical structures, their thinking and action on this. In societies students will assume sociopolitical responsibility as the future elite (c.f. Hoffmann-Lange 2002) – therefore it is a primary sociological importance to examine the political-democratic values and orientations of this group in more details. Certainly a democracy is only viable if all stakeholders are aware of their principles and if they are actively involved (c.f. Zimmer 1996). As aspiring leaders and as a “reservoir of the power elite” (c.f. Dahrendorf 1965) the students present the political and democratic values and content and will create the social reality in a democratic society: so they have to take a special role in this process. It is therefore important to analyze the extent to which they are able to put them to meet political and democratic commitments. It also requires a constant monitoring to what extent the democratic expectations coincide with reality. This is the base to prevent an erosion of the democratic criteria (c.f. Rousseau 1977; Tocqueville 1985; Offe 1996).

For the formation of such an elite the university as an institution has a very important role. On the one side, while drawing attention to the political motivations and democratic attitudes should be conveyed, on the other side they should be internalized and developed further (c.f. Dippelhofer 2008).

¹ This paper is a revised and expanded version of a lecture, which was held at the international workshop “Changing Values on Campus in International Perspective” organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the History Department of Fudan University Shanghai (China) at 11/24/2011. I would like to thank Jessica Woods for their critical view of translation and revision of the English version.

This essay deals with the students' orientations: The explanation will start with the discussion of the political interest and the democratic values, the role of students and of universities as an institution. The view of how this issue is perceived in Western Europe will be presented. In the empirical chapter, it will present some results about students' values. A conclusion should draw implications – especially for universities and the development of the society.

2 Theoretical Background

After the Second World War, democracy was one of the highest values in Western-Europe – especially to enable a peaceful and social coexistence and to avoid new totalitarian regimes in Europe. After the end of Nazi domination, particularly the Western allies have forced such development. In addition to other Western European countries, in this context particularly Germany was important for them in advocating a humanistic social order (c.f. Gerhardt 2005).

On the one hand therefore democratic structures in the society should be built, although unlike in the Weimar Republic. On the other hand it was necessary that the associated values and principles, virtually anchor to sustainable levels in the population and thus contribute to their greater acceptance. At all times a central key to this development was formation and education. In this case, it came to the task of formation and educational institutions to spread these ideals in theory and practice – in addition to school, always universities have been in the main focus (c.f. Phillips 1995; Müntefering 2005). As a key milestone in this process, the separation of powers is emphasized (c.f. Montesquieu 1965). These indicators of democratic structures – i.e. the strict separation between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary – are absolutely accepted by the people continuously. This can be interpreted as a result of a political socialization and educational respectively formational-work (c.f. Rippl 2012; Claußen/Geißler 1996).

With the social, political and economic change, there are some new accentuations and practical understandings in Western European Countries: Now democracy is more than a form of government – it is rather an attitude of life. There are two relevant conditions to internalize their values and to represent this seriously and successfully and to receive this: political interest and participation in society. So it is central to form individuals with appro-

appropriate foundations – important and necessary are commitment, ability to be critical, communication competences, maturity and liberation (c.f. Habermas 1990; Kohlberg 1987). A democracy only has the ability to live, if all individuals become aware of these principles and if they are active.

In this process the universities are very important, because their students will be overrepresented in positions of sociopolitical and economic power (c.f. Hartmann 2002). As the future elite they represent the existing system – in this case, the democratic system. It will be their responsibility to represent their values convincingly and to be convincing. It is the contribution of the universities to form and to support the individuals in this way with their exclusive opportunities.

Students are neither human nor socially better or worse than non-graduates – but they are called by their formation time and the exclusive facilities at the university to contribute to social developments. In this case they are requested to be guided by humanistic motives and to put them into society. In this process universities are on the one side the place for new ideas, developments and ways of life, on the other side a more productive space for democracy-oriented and alternate intentions (c.f. Dippelhofer 2008).

The research outlining the student generations shows that there is a change as Bargel (2011) points out: The political calm “sceptical generation” of the 1950s (c.f. Schelsky 1957), has turned to a more political open, critical and emancipatory “generation of the impartial” at the beginning of the 1960s (c.f. Blücher 1966). From the second half of the 1960s till the 1970s, there was the change to an “agitated generation” – they were characterized as more political, rebelling, aggressive and critical about the system (c.f. Wildenmann/Kaase 1968). Further it was the time of new and alternative sociopolitical ways of life. This was followed by the development of the “Generation Golf” in the 1980s – this term includes a back out of the adolescent from political and public participation into private and pragmatical orientations (c.f. Illies 2000). This changed after the millennium to a more “pragmatic generation” (c.f. Hurrelmann/Albert 2010). In another view they are also considered politically more discontent, disgruntled and disenchanting with politics – so they were described as “despondent democrats” (c.f. Gille/Krüger 2000). Current the trend goes into a more “discreet generation”, which is characterized by social and political ambivalence (c.f. Bargel 2011). However, such typifications are rather more theoretical and rarely documented by empirical surveys.

3 A View on Western-Europe

Of course – there is an established research about universities and students in Western Europe. But their focus has always been more on the examination of the young people, the evaluation of manpower training and academic success. Furthermore, there is a shortage of cross-national studies. Other as in the USA: The “college impact research” already analyzed social orientations, personality changes and their determinants in the 1950s (c.f. Feldman/Newcomb 1969). The fact-based research outlined a strong democratic attitude of students at all times – this is reflected in selected German studies (c.f. Sandberger/Lind 1979; Dippelhofer 2011).

After latency partly the interest in investigating political-democratic values of the young generation in Western Europe grows. In the interest of the role of the universities their structures and ideals should be designed to form democratic ideas by individuals. But there is still a lack of comparative studies and integrated tools to show on the one side the role of universities and their structures they should be designed to form democratic individuals – and on the other side the democratic convictions of the students. So it is complicated to receive a complete view of students’ values and orientations in Western Europe.

Currently, there is an attempt to establish appropriate studies. With the construction of the European Higher Education Area the international perspective becomes even more important. In this way, the Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz takes care of organization and moderation of the international Network “ISSUE” – The International Students Survey in Europe. A lot of European research groups are belonging to this project. It is an open association with a sustainable exchange (c.f. <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-hochschulforschung>). The aim is to gain systematic empirical data about the students and to enable students to report their experiences and judgements about the European Higher Education Area. The main attention is especially directed towards inequalities and social attitudes, views of the labor market, economic and academic opportunities, student motivation, and gender issues. For the European partners socio-political values play no rule – furthermore to the fairly recent project evaluations are still at the beginning and a long-term view and analysis is not possible yet (c.f. Schmidt/Bargel 2011; Hadji/Bargel/Masjuan 2005).

But it is possible to present the students' political-democratic values and orientations, the change and the role of the universities with the illustration of the German students.

4 Methodical Approach

The following results about the political interest and democratic values are based on the "German Student Survey". This is a representative long-term study, which has been conducted since 1983 by the Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz every two or three years at universities in Germany with a standardized questionnaire – the most recent survey was in 2010; it is the 11th. Until now, a total of 76.077 students were surveyed (c.f. Table 1). The "German Student Survey" is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Table 1
Samples of the cross-sectional German survey: university students 1983-2010

Federal Republik of Germany (West Germany)	
WS 1982/83	6.607
WS 1984/85	7.663
WS 1986/87	7.532
WS 1989/90	6.999
Federal Republik of Germany (West and East Germany)	
WS 1992/93	7.192
WS 1994/95	6.582
WS 1997/98	5.799
WS 2000/01	6.385
WS 2003/04	8.307
WS 2006/07	6.894
WS 2009/10	6.117
Total	76.077

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

The aim of the survey is to document reliable information about students' study and their orientations, estimations and evaluation of their study situation as well as their wishes and demands concerning better study conditions in Germany. The focus is also on their

expectations of their working-career options as well as their views on various political, individual or private and social aspects. Created as a cross-sectional long-term study, it is possible to have a comparable view over time – so it is possible to show the change of values (c.f. <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-hochschulforschung>).

For this contribution the evaluated measurements of 1993, 1998, 2004 and 2010 were considered. The sample size has in each case more than 5.000 respondents (c.f. Table 1). Selected survey-data from 1993 will be shown, because students of the former GDR are also considered from this time on. The focus of this paper is on the political-democratic convictions.

Table 2
Political Interest and Democratic values: Indicators and variables

Indicators	Variables	Scales
Political Interest	How great are your interests in politics?	0 = "not at all" to 6 = "very great"
Democratic Orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are conflicts in each democratic society which have to be settled with violence. - In case of need, every citizen have the right to demonstrate for his convictions. - Citizens loose the right for strikes and demonstrations in case of endangering public order. - It is not the duty of the political opposition to criticize the government in her work, but to support. - Confrontations between communities of interests are harmful to the general public. 	-3 = "clearly not accept" to +3 = "completely agree"
Acceptance of Democratic Principles	Sumscore of the democratic orientations	1 = vehemently democratic 2 = unambitious democratic 3 = labil democratic 4 = weak democratic 5 = trends undemocratic 6 = strong undemocratic

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

They are illustrated with three indicators: first the political interest in general – it is based on a seven level answer-scale from “not at all” to “very great”. The second will explore the democratic orientations: this scale has been created by Max Kaase (1971) and has been used for over 40 years to record the relationship to democracy (c.f. Table 2). The respondents are asked to evaluate five statements about discursive confrontations between communities of interests, the right for citizens to strike and demonstration in case of endangering public order, the violence as an opportunity to solve conflicts, the duty of the political opposition to criticize and to not support the work of the government and the right of every citizen to demonstrate. These items are recorded with a Likert-scale from -3 (“clearly not accept”) to +3 (“completely agree”).

A third scale is a sumscore based upon them – this scale should recognize the acceptance of democratic principles. There are six levels, which outline the relationship of the student accordingly. They go from a vehemently democratic conviction of a weak link to a strong undemocratic attitude. This doesn't record criticism of the separation of power, but to certain aspects of democratic attitudes.

5 Empirical Findings

5.1 Indicators of political interest and democratic values

The results show stability as well as change in a cross-sectional term view: German students are still politically aware. The interest remains high in time – with small fluctuations between 1993 till 2010. At the beginning of the 1990s the political interest was much more pronounced: 73 percent choose the predefined answers 4, 5 or 6 – the half of the students are even massive interested in (response categories 5 or 6). In 2010 there are only 38 percent of the students, who are extraordinarily strong interested in politics and ticked the two highest categories. At the same time, the disinterest has doubled to 10 percent. Nevertheless, there is still a not to be underestimated, willingness to address political issues.

A similar trend is reflected by the democratic convictions. At all times non-violence and the right to demonstrate are always very popular by the future elite (c.f. Table 3). These are basic to the democratic system and have lost less of its attractiveness as the medians

indicate. Other items show regressions in time – like the loss of the right to strike, even if it endangers the public order, a critical opposition and discursive confrontations between groups of interests have lost agreement.

Table 3
Democratic Orientations in a cross-sectional term view from 1993 till 2010.
Medians.

	1993	1998	2004	2010	
There are conflicts in each democratic society which have to be settled with violence.	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,3	**
In case of need, every citizen have the right to demonstrate for his convictions.	6,8	6,7	6,7	6,6	**
Citizens loose the right for strikes and demonstrations in case of endangering public order.	3,0	3,0	3,5	3,6	**
It is not the duty of the political opposition to criticize the government in her work, but to support.	2,8	2,9	4,1	3,6	**
Confrontations between communities of interests are harmful to the general public.	2,5	3,0	3,8	3,2	**

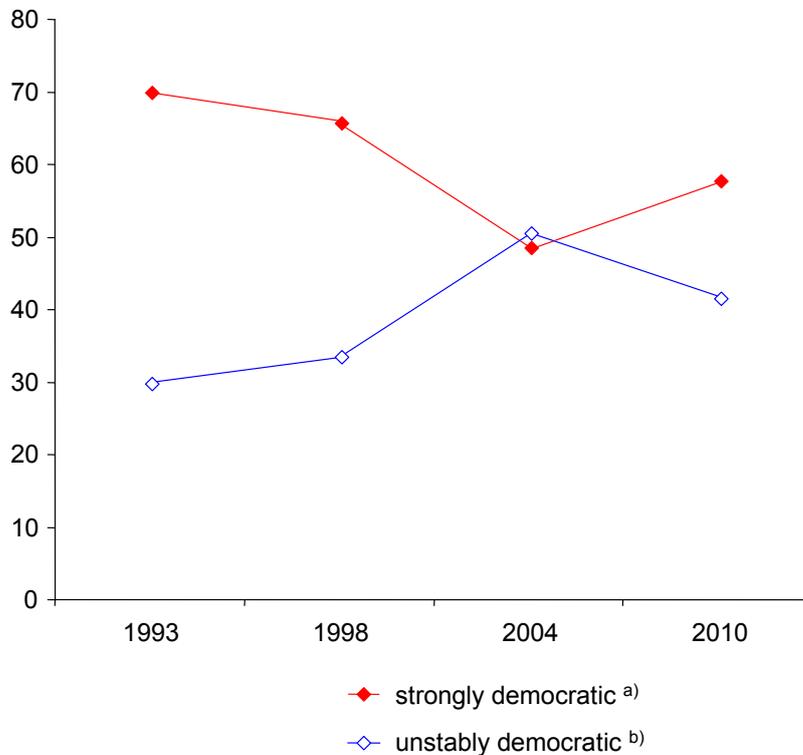
a) Variable range: 1=„clearly not accept“ 7=„completely agree“

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

But there is a tendency, that they will gain relevance again in recent days. In this case, most likely discursive confrontations between groups of interests seem particularly back to rise in the favor of the respondents (2004: 29% vs. 2010: 39%). Around one-third of the students also accentuated the duty of opposition to be critical and not supportive of the governments work and the right to strike for everybody.

In a cross-sectional time comparison, the sum of “democratic principles” portrays young highly qualified, who seem less and less connected with these principles (c.f. Figure 1). At the beginning of the Millenium this tendency had its high point. In the following years the democratic attitude fell down from 70 percent in 1993 to 49 percent in 2004 – the distance to the associated democratic values were never bigger as at this time. But after this regression, the students’ democratic basic attitude grows again. Currently it is not at the same level like the beginning of the 1990s, but the democratic student view is clearer than in 2004.

Figure 1
 Acceptance of democratic principles in the cross-sectional term view.
 (%)



a) Sum of 1=vehemently democratic and 2=unambiguous democratic

b) Sum of 3=labile democratic; 4=weak democratic, 5=trends undemocratic,6=strong undemocratic

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

5.2 Bivariate relationships and analysis of variance

The political-democratic values are correlated with other variables in different ways – this is particularly shown with the survey-data from 2010: Thus the gender groups covariate with the *political interest*. Like in other social fields at universities more men than women are interested in politics (c.f. Table A1). Currently more than every second man is highly interested compared to only every third woman – they choose the points five or six on the scale. Parallel to this the explicit disinterest among women is twice as high (11%). Over the time the political openness of this group has decreased even stronger. Slightly weaker correlations are shown with the formation of origin – following the median comparison,

primarily the students whose parents are academics and children of the class with the lowest level of formation express to be the most political interest. However, there are nearly no differences between students in the Old and New Federal States of Germany – i.e. in the former FRG and the former GDR. Although the median comparison of the political interest between the two sub-samples is statistically significant – but the deviation is very low (c.f. Table A1). So for the young generation it plays no role anymore, which social-political system ruled before – a market economy or socialism.

In contrast to the university as an institution shows a big relevance (c.f. Table A1). There are clear differences between the students' subjects and the years of study. Beside law students, students of social sciences are more politically open-minded – 44 percent evince this very strong. Students in engineering sciences set the contrast with 33 percent. At the same time one in eight explicitly expresses not to be socio-politically minded. This pattern is reflected over the years. The view of the study period shows, that with the years of study, the political interest grows too. So the high semester students are the most receptive respondents. Among the new students' interest in political contexts is visibly lower (7 and more semesters 43% vs. 1.-4. semester 33%). In addition the lower semesters show more apathy in sociopolitical fields. This relationship is reflected in a detailed analysis: thus with the number of semesters the students' interest in the political process in general increases (c.f. Table 4). It is noticeable that it receives a further boost, especially after the specified periods of study.

Table 4
The relation between years of study, politic interest and democratic orientations in 2010. (Medians)

	Years of study						
	1.-2. (n=988)	3.-4. (n=1158)	5.-6. (n=937)	7.-8. (n=809)	9.-10. (n=763)	11.-12. (n=615)	13. and more (n=799)
Political interest ^{a)}	3,7	3,9	4,0	4,1	4,1	4,1	4,5
Acceptance of democratic principles ^{c)}	2,5	2,4	2,3	2,3	2,3	2,2	2,0

a) 0=not at all to 6=very great

b) 1=vehemently democratic, 2=unambiguous democratic, 3=labile democratic; 4=weak democratic, 5=trends undemocratic, 6=strong undemocratic

p** ≤ 0.01 (Chi²-test)

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

With regard to the democratic values, the political interest is strongly connected with one owns convictions (c.f. Table A1). The more pronounced their political interest, the more the students approve the democratic principles. Only one in three feels less anchored with them. In contrast, the political reserved students remark a lower identification with democratic principles. They can be mainly used as little or mostly not associated with them. The strongly democratic students are represented slightly less in this group (c.f. Table 5). The gender variable and the parents' formation level show in fact significance but an extraordinary small difference. In this case a comparison between West- and East-Germany illustrates no effect.

Table 5
The relation of acceptance of democratic principles and students' political interest in 2010.
(%)

Acceptance of democratic principles	Political interest ^{a)}	
	not at all (n=2.169)	great (n=2.316)
Strongly democratic ^{b)}	46	70
Unstably democratic ^{c)}	54	30

a) Variable range: 0-3=not at all; 5-6=great

b) Sum of 1=vehemently democratic and 2=unambiguous democratic

c) Sum of 3=labile democratic; 4=weak democratic, 5=trends undemocratic, 6=strong undemocratic

p** ≤ 0.01 (Chi2-test)

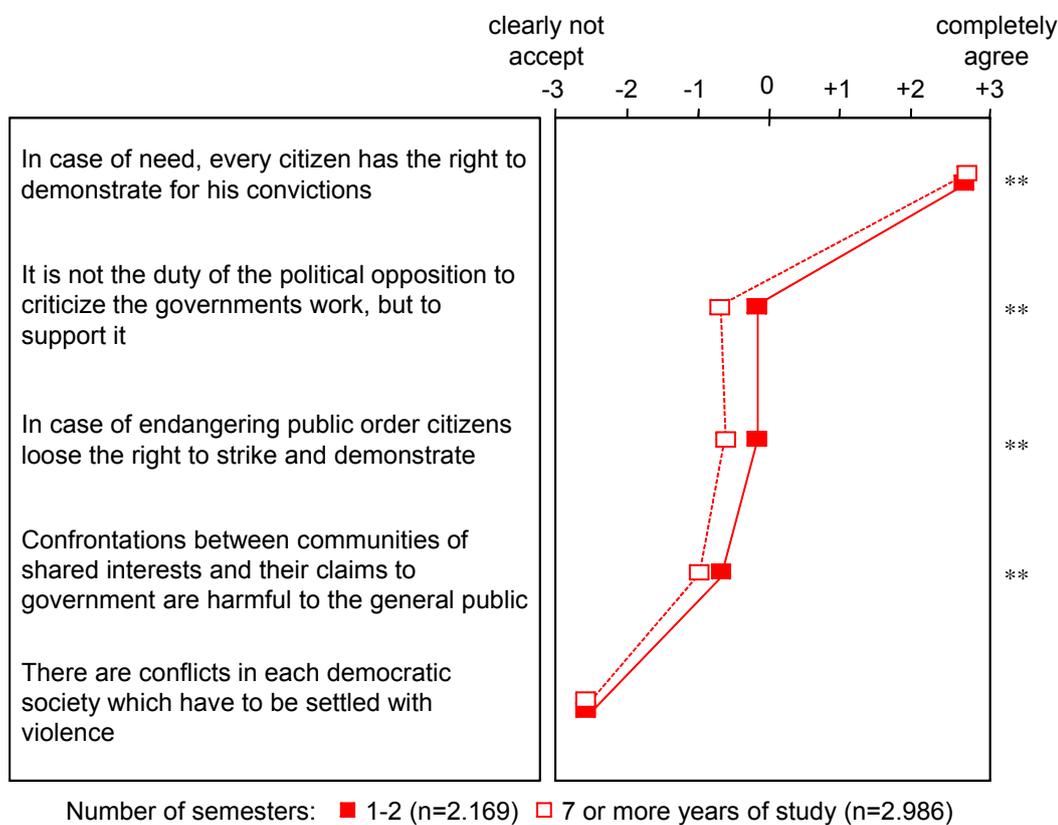
Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

Besides there aspects of the study occur again (c.f. Table A1): The subject and the years of study. So, in time the students in social sciences are the strongest advocate of democratic values. The future engineers are the taillight – and they also distance themselves the most. And with the length of study, the students establish more democratic values. A detailed analysis reflected again a linear relationship (c.f. Table 4): This shows that with the time of study at the university, the students are more sustainable emphasize democratic principles.

This is reflected in the related sub-aspects (c.f. Figure 2). With time the assumption that conflicts are not harmful grows – 38 percent of the young students show this meaning, those with seven or more semesters reach 44 percent. This pattern is replicated by the right to strike and the view of the opposition. With the years of study the agreement that a

citizen doesn't lose the right to strike and demonstrate in case of endangering public order grows too. Thus each more than a third of the higher semester shall for that right – in the lower semesters, this is not even one in three. Furthermore a more critical responsibility of the opposition compared to the government work is pronounced with the time the students are at the university. The demand, that in case of need every citizen has the right to demonstrate for his convictions have nearly the same distinctness. Around in three-quarters of both groups want this right.

Figure 2
The relation between years of study and democratic orientations in 2010.
(Medians)



Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

This pattern is reflected in all times of the elevations. And after a continuous regression from 1993 till 2004, again the influence of the university shows a reinforcement of the fact that with the length of the study the support of the democratic aspects increases.

Sequential, two-factorial analysis of variance for the criterion of political interest confirm a significant effect of the gender variable and the subject of study - but the importance of the gender factor is higher (c.f. Table A2). With an explained variance of 6,1% it exceeds the explanatory power of the subject (2,8%). In both subjects, the men are always more interested than women; whereby the men in the social sciences are by far more politic-affine than the three reference groups – the interaction term is significant at the five percent level. In a comparison with the period of study likewise the gender variable is a powerful explanation and provides a relative variance of 4,0%. So it can be seen in the course of the study while a continuous growth of interest in women and men – however the initial distance between the groups remains. A simultaneous comparison of university related factors shows the following findings: Regardless of the affiliation to the social sciences and engineering sciences the political interest is growing while the period of study and regardless to the number of semesters the students of social sciences are always more interested in. With an explained variance of 3,3% the discipline has the more prominent role.

In contrast to this, the design of the criterion acceptance of *democratic principles* is different (c.f. Table A3): Not the factor gender but the subject and the number of semesters prove to be meaningful. With an explained variance of 4,8% the discipline is a highly significant predictor. Regardless of gender, students in social sciences illustrate more emphasis for the democratic principles than students in the engineering sciences – those are more reserved. The study period also provides a higher explanation than the gender factor (1,8 vs. 0,4%), but both variables show significant effects. In a simultaneous comparison of the factors number of semesters and subject, are ultimately more clearly separate effects. The achieved variance of the factor subject exceeds with 4,7% those of the factor time of study. But regardless of the number of semesters students in the social sciences advocate democratic principles stronger – independent from that in both disciplines the emphasizing of the principles increased during the period of study.

5.3 Regression Models

Regression calculations of all independent variables that were previously considered provide an insight into the whole relationship and power of each variable: In separate models, the dependent variable (criterion) political interest and acceptance of democratic principles will be merged with each independent factor (predictor). Below each of the model is

presented that has the highest explanatory power – measured by the adjusted R^2 . In this case no causal connection chains are assumed – the models serve heuristic purposes and are characterized by multiple patterns of relationships.

For the *political interest* the subject of study is the strongest predictor (c.f. Table 6) – in the model calculated this positive effect of the subject emanates from the social sciences (beta .-30). Added to this the gender shows a big significant influence – it confirms the dominance of men in the interest (beta .-27). Third there is a slightly less impact from the years of study (beta .-11) – this illustrates that the interest increases with the time at the university. The parents' formation level has less of an effect. Final the university location in East- or West-Germany indicates no significance.

Table 6
The multivariate relations between democratic orientations and various sources of influences. Linear regressions 2010. Standardized beta-coefficients.

Predictors	Criteria			
	Political interest ^{a)}		Acceptance of democratic principles ^{b)}	
Gender	-.27	***	-.10	*
Subject	-.30	***	.13	**
Years of study	.11	**	-.09	*
Parents' formation level	.06	*	-.08	*
University location (Old and New Federal States)	-.04		.03	
Political interest			-.27	***
df	5/1561		6/1558	
adjusted R^2	.10		.08	

a) Variable range: 0=not at all to 6=very great

b) Variable range: 1=vehemently democratic, 2=unambiguous democratic, 3=labile democratic, 4=weak democratic, 5=trends undemocratic, 6=strong un democratic

*** $p \leq 0.000$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

The acceptance of *democratic principles* calculated in the model is primarily influenced by the political interest (beta .-27). This underlines the fact that with an increasing openness of the students the likelihood for a place more emphasis on democratic values increases.

A subordinate influence is shown by the subject. This illustrates the positive effect of social sciences (beta .13). The gender and the years of study rank on a lower level behind these influences. On the one side it shows that women are more sympathetically with the democratic principles; on the other side the data slightly confirms on a level the positive effect of the year of study. The parents' formation level gives a significant, but a light explanation. The university location is not relevant.

In sum: Thus, a strong political interest can encourage democratic values. Also the university provides a contribution – namely given through the years of study and the subject. In addition, gender and parents' formation level give supplementary explanations. But the explanation power of the models is not sufficient at all (R^2 .10; R^2 .08). It is to assume that other variables which are not calculated keep relevance.

6 Conclusions

In recent times the interest in comparative studies on the social situation of students, their motivations and labor market opportunities and gender issues has increased. Even the theme "Changing Values on Campus" is moving back into the focus. However, in this case there is a loss of attention in European Countries. So it is not really possible, to give a comprehensive analysis of student political and democratic orientations and the role of the university in this process. In this paper it was exemplary to illustrate the students' political-democratic values and orientations, the change and the role of the universities in a cross-sectional time comparison by the German students with data of the "German Student Surveys".

All in all in a cross-sectional time response on the one side the data shows a change of political and democratic values. On the other side there is a stability in various aspects. Since the beginning of the surveys, there has been a high political interest. The democratic orientations are characterized with a declining foundation and in recent time with a consolidation. This shows the self-imposed commitment of the students to represent the basic democratic values and that they still have an eye for social crisis phenomena. This attitude is certainly the success of political education-work and a special formation (c.f. Bargel/Sandberger 1981; Brämer 1993). In addition, at universities the young highly skilled persons have exclusive options available to form their socio-political attitude and to be

formed. The empirical results give references of how these commitments can be firmed stronger.

An opportunity could be the conveying of *political interest* of women. On the one side, for example a constructive discussion with female ideas and attitudes towards the political sphere could support their sociopolitical understanding and interest. On the other side this context perhaps opens the chance to stimulate a debate about a new fundamental understanding of politics or rather the political. In this case, particularly women are likely to promote social as well as at the University and to be in a position to implement their ideas about politics and democracy – because at the universities they represent the largest group. In this context, also the university could play a socializing role. Furthermore the creating and strengthening of open, less regulated structures in universities seem to bear good prospects that exist in social sciences. An additional contribution to increase the political interest of the students could also be a stronger reference to the dimension of the subject to social and political connections. These terms seem particularly present in the social scientific understanding.

With regard to the *democratic values*, in a cross-sectional time response the data shows that universities have an independent socializing effect, too. On the one side the subject is important. In this term a transformation of social science concepts, contents and structures into other subjects could be fruitful for the students' democratic convictions. On the other side the democratic orientation grows with the years of study – this relationship is confirmed for all the times of measurement the surveys were conducted. So it would be questioned to what extent a shorter period of study contributes in this case. This affirms the chances of universities to be a relevant instance and to form an elite, that is convinced of democratic values and realizes them.

In addition, here comes the factor of political interest: The higher it is, the stronger the democratic principles are emphasized. This framework could be next in the attempt to sensitize women to raise awareness of political issues, also thinking about a change in the gender composition of the subjects – above all in the social sciences. Especially with a regard to the interests of the men it is worth achieving a widely more content or broader thematic focus and thus to increase their share in the social sciences. On the one side this would create opportunities for a closer connection between women and political fields and – on the other side – open up the democratic socializing effect of the subject to men.

It is an open question, whether the students will participate at protests of the young generation. In fact the economic crisis in several European countries created new social movements against a pure economization and for more commitment, ability to be critical, communicate competences, maturity and liberation. There are also new democratic parties; they are very popular among young people – like the pirates: they are becoming increasingly popular because they stand for transparency, the freedom of information, the realization of an active participation and the chance to transform the democratic values (c.f. PP International n.d.). Further the interest and the willingness of students to participate in protests of their generation should not be ruled out, because the current reforms led the European universities to regulations and school like teaching – on the one side this includes a shorter duration of study and on the other side parallel to the ideal of a humanistic formation narrows a professional education.

All in all: Despite the unstable estimations in certain aspects, due to the strong political interest of the students and the existing foundation of values and beliefs no threat to the democratic system is expected.

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Appendix

Table A1
Political Interest and Acceptance of democratic principles in 2010. Bivariate analysis.
Medians.

Variables	Political Interest ^{a)}		Acceptance of democratic principles ^{b)}	
Gender ^{c)}				
men	4,5		2,3	
women	3,8	**	2,3	**
Parents' formation level				
secondary modern school	4,1		2,3	
secondary school	3,8		2,5	
grammar school	4,0		2,4	
university	4,1	**	2,2	**
University location				
West-Germany	4,1		2,3	
East-Germany	4,0	*	2,3	
Years of study				
low (1.-4. Semester)	3,8		2,4	
high (7. and more semester)	4,2	**	2,2	**
Subject				
cultural sciences	4,1		2,2	
social sciences	4,3		2,1	
law	4,8		2,4	
economics	4,3		2,5	
mathematics	3,9		2,3	
natural sciences	3,8		2,4	
engineering sciences	3,8	**	2,6	**
Political Interest ^{d)}				
not at all			2,6	
great		*	2,0	**

a) 0 = "not at all" to 6 = „very great“

b) 1 = vehemently democratic, 2 = unambitious democratic, 3 = labil democratic, 4 = weak democratic, 5 = trends undemocratic, 6 = strong undemocratic

c) nicht gerundete Werte: men = 2,34, women = 2,26

d) Variable range: 0-3=not at all; 5-6=great

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

Table A2
 Sequential, two-factorial analysis of variance confirmed for the criterion political interest in 2010 ^{a)}

Factors	Mean	df	MSSQ	F	SSQ%	P
Subject ^{b)} and Gender						
Social sciences - Men	5,0					
Social sciences - Women	3,9					
Engineering sciences - Men	3,8					
Engineering sciences - Women	3,1					
A = Subject		1	112,3	48,9	2,8	***
B = Gender		1	241,0	104,9	6,1	***
AB = Interaction		1	12,9	5,6	0,3	*
Years of study ^{c)} and Gender						
Low semester – Men	3,9					
Low semester - Women	3,3					
High semester - Men	4,4					
High semester - Women	3,8					
A = Years of study		1	174,8	77,7	2,3	***
B = Gender		1	310,3	137,9	4,0	***
AB = Interaction		1	0,1	0,0	0,0	
Years of study ^{c)} and Subject ^{b)}						
Low semester - Social sciences	4,0					
Low semester - Engineering sciences	3,4					
High semester - Social sciences	4,3					
High semester - Engineering sciences	3,8					
A = Years of study		1	44,4	18,4	1,3	***
B = Subject		1	107,9	44,8	3,3	***
AB = Interaction		1	1,9	0,8	0,7	

a) 0=not at all to 6=very great

b) Comparison of extreme groups: Social sciences vs. Engineering sciences

c) Comparison of extreme groups: low semester = 1.-4. semester; high semester = 7. and more semester

p*** = 0.000; p** ≤ 0.01; p* ≤ 0.05

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

Table A3
Sequential, two-factorial analysis of variance confirmed for the criterion democratic principles in 2010^{a)}

Factors	Mean	df	MSSQ	F	SSQ%	P
Subject ^{b)} and Gender						
Social sciences - Men	2,1					
Social sciences - Women	2,1					
Engineering sciences - Men	2,6					
Engineering sciences - Women	2,4					
A = Subject		1	64,9	79,9	4,8	***
B = Gender		1	0,1	0,2	0,0	
AB = Interaction		1	2,8	3,4	0,2	
Years of study ^{c)} and Gender						
Low semester - Men	2,6					
Low semester - Women	2,4					
High semester - Men	2,3					
High semester - Women	2,2					
A = Years of study		1	49,6	58,8	1,8	***
B = Gender		1	10,1	12,0	0,4	**
AB = Interaction		1	0,3	0,4	0,0	
Years of study ^{c)} and Subject ^{b)}						
Low semester - Social sciences	2,2					
Low semester - Engineering sciences	2,6					
High semester - Social sciences	2,0					
High semester - Engineering sciences	2,4					
A = Years of study		1	17,6	18,4	1,3	***
B = Subject		1	64,6	44,8	4,7	***
AB = Interaction		1	0,0	0,8	0,0	

a) 1 = vehemently democratic, 2 = unambitious democratic, 3 = labil democratic, 4 = weak democratic, 5 = trends undemocratic, 6 = strong undemocratic

b) Comparison of extreme groups: Social sciences vs. Engineering sciences

c) Comparison of extreme groups: low semester = 1.-4. semester; high semester = 7. and more semester

p*** = 0.000; p** ≤ 0.01; p* ≤ 0.05

Source: German Student Surveys 1983-2010, Research Group on Higher Education at the University of Konstanz

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