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Being and becoming political in the classroom

The "foundation of a village-community"-simulation as genetic teaching and research setting

The democracy and ideology gap in civic education

When reflecting on the future of civic education and its best practices we should keep in mind the most salient similarity between teaching and politics: the gap between programs and practice. This is why we can talk about an important "rejuvenation" of this subject both in the United States and in Germany by the recent empirical turn. Instead of accepting the evidence that many students consider civic education as boring and see no learning effect, we started to examine by surveys and assessments, how civics is being taught and how it might be best taught, including to find explications and solutions for the youthful indifference toward institutional politics (e.g., Niemi & Niemi, 2007, 34-35). So I will start with real classroom practice to unfold my perspective on the problems and challenges of present teaching and develop theoretical and practical didactical answers. Though my own best practice research refers to German experience, I will link my approach to the recent American didactic discussion to outline common future tasks. As I didn't get a chance yet to do research in American classes, I will inductively develop my didactic starting point using a classroom scene with a 11th or 12th grader published by Nancy and Richard Niemi (2007, 44-45). I have chosen it because the authors see it as typical and we can find here in a nutshell the core of two outstanding teaching and learning problems to be solved both in the U.S. and in Germany:

T: Okay. You all understand whether you are liberal or conservative? I'm not going to ask you to tell me–to answer that question for me. What you're going to do right now is you're going to take this test. It's 25 questions and it's your opinion. It's not a real test. It's not gradable.
S: Can we work on other stuff?
T: No, this is what you're doing right this second, in class. All right, no talking about it.
S: What if you don't know?
T: Just do your best. If you don't know then skip it or don't write anything. Say I don't know. Okay, so you're quietly working on this, You really don't need to talk to anybody to do this. You need to do this on your own.
S: I don't trust none of these.
T: Shhh.

First, as a former teacher, I perceive a student who doesn't want to work "on the stuff" his teacher provided for him. A typical everyday situation in school. This might be a sign of a general lack of motivation stemming from social problems outside the classroom or the special relationship between this teacher and this student, as a simple pedagogical interpretation might suggest. But as didactic scholars in a special subject field we have to look at the didactic triad "teacher – student – content" from a content-based politics-related perspective. When the student states to trust neither in liberal nor in conservative Politicians, he seems to reflect the common juvenile mistrust in politics and its representatives, as found in many civics classes in Western democracies (e.g., Hahn 1998; Torney-Purta et al. 1999, 2001; Avery 2007). As educators, we can't easily change the societal influences

leading to this mistrust, but we can look at the specific contributions of the teaching setting to the formation of the student's political attitudes.

The authors of the study consider this scene as an example for "teachers' methods for ignoring and stifling students' political opinions": Neither does the teacher want to know the political standpoints of his students nor does he engage the class in a discussion about the liberal versus conservative controversy. In the contrary, he doesn't allow any discussion among the students. I call this first problem of suppressing controversial debates in formal classroom interaction "the democratic gap", meaning the absence of central principles and practices in the classroom's political microcosm that are indivisibly linked to democratic politics in the political macro sphere.

This failure to engage students in discussions of controversial issues sends, according to the authors of the study, two signals: First, civics is boring, second: discussions, arguments and opinions are not welcome and necessary or central to civic participation. Civics doesn't seem to be about politics, but about "memorizing constitutional provisions", learning names and how a bill becomes a law. Polity is taught at the expense of policy and politics – we know similar tendencies in Germany, albeit less than 20 years ago.

Another part of the democracy gap, as stated in the same study, are teachers expressing directly or indirectly opinions despite their intent to do otherwise, "under the guise of expert". We can even talk about a "misconception that their work is neutral". Teachers may show to be a part of the political process, but do this unknowingly, not as concrete example of their participation. Tilman Grammes, (1998, 102), among others, comes to the same result by examining several civic education classroom scenes in Germany, he speaks about an "exclusion of discourses" and therefore sees politics "vanish" or neutralised through classroom interaction.

Another recent study (Hess & Ganzler 2006) comes to the conclusion that classes without discussion culture are miniature models of U.S. politics: Due to the absence of controversial discussion the student's own political diversity lays dormant, and they easily develop the misperception "everybody is in the middle". Besides, students in homogeneous classes, like in explicitly Christian schools, tend to mislabel dissenting different views as out of the mainstream, as assaults unworthy of proper consideration. According to the authors, both problems discourage students to participate in public political discussions.

A sociological explication of the democracy gap is exposed in a study outside the classroom in British and American focus groups (Conover & Searing & Crewe 2002): Therefore, many citizens understand discussions mainly as guaranteed "act of self-expression", they like to exercise their Freedom of Expression and to listen to others doing so. But they consider contested and public discussions as dangerous enterprise: They fear being misrecognized, disrespected and excluded. Furthermore, they are also afraid of being truly recognized and pressured to transform their political preferences. These "politics of recognition" lead to the misconception that "politics is ultimately personal and private" instead of recognizing discussions as means for citizens "to educate each other" – an insight that Kohlberg and Piaget would approve directly from a psychological point of view.

Apparently, we have to complete those findings, that many students feel able to voice their opinions and to discuss controversial issues in an open and supportive classroom climate (Hahn 1998, see also Avery 2007): This openness often stops, where actual politics begin: When personal opinions have to be justified and negotiated to come to a compromise or common decision.

Back to our classroom scene: Beside the absence of interchange the authors note that the teacher denies any conversation about what other political opinions might be available to the student. He focuses on the classical American left-right scheme, ignoring other political ideas. I call this lack of a differentiated political map and therefore of a deep understanding of political thinking and struggling beyond recent institutional political practice "the ideological gap". In other words, I doubt the teacher's initial statement that all deeply *understand* whether they are liberal or conservative or more generally what these labels might signify and which values they contain. In this manner becoming political is thwarted, by silencing the latent, often unconscious political orientations that students always bring along in the classroom even before learning about them. The authors of the study on ideological diversity (Hess & Ganzler 2007, 133) describe one of the examined classes as "microcosm of the political diversity" of the U.S. – because half the class would have voted for Bush in 2004 other half would have voted for Kerry. There's a systematic background: Political systems with majority representation ("the winter takes I all") often lead to two-party-systems whereas the German proportional representation allows a more differentiated party competition. Therefore, in Germany, lots of scholars criticize the one-dimensional left-right scale, but nevertheless it is used in surveys to measure the political orientations of adolescents, even without explaining it. No wonder that many teenagers show difficulties in placing themselves on the scale or simply choose the seemingly neutral center.

Those two gaps, the democratic and the ideological one, endanger both the further development of democracy as a deliberative political system and the future role of our students as responsible citizens with a strong and empathic political identity: "Too much agreement is a bad thing for democracy" because we have to "deliberate the nature of public good" (Hess & Ganzler, 2006, 131). In the following I will first link these gaps to the normative goals of civic education as fixed in the American and German National Standards. Then I will propose my own didactic approach (Petrik 2007) as part of a possible solution in the American tradition of John Dewey and Joseph Adelson as well as following the German general didactic schools "Didactics of the Art of Teaching" and "Didactics of Learner Development". They have in common what John Dewey and Martin Wagenschein, German scholar of physics education, called the "genetic method". I will concretize this method presenting my best practice example "the foundation of a village community".

Political identity, ideology and civic competency

The primary purpose of civic education can be defined to "develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (NCSS 1992). Or, as Joseph Adelson (1971, 1013) phrases it in his famous

study "the political imagination of the young adolescent": The development of a political identity as process of "struggling to formulate a morally coherent view of how society is and might and should be arranged". So we have to pursue two major tasks: First to show the variety of political perspectives, as there is no objective, common shared public good, especially in a culturally and subculturally diverse society. Second to show that democratic values, principles and procedures are the best-known political way of coping with, negotiating and coordinating ideological diversity without making war.

The NCSS (2002) conceptualizes "strands of civic competency" that encompass civic-related knowledge, cognitive and participative skills as well as civic dispositions. The items that concretize these strands are mostly familiar to the German discussion (GPJE 2004; Behrmann & Grammes & Reinhardt 2004). However, in the History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools (California Department of Education 2005) I found three main goals respectively skills whose wording is closer to the German one:

1. Critical thinking skills: Ability to question the validity and meaning of what students read, hear, think and believe, to write analytical commentaries, interpret extract meaning, distinct between verifiable and unverifiable information, judge information, identify unstated assumptions, semantic slanting, test conclusions or hypothesis. Following Behrmann, Grammes and Reinhardt I would suggest distinguishing between those thinking skills of *scientific empirical analysis* and those skills of *critical normative judgment*.

2. Participation-skills: Effective cooperation, willingness to work fort he common good, skills of persuading, compromising, debating, negotiating, and resolving conflicts, ability to confront controversial issues in reasoned, non-aggressive ways, identify issues that require social action, commitment to accept social responsibilities, to work to influence those in political power to preserve and extend justice, freedom, equity, and human rights, mobilizing groups, making decisions, planning and taking action accept the consequences of one's own actions. Like before, I would consider to follow the concept of Behrmann, Grammes and Reinhardt and distinguish between micro-political and macro-political participation skills: *Conflict resolution skills* comprehend those abilities needed in group interaction to persuade, compromise, debate and negotiate, while genuine *Political Participation skills* comprise those capabilities necessary to take part in political mobilization and action.

3. Basic study skills: Methods to acquire knowledge, locate, select and organize information from written sources, read and interpret maps, globes, models, diagrams, graphs, charts, tables, pictures, cartoons, understand specialized language used in social science research. In Germany it is controversial whether those skills form a competency group by themselves or if they are just auxiliary- or sub-skills for the thinking- and participation-skills.

In the following, I will first focus on the conceptualizing of the *critical judgment skills* to fill the ideological gap, because only a deep understanding of the vast political landscape brings to mind the necessity of a democratic framework to solve resulting conflicts. Then I will show a method of fostering the *conflict resolution skills* to fill the democratic gap to become at the same time tolerant and critical citizens.

Filling the ideology gap: Four basic political orientations

A normative political judgment has always to do with values, they are the benchmarks of each political identity. As we deal now with skills to assess the political process, we talk about *controversial* values that lead to cleavages and competing political ideologies, not about the most consensual values like tolerance, freedom of expression and sovereignty of the people that are part of democracy, providing the confines of political struggle.

I discovered four independent approaches to replace the one-dimensional left-right scale by a coordinate system, using two instead of one axis: There is "the world's smallest political quiz" designed by American right-wing libertarians around 1985, with origins in 1969 (see Harris 2004). There is the so-called "political compass" (Pace news limited 2008), and a British anarchists' model (Christie & Meltzer 1970, 104). The genuine scientific approach stems from Herbert Kitschelt (1992; 1994), Professor of International Relations at Duke University, North Carolina, an empirically tested model of "Ultimate values, ideologies and forms of social order", created as heuristics for political preference formation and party programs in post-communist democracies.

The economic or distributive (classical Left-Right) axis measures one's opinion of how people should be endowed with resources. "Left" is defined as the view that assets should be redistributed by a cooperative collective agency (the state or a network of communes), while "right" is defined as the view that the economy should be left to the market system, to competing individuals and organisations. The other axis (Authoritarian-Libertarian) measures one's political opinions in a social or procedural sense, considering the appropriate amount of personal freedom and participation: "Libertarianism" is defined as the belief that personal freedom and participation should be maximised, while "authoritarianism" is defined as the belief that authority and tradition should be obeyed.

The "the world's smallest political quiz" works with the following model, being used or referred to in many American schools and civics textbooks according to its authors. It has been developed "to replace the flawed, misleading "left-right" line that "doesn't have a place for many millions of people who don't fit" "with a better, more accurate, more insightful visual political map" (Harris 2004):
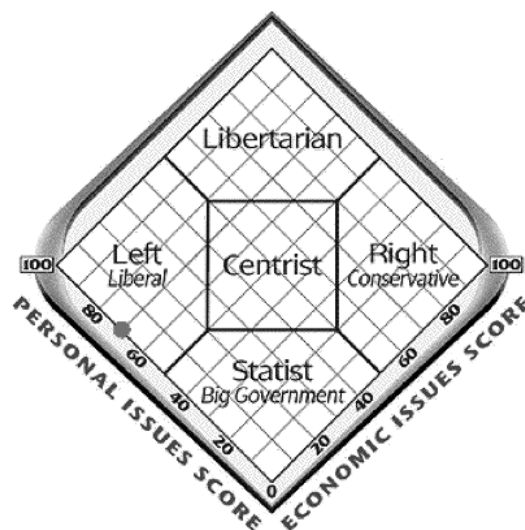

Fig. 1: The world's smallest political quiz (www.theadvocates.org)

You can find your own place in the chart by answering the following 10 questions positively or negatively, raising fundamental political issues that had been found to be most controversial, covering outstanding personal and economic cleavages of the American society:

PERSONAL ISSUES

1. Government should not censor speech, press, media or the Internet.
2. Military service should be voluntary. There should be no draft.
3. There should be no laws regarding sex between consenting adults.
4. Repeal laws prohibiting adult possession and use of drugs.
5. There should be no National ID card.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

1. End "corporate welfare." No government handouts to business.
2. End government barriers to international free trade.
3. Let people control their own retirement: privatize Social Security.
4. Replace government welfare with private charity.
5. Cut taxes and government spending by 50% or more.

Though, from a scientific point of view, there are some specifications to be made. Most important, the term "libertarian" is almost only used in the U.S. for a *right-wing* ideology combining free market with personal freedom. In Europe it is (historically correct) used for forms of cooperative living, left-wing anarchism in the tradition of Proudhon (sometimes called libertarian socialism) and for post-modern values (as Inglehart does it, too), both combining personal freedom, participative democracy and social equality. The term "liberal", in the contrary, in Europe refers to a sort of moderate libertarianism, what is sometimes called "classical liberalism" in America. Even there, some libertarians describe themselves as "real liberals" or "classical liberals" or "Jeffersonian liberals". Second: Though in the quiz the term "statist" is only used for left-wing systems, the authors distinguish well between Fascism and Stalinism as different authoritarian state systems:

> "Pursue conservative thought to its logical extreme, according to this model, and you somehow end up at fascism (which is national socialism), or white supremacy or some other authoritarian position. If you pursue liberal thought too far, you supposedly end up at socialism or communism." (Harris 2004)

Thirdly: To be centrist is not a political order or ideology by itself, but considers those individuals combining values of all the four political orientations depending on the issues to be decided.

The value correlations and their historical and theoretical sources are more clearly developed in Kitschelt's model of "Ultimate values, ideologies and forms of social order", designed as a redefinition of the competitive space for political parties:
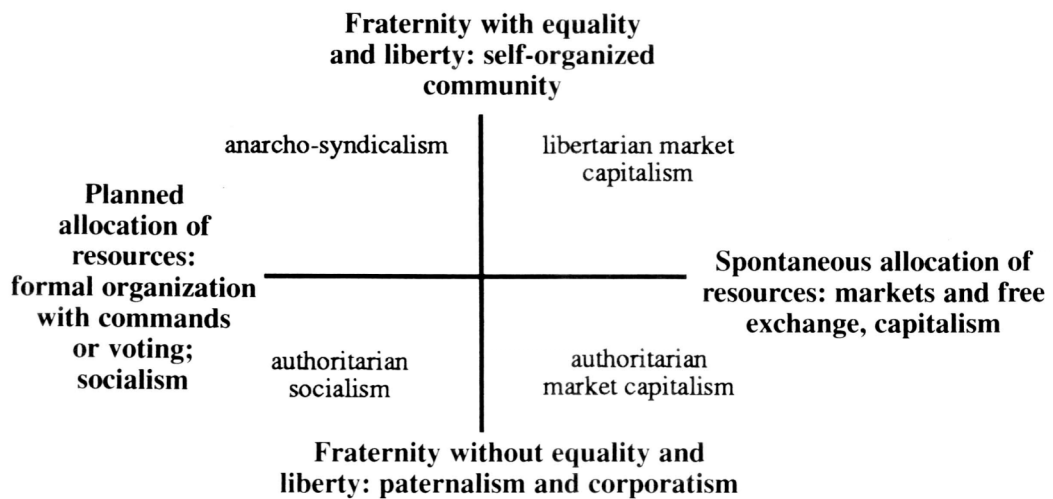
**Fraternity with equality
and liberty: self-organized
community**

anarcho-syndicalism   libertarian market
                                 capitalism

**Planned
allocation of
resources:
formal organization   **Spontaneous allocation of
with commands   resources: markets and free
or voting;   exchange, capitalism**
socialism**
              authoritarian   authoritarian
              socialism   market capitalism

**Fraternity without equality and
liberty: paternalism and corporatism**

Fig. 2: Ultimate values, ideologies and forms of social order (Kitschelt 1994, 12)

Kitschelt's theory, that the classical values of the French Revolution drive modern visions of the good society can be seen as a renewal of Karl Mannheim's (1936/1929) classic model of utopian and ideological thinking. From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge he identified four historical ideal types of political consciousness, that still influence political parties and individuals: Orgiastic chiliasm or anarchism (which isn't developed historically correct), liberalism, conservatism, and socialism/communism. Both, Mannheim and Kitschelt, question Marx's belief that ideologies emerge only from social classes. Every day experiences in markets, work organization, and the sphere of consumption profoundly affect citizens' political aspirations and preferences, shape their rank ordering of political values:
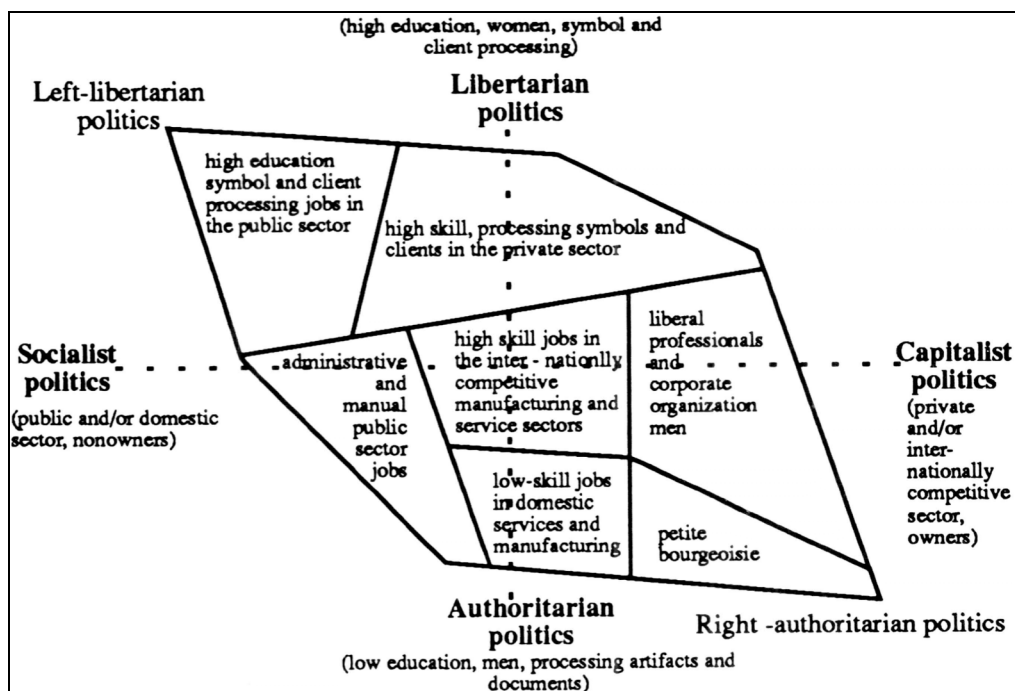

Fig. 3: Ideology and occupational groups in advanced capitalist democracies
(Kitschelt 1994, 27)

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Further empirical evidence of value preference formation is provided by the Social Milieu approach (see www.sigma-online.com/en/SIGMA_Milieus).

For the use in civic education classes, I transformed the Kitschelt model into an elementary political compass of ideologies, including their founding fathers:
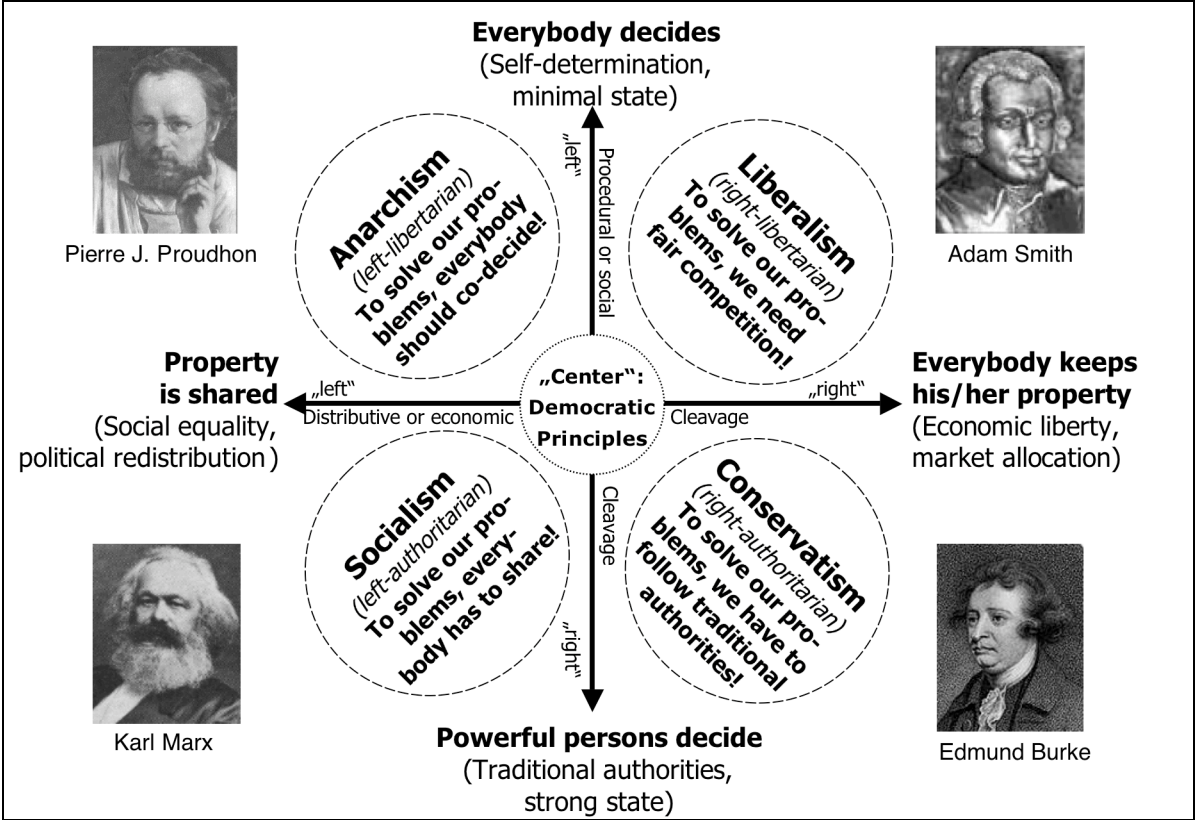

Fig. 4: The Political Compass of four basic political orientations (Petrik 2007: 100)

Every ideology is meant to represent its democratic core, this is why the center represents the consensual principles to be shared by all the four. So neither Stalinism, nor Fascism or Manchester Liberalism or the minority of Anarchists throwing bombs are primarily considered, when students learn about the elementary variety of political thought and orders (but might be added later). Anarchism represents a not well-known historical source of those values that refer to modern left-wing libertarian, socially just, post-materialist and ecological grassroots politics.

So what are best-practice methods to teach political identity and classroom democracy?

Filling the democracy gap: The genetic learning environment "foundation of a village community"

As shown, the democracy gap concerns the choice of methods and forms of classroom interaction. If we want to foster controversial and constructive discussions and the personal development of a political identity, we have to use methods that entangle students in situations, where their

developmental task "aquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior – developing an ideology" (Havighurst 1972: 69ff.) is evident to them. According to Havighurst and the "Didactics of Learner Development" (Meyer 2007) we have to create "teachable moments" (Havighurst), where "individual need and a societal demand" are in accordance.

This approach needs a *situated* perspective on learning, demands the arrangement of "laboratories of democracy" (Dewey) as learning environments rich in student interaction, cooperation and problem solving (see Lave & Wenger 1991; Rubin 2007). One appropriate methodical approach is the genetic method. The "Didactics of the Art of Teaching" (Berg 2004) is dedicated to the development of genetic best practice teaching examples called *didactic plays* ("Lehrstücke", see Petrik 2004) in the tradition of the physics education scholar Martin Wagenschein (for English translations see Westbury, Hopmann, Riquarts 2000). As these didactic plays are permanently tested in schools to improve them, we can speak about an extended version of the lesson study method (Lewis 2004).

The genetic method embodies an answer to the students' tendency to use political terms (like conservatism, liberalism, majority vote and so on) formally, just learned by heart, without real insight into what they signify, let alone their connection with other terms or their possible contribution to shape a political identity (see e.g. Kuhn, Massing 1999). This phenomenon is what Martin Wagenschein called "pseudo-knowledge" (Scheinwissen) and what stimulated him to further develop the genetic principle. The genetic principle aims at bridging everyday knowledge and scientific concepts: Instead of leading adolescents through "systematic exhibitions showing completed expeditions", as is largely the practice in school, they are encouraged to investigate possibilities to systematize their own experiences with the object themselves (Wagenschein 1991, 79). The simple methodical "trick" is "to turn dead objects back into the living actions from which they were derived" (Roth 1965, 116). Jean Piaget (1971) comes to the same conclusion: Teaching can support the developmental process by providing support for the "spontaneous research" of the child, using active methods that require re-discovering or reconstructing scientific "truths". Therefore, the genetic principle is akin to John Dewey's experience-based pedagogy:

> "Studying it in process of formation makes much that is too complex to be directly grasped open to comprehension. Genetic method was perhaps the chief scientific achievement of the latter half of the nineteenth century." (Dewey 1966, 214)

> "It thus becomes the office of the educator to select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potentiality of presenting new problems which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgement will expand the area of further experience. (...) The issues and problems of present *social* life are in such intimate and direct connection with the past that students cannot be prepared to understand (...) the best way of dealing with them without delving into their roots in the past." (Dewey 1997, 75-77)

So how do we find appropriate original situations that provoke the discovery of scientific findings like the political compass? In the social studies curriculum we can distinguish amongst three different forms of knowledge of society: Scientific knowledge gives insight into ways of problem solving. Institutional knowledge shows how politicians and other political activists bargain and decide political conflicts. Everyday knowledge helps to cope with personal conflict situations (see the "Model of forms of knowledge", Grammes 1998, 70). By this means we can locate fruitful problems or key events

through which social inventions, political ideas and procedures as well as social research methods were developed, e.g. by Marx, Burke and other thinkers. This is the scientific genesis. Second, we try to find out, how central ideas and procedures got prevailed or established in form of laws and institutions, e.g. in the French or Russian Revolution or after the decline of the Stalinist system in Europe. This is the institutional genesis. Thirdly, we can examine, how individual values, norms and images of society emerged or changed. This is the individual and collective genesis:
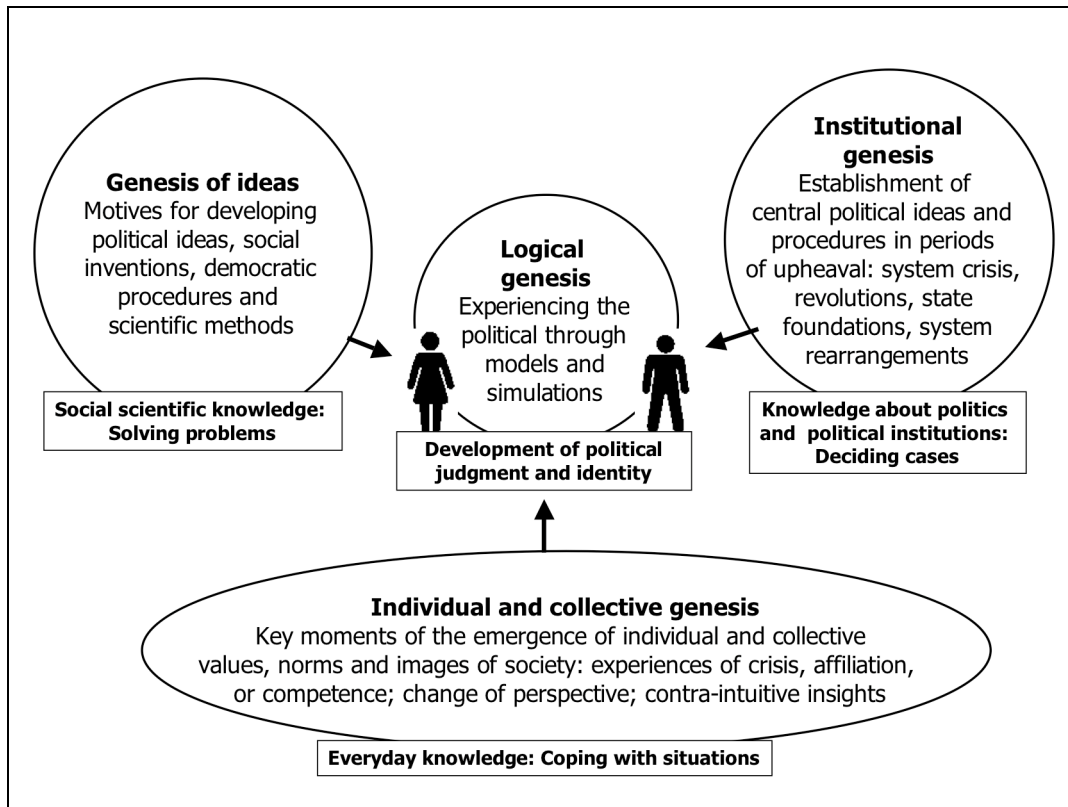

Fig. 5: Forms of political knowledge and their Geneses (Petrik 2004 & 2007, 253)

Fourthly, we can work with genetic models of societal development and original situations, if we want to avoid the complexity of historical and recent facts, before adding them later. This genesis is represented by the tradition of "Robinson" or "island stories". Adelson (1971) worked with such a model to examine the political imagination of teenagers. His research "still stands as a model for understanding young people's thinking about social and political concepts" (Avery 2003):

> "Imagine that a thousand people venture to an island in the Pacific to form a new society; once there they must compose a political order, devise a legal system, and in general confront the myriad problems of government" (Adelson 1971, 1014).

Based on the scenario, he presented hypothetical laws and potential conflicts within the community to the youth. For example, should a law be passed to prohibit smoking? Should a dissenting religious group be vaccinated? Further similar studies have been conducted under the label "the world interview" (e.g., Crain & Crain 1974). Adelson's reasoning to avoid talking about current political realities is similar to Wagenschein's point of view: Adelson didn't want to risk "being misled about the child's grasp of the political". The younger "may be intimidated by their lack of knowledge, the older

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may glory the possession of it". So both child and interviewer would "become so mesmerized by the pursuit of facts and opinions that the quality of the child's thought may be obscured." (1013-1014).

The German Pedagogue Eduard Spranger (1963), a friend of Martin Wagenschein, came to a similar idea in the 1960's, but instead of "assigning interviews" as part of teaching, as Patricia Avery (2003) suggests, he aims at involving students into a fundamental negotiation process of basic political values: He wants them to simulate the foundation of a new society on an island. In this microcosm, elementary political categories like power, freedom, equality, justice such as latent liberal, conservative, libertarian and socialist orientations can be discovered and used to build one's identity and furthermore as cognitive map to better understand macro-political issues and systems:

> "If it is true that one carries the basic factors of political concepts already within himself, although in simpler schemes, political insight would take on the character of a re-discovery." Spranger (1963, 12)

I transferred this setting to the foundation of a village community in a deserted Pyrenees mountain village. The pure island situation runs into danger to promote more social than political learning. The village model already contains institutions like a market place, a town hall, a prison and a church, which animate students more likely to debate basic political issues like decision making, resource distribution, the role of religion and punishment, issues that also shape and separate the content of our four political ideologies:
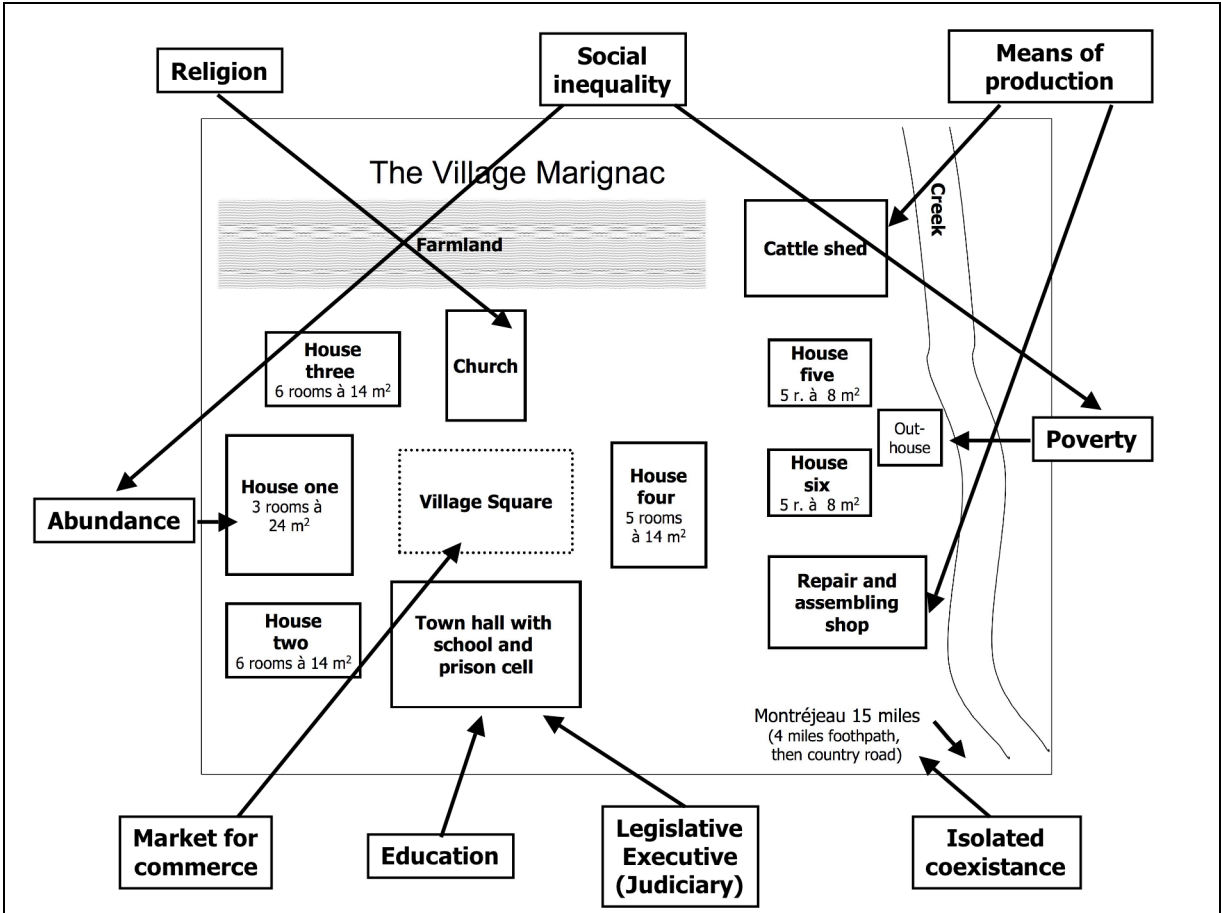

Fig. 6: The village-model as political microcosm (Petrik 2007: 298)

Other than in "The Smallest Political Test" or in Adelson's interviews, these issues are raised and discovered *through the setting,* prompting the students to debate them. Later, in the course of the simulation, the village inhabitants get to know the four founding fathers of liberalism, conservatism, socialism and anarchism, Smith, Burke, Marx and Proudhon, and engage in role-plays in order to learn to perform precisely their different argumentations. Finally, they discuss recent controversial political issues like homosexual marriage or the decline of the German welfare state, first by taking the four ideologies' perspectives and second by stating a personal viewpoint. So they pass through a learning path from the discovery of their proper values to political ideologies, orders and recent politics. There are versions for college and for high school level that are frequently used in many German schools, mainly in Hamburg and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Present findings and future research: Politicization types

The village foundation process always shows a high intensity of heated debates, that sometimes continue during recreation time. The village people manage to establish democratic rules to tame their chaos of sometimes aggressive statements and mutual interrupting. By the lack of a political order its necessity becomes evident. Even the trust in Politicians might grow, as one female teenager states it: "We always complain about the long-lasting political debates in Parliament and talk shows. Now I see that it is even difficult with 25 people to come to an agreement". The sense of democracy gets re-discovered, Dewey's notion that democracy has to be lived in everyday practice to keep it stable can be comprehended on a smaller scale. So the village foundation appears to be an adequate means to fill the democratic gap. Besides, most students discern in their final self-reflection to feel more certain about distinguishing political parties and ideologies and about defending their views against friends and family. But this general outcome should be specified by the concrete analysis of learner development to get insight into typical difficulties. Precisely I want to contribute to the development of a set of politicization types as heuristics for civic education teachers that could facilitate a sensitive coping with learning problems. I define a politicization type as set of typical problems and chances in developing political judgment skills and conflict resolution skills, depending on the student's latent or explicit political ideology.

In my dissertation (Petrik 2007), I began by examining three outstanding 13th grade students with maximally different political starting positions, during a village foundation that lasted more than 30 lessons long. I measured the formal and content-related quality of their arguments, classifying them into non-argumentative personalistic, reasoned public, institution-related and principled "scientific" argumentation levels (see Behrmann & Grammes & Reinhardt 2004; a similar typology can be found in Crain 1974). In Halle, where I work, we will concretize the present results and develop research methods and teaching settings to examine further politicization types in a wider scale. Here a short abstract about my findings:

Type I: Emotional left-wing Opposition (Martin)

From the beginning, Martin proves himself to be a strong and explicit adversary of market liberalism.

His engagement during the discussions in the village council shows that he doesn't think in terms of two common misconceptions: The illusion of individual autonomy and the Illusion of politics as natural, unchangeable status quo. On the contrary: he feels a great need for political change, but is lacking the tools to make himself listened to, let alone to persuade others. Whenever it comes to a discussion about assets allocation and property rights, he defeats aggressively his view of social equality, raising his voice, interrupting others, without rational argumentation. As time reveals and he admits in his final self-reflection, he believed in the misconception, that at least young people of his age would automatically share his basic values, we call this the Illusion of homogeneity. This illusion misled him to develop a rather authoritarian view in contrast to his left-wing libertarian, grassroots democracy approach. In the course of the teaching project, his attitude changes through the massive resistance of the majority of the village community. He learns to understand that only founding his arguments gives him a chance to get connected to people with other belief systems and to succeed in convincing them. He learns to accept the inevitable difficulties of negotiating different world-views in a democratic manner. In my recent interview with him four years after the simulation, he stated that this experience had deeply changed his way of discussing with others to a more democratic and tolerant way, including a self-critical stance towards himself and his left-wing friends.

Type II: Open quest for political identity (Melanie)

At the beginning, Melanie seems to advocate the same political standpoint as Martin: Grassroots democracy and social equality. But contrarily to him, she considers her values not as a truth to be shared by all intelligent people, but as sort of a hypothesis to be verified through discussion. She is open to counter-arguments and to correct assumptions. Instead of sticking to her left-libertarian values, she strives for democratic procedures that grant a most constructive atmosphere. Her openness allows her to critically examine her basic values: While debating hypothetical problems of the village community like theft and a possible lack of motivation to work she finds out that she doesn't belief any more in her premise of altruistic human beings – as precondition for anarchist societies. Instead she develops a preference for Adam Smith's idea of the invisible hand that guides, by competition, egoistic people to work for the benefit of everybody. As typical for learning processes, she presents her new liberal, right-wing libertarian view in an extreme way, e.g. by blaming *most* people on welfare to betray the state. Additionally, like most students in this class, she has some difficulties to transmit her political judgment from the village microcosm to recent macro-political issues. In the recent interview I conducted 4 years later, she confirms a persisting stable right-wing liberal attitude, without remembering her initial left-wing statements. So I think, in fact the village experience didn't change her basic values but helped her to free them from some layers of left-wing rhetorical habits, probably stemming from her social democratic parents.

Type III: Nonpolitical mainstream loyalty (Franka)

Franka seems neither fixed on a political orientation, like Martin is, nor seeking for a coherent one – like Melanie does. She desires a village community organized like an ideal family. In the consequence, she dislikes every attempt to question the status quo, e.g., the inhabitants' unequal income.

Reasonable argumentations seem to disturb her frequently expressed need for harmony. The common family shares values intuitively. Her rejection of a political discussion level reveals mainly three misconceptions: The Illusion of individual autonomy, the Illusion of nature-like, ontological, unchangeable political opinions and the Illusion of homogeneity. As she doesn't see her conservative values of community, hierarchy and inequality as a standpoint to be justified, she doesn't try for a long time to use and develop argumentative skills. But after a couple of contentious debates she starts to argue for a major vote system: She realizes that without doing so, first no harmony could be established and second the grassroots advocates could enforce a direct democracy system with consensus decision-making. Karl Mannheim wrote, that historically those appreciating conservative values without seeing a necessity to justify them had been challenged by liberal ideas to re-interpret their belief system to transform it into an explicit and therefore contingent political ideology among others. So did Franka to some extent. Non-, pre- and implicitly political students have to clear a greater hurdle than those already emotionally involved in politics or those seeking to involve themselves into.

A short conclusion

Our student in the initial classroom scene hopefully would have found his political tendency and gained more trust in the professional political work by taking part of the village community. Maybe he would have felt for the first time that his "political" needs had been taken for serious. Following this example, I would state the following conditions for further best practice research in the United States and in Germany: Students must get a chance to "delve" into civic and political experiences before "diving into the first chapter of the civics or government textbook" (Avery 2007:34). We need to create and evaluate teaching units that really entangle students in processes of democratic negotiation that foster their judgment and conflict resolution skills. By doing so we would leave the dominant teacher-centered question-response scheme and enhance the students' chance to acquire a personal motivation basis to further develop their analytical and participatory skills. They would learn to correct mutually their political misconceptions that are neither changed by ignoring them (see Hess 2006, 337) nor by eradicating them in an authoritarian manner. I'm looking forward to a productive American-German cooperation!

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