

# **Bonding and Bridging Social Capital A Relevant Concept for Political Participation?**

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## **Abstract**

The main focus of the presented paper is to investigate whether the concept of bonding and bridging social capital can be reasonably specified by categorizing voluntary associations according to their constitutive goods, i.e. purposes, and whether this conceptualization will also hold for empirical analysis in the realm of political participation. The empirical findings show that memberships of voluntary associations which are conducive either to bonding or bridging social capital indeed affect generalized trust, norms and some forms of political participation differently. Underlying structures are revealed and by applying this concept to empirical research we might be better able to answer systematically which associations account for which effects on different aspects of social capital and on political participation. Besides, empirical analyses reveal that norms, as another component of social capital, exert comparable deviating effects, thus stressing the need for further differentiation, too. Moreover, an impressive linkage of political trust to some components of social capital can be disclosed.

## 1. Introduction

Do all voluntary associations have benevolent aspects for democratic decision-making? Until recently, convinced social capitalists who consider social networks as crucial components of their concept would have agreed upon it as long as those associations were horizontally structured and on a real voluntary basis. One of their main concerns would only have been decreasing patterns of membership in voluntary associations. But increasingly they become aware of phenomena like for example religious organizations that show clear sectarian tendencies, status groups that aim primarily at social exclusion or highly organized and efficient criminal networks. These developments have been introduced into the literature as the dark sides of social capital that do *neither* enhance procedures of collective action *nor* increase generalized trust but rather undermine both aspects which are considered to be vital for effective democracies. Thus, either one has to reject the idea of the importance of voluntary associations for social capital building altogether or enlarge the concept of social capital. Social scientists have definitely decided for the latter. These concessions mark a fundamental shift in the social capital debate since academics become more reluctant about the previously assumed exclusive positive effects of social capital. They currently attempt to integrate these findings into the former notion of social capital by differentiating between the bonding and bridging societal effects of voluntary associations.

The focus of this paper will therefore be on the analysis of different potentials of voluntary associations to build bonding or bridging social capital and on possible relationships to some forms of political participation. The research interest is based on recent theoretical elaborations as well as on empirical assumptions assuming that voluntary associations are not at all always causing the same effects, thus stressing the need for further empirical clarifications of this topic.

Germany, as a European country with a high level of social participation, allows for some crucial insights since it demonstrates the importance of a vibrant voluntary sector for the sustainable development of democratic attitudes and behaviour, especially after the persistent experiences of life under dictatorship and in conditions of war. However, the presented empirical results are only based on West German data. Since clear differences between the levels of social participation in East and West Germany exist<sup>1</sup> and since we are primarily interested in a first empirical application of our conceptualization we restrict our analyses to West Germany. A comparative study will be subject to another publication.

With newly available German data based on a representative population survey which was collected within the Europe-wide coordinated project “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy”

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<sup>1</sup> See Rosenblatt (2000).

thorough empirical investigation into this field of research is now possible for the first time<sup>2</sup>. The data offers a considerable amount of information that is linked to different aspects of social capital and political involvement, such as membership and activities in more than thirty different voluntary associations, activities in networks, social and political trust, norms, political orientations and behaviour, etc. On this basis, assigning voluntary associations either possible bonding or bridging capacities looks very promising and first empirical results already underline its relevance.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Networks, norms and trust are said to form the constitutive components of social capital, a concept to which considerable scientific attention has been paid during the last decade. For political scientists its theoretical relevance refers mainly to the thereby acquired possibility of revealing mechanisms of collective and co-ordinated action. Puzzles about deviating political, societal and economic effectiveness of different societies are promised to be solved by understanding the composition of social capital and its consequences. Since the famous introduction of this concept into the narrower sphere of political science by Robert D. Putnam (1993)<sup>3</sup> the notion of social capital has developed considerably. Especially, well formulated doubts about the alleged exclusively positive effects of social capital have contributed to the elaboration of a useful differentiation<sup>4</sup>. Scientific political research has actually reached a point where the importance of differentiating between bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital is stressed<sup>5</sup>. Putnam (2000) argues that depending on the characteristics of the available social capital one can either expect co-operations, generalized trust and institutional effectiveness or sectarian tendencies, corruption and ethnocentrism.

While he assigns positive societal effects to both forms of social capital, he considers the relevance of bridging social capital to be more important for the ability of modern societies to co-operate. On one hand, networks with bridging social capital are “better for linkage of external assets and for information diffusion” (p. 22) because they are outward-orientated and their individual composition can be more heterogeneous. They can enhance broader identities and reciprocity. Examples of these networks are civil rights movements and ecumenical religious organizations.

Bonding social capital, on the other, can foster specific reciprocity, solidarity, in-group loyalty and the narrower self. It also supports exclusive group identities and reinforces homogeneous groups. These tendencies furthermore enlarge the risk of strong out-group

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<sup>2</sup> The collection of the German data was completely financed by the German National Science Foundation (DFG), (Grant DE 630/7-1). This generous support is gratefully acknowledged here.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the chronological development of the concept of social capital in sociology together with differing definitions see Haug (1997). For a short overview of different definitions applied in sociology and political science see Woolcock (1998: p. 189).

<sup>4</sup> See for example Levy (1996), Portes and Landolt (1996).

<sup>5</sup> For first elaborations on bonding and bridging social capital see Gittel and Vidal (1998), Putnam (2000), Warren, M.R. (2001), Narayan (1999), Woolcock and Narayan (2000).

antagonisms. As examples of networks with bonding social capital Putnam mentions fraternal organizations or church-based women's reading groups (p. 22ff.).

But, at the same time, he reminds us that many formal and informal networks "bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others" (p. 23). Churches, for instance, bond along religious lines and bridge across social classes. The use of the Internet importantly bridges across regions, age, gender and religion but unites, simultaneously, people with comparable levels of education. Accordingly, he comes to the understanding that "bonding and bridging are not 'either-or' categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but 'more or less' dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital" (p. 23).

So far, we conclude that it is strongly advisable to closely inspect formal and informal networks, firstly, with regard to their purposes, i.e. fostering exclusive group identities and, secondly, with regard to their members' socioeconomic composition. But in most cases, we shouldn't expect to be able to draw clear lines between bonding and bridging groups.

Given these theoretical difficulties in assigning organizations potentials of bonding or bridging social capital, we, now, draw on Mark Warren's theoretical elaborations on the broad range of democratic effects of associations (see Warren, M.E. 2001). His basic assumptions will be presented in the following which will give us another clue as to how reasonably categorize voluntary associations into bonding and bridging groups<sup>6</sup>.

At the outset of his book, Warren defines the areas which he considers to be crucial for the existence of democratic societies. Thereby, he underlines the importance of individual and political autonomy as well as institutional resources that act as supporter of the two aforementioned spheres of autonomy.

According to Warren, individual autonomy relies on capacities which contribute to critical self-reflections and reflections about others, to participation in decision-making processes and to reasonable judgements that individuals are able to defend in public (2001: p. 63). Associations are relevant for this sphere of autonomy since they influence their members' sense of efficacy, political skills, civic virtues, critical skills and ease the flow of information (p. 71ff.). These processes are also referred to as developmental effects.

Political autonomy can be considered as an extension of the conditions of individual autonomy to the public sphere. The importance is to note that it is now *collective* judgements that should be autonomous and "be the result of a process of public reasoning and justification" (p. 65). Associations contribute to political autonomy by communicating information into the public sphere, by developing issues or by representing marginal or excluded members of society. These effects are referred to as public sphere effects (p. 69).

The democratic dimension of institutions is based on the ability to develop, foster and sustain individual and political autonomy in institutionalized processes (p. 69). In this regard,

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<sup>6</sup> In the following, we will refer to the terms of bonding and bridging voluntary associations which are used as synonyms for voluntary associations fostering either bonding or bridging social capital. Furthermore, it is important to note that our empirical analyses are based on individual data from which we make assumptions about the associations themselves.

associational effects comprise representation, resistance, subsidiarity, coordination and democratic legitimization (p. 82ff.).

This short description gives a rough idea about the spectrum of Warren's research but we are primarily interested in the associational democratic effects on the sphere of individual autonomy. It is especially with regard to his theoretical conception about civic virtues that the application of those theoretical findings promises to be a useful tool for our own empirical analyses.

By describing the field of civic virtues, Warren mainly refers to reciprocity, trust and recognition which present rather "civil" than civic virtues "in the sense that they are not immediately (or merely) civic, but.." (p. 75) nonetheless support democratic principles. The importance of these three factors stems from their property of facilitating collective action and cooperation as essential characteristics of democratic societies. In this respect, associations, as long as they are voluntary, offer an important field of experiencing reciprocity, trustworthy behaviour, recognition and finally collective and co-ordinated actions and their outcomes.

Interestingly, Warren differentiates between trust which is built out of reciprocity, and trust based on group identity or ascription. Ascriptive trust is not related to trustworthy behaviour but to the belonging to either the same "race, ethnicity, family, religion, and so on" (p. 74). Its strong inward-orientation is furthermore complemented by a strong distrust of outgroups which is not in the least related to their performance (p. 74). Therefore, it is only associations with the propensity to build reciprocal trust that contribute to robust cooperative relationships which are conducive to democracy.

At this point, the intersection with the Putnamian social capital concept becomes obvious, although Warren is very well able to mention this term surely not more than four times during the length of his detailed theoretical elaborations on associations and democracy. But both recognize that voluntary associations can be closely related to trust and reciprocity. Likewise, both concede that trust based on group identities creates antagonisms and prevents collective action outside the respective groups. Assuming the justification of these theses, we can conclude that members of bridging organizations are characterized by trust built out of reciprocity whereas ascriptive trust prevails in bonding associations.

In order to analyze potential associational democratic effects on civic virtues as one of the many parts of the sphere of individual autonomy, Warren introduces three units of further analysis that serve as explanatory factors. These are the ease of exit of an association, the media of embeddedness and the constitutive goods, i.e. purposes, of an association. Each factor is likewise subdivided into several categories. For the ease of exit of an association Warren assumes different degrees depending on the individual relevance of resources which associations offer to their members. He differentiates between a high, medium and low ease of exit. As to the media of embeddedness of an association he differentiates between power, money and social resources as bases for associations. The last identified explanatory factor refers to the classification of the countless purposes the broad range of associations pursues. This category is the most relevant for our own conceptualization and will be used and

explained in detail in the following. But it is important to note that *every* mentioned category with its subdivisions causes different democratic effects and that the interaction of these effects produces different outcomes. The impressive variety of associational impacts on democracy can therefore be attributed to the combination of the associations' respective positions held in the three described analytical dimensions.

As already mentioned, for our own analysis we will exclusively refer to the so-called constitutive goods of associations. We first and foremost must rely on the labels, i.e. names, of our associations by which we will try to infer their purposes. Unfortunately, inference with regard to ease of exit and media of embeddedness is not possible on the basis of our available data which does not mean that they should be neglected in further research all the same.

Warren classifies constitutive goods which are relevant for associations into individual material goods, public material goods, inclusive social goods, interpersonal identity goods, status goods and exclusive group identity goods (p. 133). Each type of good together with its specific impact on the sphere of civic or civil virtues will be shortly described in the following.

*Individual material goods* are characterized as individual, scarce, and excludable, such as food, clothing, shelter, and other material consumables which individuals or small groups enjoy. While “there is no *inherent* requirement for collective action to gain them” (p. 126, italics in original) associations pursuing these goods are perceived to have only a small impact on their members' civic virtues (p. 133). Business lobbies, unions, professional associations are assigned to this category when they are involved in wage demands or in securing other advantages for their clientele (p. 127).

*Public material goods* refer to goods which are individual, material, scarce and nonexcludable, such as “public radio and television, clean air and water, environmental integrity, and territorial security. Included in this category are rights to individual security, insofar as they are publicly guaranteed.” (p. 128). The fact that these goods are scarce and that they are also open to free-riders requires co-operation and collective action, on one hand, and persuading or coercing potential free-riders, on the other (p. 128). Because of this required extensive cooperation and their broadly beneficial character associations devoted to public material goods “are most likely to cultivate civil virtues” (p. 152). All in line with the Tocquevillian argument, they remind their members of individual interdependencies and draw them out of their narrower self. As examples, civic and environmental groups as well as political parties are mentioned (p. 136).

Accordingly, the same positive effects on the sphere of civic virtues can be ascribed to associations pursuing *inclusive social goods*. They are characterized as social, symbolic, nonscarce, and nonexcludable. Common resources such as language, knowledge, and culture belong to this category “as well as the identities and recognitions that attach to the goals, ideals, activities, and dialogues that constitute membership in a society” (p. 132). These goals

can be pursued by associations as different as e.g. educational societies, cultural groups, charitable foundations or associations devoted to securing basic civil rights (p. 132).

*Interpersonal identity goods* are individual, symbolic, nonscarce, and excludable and comprise goods like “identities that emerge out of close interpersonal relations such as love, family, friendship, and primary group attachments” (p. 129). Though interpersonal identity goods are private by nature and encompass the closest relationships individuals depend on, they also offer the terrain to learn empathy and develop confidence. Neighborhoods, social and sport clubs can be assigned to this category and they are also expected to contribute to the constituents of civic virtues (p. 153).

*Status goods* are social, symbolic, scarce and excludable and refer to goods such as degrees, titles, exclusive club membership, expensive cars, houses, etc. or other goods with an attached symbolic value (p. 130). They are not equatable with other goods and the possession of exclusive privileges cannot be defended in the name of common interest. Therefore, associations pursuing and securing status goods are very unlikely to contribute to civic virtues. Trust and empathy that might emerge therein are restricted to fellow members or like-minded individuals. Elite social clubs, private schools, elite political and professional groups belong to this category (p. 136f.).

The last category refers to *exclusive group identity goods*. They are characterized either by group distinctions defined by religion, gender, language, ethnicity or age or by distinctive interests, hobbies or lifestyles (p. 130). Exclusive group identity goods can therefore be pre-determined by birth, be the response to external domination or marginalization, or emerge for other specific purposes. With regard to these goods shared interests with fellow members are identity-based and exclusive and automatically submerge interests with others. Associations which are devoted to this kind of goods can even undermine civic virtues. They foster their members’ propensity only to trust each other and to distrust any outsider (p. 131). As associational examples Warren enumerates fraternal orders, groups dedicated to cultural tradition, parochial churches, ethnic identity groups, patriotic groups, organized crime groups and other separatist groups (p. 136f.).

Agreeing to Mark Warren’s arguments and relying on the validity of inferring associational constitutive goods by the labels of associations<sup>7</sup>, we can now enlarge our notion of bonding and bridging voluntary associations.

We conclude that associations devoted to status goods or exclusive group identity goods will be most likely to create bonding social capital. Trust and reciprocity should, here, rather exclusively refer to members of the own associations and should not be generalized towards outsiders. Thus, collective action might be possible within these groups but its spread across the associational borders should be highly unlikely. The exclusive character of bonding voluntary associations should, furthermore, be enhanced by a relatively high socioeconomic homogeneity of their members. We also expect that groups striving for individual material goods can be assigned to our category of bonding associations, too. Their propensity to have

positive effects on their members' civic virtues is also very low although they probably do not explicitly cultivate exclusive group identity as much as the two other groups. This characteristic, however, could be compensated for by a high socioeconomic homogeneity of their members.

Bridging associations, on the other hand, are characterized by their devotion to inclusive social, public material or interpersonal identity goods. The socioeconomic composition of their members should, moreover, reflect a considerable heterogeneity. Due to the inclusive character of their constitutive goods as well as to the broad socioeconomic origins of their members, bridging groups should importantly enhance trust and reciprocity to spread across associational borders.

We have now presented the theoretical basis of our conceptualization, and will apply it in the following in order to test its empirical relevance<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, we will continue our research by addressing our attention to the description of the data used and the applied statistical methods and, finally, to the presentation and discussion of our empirical findings.

### **3. Data and Research Design**

The empirical findings presented in this paper are based on data of a representative German population survey (West Germany N=1991) having been conducted in summer 2001<sup>9</sup>.

The research strategy presented in this paper will consist of several components. The first step will be to evaluate the whole range of our available voluntary associations with regard to their theoretical bridging and bonding capacities and categorize them according to our theoretical assumptions. Where this procedure doesn't seem to be appropriate either because of a lack of further information on the specific constitutive goods of the organization and/or the homogeneity or heterogeneity of its members an a priori categorization will not be undertaken and the respective organization will be excluded from further empirical testing.

Since our conceptualization of bonding and bridging should not only hold for the analysis of social capital itself but also for its application to the realm of political participation it seems advisable to differentiate our bonding group even further. As described above, mainly

<sup>7</sup> At least with regard to the West German data.

<sup>8</sup> The theoretical grounding presented above is already supported and supplemented by some empirical evidence. See for example Stolle and Rochon (1998), Billiet and Cambré (1999) who conclude that differentiating voluntary associations is an important issue.

<sup>9</sup> The collection of the data was carried out as part of the internationally organized project "Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy" whose participants have established a likewise called network which functions as an officially recognized European Science Foundation Network. The main scientific objective of this project that covers more than a dozen European countries, consists of gathering a broad range of individual data which encompass the most important aspects of social capital and political involvement. New insights are expected into the relationships of these different areas of social science research. The content of the data ranges from memberships and kinds of voluntary associations as well as the individual degree of activity within the associations to activity in networks and neighborhoods, frequency of contact with family members, friends and colleagues and the personal satisfaction with these contact frequencies, norms, value orientations, issues of social



associations devoted to status, exclusive identity and individual material goods will be assumed to invoke bonding social capital. However, we esteem unions and professional associations, as representatives of the last category, to be politically highly motivated and active<sup>10</sup>. Thus, we should assign them to the introduced bonding sub-category of ‘interest group’.

Assuming that both, bridging and bonding effects, can only emerge when there is a minimum communication between the members taking place, we will, furthermore, neglect every association that shows a lower average activity level than one activity out of four measured, or even none at all<sup>11</sup>.

Besides, we will exclude every voluntary association whose members represent less than 1% (less than 19 respondents) of the whole sample. In the light of reliable multivariate results, this step seems to be appropriate<sup>12</sup>.

On the basis of the assigned associational constitutive goods and of the members’ socioeconomic characteristics, we will categorize the remaining voluntary associations into bonding and bridging groups.

We will, then, continue to examine the empirical usefulness of this concept in the broader context of social capital, where trust<sup>13</sup> and norms<sup>14</sup> form the two other undisputed components. We will introduce these categories as explanatory terms into linear regression analyses with trust as well as norms serving as dependent variables. On the basis of a stepwise inclusion of standard socioeconomic variables and membership categories into our analyses, on the one hand, and generalized trust, norms and political trust, on the other, we will present, compare and discuss the empirical results of the different regression models.

Since we are primarily interested in exploring the usefulness of this concept with regard to political participation, political trust as a further explanatory term<sup>15</sup> is also taken into

and political trust, political orientations and behaviour, personal mobility and the standard variables covering the socioeconomic status of the respondents.

<sup>10</sup> These associations aim primarily at unfolding political impact in order to secure or obtain economic advantages for their members. They do so by organizing strikes, demonstrations, signing petitions or lobbying.

<sup>11</sup> The four activity items, measured for every single voluntary association, include a) participation in an activity, b) doing unpaid work for the association, c) donate money to the association, d) having friends within the association. For the wording of the questions see appendix. The excluded associations are automobile clubs, consumer associations and business associations.

<sup>12</sup> Excluded voluntary associations comprise peace organizations, lodges, investment clubs, consumer associations, housing associations, immigrants’ associations, veterans’ associations, associations for displaced persons.

<sup>13</sup> Our applied term of generalized trust is measured on a Lickert scale. For the wording of the question see appendix.

<sup>14</sup> The inspected norms measured on a Lickert scale are 1) the importance to obey laws, 2) not to evade taxes, 3) to think of others more than of oneself, 4) to be self-critical, 5) to form one’s own opinion independently from others and 6) to be active in organisations. When applying factor analysis, our selected six norm items can clearly be assigned to three different dimensions. The first dimension measures orientations towards the public sphere and duties, the second social and altruistic attitudes and the third dimension reflects individual orientations referring to opinion-building processes. We applied the principal component method and used a varimax rotation.  $R^2$  amounts to 76 %. These factor scores will be used for the linear regression analyses. The original variables are measured on a Lickert scale. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

<sup>15</sup> Political trust is measured here on two dimensions. The first dimension refers to political trust in the executive bodies and legislature which are based on the following items: political parties, politicians, government, parliament, European Union. The second dimension measures political trust in the jurisdiction and the police.

consideration. Firstly, because we expect political trust to exert a considerable impact on the propensity to be politically active. Secondly, we should also assume political trust to be related to a certain extent to the components of social capital, and we will, therefore, be able to observe either parallels or deviating structures when it comes to political action<sup>16</sup>. In this respect, we will also examine the influence of the components of social capital on political trust.

Finally, we will focus our examination primarily on the effects of bonding and bridging groups on conventional and unconventional political participation as well as on voting behaviour. Similarly to the regression analyses of the components of social capital, we will proceed with a stepwise inclusion of standard socioeconomic variables and membership categories, generalized trust, norms, political trust, and organizational skills. After the presentation, a comparison and a discussion of the empirical results of the different regression models will follow.

We will conclude by summarizing and evaluating our empirical findings mainly with regard to our concept of bonding and bridging voluntary associations, while other relevant results will also be subject to discussion.

#### **4. Specifications on the relevant bonding and bridging voluntary associations**

Based on our theoretical arguments for the relevance of differentiating between voluntary associations and the criteria of selection, we now turn to specifying our available set of organizations.

During this process of categorization, we will be guided, firstly, by the inferred constitutive goods of voluntary associations and, secondly, by their members' socioeconomic heterogeneity. Where straightforward assignments are not possible on the basis of our information, we will refrain from categorizing and exclude those voluntary associations from our analyses. Furthermore, it is important to note that membership of political parties, as a means of social *and* political participation, will not figure in our bonding/bridging categories since they will also be used as explanatory terms in regression analyses on political behaviour.

Table 1 presents a detailed overview of the nineteen associations taken into consideration<sup>17</sup>, their assignments to the bonding, interest and bridging category, their

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Factor analysis with principal component method was applied and varimax rotation used.  $R^2$  amounts to 73 %. For the empirical analyses the factor scores are used. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

<sup>16</sup> See Rahn et al. 1997 for an empirical confirmation of the causal effects of political trust on generalized trust and vice versa.

<sup>17</sup> Although associations for patients are included in our data set and aim at individual material goods which would incite us to assign them to the category of bonding group, their members' socioeconomic heterogeneity wouldn't allow for such a straightforward categorization. Therefore, they are excluded from further analysis. Furthermore, we will not include the associational variable „other voluntary associations“ because we can't infer any constitutive good from this label.

constitutive goods and some information about the socioeconomic homogeneity of their members. As already indicated, the constitutive goods of our voluntary associations were inferred by the labels but, obviously, this procedure bears considerable risks, especially when it comes to cross-country analyses. In most cases, however, decisions about the respective associational constitutive good were straightforward and led to a direct assignment to one of the three group categories. However, parents' associations and religious groups can probably be devoted to interpersonal identity goods as well as to inclusive social goods. Since both constitutive goods are supposed to foster trust and reciprocity we could, nevertheless, directly assign them to the bridging group category. With regard to the constitutive good of youth clubs the decision for the interpersonal identity good wasn't straightforward since one might also suppose that youth clubs are based on exclusive identity goods. However, youth is a period in one's lifetime and no irreversible personal trait. Therefore, one could expect that young adults, being active in those clubs, might do so even when they get older, thus undermining the development of exclusive group identities. The considerable share of members of higher age supports this thesis.

At first sight, it is furthermore surprising that hobby breeders' associations were assigned to the bonding group while their constitutive good is described as interpersonal identity good. In this case it is obvious that the decision was based on the remarkable socioeconomic homogeneity of their members. Most of them are men of higher age, ranging on rather modest income levels and taking a not too leftist position on the Left-Right scale.

With regard to members of voluntary fire brigades the assignment to the bonding group category is even less evident. These associations are devoted to public material goods, i.e. publicly guaranteed individual security. Therefore, one shouldn't hesitate to assign them to the bridging category. However, we assume that being devoted to public material goods which are, at the same time, publicly guaranteed, makes a significant difference in fostering civic virtues. Because any non-member is a publicly guaranteed potential free-rider the members' tendency to develop strong in-group orientations could be as pronounced as in associations devoted to status or exclusive identity goods. Moreover, with regard to sex their members show the highest homogeneity of all voluntary associations in our sample. Compared to the bridging associations they also dispose of the smallest amount of highly educated people and the most homogenous denominational composition, in this case being protestant<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, 84.5 % of their members place themselves either in the middle or on the rightist position of the political Left-Right scale<sup>19</sup> which could also be estimated as an indicator of political homogeneity. Their highest share of distrustful members of the whole sample also points at some exceptional features of these associations.

We therefore conclude that, firstly, the special character of the associational constitutive good, and, secondly, the socioeconomic basis for developing exclusive group identities are

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<sup>18</sup> Obviously, the only associations among the bridging group with a higher denominational homogeneity should be religious associations. But these associations are more heterogeneous with regard to the sex of their members.

favorable (comparable to the hobby breeders' associations) and will assign voluntary fire brigades to the bonding group category.

As we have already mentioned above, assignments of voluntary associations should be based on the associational constitutive goods as well as on their members' socioeconomic homogeneity/heterogeneity. During the described procedure of evaluation, however, priority was given to the assignments of constitutive goods.

## **5. Introducing the concept of bridging and bonding voluntary associations into the analysis of social capital**

At the outset of our examination, we start with the description of the relationships between our group categories, as the structural aspect, and generalized trust as well as the available set of norms<sup>20</sup>, as the cultural aspects of social capital. Table 2 discloses a very interesting picture which suggests that differentiation is indeed necessary. With regard to the relationships between trust and the group categories we observe important deviating patterns. The interest group category doesn't show *any* relationship with trust at all, whereas members of the bonding group reveal at least a small but significant correlation coefficient<sup>21</sup>. Members of bridging groups, however, clearly show a highly significant and considerable relationship with trust.

When we now turn to their relationships with our norm dimensions some further interesting differences can be detected. The group comprising bonding associations without clear cut interest groups reveals significant to highly significant positive coefficients. Obviously, the strongest relationship exists with the social and altruistic orientations of the respondents. But even this coefficient ranks on a rather modest level, while the coefficients for the public and individual opinion-related norm dimensions depict only small relationships.

Interest groups, as another bonding category, behave remarkably differently. Although all of their coefficients are significant or even highly significant they don't move into the same direction. Contrary to our first bonding category, interest groups are negatively related to public orientations, although there seemingly exists only a weak relationship. The same weak correlation coefficients are characteristic for social and altruistic as well as for individual opinion-related norms, yet with a positive sign.

Finally, bridging voluntary associations clearly underline their exceptional strong relationship with their members' social and altruistic orientations. The coefficient of the individual opinion-related norm dimension is equally highly significant but ranks considerably lower than the aforementioned one. Interestingly, the public norm dimension

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<sup>19</sup> Compared to the associations of the bridging group their standard deviation of mean of the left-right-scale reveals, together with cultural associations, the smallest value; results not presented here.

<sup>20</sup> Compare footnote 14.

<sup>21</sup> „Interest groups“ and „members of interest groups“ are used as synonyms; the same refers to the two other group categories. See also footnote 6.

doesn't play a crucial role. A negative weak but insignificant relationship describes its coefficient.

Summing up, we perceive that norms referring to social and altruistic orientations are the most positively related to membership of voluntary associations followed by the individual opinion-related norm dimension. Norms concerning public duties, however, are not related to membership in a meaningful way. We might, therefore, conclude that it should be of utmost importance to differentiate between norm dimensions when examining the relationship with memberships. Furthermore, as our correlation analysis has shown, it is equally important to differentiate between categories of voluntary associations because the strength of their ties, obviously, varies a lot. Their classification into bonding and bridging groups promises to facilitate the search for their potentials with regard to our three norm dimensions.

Based on these supporting empirical results, we will now proceed to examine in greater detail and by means of linear regression analyses the causal effects of our categorized voluntary associations on generalized trust and norms as equally important components of the social capital concept. For each regression analysis we will present several models which will enable us to detect underlying structures.

### **5.1 Regression analysis of generalized trust as dependent variable**

We start our analyses by restricting our linear regression model to socioeconomic variables such as sex, age, income and education, on one hand, and our three group categories, on the other (see table 3)<sup>22</sup>. Although model 1 includes only two highly significant terms, namely education and membership of bridging groups, the adjusted  $R^2$  amounts to nearly 9 %. These explanatory terms also keep their highly significant and considerable beta coefficients in the second and third regression model. The second model, with the different norm dimensions introduced, increases the overall explanatory power by another four percentage points. But only social and altruistic orientations as well as individual opinion-related norms cause positive, highly significant and important effects. Especially social and altruistic norms disclose a comparably high coefficient. In the third model, their explanatory power is somewhat put into perspective with the two political trust dimensions introduced. Still social and altruistic norms show the highest coefficient but it is closely followed by trust in executive political bodies and legislature. On a comparable level still ranks membership of bridging associations, with the coefficients of education and trust in jurisdiction and the police not lagging far behind. The importance of political trust is also reflected by a further increase of the adjusted  $R^2$  by another two percentage points.

Summing up, we observe that neither bonding nor interest groups exert any independent impact on our trust variable. Only members of bridging associations reveal a highly significant and positive coefficient throughout the three presented models. Furthermore, we conclude that norms, except for public orientations, clearly belong to the overall concept of

social capital and that it is worthwhile differentiating them. Rather surprisingly, we must admit that political trust also plays a crucial role, at least when it comes to explaining generalized trust. In the following, we will therefore have to observe carefully its effects on the three different norm dimensions.

Thus, as the analysis of generalized trust has shown, there exists a clear cut difference between the impact of bridging organizations, on one hand, and of bonding ones on the other. We therefore estimate that the realized categorization proves to be a meaningful tool in order to grasp different influential effects. Whether this finding refers to the explanation of trust only or can even be generalized to norms and to other fields of political research will be discussed subsequently.

## 5.2 Regression analysis of norms as dependent variables

In the following, we will present three linear regression models for every norm dimension as dependent variable. Table 4 presents the beta coefficients for the explanation of norms towards the public sphere. We must ascertain that none of our group categories shows significant coefficients and that the most important influence is exerted by age and complemented by sex, i.e. being a woman, but on a much lower level. Moreover, the adjusted  $R^2$  of 7 % of the first model is not increased by introducing the term of generalized trust. The third model, however, with the two political trust terms included, importantly increases the explanatory power of the model (adj.  $R^2$  17%). Both variables show by far the highest positive coefficients which, simultaneously, decrease the values for age and sex. At the same time, we observe that education significantly and *negatively* affects orientations towards the public sphere, but still no influence of any group membership can be revealed. Our findings suggest that this norm dimension cannot be linked in a meaningful way to the overall concept of social capital, unless if one was ready to enlarge it by political trust.

The results for the regression analyses of social and altruistic norms are presented in table 5 and show a very different causal structure. In neither of the three explanatory models, socioeconomic variables exert any effect, although the adjusted  $R^2$  rank between 20 % and 27 %. The explanatory power of the first model is exclusively based on membership of bonding and bridging associations, where the bridging category attains a strikingly high beta coefficient. Members of interest groups, however, don't contribute anything to this model.

With generalized trust introduced into the second model, the adjusted  $R^2$  increases by 3 percentage points and the value of its beta coefficient underlines the explanatory relevance, too, without significantly decreasing the impact of the two influential group categories.

The third model, again, points to the importance of political trust in our analysis of the components of social capital. We not only observe another important increase of the adjusted  $R^2$  (27 %), but we can also detect clear differences between the effects of the two political

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<sup>22</sup> All following linear regression models have been tested for multicollinearity and all proved negative.

trust dimensions. Ranking on the second position in the model, trust in executive political bodies and legislature importantly affects social and altruistic norms, whereas trust in jurisdiction and the police doesn't figure at all.

Contrary to the empirical findings for public orientations, we are now very well able to link memberships as well as generalized trust to social and altruistic norms. In addition, we find clear differences between the impact of our group categories. The presented results underline that it is not only reasonable to differentiate between bonding and bridging groups but that even the introduction of the bonding sub-group can be empirically justified. And again, we find another hint to consider the importance of political trust for the overall concept of social capital.

Finally, table 6 presents the causal effects on individual orientations towards opinion-building processes. In all three models, education reveals highly significant positive and important beta coefficients. Compared to the afore described regression models of the two other norm dimensions, the explanatory power of the three models for individual opinion-related orientations rank very low (between 3 % and 5 %). Except for education, we can also detect, in our first model, significant positive coefficients for the bonding and bridging group categories. But we observe that they not only differ in their degree of significance but also in their strength.

This picture doesn't really change when we introduce generalized trust. Every former explanatory term more or less sticks to its value even when the trust term evolves its highly significant and positive influence on this norm dimension.

The third regression model depicts, once again, the exceptional and relevant role of political trust as additional explanatory term. Firstly, the significant effect of bonding groups vanishes when we include political trust in our model. This leaves bridging groups as the only membership category with a significant coefficient. Furthermore, we observe that both political trust items show significant to highly significant beta coefficients but indicating *opposite* directions. Obviously, political trust in executive bodies and legislature *negatively* affects individual orientations towards opinion-building processes, whereas trust in jurisdiction and in the police exerts the *highest* positive effect on this norm dimension in the whole model.

To sum up, we conclude that orientations towards individual opinion-building processes are also related to the other discussed components of social capital. However, we must admit that, amongst memberships, only the bridging category contributes to the explanation of the dependent norm variable. We can evaluate this result as another confirmation of the empirical relevance of the bridging and bonding concept. In addition, the included terms of political trust, once again, underline their closeness to the social capital concept, although they do not importantly increase the explanatory power of this regression model.

Given the striking beta coefficients of the two terms of political trust and their assumed relatedness to the components of social capital, we shortly turn to the inspection of possible effects upon them which are caused by norms, trust and bonding and bridging membership, respectively.

### 5.3 Regression analysis of political trust dimensions as dependent variables

For each dimension of political trust we present a linear regression model with the standard socioeconomic variables and the components of social capital included. The causal effects on trust in executive political bodies and legislature are depicted in table 7. Our explanatory terms related to social capital give a rather contradictory impression. Only bonding group membership, as structural component, significantly but *negatively* affects this political trust dimension whereas generalized trust exerts some positive and important influence on it. The effects of our three norm dimensions, however, reveal deviating patterns. While orientations towards the public sphere and social and altruistic norms highly significantly, positively and considerably affect the dependent variable, orientations towards individual opinion-building processes do not. They even exert a negative but, at the same time, much lower influence than the two aforementioned ones. With regard to the socioeconomic variables we observe that only education positively affects the discussed political trust dimension. Although the adjusted  $R^2$  of this model attains an acceptable value (nearly 15 %), we can, firstly, assign most of the explanatory power to generalized trust and the described two norm dimensions only. Secondly, we conclude that a direct link to the overall social capital concept cannot be established since the coefficients of its structural component do not meet the expectations.

As for the empirical findings of the second regression model on trust in the jurisdiction and the police as dependent variable, which is also presented in table 7, we observe a different pattern. Although the value of its adjusted  $R^2$  is comparable to the first political trust model, we find that every included aspect of social capital attains significant to highly significant coefficients which nearly in every case reveal the same positive signs. Only membership of interest groups significantly but negatively affects this political trust dimension, contrary to the two other group categories. This result, again, stresses the relevance of introducing a useful tool of differentiation.

All the remaining cultural components positively contribute to the explanatory power of the model, while the beta coefficient for orientations towards the public sphere clearly ranks on top. Thus, although we see clear differences in the strength of the coefficients, we conclude that the concept of social capital is closely and nearly homogeneously linked to trust in jurisdiction and the police. Probably, this political trust dimension also reflects the citizens' idea about the functioning of sanctions in a society which should also enhance the propensity of collective action and vice versa.



Besides, we observe that increasing age as well as being a woman exert a considerable impact on the described political trust dimension, too.

Although the presented empirical findings of our analyses on causal effects on generalized trust, norms and political trust give some new and very interesting insights, they first and foremost were carried out, except for political trust, in order to validate our assumptions on the differing bonding and bridging potentials of voluntary associations and to integrate them into the broader concept of social capital. After having concluded this task, we can now turn to the very core of this paper, namely the empirical study of the relevance of this theoretical and by now empirically validated differentiation for political participation.

## **6. Introducing the concept of bridging and bonding voluntary associations into the empirical analysis of political participation**

Scientific research on the relevance of social participation for political action has a long-standing tradition. Inspired by Tocqueville's famous observations on the vitality and importance of America's social life for democracy<sup>23</sup>, social scientists have already started more than 50 years ago to disclose possible relationships. Especially the mobilization function of voluntary associations is considered to be crucial for political participation<sup>24</sup>. Voluntary associations offer the opportunity to experience formerly unknown environments together with fellow members coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, to establish discussion networks, to develop friendship (van Deth 1997: p. 10) and they ease the flow of information. As Olsen puts it, voluntary associations draw their members into the public sphere by broadening their interests and concerns, provide them with leadership skills and other resources necessary for political participation (1972: p. 318).

Thus, apart from Hirschman and other adherers of his broadly known model of shifting involvements<sup>25</sup>, many social scientists start from the assumption that social and political participation are closely linked and do not exclude each other. This relationship is, furthermore, very well documented by a large number of empirical studies which disclose effects of social activities on conventional and unconventional action as well as on voting behaviour (turnout) (van Deth 1997: p. 11-15). However, reliable empirical evidence is still lacking as to whether social participation directly influences political action or rather indirectly, namely by affecting political orientations.

The standard SES model, assuming an indirect relationship between social and political participation, starts from the socioeconomic individual status which affects an individual's

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<sup>23</sup> See Tocqueville (1961).

<sup>24</sup> See van Deth (1997) for a detailed description of the assumed different relationships between social and political participation and an overview of the relevant literature.

<sup>25</sup> In his theoretical elaborations, Hirschman refers to activities in the private and public sphere which can be easily transferred to the social and political sector. Out of frustration, he assumes, individuals are either active in one sphere or the other (1979: p. 100ff.).

political orientations as well as the ability and willingness to be socially active. Apart from the socioeconomic status, social participation itself influences individual political orientations which are decisive for political action.

The direct impact model, however, not only recognizes the fact that the socioeconomic status is vital and that social participation affects political orientations which, on their part, entail political behaviour; but it assumes a direct impact of social participation on political action, too. Both explanatory models are supported by different empirical studies (van Deth 1997: p. 12-14). Besides, it seems also very reasonable to expect a reinforcing process of social participation on political action and vice versa (Dahl 1961: p. 299). Given the actual diversity of empirical findings, no clear decision about the model and probable recursions can be taken.

For our own analysis of the causal effects of social participation on political action we have more than twenty items of political participation at our hand. However, it is advisable, in a first step, to restrict the following analyses to a limited amount of different forms of political action whose several aspects have already been largely discussed in previous literature on political behaviour. Accordingly, it was decided for the inclusion of the following items of political participation: to sign petitions, to demonstrate, to strike, to participate in a political meeting, to work in a party and to vote<sup>26</sup>.

Including these terms into factor analysis we can unequivocally identify three dimensions of political participation. Clearly, the items can be assigned to voting, unconventional and conventional political participation, respectively<sup>27</sup>. In the following linear regression analyses, the same factor score results representing these three dimensions will be used as the measures for our dependent variables. In addition, it should be mentioned that in first analyses with a more explorative character being an activist in voluntary associations<sup>28</sup> proved to be more influential than the mere membership variables. We will therefore proceed with dummies measuring the activity in bonding and bridging groups.

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<sup>26</sup> Since our efforts aim at attaining findings which should be as comparable as possible to former empirical results work in a political action group is not included in the analysis. This decision is based on results of factor analyses (not presented here) that include the aforementioned items together with work in a political action group. Contrary to previous empirical findings, the latter can't be assigned to the sphere of unconventional political participation any longer. It rather tends to belong to the same dimension as work in a party and participation in political meetings which are classical representative items of conventional political behaviour. This finding points to some important general developments of citizens' political participation but can't be pursued here any further.

<sup>27</sup> The explained variance amounts to 69 %. Participation in a political meeting and work in a party are measured on the dimension of conventional political action; signing petitions, demonstrating and participating in strikes belong to the dimension of unconventional political participation; whereas voting represents the only item on the voting dimension. We applied the principal component method with varimax rotation. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

<sup>28</sup> For the measured activity items see footnote 11. For regression analysis we will use dummies, 0= no member or passive member, 1= active member.

For our first descriptive presentation, however, we construct additive participation indices<sup>29</sup>. They include the same item sets and represent the same dimensions which were disclosed by factor analysis.

Our theoretical expectations on the relationships between bonding and bridging voluntary associations and political participation can be summarized as follows:

1. According to a variety of empirical findings, we expect members of any of the defined group categories to be more numerous in participating in political action than non-members.
2. We assume that interest groups, as the most politicized and motivated category in our analyses, will rank highest in every single realm of political participation.
3. The second category of bonding associations, though not as politicized as interest groups, is also expected to act politically but in restricted spheres of political behaviour. As the correlation coefficients for the relationships between this bonding category and norms have revealed, this group is the only one with a significant and *positive* value for the norm dimension of orientations towards the public sphere and duties. So we assume, that members of these bonding organizations will be less involved in unconventional action, i.e. protest activities. They will rather rank higher with regard to conventional, i.e. legitimate participation and to voting, especially if this voting act is considered as a civic duty.
4. Finally, referring to members of bridging associations, however, we expect more of them to be politically active than members of bonding groups. We base this thesis mainly on the assumption that bridging memberships considerably broaden one's sphere of self-interest. Subsequently, this should lead to an increasing number of policy domains that affect those members' lives. Contrary to the political behaviour of members of bonding groups, we expect members of bridging associations to get rather involved in unconventional political actions because their broadened sphere of interests might more often challenge existing laws and regulations.

Our descriptive data on the percentages of participation in the three discussed forms of political action give some confirming information with regard to our hypotheses (see table 8). First of all, we can clearly differentiate between members of either bonding or bridging groups and non-members. In every case, members show a higher level of participation. This finding also holds true for the comparison of these items for the whole sample and members. Except for the realm of unconventional political participation, where the percentage of the

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<sup>29</sup> The first additive participation index comprises participation in a political meeting and work in a party and ranges from 0 to 2. The second comprises signing petitions, demonstrating and participating in strikes and ranges from 0 to 3. The third index only ranges from 0 to 1, indicating whether the respondents have voted or not.

whole sample slightly exceeds the one of the first bonding group, members rank higher in every respect.

When we closely inspect our three categories of members of voluntary associations only, we also find some deviating patterns. The results for unconventional participation are in line with our arguments. Members of interest groups, as the ones who are the most politicized, attain the highest share but they are closely followed by members of bridging organizations. The bonding group representatives lag behind by 10 percentage points. With regard to the sphere of conventional participation members of interest groups again account for the highest percentage. The other members of bonding and bridging voluntary associations, however, have exchanged their ranks. As to voting behaviour, empirical results confirm, once again, the above described thesis. Members of the two bonding groups clearly differ in their voting behaviour from those of bridging organizations. Based on this result, an intra-bonding group comparison could come to the conclusion that members of interest groups rather prefer collective political action in order to exert pressure than to cast a vote. The same applies to members of bridging groups, whereby they definitely are not as politicized as members of interest groups which is also reflected by the lower percentage share in voting behaviour.

After having presented differences in political participation on a descriptive basis, we, similarly to our linear regression model on generalized trust and norms, are now interested in testing whether or not our bonding and bridging groups cause any effects on political action according to the predicted directions.

## 6.1 Conventional participation

Table 9 presents four linear regression models with conventional political participation as dependent variable, and which are based on a stepwise inclusion of all relevant aspects of social capital together with political trust and a dummy variable of organizational skills<sup>30</sup>. The same procedure will be applied to the analysis of unconventional political action and to voting behaviour.

The first model clearly underlines the importance of being active in *any* of the three group categories for conventional political action. A higher education as well as being male also contributes to this form of behaviour. But we must note that the explanatory power of the model is rather low.

The picture remarkably changes when we include the term of organizational skills into the second model. Firstly, it increases the explained variance by nearly 3 percentage points and shows the highest beta coefficient and, secondly, the significance of the bridging group

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<sup>30</sup> This decision is based on the notion that voluntary associations should primarily act as „schools for democracy“ in as much as they offer their members important opportunities to develop organizational skills which are also crucial for political action. The dummy variable consists of 0 for no member, passive member or hardly active member and 1 for active or very active member. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

coefficient disappears. The same applies to the term representing the sex of the respondents. The other values do not change remarkably.

Introducing norms and generalized trust also contributes to the model but we must be more specific. It is only orientations towards individual opinion-building processes which disclose a significant and positive beta coefficient, whereas the two other norm dimensions don't affect conventional action. Generalized trust, however, clearly and positively affects the dependent variable. Except for education which now loses its significance, all other former explanatory terms remain influential on a comparable level.

Finally, we add some more information with the inclusion of the two political trust terms. Only trust in executive political bodies and legislature significantly and positively affects conventional political participation but, at the same time, we observe that social and altruistic orientations exert a significant but *negative* impact. Thus, we conclude that norms do not necessarily foster political participation, a finding that has already proved its relevance in the context of social capital.

According to our hypothesis, only activities in bonding groups significantly influence political participation of the conventional kind. Bridging voluntary associations do not contribute to the explanatory power of the model. At the same time, however, the model impressively underlines the relevance of being active in any voluntary organization, thereby acquiring specific organizational skills. Furthermore, higher generalized trust facilitates conventional political action. This finding doesn't surprise at first since it is assumed that coordinated actions such as many forms of political participation are supported by a higher level of trust. But we should keep this finding in mind and compare it with the following regression models on political behaviour. The significant importance of lower social and altruistic norms for conventional actions somewhat opposes the aforementioned increasing relevance of generalized trust. As it was depicted in table 3 a causal relationship between both items can be assumed. This leads us to the conclusion that conventional political participation requires a higher level of trust but, obviously, individuals seem to be driven by other norms than our social and altruistic dimension such as orientations towards individual opinion-building. This thesis is also supported by the impact of the activities of bonding groups in our regression model whose memberships revealed the weakest relationships with social and altruistic norms (see table 2).

## **6.2 Unconventional political participation**

The first linear regression model (table 10) confirms some already well known features about unconventional political participation and, at the same time, reveals some surprising insights. Being well educated and of younger age considerably contribute to this form of political action. However, the only significant beta coefficient of the three group categories refers to the interest organizations only. Being active in one of the two other groups doesn't

independently affect unconventional action at all. This result could be interpreted as a change in the nature of the individuals' motivation for demonstrations, strikes and petitions.

The second model, however, reveals that the fact of generally being active in a voluntary association obviously does affect this kind of political behaviour as is proved by the highly significant and positive term coefficient of organizational skills. In spite of the introduction of this explanatory term, the adjusted  $R^2$  still ranges on a modest level.

The effects of norms and generalized trust, as cultural components of social capital, are presented in the third regression model. Their inclusion leads to another slight increase of the explained variance but they either exert a considerable negative impact on unconventional behaviour, like orientations towards the public sphere or towards individual opinion-building processes, or they are not influential at all. That the norm dimension which also includes the aspect of always obeying laws opposes political protest activities to a certain extent follows a stringent line of reasoning. In contrast, it is not at all self-evident why lower values on the norm dimension of individual opinion-building attitudes should positively influence unconventional political participation, especially because higher education also represents a relevant factor in our model and a considerable causal relationship between both terms could be detected (see table 6). Again, this could be a sign for the shifting nature not only of the reasons for unconventional participation but also of the groups of potential activists and their characteristics. At the same time, we must realize that neither generalized trust nor social and altruistic norms are relevant for unconventional political action. Although unconventional political behaviour encompasses uninstitutionalized forms of political action which should require, on behalf of the activists, a higher ability and willingness to co-operate, generalized trust is not mandatory.

Introducing the two terms of political trust into the fourth model adds some more information. Again, we observe that *less* political trust in institutions, especially trust in the executive political bodies and legislature significantly affects unconventional political action. Protest activities mainly result from dissatisfaction either with governmental, regional or local policies or economic grievances. Therefore, some degree of distrust in political institutions perfectly suits our search for causal effects.

To sum up, we must admit that our expectations are not entirely met by the empirical results of the described regression models. Although the relevance of activities in interest groups for unconventional political participation proved to be the most influential term throughout the analyses, we also hypothesized that activities in bridging voluntary associations would significantly contribute to this form of political action, too. An assumption that didn't materialize empirically, leading us to the conclusion that the fact of establishing bridging ties between individuals of different backgrounds or being concerned on a voluntary basis with the improvement of public material, inclusive social or interpersonal goods doesn't affect independently this sphere of political action. We also observe that general activities in any voluntary association, thereby acquiring organizational skills, are indeed necessary even for less established and more spontaneous forms of political action like protest behaviour.

Given the high impact of activities in interest groups, we, furthermore, conclude that we might expect a diminishing importance of environmental or other social movements' issues and an increase of protest activities that reflect the actual problems on the employment market or of economic branches. This observation would also have immediate consequences for the visibility and relevance of postmaterialist issues for the actual political agenda.

Once again, the differentiation of voluntary associations proved to be a useful empirical tool, whereas we must also realize that the remaining components of social capital either do not function in the predicted direction or don't contribute anything to unconventional political action at all.

### **6.3 Voting behaviour**

The last regression analyses of this paper deal with the explanation of voting behaviour as the most essential participatory feature of democratic societies. Our first model shows that higher age, higher education and being active in bonding and bridging associations influence the act of voting (table 11). However, it is remarkable to which extent the two group activity coefficients differ in their strength. Nonetheless, the explanatory power of the model ranks rather low.

This picture doesn't change with the introduction of organizational skills into the second model. Since voting represents a single individual political act, the empirical irrelevance of this term could be expected.

Introducing the cultural aspects of social capital into model 3, however, firstly stresses the considerable importance of orientations towards the public sphere and individual opinion-building processes for casting a vote. Secondly, and most importantly, the significant positive effect of bonding groups vanishes with their inclusion, whereas the effect of bridging groups remains.

In our fourth model, the considerable relevance of political trust for voting behaviour is depicted. Especially trust in jurisdiction and the police highly significantly and positively contributes to this kind of political action. At the same time, the two political trust terms lower the impact of the significant norm dimensions, whereas all other significant beta coefficients stay more or less unchanged. Starting with an explained variance of about 4 % in the first model, model 4 can now account for 9 % which is the highest adjusted  $R^2$  value in our whole models for political participation.

The empirical results of our last regression model deliver unexpected insights with regard to our differentiation between bonding and bridging voluntary associations. Both categories could have been expected to contribute independently to the explanatory power of the model, either because members as part of a larger group intend to enforce their interests or because members have broadened their sphere of self-interest and feel it as their civic duty to cast their vote, too. But only activities in bridging organizations behave in the predicted way, probably

because norms on public orientations, which should also highly correlate with voting as a good citizen's duty, unfold their impact.

## 6.4 Evaluation

“Voluntary associations are schools for democracy”. Today, Tocqueville's famous summarizing conclusion about America's 19<sup>th</sup> century's societal landscape is as valid for democratic societies as it was more than 150 years ago. The empirical analyses of the West German data proved this case convincingly and added even more to that.

For different realms of political participation different kinds of voluntary associations exert deviating influences. Obviously, one could imagine a large variety of criteria that would be helpful for a substantive categorization of voluntary organizations. In this paper, however, we have decided for sound standing theoretical reasons to use the so-called constitutive goods of voluntary associations as well as their members' socioeconomic homogeneity/heterogeneity as selection criteria. This conceptualization led to the differentiation between bonding groups on the one hand and bridging organizations on the other. The focus on the relevance of this concept for political participation required a further specification with regard to interest groups as a bonding sub-category. As the empirical results presented above have shown, these categories not only further the notion about differing potentials of being active in voluntary organizations for political action but they also provide interesting insights into the requirements of organizational skills of the aforementioned three specified spheres of political participation. That not all voluntary associations were alike was already testified by former empirical studies<sup>31</sup>. In a first step, those studies identified single voluntary associations in different countries. With the assignment of voluntary organizations into bonding and bridging groups we might hold an instrument for theoretical generalization in our hand. Whether the discussed supportive West German empirical findings can be generalized to other democratic societies remains to be seen and will be subject to further intensive investigation. The subsequent empirical analysis of the East German population, which will be reserved to another working paper, will surely help to inspect the validity of this concept for societies in transition.

As to previous theoretical assumptions about and similarities or dissimilarities of the remaining explanatory terms in our regression models on the presented three forms of political participation, we are now able to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Except for conventional political participation generalized trust does not exert an independent impact on political action. This result stands in contrast to the thesis that trust fosters co-ordinated actions as we would have supposed particularly for

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<sup>31</sup> See footnote 8.



unconventional political behaviour. Since this is not the case we must consider that the possible influence of generalized trust on this specific form of participation is outweighed by some more important factors. However, it also tells us that the significance of generalized trust for collective political actions has probably been overestimated in the past. Its irrelevance for unconventional forms of political actions casts some doubts on the discussion about the relationship between generalized trust and political action as a whole. And it has not yet been empirically tested for less specific collective actions as such.

2. A similar statement applies to norms with regard to their significance and their direction of influence. Although, on theoretical grounds, we would have expected every measured norm dimension to exert a possible positive influence on any form of political participation, we must now conclude that this is not at all the case. The only norm dimensions which significantly *and* positively influence political action refer to orientations towards public duties as well as to orientations towards individual opinion-building processes. But only voting behaviour is positively affected and to a much lesser extent conventional participation but only with regard to the norms on opinion-building. In any other regression models, significant terms of norms reveal *negative* effects. This finding questions previous theoretical assumptions about the importance of norms, as cultural components of social capital, for political participation even more than the relevance of generalized trust.
3. The empirical results of this paper, however, not only challenge findings of former studies. Considerable confirmation relates to the importance of the members' acquired organizational skills in voluntary organizations for collective forms of political action. As to the socioeconomic variables in our models we observe that age as well as education definitely still should be considered in analyses on political action. Including sex and income, however, didn't contribute any further information to none of our models in the fourth stage.
4. The specific role of political trust for generalized trust, on one hand, and for political participation, on the other, could be further specified. The relative importance and positive effects of both dimensions of political trust on generalized trust stands in line with previous empirical results<sup>32</sup>. But still it is amazing to what extent political trust affects the latter while other crucial components of social capital either hardly attain comparable values or aren't influential at all. In comparison to the coefficients of political trust for all our regression models on political participation its coefficient values for generalized trust even range on top. Additionally and except for voting behaviour, we can only detect rather modest effects of political trust on political action. This refers solely to trust in executive political bodies and its influence even tends to be negative for unconventional political action.

## 7. In Conclusion

The main focus of the presented paper was to investigate whether the concept of bonding and bridging social capital could be reasonably specified by categorizing voluntary associations according to specific theoretical assumptions and whether this conceptualization would also hold for empirical analysis in the realm of political participation. We tried to approach these questions by, firstly, developing meaningful categories on theoretical grounds, secondly, by introducing and applying them to empirical research on social capital, and, finally, by analyzing their significance with respect to political behaviour.

The empirical results on the components of social capital tell us that our concept of differentiation is worthwhile because it delivers further information on underlying structures. As it has already been assumed and empirically tested before, voluntary associations are not all alike. By applying this concept to empirical research we might be better able to answer systematically which associations account for which effects with regard to the different aspects of social capital.

Furthermore, we were confronted with the finding that norms constitute, as expected, an undisputable component of the concept of social capital, but that particularly orientations towards the public sphere cannot be linked to this concept at all. This result clearly opposes one of the most essential statements of social capital theory, namely that expressing trust in strangers, which also implies trust in their lawful behaviour, simultaneously fosters one's own willingness to comply with public rules<sup>33</sup>.

Equally striking is the conclusion that political trust is considerably linked to *every* analyzed component of social capital. Thus, if a policy was to be formulated referring to the conditions of building and sustaining social capital, one would seriously have to consider the relevance of political trust.

Our concept of bonding and bridging associations also proved its usefulness when we inspected causal effects on different forms of political participation. But, at the same time, we could also shed more light on the impressively deviating impacts of the cultural aspects of social capital on political action. Introducing generalized trust, several norm and political trust dimensions offered some meaningful insights into the nature of the specific political action and into its functional requirements. We therefore conclude: Differentiation matters, not only with regard to membership.

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<sup>32</sup> See Rahn et al. 1997; however, the operationalization of political trust is not identical.

<sup>33</sup> See Putnam 1993 for a discussion.

Table 1: Constitutive goods of bonding and bridging voluntary associations and some socioeconomic characteristics of their members, shares in percentage

Associations	Constitutive associational goods	Women	Highly educated <sup>1</sup>	Higher household income <sup>2</sup>	Higher Age <sup>3</sup>	Religious denomination Protestan. Catholics	Leftist position <sup>4</sup>	Activists	Distrustful members <sup>5</sup>	N
<b>Bonding Group</b>		<b>47.5</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>96.3</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>244</b>
- pensioners' ass.	excl. group identity	64.2	9.9	0.0	98.7	38.3	20.3	98.8	37.0	81
- ass. for disabled pers.	excl. group identity	42.1	15.8	15.4	57.9	57.9	41.2	84.2	26.3	19
- women's associations	excl. group identity	96.6	6.9	19.0	62.1	34.5	25.9	100.0	34.5	29
- local traditional ass.	excl. group identity	41.3	14.3	7.5	77.8	58.1	14.3	96.8	28.6	63
- hobby breeders' ass.	interpersonal identity	22.7	22.7	0.0	86.4	33.3	15.8	100.0	18.2	22
- voluntary fire brigades	public material	9.2	15.4	30.0	52.3	64.6	15.5	93.8	46.2	65
<b>Interest Group</b>		<b>29.8</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>225</b>
- unions	individual material	30.6	22.0	21.4	44.4	53.5	44.7	71.9	36.3	160
- farmer organizations	individual material	35.0	5.0	53.8	55.0	75.0	0.0	80.0	35.0	20
- professional orgs.	individual material	23.6	43.6	42.4	51.8	55.6	23.9	70.9	32.7	55
<b>Bridging Group</b>		<b>53.1</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>98.4</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>1,022</b>
- sports clubs	interpersonal identity	46.3	34.2	28.6	30.8	43.3	35.1	98.5	25.0	607
- youth clubs	interpersonal identity	37.5	29.2	23.5	16.7	41.7	33.3	100.0	25.0	24
- other hobby clubs	interpersonal identity	51.9	23.6	16.5	51.9	35.7	30.7	97.4	31.5	233
- parents' associations	inter. iden./incl. social	62.0	42.0	25.0	10.0	45.8	53.3	100.0	16.0	50
- religious associations	incl. social/inter. iden.	61.7	16.4	12.6	64.8	45.9	30.6	99.0	29.6	196
- animal rights	inclusive social	58.9	32.1	20.0	60.0	51.8	40.4	91.1	26.8	56
- human rights	inclusive social	80.0	36.0	23.5	45.8	54.2	45.0	96.0	24.0	25
- charity associations	inclusive social	69.1	17.0	16.4	63.8	46.8	27.3	94.7	24.5	94
- cultural associations	inclusive social	58.0	24.7	19.2	50.2	42.3	32.8	96.9	22.4	255
- environmental orgs.	public material	51.4	54.1	22.7	41.7	55.6	48.6	94.6	32.4	37
<b>All Associations</b>		<b>51.5</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>1,181</b>

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>1</sup> Highly educated = all respondents with high school graduation

<sup>2</sup> Higher household income = DM 5,000 and more (average household income = DM 4,317)

<sup>3</sup> Higher age = 50 years and older (average age = 49,95)

<sup>4</sup> Leftist position = 4 and less on the Lickert scale

<sup>5</sup> Distrustful members = 4 and less on the Lickert scale (average trust level = 4,95)

Table 2: Correlations between group categories, generalized trust and norms, Kendall's tau\_b coefficients

	<b>Generalized trust</b>	<b>Norms on public sphere</b>	<b>Social and altruistic norms</b>	<b>Norms on individual opinion-building</b>
Membership of bonding group	.035*	.055**	.128**	.036*
Membership of interest group	.019	-.032*	.038*	.054**
Membership of bridging group	.221**	-.030	.349**	.102**
N	1,988	1,898	1,898	1,898

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$  (one-tailed)

Table 3: Effects on generalized trust, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Sex	-.036	-.043	-.041
Age	-.021	-.014	-.028
Income	.007	.006	.003
Education	.138***	.118***	.115***
Membership of interest group	-.004	-.025	-.017
Membership of bonding group	.028	.025	.026
Membership of bridging group	.228***	.133***	.123***
Public orientations		.012	-.026
Social and altruistic orientations		.208***	.156***
Orientations towards individual opinion-building		.101***	.084***
Political trust in executive body			.145***
Political trust in judicial body and police			.106***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.086	.125	.146
N	1,965	1,872	1,827

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 4: Effects on orientations towards the public sphere and duties, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Sex	.084***	.083***	.050*
Age	.220***	.220***	.149***
Income	-.015	-.015	-.022
Education	-.044	-.044	-.046*
Membership of interest group	-.014	-.015	-.001
Membership of bonding group	.026	.025	.005
Membership of bridging group	.010	.006	-.035
Generalized trust		.015	-.034
Political trust in executive body			.213***
Political trust in judicial body and police			.266***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.067	.066	.165
N	1,875	1,872	1,827

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 5: Effects on social and altruistic orientations, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Sex	.024	.032	.023
Age	.020	.023	.000
Income	-.002	-.003	-.005
Education	.005	-.017	-.024
Membership of interest group	.025	.029	.034
Membership of bonding group	.108***	.099***	.100***
Membership of bridging group	.419***	.380***	.366***
Generalized trust		.177***	.129***
Political trust in executive body			.218***
Political trust in judicial body and police			.036
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.195	.225	.271
N	1,875	1,872	1,827

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 6: Effects on orientations towards individual opinion-building processes, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Sex	-.037	-.035	-.039
Age	-.027	-.027	-.029
Income	.015	.014	.009
Education	.112***	.102***	.111***
Membership of interest group	.031	.031	.033
Membership of bonding group	.052*	.046*	.042
Membership of bridging group	.090***	.068**	.064**
Generalized trust		.095***	.081***
Political trust in executive body			-.066**
Political trust in judicial body and police			.121***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.031	.040	.054
N	1,875	1,872	1,827

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 7: Effects on political trust in executive body and legislature and in jurisdiction and police, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>executive body legislature</b>	<b>jurisdiction police</b>
Sex	.012	.059**
Age	.041	.102***
Income	.003	.024
Education	.061**	-.025
Membership of interest group	-.026	-.049*
Membership of bonding group	-.045*	.065**
Membership of bridging group	-.035	.082***
Public orientations	.211***	.255***
Social and altruistic orientations	.262***	.049*
Orientations towards individual opinion-building	-.054*	.116***
Generalized trust	.136***	.094***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.145	.144
N	1,827	1,827

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 8: Political Participation in percentage

Associations	Unconventional participation	Conventional participation	Voting behaviour	N
Bonding Group	31.1	17.2*	93.4*	244
Interest Group	44.9*	22.2*	90.7*	225
Bridging Group	40.5*	13.1*	86.0*	1,022
Non-members	18.0*	3.6*	70.1*	690
All	31.3	9.8	80.6	1,991

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 9: Effects on conventional political participation, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sex	-.053*	-.041	-.034	-.032
Age	.019	.026	.029	.028
Income	-.005	-.003	-.003	-.002
Education	.077**	.065**	.048	.042
Activities in interest group	.102***	.092***	.087***	.087***
Activities in bonding group	.092***	.080***	.063**	.069**
Activities in bridging group	.074**	.024	.018	.024
Organizational skills		.179***	.182***	.184***
Public orientations			.005	.004
Social and altruistic orientations			-.042	-.056*
Orientations towards individual opinion-building			.052*	.060*
Generalized trust			.099***	.096***
Political trust in executive body				.060*
Political trust in judicial body and police				-.046
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.037	.064	.072	.077
N	1,835	1,835	1,750	1,715

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 10: Effects on unconventional political participation, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
Sex	-.008	-.002	.006	.012
Age	-.116***	-.112***	-.084***	-.080**
Income	-.015	-.014	-.014	-.014
Education	.100***	.093***	.100***	.101***
Activities in interest group	.125***	.120***	.116***	.114***
Activities in bonding group	-.032	-.038	-.025	-.023
Activities in bridging group	.039	.013	.013	.016
Organizational skills		.092***	.097***	.097***
Public orientations			-.114***	-.089***
Social and altruistic orientations			-.003	.015
Orientations towards individual opinion-building			-.063**	-.059*
Generalized trust			.009	.019
Political trust in executive body				-.063*
Political trust in judicial body and police				-.044
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.054	.061	.073	.076
N	1,835	1,835	1,750	1,715

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)

Table 11: Effects on voting behaviour, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
Sex	-.006	-.005	-.007	-.012
Age	.118***	.119***	.094***	.088***
Income	.042	.042	.043	.041
Education	.063*	.061*	.052*	.058*
Activities in interest group	.041	.040	.025	.028
Activities in bonding group	.052*	.050*	.031	.023
Activities in bridging group	.170***	.164***	.128***	.124***
Organizational skills		.023	.036	.038
Public orientations			.149***	.116***
Social and altruistic orientations			.037	.016
Orientations towards individual opinion-building			.130***	.120***
Generalized trust			.012	-.012
Political trust in executive body				.050*
Political trust in judicial body and police				.098***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.043	.043	.080	.090
N	1,835	1,835	1,750	1,715

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (one-tailed)



## Appendix

### 1) Membership and activities

I will now show you a list of different organisations, which I will read to you one by one. For each of them please answer yes if you

- A. Are a member of the organisation

I now have some additional questions concerning this particular organisation.

- B. Have you participated in activities of this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?
- C. Have you donated money, apart from membership fees, to this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?
- D. Have you undertaken voluntary (unpaid) work for this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?
- E. Would you say you have personal friends within this organisation?

### 2) Organizational skills

I will now read out a few things which people sometimes do as part of their activities in organisations and associations. How often do you, as part of your activity in organisations

- A. participate in decisions at a meeting
- B. B. plan or chair a meeting
- C. Prepare or give a speech before a meeting
- D. D. write a text other than a private letter at least a few pages long

1 = a few times a week; 2 = a few times a month; 3 = a few times a year; 4 = never or almost never

### 3) Generalized trust

I would now like to ask you some questions about how you view other people. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

0 = You can't be too careful; 10 = Most people can be trusted

### 4) Political trust

I will now read out names of different institutions such as the police, government, civil service, etc. Please tell me how strongly you personally trust each of these institutions.

- A. The cabinet
- B. The political parties
- C. The Bundestag
- D. The courts
- E. The police
- F. Politicians
- G. The European Union

0 = No trust at all; 10 = Very strong trust

### 5) Norms

As you know, there are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. I would therefore like to ask you to examine the characteristics listed on the card. Looking at what you personally think, how important is it:

- A. Never to try to evade taxes
- B. To form your own opinion, independently of others
- C. Always to obey laws and regulations
- D. To be active in organizations
- E. To think of others more than yourself
- F. To subject your own opinions to critical examination

0 = not at all important; 10 = very important

**6) Political Participation**

There are different ways of attempting to bring about improvements or counteract deterioration in society. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

- A. Worked in a political party
- B. Signed a petition
- C. Taken part in a public demonstration
- D. Taken part in a strike
- E. Attended a political meeting or rally

Did you vote in the last election, or was there anything that made you unable or unwilling to vote?

1 = Yes, 2 = No, but was eligible to vote, 3 = No, was not eligible to vote

**7) Left-Right Scale**

In political matters, people talk of “the left” and “the right”. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?

0 = Left; 10 = Right

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