Abstract for the “SOEP2014 - 11th International German Socio-Economic Panel User Conference” from June 30th to July 1st in Berlin (Germany)

Intergenerational transmission of volunteering
Socialization and status transmission effects disentangled?

Volunteering has been considered as highly socially desirable due to its benefits for the society (e.g., democracy promoting) and for the volunteering person itself (e.g., potential to develop human capital). However, volunteering is also an indicator of social inequality as it is limited to a certain group, and can reproduce social inequality if it is transmitted from parents to children.

In order to examine the role of volunteering in the inheritance of social inequality, this paper focuses on the extent and mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of volunteering in Germany.

First descriptive results suggest a clear positive correlation between parental and children’s volunteering. However, the mechanisms behind this correlation are still unclear. A possible explanation of intergenerational transmission of volunteering is based on the influence of parental socialization during formative years of adolescence. Respectively, intergenerational transmission can be carried out directly either by internalized norm and values inculcated by parents which foster volunteering in the later life (Bekkers 2007; Musick/Wilson 2008), or parents can set role models by volunteering themselves which can be observed and imitated by their children due to social learning processes (Bandura 1977).

However, social, cultural and financial resources provided by parents can also facilitate or impede volunteering and are of particular interest (Smith/Baldwin 1974; Janoski/Wilson 1995). The social status of parents can influence the volunteering of parents as well as the children, and serve insofar as mediator of intergenerational transmission processes and respectively may overlap the socialization effect.

Drawing on the German Socio Economic Panel Data (1984-2011) and based on a contrafactual approach this study aims to disentangle socialization and status transmission processes and thus answer the question whether and to what extent each model accounts for explanation of intergenerational transmission of volunteering in order to discuss different strategies for volunteer recruitment.

Literature