SHAPING THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION:

How social barriers can be overcome
and how resonance potentials can be utilised

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Shaping the social-ecological transformation: How to overcome social barriers and utilise resonance potentials

We humans usually focus on present times and prefer to ignore future challenges. Climate policy has a different focus and is therefore not easy to implement. Nevertheless, more and more people are taking the future more serious. This is because the climate related effects such as heat-waves, droughts and heavy rainfall events, with their enormous damage and far-reaching disruption to everyday life, are becoming more evident: It is (meanwhile) enough to take a short-term perspective to recognise the impact of the current production and consumption system.

However, the question of how people feel about ambitious climate protection reveals a different picture. A majority of society supports climate protection in general and only a minority denies climate change or opposes climate policy. But even among those who are fundamentally in favour of climate protection, there are hesitant to negative attitudes with regard to certain measures. On the one hand, there is a fundamental openness to change, but on the other hand there is also a clinging to the status quo and a concern about the loss of prosperity and security of supply: The expansion of renewable energy, increased efforts in the heating and transport transition, structural change in businesses and its impact on the working and living environment - the closer the impending changes come to daily life, the greater the scepticism and resistance seem to be.

In order to address these concerns and reservations from the population, we must take note of them and understand the transformation towards climate-neutral societies not only as a technical and economic process (innovations, subsidies, etc.), but also as a socio-cultural project (see Brand/ Welzer 2019) - especially since climate policy must consider not only questions of effectiveness and efficiency, but also questions of the consequences for social justice and democratic stability (see Sterner et al. 2019).

In other words, this means that climate policy must address key hurdles and barriers that exist for many and make climate-friendly attitudes and behaviour difficult or impossible. However, climate policy must also build on existing preferences, values and activities that are much more prone in some population groups than in others (e.g. interest in green technology, openness to green trends such as food sharing, second-hand or unpackaged shopping, preference for organic products, etc.) (see Reusswig/Schleer 2021).

Against this background, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Competence Centre for Climate & Social Justice commissioned a large-scale population survey in Europe and North America: In a total of 19 countries, the perceptions, interests and fears that people associate with the social-ecological transformation were analysed. The aim of the survey was not just to observe climate policy attitudes. Rather, the aim was to analyse which population groups are (particularly) receptive to climate policies and which groups have a critical, reserved or even hostile attitude towards the social-ecological transformation. Behind this is the practical interest in mobilising existing social potential in order to "take along" the largest possible number of people in the transition to sustainable ways of living and doing business, to keep social conflicts to a minimum and to strengthen democracies rather than destabilise them (see also Borgstedt 2023).

1. Methodological structure of the study

The study design is based on quantitative, population-representative surveys with a sample size of at least 1,200 individuals per country (22,823 cases in total). The study was conducted in the period from mid-April to the end of July 2023 in the following 19 countries: Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the USA. In all countries included in the study, the survey was designed as an online study (see Figure 1).[1]

Figure 1: Overview of the study programme

Method
Standardised online survey (CAWI)

Quota sample (gender, age, education and region)

The surveys were conducted in the national language.

Data collection
Survey duration: 20 to 28 minutes, depending on the country

The data collection was carried out by Sociotrend GmbH.

Target group
Resident population aged from 18 to 69 years

Sample size
Total sample: 22,823 cases (around 1,200 people per country)

Survey period
20.04. – 28.07.2023

Survey content

- Awareness of environmental, nature and climate protection topics
- Climate and environmentally conscious behaviour: Attitudes, barriers and motivators
- Attitudes towards the change in our way of living and doing business: Necessity of change, attribution of responsibility and political measures
- Information interest and level of knowledge: Climate chae, ecological interrelationships and political measures

The socio-cultural approach of the **Sinus-Milieus social model** was integrated into the survey design. The Sinus-Milieus are to be understood as social groups that are similar in terms of their socio-economic circumstances as well as their cultural values, everyday attitudes, lifestyles and life goals. They therefore perceive people holistically, in the frame of reference of everything that has meaning for their lives (see Barth/Flaig 2023).[2]
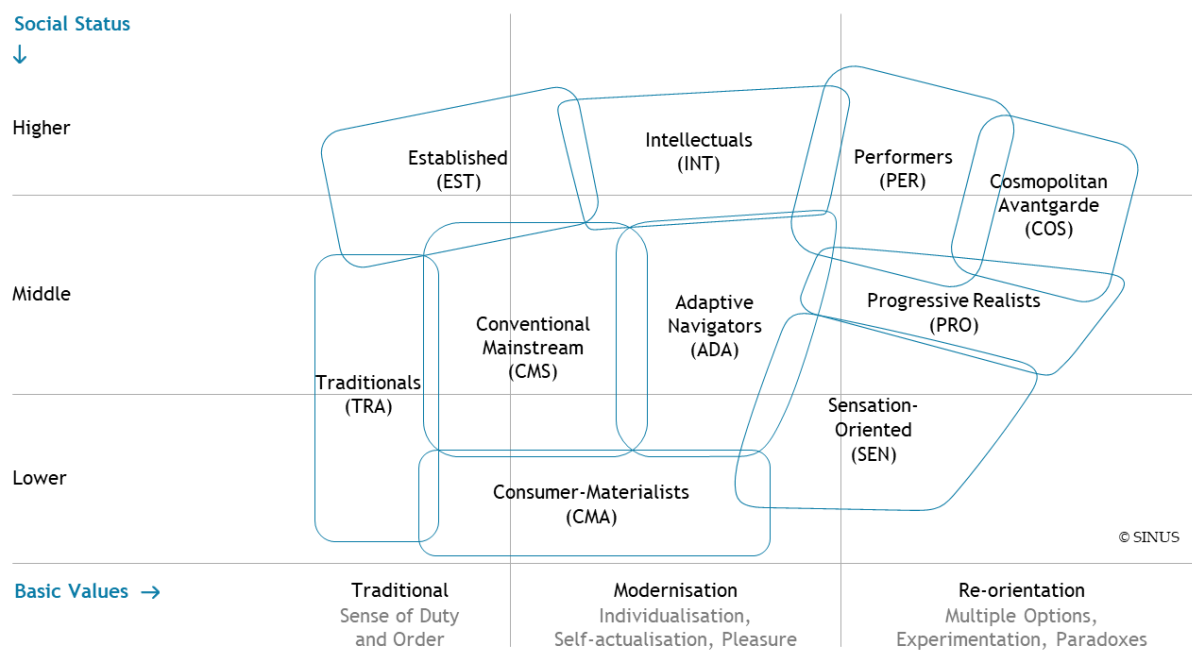
The milieu concept combines the vertical (income, education, occupation) and horizontal (values, everyday attitudes, lifestyles, life goals) differences discussed in climate economics and is therefore particularly suitable for analysing distributional and value conflicts simultaneously (see Reusswig/ Schleer 2021): An analytical approach that takes into account the values, attitudes to life and lifestyles of different social milieus enables a more comprehensive and differentiated view of the social challenges associated with the social-ecological transformation (for example in the areas of nutrition, housing, mobility, etc.).

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[1] Access to the internet is a prerequisite for online surveys. It should be noted that not everyone has access to the internet and that many people who do have access to the internet are not digitally savvy. This applies primarily to the older population (70+). The resident population aged between 18 and 69 therefore forms the basic population for the surveys in the countries analysed. In order to fulfil the requirement of representativeness for the age group of 18 to 69-year-olds, quota samples were drawn. The aim of the survey was to achieve the closest possible approximation to the representative marginal distributions of the quota characteristics of gender, age, education and region in all countries. Despite the definition of these quotas, there may be structural deviations from the population. For this reason, the data was adjusted for deviations from the population after the surveys were completed. This was implemented using factorial weighting.

[2] In contrast to an inductive-empirical approach, according to which lifestyle types are generated using statistical classification methods such as cluster and correspondence analyses and are not determined a priori, the development of the Sinus-Milieus was developed on the basis of qualitative findings (see Barth 2022).

"Groups of like-minded people" also exist across national borders - the so-called Sinus-Meta-Milieus. These are internationally comparable population groups with similar basic orientations and life-styles, but the depth of the descriptions (in lifestyles, media behaviour, etc.) can be analysed and presented on a country-specific basis.[3] Figure 2 shows the Sinus-Meta-Milieu model for the Established Markets.[4]

Figure 2: The Sinus-Meta-Milieus in Established Markets

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2. Social barriers and potential for resonance

The results of the multi-country survey show, among other things, a general awareness of the need for a fundamental rethinking in politics, businesses and society. When asked whether a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business is necessary in their own country, more than two thirds of respondents in all countries surveyed answered "Yes, definitely" or "rather yes" - on average 84% (see Figure 3). In addition, the vast majority of respondents believe that humanity is endangering its livelihoods by destroying nature. At least 85% (in Denmark) and up to 97% (in Greece, Portugal and Serbia) "fully" or "somewhat" agree with this statement. Furthermore, at least 65% (in Germany and the Czech Republic) and up to 93% (in Portugal and Turkey) say they are afraid of the consequences of climate change. In contrast, the view that the consequences of climate change are greatly exaggerated is much less common in all countries. The range here extends from 22% agreement in Portugal to 47% agreement in Romania, the Czech Republic and the USA.

Figure 3: Assessing the need for change

In your opinion, is a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business necessary in your country?
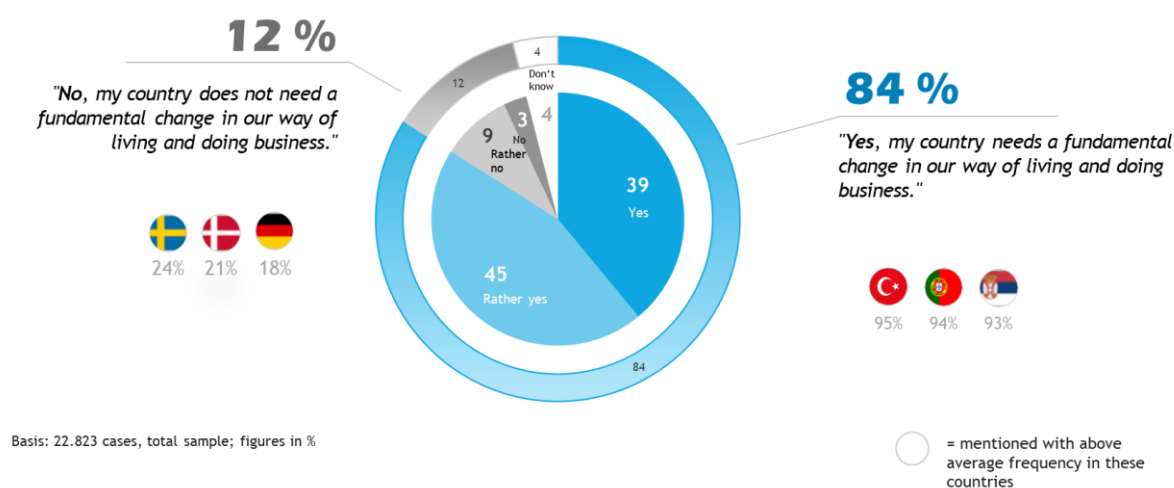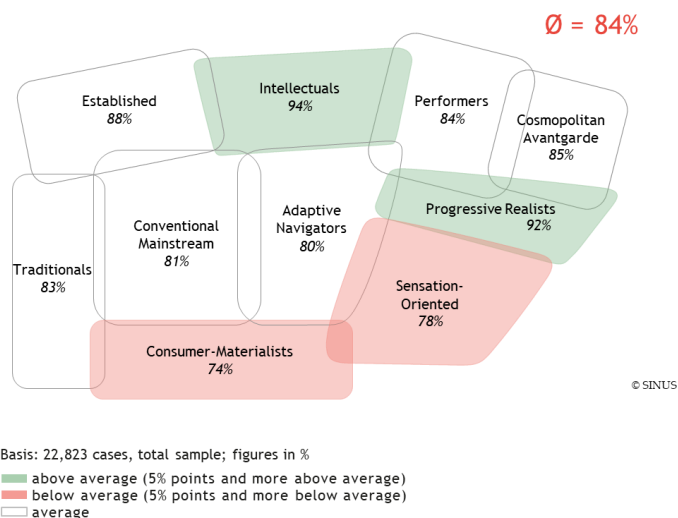
It should be noted here that the opinions expressed in surveys do not necessarily have a direct impact on people's own behaviour. Not only are the climate and sustainability policy demands of science and many activists perceived as elitist and status-threatening by significant sections of society and decisively rejected, but even in those parts of society in which such narratives are developed and cultivated to a particular extent, they are often primarily self-portrayals and target ideas that are far removed from the forms of action, lifestyles and patterns of self-realisation actually practised (see Blühdorn 2020).

And despite this justified objection, there is no denying that there is fundamental support for a change in our way of living and doing business. This is all the more true as the high values are not only evident in certain sections of the population (e.g. the educated or propertied middle classes), but in all population groups (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Assessment of the need for change according to social milieus

In your opinion, is a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business necessary in your country?
„yes / rather yes"

Ø = 84%

Established 88%	
Intellectuals 94%	
Performers 84%	
Cosmopolitan Avantgarde 85%	
Conventional Mainstream 81%	
Adaptive Navigators 80%	
Progressive Realists 92%	
Traditionals 83%	
Sensation-Oriented 78%	
Consumer-Materialists 74%	

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Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
▮ above average (5% points and more above average)
▮ below average (5% points and more below average)
▯ average

This raises the question of how the two findings fit together: High approval ratings for the social-ecological transformation with simultaneous reservations and perceptible resistance to ambitious climate protection? Our hypothesis is that social conflicts over environmental and climate policy revolve less around the fundamental question of "More climate protection: yes or no?" and more around the appropriate *design* of the social-ecological transformation (see also Mau et al. 2023). This is where the real conflicts reside, and this is where the search for starting points must begin in order to be able to address and do justice to the specific needs and future aspirations of the population, legitimate demands, but also latent fears and populist accusations. If we differentiate between the fundamental level and the implementation level, it also becomes clear that climate policy can not only polarise between individuals or social groups, but can also trigger ambivalence within groups and among individuals themselves: On a whole range of topics, we ourselves are divided, we are both victims and accomplices (see Latour/Schultz 2022). In this case, social polarisation is not due to irreconcilable positions, but to a way of dealing with internal contradictions.

Science must attempt to uncover these ambivalences and contradictions. This is exactly what will be done in the following by analysing the barriers and resonance potentials of the various social milieus in more detail. The analysis is based on the milieu results of the multi-country survey (basis: 22,823 cases), which can be viewed both across countries (country comparison report) and for each country individually (country reports) on the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung website.[5]

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[5] For the country reports, the results were also analysed according to socio-demographic characteristics, but the differences according to gender, age, education and income are significantly smaller than the differences according to social milieus.

Before the analysed barriers and resonance potentials of the individual milieus are shown and described, a classification is first made into four milieu groups of socio-ecological change (see Figure 5):

Figure 5: The social-ecological transformation: primary driver milieus, partial supporter milieus and insecure to distanced milieus
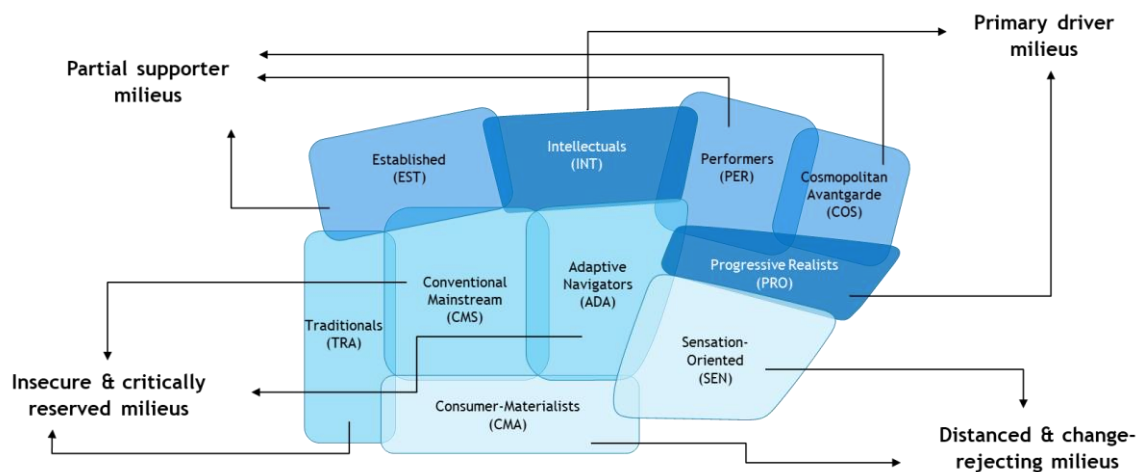
- The daily lives of the post-materialist *Intellectuals* and the mission-conscious *Progressive Realists* can be seen as the **primary driver milieus.** Both milieus are characterised by a particularly strong sensitisation to the risks of climate change. In their view, social-ecological transformation is a basic prerequisite for overcoming the climate crisis. In view of the pressing time, they are calling on politicians to push ahead more consistently with nature conservation, environmental protection and climate action (the Progressive Realists are particularly "vocal" in this regard). They explicitly agree with distributing the costs and burdens of change fairly. At the same time, there is a high level of willingness to shape one's own way of living more sustainably in favour of the environment. This does not rule out inconsistent behaviour in some cases, but the members of these milieus also self-critically acknowledge inconsistencies - and see them as an incentive for further improvements.

- The conservative *Established* elite can be seen as a **partial supporter milieu.** The members of this milieu have an open attitude towards necessary changes, but fear economic damage if climate protection targets are too ambitious. They are also reluctant to change their own sometimes exclusive lifestyle (privileged living conditions, long-distance travelling, etc.). The modern economic elite of the *Performers* also agree with the goal of climate neutrality. However, they are less convinced - especially in comparison to the driver milieus - that strict and consistent laws are needed to preserve nature and the environment. Instead, they favour technology and progress - and the voluntary nature of climate policies. Although the lifestyle-affine *Cosmopolitan Avantgarde* milieu is strongly individualistic and anti-ideological, it can still be considered a supporter milieu - due to its urban cosmopolitanism, its interest in green trends (vintage fashion, upcycling, etc.) and its general appreciation of sustainability, which is also translated to some extent into political positioning and professional orientations. In everyday life, sustainable behaviour is supported above all where ecological rethinking promises an increase in quality of life (e.g. sustainable nutrition, environmentally friendly mobility).

- The (highly) **insecure and critically reserved milieus** include the stability-seeking older generation of *Traditionals*, the harmony-seeking *Conventional Mainstream* and the young, modern middle class of *Adaptive Navigators*. Uncertainty is increasingly spreading in these milieus in view of the perceived intensification of the crisis and the associated calls for change, which are

perceived as diffuse. The need to adapt to changing times may be undisputed here, but awareness of the urgency of the climate problem is rather low. Although people express fear of the consequences of climate change, many also believe that there are more important problems in their own country (e.g. pension provision/elderly poverty, inflation/falling purchasing power, fair and well-paid jobs). As people believe that they will be worse off afterwards than before, the idea of a "great transformation" creates growing fears of social decline and the future. People are disappointed by politicians and the government, no longer feel that their interests are (sufficiently) represented and are annoyed regarding "wealthy elites" who want to tell others how they should live in the future in the wake of the climate crisis.

- While the middle-class milieus (Conventional Mainstream, Adaptive Navigators) and the Traditionals are certainly sensitised to the issue of climate neutrality, this is where the boundary runs to those groups that are (strongly) **distanced or even opposed** to the ecological issue: In the materialistic and entertainment-orientated milieu of the *Sensation Oriented,* the envisaged climate neutrality is primarily seen as an imposition that is associated with sacrifice, personal restrictions and a loss of joie de vivre. The members of this milieu live in the "here and now" - this strong focus on the present runs counter to the principles of sustainability. Although environmental threats cannot simply be ignored, little thought is given to the risks and consequences. The *Consumer Materialists*, who are concerned about participation, also regard climate change as a subordinate problem. Many live in precarious circumstances (e.g. unemployment, health problems, difficult family circumstances), feel "left behind" and socially disadvantaged. In view of this, climate policy measures are perceived as unfair and as an additional threat to their own social situation. As a result, they feel abandoned by the state and fear that they will be left even further behind.

The grouping made here according to the degree of support for the necessary transformation must not obscure the fact that we are dealing with topic- and situation-specific approval and opposition in each milieu, which can be addressed. Even lifestyle factors and value orientations that initially stand in the way of a transformation towards climate neutrality can be used to bring about climate-friendly changes. For this reason, both the potential for resonance and the barriers are identified and described below for each milieu.
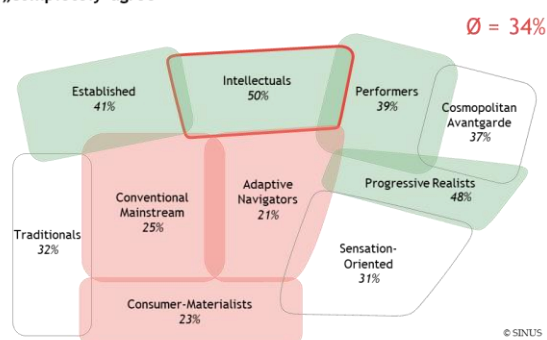
2.1. The primary driver milieus

Intellectuals - Academic elite with post-material roots

- High affinity for indulgence, sensuality, art & culture
- Critical of globalisation
- Advocating for justice and public welfare
- Taking responsibility for oneself and others
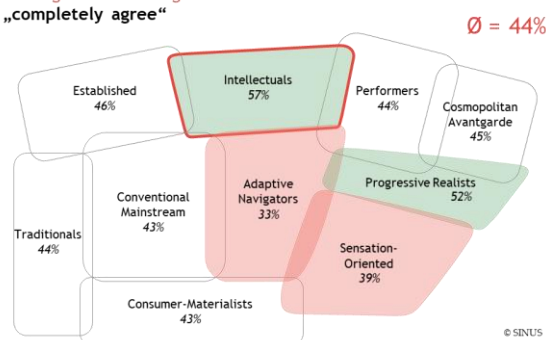- Affinity for (continuing) education and embracing quality of life

Figure 6: Typical milieu results – Intellectuals

Barriers and Obstacles

Large ecological footprint
Intellectuals like the finer things in life. Art, clothes, large flats, good food, travelling - they also see all of this as a way of balancing out the stress of everyday professional and private life.

Discrepancies between environmentally conscious demands and actual behaviour
Intellectuals are aware of the impact of a large ecological footprint. This makes them feel all the better about buying products that have less impact on the environment and climate ("clean hands": avoiding feelings of guilt) (see Figure 6). However, although they endeavour to make the most sustainable consumption decisions possible, they lead an upscale lifestyle (e.g. high energy consumption due to large homes). This sometimes inconsistent behaviour repeatedly leads to conflicts of conscience that are difficult to resolve (cognitive dissonance).

Reflected renunciation, but no general restrictions (compensation logic)
If sustainable behaviour threatens to compromise the own "enjoyable" lifestyle, Intellectuals help themselves with compensatory restrictions: By making compensatory payments (e.g. Carbon tax on airline tickets) and making reflected sacrifices, they create room in certain areas of their life so that they can act in a less environmentally friendly way (without feeling too guilty) on other occasions (e.g. not driving a car or eating less meat to compensate for long-distance travelling).

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Strong connection to nature
Nature plays a major role in the lives of intellectuals. Regularly spending time in nature helps them to find what they see as the right balance between work, private life and relaxation (the need to slow down in nature). They are aware that humans are dependent on nature and that the destruction of nature also has repercussions for humans.

High level of problem awareness and holistic understanding of sustainability
Intellectuals are generally (very) well informed regarding environmental problems and their consequences (e.g. loss of biodiversity, scarcity of resources). Not only do they have a differentiated understanding of the complex ecological interrelationships, they also consider the economic consequences in addition to the social ones (e.g. increase in humanitarian crises). For example, many are convinced that the switch to more climate-friendly businesses is also essential because otherwise there is a risk of economic damage.

Ecologically motivated social criticism and a critically informed view of environmental policy
In no other milieu is environmental, nature and climate protection a higher political priority than in the Intellectuals milieu. Most members of the milieu call for a more consistent switch to renewable energies and expect Politicians to exert greater pressure on businesses. However, the Intellectuals also hold citizens accountable. In their view, every individual should take on more responsibility in order to tackle climate change.

Strong sense of distributive justice
The desire for a better and fairer world is typical of the intellectuals. In their opinion, the transformation of businesses and lifestyles can only succeed if it is organised in a socially fair way. This applies to both the national and global level: Many Intellectuals emphasise that the industrialised countries have a special responsibility for climate protection, as they are the main cause of climate change (see Figure 6).

Strong affinity for a sustainable, environmentally and health-conscious lifestyle
The consumer behaviour of Intellectuals is discerning and selective ("less is more"). Here, "organic" is not only a sign of quality - a healthy, balanced diet is important to them - but also an expression of a mindful lifestyle (aversion to the unreflected affluent society). As many members of this milieu feel particularly responsible for the preservation of nature and the environment and associate more environmental protection with a better quality of life and health, they are correspondingly open to ecological arguments.

Willingness to change one's own habits
Intellectuals are aware that effective environmental and climate protection measures (such as saving energy) also require them to "correct" their own habits. At the same time, they show a high willingness to change their lifestyle in favour of the environment and to accept a certain reduction in their own standard of living (e.g. more electric mobility, car sharing, bicycle use; higher tolerance for progressive taxation).

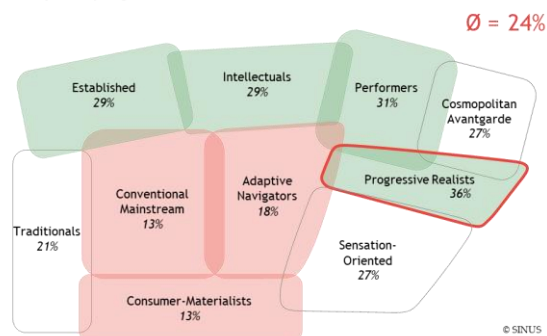### High willingness to pay for sustainable products
Because ecological awareness and a high income come together in this milieu, sustainability is an important purchasing and decision-making criterion for Intellectuals - even if they have to pay higher prices for more sustainability.

Progressive Realists – Impulse giver of the global transformation

- Sustainable lifestyle without ideology of renunciation
- Progressive, optimistic
- Taking responsibility for society
- Ease of dealing with contradictions, party & protest, seriousness & entertainment
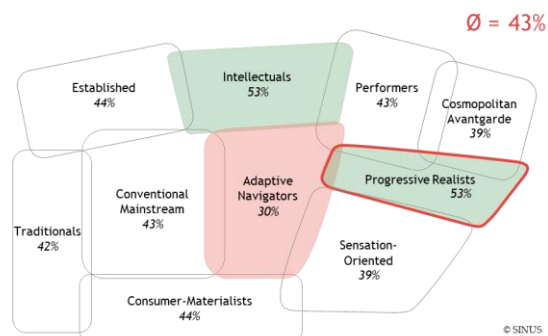
Figure 7: Results typical of the milieu - Progressive Realists

For me, the bottom line is actively being involved in changing society.
„completely agree"

Ø = 24%

Established 29%	Intellectuals 29%	Performers 31%	Cosmopolitan Avantgarde 27%
Traditionals 21%	Conventional Mainstream 13%	Adaptive Navigators 18%	Progressive Realists 36%
	Consumer-Materialists 13%		Sensation-Oriented 27%

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Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
■ above average (5% points and more above average)
■ below average (5% points and more below average)
□ average

Politicians need to work harder to ensure change to the structuring of our economic system and lifestyle is socially just.
„completely agree"

Ø = 43%

Established 44%	Intellectuals 53%	Performers 43%	Cosmopolitan Avantgarde 39%
Traditionals 42%	Conventional Mainstream 43%	Adaptive Navigators 30%	Progressive Realists 53%
	Consumer-Materialists 44%		Sensation-Oriented 39%

© SINUS

Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
■ above average (5% points and more above average)
■ below average (5% points and more below average)
□ average

Barriers and obstacles

Limited financial resources
Due to the financial restrictions of this still young milieu (lowest average age in the milieu comparison), it is not always possible to fall back on the most environmentally friendly products (e.g. ownership of older vehicles, as alternative drive systems are often too expensive for them).

Self-image as autonomous decision-makers
On the one hand, Progressive Realists are in favour of legal regulations (e.g. on energy efficiency) and are generally open to personal change; on the other hand, they have strong self-development values (e.g. independence, self-determination) and find it difficult to accept "directives from above" - especially if political decisions are not sufficiently explained and clarified.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Strong connection to nature
Many members of this milieu feel a strong connection to nature. They particularly value untouched, unspoilt nature left to its own devices. Its diversity is an end in itself and therefore worth protecting.

Strong awareness of the consequences of climate change
The Progressive Realists are characterised by a strong awareness of the risks of climate change. Whether forest fires, species extinction, extreme weather events or the increase in humanitarian crises: The consequences of climate change are viewed with great concern and seriousness (but without doomsday rhetoric).

Plea for the post-growth society

Most members of this milieu are convinced that the goal of climate neutrality cannot be achieved without a change in economics and lifestyles. They question old principles (differentiation from neoliberalism), criticise intergenerational injustice ("the elderly and the established use up resources and do nothing themselves to prevent the climate catastrophe") and support a fundamental change of direction: from a (thoughtless) consumer society to a (responsible) post-growth society.

Demand for a socially just organisation of change

Many Progressive Realists are explicitly in favour of taking social aspects into account on the path to climate neutrality. In their opinion, Politicians must do much more to ensure that change is socially fair (see Figure 7). For example, they emphasise that people on low incomes should receive more financial support if the costs of electricity, heating or mobility rise due to climate protection measures.

A pioneering mentality combined with pronounced solution pragmatism

Progressive Realists criticise status quo politics, but distance themselves from ideological ideas. According to the members of this milieu, what is needed are realistic solutions that are implemented pragmatically, constructively and as quickly as possible - e.g. the promotion of electric vehicles, the construction of more wind turbines or the labelling of climate-friendly products.

Great need to have a say and help shape the state and society

The desire for an economy and way of life that is shaped in a sustainable way is expressed through the assumption of responsibility and the transfer of responsibility to all social actors (politics, businesses, science, NGOs, civil society): Progressive Realists get involved, are visible in the process and rely on social networks to build social pressure. They see themselves not only as initiators, but also as co-designers of the social-ecological transformation. They expect politicians to support the development of energy communities and at the same time are willing to participate in shaping the community's energy supply themselves (e.g. by joining an energy cooperative). In addition, many can imagine generating their own energy (e.g. by installing solar panels on their roof or balcony). Overall, this milieu shows a great willingness to actively participate in changing society (see Figure 7).

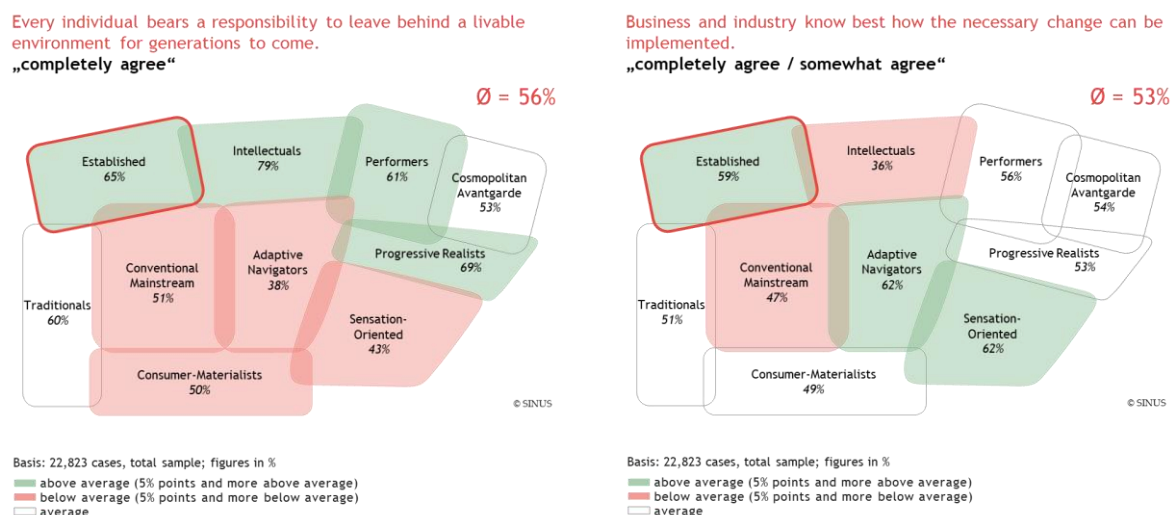**Openness to pragmatic experimentation with alternative lifestyles**

Progressive Realists strive for an environmentally and climate-sensitive lifestyle. In their view, all citizens should act and start shaping their lifestyles sustainably. They sometimes refer to a "good feeling" that arises whenever they buy products that have less impact on the environment and climate (feeling of a clear conscience and avoiding feelings of guilt). In order to fulfil their own expectations, people are even prepared to forego certain comforts of consumer society. They are open to experimenting with alternative lifestyles (e.g. cargo bikes as an alternative to cars, natural-based cosmetics).

2.2. The partial supporter milieus

Established - Status-driven conservative elite

- High self-confidence
- Classic responsibility and performance ethics
- Exclusivity and status claims
- Acceptance of social order

Figure 8: Typical milieu results – Established

Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
- above average (5% points and more above average)
- below average (5% points and more below average)
- average

Barriers and obstacles

Large ecological footprint
Traditional status consumption and an exclusive lifestyle (privileged living conditions, long-distance travel, exquisite food) mean that the Established have a large ecological footprint.

Rejection of (ideological) appeals to renunciation
The Established milieu is sensitised to the consequences of climate change, but personal renunciation of luxury is not seen as a solution. Luxury and exclusive consumption ("treating yourself to something") are privileges that they believe they are entitled to (based on personal achievement and the resulting position in society).

Opposition to a rapid and comprehensive transformation
The concept of a "major transformation" in the sense of a rapid and comprehensive social reorientation meets with little resonance among members of this milieu. Climate protection measures that are perceived as "radical" are opposed.

Great confidence in market solutions
Even if they support the (long-term) goal of climate neutrality and are prepared to contribute themselves, they are quick to point out the "real" influencing factors: for many members of this milieu, businesses know best how to implement the necessary changes (see Figure 8).

Fear of economic damage due to overly ambitious climate protection targets
Compared to the primary driver milieus (Intellectuals and Progressive Realists), the Established are significantly more likely to believe that companies that require a lot of energy for their production

cannot implement strict climate protection requirements. In their view, Politicians should not put too much pressure on businesses. This is due to the fear of losing out on global competition as a result of national climate protection targets.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Nature as an opportunity to identify with one's homeland
In addition to the Intellectuals and Progressive Realists, the Established also have a strong affinity with nature. Many emphasise that spending time in nature increases their quality of life. Nature as a cultural asset also serves the Established as an opportunity to identify with their own homeland.

Relatively high acceptance of additional costs
Due to their high social status (high income, good education), they have a relatively high acceptance of additional costs. This applies above all to high-quality products: If climate protection and sustainability mean (quality of) life, i.e. "more" flair, health, aesthetics or durability, then they are also willing to pay higher prices (responsiveness with quality arguments: e.g. higher quality and more durable materials or natural products and food that comes from the region).

Responsiveness with efficiency and innovation messages
The status-orientated conservative elite has a partly cautious but fundamentally open attitude towards economical and efficient environmental technologies. They are interested in technical innovations that are more climate-friendly (e.g. hybrid cars) - especially when innovations come from established suppliers that are considered reliable (e.g. Mercedes).

Environmentally conscious behaviour as a civic duty
Many members of this milieu see the careful use of resources as an ethical necessity because they want to leave an environment worth living in for future generations (see Figure 8). In this respect, environmental protection is also a matter of civic duty and decency.

Self-image as a responsible social elite with a role model function
Members of this milieu see themselves as a responsible social elite. Many claim to be actively committed to changing society (responsiveness to role model function). When it comes to sustainability, they also want to fulfil their role as role models and co-creators of society (opportunity to gain distinction). The Established often emphasise that they feel personally responsible for the preservation of nature and the environment and can imagine generating their own energy (e.g. by installing solar panels on the roof).

Fundamental trust in the system
Many Established hold the opinion that every individual has a responsibility to protect nature and the environment. However, they have even greater expectations of the state, which must create the right framework conditions to overcome the environmental and climate crisis. For example, businesses need clear (and realistic) targets from the state in order to become climate-neutral. And if these were then also implemented, society would be on the right track (plea for government guidelines and effective controls).

Positive attitude towards progress and development
Despite fears of economic damage from overly progressive climate protection measures, most members of this milieu are (more or less) convinced that consistent policies to protect the environment will have a positive impact on the competitiveness of businesses in the future. From the Established's point of view, however, it is important that the social-ecological reorganisation is carried out with a sense of proportion and is thought through to the end.
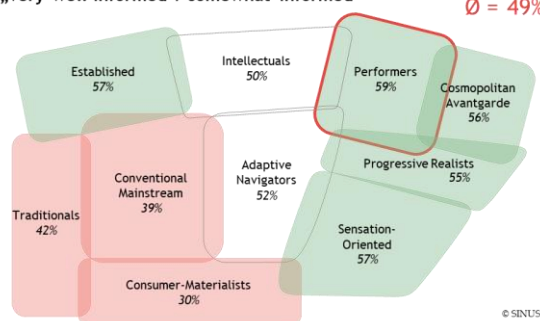
Performers - Efficiency- and progress-orientated modern elite

- Global economic and liberal thinking
- Affinity for "best in class" consumption, modern design, early adopting
- Interest in technology and digital
- Competitive and career-orientated, networker
- Open to change and new things

Figure 9: Typical milieu results – Performers

Barriers and obstacles

Large ecological footprint
Performers have a strong tendency towards sophisticated consumption and have an affinity for status symbols (the latest gadgets) and prestige signals ("consumption is a reward"). As technology trendsetters, they are extensively equipped with IT and household appliances. In addition, they are usually travelling a lot. Both professionally and privately, they consider mobility to be an important part of their quality of life (they are car enthusiasts and enjoy the jet-set lifestyle).

Pronounced belief in progress and opposition to personal restrictions or renunciation
Performers tend to assume that science and technology will solve the problem of climate change without the need for a fundamental change in lifestyles. They believe in free competition for the best future technologies. Personal restrictions "just for the sake of the environment" are generally opposed (e.g. speed limits or driving bans).

Reactance to overregulation and "blind idealism"
Performers have a (neo-)liberal world view. "Blind idealism" and over-regulation are rejected. Especially in comparison to the primary driver milieus (Intellectuals and Progressive Realists), they are less convinced that strict and consistent laws are needed to maintain an environment worth living in. Instead, they favour the voluntary nature of measures to promote sustainable change.

Fears of economic damage due to overly ambitious climate protection targets
Performers often believe that preserving jobs should take precedence over climate and environmental protection. In addition, many see the danger that combating climate change could harm the domestic economy. From the perspective of the modern business elite, however, it is essential to

prevent overly ambitious climate protection targets from jeopardising the country's future viability and prosperity.

Rationally shaped awareness of nature
Performers do not have a strong connection to nature. A rational attitude and a consumer-orientated approach to nature is more typical (nature as a place of sport and staging).

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Awareness of the need for a more effective environmental and climate policy
The modern economic elite of the Performers usually express (great) interest in discussions regarding global warming. They are also generally well informed regarding political measures for a change towards more climate and environmentally friendly businesses (see Figure 9). They are aware that such a change is fundamentally necessary. This all indicates that awareness of climate and environmental issues has increased in this milieu.

Responsiveness with profitability arguments
Performers see sustainability as a topic of progress and are fundamentally in favour of greater agility in society. They support environmental and climate-friendly measures in particular if they are accompanied by additional economic benefits. For example, they are all the more in favour of building a solar park or wind farm in their community if the resulting profits benefit the community. Further examples: Contribution of inner-city green spaces to climate adaptation and upgrading of urban real estate; Linking innovative mobility concepts with the attractiveness of the region.

Efficient and resource-conserving environmental technology as a long-term competitive advantage for domestic industry
Many members of the milieu see long-term competitive potential in the switch to environmentally and climate-friendly products and production processes, which also opens up new opportunities on the labour market.

Self-perception as early adopters with a pronounced hands-on mentality
Performers see green solutions as an opportunity to harmonise state-of-the-art technology and climate protection. They aspire to lead the way in the use of new climate-friendly and efficient technologies ("always want to be at the cutting edge"). They also take responsibility when it comes to working collectively to bring about change in society. For example, many Performers are willing to actively participate in their community's energy supply (e.g. by joining an energy cooperative) (see Figure 9).

Great interest in green investments that pay off in the long term
Especially when it comes to technology (photovoltaics, heat pumps, electric cars), Performers are increasingly focussing on sustainability - not only because they see themselves as early adopters in this respect, but also to secure long-term financial benefits. And as they can afford to invest (high income level), they are also very willing to pay for green innovations (innovation logic instead of restriction and renunciation logic).

Cosmopolitan Avantgarde - Ambitious & individualistic avant-garde

- Cosmopolitan, urban, mobile & flexible
- Digital nomads, lifestyle vanguards, pronounced self-expression
- Postmodern lifestyle elite, anti-mainstream, desire to stand out
- Joie de vivre, ambitious & success-orientated

Figure 10: Typical milieu results - Cosmopolitan Avantgarde

To what extent do you support the following measures? Introduction of a toll for cars so anyone who drives a car too much must pay more.
„wholly support / somewhat support" Ø = 47%
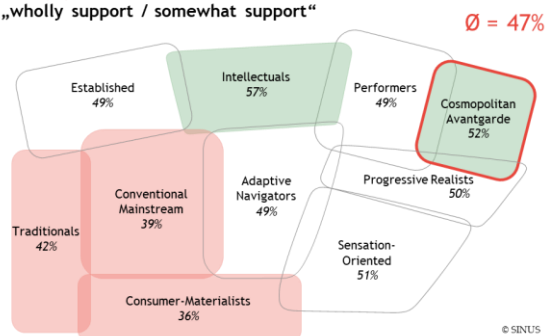
The switch to environmental and climate-friendly products and production methods offers great employment opportunities.
„completely agree" Ø = 25%
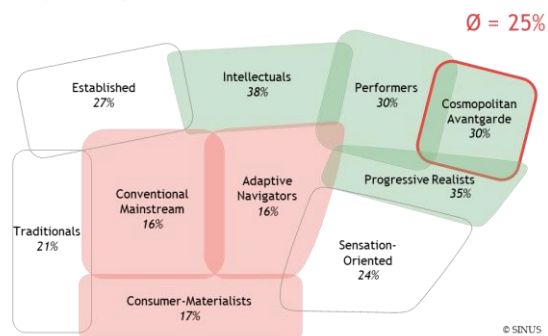
Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
- above average (5% points and more above average)
- below average (5% points and more below average)
- average

Barriers and obstacles

Large ecological footprint
As a postmodern lifestyle avantgarde, the members of this milieu cultivate a consumption-intensive lifestyle (lots of electrical appliances, eating out, frequent use of mail-order services of all kinds). This young milieu also has a great need for mobility and flexibility (frequent flyers, frequent relocation/single flats).

Trust in science and progress with simultaneous opposition to ideological debates
From the perspective of the ambitious and individualistic cosmopolitan avantgarde, the socio-ecological transformation must neither appear ideological nor be accompanied by a "depressive aesthetic of renunciation". Similar to the Performers, they believe that science and technology will solve the problems (at least in part) in such a way that a fundamental change in lifestyles is not absolutely necessary.

Opposition to external constraints and appeals to renunciation
The members of this milieu endeavour to shape their lives (increasingly) sustainably, but do not aim to be "pressured" into giving up the benefits of their way of life ("getting to know the world and discovering new things"). The demand to enforce strict and consistent laws to preserve an environment worth living in is met with much greater reluctance here than in the primary driver milieus (Intellectuals and Progressive Realists).

No strong connection to nature
Although nature is gaining in importance in this more urban-oriented milieu - wild, unspoilt nature is discovered when travelling - the appreciation of local nature is less pronounced.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Increasing awareness of climate change and the destruction of nature
In the Cosmopolitan Avantgarde milieu, there is great interest in socio-ecological challenges. Partly because they are globally networked and know what is happening around the globe (e.g. dying forests, species extinction, pollution of the oceans), the topic has gained in importance and driven the politicisation of this milieu. Especially the younger ones are of the opinion that a rethink needs to take place (partly in solidarity with climate movements).

Openness and a positive attitude towards change
The Cosmopolitan Avantgarde usually feels well-informed regarding political measures for a change towards a more climate and environmentally friendly economy. Any concerns that many people will be worse off after a change than before are present, but tend to be limited. On the other hand, many are convinced that the switch to more eco-friendly businesses offers great employment opportunities (see Figure 10). This is why it is often argued that structural change measures should be implemented even if this means job losses.

Flexible adaptation to change processes
The Cosmopolitan Avantgarde generally takes a pragmatic and flexible approach to change processes - they are very willing to experiment and adapt. They are particularly responsive where ecological rethinking promises an increase in quality of life (e.g. sustainable nutrition, environmentally friendly mobility). They support the reduction of climate-damaging subsidies and the expansion of charging stations for e-mobility. On the contrary, the succinct stance that it will soon be impossible to do anything at all with even more regulations for climate and environmental protection is usually not accepted.

Self-perception as trendsetters and postmodern avantgarde
The Cosmopolitan Avantgarde interprets environmentally and climate-friendly behaviour as a modern lifestyle (gaining distinction). As a group of young creatives, they set trends or drive them forward (e.g. Regenerative Food, unpackaged shopping and chic storage, vintage fashion, upcycling, Oatly Power Bowls). As a result, this group goes viral with its views and preferences.

High health awareness and affinity for environmentally friendly mobility concepts
The Cosmopolitan Avantgarde prioritises a healthy diet with lots of vegetables and little meat (high proportion of vegetarians and vegans). Owning a car is also questioned as a necessity: Many point to the existing (albeit improvable) alternatives (public transport, car sharing) and are in favour of introducing a car toll (see Figure 10).

**Willingness to spend more money on a sustainable lifestyle**
In this milieu, the financial means for a sustainable lifestyle are generally available. Any (still) existing financial restrictions (low average age) are compensated for by alternative behaviour (e.g. DIY, second-hand, sharing, swap meets).

2.3. The insecure and critically reserved milieus

Traditionals – Order-seeking older generation

- Petty bourgeois world, traditional working-class culture
- Desire for social security, harmony, consistency
- (Voluntarily) disconnection from modern lifestyle and digital culture
- Desire for simple, safe, down-to-earth lifestyle

Figure 11: Typical milieu results - Traditionals
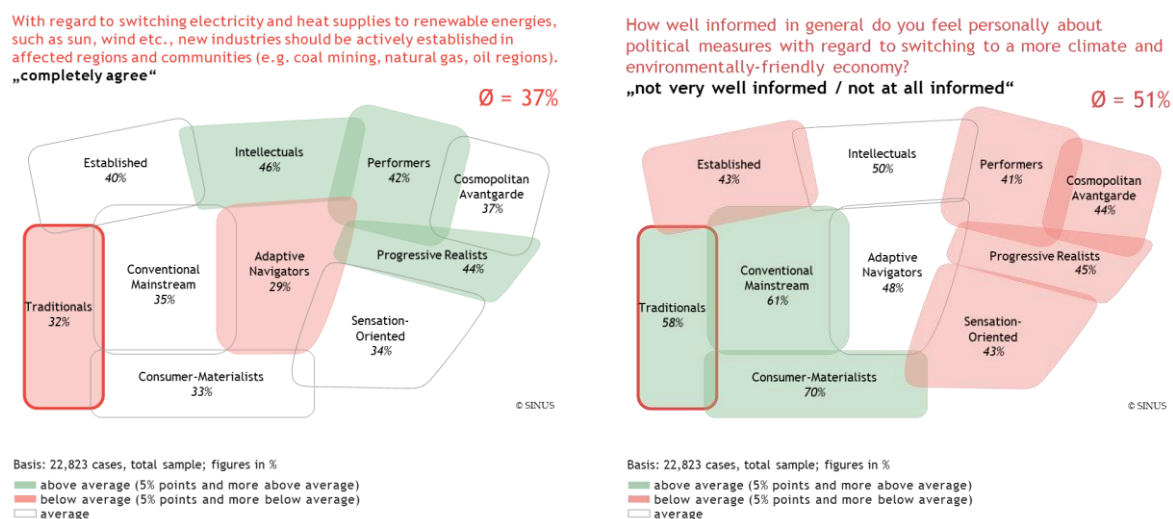
Barriers and obstacles

Financial restrictions and traditional consumption
Due to their limited financial means, Traditionals are not particularly willing to pay for environmentally and climate-friendly products. In addition, meat consumption is generally high here, while interest in eco and organic products is rather low (traditional consumption).

Stable consumption patterns and adherence to the old ways
Traditionals trust in what they know, because routines, rituals and customs promise security and reliability. They do not believe they can cope with modern, resource-saving environmental technology (often using old household appliances with high power consumption). In general, there is a very hesitant attitude towards change in this milieu (e.g. switching to green electricity or energy-efficient household appliances). For fear of being overwhelmed, Traditionals are less open to what they see as more complex plans for the future (e.g. purchasing a solar system or heat pump, replacing windows).

Limited knowledge of the threat to nature
Traditionals have comparatively little knowledge regarding ecological connections and the threat to nature. Environmental problems are mainly perceived when they are interpreted as an expression of social deviance (e.g. wild dumping of rubbish).

Discomfort with change processes and Opposition to experiments
In the stability-seeking older milieu of the Traditionals, the idea of a transformation that is rapid, fundamental but rather abstract in its goal can have a deterrent effect. There is a great deal of unease here about processes of change and little willingness to embrace new or unfamiliar things. For example, the proposal to actively establish new industries in regions that are affected by the

conversion of the electricity and heat supply (e.g. natural gas or oil regions) is usually met with critical reluctance (see Figure 11). The same applies to the proposal for citizens to participate in the energy supply of their community (e.g. by joining an energy cooperative).

Scepticism towards progress and technology
Most Traditionals do not believe that science and technological innovations will solve the problem of climate change without a fundamental change in lifestyles being necessary. This attitude is due to their general scepticism towards progress and technology.

Little knowledge regarding political measures for environmental and climate protection
When it comes to tackling the climate and environmental crisis, Traditionals clearly see the government as the most influential player. There is therefore a fundamental trust in the leadership skills of politicians. However, most members of this milieu also feel that not enough is explained and clarified: Politicians often do not feel well informed regarding political measures for a change towards a more climate and environmentally friendly businesses (see Figure 11). The need for more specific information is probably also a clear sign of the growing uncertainty in the face of the perceived complexity of political decision-making processes.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Relatively strong connection to nature
The Traditional milieu can also be described as close to nature. Nature is perceived here as an asset that is fundamentally worth protecting (e.g. preserving the beauty of the landscape, nature as the basis of human life). It stands for harmony and tranquillity, which - against the background of an increasingly complex world - promises security and stability.

Unconsciously sustainable lifestyle, criticism of the consumer and throwaway society and frugality as a life principle
Due to their thriftiness and modesty, Traditionals are among the most nature and environmentally friendly milieus with a relatively small ecological footprint: they travel less (no long car journeys and hardly any air travel), use all products for as long as possible ("purchases for life") and generally buy less (e.g. "voluntarily" avoid modern electronic devices).

Nature and environmental protection as a social norm
When certain climate-friendly everyday practices become established as social norms, Traditionals often behave more conscientiously than more modern milieus (conformism). For example, many believe that it is the duty of the individual to leave behind an environment worth living in for future generations.
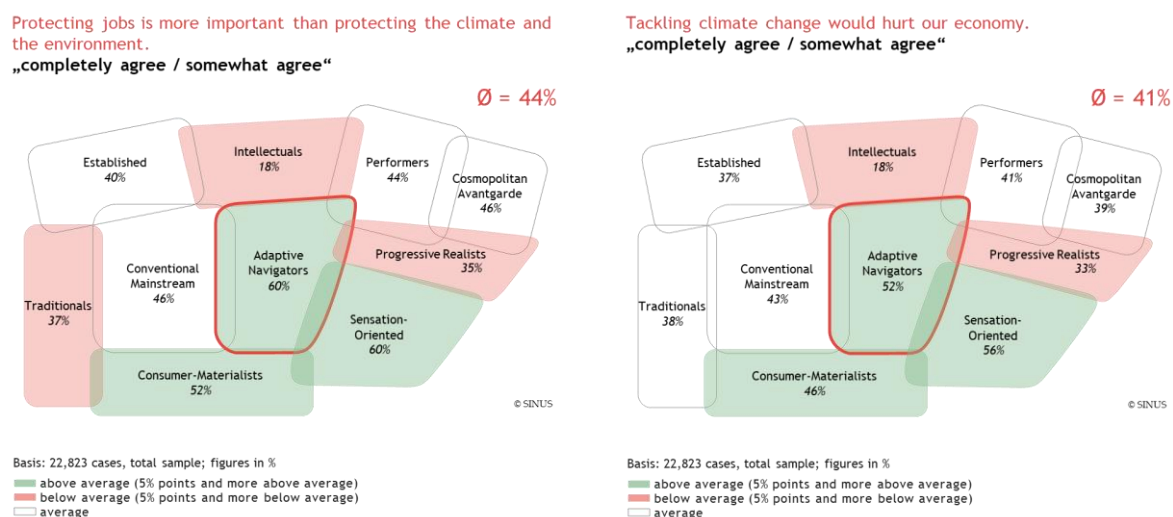
Openness to easily implementable behavioural changes
Environmentally and climate-friendly behaviour is welcomed if it leads to financial savings (or at least does not involve additional costs) and is as easy to implement as possible (e.g. switch-off power strips, energy-saving electrical appliances).

Adaptive Navigators – Adapting modern mainstream

- Flexible pragmatists
- Young modern middle class
- High willingness to adapt and perform
- Modern lifestyle, digital affinity, reliable & loyal
- Open to new – but tested and verified - things

Figure 12: Milieu-typical results - Adaptive Navigators

Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %
- above average (5% points and more above average)
- below average (5% points and more below average)
- average

Barriers and obstacles

Unreflected propensity to consume and little willingness to accept additional costs, effort and sacrifice

The young, modern middle class of Adaptive Navigators aims to shape their lives as comfortably as possible and to be able to afford what they like. Although members of this milieu can imagine taking eco-social criteria into account when shopping, they are hardly prepared to accept (even) higher prices. Additional burdens or lifestyle changes are currently not tolerated, or only to a limited extent. In addition, many find it difficult to shape their lives in an environmentally and climate-friendly way. As time is often short in everyday life, sustainable behaviour must be practicable or quick to implement and require as little information, searching and procurement effort as possible (e.g. eco-washing, switching off unnecessary appliances, replacing light bulbs with energy-saving bulbs).

No pronounced awareness of the urgency of the environmental problem

Although most members of this milieu express fear of the consequences of climate change, many are also of the opinion that there are more important problems in their own country. For example, they often believe that preserving jobs is more important than climate and environmental protection (see Figure 12). In addition, they are (still) less convinced that it takes an individual effort to maintain an environment worth living in. It almost seems as if the climate and environmental problems are being ignored or simply not recognised (partly fatalistic attitude: "What's the point of worrying about it?").

Doubts about the feasibility and prospects of success of a "major transformation "

Adaptive Navigators have a strong need for orientation and predictability. Extremes do not suit this milieu. Despite their fundamental acceptance of climate protection targets, the prospect of a "great transformation" tends to raise doubts about its feasibility and prospects of success. Many members of this milieu believe that exerting greater pressure on businesses is only a sensible

political measure to a limited extent. For example, they point out that companies in energy-intensive industries are unable to implement strict climate protection requirements.

Strong cost-benefit orientation and dominance of trade-off perceptions
Adaptive Navigators are characterised by strong utilitarian thinking ("What's in it for me?"). Their approach to environmental and climate issues primarily revolves around the question of what personal advantages and disadvantages an ecological transformation of society can have. At present, the disadvantages seem to predominate for many members of the milieu. Although advantages are also seen, trade-off constellations are considered more likely, especially in the short term - more environmental and climate protection does not lead to greater competitiveness, greater employment opportunities and a better life for all, but rather to economic damage (see Figure 12), high personal costs and an increase in social inequalities.

Low perception of self-efficacy
Many Adaptive Navigators see themselves as having less of an obligation to change their own lifestyle in favour of the environment. They often believe that the significance of their own actions is too small to make a significant contribution to environmental protection - a subjectively perceived powerlessness ("small-agent feeling"), which leads individuals to behave in a self-interested manner and avoid getting into overly complicated decision-making situations ("I'll wait and see").

Delegation of responsibility to third parties (risk of diffusion of responsibility)
The Adaptive Navigators show a strong tendency to shift responsibility onto third parties. Although they see climate protection as a task for society as a whole, they feel less personally committed to preserving nature and the environment. Many are of the opinion that others should take the first step - by which they mean the wealthy, who can afford to live a good life despite rising prices.

Benefit-orientated access to nature
Adaptive Navigators do not have a strong emotional connection to nature. Against the background of the milieu-typical pragmatism and their desire to make life as simple as possible, they tend to prefer inner-city nature to a (from their point of view rather time-consuming) trip into the countryside. City parks are seen as meeting places, retreats and places to exercise all in one.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

No ignorance of environmental problems
Adaptive Navigators are flexible and adaptable pragmatists who attach great importance to a good work-life balance ("balanced living"). They are just as interested in discussions regarding climate change, which will lead to environmental changes and thus also to changes in everyday life, as they are in climate policies for a change towards a more climate and environmentally friendly economy.

Responsiveness with efficiency, modernisation and cost arguments
Effective arguments for energy-saving behaviour or the purchase of environmentally friendly appliances, for example, are cost savings, modernity and efficiency (e.g. reduction of ancillary household costs through thermal insulation). This is especially true when a financial investment pays for itself within a short period of time (pragmatic short-termism).

Receptiveness to the bonus principle
Climate policies are supported if they are compatible with life in a modern consumer society and offer direct additional personal benefits (e.g. expansion of inner-city green and open spaces as an opportunity to "switch off in the countryside" in the immediate vicinity; more local infrastructure instead of long commutes; bonus points for using public transport; low-cost rental bikes).

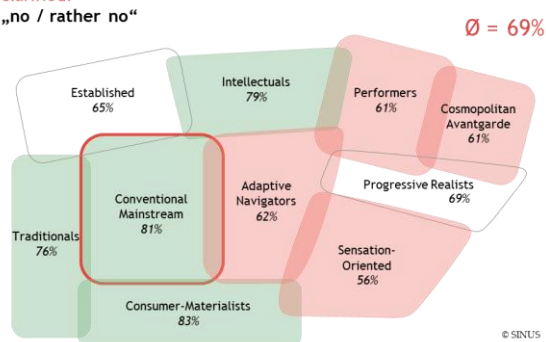**Interest in green trends that have arrived in the mainstream**
When climate-friendly and energy-efficient products are considered mature and have reached the mainstream (e.g. e-mobility), the young modern middle class shows great interest ("Don't start, but join in when the time is right").

Conventional Mainstream - Harmony-seeking older middle class

- Middle class under financial and ideological pressure
- Desire for secure circumstances
- Fear of losing well-deserved achievements
- Search for community, cohesion, social life, neighbourly support - down to earth
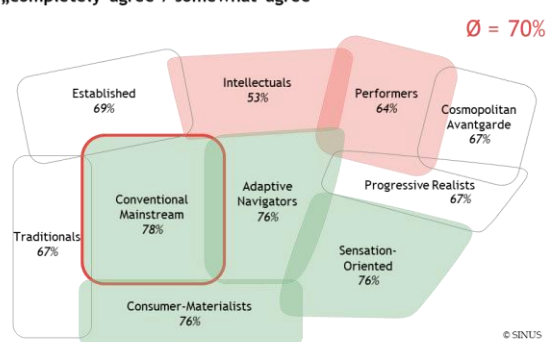- Distrust towards the primacy of the elites – feeling of being left out in favour of others

Figure 13: Typical milieu results - Conventional Mainstream

Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %

- above average (5% points and more above average)
- below average (5% points and more below average)
- average

Barriers and obstacles

Clinging to traditional symbols of prosperity
For the harmony-seeking older middle class, consumer goods are identity-defining features. This down-to-earth milieu clings to traditional symbols of prosperity (e.g. the well-equipped and cosy home or the well-deserved cruise). Climate-friendly consumption patterns are usually limited to to-day's conventions (social-normative rules) and are primarily economically motivated (e.g. switching off unnecessary appliances, replacing light bulbs with energy-saving bulbs).

Low awareness of the need for ecological change
In the Conventional Mainstream milieu, the preservation of nature and the environment is seen as an important social concern in principle, but a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business is not exactly considered a sine qua non. The fact that economic damage is imminent if businesses do not become more climate-friendly is an unconvincing argument from the perspective of the Conventional Mainstream. Often, they believe that there are more important problems than climate change (e.g. Public health service and care, inflation/falling purchasing power, pension pro-vision).

Pronounced cost awareness and low willingness to pay for climate protection
Members of this milieu have a critical and cautious attitude towards the modern eco-movement (es-pecially Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future). The demand to put a price on ecological con-sequential costs (internalisation of external costs) is seen as an additional increase in the cost of

normal consumption (e.g. food, mobility). The introduction of a car toll is viewed with similar scepticism as an increase in the price of climate-damaging products.

Increasing feeling of being overwhelmed and doubts about business solutions

Scepticism towards proactive, forward-looking environmental thinking is often an expression of being overwhelmed by the complexity of ecological issues. There is comparatively little awareness regarding environmental problems (e.g. pollution of the oceans, species extinction) and political measures for a change towards a more climate and environmentally friendly economy (see Figure 13). The knowledge of this milieu is also limited when it comes to sustainable consumption (environmental technologies, alternative drives, etc.). There is also a certain mistrust of companies. Many members of this milieu doubt that businesses know best how to implement the necessary change. They therefore aim neither to take the risk of bad investments nor to trust businesses that advertise sustainability (suspicion of "greenwashing"). Even the eco-labels do not offer sufficient guidance here (because they are not very clear).

Status quo thinking and growing fears of social decline

In the older middle class, the ecological issue is perceived as a threat to the standard of living they have achieved. Many people are experiencing a sense of crisis ("the future is less and less predictable"), combined with concerns about the loss of traditional ways of life and the fear of not being able to maintain their own (hard-earned) prosperity (see also Figure 13). As people believe that they will be worse off afterwards than before, the idea of a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business creates growing fears of social decline. This is why people often react very hesitantly when it comes to actively working to change society.

Feeling of disadvantage and outrage regarding the supremacy of detached elites

In the Conventional Mainstream milieu, there is an increasing impression that established politicians are no longer taking sufficient account of the interests of ordinary citizens. From the point of view of many representatives of this milieu, climate and environmental protection policies are socially unjust, as they place a particular burden on low-income earners. Many are disappointed with politicians and the state and are annoyed regarding the "green elites" who want to tell others how to live in the wake of the climate crisis (perceived devaluation of their own lifestyle and susceptibility to populist narratives). The feeling of being patronised is even met with clear resistance from some: people would not be prepared to do more to protect the environment even if everyone acted in this way.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Nature means quality of life

In the Conventional Mainstream milieu, the closeness to nature is less pronounced than in other lifeworlds (especially in comparison to the Intellectuals). Nevertheless, many members of this milieu emphasise that spending time in nature has a positive effect on their quality of life. In this harmony-seeking lifeworld, nature is valued above all as an environment for outings with the family. In this respect, the idea of intact nature is important here ("harmonious coexistence of people and nature").

Sustainable behaviour in spatial and social proximity

Especially when nature and environmental problems become visible and tangible in the immediate surroundings (e.g. waste in the environment and living environment, water pollution, traffic noise), people are prepared to adopt sustainable behaviour - where it fits well into their regular everyday life (waste separation, environmentally friendly disposal of household appliances, cloth bags instead of plastic bags, regional vegetables and meat, use of public transport, etc.).

Change in small and predictable steps

Most members of this milieu are aware that society has to adapt to changing times in view of the climate crisis, a basic sensitisation is present, but a change in structures must also consider the demands of everyday life (e.g. for many it is not possible to do without a car). This is why they are in favour of change in small and predictable steps.

Desire for secure conditions

In principle, most members of this milieu are willing to do more for environmental and climate protection, but they expect their own "modest" prosperity to be safeguarded. In particular, the burdens of change must be distributed in a socially fair manner, which also corresponds to their desire for community and cohesion in society ("overcoming challenges together").

Need for information and support

In an increasingly confusing world, this milieu is looking for orientation and reliable information. For example, it is often criticised that policies for a change towards a more climate and environmentally friendly economy are not sufficiently explained and clarified. This indicates that members of this milieu are not averse to sustainable behaviour per se. However, they expect concrete decision-making aids and more support from politicians and companies (e.g. when buying low-energy household appliances).

2.4. Lifeworlds that are (strongly) distanced or even opposed to change

Consumer Materialists - Lower class striving for orientation and participation

- Precarious living conditions
- Undemanding adaptation to necessities
- Desire for consumption standards of the middle class
- Defiant cohesion within their own community
- Fear of speed of change, being left behind

Figure 14: Typical milieu results - Consumer Materialists
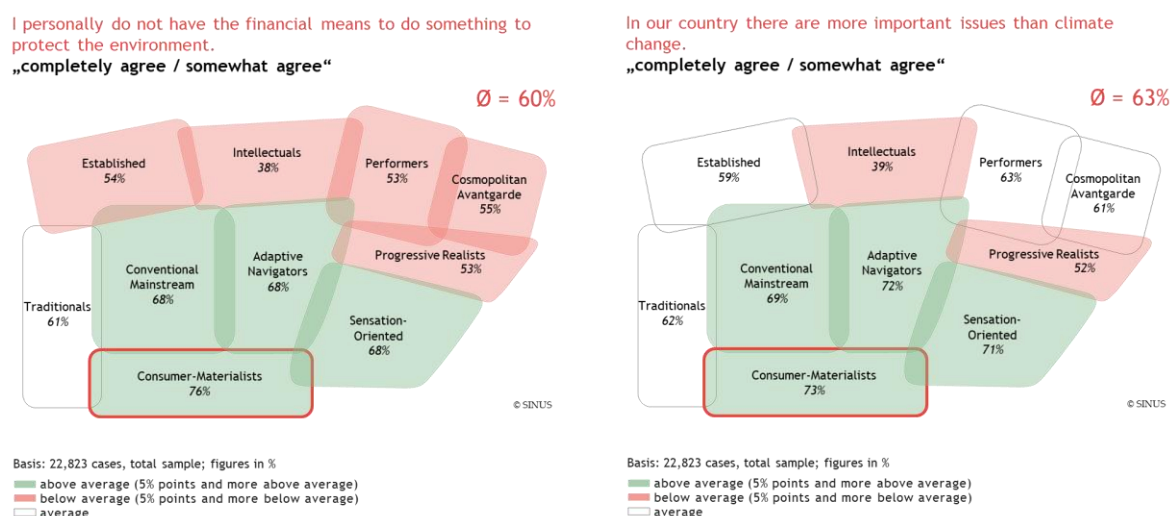
Barriers and obstacles

Pronounced consumer-materialistic desires
The pronounced consumer-materialistic desires of this milieu reflect the striving for social participation, but are counteracted by strong financial restrictions (low household income). For this reason alone, most members of this milieu feel that they are only able to do something for climate protection to a very limited extent (see Figure 14). A surcharge for sustainable products is hardly an option here (e.g. "cheap consumption" instead of organic products from the region).

Climate change and environmental threats as a secondary problem
In the Consumer Materialist milieu, there is little interest in climate and environmental issues. Too much focus is placed on the own problems. In this lifeworld, unemployment or temporary employment often go hand in hand with family difficulties and health problems. Against this background, the protection of nature and the environment is not relevant to everyday life (see Figure 14).

Little knowledge regarding environmental problems and their impact on health & quality of life
Although Consumer Materialists know from the media that nature, the environment and climate are much-discussed topics, their knowledge regarding environmental problems (e.g. species extinction, pollution of the Oceans, etc.) is comparatively low. Many members of the milieu are also unaware of the connection between environmental protection and improving quality of life.

Pronounced feeling of being left behind and accusations of social disadvantage
In the Consumer Materialist milieu, there is a great desire to belong to society. They see themselves as being left behind by society through no fault of their own, as victims of processes of change and political decisions. In view of this, climate and environmental protection policies are perceived as socially unjust and as an additional threat to their own social situation. There is a fear that a fundamental change in our way of living and doing business will be associated with high personal costs, making the possibility of social participation a distant prospect.

Strongly distanced to negative attitude towards (environmental) politics (general disenchantment with politics)
The feeling of exclusion and disadvantage often leads to bitterness and disappointment (perspective of hopelessness). Many feel abandoned by the state and not taken seriously. They are annoyed when others want to tell them how to live (susceptibility to populist narratives) and demand that politicians take care of the "really important topics" (e.g. healthcare, inflation, pension schemes, fair wages, social justice, affordable housing).

Low awareness of nature
Nature plays a subordinate role in the lives of Consumer Materialists. From childhood onwards, they spend little time in the countryside (living and working environment far removed from nature). A strong connection to nature is rarely found here. (In general, however, it should be noted that lifeworld-specific forms of a positive and affective relationship with nature are also present in this social grouping).

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Responsiveness with "simple" cost arguments
Due to the precarious living conditions typical of this milieu, there are strict limits to the consumption wishes of the milieu members. Environmentally and climate-friendly behaviours that involve no (or only low) investment costs but have a direct positive impact on disposable income (e.g. power strips that can be switched off, energy-saving light bulbs, water-saving taps) could therefore meet with a positive response.

Environmental protection measures as a contribution to environmental justice in cities and an opportunity for social participation
Environmental protection policies can contribute to environmental justice in cities (underprovision of lower-income households with urban green and open spaces), improve the social participation of disadvantaged groups (access to nature experiences) and increase their nature awareness (it is precisely socially disadvantaged groups that are particularly dependent on the provision of public goods).

Sensation-Oriented – Materialistic- and entertainment-orientated (lower) middle class

- Hedonistic approach, with focus on today
- Conspicuous consumption
- Adjustment if necessary, breakout if possible
- Unconcerned, open to risks
- Anti-bourgeois, yet materialistic lifestyle
- Rejection of political correctness and conventions
- Looking for fun, action, entertainment, stimulation

Figure 15: Environment-typical results - Sensation-Oriented
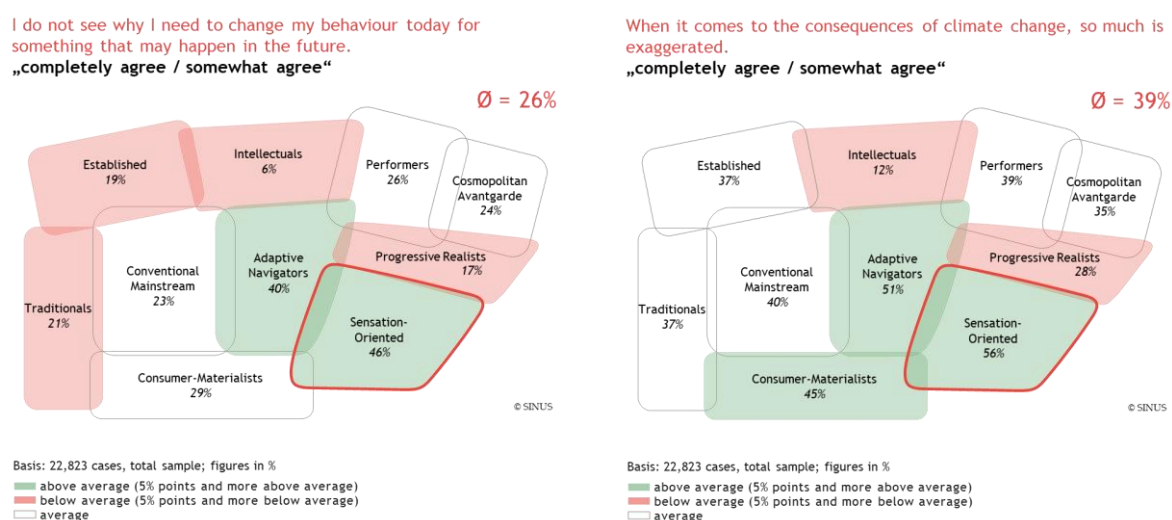
Barriers and obstacles

Hedonistic lifestyle with spontaneous and permissive consumption
The entertainment-oriented milieu of the Sensation-Oriented loves conspicuous and prestigious consumption (costume jewellery, cosmetics, cars, etc.). They strive for an intense life with lots of fun, action and stimulation (e.g. party holidays). Despite financial restrictions (low/middle income level), people are prepared to spend more money on "pleasure and luxury" (to compensate for their own social disadvantage). As a rule, however, this does not apply to sustainable consumption. Longevity, energy efficiency and environmental compatibility are not important purchasing arguments here (e.g. low willingness to invest in long-term energy and cost savings).

Strong focus on the present
The life maxim of the Sensation-Orientated is designed to satisfy short-term needs. People aim to live freely, spontaneously and unrestrictedly in the here and now. This strong focus on the present runs counter to the principles of sustainability: Changing one's own behaviour today for something that may happen in the future contradicts the basic attitude typical of this milieu (see Figure 15).

Trivialising the problem and delegating responsibility to third parties
In this planning-averse milieu, thinking in long-term time frames is alien to many people. Although they are well aware of environmental threats, they give little thought to the risks and consequences - the responsibility is seen as lying with third parties anyway. So people take things as they come, act unconcerned and trivialise the problems: The majority opinion is that a lot is being greatly exaggerated in the climate debate (see Figure 15).

Resistance to lifestyle changes, restrictive rules and renunciation
In the Sensation-Orientated milieu, the idea of sufficiency has very little appeal. They do not aim to restrict themselves or have to cut back - and certainly not to do without things that make life worth living (events, travelling, fast food, consumer electronics, etc.). However, sustainability is often associated with precisely this - with a lowering of living standards, restrictive rules, loss of comfort and sacrifice (e.g. giving up meat). It is therefore not surprising that many representatives of this milieu believe that it is simply (too) difficult to shape their own lives in an environmentally and climate-friendly way.

Social-ecological transformation as an imposition ("loss of joie de vivre")
In the Sensation-Oriented milieu, the envisaged climate neutrality is often seen as an imposition that is primarily associated with additional effort and a loss of joie de vivre. Many members of the milieu are downright annoyed by the "dictates of sustainability" (speed limits, flight shame, etc.): If there are even more regulations for climate and environmental protection, soon nothing at all can be done - is the widespread opinion. And as they assume that climate policies will ultimately put a strain on their own budget, reactance is often the means of choice: They are outraged regarding the opaque politics, consider "eco-egoists" to be unrealistic and do not aim to let anyone tell them how to live (susceptibility to populist narratives).

Little interest in consciously experiencing nature
In the Sensation-Orientated milieu, "classic nature experiences" such as hiking or gardening are usually uninteresting. The fact that consciously spending time in nature also promotes health and quality of life does not occur to many.

Resonance potential and strategic starting points for communication

Nature as an experience space that needs to be preserved
In this lifeworld, nature is primarily seen as a backdrop for sporting activities. Skateboarding, mountain biking and kitesurfing are the favourite pastimes of this milieu. Nature can and should be wild and alive - a space for experiences that needs to be preserved. If it is possible to describe nature as a space that is itself "exciting" or supports one's own experience-orientation, it is also viewed positively in this milieu.

Potential interest in sustainable consumption trends
Although environmental protection is not the primary motivation, but clearly a "second benefit", if sustainability is fun (at no extra cost) and perhaps even means prestige (ecological high-tech products, sustainable jewellery, etc.), members of this milieu are not reluctant to buy.

Fundamental openness to behavioural changes that do not require any effort in everyday life
If they can save costs, are not asked to do so and if environmentally friendly behaviour can be directly and "conveniently" integrated into everyday life, they are quite prepared to change their habits to a certain extent (sustainable behaviour must not be "annoying").

Fundamental willingness to get involved ("doer mentality")
A certain doer mentality is typical of the Sensation-Orientated milieu. If they feel directly affected, they want to have a say and be involved. Many could imagine actively participating in their

community's energy supply, e.g. by becoming a member of an energy cooperative. The prerequisite for this is that they meet like-minded people there and feel "welcome" or accepted (tackling instead of discussing at length).

3. Implications and recommendations for governance and public policy

As outlined above, the FES study found high approval ratings for a change in businesses and life-styles in all the countries analysed. Although surveys can only reflect reality in a distorted way and it must be assumed that some of the approval ratings are due to socially desirable answers (see Mummendey 1981), such surveys reveal that many people have a clear opinion, which may sooner or later be reflected in their behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is unmistakable that the "approaching" of socio-ecological change is leading to various feelings, reservations and counterreactions. These range from a general unease about transformation processes to fears of increasing ecologically motivated regulations, economic damage and high personal costs, as well as doubts about the feasibility of transformation, accusations of social disadvantage and growing concerns about the future.

But what exactly should be done now? Some recommendations are given below.

Shaping change in a socially just way

Many people are asking themselves how much ambitious climate protection will cost, and most of them are assuming: It will be expensive. Regarding all countries, 70% of respondents fear that a fundamental change in economic and lifestyle behaviour will be associated with high personal costs. The *Consumer Materialists* and the *Sensation Oriented* milieu are particularly affected. In these lower-income lifeworlds, many are concerned that they will not be able to bear the additional costs of more climate protection.
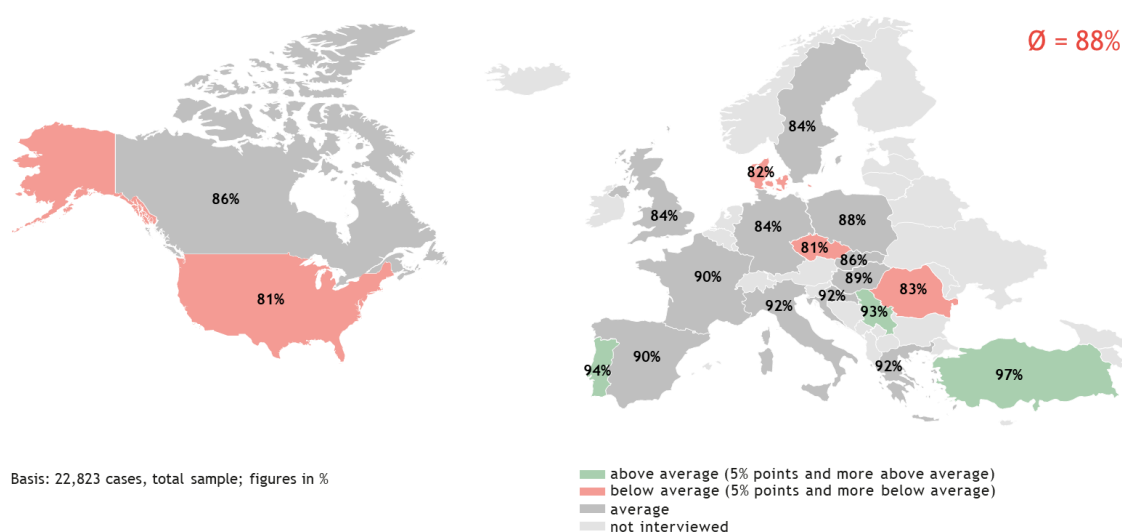
Addressing the question of costs is therefore a necessary prerequisite for encouraging those groups that are strongly distanced or even opposed to the transformation and express this through passive indifference (e.g. no/hardly any climate protection action) or even active opposition (prevention of energy transition projects due to "fundamental criticism", etc.) to be more resonant - or at least to limit their impact on the centre of society. This is because financial fears exist not only in the lower-status milieus, but also in the middle-status milieus. Here too, the transformation is perceived by many as a threat to their standard of living (see section 2.3). It is precisely where inequalities are concentrated (e.g. rural low or average earners in poorly insulated houses with oil heating) that the costs accumulate and resistance increases.[6] This makes the question of fair distribution of the burdens and costs of transformation even more important - especially as the privileged milieus cause significantly more emissions than the lower-status milieus, in which below-average incomes or thriftiness and modesty result in a smaller ecological footprint.

Thus, shaping a socially just climate policy is key to overcoming social barriers and minimising social conflicts. And there is also great support for this among the population. In all countries analysed, at least 81% of respondents would be willing to do more for environmental and climate protection if the resulting costs were distributed in a socially fair manner (see Figure 16). The milieu analysis shows relatively small differences. The range here is between 10 percentage points, with the highest approval ratings coming from the privileged milieu (e.g. Established: 91%). The socially advantaged milieus are therefore well aware that they have to bear the greater costs.

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[6] Populist organisations take up this defensive stance and use it for their own purposes to fundamentally de-legitimise climate policy (see Reusswig et al. 2021).

Figure 16: Importance of a socially just organisation of change

I would be prepared to do more to protect the environment and the climate if the costs arising from this were distributed in a socially fair manner. **„completely agree / somewhat agree"**

Ø = 88%

84%
82%
84%
84%
88%
86%
81%
90%
86%
89%
83%
92%
92%
93%
94%
90%
92%
97%
86%
81%

Basis: 22,823 cases, total sample; figures in %

- above average (5% points and more above average)
- below average (5% points and more below average)
- average
- not interviewed

Involving citizens more closely in change processes

As important as addressing the question of costs is, this is not enough. Non-monetary losses, such as changes that are perceived as lifestyle impositions (e.g. in the areas of mobility, housing, food), are often just as important for those affected (see Reusswig/Schleer 2021) - especially when the impression arises that external requirements are being (in short term) imposed on parts of the citizenship. A current example of this is the Europe-wide farmer protests against EU environmental regulations and in favour of protection against competition from third countries. In addition to actual concern, the subjective perception that governments have distanced themselves from the reality of life and the everyday problems of the population also plays a role here. The fact that this can cause emotions to "boil over" can also be seen from the results of the survey: 73% of respondents in all countries stated that they are annoyed when others want to tell them how to live.

To avoid such reactions, formats for improved social participation are needed: Whenever possible, citizens should be involved in decisions regarding the design of climate policy measures. Offering them more opportunities to help shape change processes increases both acceptance of ambitious climate protection and trust in the political system. It is not only the "outcome benefit" that is relevant here, sometimes the "process benefit" is even more important: the fundamental opportunity to contribute one's opinion means that decisions are often supported even if people have to (slightly) deviate from their own views (see Frey/Stutzer 2022). And even if many citizens feel no motivation to participate in decision-making processes themselves, they still want to have the justified feeling that their interests are being taken into account (e.g. through the establishment of citizens' councils).

Another factor is that more opportunities for involvement and participation can also break through the dilemma of avoiding responsibility. Regarding all countries, 65% of respondents can imagine being actively involved in shaping the energy supply in their community (e.g. by becoming a member of an energy cooperative). Such results show that there is a general willingness to participate. Considering that relatively few people are involved in such initiatives, there is still a lot of untapped potential.

Emphasise the common good and social benefits of a climate-neutral society

The dominant climate policy narrative, according to which emissions must be reduced because otherwise the world will be increasingly jeopardised, means that climate policy is primarily associated with sacrifice and the loss of familiar ways of life that are perceived as positive. Politicians can only counter this by emphasising the common good and social benefits of socio-ecological change. In other words: The social-ecological disadvantages of the fossil-fuelled way of life need a complementary narrative of the advantages of a climate-neutral society (Reusswig/Schleer 2021). After all, if the subjectively feared consequences of climate protection policies prevent broad social acceptance, then it is essential to address the social benefits. There are plenty of approaches for this (see Karlsson et al. 2020) and they can also be worked out for specific milieus: cleaner, greener and livelier city centres; higher quality of life through less stress, e-mobility and more local infrastructure instead of long commutes; nature as a cultural asset and as an opportunity to identify with one's homeland; inner-city green spaces as a contribution to climate adaptation and upgrading of urban real estate, etc. (see sections 2.1 to 2.4).
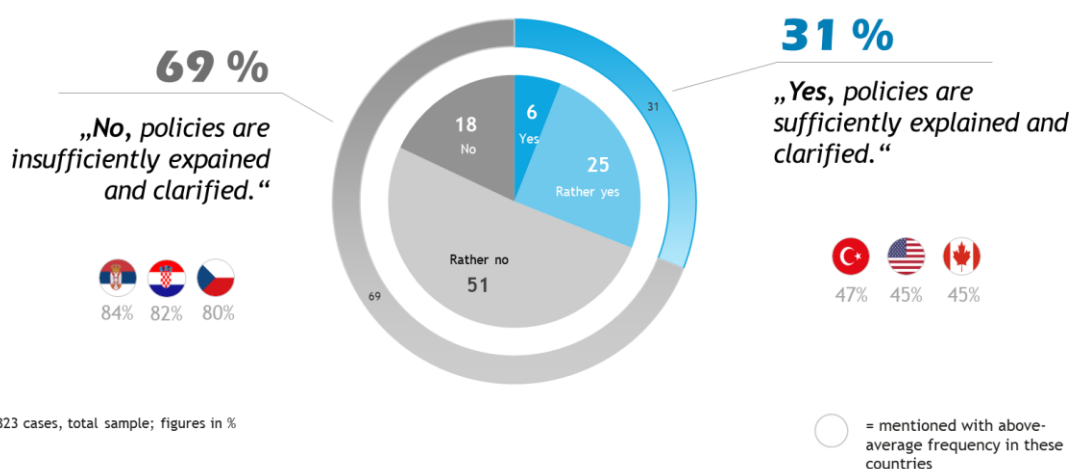
Explain climate policy measures adequately and communicate them clearly

The results of the multi-country survey show that many people would like more and, above all, clearer information regarding climate policies: Across countries, only 7% of respondents feel "very well" informed about policies for a shift towards a more climate and environmentally friendly economy, while a further 42% feel "somewhat" informed. All others (51%) expressed (significantly) less knowledge. The situation is similar when it comes to the question of which corresponding policies are sufficiently explained and clarified: In 16 out of a total of 19 countries, less than 10% answered "yes". Only in Canada (10%), the USA (14%) and Turkey (19%) is the figure slightly higher. The proportion of those who answer the question with "yes" or "somewhat yes" ranges from 16% (in Serbia) to 47% (in Turkey) - the average is 31% (see Figure 17).

All of this makes it clear that "proper" climate protection communication is of paramount importance. Most people are concerned about the consequences of climate change, and many want more to be done so that they can shape the future proactively (instead of having to act reactively). Politicians should therefore not try to minimise the challenge of "climate neutrality" but, on the contrary, communicate the size and duration of the task - *but* without using the narrative of "radical" change: reservations and fears among the population emerge above all when the impression arises that truths are not being spoken, that there is a lack of concepts for overcoming the problems and when a change in structures is to take place in the short term and seemingly without consideration for the demands of everyday life. In order to eliminate information deficits and avoid uncertainty, climate policies must be explained in an understandable way, purposes and objectives communicated and both effects and successes demonstrated.

Figure 17: Knowledge regarding climate policies

In your opinion, are political measures to switch to a more climate and environmentally-friendly economy sufficiently explained and clarified?

69 %

„*No,* policies are insufficiently expained and clarified."

84% 82% 80%

18
No

6
Yes

25
Rather yes

Rather no
51

69

31 %

„*Yes,* policies are sufficiently explained and clarified."

47% 45% 45%

31

Basis: 22.823 cases, total sample; figures in %

◯ = mentioned with above-average frequency in these countries

Reaching the modern middle class of society

People live in social collectives that can strongly influence and change their attitudes and behaviour: By copying and comparing, imitating and identifying, individuals develop certain patterns of behaviour that express a personal connection with the community. This creates a sense of togetherness, a feeling of commitment to shared values (see Schleer 2014). However, majorities in the population are not required to set social change processes in motion. For the "tipping point", a committed, large subgroup that is credible and, above all, visibly in favour of change is sufficient (see e.g. Centola et al. 2018 and Gladwell 2006). Accordingly, the success of the transformation towards climate-neutral societies depends largely on winning over the driver and supporter milieus for concrete climate policies. Although there is broad consensus among these groups on fundamental issues, opinions regarding the pace and concrete measures can differ widely (see sections 2.1 and 2.2). Depending on the (interest) situation, criticism is voiced, for example regarding deficits in implementation and a lack of consistency (e.g. insufficient consideration of nature conservation issues). However, people often act on their own initiative, e.g. through personal, corporate or municipal initiatives. The driver milieus of the *Intellectuals* and *Progressive Realists* are particularly willing to change. With their activities, both in the private and public sphere, they have the potential to influence the supporter milieus, as they have in common the desire to take on a pioneering role in society - the *Established* as a responsible performance elite, the *Performers* as progress-oriented "early adopters" and the *Cosmopolitan Avantgarde* as ambitious creative trendsetters.[7]

Nevertheless, the transformation cannot be successful as an "elite project". To minimise resistance and counterreactions, it needs more comprehensive support in society. The *Adaptive Navigator* milieu has a central role to play here (see also Barth/Molina 2023 and Borgstedt 2023). This milieu is open-minded, determined, well-educated, flexible, willing to adapt, modern and generally open to new things - and therefore "usually" easy to reach for the goal of a sustainable society. If we succeed in convincing the modern middle class of concrete measures, this will also have an impact on

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[7] Nonetheless, in the end there will be no getting around the need to address the large ecological footprints of high-status social milieus; they cannot be approached solely in terms of their positive ecological aspects without becoming untrustworthy. If the transition to climate neutrality inevitably involves a moment of renunciation (see Lepenies 2022), then it is precisely the high-status milieus that will have to do without. It will therefore also be important to develop a civil culture of conflict and debate. This must be wrested from populism, which in reality undermines it.

the adjacent milieus (especially the Conventional Mainstream, for whom the Adaptive Navigators are important sources of orientation). However, despite being fundamentally open to climate issues, the young modern middle class currently sees less the social advantages of a sustainable society and more the personal disadvantages of the impending change. For climate policy, this means: trade-off perceptions (e.g. "climate protection leads to economic damage and jeopardises jobs") must be reduced, doubts about the feasibility of necessary measures must be dispelled and - in addition to the public welfare aspects (see above) - direct additional personal benefits must also be emphasised (efficiency, modernisation and cost arguments such as bonus points for using public transport or inexpensive rental bikes, see section 2.3).

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