

Cohesive welfare states

Welfare states as destructors and producers of social cohesion between ethnic groups

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Welfare states and ethnic diversity are two concepts that are often portrayed as opposites (e.g. the Allesina 2001 debate). Just compare the US and Europe. In the US, rudimentary welfare states seem to be a condition to absorb large numbers of immigrants without significant problems. In Europe, comprehensive welfare states block the integration of migrants and their children. This paper not only questions whether this debate is fruitful, it stresses another question: ‘which welfare state logics undermine and which produce social cohesion between groups’. Although the paper discusses sociological theories (such as Putnam 2006), the main – theoretical - contribution is to integrate social psychological literature (e.g. Tajfel 1970, Pettigrew 2001) in welfare state analyses. The Netherlands will be the case used. We saw a growing (political) polarisation between native Dutch and the (children of) migrants in this country. How did the Dutch welfare state contribute to this polarisation? And what kind of welfare state we need to produce rather than destruct social cohesion between ethnic diverse groups?