

Welfare values and individualisation

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to perform a rare empirical test of the theories of the impact of individualisation on the future of the welfare state.

One claim in theories of radical modernisation as put forward among others by Giddens is that individualisation will undermine the solidaristic foundation of the welfare state. This will emerge because the well educated part of the population will become more directed to international based values as opposed to the values of their nation state. They will pursue an international career and even though they might still be working in their country of origin they will be in intense contact with highly educated people from other countries. The well educated elite will develop values based on individualisation and move away from the solidarity on which the development of the nation based welfare states has been based.

If this is true the well educated elite of the nation states of Europe will in a higher degree share values with each other than with their less well educated countrymen and women – and as a consequence they will in the future be less willing to take part in the solidaristic financing of the welfare state.

Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) this paper perform an empirical test of this.

ESS contains data from more than 20 European countries. Based on the questions in the ESS it is possible to create a ‘European Value Map’ based on two dimensions: The individual possibilities & behaviourism in society.

This was done in ‘European Value Map’ by Hans Bay in 2004. This analysis showed a clustering of countries which in many ways was similar to the clustering used in welfare state theory by e.g. Esping Andersen.

The purpose of the analysis in this paper is to take the 2004 analysis one step further. Now the population in each country will be divided into two groups based on education attainment – elite and non-elite. Using the results from the 2004 analysis – i.e. the ranking of the total population in each country in the European value map - as the benchmark the thesis of the paper is the as follows: The elite in Europe will detach themselves from their national origin in relations to values and have more in common with each other irrespective of country of origin than with their fellow non-elite countrymen/women.

If this thesis is confirmed it will be strongly in support of the individualisation thesis of the theories of radical modernisation.