

Introduction: Values, Modernisation and Social Change in Europe

This thematic issue deals with the subject of values and value change. The concept of 'value change' has come to be widely employed by sociologists interested in 'social change' and 'modernisation'. The idea introduced by Ronald Inglehart [1977] that our values are shifting in response to dynamic economic and social development has become a topic of research in many countries.

Inquiring into people's values, value priorities, and especially the role of values in social conduct has become an important part of the sociological endeavour to understand human behaviour and the functioning of human societies. Personal values and value priorities have been described as a 'dominating force in life' [Allport 1961: 543] because they direct all of a person's activity towards their pursuit. In Rokeach's [1973] classic conceptualisation of values, they are the cognitive representations of human needs, and as such, they are the standards that rule and influence behaviour, attitudes, and assessments. The function of values – as *dispositions towards a certain behaviour or its cause* – has led many sociologists to view values as the crucial factor in understanding and predicting attitudinal and behavioural decisions and as the key to interpreting social, economic, and political change [e.g. Inglehart 1990, 1997].

In such a context, sociologists treat personal values as social facts that serve as a regulatory mechanism of people's behaviour, which implies a causal link. This determination of behaviour by values cannot be taken, however, in absolute terms, because sociologists are well aware of the fact that people's values are influenced by the social environment they live in, or, more specifically, by the culture and its norms, patterns, and rules. These cultural values are anchored in past social and historical evolution (they are path dependent) creating the framework of behavioural constraints and opportunities. From an analytical point of view, people's values can be treated as an independent variable, because of their potential to shape the political, economic, and institutional structures of society, but also as a dependent one, in that they in turn are shaped by the cultural and socioeconomic milieu. Cultural and personal values are not static entities. They evolve, develop, and change.

Whatever the direction of this causal link, one thing is evident, which is that values are a crucial part of the lives of individuals and society. From a sociological perspective, they rank among the fundamental components of the social structure. Data on values and their knowledge – especially in longitudinal time series – can serve as important predictors of the behaviour of different social groups and sub-populations. Such knowledge is highly important, especially in the societies that experienced the transformation process from totalitarian communism to democracy. The success of their social change has depended heavily

not only on economic advancement, but also on a culture shift at both the societal and the individual levels.

Nowadays researchers studying value changes are lucky because they have an enormous amount of empirical data at their disposal. Thanks to the European Values Study (EVS), a unique international comparative project that started in 1981,¹ and its younger cousin, the World Values Survey (WVS)², researchers can analyse large data sets containing information from repeated cross-sectional surveys that are now conducted in dozens of countries and span a period of more than 36 years (the last wave of the EVS was carried out in 2017 in 35 European countries).

This thematic issue is an example of various approaches towards values and value change research. All six thematic papers are empirical analyses based on EVS data (one also uses the WVS data set) covering different periods of time³ and comparing different countries. Unfortunately, at the time of writing (2019) not all the data from the countries that participated in the last EVS wave (2017) were available, but this fact should not detract from the importance and the quality of the results.⁴

The issue is structured as follows.

In the first paper entitled 'Value Modernisation in Central and Eastern European Countries: How Does Inglehart's Theory Work?', Beatrice Chromková Manea and Ladislav Rabušic study the effects of modernisation and intergenerational population change on value structures as outlined by Inglehart and other authors. They examine whether value shifts in Central and East European countries (CEE) reflect their dynamic modernisation path and whether these shifts have replicated the trends observed in Western European countries. In the first part, they explore whether the value shift has moved in the assumed direction and whether it has copied trends in Western European countries. They then look at different generations to determine whether the younger generations of CEE countries that grew up after 1989, in a time of rapid economic and political changes, show higher levels of post-materialist and post-modern values than the generations socialised and raised during the communist regime. They compare five CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Romania – with four Western European countries – Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden – using the four waves of the EVS carried out between 1990/91 and

¹ The EVS is a quantitative project using surveys as the mode of data collection. It is repeated every nine years. Five waves have been carried out to date: 1981, 1990/1991, 1999, 2008, and 2017.

² See the EVS at <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>, and the WVS at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.

³ Some authors could not use data from all the waves because some of the questionnaire items relevant for their analysis were not included in every wave.

⁴ The integrated 2017 data set was fully released on 20 October 2020.

2017. The results are mixed. With respect to the effect of the intergenerational population change on cultural modernisation, they found differences in values between the generations: older generations have always been more traditional than younger ones, and not only in the CEE countries, as the same trend has been recorded in Western countries. The assumption that considerable differences in attitudes and values were found between East and West in 1991 was confirmed. On the other hand, the assumption that by 2017 the value differences between the Eastern and Western European countries would have decreased and that there would be some value convergence was not completely confirmed, although in the CEE countries a moderate increase in post-materialism was observed between 1991 and 2017, but it was still much lower than in the Western countries, where the trend in the proportion of post-materialists was unstable between 1991 and 2017 and the share of post-materialists – with the exception of the Netherlands – remained essentially the same. They conclude that even though the data analysed cover a quarter of a century, it seems that this is not a long enough period for the value structures of the former communist and the traditionally democratic countries to grow closer together.

The perspective of modernisation theory is also the background of the next paper, 'The Work Ethic and Social Change in the Czech Republic and Slovakia – a Modernisation Theory Perspective', by Michal Kozák. Using the last three waves of EVS data (1999–2017), the author compares trends in the work ethic in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and examines to what extent the work ethic in those two culturally similar societies changed throughout the years of growing material prosperity. The study applies the linear decomposition technique together with multivariate statistical analysis. It has two goals. First, by means of exploratory analysis, it compares trends in the work ethic in the two societies and provides possible explanations for the observed differences. Second, it investigates whether the work ethic in the two countries has changed in line with the expectations of modernisation theory, that is whether it has declined proportionally to growing material prosperity and whether the decline has been driven primarily by the intergenerational replacement of the population. The results show that, even though the work ethic decreased in Czech Republic and increased in Slovakia, intergenerational population replacement contributed to its weakening in both countries. However, historical differences in socioeconomic development levels in conjunction with the different pace of population replacement were the main factors behind why population replacement dominated the overall trend in the Czech Republic but not in Slovakia. Finally, the author presents more comparative evidence in favour of modernisation theory, suggesting that population replacement universally contributed to a decrease in the work ethic in all European countries with comparable EVS data.

One aspect of modernisation theory, namely post-materialism, is at the centre of the third article, by Barbora Hubatková and Tomáš Doseděl, entitled 'The Expansion of Higher Education and Post-Materialistic Attitudes to Work in Eu-

rope: Evidence from the European Values Study'. Here the authors inquire into (i) whether there is an association between higher education and post-materialistic work-values if so how strong it is and (ii) to what extent this assumed link has been affected by the expansion of tertiary education. In this context they ask two research questions: first, whether higher-educated individuals – when compared to their lower-educated counterparts – ascribe less importance to the materialistic characteristics of jobs and greater importance to the non-materialistic characteristics; and second, whether this is still the case when the share of higher educated individuals in the labour market increases. For the purpose of their analysis they had to analyse the data on 28 countries from the 1990/91, 1999, and 2008 waves of the EVS in order to have a sufficient number of participating countries that included the battery of questions on job aspects in their surveys. The findings show that the link between higher education and post-materialism observed in other studies also applies to work values. Higher-educated Europeans were both more post-materialistic and less materialistic in their work orientations than their lower-educated counterparts. This means that they more often ascribed importance to those characteristics of work that can be described as intrinsic and, at the same time, assigned somewhat less importance to aspects of work such as pay, hours, or pressure. This association was, however, weakened by tertiary expansion. At the same time, work-related post-materialism declined with the increasing share of university-educated individuals in the working-age population. Nevertheless, so did work-related materialism, but only until the expansion of higher education reached 25%, after which point it gradually increased. The authors suggest that such development stems, at least partially, from the changing position of higher-educated workers in the labour market.

The fourth paper in this thematic collection, 'The Economy and Governance as Determinants of Political Trust in Europe: An Analysis of the European Values Study and World Values Survey, 1990–2019', by Marta Kołczyńska deals with one important aspect of the legitimacy of political systems, namely political trust. The author examines economic performance and the quality of governance as determinants of political trust in European countries. It uses not only EVS data, but also data from the World Values Survey, which cover 42 European countries. In terms of descriptive trends, the author finds that while political trust has remained relatively stable in much of Western Europe over the last 30 years, Central and Eastern European countries experienced greater volatility in political trust that included both substantial increases (e.g. in Estonia) and considerable declines (e.g. in Croatia). Linking political trust to economic performance and quality of governance, the paper addresses three research questions: (i) Is political trust associated with economic performance and quality of governance? (ii) Is this link due to cross-national differences or over-time changes in performance and governance? (iii) How do this link differ between European regions. The results provide evidence of links between economic performance – economic development and unemployment – and political trust in the expected directions.

Moreover, it seems that countries with less corruption tend to enjoy a higher level of political trust. However, the author warns that the effects on trust depend on the corruption indicator being used. Interestingly, the author finds a negative association between political trust and democracy in Central Europe, where trust declined while democracy was improving. On the other hand, among the non-EU countries, for example in Belarus and Russia, trust was increasing as democracy was deteriorating. These examples, according to the author, question the existence of an unconditional link between political trust and democratic legitimacy, with overall stability and a satisfactory economic situation being potential conditions in which the trust–democracy link may emerge.

In the next paper, 'Attitudes towards Life and Death in Europe: A Comparative Analysis', by Edurne Bartolome Peral and Lluís Coromina Soler, we turn to the questions of life and death. The authors analyse factors explaining citizens' attitudes towards in-vitro fertilisation, abortion, and euthanasia. The main aim of their study is to explore whether these attitudes towards what they call beginning- and end-of-life issues are comparable across countries as a meaningful construct, and how these attitudes evolve over time. The second aim is to analyse the effects of selected value orientations and sociodemographic determinants on latent-variable attitudes towards beginning- and end-of-life issues, across countries and over time. The answers were sought in the EVS 2008 and 2017 datasets on Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Russia. The results indicate that in all the observed countries the degree of acceptance (tolerance) of these practices has been growing, although significant differences were found in the value orientation effects and respondents' background variables. After testing for measurement invariance and conducting multi-group confirmatory factor analyses across countries and across waves, the authors conclude that age and religiosity, alongside other sociodemographic variables, are important explanatory factors in attitudes towards life and death issues in all the countries examined. The effects of value orientations show relevant explanatory effects on such attitudes, although we find variations across societies.

In the last paper, 'Trends in Divorce Acceptance and Its Correlates across European Countries', Petr Fučík deals with the topic of divorce. He examines whether and to what extent the acceptance of divorce has changed in European countries in recent decades. First, the author explores the acceptance of divorce trends in various European societies between 1981 (1991) and 2017 and these trends are examined in relation to demographic divorce rates. Second, he analyses the correlates of divorce acceptance and its changes over time at the individual level. Third, he looks at the consistency of divorce acceptance with attitudes towards other types of social actions indicative of non-traditional family behaviour (homosexuality, abortion, casual sex, artificial insemination) and attitudes towards gender roles. The results show that: (i) divorce acceptance has been rising over time in all the countries studied with only a few exceptions. From a regional point of view, the increase in divorce acceptance is weakest in the

post-Soviet countries, modest in the post-communist countries, and strongest in other European countries. There is also a connection between divorce acceptance and a country's divorce rates, but it is stronger in Western countries than in the Eastern ones; (ii) divorce acceptance correlates on an individual level with the age, education, and religion, but surprisingly there is only small difference between men and women; (iii) a considerable level of consistency within the cluster of attitudes indicating non-traditional family behaviour was found, as well as a significant association between the prevalence of egalitarian gender-role attitudes and divorce acceptance.

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