

# Varieties of Ideology in European Welfare State

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In my paper, I look at how Western welfare states are changing over time in their ideological premises and in what approach and efficiency they have in reducing economic inequalities. I contend that the difference in how economic inequalities and in the size of the welfare state derives from the different interpretation that each State has regarding the principle of equality and the place that the latter has in the hierarchy of values. Using the thought of the major political and economic thinkers on equality as a norm and as a policy, I propose a new sociological paradigm to interpret and classify the welfare states in Europe's industrialized democracies in contemporary times (Varieties of Equality), putting forward three ideal-types of equality of reference that welfare states refer to in their political economy and checking how these clusters behave in the reduction of economic inequality and in terms of their political and ideological context.

In the paper, I propose an innovative way to measure the ideological stance of welfare states, based on what I call the normative context of social justice. I define the concept as the vector of axiological preferences that defines the adherence of an economic and political democratic system to a variety of equality. Subsequently, I construct my original indicators of political polarization, from data that I have collected and manipulated from the Comparative Manifesto Project Database (CMP)<sup>1</sup>.

The database codifies the share of the political attention that each party of any industrialized country gives to ideas, policies and concerns in their communication platforms. The unit of account to measure the frequency to certain policy areas is the number of quasi-sentences spent to describe its support or opposition to it, and then divided by the total words of the party program. A quasi sentence is an argument, or the verbal expression of one political idea or issue (Mikhaylov and Benoit, 2007, p.2). I have associated the various policy categories of the manifesto to four different indicators, which form two axes of the ideological plane: the freedom-equality (F-E) axis and individualismholism one (I-H). To obtain the scores of the four values composing the axis, Liberty, Equality, Individualism and Holism.

By means of the Pierson's correlation formula and standard OLS techniques, I study the

relation between economic inequality variables (Gini income and wealth pre and post tax) and the proposed ideological indicators to offer most complete overview of the focal variability of equality and the normative context of social justice for the Eurozone, European and Industrialized welfare

states.

I have found, for all groups, that:

(a) higher commitment in transfers generally yields to above-average redistribution, although it

does not predict redistributive efficiency.

(b) A Libertarian variety of equality which features lower-than-average commitment to transfers,

lower-than average redistribution and lower-than average redistributive efficiency usually correlates

with states that have a holist axiological preference.

(c) A Functional or Liberal-Egalitarian variety of equality, both featuring above average

redistribution, but the first having above-average redistributive efficiency and the second having

above-average commitment to transfers, tend to correlate with Individualist collective preferences.

I conclude by discussing how the latter findings echo the Popperian argument that individualism is

an instrument of modernity.