

ESPAnet Annual Conference 2010

Stream 3: Comparative methodology. Neglected issues and innovative methods: Identifying best practice

**Identifying welfare policy patterns by means of disaggregated spending structure:
An application for 27 European countries**

Abstract

Comparing welfare policy patterns over time and across countries in a comprehensive quantitative manner requires not only underlying theoretical concepts which are suited for travelling across countries, but also necessarily valid data. The lack of comparable and conceptually substantiated time series data on welfare policies and institutions is still an Achilles' heel of comparative analyses, which has been addressed repeatedly in reference to the "dependent variable problem" in the past. Yet most of the cross-country comparisons (especially those with a pooled time-series cross-section design) either still make use of aggregate social spending or limit the analytical scope to countries for which more sophisticated data like welfare state generosity is available, i.e. the OECD countries.

A recent approach to address this problem is to use disaggregated social expenditure data for identifying patterns of welfare policies. This paper first discusses advantages and shortcomings of concepts in this tradition. Drawing on recent approaches utilizing disaggregated spending data, it then develops an integrated analytical concept and illustrates how the ESSPROS data provided by Eurostat instead of OECD SOCX can be adopted for the operationalization. Using ESSPROS data enables us to integrate the new Central and Eastern European (CEE) member states of the European Union (EU) in the corpus of comparative welfare state typologies – an attempt which has gained little methodologically substantiated attention in comparative quantitative studies so far. A hierarchical cluster analysis of 28 European countries is finally performed in order to provide insight into whether patterns of spending result in clusters similar to the ones identified within the "welfare regime" framework and how the CEE countries fit into it.

Kati Kuitto
Department of Political Science
University of Greifswald
Baderstr. 6/7
D-17489 Greifswald
Germany
Tel. +49 3834 863156
E-Mail: kuitto@uni-greifswald.de
Web: <http://welfare.ipk.uni-greifswald.de>