

Title: Dissatisfied Democrats, Policy Feedback, and European Welfare States, 1976-2001

Abstract

Are citizens' level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy affected by welfare state-related policies and outcomes? Three-level analyses of Eurobarometer surveys from three decades suggest that generosity in unemployment benefits (but not pensions, sick pay, or income inequality) helps explain over-time within-country variation in satisfaction with democracy. This effect is relatively stable across individuals with different interests and values, but is conditioned by unemployment rates. Specifically, the results support a "visible costs hypothesis" predicting weaker generosity effects when more people are out of work. In conclusion, the long-term rise in unemployment in Western Europe may have assisted in the birth of dissatisfied democrats directly, as well as indirectly by disarming the previously legitimizing force of unemployment protection policies.

Dr. Staffan Kumlin
Docent / Associate Professor
Dept. of Political Science, University of Gothenburg
Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS), Uppsala
www.pol.gu.se/personal/staffankumlin

2009-10: visiting scholar at Institute for Social Research, Oslo

Postal address: Institute for Social Research,
PO Box 3233 Elisenberg, N-0208 Oslo, Norway
email: staffan.kumlin@pol.gu.se
office: +4723086118
mobile: +4747286824