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The Secularization Theory – not
disconfirmed, yet rarely tested

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„Secularization theory has been effectively falsified“, Berger

What did he expect?

- What is secularization?
- What is proposed by secularization theory?

Only if these questions have been answered, one can assess falsification.

1 what is meant by the concept secularization and what secularization theory contends, in order to review

2 how and with what success secularization theory has been examined up to now.

Overview

1 Secularization between concept and theory

1.1 The concept secularization as a tendency proposition

1.2 Three steps form a tendency proposition to a theory

2 Theory of Secularization: Cross-sectional and longitudinal designs in Macro and Multi-level analyses

2.1 Cross-sectional macro analysis

2.2 Cross-sectional Multi-level Analyses

2.3 Longitudinal Macro Analyses

2.4 Longitudinal Multi-level Analyses

3 Summary and Conclusion

1 Secularization

between concept and theory

1.1 The concept secularization as a tendency proposition

Decrease of Christian religiosity *in European societies and their former colonies*, in brief: *in Western countries*

Definition of a tendency proposition refers

- not only to *objects*
- but also to *a starting point and a direction*

Specifically “secularization”

- define *religion and religiosity* and
- identify a *trigger* which has elicited the tendency at a *certain time point*.

Religion und religiosity

Religions = world interpretations, as are world views, philosophies or ideologies, answer religious question of wherefrom and whereto of life and world

Religions as against other world interpretations:

- *cognitively*, do not justify their propositions naturally through knowledge and experience, but (1) super-naturally, through *belief*
- *socially*, reinforce their propositions through exchange of arguments, AND (2) through *practice* of rites (3) in *community* of those which share supernatural justifications.

Religiosity = subjective appropriation of religion, defined by same specifics:

- (3) *belonging* to a community
- (2) *practice* of its rites, and
- (1) *belief* in its propositions

According to these definitions

- *religion vs. secular, religiosity vs. secularity*
- negative development of religiosity = secularization.

Secularization opens new form: diffuse religiosity

- moves away from church religion and focuses on the person
- encompasses belonging, practice, belief and without accepting. Contrast to concrete religiosity
- four concepts
 - self-ascribed religiosity
 - self-ascribed spirituality
 - importance of God in one's life
 - importance of religion as a life domain.

Trigger of negative tendency: separation between religious and secular justifications of social order

Population at large – as against elites – free to live without following commandments and using services of church

Religiosity or secularity option

- not until modern age only (except Japan, Korea and Taiwan) in countries formed by Christianity
- Secular justification of social order after religious wars of 16th and 17th centuries, replacement of *political theology* of medieval Christianity through a *secular theory* of social life. Separation between religious and secular justifications of social order

Thus: Secularization = proposition of a negative tendency about the development of religiosity in Western, societies not dominated by religion *since the separation of a secular from the religious order.*

... and starting point: state monopoly for legal notification of life transitions

Church to state

- Churches lost monopoly for *marriage* ceremonies
- State legalized *divorce* and
- took over *birth* registration

option between planning lives under guidance by or independently from churches, model for

option between belief and unbelief, observance and non-observance

in most European nations not before end of 19th century

Starting point not before reformation in Golden Age of Christianity, Middle Ages

- step within the "secularization of law"
- *authority loss of churches over conduct of life.*
- in most European countries after industrialization, urbanization and the introduction of a democratic constitution
- when life without churches became thinkable, and then also feasible for many

*1.2 Three steps form a tendency
proposition to a theory*

(1) Goal variable:

Subsuming hypothetical trends with a common starting point under a development

concept and indicators = *development and trends.*

subsume trends under development according to a hypothesis *in advance*

Development secularization

- trends in *all dimensions* of religiosity and their indicators
- since emergence of state monopolies on legal regulation of biographical transitions.

*(2) Independent Variables:
Differentiation and Pluralization*

Time and place *proper names*, single case

Class of cases defined by *analytical properties*

Replacing proper names by properties

requires explicit hypotheses about causes

Social differentiation

distribution of the tasks necessary for a society's maintenance among its members

The more differentiated a society

- the richer it becomes, such that men are able to plan and govern their lives more easily and the need to explain life through powers beyond decreases
- the more life is split up into different areas

Social differentiation enlarges life chances by

- providing more resources and
- opening up more life domains.

Causal sequence

differentiation-pluralization-secularization

Increasingly richer and broader life through lens of world-view, depends on

- life conditions during formative years of youth, wealth of society resulting from social differentiation
- experiences during life resulting from opportunities and character of a person

Both produce social change; but the latter independent from the former.

Impact of social differentiation upon secularization filtered by world-views which may change in accord with it

- strong when world-views are homogeneous and have no competitors
- weak when they are heterogeneous and have many competitors

Cultural pluralization second hypothetical cause

- independent from first cause and more closely related to ultimate effect

Causal sequence differentiation-pluralization-secularization

Differentiation and pluralization: complementary and exhaustive

Medium of differentiation = structure of roles in society.
Geared to and often grants the natural and economic reproduction of a society.

Medium of pluralization = interpretations of world and life which everybody takes over from tradition or derives from encounters with others

Located on social layers in general, such that secularization theory implicitly contends

- all social developments affecting personal religiosity are facets of differentiation or pluralization and
- both together explain it *exhaustively*.

Two causal hypotheses

- Differentiation hypothesis: The further *social differentiation* advances, the greater will be cultural pluralization.
 - *For:* The more life domains co-exist in a society and the more finely they are divided within themselves, the more heterogeneous the principles according to which they are regulated must become.
- Pluralization hypothesis: The further *cultural pluralization* advances, the greater the opportunities for everybody to distance oneself from the handed-down religion and the stronger will be the secularization in the society at large.
 - *For:* As one experiences more and more formerly unknown world-views one tends to question and possibly give up the original one.

Secularization, individualization and market theory

Differentiation and pluralization causes of religiosity in

- secularization theory as well as
- individualization theory and religious market theory.

Yet latter two depart from first insofar as they

- define the ultimate step of causal chain more broadly and
- justify impact of pluralization differently.

Individualization theory

Because pluralization *individualizes* religion, it

- reduces belief in *Christian* dogma and observance of church practices, *negative*
- increases *non-Christian alternative "individualized"* religiosity, *positive*.

For: Everybody is motivated by experiences of diversity to question one's handed-down world-view; yet everybody needs some world-view as well such that not all abandon their handed-down world-view, but many mix tradition and novelty according to their own insight.

Negative effect in accordance with,

Positive effect contradicts secularization theory.

Religious market theory

highlights a new mechanism: competition, pluralization strengthens religion. *Vitalization hypothesis*, opposite to pluralization hypothesis

For: Diversity incites adherents of all competing supplies to more firmly and openly believe and to more intensely practice.

Remains within causal sequence. But specifies two positive effects:

- Christian church religiosity AND
 - alternative religiosity
- should increase

Common structure of the three theories

Consent: first two members of the sequence

Dissent: range of third member and impact of second on third

Share macro-social perspective on the religious development

Can be *modified* in same manner:

- first two members of the sequence can be set side by side as causes of equal rank; causal sequence reduced to two levels
- causality from differentiation to pluralization becomes a correlation
- differentiation hypothesis is split up into two hypotheses on
 - positive correlation between differentiation and pluralization and
 - positive impact of differentiation on secularization

Common structure remains:

- three concepts
- two hypotheses, differentiation hypothesis can be split up

(3) Multi-level Model: Minimal Program of Independent Micro-variables and Cohort succession hypothesis

Causal sequence proceeds unevenly on micro and macro level:

- differentiation and pluralization on macro level only
- secularization reflection of micro decisions onto macro level.

Multi-level model from macro to micro level and back again
required

- impact of macro conditions on micro causes
- impact of micro causes on micro effects, and
- aggregation of micro to macro goal variables

Aggregation conditioned by micro causes of religiosity.

Micro theory of religiosity needed, in none of the three theories.

Minimal program of micro causes of religiosity

Two perspectives

- *during socialization* religiosity results *positively* from religious *imprinting* and *negatively* from *reflexivity* of the adolescent
- *life stages* lower or increase natural self-concern of every man and move religious question into foreground or background of consciousness

Micro-Indicators from socio-demographic survey questions

- *Belonging to a denomination* indicator of imprinting at home and at school. MUST be controlled in order not to over-estimate other causes which correlate with them. Retrospective question about *religious upbringing during youth*

- Antagonist: reflexivity of the adolescent: *educational level*

- Parenthood and – indirectly – partnership reduce self-concern; children transgress life horizon of parents, remind them on their death.

- Being employed challenges achievement motives, stresses self-concern.

Secularization longitudinal concept: birth cohort MUST be controlled

Cohort succession and cohort aging

Imprinting during youth, succession produces
change

Richer societies, decreasing religious imprinting

Aging during life cycle, uniformity produces
stability

death approaches, religiosity increases

None of three theories explicate either
hypothesis, reconstruction of IMPLIED
hypotheses ex post

Cohort hypotheses in the three theories

Secularization theory: decrease of religiosity, two propositions:

- (1) religiosity starts on a lower level with each younger cohort
- (2) religiosity remains constant within cohorts. No cohort aging.

Negative cohort succession hypotheses:

Individualization theory: decrease of Christian religiosity

Negative cohort succession hypothesis for Christian religiosity

Increase of individualized religiosity, inverts sign of pluralization hypothesis. Two consequences:

- (1) if pluralization as a macro tendency increases religiosity, cohort aging no longer excluded, but part of macro tendency of increasing religiosity
- (2) Positive tendency rests on *positive cohort succession*.

Positive cohort succession hypothesis for individualized religiosity

Market theory: inverts sign of pluralization hypothesis throughout

Positive cohort succession hypothesis for any form of religiosity

Summary steps (1)-(3): Common structure of theories

- (1) definition of secularization restricted substantively to *Western, not religiously dominated national societies*, located in time *after authority loss of churches*, option between religiosity and secularity for population at large
- (2) all social determinants of secularization = *differentiation* and *pluralization*
- (3) *minimal program of independent micro-variables of religiosity* and a hypothesis on the effect of *cohort succession* on religiosity indispensable

Share

- causal sequence differentiation-pluralization-secularization
- hypothesis of a positive impact of differentiation on pluralization

Differ

- extension of object range from Christian church religiosity to alternative religiosity
- sign of pluralization hypothesis
- sign of implied cohort succession hypothesis.

Summary of each theory

Secularization theory

- restricts its prediction to the decrease of Christian church religiosity
- assumes a negative effect of pluralization on religiosity and implies a negative cohort succession hypothesis:
 - *Christian church* religiosity *decreases* monotonously with pluralization and with younger cohorts.

Individualization theory

- treats Christian church *and* alternative religiosity.
- Prediction as in secularization theory for former. For latter sign of pluralization and the cohort succession hypotheses switch:
 - *Alternative* religiosity *increases* monotonously with pluralization and with younger cohorts.

Market theory

- Treats Christian church *and* alternative religiosity
- switches sign of pluralization and cohort succession hypothesis for both:
 - *Every form* of religiosity monotonously *increases* with pluralization and with younger cohorts.

The secularization theory

encompasses exactly three hypotheses

- *the* differentiation hypothesis
- *a* pluralization hypothesis
- *a* cohort succession hypothesis

presupposes

- a minimal program of micro-determinants of religiosity

2 Theory of Secularization:

Cross-sectional and longitudinal
designs
in Macro and Multi-level analyses

Tendency of secularization: demonstrated massively. Yet

Explanations of tendency by theory: only a few

- None follows the causal sequence as a temporal one, only two causal levels.
- Individualization theory nowhere examined simultaneously in its positive and negative facet, only secularization and market theory

Review in two dimensions

- *data base*, from cross-sections to longitudinal designs - progress
- *statistical analysis procedures* handling imbalance of secularization theory: From macro-analysis to multi-level analysis - progress

Crossing *data base* and *analysis procedure*, four forms:

- 2.1 Cross-sectional macro analysis
- 2.2 Cross sectional multi-level analysis
- 2.3 Longitudinal macro analysis
- 2.4 Longitudinal multi-level analysis.

Progress in both dimensions = Rank order

2.1 Cross-sectional macro analysis

Social differentiation:
socio-economic development, negative with religion

70 countries of all continents:

- HDI, degree of alphabetization, level of schooling, access to mass media -.53 to -.45 with average of church attendance and prayer

21 post-industrial societies only:

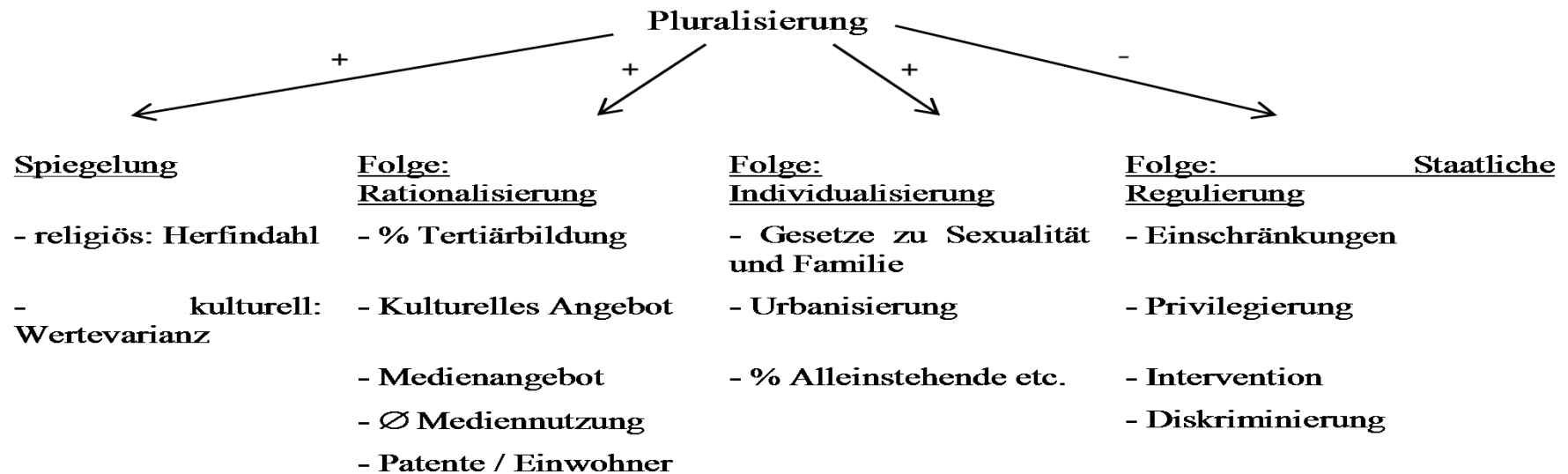
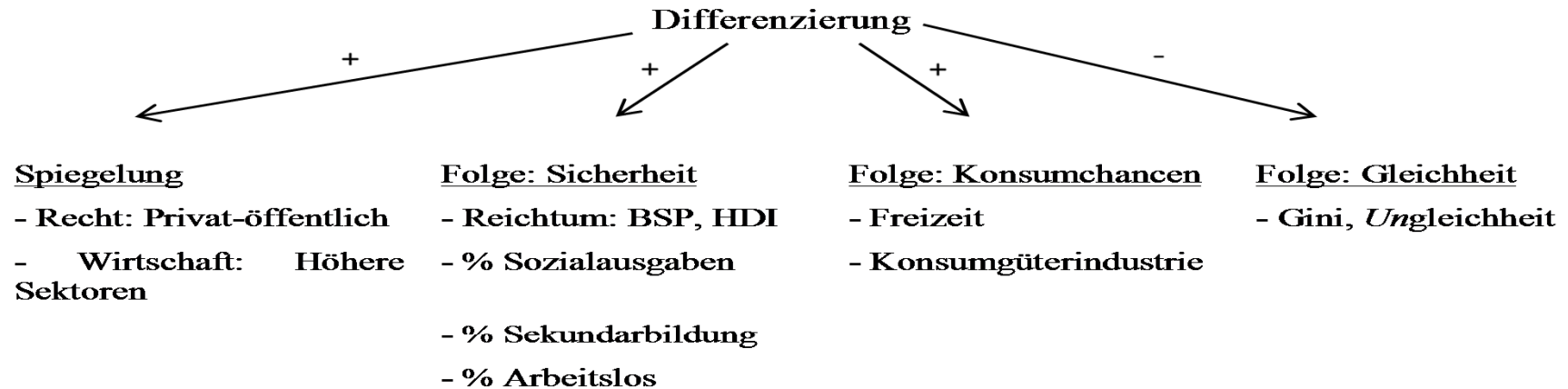
- -.25 to .08, not significant

Three Problems

1. Secularization refers to Western societies, country samples worldwide. Different sampling levels- different results
2. No third variable analysis possible with aggregate independent variable of religiosity, they dominate, fixed-effects regression reduces this problem.
3. Differences between correlations of a given macro variable with different dimensions of religiosity difficult to interpret.
Example: State regulation of religion in 42 states of Europe does not affect church attendance, but belief in God and self-ascribed religiosity .35 and .25. Actions less than belief?

2.2 Cross-sectional Multi-level Analyses

Differenzierung und Pluralisierung: Dimensionen und Indikatoren.



Differentiation (D) AND Pluralisierung (P): Results of 5 Studies

	<i>Goal Variable</i>		<i>Countries</i>		
	<i>Pract Belief</i>		<i>D</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>
Pettersson	factor both		-	+	37 Christian
Halman & D	ja	ja	0	-	30 European
R & van T	ja		-	-/+	48 Christian
Huber & K	ja	ja	-	0	14 west, 7 nw
Pollack & R	ja	ja	-	-/+	54 west + nw

Differentiation (D) only: Results of 2 Studies

	<i>Goal Variable</i>			<i>Countries</i>
	<i>Pract</i>	<i>Belief</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>n</i>
Immerzeel	ja	Ja	-	32 European
Hirschle	ja		-	82 European REGIONS

2.3 Longitudinal Macro Analyses

Differentiation and Pluralization: 1 Study; Differentiation only: 1 Study

	<i>Goal Variable</i>		<i>Countries*Time</i>		
	<i>Pract Belief</i>		<i>D</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>
Jagodz.	Ja	ja	-	-	10*2 W Eur
Hirschle	ja		-		13*25 W Eur

2.4 Longitudinal Multi-level Analyses

D and p and cohort succession: Results of 2 Studies

	<i>Goal Variable</i>				<i>Countries*Time</i>
	<i>Pract</i>	<i>Belief</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>
Reitsma 1981-1998 Typology			-	0	10*2 W European
Reyn. 1991-2008	ja	ja	-	0	13*25 W European

Both studies show negative cohort succession effects

But Reitsma: positive effect of time after controlling D and P and micro variables

Three Desiderata for Longitudinal multi-level Design

1. Test explanation by analytical properties and by cohort succession against explanations which additionally comprise proper names.
2. Test macro predictors one at a time and together
3. Treat country and time, separately statistically
 - Common procedure: replications of surveys in countries treated as independent samples, although dependent upon each other
 - Standard errors of macro variables underestimated, macro effects too easily proven significant. Furthermore, estimates of effects can be biased (Schmitt-Catran & Fairbrother 2016).

3 Summary and Conclusion

11 tests of secularization theory

Design, authors, period	Goal variable			Independent variables					
	Prac tice	Belief	Other dimensions, comments	Macro		Micro			
				D	P	I	E	Pa	Em
<i>Cross-sectional multi-level analyses</i>									
Pettersson			Factor score for both	-	+	+	-	+	
Halman & Draulans	Y	Y	Factor score for each	0	-	+	0		-
Ruiter & van Tubergen	Y			-	-/+	+	-		-
Huber & Krech	Y	Y	Centrality = practice, Diffuse = belief	-	(0)	(+)	0		
Immerzeel & van Tubergen	Y	Y	Diffuse = belief	-/0			-		
Pollack & Rosta	Y	Y	Diffuse = belief	-	-/+		-		-
Hirschle	Y		Unit of analysis: region	-		+	0		-
<i>Longitudinal macro analyses</i>									
Jagodzinski 1981-1990	Y			-	-				
Hirschle 1970-2009	Y	Y	Diffuse = belief	-					
<i>Longitudinal multi-level analyses</i>									
Reitsma et al. 1981-1998			Typ, diffus = belief	-	0		-		
Reynolds 1981-2008	Y	Y	Factor score for each	-	0		-		-

Dependent Micro Variables

Practice and belief

- simultaneously in only 6
- No correlations reported
- Sometimes mixed as factor or typology

Confirmation of Differentiation and Pluralization hypotheses

Simultaneously in 8 of 11 studies. No correlations reported

Differentiation

- in all 11 studies. Confirmed throughout in 7, for practice only in 1, disconfirmed in none
- theoretically backbone, empirically supporting leg of secularization theory.

Pluralization

- in 8 of 11, disconfirmed in 1, confirmed in 2
- Confirmed as *diversity* and disconfirmed as *state regulation* in 2
- *Diversity*: pluralization - *state regulation*: vitalization through market hypothesis. Complementary, not antagonistic. Diversity weakens, non-regulation strengthens religiosity.
- Theoretically and empirically: free leg of secularization theory.

D and P(*diversity*) simultaneously confirmed in 3 studies

D and P(*state regulation*) simultaneously confirmed in 3 studies

Independent Micro Variables: Only 9 multi-level analyses relevant

- *Imprinting = membership, socialization*: 5, positive, as expected.
- *Education*: 9, always negative, as expected
- *Parenthood*: 1, positive, as expected
- *Female*: 9, always positive, as expected
- *Employment*: 5, always negative, as expected
- *Cohort*: only in 2 longitudinal multi-level, both negative as expected

Only 4 studies control at least 3 of the minimal program, micro blindness

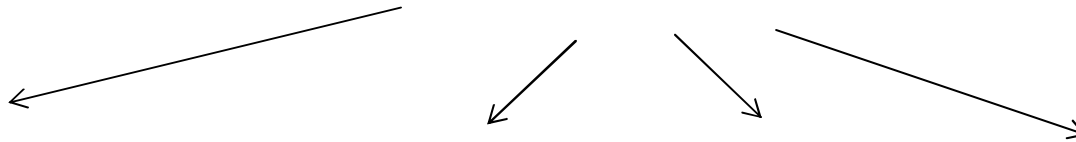
Secularization theory – so far:
not disconfirmed, but rarely tested

- only a few and sometimes incomplete studies
- in appropriate designs, its three hypotheses (differentiation, pluralization, cohort succession) have been tested and by and large confirmed
- For most appropriate design, longitudinal multi-level regression, compiled data sets available, and confirmation so far

Thank you

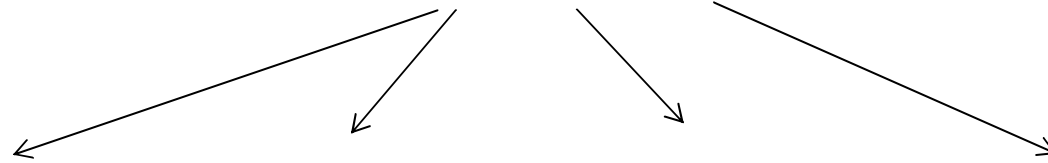
Heiner Meulemann, 2017. Secularization theory
– not disconfirmed, but rarely tested. *Analyse &
Kritik* 39(2): 325-355

+ Social Differentiation



<u>Direct</u>	<u>Consequences:</u> <u>Security</u>	<u>Consequence:</u> <u>consumption</u> <u>opportunities</u>	<u>Consequence</u> <u>: Equality</u>
- Law: Private-state	- Wealth: GNP, HDI	- LeisureFreizeit	- Gini, INequality
- Economy: higher Sectors	- % social expentire of GNP	- Consumption industry	
	- % Secondary education		
	- % unemployed		

Cultural Pluralization



<u>Direct</u>	<u>Consequence: Rationalisation</u>	<u>Consequence: Individualisation</u>	<u>Consequences: State Regulation</u>
- Religious: Herfindahl	- % Tertiary education	- Laws conc. sexuality and family	- Restrictions
- Cultural: value diversity	- Cultural supply	- Urbanisation	- Privilegization
	- Media supply	- % Single etc.	- Intervention
	- ∅ Media use		- Discrimination
	- Patents per inhabitant		

Synopsis of 11 studies

				Independent variables					
	Goal variable			Macro		Micro			
Design, authors, period	Practice	Belief	Other dimensions, comments	D	P	I	E	Pa	Em
Cross-sectional multi-level analyses									
Pettersson			Factor score for both	-	+	+	-	+	
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Reynolds 1981-2008	Y	Y	Factor score for each	-	0		-		-