

la società contemporanea

Changing values in a changing world?
Italy in the European Values Study
and World Values Survey (2018)

Preface

The call for papers for this monographic section of «Quaderni di Sociologia» was originally launched in May 2020, a few months after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are writing this preface in January 2022, while Europe is at the heart of the fourth wave of the pandemic. While much of the attention of social scientists is focusing on the consequences of the health emergency, the collection of papers in this monographic section – written in the midst of the pandemic – reminds us that the world was changing even before COVID-19. The second decade of the twenty-first century has been witness to relevant social changes and events in European countries: economic crisis inside a changing economic infrastructure, war in Syria and the refugee crisis, the rise of populist parties in many countries and the development of information technology, to mention what appear to be the most significant events. While the relevance of these changes is clear and well defined, it is less evident how opinions, attitudes and values have changed too, if at all. The data providing the backdrop to this monographic section come from the two top research infrastructures studying changing values in Europe and all over the world, and offer a unique opportunity to explore this side of social change.

The *European Values Study (EVS)* is a large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens all over Europe. It is a unique research project on how Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society. The European Values Study started in 1981, when one thousand citizens in ten European countries were interviewed using standardized questionnaires. Since then, the survey has been repeated every nine years, in an increasing number of countries. The fifth wave (2017) covers almost 40 European countries, from Iceland to Azerbaijan and from Spain to Norway. Italy has been part of the European Values Study since the first wave.

The *World Values Survey (WVS)* consists of nationally representative surveys conducted in almost 100 countries. The World Values Survey is a large non-commercial, cross-national, longitudinal investigation of human beliefs and values. It covers the full range of global variations, from

very poor to very rich countries, in all of the world's major cultural zones. The World Values Survey deals with different topics: economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital, subjective well-being and many others. Seven waves of the survey, which started in 1981, have been carried out. Italy took part in the fifth (2005-2009) and seventh wave (2017-2019) of the World Values Survey.

In Italy, the European Values Study and World Values Survey were jointly collected in 2018: the data are available through the EVS website (<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>). The aim of the call for papers launched in May 2020 was to gather methodologically high-quality, theoretically based contributions using the EVS-WVS data, with a special emphasis on Italy and the 2018 wave. Ten abstracts were selected from the sixteen that were received. The seven articles of this section went successfully through the review process. We think that the selected papers provide the best evidence of the theoretical and empirical contribution offered by the EVS-WVS data.

The articles in this section cover a very rich set of topics, going beyond those originally proposed by the call for papers (tradition and modernity, European solidarity and identity, religion and religiosity). The article by Carriero and Filandri investigates the role social class plays in affecting attitudes towards the state and the market while Gozzo, D'agata and Maglia look at the relationships between welfare regimes and social cohesion in Europe. Moving to a more general political domain, Guglielmi unveils the mechanisms connecting national identity and immigrant discrimination while Verderame focuses on the cosmopolitanism of the young population. In the same field, Ladini analyses how political orientation affects confidence towards institutions. Finally, two articles consider the connection between gender and religion from two very different perspectives. Palmisano and Todesco consider the relationships between religiosity, gender and modernization, while Dražanová looks at trends in gender egalitarianism while considering declining religiosity and the expansion of education.

The different papers also employ an impressive range of research designs and statistical techniques: linear and logistic regression, multilevel regression, age-period-cohort analysis, structural equation modelling and Bayesian networks. Some articles focus on the last EVS-WVS wave while others exploit the datasets' longitudinal potential. A couple of papers take a comparative approach while many papers, even focusing on just one country, pay special attention to economic and political institutions and how they have changed over time. Overall, we think the articles published in this section will arouse scientific interest among many scholars.

After the book recently published on value change in Italy (Biolcati F., Rovati G., Segatti P. (a cura di) (2020), *Come cambiano gli italiani. Valori e atteggiamenti dagli anni Ottanta a oggi*, Bologna, il Mulino), this monographic section is a further effort to promote scientific activities around

the issue of changing values and attitudes using the EVS-WVS data. Moreover, may we mention the user conferences organized in Trento in 2015 and Milan in 2018, and the third one scheduled for 2022. We hope that all these initiatives will help to strengthen the increasing community of Italian social scientists working on the EVS-WVS data.

Finally, let us take a look into the near future. The sixth wave of EVS and the eighth wave of WVS data collection are not so far off, as 2026 is rapidly approaching. This wave will be particularly relevant because it will allow the changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic to be put into the context of a longer history of change. Thanks to the longitudinal and cross-national character of these research infrastructures, this next EVS-WVS survey will provide the necessary information to place the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic within overall societal change.

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