

Paradoxes of Value Change: Critique of Post-materialistic Work Orientations

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Abstract

Recently, there has been a tendency to evaluate the transformation in work values in terms of Inglehart's value change thesis. This tendency argues that extrinsic values, such as wage and job security, have lost their importance in work orientations whereas intrinsic values, such as self-realization or autonomy, have been embraced. However, the discussions that have taken place in work sociology during the last 25 years are mainly based on a growing lack of security in employment and work conditions rather than on the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic values. This study will compare Inglehart's value change viewpoint with other viewpoints on the structural conditions present in job insecurity. This comparison will be based on Sennett and Doogan's analysis and will argue that Inglehart's value change thesis is actually a discourse that helps to form the stereotype required for flexible production, thus enabling the internalization of market discipline.

Key Words

Kevin Doogan, Materialism, Post-materialism, Richard Sennett, Ronald Inglehart, Work Orientations.

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Since Weber, there has been a strong current of thought arguing that the materialist goals of work have transformed into an ethos (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007; Congleton, 1991). This ethos, as Gorz (1995) has defined, is a modern-economical attempt whose values, as some argue, have shifted within the past 25 years. Kumar (2005) argues that the common feature of the theories focusing on such a shift lies in their assessment of politics, ethics, and economics as well as in their desire to reach holistic results based on associations between these aspects. Inglehart's value change theory, which Spates (1983) has defined as new generation of value theories, stands out among others in this current.

Inglehart's value change thesis is built upon strong empirical foundations as well as on an extensive literature based on these foundations.¹ Particularly, two value surveys, the World Values Survey (WVS) (Minkov, 2012) and the European Values Survey (EVS) (Halman, Luijkx, & van Zundert, 2005), featured Inglehart's distinction between materialism and post-materialism, designing their question formats by taking this distinction into account (MacIntosh, 1998). Thus, the concept has created a "minor academic industry"² in values. However, although Inglehart's comments are effective in terms of understanding modern societies, they are also heavily criticized due to their speculative and holistic nature.³ Despite these criticisms, it is clear that the materialism/post-materialism distinction which made popular in the mid-1970s is considered an effective argument in discussions on work ethics (Dülmer, 2011; Harding & Hikspoors, 1995; Hayward & Kemmelmeier, 2007; Roales-Nieto & Segura, 2010). This sub-literature puts forward the argument that post-materialist tendencies have become more important in terms of work values, basing this assumption on Inglehart's (2008) observation that individual expressions have been put in the foreground as a result of these changes in values. More specifically, this change could be described by looking at the concept of work orientations in which the values attributable to work have been shifting from extrinsic trends with materialistic priorities to new intrinsic trends which disregard wage and job

¹ Please see (Newman, 2002) for a detailed review of this literature.

² The term minor academic industry is a semi-critical term used to describe the espousal of concepts and methods emerging both from social sciences and from numerous studies made on such issues within a very short period of time. Please see (Sundberg & Taylor-Gooby, 2013; Van Deth, 2003) to review examples.

³ Generally, there are a variety of criticisms against each article written by Inglehart. Please see (Franklin, Tranter, & White, 2000; Haller, 2002; Majima & Savage, 2007) to review some recent criticisms.

security (Esser, 2005; Uheda & Ohnozo, 2012). In this vein, therefore, some consider this distinction as a development toward the liberalization of work from market forces, as expressed in terms of the distinction made by Arendt between labor and work (Halman & Müller, 2006; Tanguchi, 2006).

With this being said however, during the same period of time, work sociology has focused on flexible production and its outcomes. Defined as an evolutionary development toward individual priorities by Inglehart, this shift is characterized as a work life shaped by “insecurity,” “prevalence of temporary employment,” and “reduced work life” by the relevant literature (Kalleberg, 2009; Strangleman, 2007). Although these trends are mainly observed in developing countries (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Munck, 2013), they also apply to Western societies which, as claimed by Inglehart, have outgrown materialist priorities (Standing, 2011; Stone, 2012).

As such, this study can be considered as an attempt to analyze these two approaches which although focus on the “same shift,” obtain completely different results. Different data sets commonly used for today’s work life verify both concepts. Tools such as the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey confirm the post-materialist shift argued by Inglehart, whereas studies on global employment data or national employment studies carried out by organizations such as OECD and ILO suggest that the global perception of job insecurity is increasing, that “long term employment” has become difficult to achieve in today’s labor market, and that wages display a downward trend (Green, 2009; ILO, 2013; OECD, 2013). Moreover, there are even studies which use the data set forming the basis of the first trend while simultaneously adopting the approach of the second trend (Chung & Van Oorschot, 2011).

The present study will use Sennett and Doogan’s ideas to clarify this dilemma. While Sennett argues that the employment related “securities” gained by employees through the bureaucratic practices of welfare states have been discredited since the second half of the 1960s Doogan, on the other hand, points out the paradoxes of the “end of work” thesis which seems to form the basis of Inglehart’s ideas. Empirical evidence shows that new production and employment models do not create so-called “discontinuities” and “flexibilities.”

In other words, it is not possible to find any evidence supporting “the end of the long-term employment” thesis. On the contrary the long-term employment methods thought to be weakening are actually becoming more widespread. At the same time however, arguments suggesting that “insecurity” has become more recurrent are accepted without question. This concern, although considered to be groundless by Doogan, has been embraced by the vast majority of people, with both media resources and academic production contributing to the widespread adoption of this point of view. Although it is defined as a “generated uncertainty” by Doogan, this trend creates a paradox whose main goal is to create market discipline. The present study argues that according to Doogan’s theory, Inglehart’s analysis on value change cannot function as an effective tool to measure the breaking point of work orientations; and that on the contrary, it measures a “discourse” lacking any valid grounds which can be hardly defended on an “objective” basis. Despite Inglehart’s claim, value differentiation in contemporary work orientations is not a step achieved by modernity through such practices of the welfare state, but is instead the outcome of a discourse contributing to the creation of the “reflexive worker,” as defined by Atkinson (2010).

In Turkey, although both post-industrial value shifts (Bali, 2009; Çileli, 2000; Kozanoğlu, 2000; Lüküslü, 2009) and a shift in work values (Aşkun, Öz, & Aşkun, 2010; Ergin & Kozan, 2004; Gök, 2009; Keser, 2005) have been studied, they have rarely been associated with each other (Bozkurt, 2000). Although there have been several studies conducted both on the results of the World Values Survey and on the value change (Ignatow, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu, 2008; Selim, 2008; Taşkın, 2009; Tessler & Altınoğlu, 2004; Yeşilada & Noordijk, 2010), they have not focused on work values themselves. Furthermore, there have been studies conducted on the results of both new employment methods and job insecurity in Turkey (Çakır, 2007; Emirgil, 2010; Yüksel, 2010). Knowing the reality, this particular study is based on Inglehart’s thesis of value change while at the same time seeking to correlate these different areas on a theoretical level.

Inglehart's Thesis of Value Change

Values have previously been used to indicate the importance and priority of social structure based on elements including “meaning,” “sanction,” and “socialization” (Parsons & Shills, 1951). However, these comments have received criticized due to their abstract nature. Just like any other concept related to culture, they have been disregarded in the agenda of sociological discussions over time, becoming an analysis tool indicating cultural differences (Jenks, 2007). Inglehart's goal is to present a concrete analysis of the concept of value, reintroducing it into the agenda of sociological discussions (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005a). Inglehart tries to achieve this goal by filling in the gaps of modernization theory (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005a; Welzel, Inglehart, & Klingeman, 2003) which postulates that values function as catalysts within the mentioned interaction due to their ever-changing nature in which the role of change can be estimated by the impact of socio-economic factors. At this point, it is important that Inglehart has emphasized a probabilistic perspective rather than a deterministic one as adopted in Marxism (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005b).

The general impression is that Inglehart's attribution to values is derived from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Kwolska & Wroblewska, 2008; Laftery & Knutsen, 1985; Russell, 1977). Inglehart argues that values change in parallel to the needs of a subjective value system and thus adopts Maslow's approach. Although Inglehart defines this antecedent as a famine hypothesis, the socialization processes which have an impact on value development also play an important role (Kroh, 2009; Sangster & Reynolds, 1996), and this impact is defined as the socialization hypothesis. It is argued that the socialization hypothesis is based on the value formation approach by Rokeach (Braithwaite, Makkai, & Pittelkow, 1996). Inglehart underlines the importance of the socialization process in value changes while also taking into account the fact that circumstantial fluctuations and unemployment, among other factors, affect the evolutionary nature of value change (Clarke & Dutt, 1991; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). Impacts such as aging and life cycles are considered to be ineffective factors by Inglehart in this process (Abrahamson & Inglehart, 1995; Hellevik, 2002; Jagodzinski, 1983; Janssen, 1991).

Post-materialism and Work Orientations

Here, the transformation of work values since the 1970s may be associated with Inglehart's thesis (Frege & Godard, 2013; Inazemtsev, 1999). The basic assumption adopted in evaluating the post-materialist value change in terms of work is that differentiation in political approaches also defines work values (Hagström & Gamberale, 1995). It is generally assumed that work values are based on personal differences rather than on intrinsic conditions or market determinants (Hagström & Kjalleberg, 2007). Yet, a different approach argues that work values are related to different sociological categories, such as sex, class, and race (Jencks, Perman, & Rainwater, 1988; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005). Heller (2002) criticizes this approach, claiming that it disregards cultural factors and power relations while adopting a one-way modernization process without question. The personal values attributed to work are discussed under the title of "work orientations" (Hult & Svellfors, 2002; Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1998) which are considered to have two dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic (Furnham, Petrides, Tsaousis, Pappas, & Garrod, 2005). Studies have confirmed that intrinsic orientations are correlated with post-materialism, and that extrinsic orientations are correlated with materialism (Halman & Müller, 2006; Hagström & Gamberale, 1995; Wilson, 2005).

The basis of this value change is Bell's (1999) post-industrial society analysis in which the "end of work" thesis is also used as a functional resource. Thus, values attributed to work during this transformation process will tend toward intrinsic attitudes and self-expression due to the necessity perception (Doherty, 2009). Inglehart's thesis considers this shift not only to be evolutionary, but also to be a key conceptualization (Gross, 2006; Harpaz, 2002; Parboteeah, Cullen, & Paik, 2013).

Post-materialism in the Era of Insecurity

Inglehart (1990) argues that the shift to materialism is related to the establishment of individualistic and rationalistic priorities instead of an understanding of social duties. The post-materialistic shift, on the other hand, involves the

replacement of life quality and well-being with economic priorities. This shift has two aspects; the first one being the post-industrial production system which no longer requires people to work, and the second one being “welfare state” practices in which people are no longer concerned about providing for their own basic needs (Davion & Meda, 2009). For Esping-Andersen, the impact of the welfare state is quite determinative (2011). However, contrary to Inglehart’s thesis, the impact of the welfare state on personal and social protection is reduced under modern conditions. Moreover, Inglehart’s theory is also criticized due both to the weakening of the hierarchy of basic needs and to the correlation between the welfare state and authority (Dean, 2007). The real discussion, however, is about the feeling of security. Beck (2011) suggests that as modernism gains a reflexive nature, risks are assumed by individuals, and it is generally accepted that new types of organization models head toward an ambition for flexibility, rather than security, as described by Harvey (2003). In parallel to reduced flexibility, deregulation, and union movements, long-term employment has itself become more difficult to achieve (Hudson, 2005; Hyman, 1994; Procter, Rowlinson, McArdle, Hassard, & Forrester, 1994). For example, while Bernhardt and Krause (2013) argue that the number of workers with concerns over job security increased by 20% in Germany between 1996 and 2008, Pedersen and Lewis (2012) indicate that flexible employment methods have also shifted people’s perception of time. Moreover, on the broader societal level, Brandth and Kvande (2001) believe that new methods based on flexible employment have played a significant role in the transformation of parent-child relationships.

Sennett: Post-materialism as a Corrosion of Character

Some of the most prominent remarks on the relationship between flexible employment and value change have been put forward by Sennett. Basing his reviews on the Fordism/Post-Fordism distinction and its criticisms, Sennett intends to assess the structural accents (Thompson & Smith, 2009) under a hermeneutic approach (Tweedie, 2013). Sennett (2003) argues that new employment methods clearly resulted in widespread “insecurity.” He is aware

of the fact that modern value systems cannot yield idealized outcomes (2003). The concept of work will gradually start taking a smaller space in people's lives and workers will pursue their self-realization goals via alternative means (Wallace & Lowe, 2011). These discussions, also defined as "leisure society," argue that employment has lost its priority within individual value systems. Individuals generally set aside time for voluntary work or consumption, and as a consequence, these activities are assumed to shape value priorities. While there are several studies arguing that there is a relationship between orientations valuing leisure time and post-materialistic values (Aguila, Sicilla-Camacho, Rojas Tejada, Delgado-Noguera, & Gard, 2008; d'Epinay, 1992) and although work hours have been gradually decreasing in the West (Evans, Lippoldt, & Marianna, 2001; Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003), this does not mean people spend less time on working according to Sennett (2003). Although the systems in question are flexible in terms of time management and autonomy, in reality, they indicate a system in which supervision is more dominating. There are numerous studies suggesting that flexible work hours create time and coordination problems (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, & Heelan, 2010; Hilbrecht, Shaw, & Andrey, 2008; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Accordingly, Sennett argues that new production methods tend to promote insecurity and cause problems in employment. Furthermore, they seem to undermine determinants, such as self-confidence and capability. As stated by Malthus and Ricardo, new work values support the "uselessness of masses" which was clearly manifested during the Great Depression of 1929. Currently however, due to global immigration, rapidly-developing automation technologies, and an aging population, security-related concerns are becoming increasingly evident, especially in Western countries (Sennett, 2009).

Doogan: Post-materialism and Paradoxes of Insecurity

Doogan argues that there are different levels of the pessimistic picture portrayed by Sennett. Accordingly, the "end of work thesis" and "insecurity theories" are not structural, but are among the ideological outcomes of capitalism. For Fevre (2007), arguments like Sennett's actually attempt to present convincing

evidence of a structural crash. Although Inglehart disagrees with such arguments, he has no doubt about the existence of such a shift. However, as initially pointed out by Auer and Cazes (2000), Western societies have never experienced structural differentiations in employment at a level which could cause a secondary shift as argued by Inglehart. The primary development can be observed in service sectors, such as the transportation and food sectors. However, the organization models in these sectors are not different from the very modern production methods thought to have been abandoned, as explains Ritzer in his McDonaldization thesis (Doogan, 2005).

Although the transformation of production and management structures are not reflected on employment duration, an increasingly higher number of workers experience the fear of losing their jobs (Doogan, 2001; Naswall & De Witte, 2003). Doogan argues that this perception of insecurity is paradoxical since it lacks structural grounds and that this paradox is a result of institutional arrangements regarding the labor market. Especially, the flexibility required by macro policies and financial investments facilitates the free movement of companies which thereby makes the persuasion of shareholders and customers easier. Moreover, “the era of insecurity” discourse has a significant role in quick investment decisions which require flexibility rather than activity. Thus, the discourse on “insecurity” and relegating enterprises has ideological, rather than structural, grounds. Doogan argues that media and academia have influential roles in the process of spreading this discourse. Specifically, two channels of academic production, management sciences and post-industrial social sciences, exert a common impact despite their otherwise conflicting features.

Criticism of Post-materialist Work Orientations Thesis based on Sennett and Doogan’s Theories

The arguments of Sennett and Doogan regarding work shift suggest a portrait different from the one indicated by Inglehart. Like Inglehart, Sennett focus on the role of values in the contemporary meaning of work, while Doogan is more interested in structural elements. Doogan argues that value change is a result

of depression accumulations observed in the intrinsic processes of capitalism, rather than a result of structural differentiation. Firstly, Inglehart underlines the importance of socialization in the long term shift of post-materialistic values. One critical aspect here is the denial of the institutional factors' (e.g. education system) impact on the adoption of post-materialist values and socialization processes. Duch and Taylor (1993) assert that post-materialism is a common value trend among highly educated individuals. Thus, educational institutions are defined as indoctrination institutions which improve democratic values. Abrahamson and Inglehart (1995) strictly reject this assertion, arguing instead that this shift in values has a deeper, more powerful foundation.

However, more attention should be paid to the primary difference between these two orientations. Specifically, Inglehart's value change theory has two characteristics; "evolutionism" and "hierarchy of needs," a correlation which Sennett considers to be problematic, stating that the transformations emerging in terms of work values within the new forms of capitalism do not follow the evolutionary chart portrayed by Inglehart. Sennett considers the evolutionary aspect of this crash to be a problem, holding that Inglehart's value change is not stable enough to provide long-term results. On the contrary, the post-materialist generation of the 1960s targeted modern institutions in an effort to create more individualistic areas of interaction. However, these new interaction areas focusing on trust and solidarity have destroyed institutions, leaving behind uncertainties unable to be overcome (Sennett, 2009). The main pursuit of Sennett is the attributes of a production oriented society which are against human nature (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). However, he argues that modern organizations provide a field of "security" even under such circumstances. What Inglehart considers as an evolutionary process, is a destruction of security for Sennett.

Although Doogan's analyzes partially square with those of Sennett (Tweedie, 2013), they generally question the assumptions made by Sennett. Doogan refuses the idea that capitalism has become host to new attributes, and instead criticizes the orientations which address capitalism as a transformative element. For him capitalist transformation theories cause an internalization of market expectations which moreover function as a leverage in persuasion of

the “de-materialist” process. The process focusing on new rules of capitalist transformation enables capital stock to be associated with a financial flow and detach itself from its materialistic characteristics. The theories in question consider intangible elements, such as information and technological development, as extraordinary values. Unlike Sennett, Doogan does not argue that value orientations are in a harmonious process based on needs, instead underlining the impact of internalization mechanisms established through “market discipline.” For example, media enterprises might radically shape value orientations. In this vein, Fevre (2007) states that in 1996, a period during which England had its lowest unemployment rate in last 10 years, 997 newspaper articles were published on the insecurity of modern jobs and massive job termination stories. However, in 1986, although unemployment rates were much higher with the compounded effect of massive layoffs, especially in the mining sector, the number of newspaper articles on such stories reached a mere 10. Furedi (2001) argues that in modern societies, such orientations do not apply to unemployment only. According to Doogan, “generated uncertainty” is an important concept in terms of market discipline and this orientation holds similarities both to Atkinson’s (2010) “reflexive worker” and Flecker and Hofbauer’s (1998) “model worker” concepts.

Conclusion

For Sennett, the evolutionary development correlation established by Inglehart between work conditions and work values is problematic. Despite Inglehart’s arguments, the transformation in work conditions has neither led to a structure in which employment and work is underrated nor to one in which autonomous production organization is overrated. On the contrary, job security is the most important problem of modern business life. Unlike Inglehart has suggested, the advantages offered by industrial production organization have not been improved, but jeopardized. Sennett does not perceive shorter periods of work and lesser spatial restrictions as a “devaluation of work” since although methods based on new technologies might have a minimizing impact on work hours, more developed methods of employee supervision have been introduced everyday

now that there are practically no spatial restrictions. In this case, not only has the household-work place distinction of modern production lost ground, but so has the sense of time been significantly impaired. In Foucauldian concepts, in an employee-employer relationship where supervision is internalized and administrated, the meaning attributed to autonomy will be quite different. Doogan's analysis generally criticizes the structural foundations of the picture portrayed by Sennett. However, the points highlighted in his analysis include a total rejection of Inglehart's context. Doogan argues that capitalist organization methods have reached a new stage and that statements suggesting that work will lose value and importance at this stage may not be valid. Transformation theories, which he describes as post-industrial social sciences, strive to criticize the transformations which have been ideologically approved by management sciences, while at the same time recognizing transformations and organizational requirements as objective conditions. Nevertheless, the relationship between transformation and reality has been expressed in ideological terms.

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