

RELIGION, IDEOLOGY AND PROSOCIALITY: SIMULATING SECULARISING SOCIETIES

Abstract

In recent years both religious movements and secular ideologies have been at the forefront of social and political changes. Despite this, ever greater numbers of people living in developed countries such as Poland and Norway, do not identify with any religion and few would claim to identify with nationalist, communist or indeed fascist ideologies. At the same time, numbers of people who see democratic ideals as vital to a good society also appear to be on the wane.

Understanding these changes requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines sociological theories with those from the cognitive sciences. Being able to predict their effects calls for an analytical methodology that is capable of combining those theories, such as is provided by computer modelling methods. The proposed project will use existing theories such as the magical ideology theory developed by the Principal Investigator as the basis for agent-based computer models of social phenomena such as religions and ideologies in order to test those theories against the available sociological data and, ultimately, arrive at an improved understanding of secularising societies and the cognitive and cultural mechanisms that underpin them.