

The changes of value-system during the transition period in Post-communist Europe

Janek Musek, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract

In spite of the stability of value-systems over time, the great economic and sociopolitical changes could alter the existing value orientation of a given society. Thus, in the transition period in Post-communist European countries the social, economic and political changes are coupled with respective shifting in the value-system. In the present study, the modifications in value orientation of the population of Slovenia during the transition period (1988-1995) have been investigated. In this period, some significant alterations in value orientations occurred although the overall ranking position of main categories of values had not been changed radically. The results showed an increment in the relative importance of dionysian values (values of hedonism, materialism, individualism, social power and reputation) in comparison to apollonian values (values of affiliation, morality, cultural and personal fulfillment). Among more specific categories the significance of values concerning social status, sensualism, patriotism, security, and social affiliation has raised especially. The changes in the value-systems being observed in Slovenia and elsewhere in Post-communist Europe can be generalized as a common trend toward the societal proliferation of individualistic, hedonistic (materialistic) and nationalistic attitudes in the European societies being under transition. The changes in value orientation are also consonant with the economical, political and other social changes. Nevertheless, the changes in the value-system - although significant - are not very dramatic and their appeasement in the near future could reasonably be expected, especially in the most developed Post-communist countries.

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Introduction

Transition processes in former socialist societies in Europe are still the matter of intensive conceptual debate in many fields and disciplines. Beside some common factors influencing the transitional changes we can also find obvious differences and dissimilarities between ex-socialist countries in political, economic and psychosocial domain.

The changes in psychological and psychosocial domain have been detected in post-communist countries even before the very beginning of political and economic transition. They included the disintegration of socialist ideology and value-system (vastly supported by previous political regime), accompanied with the invigoration of political autonomism and the simultaneous increase of pro-individual, entrepreneurial, pro-democratic, pro-religious and pro-nationalist orientation. There is a common observation that the intensity of these changes correlated with the cultural and historical factors including the closeness to the western or central-European tradition (with the historical passages through Reformation, Anti-Reformation and Enlightenment phases), the commitment to catholic rather than orthodox religion, the adherence to the individualistic rather than collectivistic culture etc. For instance, Slovenia, the most western of all these countries, differs from the others in many respects on the ground of its specific pre-transition conditions. Slovenia has been more pro-western in orientation, strongly adherent to the central European cultural tradition and had more improved economy. Slovenia shows therefore comparatively more indications of stable and accelerated economic development in transition period and has gained some strategic goals of postsocialist development more rapidly (Orazem and Vodopivec, 1994; Pleskovic and Sachs, 1994; Vodopivec and Hribar-Milic, 1993).

Despite the fact, that the value systems are by definition rather stable and resistant to change, we may expect that they cannot remain unchanged in confrontation with a large societal transition. It seems even reasonable to believe that the changes in value orientations could precede the political and even economic transformation (McClelland, 1961; Weber, 1904). The existing empirical evidence supports this hypothesis at least in the case of Slovenia. In public opinion survey data, a definite shift toward more pro-democratic and pro-religious attitudes has been established in the middle of eighties (Toš, 1994). In 1992 and 1993 the sociopolitical attitudes of younger and older people strongly departed from attitudes, measured in the period of 1969 to 1985 (Pečjak, 1994; Ule, Miheljok & Mencin, 1994). The entrepreneurial orientation in Slovene youth was in the same years very high, even slightly above the norms for USA samples (Lapajne, 1994).

The major societal shifts in value orientation are most probably coupled with extensive changes in social, political and economic system. Unfortunately, until very recently, it was not possible to verify empirically the changes in value-systems after great sociopolitical events in the world. Now, in the past decade such an opportunity has been offered to the social scientists, namely during so-called transition period in ex-communist countries in the East, South and Central Europe. For Slovenia, one among those countries, being part of former Yugoslavia, the data have been collected for three segments in this period: in the years 1988/89, 1992/92, and 1993/95. In this presentation I will briefly report the comprehensive results of the studies being carried out in the mentioned three periods.

All our data have been obtained by means of Musek Scale of Values, which is based on the long-term research on human individual values. It yielded a distinct model of values forming a four-level hierarchical structure (Figure 1). Our multivariate analyses of values (Musek, 1993a, 1993b, 1995) confirmed strongly the existence of two very large dimensions (macrocategories or superdimensions) of values (dionysian and apollonian) and four more specific but still very general categories - the value types: the hedonistic values concerning the life pleasures, entertainment, sensuality and health, the potency values concerning the ideals of achievement, success, reputation, the moral values concerning the social and ethical ideals, the duties and responsibilities, and the fulfilment values concerning the self-actualising goals, the sense of the life, the spiritual and self-transcending ideals. On a

still more specific level, a number of middle range value categories could be discovered (sensual, security, status, patriotic, societal or democratic, social, traditional, cognitive, cultural, self-actualising, religious values). Thus, a complete hierarchy of values could be established on the grounds of cluster and factor analyses. As we can see from Figure 1, this hierarchical structure of values encompasses at least four different levels: the level of macrodimensions, the level of value types, the level of middle-range categories and the level of specific values.

Insert Figure 1.

Method

Sources of data, subjects, instruments, rationale and design of research

The data being analysed in this report, were drawn from three temporally distinct samples (Table 1). They represent three important time locations in the transition period of Slovenia: pre-independence period, the time of the establishment of independence and post-independence period.

Table 1.

Some orientative details for three studies: subjects, measuring instruments temporal context.

| Source | Subjects | Measures for value orientation | Temporal sociopolitical context |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| 1. study 1988/89 | N = 98 | MSV (Musek Scale of Values) (54 values) single values middle-range categories value types macrocategories | beginnings of the transitional processes in Slovenia (being in the time still federal republic in the former Yugoslavia) – pre-independency period |
| 2. study 1991/92 | N = 621 | MSV (Musek Scale of Values) | the years of the establishment of independent Republic Slovenia |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|--|
| 3. study 1993/95 | N = 1100 | MSV (Musek Scale of Values) | progreident political and economic development in Slovenia |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|--|

Musek Scale of Values contains 54 single values (see Appendix A), which should be rated on a rating scale from 1 to 100 (or from 1 to 10 in alternative form) in regard of individual importance of each value. The rated values could be further arranged in the way that they could represent the scores for all four levels of value structure:

1. for macrocategories of values (dionysian and apollonian values),
2. for value types (hedonic, potency, moral, fulfilment values),
3. for middle-range categories of values (sensual, health, status, patriotic, societal, traditional, social/familial, cultural, cognitive values), and
4. for single values.

In my further report I will concentrate upon results concerning three the most general levels of value categorisation, that means the level of macrocategories, value types, and middle-range categories of values.

Results and discussion

The major change in value orientation observed in Slovenia, but similar trends have been observed in other former socialist countries (especially in Central Europe), during the period from 1988 to 1995 is the significant increase of the rated importance of dionysian values (see Figure 2a). Dionysian values increased constantly while the apollonian values remained approximately at the same level (the difference between samples is insignificant). Dionysian values, as we know, could be decomposed into two value types, the hedonistic type including sensual and health (security) values, and the potency type, including the values of social power (achievement and reputation) and patriotism. Similarly, the apollonian values could be divided into the moral value type containing societal, social and traditional ethical values, and the fulfilment type embracing cultural, cognitive, self-growth and spiritual values. We can see that the raise of dionysian values is due to the increments in both hedonistic and potency value types (see Figure 2b). The moral value type remained more or less

stagnant during the period of measurement, while the fulfilment values showed a significant fall-down in the 1991 and then raised again in the next years.

The value types could be further divided into different middle-range categories of values. As shown in Figure 2c, the most significant changes have been recorded for patriotic, status and sensual values which consistently increased. Social and security values also increased, but only in the period after 1991. The other categories remain mostly at the same level (democratic, cognitive and traditional values) or even decreased in the period from 1988 to 1991 (cultural and religious values).

Figure 2. The observed shifts in the ratings of the importance of values in the period 1988 to 1995 in Slovenia: (a) the macrocategories (Dionysian and Apollonian values), (b) the value types and (c) middle-range categories.

The results of discriminant analyses only confirmed previously mentioned trends in value orientations, as we can see from the Table 2. Discriminant analyses showed strong significant effects for both discriminant functions delineating all three groups of subjects. First function discriminates between groups in the linear manner (with group centroids being lowest in the first group and highest in the third) while the second function discriminates between independence (1991/92) group with lowest group centroid and both other groups with higher centroids.

Table 2.

Correlations between value-categories and both canonical discriminant functions

| | Func 1 | Func 2 |
|---------|---------|----------|
| PATR_MR | ,71699* | ,00006 |
| SOCI_MR | ,67245* | ,44117 |
| SECU_MR | ,43090* | ,25090 |
| ACTU_MR | ,36704* | ,26141 |
| SENS_MR | ,35926* | -,02785 |
| COGN_MR | -,01797 | ,58605* |
| TRAD_MR | ,43963 | ,58015* |
| CULT_MR | ,25496 | ,45587* |
| RELI_MR | -,00273 | ,43750* |
| STAT_MR | ,39070 | -,41885* |
| DEMO_MR | ,26480 | ,35946* |

The observed changes and shifts in value orientation are congruent with political, social and economic changes in pre-transition and transition period in Slovenia. The changes in value orientation indicate the rise of individualism, competitiveness and nationalism, all embodied in dionysian values, in hedonistic and potency value types and particularly in status, sensual, security and patriotic values. This picture can easily be associated with the dominant changes on the political and economic scene: the transformation of totalitarian system to the pluralistic democracy and the progression from the socialist to the market economy. The rise of patriotism and nationalism in transition period is very understandable for the situation of Slovenia, which struggle for independence culminated successfully in 1991. The empirical evidence also suggests that some changes occurred even before. The increasing valuation of national autonomy, religiousness, political pluralism and democracy has been observed already in early eighties (Toš, 1994). According values - the patriotic, religious and democratic ones - achieved high levels already before transition. That also explains why some of these values display no more rising effect in recent years.

In the psychosocial analyses, the rise of hedonistic and potency values have not been met always with sympathy. Certainly, it could easily be connected with negative events accompanying the development in transition countries - from escalated criminal to increasing rate of suicide. To some extent, it is also reasonable to speak of the crisis of values especially in relation to the collapse of previous doctrinary established value system. The old value system lost the power and seemingly the society in transition fell into the vacuum state regarding the values. But, of course, there is not such thing like a society without values. Ideological values of communism never exclusively occupied the minds of the people, they always have to struggle with traditional values and with the values being imported from democratic world.

Even more important, the changes in value orientation - although significant - are not very dramatic. The overall hierarchy of values has been changed only partially. The gap between apollonian and dionysian values, very large in 1988, is abated indeed in 1991, but remained undiminished in recent years. Social and security values saved their supremacy in hierarchy, while status and patriotic values, although elevated in transition period, maintained rather low position. Even the observed trends

in value change show a tendency to the stabilization, and, moreover, the most recent results of my colleagues demonstrated even some opposite trends in the period from 1993 to 1995, notably the diminution in the importance of materialistic and potency values (Ule Nastran, Miheljak & Renner, 1996; Ule Nastran, Renner, Miheljak & Mencin, 1996, unpubl. research report).

Somewhat surprising, the trends in value orientations being reported for post-communist countries are rather at variance with the trends observed in western Europe and other developed societies. Coleman and Husen (1985) found in young population already in eighties a definite shift from materialistic and career-oriented values toward postmaterialistic and personal values. The trends in post-communist countries in early transition period go at least partially in opposite direction and the increase of dionysian values demonstrates these trends quite well. Nevertheless, this change could also be explained as a consequence of a radical break with the values being compliant with collectivistic and egalitarian norms of communism. On the other hand, we can observe in more developed post-communist societies the same characteristics of the postmodern mixed value orientation as found by Coleman and Husen in the West. This mixed orientation consists in a combination of traditional achievement motivation with orientation toward antiauthoritarianism, self-actualisation and adoption of information technology and it characterises a great and increasing number of young people throughout the developed world.

The relationship between transitional processes and values is bidirectional: transitional changes influence the value-systems, and vice-versa, the changed value-systems could affect the further development of the life in the respective countries. A question could be raised therefore, what could be the consequences of the shifts in the value orientations being observed in newly developing democracies in the Central and Eastern Europe. It seems probable that such consequences depend on the broad scale of political, economic and social factors which can moderate or facilitate the final outcomes. The actual situations in the countries with remarkable pre-communist individualistic cultural tradition, economic development and political democracy (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Poland) is showing rather stabilising tendencies concerning further societal development. In other countries, however, the general situation is not so stable and the symptoms of growing social anomia are maybe even increasing. Slovenia is deeply rooted in Middle-European area for

historical, cultural and geographic reasons. It differs from the majority of other post-communist societies by close connectedness with more individualistic cultures (Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1980; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Schwartz, 1990). For this reason, Slovenia is probably better equipped for transition tasks both in economic and psychological respect. Thus, the observed modifications in value orientation reflect probably not only the realm of transitory processes, but also the specific situation of Slovenia with its historical, cultural and geographical inclinations.

The conclusion could be drawn therefore, at least from the results of our investigations, that the observed changes in the value orientations in more developed post-communist countries are not very dramatic and, even more, they show the trends of stabilisation in very recent times. To say in other words, we can hardly expect that the observed changes in value-system could have a serious detrimental effect on further societal development of respective societies. More probably, the newly established value system would contribute to the stable functioning of these societies in the future.

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Figure 1.

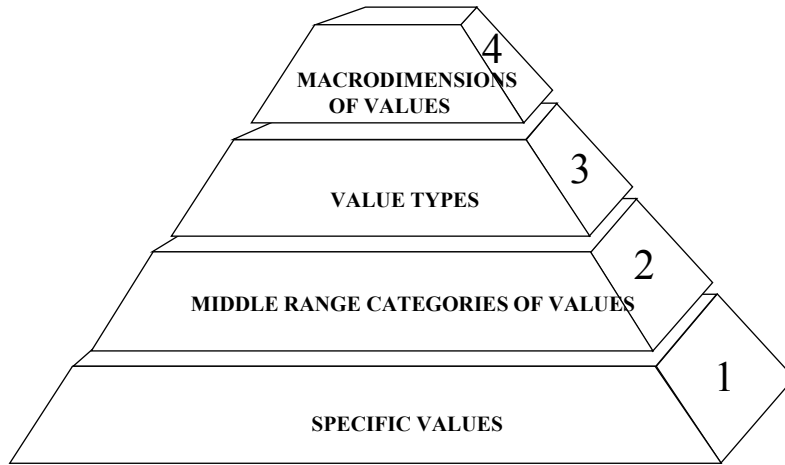
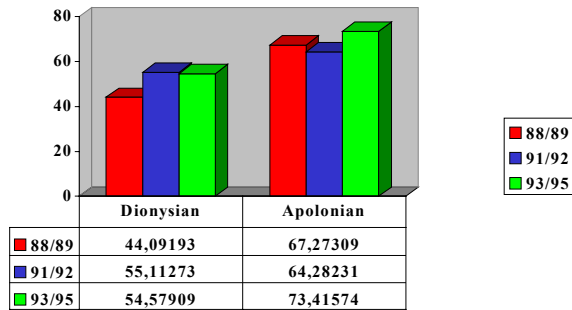
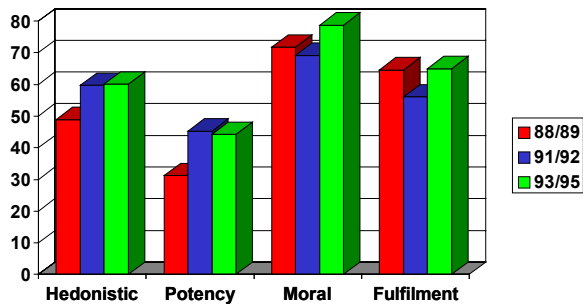


Figure 2.

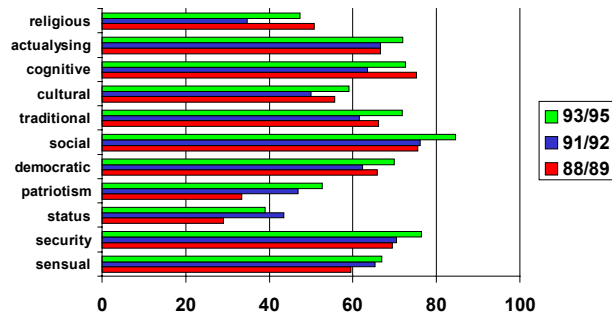
a



b



c



Appendix A
List of values included in MLV Survey

| |
|--|
| HONESTY |
| SOCIABLE LIFE |
| LOVE FOR CHILDREN |
| BEING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE |
| KNOWLEDGE |
| GENEROSITY AND UNSELFISHNESS |
| DILIGENCE |
| LONGEVITY |
| REPUTATION IN SOCIETY |
| HARMONY WITH PARTNER |
| FREEDOM |
| MORAL PRINCIPLES |
| CONCORDANCE AND HARMONY BETWEEN PEOPLE |
| SUCCESSFUL CAREER |
| SPORTS AND RECREATION |
| FAITH IN GOD |
| COMFORTABLE LIFE |
| LOVE FOR HOMELAND |
| RESPECT FOR LAWS |
| COMPANIONSHIP AND SOLIDARITY |
| BEAUTY (ENJOYING BEAUTY) |
| PEACE ON THE WORLD |
| CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS |
| FIDELITY |
| CULTURAL CONCERN |
| GOOD SEXUAL RELATIONS |
| POWER AND INFLUENCE |
| MONEY AND WEALTH |
| PROGRESS OF HUMANITY |
| SELF-FULFILLMENT |
| HEALTH |
| LEISURE TIME |
| NATIONAL EQUITY |
| PERSONAL ATTRACTIVENESS |
| FULL AND EXCITING LIFE |
| SECURITY |
| FAMILY HAPPINESS |
| REST AND PEACE |
| JUSTICE |
| GOOD FOOD AND DRINKS |
| FRIENDSHIP |
| WISDOM |
| EQUALITY BETWEEN PEOPLE |
| NATIONAL PRIDE |
| GLORY AND ADMIRATION |
| FREE MOVEMENT |
| JOY AND ENTERTAINMENT |
| HOPE IN THE FUTURE |
| LOVE |
| DISCOVERING THE TRUTH |
| ORDER AND DISCIPLINE |

| |
|---------------------------------------|
| ARTISTIC ENJOYMENT |
| POLITICAL SUCCESS |
| EXCEEDING AND SURPASSING OTHER PEOPLE |