



VALUE HIERARCHY AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE VALUE MODEL IN BULGARIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to trace and analyse to what extent values and their hierarchy are influenced by external factors. Values are considered as an element of culture. Hence, culture as a complex and dynamic system changes under the influence of various factors, leading to corresponding changes in the value hierarchy. A brief overview of the influence that technical innovations have on the value model in modern societies is done. Milton Rokeach's views and research on the 13-year change in values in American society are presented. The transformations of values are also included but in a cross-cultural perspective through the research of Ronald Inglehart. The article also analyses the transformations of the value model in Bulgaria. The society in Bulgaria is seen as a complex example of the influence of political and economic transformations on the value hierarchy. The article can initiate further discussion concerning notions as sustainability and variability of value models in the period of transition and democracy.

Key words:

Values, Value Hierarchy, Value Orientations, Culture, Cultural Variability

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores values as an element of culture, their hierarchy, sustainability and variability. Cultures are constantly changing over time hence the values. Some cultures are more open and accept changes, others are more conservative and oppose changes. Culture can be a complex of fundamental ideas, practices and experiences of a group of people, which is symbolically passed on from generation to generation through a process of learning certain practices. Culture relates beliefs, norms and relationships that determine our behaviour and the way we solve the problems. In addition, culture can be seen as a system of shared symbols that guides members of society. If the culture is defined as a holistic system, the following subsystems can be found: family and family ties, educational system, religious system and symbolism, political system. Each of these subsystems has an impact, i.e these subsystems are mutually determined. The change in one of these subsystems also affects the other, on a larger scale. Changes in culture as a system are passed from generation to generation. Four mechanisms contribute to changes in cultural communities; technological inventions, disasters, cultural contacts and natural-geographic factors.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. *Economic factors*

A very significant contribution to the behaviour of individual cultural communities have technological inventions in transport and communication. They lead to radical changes in the existence of enormous cultural communities.

For example, the invention of the steam engine in England in the 18th century led to an industrial revolution that changed the way of production, trade, social relations and generates social phenomena unprecedented by then. This put Britain in a dominant position and turned it into a "master of the world". The development of new transport and communication technologies, cultural communities are connected in a way that a century ago was only imaginative. This inevitably leads to changes in behaviour, communication, the value system of large groups of individuals. Disasters and natural cataclysms invariably alter lifestyles such as; First and Second World Wars, Civil War in the United States, Opium War in China. Similarly, the destruction of Pompey caused by the eruption of the Vesuvius. As an example of the influence of the natural geographic factor, the increasing number of urban population can be given, which leads to a reduction in the agricultural areas. As a result, urban lifestyle has replaced traditional agricultural, which is a significant transformation from an agricultural type culture to urban one that is related to change and the corresponding subsystems and interconnections in the respective communities.

2.2. *Changes in the value hierarchy according to Milton Rokeach's views*

Rokeach considers two types of values: terminal and instrumental. Terminal values are the preferred ultimate goals of existence.

This category includes such values as freedom, equality, peace. Instrumental values refer to ideal standards for behaviour such as: honest, ambitious, responsible, etc. Terminal values are divided into two subgroups – social and personal. Instrumental ones are also divided into two – moral and values of competence (Rokeach, 1973, 1979). He designed a method which consists of two sets of values: 18 terminal and 18 instrumental. The surveyed individuals should sort the objects in the two lists, starting from the most important ones and going to the least important ones. Each value has an appropriate rank, rank 1 means that it is the most significant, and rank 18 – the most insignificant value for a person. Rokeach presents the value system as a one-line vertical hierarchy. The essential question that Rokeach tries to answer, is how the value system changes, since traditionally values are seen as the most sustainable mental structure. He analyses the problems of change and stability of the values at macro and micro level. Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach traced the change in American society's value priorities for a 13-year period – from 1968 to 1981. Representative extracts were studied with 18 terminal and 18 instrumental values, and in 1974 and 1981 only the list of terminal values was used. The results show that the most significant values (from 1 to 6 rank) do not change significantly. Only "equality" undergoes significant changes - in 1968 it was 7th, in 1971 in 4th place and in 1974 and 1981 in 12th place. At the same time, for this 13-year period, "liberty" invariably retains the third rank in the value hierarchy. Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach explain the change in egalitarian attitudes as a result of events in the political sphere – the war in Vietnam. The data from the four surveys as a whole testify to a change from collectively and morally oriented values to values related to personal competence. (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Rokeach is also interested in how, despite its relative stability, values can change, and hence their attitudes and corresponding social behaviour. He considers, this to be possible only if one realises objectively the existing contradictions between certain values, if he is placed in a state of self-confrontation. Ball-Rokeach hold a series of so-called "self-confrontative experiments" to prove the possibilities of manipulating the rank of values through the means of mass communication.

Rokeach assumes that the main motivational process that leads to value change or stability is the feeling of dissatisfaction or self-satisfaction. Value change occurs when the awareness of the inconsistency between two values is provoked by the dissatisfaction of the person as a moral and competent human being. Cognitive reorganisation occurs in order to reduce or eliminate that feeling and preserve the self-esteem of the individual. Conversely, value stability is the result of experiencing self-satisfaction and confirming the cognitive coherence of the system of personal beliefs (Rokeach, 1973; Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Hence, while the structure of the value system is presented as a consequence of the inequality in the significance of value objects, its modification is seen as an attempt to achieve a cognitive balance (Baychinska, 1994).

2.3. Transformation of values. Ronald Inglehart views.

Another author who studies the transformation of values over the past three decades, but in an intercultural perspective, is the American sociologist Ronald Inglehart. He uses two bipolar dimensions of culture - survival / self-expression and traditional / secular-rational authority. The first dimension is determined above all by the alternative material-postmaterial values. Materialistic societies emphasise the need for survival, physical preservation, security and material well-being, and in the post-materialist world there is a growing desire for self-sufficiency, self-expression, achievement of well-being, trust and tolerance in interpersonal communication, group affiliation, improvement of the quality of life and protection of the environment (Abramson and Inglehart, 1992).

The second dimension to measure cultural diversity reflects the attitude towards authority. In traditional societies dominate spiritual and religious beliefs, beliefs about man's leading role in economic and political life. There is relatively low tolerance for abortion and divorce. The secular societies have opposite characteristics (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). On the basis of a comparative analysis of data from national representative surveys collected for the world value survey in the third time period. Inglehart and Baker (2000) find that globally today there is a cultural change – the importance of the values of rationality, tolerance, trust and citizen participation in decision-making in political and economic life increases. At the same time, the relative importance of some traditional values, such as religious ones, are preserved in a number of economically developed societies. Post-communist countries even account for an increase in religious and spiritual beliefs. The processes of cultural value transformation go hand in hand with those of cultural continuity, stability and identity.

3. PRACTICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Values and Value Model in Bulgaria – sustainability and variability

Values in Bulgarian society are the subject of research from a number of scientific disciplines – anthropology, sociology, political science, social psychology. In the period since 1989, the research on the value model and its transformation in Bulgaria has become particularly relevant in order to clarify and explain some social phenomena. A detailed analysis of the value transformations in Bulgaria after 1989 is done by Krasimira Baychinska in her book “The Values of Contemporary Bulgarian Culture” (2011).

The historical situation after 1989 necessitates a new return to the old tasks, the images of the "new" identity, affirming the autonomy of the personality. Some social structures of traditional society are reproduced in modern times, which determines its specific appearance - both residence and cohabitation of people of different ages (Elenkov, 1994). Modernization in our society is not completed in some basic aspects. The process of individualisation, the transformations from traditional social to modernity that have begun since the Liberation, are about to end in the present social reality.

A new return to the modernization tasks in Bulgaria is needed - economic self-regulation, privatization, professionalisation of government, publicity in authority. The Bulgarian society is characterised by collectivist stereotypes. Individualist orientations appear in externally defined social and political influences from Western Europe and the United States. Although the aspirations for belonging and identity continue to function, the value change in Bulgaria is a culture of intolerance, collectivism and authoritarianism towards a culture of individualism, liberalism, tolerance and pragmatics. A number of sociologists, economists and psychologists note that the Bulgarian seems to be an individualist in terms of decisions to act and independently pursuing his economic success, but he is not an individual when he has to take responsibility for the consequences of his actions. This phenomenon is referred to as "negative individualism". Some authors qualify this phenomenon as a quest for survival (NCIOM Bulletin, May 1996). At the same time, some authors point out that Bulgarian society creates prerequisites for transition from collectivist to individual attitudes. These values are typical for highly educated people living in the capital and large cities. Other researchers emphasize that negativism and prejudice to private property, wealth, capital and the wealthy, the capitalist are layered both by the centuries-long existence of the small-scale economy, as well as the social ideologies proclaimed through socialism for social equality and nationwide property. These attitudes of Bulgarians greatly slow the formation of new value models, adequate to the new conditions. The prevailing values of attitudes are egalitarian, static, paternalistic, collectivist notions of prosperity, as well as communal stereotypes and working habits. The Bulgarian value model is often defined as neutral, indefinite or diffuse and unstructured. The results of cross-cultural research done by Krasimira Baychinska, are related to the individual level of the value system (Baychinska, 1996, 1998).

The significance that Bulgarians attach to the categories: security, tradition, stimulation, achievements and power is greater than the pan-cultural environment. Conversely, the significance that Bulgarians attach to values: benevolence, universalism, self-direction and hedonism is lesser. The Bulgarians are more motivated to preserve the security in their society and their traditions. At the same time, they aspire to a greater degree of personal success and power. However, they are less motivated to benevolence and universalism, that is to go beyond their personal boundaries, independent action and hedonism.

There are certain differences in the hierarchical organization of the value system. It is characterised by a lower degree of hierarchy. There is a tendency to attribute the same degree of significance to categories of values expressing relatively opposite interests - collective and individual. The first two places are occupied by security and self-direction, expressing collectivist and individualistic interests. Following are value categories of benevolence and conformation, expressing collective interests and achievements expressing individual interests. There are certain differences in the dimensional structure of the value system of Bulgarians from that of the pan-cultural extract. The Bulgarians value more self-affirmation and inclusion and less self-transcendence. The openness to change Bulgarians appreciate to the same extent as "averages" – a citizen of the world.

Collective interests dominate the individual. The social group influences the peculiarities of the value hierarchy and the dimensional structure on an individual level. Valued priorities of students and teachers can be defined as transcendental conservatism. Categories such as self-affirmation and inclusion are dominant in the social group of businessmen. Collective interests do not dominate the individual.

Another study was carried out in 2005, aiming at studying the changes occurring in the value system of Bulgarians for the period 1995 – 2005. It shows that the value system at the level of the value categories, dimensions and interests has proved to be relatively sustainable to the influence of socio-historical time. Different social and professional groups are experiencing similar transformation processes provoked by public events and the need for people to adapt to them. However, there are also specific changes in values as a function of socio-occupational affiliation and related social roles.

For the period 1995 – 2005 the significance of survival values diminished. At the same time, however, there is no increase in the intensity of postmodern values - self-direction, achievement and universalism. The contemporary Bulgarian is still in a period of transition from material to post material values. For the period 1995 – 2005 no significant changes in the hierarchy of value categories occurred at individual level. Although more differentiated, the value hierarchy of the modern Bulgarian is close to that from the beginning of the transition.

Valuable priorities – security, self-direction, goodwill, and conformation, are emerging as an invariable, structurally determining core of the value system. The merging of the values of security and self-determination is an expression of two relatively opposite attitudes – the historically rooted attitude towards security, the new, modern attitude towards development in the direction of personal autonomy and independence. Values of benevolence – significance of relationships and contacts with people in internal groups third rank; and conformity – self-limitations of own actions in the name of the well-being of the group – fourth rank. These four value categories - security, self-centeredness, benevolence and conformation represent and build the core of the value system of the contemporary Bulgarian, which through the various means of communication present themselves in the social life.

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis illustrates that the ranks of values do not change from one situation to another arbitrarily and without more or less stable relationship of consistency. The hierarchy of values is based on experience and reflects within the bounds of experience. The hierarchy is related to the subordination of values, which is determined by their nature, purpose, and function. This analysis can initiate a future discussion on the sustainability of values and how they are determined by external factors. The results can be used in the development of social and business projects and programs.

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