https://doi.org/10.15388/vu.thesis.1006
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VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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The Value Change in the First Postsocialist Generation: An Application and Revision of Ronald Inglehart's Model

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Social Sciences
Sociology (S 005)

VILNIUS 2026

This dissertation was prepared at Vilnius University from 2021 to 2026.

The research was supported by the Research Council of Lithuania (funding for doctoral students' academic trips, 2024) and the Utrecht Network (Young Researcher's Grant was received in 2024).

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

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Vertybių kaita pirmojoje posocialistinėje kartoje: Ronaldo Ingleharto modelio taikymas ir koregavimas

DAKTARO DISERTACIJA

Socialiniai mokslai
Sociologija (S 005)

VILNIUS 2026

Disertacija rengta 2021–2026 m. Vilniaus universitete.

Mokslinius tyrimus rėmė Lietuvos mokslo taryba (parama doktorantų akademinėms išvykoms, 2024 m.) ir „Utrecht Network“ (Jaunojo tyrėjo stipendija, gauta 2024 m.).

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Disertacija bus ginama viešame disertacijos gynimo tarybos posėdyje 2026 m. lapkričio 20 d. 11:00 val. Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto 201 auditorijoje.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 8
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW 23
1.1. Literature Review Methodology 23
1.2. Postsocialist and Late-Modern Context 24
1.2.1. Socialist modernisation and divergent postsocialist transformations 25
1.2.2. Pre-socialist and socialist legacies in value socialisation 28
1.2.3. Globalisation, westernisation, and digital mediation 31
1.2.4. Social support, community ties, and social capital in value formation 33
1.3. Defining Generations in the Postsocialist Context 36
1.3.1. What is a generation: three ways of definition 36
1.3.2. Defining postsocialist generation: problems and solutions ... 41
1.3.3. The relevance of age–period–cohort effects in understanding generational value change 48
1.4. Defining Values and Value Change 51
1.4.1. What are values? 51
1.4.2. Complementary approaches to value analysis: Schwartz and Hofstede 54
1.4.3. Inglehart's theory of value change 55
1.5. Criticisms and Development of Inglehart's Value Change Theory 57
1.5.1. Challenges to the Scarcity Hypothesis 57
1.5.2. Late modernity, individualisation, and consumer capitalism 59
1.5.3. Measuring materialist and postmaterialist values: Index limitations and the possibility of coexistence 63
1.5.4. On the matter of religion: Traditional-secular-rational dimension and beyond 66
1.6. Values of the First Postsocialist Generation 69
1.6.1. Contradictory and context-dependent patterns of value change 69
1.6.2. Work and education 74

1.6.3. Political participation 79
1.6.4. Relationships and family formation 82
1.7. Theoretical Model of the Dissertation 85
1.7.1. Epistemological and social ontological assumptions 89
2. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS: AN APPLICATION OF INGLEHART'S MODEL 91
2.1. World Values Survey and European Values Study, 1990–2022 92
2.2. Research Methodology 93
2.2.1. The age–period–cohort identification problem and conditional analytical strategy 100
2.2.2. Data analysis methods 107
2.3. Findings of Statistical Analysis 114
2.3.1. Country-level contextual factors 114
2.3.2. Generational, survey-period, and age-group patterns 121
2.3.2.1. Generational patterns and cross-national heterogeneity (H3–H4) 121
2.3.2.2. Survey-period and age-group associations (H5–H6) 125
2.3.3. Religious context and individual religiosity 127
2.4. Summary of Quantitative Results 134
3. RELATIONAL SUPPORT, INSECURITY, AND VALUE TRANSFORMATION IN THE FIRST POSTSOCIALIST GENERATION 135
3.1. Research Methodology 135
3.2. Qualitative Research Findings 146
3.2.1. Social support as a relational mechanism between insecurity and value orientations 146
3.2.2. Context-specific forms of insecurity, provisional planning, and coping strategies 156
3.2.3. The transformation and coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist values 170
3.3. Summary of Qualitative Findings 182
3.4. Limitations of the Qualitative Study 184
4. DISCUSSION: CONDITIONAL GENERATIONAL CHANGE, VALUE COEXISTENCE, AND REVISION OF INGLEHART'S MODEL 186

4.1. Economic Development, Democratic Conditions, and Differentiated Forms of Insecurity 186
4.2. Generational Change under Age, Period, and National Heterogeneity 189
4.3. Generational Transmission and Relational Pathways of Security .. 192
4.4. Value Coexistence, Recombination, and Biographical Meaning ... 196
4.5. Religious Context, Institutional and Reflexive Orientations 199
4.6. The Revised Theoretical Model of Value Formation and Change in Postsocialist Societies 203
4.7. Theoretical Contribution, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research 207
CONCLUSIONS 213
REFERENCES 219
ANNEXES 246
SANTRAUKA 259
TRUMPOS ŽINIOS APIE DISERTANTĘ 275
BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE 276
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 277
PADĖKA 280
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS .. 282

INTRODUCTION

Relevance

The collapse of state socialism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a shared systemic rupture across a broad group of societies, but they did not produce a uniform postsocialist trajectory. The countries that underwent this transformation differed in their pre-socialist histories, forms of socialist modernisation, institutional legacies, and the subsequent paths of economic and political development (Blokker, 2005; Kokushkin, 2011; Lazić, 2011; Myant, 2007; Norkus, 2008, 2023; Offe & Adler, 2004; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017). These differences have continued to shape their institutional conditions, social relations, and responses to later processes such as globalisation, migration, digitalisation, consumer capitalism, and geopolitical insecurity. Postsocialism is therefore relevant not as a description of a homogeneous region, but, rather, as a historically connected and internally differentiated field in which the long-term consequences of systemic transformation can be compared.

The development of postsocialist societies is commonly assessed through macro-level indicators, particularly economic performance, democratisation, and institutional change. Such indicators are indispensable for comparing national trajectories, but they do not fully reveal how structural transformations are experienced, interpreted, and reproduced in everyday life. The study of values provides a link between societal change and individual orientation: values indicate how people evaluate security, autonomy, participation, social relationships, and desirable life goals within the opportunities and constraints of their historical context. Examining value change therefore complements institutional and economic accounts of postsocialist transformation without treating individual orientations as direct measures of the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of particular regimes, but rather by providing additional context to it.

Generational comparison offers a particularly important perspective on these processes. Generations occupy different locations in historical time and encounter societal institutions, cultural expectations, and forms of (in)security at different stages of their formative socialisation (Mannheim, 1952; Elder et al., 2003). In this dissertation, the first postsocialist generation comprises individuals born between 1991 and 2000, whose childhood and formative socialisation took place after the collapse of state socialism. Its members did not directly experience the socialist system in the same way as earlier generations, but they grew up in societies whose institutions, families, and

social relations continued to be shaped by socialist legacies and postsocialist transformation. Comparison with the penultimate socialist (born 1961–1970), last socialist (1971–1980), and transitional generations (1981–1990) makes it possible to examine whether this distinct historical location is associated with a different configuration of value orientations. The category does not imply that all members of the first postsocialist generation share identical experiences or values; rather, it identifies a common historical position whose consequences may differ across national and individual contexts.

Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change provides one of the most influential explanations of the relationship between generational socialisation, existential security, and long-term shifts from materialist towards postmaterialist priorities (Inglehart, 1971, 1977, 1997). However, its principal assumptions were developed primarily through the experience of Western postindustrial societies. Their application to postsocialist societies raises several unresolved questions. Socialist industrialisation did not produce the same relationship between economic development, individual prosperity, and political opportunity as that observed in Western societies. Subsequent postsocialist development has also been uneven and repeatedly affected by economic crises, institutional instability, migration, war, and other forms of insecurity. At the same time, cultural liberalisation, global communication, digital media, and transnational mobility may facilitate orientations towards autonomy and self-expression even where economic security remains limited. Postsocialist societies, therefore, provide a theoretically significant setting for examining whether generational value change follows the developmental sequence proposed by Inglehart or takes more conditional and context-dependent forms.

Existing research does not indicate a uniform trajectory of generational value change across postsocialist societies. Studies in Central and Eastern Europe have found younger generations to be less traditional in family, gender, and individual-choice norms, but the expected intergenerational growth of postmaterialist orientations remains uneven across countries and periods (Manea & Rabušic, 2021). Research in Serbia and the post-Soviet region associates younger generations with stronger emancipative values, individualism, independence, and entrepreneurial orientations, while also identifying continuing institutional distrust and marked national differences (Pavlović, 2018; Surzhko-Harned & Turkina, 2018). Estonian and Lithuanian studies likewise reveal cohort-specific changes towards freedom, individual choice, and less traditional religious and moral attitudes, but show that these developments coexist with ethnic differences, material and achievement priorities, and continuity in other value domains (Kalmus et al., 2018; Lilleoja

& Raudsepp, 2018; Žiliukaitė, 2016a; Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026). Other findings emphasise the persistence and intergenerational transmission of basic values despite the political rupture of 1989, as well as the contribution of period-related and within-cohort change alongside generational replacement (Gavreliuc & Gavreliuc, 2018; Savelyev, 2016).

Much of this research, however, is based either on quantitative cross-national comparisons or on studies of individual countries. Broader comparative evidence has rarely been integrated with biographical analysis capable of examining how historical and societal conditions acquire meaning through family socialisation, interpersonal relationships, institutional experiences, and individual interpretation. Consequently, the connections between macro-level transformation, generational socialisation, relational environments, and individual value orientations remain insufficiently explained.

A further problem concerns the meaning and measurement of value change. Inglehart's four-item postmaterialism index enables long-term and cross-national comparison, but it captures forced choices between a limited set of national priorities rather than the full theoretical domain of material security, autonomy, participation, belonging, and self-expression. Similar survey responses may also carry different meanings across historical periods and national contexts. In this dissertation, value change is therefore examined in a deliberately delimited manner. The quantitative analysis investigates generational and contextual variation in the materialist–postmaterialist orientations represented by the four-item index, while the qualitative analysis examines how these orientations are articulated, combined, and interpreted within individual biographies. Qualitative evidence is not treated as another measurement of the survey index, but as a complementary form of evidence that can reveal meanings and mechanisms excluded from the standardised indicator.

The scientific relevance of this dissertation consequently lies in applying and critically reassessing Inglehart's model through a comparative mixed-methods study of heterogeneous postsocialist societies. By connecting cross-national and generational patterns with historically situated biographical accounts, the study examines value change across macro-level historical legacies and contemporary economic, political, religious, and societal conditions; whereas, meso-level contains generations as historically situated structures of socialisation and mediation, together with intergenerational transmission and relational environments such as families, friendships, partnerships, and communities; and micro-level is attributed to individual circumstances, life-course positions, experiences, and interpretations.

These levels are not treated as independent or deterministic sets of causes, but as analytically distinct dimensions, through which, societal conditions are mediated and value orientations are formed, reproduced, or reinterpreted. The model assumes interaction between these levels rather than unidirectional transmission of macro-level conditions to passive individuals. This approach makes it possible to evaluate both the continuing explanatory value and the limitations of Inglehart's model without assuming either a uniform postsocialist trajectory or a linear replacement of one set of values by another.

Research subject and research question

The subject of this dissertation is generational change in materialist and postmaterialist value orientations in postsocialist societies, with particular attention to the first postsocialist generation. The study compares four historically defined ten-year birth cohorts – the penultimate socialist generation (1961–1970), the last socialist generation (1971–1980), the transitional generation (1981–1990), and the first postsocialist generation (1991–2000) – across 24 postsocialist societies. The first postsocialist generation constitutes the central analytical focus, but its distinctiveness is assessed through comparison with generations whose formative socialisation took place under different historical and institutional conditions.

The central **research question** is therefore:

How do materialist and postmaterialist value orientations differ between the first postsocialist generation and earlier generations across postsocialist societies, and how can these differences be understood in relation to macro-level historical and contemporary conditions, meso-level processes of generational socialisation and relational mediation, and micro-level individual circumstances and interpretations?

Theoretical assumptions

The principal theoretical framework of this dissertation is Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change, which connects long-term societal change with existential security, formative socialisation, and generational replacement (Inglehart, 1971, 1977, 1997). The theory is based on two hypotheses – those of scarcity and socialisation. The scarcity hypothesis proposes that individuals give greater priority to needs that are in relatively short supply, first of all – survival needs, whereas the socialisation hypothesis maintains that basic value orientations are formed primarily during childhood and early adulthood. At the societal level, generations socialised under

conditions of greater economic and physical security are, therefore, expected to place greater emphasis on autonomy, participation, self-expression, and the quality of life. As these generations replace those formed under conditions of insecurity, materialist priorities are expected gradually to give way to postmaterialist ones.

The dissertation distinguishes between the early materialism–postmaterialism formulation of Inglehart's theory and its later development into the two-dimensional cultural map. The primary theoretical and empirical construct examined in this study is the materialist–postmaterialist orientation, interpreted within the broader survival–self-expression dimension. The traditional–secular-rational dimension is retained as a complementary perspective relevant to religious and cultural change, but it is not treated as equivalent to materialism–postmaterialism or combined with it into a single continuum. Individual religiosity and country-level religious context are analysed as factors associated with materialist and postmaterialist orientations; this does not constitute a full empirical test of the traditional–secular-rational dimension.

The application of Inglehart's theory to postsocialist societies requires particular caution. The original model was developed primarily through research on Western industrial and postindustrial societies, while postsocialist countries entered the World Values Survey comparison only after the political transformations of 1989–1991. Inglehart expected economic development and generational replacement eventually to strengthen postmaterialist orientations in these societies, although he also recognised that this process could be delayed and prolonged (Inglehart, 1997). Nevertheless, socialist industrialisation did not create the same relationship between economic prosperity, political opportunity, and individual security as industrialisation in Western societies. Moreover, the collapse of state socialism was followed by divergent processes of institutional reconstruction, economic development, democratisation, migration, cultural liberalisation, and geopolitical insecurity. The assumptions of the original model, therefore, cannot be transferred to postsocialist societies without considering their distinct and internally heterogeneous historical trajectories.

Postsocialism is consequently treated as a historically bounded comparative framework rather than as a uniform or exhaustive explanation of value change. The 24 societies included in the quantitative analysis share an experience of state-socialist rule or incorporation into the Soviet Union or socialist Yugoslavia and a subsequent systemic reorganisation of their political, economic, and institutional orders. However, they differ in their pre-socialist histories, forms of socialist modernisation, experiences of

transformation, religious traditions, economic and democratic development, and exposure to later national and global processes. Drawing on path-dependence approaches, the dissertation assumes that these historical trajectories shape the conditions under which generations are socialised without determining a single postsocialist value pattern (Ekiert & Ziblatt, 2013).

Generations are conceptualised by combining a cohort-based operational definition with a Mannheimian understanding of historically situated social locations (Mannheim, 1952). The four ten-year birth cohorts used in the dissertation identify groups whose formative socialisation occurred in different relationships to late socialism, systemic transformation, and the consolidation of postsocialist institutions. These categories make generational comparison possible, but they do not imply that *all* members of a cohort share identical experiences or value orientations. Generational position is analytically distinct from age and the survey period: age refers to life-course position, whereas period pertains to historical conditions affecting respondents at a particular time, and cohort refers to the shared temporal location created by the year of birth and formative historical experience. Empirically, however, the age, period, and cohort are structurally interdependent, because cohort is determined by the relationship between age and period. Their pure and independent causal effects, therefore, cannot be identified from observational survey data without imposing additional assumptions (Bell & Jones, 2013; Fosse & Winship, 2019a). The dissertation does not claim to overcome this identification problem. Instead, it examines whether conditional generational differences remain observable when broad age-group and survey-period categories, country, and individual characteristics are considered together.

Inglehart's theory is supplemented by perspectives on late modernity, individualisation, risk, and relational security. These approaches draw attention to forms of insecurity that cannot be reduced to national income or immediate material deprivation (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000, 2007). Economic development may expand autonomy and opportunities while also generating uncertainty related to employment, housing, social recognition, identity, relationships, and individual responsibility.

The initial theoretical model therefore retains Inglehart's propositions concerning existential security, formative socialisation, and generational replacement while leaving their empirical operation in postsocialist societies open to examination. It does not presuppose that value change must follow a uniform linear replacement of materialist orientations by postmaterialist ones, nor does it assume in advance the final categories through which the findings will be interpreted. In the title of the dissertation, the *application* of Inglehart's

model refers to the empirical examination of its expectations by using comparative quantitative evidence, while its *revision* refers to the subsequent reconsideration of the model through the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Novelty

The novelty of this dissertation does not lie in claiming that generational value change or Inglehart's theory has not previously been studied in postsocialist societies. Its contribution arises from combining a broad cross-national generational comparison, a contrastive qualitative study of the first postsocialist generation, and the integration of both forms of evidence in order to reassess the explanatory scope and substantive meaning of Inglehart's model. This combination makes it possible to examine not only whether generational differences are observable, but also how their magnitude, direction, and meaning vary across historical, national, relational, and individual contexts.

The empirical contribution of the quantitative analysis consists of comparing four historically defined generations across 24 postsocialist societies using harmonised *World Values Survey* and *European Values Study* data from 1990 to 2022. The analysis considers the generation together with the age group, survey period, country, and individual characteristics, while also examining country-level economic, democratic, and religious contexts and national heterogeneity in generational differences. Rather than identifying a uniform regional transition, the findings establish a conditional generational pattern: the first postsocialist generation has higher adjusted odds of postmaterialist orientation than each of the three earlier generations in the pooled sample, but the magnitude and, in some countries, the direction of generational differences vary across national contexts. The generational association is therefore interpreted as statistically observable but substantively modest and inseparable from age–period–cohort limitations and heterogeneous national trajectories.

The qualitative contribution is based on 65 analysed biographical interviews with members of the first postsocialist generation in six purposively selected countries: Lithuania, Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. The comparison examines how materialist and postmaterialist priorities are articulated under contrasting conditions of economic development, institutional provision, relational support, and biographical (in)security. It identifies contextually grounded meanings and plausible pathways through which family socialisation,

interpersonal relationships, community ties, migration, employment, consumer aspirations, and individual interpretation may mediate broader societal conditions. These findings are not treated as representative national value profiles or as direct causal explanations of the quantitative coefficients. Their contribution lies in revealing configurations and meanings that cannot be distinguished by the standardised survey indicator.

The methodological contribution lies in the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design and in the specific manner in which the two empirical components are connected. Preliminary quantitative patterns informed the purposive selection of the six qualitative cases and the development of the interview guide. The qualitative analysis subsequently contributed not only to the interpretation of these patterns but also to the reconsideration of the meanings represented by the materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist survey categories. The qualitative study does not 'solve' the measurement limitations of the four-item index or reproduce its categories in another form; instead, it demonstrates what the index can compare, and what it necessarily leaves outside of its empirical scope.

The principal theoretical contribution is an empirically grounded refinement of Inglehart's model rather than its rejection or replacement. The revised model retains the importance of existential security, formative socialisation, generational replacement, and societal context, but connects them through a macro–meso–micro architecture. Macro-level historical trajectories and contemporary societal conditions are mediated through generations, intergenerational transmission, and relational environments, while their meanings are interpreted within individual biographies. This revision shifts the emphasis from a uniform sequence of value replacement towards conditional processes of coexistence, transformation, and recombination.

Within the broader field of materialist and nonmaterialist values, the revised model distinguishes four configurations. Classical materialist orientations concern subsistence, economic stability, and protection from immediate risks. Neo-materialist orientations concern accumulation, professional achievement, comfort, mobility, status, and lifestyle maintenance, with consumerism as their clearest expression. Relational nonmaterialist orientations concern family, friendship, reciprocity, solidarity, mutual support, and community as valued ends. Neo-nonmaterialist orientations emphasise autonomy, meaningful work, mental well-being, liberal life choices, self-realisation, and reflexively selected lifestyles. This distinction does not imply that all materialist orientations have become consumerist, or that all postmaterialist orientations are necessarily liberal and

individualised. The four configurations are not mutually exclusive types of individuals but are analytically distinguishable orientations that may overlap across life domains and coexist within the same biography.

The dissertation also proposes distinguishing institutional and reflexive orientations in the interpretation of religious, cultural, and moral change and in relation to Inglehart's second – traditional-secular (rational) – dimension. Institutional orientations refer to norms and meanings anchored in established institutions, inherited frameworks, collective traditions, and recognised authorities. Reflexive orientations refer to the active evaluation, selection, reinterpretation, and personal reconstruction of such norms and meanings. They are not opposite endpoints of a single continuum: institutional belonging may involve personal reflection, while reflexively selected beliefs may remain embedded in religious, familial, or communal traditions. These concepts refine the interpretation of the traditional–secular-rational dimension but do not constitute a fully operationalised quantitative replacement for it.

The revised model should, therefore, be understood as an empirically grounded theoretical proposal for further research rather than as a fully operationalised and validated measurement model. The dissertation does not claim that the proposed configurations are unique to postsocialist societies, particularly because it does not include a Western European or other non-postsocialist comparison group. Its theoretical novelty lies in specifying how generational value change is configured within historically differentiated postsocialist contexts and in formulating a model that can be operationalised and tested in future comparative research.

Methodology

The dissertation is based on a structured narrative synthesis and an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. The research process comprises three interconnected components: the development of the theoretical framework through literature synthesis, the quantitative examination of comparative generational patterns, and the qualitative interpretation and theoretical elaboration of these patterns. The overall analytical logic is abductive, combining deductive examination of theory-informed expectations with inductive attention to patterns and categories emerging from the empirical material. The quantitative approach primarily examines theory-informed hypotheses, whereas the qualitative approach uses theoretical concepts as sensitising points of departure while remaining open to categories and relationships emerging from the interview material. The

integration of both empirical components enables the initial theoretical model to be reconsidered in light of different but complementary forms of evidence.

The literature review covers three interconnected fields: generations, value change, and postsocialism. It is described as a structured narrative synthesis because it was not based on a preregistered review protocol, predetermined eligibility criteria, or a complete screening log. Sources were identified through searches in the *Web of Science* and *Scopus* databases, citation chaining, and targeted searches concerning the postsocialist countries, value change, generational differences, and Inglehart's theory. Relevant theoretical arguments, criticisms, and empirical findings were organised and compared by using *MAXQDA*. The purpose of the synthesis was to define the central concepts, assess competing explanations of value change, identify the limitations of Inglehart's model in heterogeneous postsocialist societies, and develop the initial theoretical framework informing the empirical analysis. The detailed search and synthesis procedures are presented in Section 1.1.

The quantitative analysis uses harmonised data from the *World Values Survey* and the *European Values Study* collected between 1990 and 2022 in 24 postsocialist societies. Respondents born between 1961 and 2000 are classified into four historically defined ten-year cohorts: the penultimate socialist, last socialist, transitional, and first postsocialist generations. The dependent variable is the three-category version of Inglehart's four-item postmaterialism index, distinguishing materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist responses according to their choices among a limited set of national economic and political priorities. Although this indicator enables long-term and cross-national comparison, it does not measure the full theoretical domain of material security, autonomy, participation, belonging, or self-expression. The mixed category may contain substantively different combinations of priorities, while the meaning of choices such as maintaining order or fighting rising prices may vary between historical periods and national contexts. The index is therefore treated as a partial and context-sensitive indicator of materialist and postmaterialist priorities rather than as a comprehensive measurement of the individual's value system.

The principal pooled model is based on 78,889 respondents. It estimates generational associations while simultaneously accounting for broad age-group and survey-period categories, country, sex, marital status, number of children, education, and individual religiosity. Separate analyses examine the relationships between postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation and country-level economic development, deliberative democracy, and religious context. The V-Dem Deliberative Democracy Index is used to characterise the democratic context with particular attention to the quality of public decision-

making. It combines electoral democracy with an assessment of public reasoning, orientation towards the common good, respect for counterarguments, consultation, and societal engagement (Coppedge et al., 2025). Its theoretical relevance to this dissertation lies in the relationship between these institutional conditions and the postmaterialist emphasis on political voice and self-expression. Country-specific contrasts and a country-by-generation interaction are used to assess the heterogeneity of generational differences. The individual economic position and the town size are included only in a smaller-sample sensitivity analysis because their uneven availability would substantially reduce the principal analytical sample.

The age–period–cohort framework is used as a theory-guided analytical strategy rather than as a claim that the independent causal effects of age, period, and cohort can be completely separated. The data consist of repeated cross-sectional surveys rather than longitudinal observations of the same individuals, and generations are represented at different ages and with unequal coverage across survey periods. The quantitative findings are, therefore, interpreted as conditional associations within the observed harmonised sample. The analysis identifies comparative distributions and adjusted relationships but does not establish causal effects of generational socialisation or country-level conditions.

The qualitative analysis followed the preliminary quantitative analysis and was designed as both an explanatory and a theory-elaborating stage. Semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted with members of the first postsocialist generation in six purposively selected societies: Lithuania, Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. The preliminary quantitative distributions informed the contrastive case selection and the interview guide's focus on the conditions under which materialist and postmaterialist priorities persisted, strengthened, or coexisted. Economic development served as the principal comparative dimension, while the geographical location and religious context were considered in order to increase the variety of cases represented. The comparison was not intended to produce nationally representative samples or to divide the six societies into internally homogeneous country types.

A total of 66 interviews were conducted between March and October 2024. One incomplete Czech interview was excluded because it did not cover the full range of topics and was not comparable with the remaining material; the final qualitative analysis therefore comprises 65 interviews. The interviews were conducted in Lithuanian, English, Russian, or a combination of Russian and English. The material was analysed in *MAXQDA* by using qualitative

content analysis guided by an abductive, theory-informed approach. Initial sensitising concepts derived from the theoretical framework and preliminary quantitative findings were combined with predominantly inductive category development. The analysis proceeded through iterative coding, comparison of recurring and contradictory cases, and reconsideration of the relationships proposed in the initial theoretical model. Coding frequencies were used only to document the organisation of the material and were not interpreted as estimates of thematic prevalence.

The two empirical components are integrated at several stages of the research. First, the preliminary quantitative findings informed the selection of qualitative cases. Second, they influenced the priorities and questions included in the interview guide. Third, the quantitative and qualitative findings are brought together in the discussion in order to interpret comparative patterns, reconsider the substantive meanings of the survey categories, and revise the theoretical model. The qualitative findings are not treated as direct causal explanations of statistical coefficients, and the quantitative results are not treated as population-level confirmation of the qualitative categories. Instead, the two components address different dimensions of the same research problem: the quantitative analysis identifies comparative patterns and associations, while the qualitative analysis examines how value priorities are experienced, articulated, combined, and interpreted within particular biographies and social contexts.

The overall analytical logic is abductive. The research begins with expectations derived from Inglehart's theory and its criticisms, evaluates them through quantitative evidence, and subsequently returns to the theoretical framework through qualitative interpretation and mixed-methods integration. The revision of the model is therefore neither derived from theory alone nor generated inductively from the interviews in isolation. It results from a continuous comparison between theoretical propositions, statistical patterns, biographical accounts, contradictory cases, and the limitations of each form of evidence.

The aim and objectives of the thesis

The **aim of this dissertation** is to examine generational change in materialist and postmaterialist value orientations across postsocialist societies, with particular attention to the first postsocialist generation, and to evaluate and empirically refine Ronald Inglehart's model of value change through the integration of comparative quantitative and qualitative evidence.

The **objectives of the dissertation** are as follows:

1. To synthesise and critically assess theoretical and empirical approaches to generations, value change, and postsocialism, and to develop an initial multilevel conceptual model connecting macro-level historical and contemporary conditions, meso-level generational and relational processes, and micro-level individual circumstances and value orientations.
2. To examine the distribution of materialist and postmaterialist value orientations across four historically defined generations in 24 postsocialist societies by using harmonised World Values Survey and European Values Study data, and to assess their conditional associations with generation, age group, survey period, country, individual characteristics, religiosity, and country-level economic, democratic, and religious context.
3. To explore how materialist and postmaterialist value priorities, as well as religious and moral orientations, are experienced, articulated, combined, and interpreted by members of the first postsocialist generation in six purposively selected postsocialist countries, and to identify contextually grounded relational and biographical processes relevant to their formation and transformation.
4. To integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings in order to evaluate the explanatory scope and limitations of Inglehart's materialism–postmaterialism model of value change and to develop an empirically refined multilevel model applicable to historically differentiated postsocialist and late-modern capitalist contexts.

Statements to be defended

1. Postmaterialist value orientations are stronger in the first postsocialist generation than in earlier generations, but generational change is uneven, modest, and context-dependent.
2. Economic development and deliberative democracy are positively associated with postmaterialist orientations, but neither condition alone accounts for their heterogeneous distribution across postsocialist societies.
3. Insecurity is experienced and managed through relational environments. Family, friendship, partnership, and community ties may provide security and support, but they may also reproduce dependence, obligation, control, or emotional insecurity.
4. Value change does not follow a linear replacement of materialist orientations by postmaterialist ones but involves their coexistence, transformation, and recombination. Therefore, the revised model

distinguishes survival-oriented classical materialism from consumption and achievement-oriented neomaterialism, and relationship and solidarity-oriented relational nonmaterialism from autonomy and self-realisation-oriented neo-nonmaterialism.

5. Religious and moral change in the first postsocialist generation does not follow a uniform transition from institutional tradition to secular-rational values. Therefore, the revised model distinguishes between institutionally anchored orientations based on inherited traditions, collective norms, and established authorities versus reflexive orientations based on the individual evaluation, selection, and reinterpretation of beliefs and meanings.

Notes on research ethics

The qualitative study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Compliance Committee for Education, Pedagogy, Sociology, Social Work, Social Policy, and Criminology (SSDI UMI AMTE Committee) at the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University. All participants received information about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided written informed consent before the interviews. Participation was voluntary, and the participants could decline to answer individual questions, interrupt the interview, or withdraw from the study. The interview material was anonymised, identifying information was stored separately from analytical transcripts, and all quotations used in the dissertation were verified against the original recordings. Detailed information on consent, recording, transcription, translation, anonymisation, data storage, and participant protection is provided in Section 3.1 and Annex 5.

The dissertation also follows the principle of transparency regarding the use of automated and generative artificial intelligence tools. Such tools were used in supporting roles, including transcription and translation, language editing, literature-oriented discussion, and assistance with the development and debugging of the *R* code. They were not used to generate empirical data, independently conduct statistical analyses, code qualitative interviews, select empirical evidence, or produce research interpretations and conclusions. All sources, code, translations, analytical suggestions and final formulations were critically reviewed and remain the full responsibility of the author. The use of particular tools within the empirical research process is described in the relevant methodology sections.

Structure

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, references, and annexes.

Chapter 1 develops the theoretical framework of the dissertation through a structured narrative synthesis of the literature. It situates value change within the social and historical conditions of postsocialist transformation and late modernity, discusses generational approaches and Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change together with its main criticisms, and reviews research on the first postsocialist generation. On this basis, the chapter formulates an initial macro–meso–micro analytical model that guides the empirical investigation.

Chapter 2 presents the quantitative part of the research. Drawing on harmonised World Values Survey and European Values Study data from 24 postsocialist countries collected between 1990 and 2022, it examines generational differences in materialist and postmaterialist orientations and their associations with age, historical period, socioeconomic development, democratic context, and religiosity.

Chapter 3 presents the qualitative part of the research, based on 65 interviews with members of the first postsocialist generation from six countries. It examines how security, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, achievement, consumption, solidarity, religion, and morality are understood and negotiated in the participants' accounts. The analysis provides a more differentiated interpretation of the coexistence, transformation, and recombination of materialist and postmaterialist value orientations.

Chapter 4 integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings and discusses them in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research. It evaluates the explanatory possibilities and limitations of Inglehart's model in postsocialist societies and develops its context-sensitive revision by distinguishing classical and emerging forms of materialist and nonmaterialist orientations.

The dissertation is finalised with conclusions. It answers the research question, summarises the findings in relation to the research objectives and statements to be defended, and outlines the study's theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions, limitations, and directions for further research.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Literature Review Methodology

This dissertation presents a structured narrative synthesis of three interconnected research fields: generations, value change, and postsocialism. Its purpose is not to provide exhaustive coverage of each field, but, instead, to identify, compare, and integrate the theoretical arguments and empirical studies needed to understand how generational value change may unfold in postsocialist societies. The literature search was not based on a preregistered review protocol, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, or a complete screening log. Therefore, the literature review is described as a structured narrative synthesis.

Sources were initially identified through keyword searches in the *Web of Science* and *Scopus* databases. Different combinations of terms related to generations, cohorts, values and value change, materialism and postmaterialism, socialism and postsocialism, communism and postcommunism, individualisation, and identity were used. The search was subsequently extended through citation chaining – that is, by examining both the references cited in relevant publications and later publications that cited them – and by following authors, theories, and concepts encountered during the reading process.

The selection of literature was iterative and based on its relevance to the research problem rather than on formally predetermined eligibility criteria. Titles and abstracts were initially examined to identify potentially relevant publications. Where a publication appeared connected to the research problem, its introduction, conclusions, and, subsequently, the full text were examined in greater detail. In practice, sources were retained when they contributed to the conceptualisation of generations, values, or postsocialism; examined relationships between these fields; developed or criticised Inglehart's theory; or provided relevant empirical evidence from postsocialist and comparable contexts. Publications that proved unrelated to these purposes were not included in the final synthesis.

The geographical coverage of the literature is necessarily uneven. Internationally indexed and English-language research is substantially more extensive for Lithuania and parts of Central and Eastern Europe than for some Balkan, South Caucasian, and Central Asian societies. To reduce this imbalance, the synthesis was supplemented with targeted searches for country-specific studies from the six qualitative research settings – Lithuania,

Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan – particularly in relation to socialist and postsocialist transformation, religion, family and social ties, political participation, employment, migration, and global and digital change. Nevertheless, the unequal availability and comparability of regional research remain a limitation when formulating theoretical expectations intended to apply across all 24 countries.

Relevant passages from the retained publications were highlighted and imported into *MAXQDA*. Coding was used as an organisational and interpretative aid rather than as a formal quantitative content analysis of the literature. The initial broad categories reflected the three conceptual fields of the dissertation and its developing theoretical framework, while additional themes and subthemes were added during the reading process. This procedure facilitated the comparison of definitions, theoretical arguments, criticisms, and empirical findings across different bodies of literature. The list of literature codes is provided in Annex 1.

The resulting synthesis performs four functions in the dissertation. First, it defines and critically relates the central concepts of generation, value change, and postsocialism. Second, it reviews competing explanations of value change and establishes Inglehart's theory as the principal, but not exhaustive, analytical framework. Third, it identifies the theory's limitations when applied to heterogeneous postsocialist societies and brings them into dialogue with research on historical legacies, individualisation, capitalism, and late modernity. Finally, the synthesis provides the basis for the theoretical model and for interpreting the quantitative and qualitative findings without treating the existing literature as a source of predetermined empirical conclusions.

1.2. Postsocialist and Late-Modern Context

This section establishes the structural and historical context before turning to the generations formed within it and to their value orientations. **In this dissertation, postsocialist societies are understood as societies that were governed by state-socialist regimes or formed part of the Soviet Union or socialist Yugoslavia and subsequently underwent a fundamental reorganisation of their political, economic, and institutional orders.**

The year 1991 is used as a common operational boundary for defining the first postsocialist generation because it marks the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consolidation of the broader regional rupture of the former socialist order. This does not imply that regime change began on the same date or proceeded in the same way in all 24 countries: political transformation had already begun in several Central and Eastern European societies in

approximately 1989, while the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the transformation of some former Soviet republics followed different trajectories. Postsocialism is therefore treated as a shared experience of systemic rupture and institutional reconstruction rather than as a uniform regional condition. The following sections examine these divergent trajectories, pre-socialist and socialist legacies, and the global and late-modern processes that shaped the socialisation of the first postsocialist generation.

1.2.1. Socialist modernisation and divergent postsocialist transformations

Before examining postsocialist transformation, it is necessary to position state socialism within broader debates about modernisation. Norkus (2008) distinguishes convergence theories, which emphasise similarities between Western and socialist modernisation and treat them as different variants of a more general modernisation process. By contrast, theories of multiple, alternative, entangled, or hybrid modernities reject the assumption of a single universal path and emphasise the historical and national differentiation of modernisation processes (Delanty, 1999; Eisenstadt, 2000; Therborn, 2003; Arnason, 2000; Wagner, 2010).

Within this debate, socialist modernisation can be understood as an incomplete or failed promise of modernisation rather than as a uniform developmental stage. Norkus (2008) argues that its historical role depended on the conditions that preceded socialism. In countries where modernisation had already advanced before the socialist takeover, it functioned as an intermediate and partly disruptive phase of an existing process. In less modernised societies, it operated as a form of accelerated or "turbo-modernisation". Consequently, the countries which were later classified as postsocialist entered and left the socialist period with different institutional legacies, levels of socioeconomic development, and experiences of modernity.

Postsocialist democratisation and economic transformation were, likewise, neither uniform nor linear. Their trajectories were shaped by different institutional starting points, local political struggles, historical legacies, and strategies of market reform (Blokker, 2005; Norkus, 2008; Kokushkin, 2011). Political and economic restructuring was accompanied by social and cultural change, while external forces, particularly European integration and the broader dominance of Western economic and political models, also influenced the direction of transformation (Lazić, 2011; Kollmorgen, 2019). Norkus (2008) consequently distinguishes several orientations of postsocialist

transformation according to changes in countries' ideological, political, and economic systems.

These divergent transformations contributed to the emergence of several varieties of capitalism rather than to a single postsocialist economic model (Myant, 2007). Their outcomes cannot be evaluated solely by measuring the distance travelled towards one presumed 'Western endpoint'. They must also be assessed in relation to these countries' initial conditions, their development capacities, and their economic and institutional performance during socialism and, where relevant, before it (Kołodko, 2010; Norkus, 2023).

Democratic transformation was also a gradual and uneven process. Although formal democratic institutions were established in much of Central and Eastern Europe, elements of authoritarian governance persisted in legal systems, property relations, restrictions on civil liberties, and practices used to suppress dissent or manage social conflict (Offe & Adler, 2004; Norkus, 2008; Tucker, 2015). These continuities limited the consolidation of democratic institutions and left open the possibility of subsequent authoritarian backsliding.

The trajectories of democratisation were also shaped by different historical starting points. Czechoslovakia maintained parliamentary democracy until 1938, whereas democratic institutions were undermined by authoritarian turns in Poland and Lithuania in 1926 and in Latvia and Estonia in 1934. Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia also had parliamentary and electoral traditions, although the scope of political competition varied over time and was constrained by royal intervention, electoral manipulation, and authoritarian rule. In Hungary, parliamentary institutions and multiparty elections operated within an authoritarian political order (cf. Waller, 2025). By contrast, the other Soviet republics and Albania had little or no comparable democratic experience. The socialist regimes themselves also differed: Yugoslavia, Poland, and the late Soviet Union experienced periods of limited liberalisation, whereas Albania, Romania, and Czechoslovakia retained more restrictive forms of political rule during substantial parts of the socialist period (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017). Memories and narratives of these earlier experiences were reactivated during regime change and influenced how democracy, capitalism, and national autonomy were subsequently interpreted.

The late-socialist economic recession of the 1980s and the disruption that followed the regime collapse further differentiated national trajectories. At the country level, the transformation produced relatively successful cases as well as societies affected by prolonged economic decline, institutional weakness, corruption, or political instability. However, national economic recovery did

not necessarily produce security at the individual level, because the costs and opportunities of transformation were distributed unevenly within each society.

Another influential debate concerned the pace and sequencing of market reforms. Rapid reforms were associated with comparatively successful economic restructuring in parts of Central Europe and the Baltic region, but similar strategies in institutionally weaker contexts were accompanied by economic concentration, corruption, and oligarchic development. Gradual reform reduced some immediate social costs in other cases, although it did not – by itself – guarantee either economic or democratic success (Stiglitz, 1999; Åslund, 2012). The results of transformation, therefore, depended not only on whether the reforms were rapid or gradual, but also on the institutional capacity, political choices, historical legacies, and the wider international environment.

At the individual level, transformation created differently positioned 'winners' and 'losers'. People's ability to adapt depended on whether their education, occupational experience, economic resources, and social connections could be converted into advantages under the new conditions. Some individuals who had occupied relatively secure positions under socialism experienced downward mobility, whereas others gained new opportunities through market liberalisation and institutional change (Eyal et al., 1998; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017). These experiences also shaped political attitudes: economic losses could weaken support for democracy and capitalism, although, in some societies, hardship was attributed to the former communist system rather than to the reforms themselves (Greskovits, 1998; Pop-Eleches, 2009).

The coexistence of durable generational differences and changing political evaluations can be interpreted through two partly competing approaches: socialisation theory and the 'running tally' model. The socialisation approach emphasises that political and social conditions experienced during the formative years produce relatively persistent orientations. The 'running tally' model, by contrast, proposes that individuals continually update their evaluations in response to subsequent experiences of economic performance, democratic governance, and institutional effectiveness (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017).

Existing evidence supports elements of both explanations. Orientations formed under socialism may persist after regime change, particularly where the exposure to the former system was longer, or where post-transformation institutions remain weak. At the same time, successful experiences of democracy and capitalism may revise previously negative or suspicious attitudes, while economic and political crises may reactivate insecurity and

reduce institutional support. Generational socialisation should, therefore, not be treated as an immutable determinant of values.

Scholars also disagree about when postsocialist transformation can be considered complete. Norkus (2012) argues that Central European and Baltic societies had largely completed their systemic transformation by approximately 2000, whereas, in Belarus, this process had advanced only to a limited extent. Sommers and Woolfson (2014), by contrast, suggest that the social consequences of transformation in the Baltic states continued much longer, and that a sense of 'normal life' emerged only around 2014. Such disagreement reflects not only different national trajectories but also different understandings of whether transformation refers to institutional reform, economic recovery, democratic consolidation, or the everyday experience of social stability.

In this dissertation, *postsocialism* is, therefore, not understood as a permanent regional essence or as a single transitional stage that every country must inevitably complete. It is used as a path-dependent interpretative framework for analysing how systemic rupture, institutional reconstruction, and the social consequences of transformation continued to shape the conditions under which different generations were socialised. Members of the first postsocialist generation have no direct socialisation experience of socialism, but they grew up in institutions, families, and societies transformed by its collapse. These inherited conditions interacted with globalisation, neoliberal capitalism, migration, digitalisation, and later crises rather than determining the generation's values on their own.

1.2.2. Pre-socialist and socialist legacies in value socialisation

Path-dependence[1] provides a framework for understanding why formally similar socialist institutions did not produce identical social and cultural outcomes. The effects of state socialism depended on the national, institutional, economic, and cultural conditions that preceded it. Pre-socialist experiences of industrialisation, urbanisation, capitalism, independent statehood, religious organisation, and political participation continued to shape how socialist modernisation was implemented and experienced (Norkus, 2008, 2012; Leonavičius et al., 2021).

[1] Path dependence refers to the ways in which earlier institutional, cultural, and political trajectories condition subsequent possibilities without mechanically determining them. It is particularly useful for long-term comparative analysis because it draws attention to how institutions, cultural norms, and collective memories create different constraints and opportunities across cases (cf. Ekiert & Ziblatt, 2013).

Socialist modernisation nevertheless profoundly reorganised the societies in question through industrialisation and central planning, the expansion of education, scientific and technological development, urbanisation, women's participation in education and employment, and the transformation of private and public life (Crow, 1997; Hoffmann, 2000; Kotkin, 2001; Maurer et al., 2011; Krylova, 2014; Leonavičius et al., 2021; Ignatovich & Walter, 2021). These processes modernised important areas of social life but did not produce a uniform socialist social order, because they interacted with different pre-existing trajectories and regime-specific institutions.

Research from parts of Central and Eastern Europe suggests that individualisation was also present during socialism, although it did not necessarily take the same form as individualisation in Western societies (Žiliukaitė, 2016b; Gavreliuc & Gavreliuc, 2018). In societies with stronger pre-socialist memories of private property, national statehood, religious practice, and political or cultural autonomy, officially promoted collectivist identities could coexist with more autonomous identities and practices maintained in private life. Socialist and pre-socialist forms of modernity, therefore, interacted – and sometimes even conflicted – with one another (Leonavičius et al., 2021). This interpretation, however, is most applicable to societies with relevant pre-socialist experiences and should not be generalised to *all* postsocialist countries.

This form of individualisation had an ambivalent character. Private practices could preserve autonomy, identity, and cultural continuity under restrictive political conditions. At the same time, surveillance, arbitrary victimisation, shortages, and the discrepancy between publicly acceptable behaviour and privately maintained beliefs could weaken generalised trust and encourage withdrawal into close relationships or reliance on oneself (Gavreliuc & Gavreliuc, 2018; Žiliukaitė, 2016b). The disruption of institutions and the growth of socioeconomic inequality after regime change could further reinforce these tendencies (Kolarska-Bobińska, 1991). Individualisation in postsocialist societies should, therefore, not be interpreted solely as growing autonomy and self-expression; it may also develop as a defensive response to distrust, insecurity, and unreliable collective support.

These legacies were transmitted not only through political institutions but also through family relationships. Lithuanian research indicates that families whose histories or beliefs conflicted with the socialist regime sometimes concealed biographical information from their children because openly discussing it could carry social or political risks. Secrecy, restricted communication, and emotional distancing could consequently affect trust within the family and the intergenerational transmission of historical

experience (Gailienė, 2022). This extends path dependence from formal institutions to family socialisation and emotional security.

Family relationships were also shaped by the interaction between socialist modernisation and pre-existing patriarchal gender arrangements. The expansion of women's education and employment increased their autonomy and opportunities for public participation, while responsibility for childcare and domestic work often remained unequally distributed. Working hours, limited childcare provision, and reliance on grandparents, older siblings, weekly kindergartens, or boarding institutions could reduce everyday contact between parents and children in some families (Leinartė, 2022). These arrangements should not be assumed to have produced identical consequences in every family: they could provide essential practical support and enable women's autonomy, but they could also contribute to emotional distance, early self-reliance, or intergenerational tensions. They therefore illustrate the internally contradictory character of socialist modernisation rather than a uniformly negative family model.

These studies identify possible mechanisms through which socialist and early postsocialist experiences may have contributed to self-reliance, restricted interpersonal trust, and uneven family support. However, much of the cited evidence concerns Lithuania and particular groups or family configurations. It should, therefore, be treated as evidence of potential mechanisms rather than as proof of a uniform legacy shared by all 24 postsocialist societies.

Recent research on the first postsocialist generation in Lithuania develops this argument by showing how systemic transformation could produce a form of forced independence. Parents and teachers who had themselves been socialised under the former system did not always possess the knowledge or resources needed to guide children through the rapidly changing educational, economic, and social environment. This problem was particularly pronounced in families already affected by conflict, socioeconomic disadvantage, or unresolved traumatic experiences (Žilinskienė & Kraniauskienė, 2024; Kraniauskienė, 2024; Žilinskienė, 2024).

Under such conditions, some members of the first postsocialist generation had to assume responsibility for navigating education, relationships, work, and future planning relatively early. Family relationships could nevertheless operate as an important source of economic and psychosocial security in an unstable environment, and the availability and quality of this support varied substantially (Žilinskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024). The literature, therefore, opens the possibility that inherited distrust, forced self-reliance, and supportive intergenerational relations may coexist. Whether and how these

mechanisms shape the value orientations of the first postsocialist generation remains an empirical question to be addressed later in the dissertation.

1.2.3. Globalisation, westernisation, and digital mediation

Younger generations in postsocialist societies are exposed to globalisation processes in ways comparable to their counterparts elsewhere in the world. They encounter global cultural narratives, cosmopolitan outlooks, and more fluid forms of identification, which may contrast with the more localised worldviews and socialist legacies shaping the socialisation of older generations (Thorpe & Inglis, 2019; Kalmus et al., 2013; Ibold, 2010). However, this contrast should not be understood as an absolute opposition between globally oriented younger generations and locally oriented older ones. Global cultural influences are interpreted through historically formed national, local, and generational experiences.

These developments are intertwined with processes of social acceleration, including the rapid development of information technologies, changing and increasingly heterogeneous labour markets, and an intensification of the pace of everyday life. Such conditions contribute to an increasing scarcity of time and may make long-term commitments more difficult to establish and maintain (Rosa, 2013). In postsocialist societies, global social acceleration coincided with particularly rapid and locally specific political, economic, and social transformations (Nugin & Kalmus, 2018). Younger generations were therefore socialised not only during an intensified circulation of global cultural influences, but also amid the continuing institutional and social consequences of postsocialist transformation.

Savicka (2004) conceptualises cultural globalisation as a mechanism of value change that is distinct from, although intertwined with, adaptation to changing socioeconomic conditions. Whereas Inglehart's theory primarily links postmaterialist value change to increasing existential security and generational replacement, cultural globalisation draws attention to the cross-border diffusion of ideas, lifestyles, symbols, and practices. In Central European postsocialist societies, the collapse of the Iron Curtain rapidly expanded access to previously restricted Western cultural flows. Savicka describes this regionally specific process as westernisation. For parts of Central and Baltic Europe, it was also associated with European integration and the political narrative of a 'return to Europe'. However, neither this narrative nor the direction and intensity of Western influence can be applied uniformly to all postsocialist countries.

Recent Lithuanian research likewise indicates that younger generations were socialised under conditions of increasing global cultural openness, technological expansion, and European integration (Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026). Through mass and digital media, global cultural influences can reach economically disadvantaged societies as well as affluent ones. Consequently, orientations associated with autonomy and self-expression may diffuse even where the level of economic security presumed by Inglehart's theory remains unstable. Nevertheless, exposure does not necessarily result in the uniform adoption of postmaterialist values or straightforward convergence towards Western value patterns because the direction, intensity, and political meaning of Western influence differed across the postsocialist region. Savicka (2004) emphasises that global cultural flows transmit not only liberal ideas, individual autonomy, and self-expression, but also consumerism, personal success, prestige, and market competition.

Studies conducted across cases including Mongolia, Ukraine, Latvia, and Georgia indicate that young people negotiate between global, national, regional, and local identities rather than simply abandoning one level of identification in favour of another (Peacock, 2015; Dovchin, 2015; Khoshtaria et al., 2021). Global identification may, therefore, coexist with, transform, or reactivate local and national belonging. Similarly, online socialisation may expand social networks while changing the forms and intensity of interpersonal interaction.

The spread of therapeutic discourse represents one example of how global cultural repertoires are localised in postsocialist societies (Plepytė-Davidavičienė, 2023). Lithuanian studies indicate that members of the first postsocialist generation have increasingly appropriated psychological language and practices as legitimate ways of interpreting the self, responsibility, suffering, and healing (Žilinskienė & Kraniauskienė, 2024). This development should neither be evaluated normatively nor reduced to individualisation alone. Rather, it reflects an interaction between globally circulating therapeutic culture and local experiences of rapid social change, insecurity, and intergenerational or collective trauma (Kraniauskienė, 2024; Žilinskienė, 2024).

Globalisation has also expanded possibilities for forms of life organised around mobility and transnational connections rather than a fixed location (Elliott & Urry, 2010). In postsocialist societies, these possibilities increased individual choice and access to new educational, occupational, and relational trajectories, while also exposing individuals and relationships to uncertainty, distance, and new forms of fragility (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Lithuanian research shows that mobile practices

contributed to European and cosmopolitan identifications among the first postsocialist generation, while simultaneously creating challenges for maintaining interpersonal relationships across distance (Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė-Mačkinė, 2024a).

Overall, globalisation should not be treated as an external force that simply replaces postsocialist legacies. It interacts with inherited institutions, inequalities, collective memories, and local forms of belonging, while providing access to liberal, consumerist, therapeutic, and cosmopolitan repertoires. **In this dissertation, globalisation and digital mediation are, therefore, treated as contextual processes rather than as separately operationalised explanatory variables.** Their significance may depend on inherited institutions, national trajectories, and the relational resources available to individuals, which leads to the discussion of social capital in the following subsection.

1.2.4. Social support, community ties, and social capital in value formation

The transformation of social ties and the importance of collective support have been central concerns in sociology from its beginnings. Durkheim (1893) argued that the modernisation of societies from agrarian to urbanised and industrial forms transforms the foundations of solidarity. Social cohesion based on similarity, shared beliefs, and common activities is increasingly replaced by the interdependence of individuals performing differentiated functions within the division of labour. He described this as a transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. However, during periods of rapid social change, established norms and forms of integration may weaken before new ones become consolidated, thus leaving individuals without any clear normative guidance and producing a state of anomie (Durkheim, 1897).

Bourdieu (1986) conceptualised social capital as resources available to individuals through durable and more or less institutionalised networks of relationships. Together with economic and cultural capital, social capital contributes to an individual's position within the social structure and affects access to opportunities and resources. Different forms of capital can also be converted into one another, including the conversion of social and cultural resources into economic advantage. In Bourdieu's approach, social capital is, therefore, not simply a collective good: it is distributed unequally and embedded in social hierarchies and power relations.

Putnam and colleagues (1993) shifted the emphasis from social capital as an individual and class-related resource towards its significance for

communities, institutions, and democratic governance. They argued that networks of cooperation, reciprocity, and trust can contribute to more effective governance and economic prosperity. Putnam (2000) subsequently distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to close ties within families, friendship networks, and relatively homogeneous communities, whereas bridging social capital connects individuals across more socially diverse groups. In his analysis of the United States, Putnam associated a decline in participation and both forms of social capital with increasing social isolation and weakening societal cohesion. The distinction is important because bonding ties may provide emotional and practical support, while bridging ties are more directly connected to generalised trust, civic participation, and cooperation across social boundaries.

Durkheim's theory of solidarity and Putnam's concept of social capital address the related problem of social integration, but their categories should not be treated as equivalent. Mechanical and organic solidarity describe different societal foundations of cohesion, whereas bonding and bridging social capital distinguish between types of social networks and connections. Nevertheless, both perspectives indicate that social integration depends not only on economic conditions but also on relationships, mutual dependence, and collective forms of support. In relation to Inglehart's value theory, this raises the question of whether social support and integration may contribute to the sense of security that Inglehart attributes primarily to material and economic conditions.

Norkus (2004; Jokubaitis & Norkus, 2006) proposed evaluating the wealth and well-being of society not only through economic welfare but also through social cohesion. Economic welfare alone does not necessarily produce societal satisfaction or cohesion, particularly when consumerist market logic continually generates new needs and encourages individuals to devote increasing amounts of time to earning and consumption. Time that could otherwise be invested in relationships, community participation, and collective activities may consequently be redirected towards the accumulation of economic capital, thus potentially weakening social capital. At the same time, the pluralisation of values and lifestyles may contribute to social fragmentation when different groups lack shared norms and channels of mutual integration (Norkus, 2003). From this perspective, social capital is relevant not only as a source of individual support but also as a possible counterweight to anomie, isolation, and social fragmentation.

Relational resources may also contribute to the subjective security and well-being relevant to value formation. Kasser (2016) suggests that intrinsic

and self-transcendent values can be nurtured in supportive family environments and may strengthen resilience to materialistic pressures associated with anxiety and insecurity. Trust in community members and participation in collective action may likewise enhance well-being and a sense of agency (Welzel 2010). Furthermore, social resources embedded in family relationships can influence the identity formation of younger generations by supporting intergenerational connections, mutual aid, and collective action (Tatarko & Tshuikina, 2021). These studies suggest that family and community relationships may influence value formation indirectly by shaping experiences of security, support, and social integration.

The relationship between social capital and postmaterialist values was examined by Damron (2004), whose analysis found that bridging social capital was associated with postmaterialist values, whereas bonding social capital was associated with materialist orientations. Damron connected bonding social capital with particularised trust within close-knit groups and bridging social capital with generalised trust extending beyond immediate social circles. Janmaat and Braun (2009) likewise found an association between social solidarity and postmaterialist values. However, these findings should not be interpreted as establishing a universal causal relationship between particular forms of social capital and value orientations, as the observed associations depend on how social capital and values are conceptualised and measured, and on the societal context in which they are examined.

However, close family and community ties should not be understood as automatically producing social closure, nor should bonding and bridging social capital be reduced solely to measures of particularised and generalised trust. Research on family socialisation indicates that autonomy and relatedness are not necessarily opposing orientations. Parents may support a child's individuality and personal well-being while simultaneously maintaining interdependence, mutual responsibility, and collective commitments (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996, 2007; Raeff, 2010; Prioste et al., 2015, 2016). This perspective complicates the assumption that bonding social capital necessarily reinforces materialism, whereas bridging social capital alone supports postmaterialism. Functional family and community relationships may contribute to both individual autonomy and collective connectedness, while an excessive or exclusionary emphasis on either closure or individual detachment may weaken broader solidarity and cohesion.

These studies suggest that relational resources may be relevant for understanding how individuals experience and respond to insecurity in capitalist risk societies and economically unstable contexts. This question is

particularly pertinent in postsocialist societies, where rapid institutional transformation and prolonged uncertainty disrupted established forms of social integration. Under such conditions, family relationships, friendship networks, and community ties may buffer experiences of insecurity and isolation (Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2012; Turkina & Surzhko-Harned, 2014). However, their effects depend on the quality, accessibility, and inclusiveness of these relationships rather than on the mere existence of social ties.

The relationship between social capital and postmaterialist values nevertheless remains theoretically ambiguous. From Inglehart's perspective, postmaterialist values are expected to emerge primarily after material security has been achieved. Social-capital research suggests that interpersonal support, trust, and collective practices may also contribute to subjective security and well-being. At the same time, macro-level studies associate social capital with economic development (Beugelsdijk et al., 2005; Tabellini, 2008; Bützer et al., 2013; Kostis, 2021), indicating that economic conditions and relational resources may reinforce one another rather than operate in a simple one-directional sequence. **Social capital is, therefore, considered here as a possible relational pathway through which structural conditions are experienced, rather than as a separately tested mediating variable.**

1.3. Defining Generations in the Postsocialist Context

1.3.1. What is a generation: three ways of definition

This section establishes the theoretical understanding of a generation used in the dissertation before moving to the empirical analysis. The concept of a generation is paradoxical and controversial since it can be explained and defined in different ways. Moreover, it is influenced by the period and age effects (Elder et al., 2003). According to Semi Purhonen (2016), there are three ways to define a generation.

The first is the genealogical definition of a generation, which refers to family generations. It is most commonly used in the study of socialisation and social mobility. The second definition of a generation is used as a synonym for birth cohort, referring to people born at the same time (in the same period). Critiques argued that the term 'generation' should be left only to describe kinship descent (Glenn, 1977; Ryder, 1965) because the processes of family transmission should not be mistaken for the dynamics of generational succession or broader social change (Kertzer, 1983, 2005). Moreover, some scholars argue that referring to a generation as a cohort is incorrect due to various implications of this term (Glenn, 1977). Therefore, they suggest using the term 'social generation'

instead (Pilcher 2005), or that of 'cohort' since it allows clearly distinguishing between these different connotations (Corsten, 2005).

The third definition is associated with Karl Mannheim, a classic of sociological generational theory, which, according to Kertzer (2005), is especially prominent in youth studies, and which has been revived in the last 30 years as a result of the rise of individualisation (Beck 1997), which diminished the significance of collective identity (Corsten, 2005). It is argued that Mannheim used the approach to generations as historical cohorts (Kertzer, 2005). In order to better understand the idea of this classical theory, I will discuss it in more detail.

Karl Mannheim (1927/1952) defines a generation as being in a social 'location' unique to it. The 'location' of a generation is defined not only by the limits of a person's biological life, but also by certain social influences, such as the historical, political and social contexts that have created a specific set of life chances, experiences and choices for people of that particular generation, and thus have shaped the generation in question. Mannheim also uses the term 'fresh contact', which encompasses several key elements.

Firstly, a generation in 'fresh contact' is exposed to and accepts elements of the cultural heritage existing in society, i.e., a generation reproduces the historical-cultural memory it has accumulated through socialisation with older generations, taking from them what it finds necessary and useful. For example, this may include certain forms of normative behaviour, established etiquette, and the orientations of other behavioural practices. Giddens (2000) adds to this idea, while arguing that the discovery and revival of the predecessors' ways of life is characteristic of generations socialising in traditional contexts, whereas, in the environment of a late modernity, this renewal of information is almost meaningless, as activities are then only repeated to the extent that they are reflexively justified. Moreover, Luhmann (1987) suggested that, during the times of radical social changes, the responsibility of the individual for one's own self-socialisation increases. It should, therefore, be noted that the individual reflexively chooses which information from historical memory to accept or reject, and what new ways of consciousness and behaviour to implement.

The second element of 'fresh contact' is linked to social change: the new generation is the first generation to experience and to be shaped by new (changing) social conditions, and this is what distinguishes it from other generations. As discussed earlier, the reflexivity and selectivity of a generation towards cultural heritage is also highlighted here, when old behaviour and social patterns are no longer applicable to the changed social conditions. In this way, a generation develops a historical, political and social consciousness

that is different from that of other generations, which, according to Mannheim, is carried throughout life. This is particularly relevant in the postsocialist context, where systemic rupture created different socialisation environments for those who grew up before, during, and after the collapse of socialism.

In other words, a generation's socialisation during a specific historical period shapes a distinctive habitus[2] – an internalised set of cultural dispositions, social practices, and attitudes that reflect the conditions of that time. This shared experience may contribute to the formation of a collective identity, which is why such groups are often referred to as "historical generations" (Corsten, 2005). However, for this collective experience to have a unifying effect, it must be commonly shared.

As Karl Mannheim argued, not all members of a generation interpret or engage with historical events in the same way. Within a single generation, different groups may form based on divergent interpretations, experiences, or positions in the social structure – these are referred to as "generational units" (Corsten, 2005). While members of a generation may live through the same historical period, the meanings they attach to it can differ significantly. On the other hand, the boundaries between generations are marked by notable shifts in language, values, and meaning systems that reflect broader social change – these should be distinct not only from previous generations but also from the internal diversity found within generational units (Edmunds & Turner, 2002).

Returning to the discussion of the generation versus the cohort approach in Mannheim's theory, it is argued that the cohort is a very technical tool to measure life events of the generation or observe and describe social change without the "assumptions of the specific form of generational experience" (Corsten, 2005, 284). It has also been criticised for its tendency to oversimplify complex social phenomena by categorising individuals into rigid generational cohorts.

For example, Parry and Urwin (2011) argue that empirical evidence supporting the existence of distinct generational differences in work values is inconclusive, as many studies have been unable to substantiate such claims. They argue that the assumption of fixed generational categories often invalidates research findings by neglecting the dynamic nature of social change (Parry & Urwin, 2017). Similarly, Lyons and Kuron (2014) highlight that, despite extensive research, evidence for significant generational disparities in workplace values remains inconclusive.

[2] The concept of 'habitus' is used here in a limited sense, referring to internalised dispositions formed through historically specific socialisation, rather than as a separate Bourdieusian analytical framework.

These criticisms are important for this dissertation because they show that cohort categories cannot be treated as self-evident explanations of value differences. They require theoretical justification and must be interpreted in relation to historically specific conditions rather than used as fixed cultural labels. Accordingly, this dissertation does not treat a generation merely as a demographic category. **It conceptualises a generation as a historically situated cohort whose members share a broadly similar social location and formative socialisation context, while recognising substantial differences within each cohort.**

Within the theoretical model of this dissertation, generation constitutes a meso-level socialisation structure linking the macro-level historical and structural context with individual value orientations. Structural transformations do not affect values directly or uniformly: they are encountered at different biographical moments, mediated through families, education, institutions, peer relations, and intergenerational transmission, and interpreted within cohort-specific socialisation environments. Generations may therefore reproduce, modify, or contest inherited value orientations, which subsequently become observable at the individual level. This mediating role, rather than the use of a ten-year cohort label alone, provides the theoretical basis for treating the generation as a distinct analytical dimension.

Connolly (2019) applied the 'civilising process' concept, as developed by N. Elias, about aligning individual norms and behaviours with socially acceptable ones and applied it to emphasise the importance of the historical context in shaping generational experiences. He argues that understanding the generational conflict requires an appreciation of the socio-political conditions that influence the values and behaviours of different cohorts. Similarly, Kingstone pointed out that different family structures and cultural narratives contribute to the formation of distinct generational identities (Kingstone, 2021). Corsten (1999) also suggests that generations are formed, named, and sustained within discursive frameworks, with their identity rooted in a shared interpretation of historical events and future expectations.

However, Roberts and France (2021) advocates for a more nuanced understanding of intergenerational relations that goes beyond simplistic generational divides. He emphasises the importance of examining the power dynamics and tensions that exist between generations, particularly in the context of social change. By doing so, he argues that scholars can better address the complexities of youth identity and agency in contemporary society. Gray and Geraghty (2022) also observed the intergenerational dynamics and revealed that the generational values are not static, but rather adaptive and changing in relation to the social context and interconnection

between generations. Through the qualitative longitudinal analysis of parental values and aspirations over the 20th century, researchers found that societal changes influence parental expectations, which, in turn, affect the values transmitted to children.

Moreover, the concept of 'social generations' has gained traction as a means to analyse the interplay between the class, gender, and generation in shaping social inequalities. Woodman and Wyn (2015) emphasise the importance of using a social generation as a lens to study these dynamics, while highlighting how different generations experience social change differently based on their socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast, Roberts and France (2021) argues that the social generation approach lacks a robust framework for understanding the interplay between social change and inequality. They suggest that the concept often fails to adequately address the structural factors that contribute to social inequality, such as the class, race, and gender. When focusing primarily on generational differences, broader socio-economic contexts that shape youth experiences and intergenerational relations can be overlooked.

For this reason, the dissertation does not assume that generation alone explains value orientations. Generational comparisons are interpreted together with the age, survey period, country context, and relevant individual-level characteristics, including sex, family status, education, and religiosity. Taking these factors into account does not eliminate the internal diversity of generations, but it reduces the risk of attributing to generation differences that may instead reflect the life-course position, historical period, or unequal social resources.

Since Mannheim sought to capture the subjective experience of the generation of the historical events, the closest option for reaching that goal would be longitudinal approaches (Corsten 2005). These would enable the observation of the maximally 'pure' experiences, free from the influence of future events and the impact of lifelong exposure to the intergenerational discourses that are embedded in memory and retrospective research. It is argued that the addition of the concept of generational discourses to Mannheim's theory helps to better understand how the generations validate and distinguish themselves from others (Dant, 1991; Corsten, 2005). However, it is suggested that if the researchers want to use the Mannheimian generation approach, but apply cohort methodology, it would be clearer and more precise to use the term 'cohort generation' (Ryder, 1965; Rindfleisch, 1994). **This dissertation follows this approach by using the concept of 'cohort generation': generations are operationalised through birth**

cohorts but interpreted through the Mannheimian logic of historically specific socialisation.

To reflect some of the criticisms and apply Mannheimian theory to contemporary societies, researchers have sought to modernise generational theory by incorporating more nuanced approaches. For example, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008) advocated for a cosmopolitan perspective that acknowledges the interconnectedness of generations across national boundaries, while challenging the notion of isolated generational identities. Similarly, Thorpe and Inglis (2019) argued that the traditional Mannheimian framework requires significant refurbishment to address the complexities of global generations and the transnational phenomena such as migration, digital communication and cultural exchange that shape them (Thorpe & Inglis, 2019).

One of the ways to address the limitations of generational theory, especially the rigidity of age categories or lack of a social context and complex social dynamics, has been the application of qualitative methodologies. For example, Nugin (2008) explored how young people in postsocialist societies navigate uncertainties, revealing the complexities of identity formation within transformative social and historical contexts. Similarly, Woodman (2013) conducted in-depth interviews and narrative analysis that allowed him to capture the complexities of identity formation and socialisation processes that characterise different generations, while Žilinskienė and colleagues (Zilinskiene & Ilic, 2021; Zilinskiene & Kraniauskiene, 2024a; Zilinskiene & Kraniauskiene, 2024b) used a biographical interview method with the soviet and post-soviet generations with the objective to explore their identities during social transformations.

The qualitative approach enables a deeper exploration of individual narratives, thereby providing a more comprehensive view of generational dynamics and shared social realities. This is also the reason why the present dissertation combines quantitative cohort comparison with qualitative biographical interviews: the former identifies broad generational patterns, while the latter explores how these patterns are experienced and narrated by members of the first postsocialist generation.

1.3.2. Defining postsocialist generation: problems and solutions

Before defining the generations used in this dissertation, it is useful to briefly discuss why widely circulating Western generational labels and cyclical generational models are insufficient for postsocialist contexts.

One prominent approach to defining and delimiting generations in Anglo-American historical discourse is the cyclical generational theory developed by William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991, 1997). Their model proposes that historical change follows a recurring cycle lasting approximately 80–100 years, within which, four successive historical phases shape different generational archetypes. In the original formulation, these archetypes were termed Idealist, Reactive, Civic, and Adaptive; in the later version, they were renamed Prophet, Nomad, Hero, and Artist. The corresponding historical phases, or 'turnings', were conceptualised as the High, Awakening, Unraveling, and Crisis. According to the model, a generation's collective persona is shaped by its location within this cycle, particularly by the social conditions encountered during childhood and the historical phase in which its members enter young adulthood (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997).

Within this later terminology, Hero generations spend their childhood during an Unraveling, which Strauss and Howe characterise as a period of institutional erosion, social fragmentation, and intensified individualism. These characteristics describe the surrounding historical context rather than the values that members of the emerging generation necessarily internalise. At the same time, child-rearing is expected to become progressively more protective. When a Crisis begins, members of the Hero generation enter young adulthood and are expected to respond through teamwork, collective mobilisation, and practical problem-solving; in midlife, they are portrayed as energetic institution-builders.

Strauss and Howe treat the GI Generation (born 1901–1924) as a historical example of this trajectory and position the then-emerging Millennial generation, provisionally dated from 1982 to approximately 2003/2004, as a possible recurrence of the same archetype. Because Millennials were still children and adolescents when these works were written, their classification as a Hero generation represented a conditional projection rather than an established empirical finding (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997).

Strauss and Howe conceptualise turnings as broad historical moods rather than discrete events, by claiming that political institutions, social norms, and individual values fluctuate cyclically across generations. However, while this model has gained considerable popularity in public discourse and policy-oriented debates – particularly in the United States – it has been subject to substantial academic criticism.

Scholars have argued that the theory relies on retrospective pattern matching, lacks falsifiable hypotheses, and employs arbitrary generational boundaries that are adjusted *post hoc* to fit the proposed cycle (Cohen, 2018). From a methodological standpoint, the theory has been criticised for historical

determinism and for treating complex social processes as mechanically recurring patterns rather than contingent outcomes shaped by structural conditions and agency.

Historians have similarly challenged the cyclical assumptions of the Strauss–Howe model. Kaiser (2009), for example, criticises generational cycle theories for selectively interpreting historical events and imposing narrative coherence on periods characterised by contingency and discontinuity. From a broader sociological perspective, Ryder's (1965) foundational work on cohorts and social change also stands in tension with the Strauss–Howe approach. Ryder argues that generations emerge not through cyclical repetition, but through specific historical ruptures that produce distinct cohort experiences (similarly as Mannheim) – which is an understanding that fundamentally contradicts the idea of recurring generational archetypes.

These criticisms are particularly relevant when considering the applicability of the Strauss–Howe framework beyond the United States. The theory is deeply rooted in the historical trajectory of American society, characterised by relatively continuous institutional development and cyclical political change. An attempt at applying this model to postsocialist societies, however, raises serious analytical problems. The first postsocialist generation was socialised under conditions of profound systemic rupture, economic insecurity, and institutional collapse – which are conditions that differ sharply from the comparatively stable environment assumed in Strauss and Howe's model. As a result, the assumption that generational roles repeat predictably across contexts becomes untenable in societies shaped by abrupt regime change and divergent modernisation and transformation paths.

Although elements of Strauss and Howe's terminology have been selectively adopted by research institutions such as the *Pew Research Center*, which defines Millennials as those born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock 2019), these classifications are primarily descriptive rather than explanatory. Globally circulating labels such as Millennials, Generation Z, or iGeneration may capture shared exposure to digital technologies and transnational cultural flows, but their conventional boundaries were developed mainly from Western historical sequences, particularly those manifested in the United States.

They, therefore, do not identify a common formative context across postsocialist societies. Although these labels chronologically overlap with the first postsocialist generation, chronological overlap does not make the categories analytically equivalent. The term 'first postsocialist generation' is used here to foreground historically specific socialisation following the

collapse of socialist regimes and during the uneven reconstruction of political, economic, and social institutions. It thus denotes a contextually defined cohort-generation rather than a universal cultural type.

Different authors and theories could define the first postsocialist generation in different ways. Strauss and Howe define a generation as spanning approximately 22 years, based on the idea that this period represents the length of a typical life phase – from birth to young adulthood – during which, individuals develop a distinct social consciousness. This length also allows four generations to fit into an 80- to 90-year historical cycle (of their four generational archetypes), which, as they argue, corresponds to the average human lifespan (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Surzhko-Harned and Turkina (2018) adapted this proposal to the socialist context and defined the generations in the following intervals: 1909–1930, 1931–1951, 1952–1972 and 1973–1990, arguing for the key historical events that shaped each period. According to these authors, the childhood and adolescence of the generation born in 1952–1972 coincided with the rise of the Eastern Bloc, i.e., the Warsaw Pact and the establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), the progressive 1950s and the political stagnation of the Brezhnev period. Meanwhile, those born in 1973–1990 are characterised by a unique experience of political, economic and social changes, which was triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, integration into the world economy and globalisation, and the European orientation of the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Extending the proposed model, the boundaries of the first postsocialist generation should be approximately 1991–2008. This period would include a period of political, economic and social transformation, the spread of liberalism, migration opportunities, technological progress, the development of the Internet, the 1998 Russian economic crisis, which also affected other postsocialist countries, and economic growth until the worldwide economic crisis of 2008. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, such a broad generational interval would make it difficult to distinguish between those who experienced early childhood during the immediate transformation period and those born into already more stabilised postsocialist conditions.

However, other researchers define the generations of the socialist period by using a more localised approach. For example, Polish researchers Sadowski and Mach (2021) define generations based on system transformations in Poland: those that were born in late 1950s are the ‘crisis generation’, referring to the emergence of the Solidarity movement and the economic crisis of 1981–1983; they are followed by the ‘transitional generation’, born in the early

1970s and affected by the transformations after 1989; finally, those born in late 1980 are the ‘open borders generation’, pointing to the EU and Schengen Area integration.

Recent Lithuanian research provides a closely related but also country-specific generational classification. Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) distinguish the Last Soviet Generation, born in 1970–1979, the Transitional Generation, born in 1980–1989, and the First Independence Generation, born in 1990–2000. Their classification is based not primarily on subjective generational self-identification, but rather on an expert grouping informed by formative political, economic, social, and cultural experiences and by the synthesis of previous empirical research.

The authors describe the youngest cohort as the first to grow up from an early childhood in an independent state and in an increasingly digitalised and globally connected environment. This distinction supports the analytical separation between cohorts socialised before, during, and after systemic transformation (Miller, 2005). In this logic, the ‘after’ cohort consists of individuals born into and socialised within the new institutional order. Miller also uses the designation ‘post-independence generation’ in relation to parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

However, independence does not constitute an equivalent historical reference point across all postsocialist countries. The term ‘First Postsocialist Generation’ is, therefore, preferred because it refers to the shared analytical criterion of socialisation after the collapse of socialist regimes without assuming identical trajectories of statehood, political independence, or institutional transformation.

Another Lithuanian researcher Laima Žilinskienė (2022) uses a less localised and more applicable division for a broader socialist context. She indicates the following generation boundaries: 1945–1960 – the ‘first Soviet generation’, 1960–1970 – the ‘second Soviet generation’, and 1970–1980 – the ‘last Soviet generation’.

The second Soviet generation, similar to the previously discussed 1952–1972 generation, according to the author, experienced socialisation during a period of stagnation, when there were no significant social changes. Meanwhile, the last Soviet generation experienced the Soviet system only in childhood and youth, when the transformation to a market economy, changes in institutional structures and legal regulation were underway. This generation was 11–21 years old when it experienced transformations in the institutional structure (Žilinskienė, 2022). The most recent research conducted by Žilinskienė confirms that those born between the years 1980 and 2000

perceive themselves as a post-Soviet generation (Žilinskienė & Kraniauskienė, 2024a).

This classification reminds of the definition of a generation as a cohort looking already to the second Soviet generation. For the methodological simplification of the measurement, the generation as a cohort approach is also used by Estonian sociologist Veronika Kalmus (2020), who distinguishes generations with every 10 years. When approaching the cohort as a generation, it could be perceived as still representing self-conscious generational identity (Thomson, 2016). These approaches show that postsocialist generational boundaries are most analytically useful when they are tied to historically meaningful ruptures rather than imported from Western generational classifications.

On this basis, the dissertation operationalises generations as ten-year birth cohorts while interpreting them as historically situated cohort-generations. The use of ten-year intervals is a methodological simplification that enables consistent comparison across countries and survey waves; it does not imply that generational boundaries are natural, universally fixed, or equally pronounced in every society. Following Mannheim, the analytical meaning of each cohort derives from the relationship between the birth timing and historically specific formative conditions rather than from the length of the interval itself.

The year 1991 is used as a common analytical boundary because it marks the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union and falls at the endpoint of the broader wave of socialist regime ruptures that occurred between 1989 and 1991. This choice does not imply that socialist regimes collapsed simultaneously, or that the subsequent transformations followed uniform trajectories across the countries included in the study. Rather, the year 1991 functions as a shared analytical reference point for identifying the first ten-year cohort whose primary socialisation occurred after the dismantling of the socialist political order, during the still-unsettled processes of institutional reconstruction, marketisation and democratisation, and under an increasing exposure to global and digital influences.

The distinction between the Transitional Generation and the First Postsocialist Generation is, therefore, relative rather than absolute. The 1981–1990 cohort was born before the completion of the systemic rupture: its older members experienced parts of their childhood under late socialist institutions, while its younger members were born during the period of political and economic transformation. By contrast, the members of the 1991–2000 cohort had no meaningful first-hand socialisation under a functioning socialist regime. Their earliest socialisation took place within societies already

undergoing postsocialist reconstruction, although the economic, political, and cultural conditions of this process varied substantially across countries. **Accordingly, the Penultimate Socialist Generation is defined as those born in 1961–1970, the Last Socialist Generation as those born in 1971–1980, the Transitional Generation as those born in 1981–1990, and the First Postsocialist Generation as those born in 1991–2000.**

Those born after 2000 are referred to only as later postsocialist cohorts rather than being assigned to a single additional generation. The available comparative data observe these cohorts only at relatively young ages and cover them unevenly across countries and survey periods. Defining them as a distinct social generation would, therefore, require additional theoretical justification and more extensive comparative evidence than is available in this dissertation.

Recent Lithuanian findings further caution against treating this generational boundary as self-evident. Žilinskienė and Kraniauskienė (2024a) found no significant differences in generational identities between individuals born in the 1980s and those born in the 1990s. Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026), however, retain the distinction between the Transitional Generation and the First Independence Generation based on their different formative contexts. These findings suggest that generational boundaries may be more visible in some dimensions, such as value orientations or digital socialisation, than in subjective generational identity. The distinctiveness of the 1991–2000 cohort is, therefore, treated in this dissertation as a theoretically grounded proposition to be examined empirically rather than as an assumption established in advance.

The generations are chosen to be named ‘socialist’ instead of ‘Soviet’ because this study covers a broader geography of countries – it analyses not only the countries of the former Soviet Union, but also the ‘satellite’ states that survived the socialist regime. On the other hand, ‘socialist’ instead of ‘communist’ was chosen because it more precisely reflects the experiences of these countries and their self-identification, while also keeping in mind that the ideological ‘communism’ goal was not achieved in the Soviet Union. The term ‘postsocialist’ is, therefore, used as the broadest analytical category, while ‘post-Soviet’ is reserved for contexts directly shaped by the Soviet Union. ‘Post-communist’ is avoided because it refers more narrowly to the ideological-political project, whereas ‘postsocialist’ better captures the institutional, economic, and social order experienced across the wider group of countries analysed in this dissertation.

1.3.3. The relevance of age–period–cohort effects in understanding generational value change

The concept of a 'generation' embodies the interconnectedness of both continuity and transformation, offering stability through shared experiences within cohorts while simultaneously reflecting change as individuals age and societies evolve through turbulent periods, which, in turn, transform experiences of the newest generation and thus differently affect their values. Thus, generational differences need to be interpreted in relation to age, period, and cohort processes (Elder et al., 2003). The *Age–Period–Cohort* (APC) framework provides a conceptual vocabulary for distinguishing the multiple temporal dimensions that may shape individual and collective values (Fosse & Winship, 2019a).

Although the APC model is not a causal framework in itself, it offers a lens for linking to actual causal effects that are hidden under the effects of APC (Mason & Fienberg, 1985; Clogg, 1982; Fosse & Winship, 2019a). This distinction is central for this dissertation because it frames three competing but potentially overlapping interpretations of observed differences in postmaterialist values: generational socialisation, life-course position, and broader historical change.

The APC framework distinguishes three types of temporal effects. First, there are age effects that refer to the biological, psychological, and social transformations that individuals undergo as they grow older. These include life-stage transitions such as entering adulthood, forming families, or preparing for retirement (Fosse & Winship, 2019a, Halman & Voicu, 2010; Firebaugh, 1997). Empirical research consistently demonstrates a tendency towards more conservative preferences with an increasing age, including a greater emphasis on stability, tradition, and security, and a decline in the prioritisation of stimulation or achievement (Bushina & Ryabichenko, 2018; Schwartz, 2006).

Second, period effects, by contrast, arise from events or societal transformations that affect all individuals, regardless of their age, during a specific historical moment (Fosse & Winship, 2019a). The fall of socialism(s), the spread of neoliberalism, the transition to capitalism and democracy, or the global rise of digital technology represent such critical period shocks. These historical events can influence social values across all age groups, although the way individuals internalise them may depend on their stage in life or cohort-specific experiences.

Third, cohort effects emerge from the formative experiences of people born at around the same time, who share common conditions during their

developmental years. These experiences can leave lasting imprints on beliefs, values, and worldviews (Mannheim, 1927/1952; Danigelis et al., 2007; Fosse & Winship, 2019a). As discussed earlier, the first postsocialist generation grew up and socialised in the context of political liberalisation, exposure to global cultural flows, and, often, turbulent economic transitions. These factors distinguished them from older cohort generations who had been socialised under socialist regimes.

Although these three dimensions – age, period, and cohort – are analytically distinct, they are linearly related through the equation: Cohort = Period – Age. This relationship is a common methodological challenge in APC research, causing the identification problem (Fosse & Winship, 2019a). For this reason, APC analysis in this dissertation is not treated as a definitive causal solution, but as a way to assess whether generational patterns remain visible when the age and period are considered simultaneously.

The identification problem has generated a long methodological debate, including constrained regression models, intrinsic estimators, hierarchical age–period–cohort models, mechanism-based approaches, and partial-identification strategies. Despite their differences, none of these approaches can derive three unique age, period, and cohort effects from the observed data without introducing additional assumptions about their functional form, distribution, or underlying causal mechanisms (Glenn, 1976; Fosse & Winship, 2019a; Bell, 2020). The central theoretical implication is, therefore, that APC analysis cannot be separated from substantive reasoning: statistical results become interpretable only in relation to theoretically justified expectations about life-course change, historical events, and cohort-specific socialisation.

However, from a theoretical perspective, the framework is useful while understanding how different temporal effects shape values, since APC effects are not causes in themselves but indicators of underlying social, psychological, or institutional mechanisms. *Age* may reflect changes in family roles, health, or risk tolerance; *period* may reflect macroeconomic shifts or political instability; and *cohort* may capture the influence of education systems, cultural narratives, or technology during one's formative years (Fosse & Winship, 2019a).

The literature reviewed in the preceding sections suggests that the formation of the first postsocialist generation may reflect an intersection of cohort and period-related mechanisms. Its members were socialised during democratisation, market liberalisation, ideological uncertainty, expanding global cultural flows, and rapid technological change. However, these conditions do not in themselves demonstrate a distinct cohort effect, since

economic crises, political reforms, and technological diffusion also operated as period processes affecting members of other generations.

Therefore, the theoretically relevant expectation is more limited: exposure to these processes during formative years may have shaped how they were interpreted and incorporated into value orientations (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Hellevik, 2002; Lilleoja & Raudsepp, 2018). Whether such formative exposure produced differences that remain visible beyond age and survey-period variation is an empirical question to be examined in this dissertation.

At the same time, age-related and life-course dynamics cannot be discounted. Research conducted across different societies indicates that value orientations may change as individuals age and move through different life stages, with older people tending to place a greater emphasis on order, tradition, and security and less emphasis on risk-taking and personal achievement (Welzel, 2013; Kalmus, 2010; Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Lilleoja & Raudsepp, 2018).

Such tendencies complicate the interpretation of the observed value differences: what appears to be a generational difference may partly reflect a life stage. The question is, therefore, whether postsocialist cohort-generations will retain distinct value profiles as they age or gradually converge with the preferences of older cohorts. While some researchers suggest that generations become more conservative as they age (Tilley & Evans, 2014; Schwartz, 2006), Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argue that the initial position of each younger generation remains more liberal or postmaterialist than that of the preceding generation, even if some life-course change occurs.

In addition to these temporal dimensions, relational dynamics between generations – this is actually what Riley (2005) describes as *interstrata relationships* – may shape the transmission, reproduction, and contestation of values. People of different ages interact within families, educational institutions, workplaces, communities, and public life, where values are communicated and negotiated rather than simply inherited unchanged. These relationships may foster mutual learning, support, and collective identity, but may also reproduce inequalities, distrust, or cultural tensions (Riley, 2005; Eisenstadt, 1956; Foner, 1974).

This argument connects with the earlier discussion of social support, community ties, and social capital: intergenerational relationships may provide resources that mitigate insecurity, while fragmented or conflictual relationships may intensify individualised coping. These mechanisms are treated here as theoretically plausible relational influences on value formation rather than as empirically established characteristics of the first postsocialist generation.

Given the complexity of these interactions, the importance of acknowledging age, period, and cohort effects becomes evident. Without this framework, there is a risk of falling into conceptual fallacies. Riley (1973) identified two particularly problematic assumptions: the aging fallacy, which occurs when differences across age groups are wrongly attributed to life-course development without considering the historical context; and the generational fallacy, which attributes differences to historical cohort effects without accounting for the role of aging (Riley, 1973; Miller, 2005).

For instance, if older individuals exhibit more collectivist values, it can be mistakenly interpreted as a product of having lived through socialism, when, in fact, it may also reflect their current life stage or physical aging. Therefore, it is important not only to reflect the APC framework theoretically, but also to adopt an analytical strategy that would make its assumptions explicit, consider competing temporal interpretations, and limit substantive conclusions to comparisons that can be supported by the available data.

Ultimately, the APC framework serves as a theoretical safeguard against attributing observed value differences exclusively to either age or generation. It emphasises that value orientations may reflect an interplay of biographical timing, historical period, and cohort-specific socialisation. The potential distinctiveness of the First Postsocialist Generation, therefore, cannot be inferred from its younger age or cohort label alone. It must be evaluated by examining whether generational differences remain visible when broad age and survey-period differences are considered, and by interpreting these patterns in relation to historically plausible mechanisms of socialisation.

1.4. Defining Values and Value Change

1.4.1. What are values?

The origins of value theory in sociology could be traced back to neo-Kantianism (Ryndina, 2021). This philosophical movement introduced the concept of value reevaluation, which emphasises the evolving nature of values and the distinction between guiding cultural values and individual valuations, which is the core idea of Max Weber's distinction of rationalities. Weber laid the foundation for modern sociological value theory by distinguishing between instrumental rationality, where actions are guided by efficiency and calculated outcomes, and value-rationality, where actions are motivated by deeply held beliefs, ethical principles, or ideological commitments, regardless of external consequences (Weber, 1922).

Max Weber perceived values as not merely subjective preferences but as being embedded in cultural and religious traditions, influencing economic behaviour, political ideologies, and social change (Weber, 1905). Weber also recognised the plurality of value systems, while asserting that societies are shaped by competing and, sometimes, conflicting values, leading to tensions and ethical dilemmas (Weber, 1917). This Weberian emphasis on value plurality is important for this dissertation because it allows value orientations to be understood not as homogeneous societal attributes, but as potentially competing and coexisting frameworks of meaning.

The first sociological definition of values was used by Thomas and Znaniecki (1921) in their work on Polish peasants in the United States, but the greatest impetus for the theory of values was given by Talcott Parsons (1939). Parsons argued that values are a certain controlling factor in social life. According to him, members of the same collective (society) have the same or similar value orientations, adopted during socialisation, which guarantee compliance with the rules (norms) of society and, at the same time, the harmonious functioning of the system (society) (Parsons & Shils, 1951).

Spates criticised Parsons' approach by arguing that it lacks empirical support and imposes rigid categories on complex social phenomena. Spates advocated a more nuanced understanding of values that considers their contextual and dynamic nature, while arguing that values are not merely abstract concepts but, to the contrary, that they are deeply embedded in social interactions and cultural practices (Spates, 1983).

Meanwhile, more recent value researchers tended to define values in more detail. Shalom H. Schwartz and Lilach Sagiv (2022), based on a number of different studies (Roccas et al., 2014; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Verplanken & Holland, 2002; Milfont et al., 2016; Vecchione et al., 2016), describe distinctive features of values, by separating them from motives, needs, goals, traits, and attitudes. According to them, people perceive values as inherently desirable, valuable and good. Meanwhile, needs, motives, character traits, or attitudes can be negative. Since values refer to what is socially desirable, people use them to find allies to achieve their goals. When revealing motives, needs, character traits, or attitudes that may be socially undesirable, the possibilities for cooperation decrease. According to the authors, people prioritise one value over another; there is a certain hierarchy of values. This hierarchy distinguishes values from all other personal characteristics.

These authors also argue that the hierarchy of values varies across different people. Values are also common human goals that apply regardless of circumstances. If a person's value is freedom, it is likely to be expressed in all

contexts, i.e., it is relatively stable. According to the authors, values are also relatively stable over time. Meanwhile, needs and motives are often cyclical, and attitudes, norms, or goals depend on the context – and therefore they change.

According to the authors, values are also chosen consciously: people remember, reflect, and choose whether to pursue them, while motives and needs may not be perceived. Finally, values, unlike motives, needs, or character traits, are certain standards by which people evaluate, decide, and justify their own and others' choices (Schwartz & Sagiv, 2022). This distinction is important methodologically because survey instruments often measure values indirectly through preferences, attitudes, or priorities. Therefore, the empirical operationalisation of values requires caution, especially when value orientations are inferred from responses to specific political or social choices.

Schwartz and Sagiv's understanding of values partly overlaps with Parsons' concept, particularly in the emphasis on the socially desirable and normatively anchored character of values. Although Schwartz does not emphasise the purpose of values as a tool of social order, he emphasises that values are socially desirable, while referring to their moral acceptability. For values to be socially acceptable, they must correspond to the norms of society; therefore, in one way or another, they, as Parsons suggested, support social order.

A key difference between these approaches lies in the balance they establish between social order and individual agency. Schwartz gives individuals greater autonomy by arguing that they hierarchise values differently according to their relative importance and may act on these priorities in ways that contribute to social change. Parsons, by contrast, places stronger emphasis on collectively shared values, normative integration, and the reproduction of social order through socialisation. These perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive: socialisation provides individuals with a socially structured repertoire of values, while individuals may prioritise, interpret, and enact these values differently depending on their experiences and social position.

In this dissertation, values are understood as relatively stable but not immutable socially embedded orientations that guide evaluation, prioritisation, and action. They are formed through socialisation within historically specific structural and cultural conditions, while their relative importance and practical meaning may be reflexively interpreted by individuals. This understanding combines Parsons' emphasis on the social grounding and reproduction of values, Schwartz's attention to individual

value hierarchies, and Weber's recognition of value plurality and conflict. It also allows for the theoretical possibility that different or competing value orientations may coexist within the same individual or generation, and that value change may involve shifts in their relative priority or meaning rather than the complete replacement of one coherent value system by another.

1.4.2. Complementary approaches to value analysis: Schwartz and Hofstede

Before turning to Inglehart's theory, which serves as the main framework of this dissertation, it is useful to briefly discuss other influential approaches to value research in order to clarify why they are less suitable for analysing generational value change in postsocialist societies.

One of the most popular theories of value analysis is the already mentioned Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic human values. Schwartz's theory states that there are 10 basic human values, divided into two dimensions, which are organised in a circular structure, allowing for an integrative approach to understanding value systems. The openness-to-change and conservation dimensions reflect the conflict between independent thinking, actions and feelings, and openness to challenges and changes (manifested in the values of self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism) and self-restraint, attachment to the past, resistance to change and the pursuit of order (manifested in the values of conformism, tradition and security). Meanwhile, the self-enhancement and self-transcendence dimensions reflect the conflict between concern for the well-being and interests of others (expressed in the values of universalism and benevolence) and concern for one's own interests, success, and dominance over others (expressed in the values of power and achievement) (Schwartz, 1992).

Schwartz's value scale is used in the European Social Survey. However, it should be noted that Schwartz's theory is originally oriented towards personal values from a psychological perspective, and is, therefore, more often applied in psychological research (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022). Also, Schwartz's theory has faced challenges regarding its applicability across diverse cultural contexts. Some studies suggest that the identified value dimensions may not hold universally, raising questions about the model's cross-cultural validity (Korotayev et al., 2020; Knafo et al., 2011; Karadağ et al., 2018; Spini, 2003). More importantly for this dissertation, Schwartz's framework is less directly focused on historical value change through generational replacement, which is the central analytical problem of this study.

Another influential framework is Hofstede's (2001) theory of cultural dimensions, initially developed through the analysis of surveys conducted among *IBM* employees in the 1960s and 1970s. The original framework distinguished four dimensions: individualism–collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity–femininity. These dimensions were primarily intended to characterise aggregate cultural patterns rather than the value orientations of individual respondents. The framework is, therefore, relevant as an example of cross-national cultural comparison, but it operates at a different analytical level from the individual and generational value orientations examined in this dissertation.

Hofstede's framework has been criticised for deriving national cultural differences from a specific organisational and occupational sample, treating cultures as relatively homogeneous, and combining values, attitudes, and practices within the same dimensions (McSweeney, 2002; Stephan, 2022). Its aggregate and comparatively static understanding of culture is also less suited to examining historically situated generational value change. For these reasons, Hofstede's dimensions are not used as an analytical framework in this dissertation, although their emphasis on cross-national cultural variation remains relevant to recognising that value orientations are embedded in different country contexts.

1.4.3. Inglehart's theory of value change

Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change (1971, 1977, 1990, 2008) constitutes the principal theoretical starting point of this dissertation. Unlike the approaches discussed above, it explicitly connects individual value orientations with economic development, formative socialisation, generational replacement, and broader historical transformation. It is, therefore, particularly instructive for examining value differences between generations formed before, during, and after the collapse of socialist regimes. Therefore, this theory is selected as the main analytical framework, while its linearity, assumptions about economic security, and limited sensitivity to divergent historical contexts are critically examined in Section 1.5.

Ronald Inglehart's value change theory evolved over several decades, expanding from an initial focus on changing political values in Western democracies to a broader framework explaining global cultural and political transformations. His early work emphasised the role of economic security in shaping individual priorities, thus introducing two key hypotheses: the scarcity hypothesis, which states that people prioritise materialist values like economic and physical security in times of resource scarcity, and the

socialisation hypothesis, which suggests that individuals who grow up in conditions of sustained prosperity develop postmaterialist values emphasising self-expression, autonomy, tolerance, political participation, and social equality (Inglehart, 1977).

He argued that the post-World War II economic boom led younger generations in Western societies to move away from materialist concerns towards postmaterialist priorities, such as environmental protection, human rights, and participatory democracy. This intergenerational value shift, he suggested, was a slow but cumulative process that reshaped political attitudes and behaviours over time (Inglehart, 1990). This logic forms the initial theoretical expectation of the dissertation: if economic security and generational replacement operate as Inglehart suggests, younger postsocialist generations should display stronger postmaterialist orientations than the generations socialised under socialist or transitional conditions.

As his research expanded to include a broader range of societies, Inglehart integrated the materialism–postmaterialism framework with modernisation theory. Together with Baker (2000), he argued that economic development contributes to systematic cultural change without necessarily erasing historically rooted religious and cultural traditions. Inglehart subsequently distinguished between two broader dimensions of cross-national value variation: traditional versus secular-rational values and survival versus self-expression values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). The first dimension captures differences between religious, familial, and authority-oriented norms and more secular and rational orientations. Whereas, the second dimension describes a broader shift from the prioritisation of economic and physical security towards autonomy, individual rights, freedom of expression, gender equality, creativity, and civic participation.

Inglehart and Welzel (2005) further developed this framework into the Human Development Theory, which links increasing economic and cognitive resources with greater individual autonomy, self-expression, and democratic participation. Later formulations of this perspective placed particular emphasis on emancipative values, understood as orientations towards freedom of choice and equality of opportunities. Emancipative values are conceptually related to postmaterialist and self-expression values, but they constitute a broader and distinct theoretical development rather than another name for postmaterialism.

In his later work, Inglehart also acknowledged that value change is neither fully linear nor irreversible. Economic downturns, social instability, and perceived existential threats may strengthen materialist and survival priorities and contribute to increasing support for nationalism, authoritarianism, or

populism (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Inglehart, 2018). The developed version of the theory, therefore, allows for period-related reversals and for the persistence of historically rooted cultural differences. Nevertheless, it continues to propose a general long-term direction in which increasing existential security favours secularisation, self-expression, personal autonomy, and liberalisation.

In this dissertation, the materialism–postmaterialism dimension constitutes the principal empirical construct, while the survival–self-expression dimension provides its broader theoretical context. These dimensions are conceptually related but are not treated as interchangeable. The traditional–secular-rational dimension is engaged with more selectively: the quantitative analysis considers country-level religious context and individual religiosity, while the qualitative analysis addresses religious and secular orientations where they emerge in the participants' accounts. A precomputed traditional–secular-rational values index was not available in the merged EVS/WVS dataset used for this study. The items required to calculate this index were also not available for all countries and survey years. Emancipative values are discussed as part of the development of value change theory rather than operationalised and tested as a separate empirical construct. The limitations of these theoretical propositions and their applicability to postsocialist societies are examined in the following section.

1.5. Criticisms and Development of Inglehart's Value Change Theory

1.5.1. Challenges to the Scarcity Hypothesis

Inglehart's theory has been widely criticised for its universalism, Western bias, and insufficient attention to the historically specific conditions of different societies (Haller, 2002; Hagenaars et al., 2003; Rabušic, 2000; Datler et al., 2013; Hanel et al., 2018; Žiliukaitė et al., 2016; Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026). The Scarcity Hypothesis has been a central target of this criticism because it implies a relatively consistent relationship between formative economic security and the development of postmaterialist priorities.

By using World Values Survey data from 59 countries, Nový et al. (2017) found that individual socioeconomic conditions were associated with postmaterialism, but that cross-national variation in this relationship could not be adequately explained by the macroeconomic conditions predicted by the theory. Pavlović's (2015) multilevel analysis of 20 Eastern European societies, including Albania, Czechia, Lithuania, and North Macedonia, similarly found that higher inflation at the time of the survey was associated

with lower postmaterialist index scores, whereas a higher level of human development was associated with higher scores. By contrast, the respondents' reported economic hardship during their formative years was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that responses to the postmaterialism index may reflect present socioeconomic and institutional conditions as well as orientations formed through early socialisation.

Brym (2016) similarly argues that increasing affluence may create conditions favourable to postmaterialist value change without producing the same outcome in every society. Cultural traditions, historical legacies, institutional conditions, and experiences of insecurity may mediate this relationship. Recent Lithuanian research provides a relevant illustration.

Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) find that younger Lithuanian generations are characterised by higher perceived control over their lives, stronger emancipatory values, and more liberal attitudes towards family, marriage, and sexual morality. In the domain of work, younger cohorts attach greater importance than older cohorts did at the same age to both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of employment: good pay and convenient working hours remain highly valued alongside opportunities for initiative, achievement, and self-expression. The authors interpret these developments as part of a broader shift towards individualised self-realisation. At the same time, the simultaneous importance of extrinsic and intrinsic work aspects opens a possibility that materialist and self-expression-oriented concerns may coexist rather than one simply replacing the other.

A comparable complication emerges in Central Asia. Drawing on World Values Survey data from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, Haerpfer and Kizilova (2020) found that Kyrgyzstan displayed the strongest postmaterialist orientation among the three societies and came closest to a mixed materialist–postmaterialist profile. Nevertheless, postmaterialism did not increase significantly among the youngest cohort, born in 1984–1993. The authors relate this absence of generational change to the economic, political, and social instability experienced during the first two decades of postsocialist transformation. At the same time, higher education, urban residence, and greater household well-being were associated with stronger postmaterialist orientations in all three societies. Although the youngest cohort examined in this study only partially overlaps with the first postsocialist generation defined in this dissertation, the findings demonstrate that generational location, economic resources, education, and political instability may interact in ways that do not produce a uniform or linear value transition.

Although later reformulations of Inglehart's theory respond to some criticisms of the original theory, they do not fully resolve its directional

assumptions. Cultural traditions and historically different contexts are recognised, but they primarily modify the starting point, pace, or form of value change. Similarly, economic and political crises are incorporated mainly as temporary reversals within a continuing long-term movement towards self-expression and emancipative values.

The central question for postsocialist societies is, therefore, whether materialist and postmaterialist orientations represent successive stages of a common trajectory, or whether they may coexist, recombine, and acquire different meanings under conditions of prolonged insecurity, rapid institutional change, and global cultural integration. In this respect, Mannheim's (1927/1952) emphasis on historically specific cohort socialisation provides an important contextual qualification to Inglehart's general model.

The World Values Survey and European Values Study provide some of the most extensive standardised cross-national data for examining materialist and postmaterialist orientations across countries, periods, and generations. Their established indicators also make it possible to relate the present study to a long international tradition of value research. For these theoretical and methodological reasons, **Inglehart's framework remains the principal point of departure for this dissertation. Its use is nevertheless critical: the analysis examines whether the expected generational movement towards postmaterialism is visible in postsocialist societies while considering age, historical period, and country context**.

1.5.2. Late modernity, individualisation, and consumer capitalism

A further criticism concerns the normative direction embedded in Inglehart's account of value change. Materialist and postmaterialist orientations are presented not only as different priorities but also, implicitly, as successive positions within a hierarchy of cultural development. Inglehart described resistance to liberalisation and self-expression, including religious fundamentalism and xenophobic movements, largely as reactionary responses that did not represent the long-term direction of social change (Inglehart, 1990, 12–13). Such framing risks treating postmaterialism, individual autonomy, and self-expression as inherently progressive, while associating materialist or security-oriented priorities with less developed social conditions. The present dissertation, therefore, distinguishes the empirical analysis of value change from a normative evaluation of particular value orientations.

Gerard Delanty (2009) argues that modernity was intended to change societies, to be a kind of a 'breakthrough' that would cut all ties with past traditions. This idea can also be sensed in Inglehart's value change theory, suggesting further and more expansive modernisation. Delanty argues that this narrows down the possible choices of forms of action and makes them static, which is an idea that contradicts the characteristic of modernity itself – constant change. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) refers to such a dynamic understanding of modernity as 'a liquid modernity'. This perspective shifts attention from modernisation as linear progress to modernisation as a process that also produces instability, ambivalence, and new forms of dependency.

Ulrich Beck (1992) highlights the dual nature of late modernity: the simultaneous production of wealth and risks. Global threats like climate change, nuclear war, infections and chemical food production hazards exemplify how risks transcend borders and often 'boomerang' back to wealthier nations, despite attempts to avoid them (Beck, 1992). Late modern societies are societies of anxiety – the consequences of these global risks are economic and political risks – possible economic and political crises, capital depreciation, and price increases.

Finally, there are the social risks – eroding communal ties and traditions – which foster dependence on volatile systems and symbols like the market, education and consumerism, in Bourdieu's words (1986), on economic and cultural capital that are serving as a symbolic capital. This challenges the assumption that economic development simply reduces insecurity: in late modern societies, insecurity may be transformed rather than eliminated.

The individual, whose security depends on symbolic capital, is increasingly drawn into a vortex of risk, anxiety, and social isolation in late modernity. Individualisation creates ambiguities that undermine stable family forms and transform intimate relationships, while, in turn, encouraging superficial social relationships (Beck, 1992). In addition, the flexibility of the system with its variety of choices and freedom to become 'anyone you want' creates a 'stage of incompleteness', where anxieties and risks of missing out or choosing wrongly emerge (Bauman, 2000). This picture contradicts Inglehart's optimistic framing of individualisation (self-expression) as progress.

Theories of risk society and liquid modernity complicate the relationship between economic development and existential security assumed by the Scarcity Hypothesis. Economic development may reduce some forms of material deprivation while simultaneously producing new insecurities related to flexible employment, individual responsibility, unstable social ties, technological change, and global risks. Economic affluence and existential

insecurity may, therefore, coexist rather than occupy successive historical stages. This does not invalidate Inglehart's argument that formative security matters for value formation, but it suggests that security is multidimensional, and that its meaning changes across historical and institutional contexts.

At this point, it is important to distinguish Inglehart's concept of materialist values from the individual-level materialistic value orientation examined in psychological and consumer research, as well as from consumerism. Inglehart's construct refers primarily to the prioritisation of economic and physical security and social order. Materialistic value orientation, by contrast, refers to the priority assigned to wealth, possessions, image, status, and financial success (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 2016), whereas consumerism describes more broadly social and economic systems organised around consumption. Although these concepts may overlap empirically, they are analytically distinct and should not be treated as interchangeable.

The development of consumer capitalism, nevertheless, raises questions about the opposition between materialist and postmaterialist priorities. Weber (1905) argued that capitalist economic structures compel individuals to participate in profit-oriented activity, while Bauman (2000) described a transition from the relatively stable institutions of Fordist 'heavy capitalism' to the flexibility and uncertainty of post-Fordist 'light capitalism'. Under post-Fordism, autonomy, creativity, self-development, and self-realisation increasingly become incorporated into employment practices and expectations of continuous investment in one's human capital (Weeks, 2011; Farrugia, 2022; Houghton, 2019). Self-expression is, therefore, not necessarily located outside market relations, but it may be pursued through careers, professional identities, consumption, and status.

Bauman's (2007) analysis of consumer society similarly suggests that identities and social relationships may increasingly be organised through choice, consumption, flexibility, and reversibility. This does not imply that autonomy or intimate relationships disappear or become entirely commodified. Rather, these arguments show that expansion of individual choice may coexist with market dependence, unstable employment, fragile social ties, and pressures to present the self as a competitive project. Material security, consumption, and self-realisation may consequently become intertwined rather than representing clearly separated value orientations.

Research on materialistic value orientations associates the prioritisation of wealth, status, and extrinsic success with lower subjective well-being, less satisfactory interpersonal relationships, and weaker community orientations (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 2016). Other studies associate postmaterialist orientations with greater life satisfaction (Kislev, 2018), although these

relationships depend on how both values and well-being are operationalised (Promislo et al., 2017). Importantly, psychological materialism and extrinsic goal orientation are not equivalent to Inglehart's materialist priorities. However, it points to important effects of contemporary materialisms that Inglehart overlooked.

Inglehart's account partly relates postmaterialism to the higher-order needs identified by Maslow (1943), including belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. However, theories of late modernity and consumer capitalism suggest that self-actualisation may itself become connected with competition, status, career success, and continuous self-optimisation. Individualism is also multidimensional: autonomy and independent judgement may support self-expression, while competitive and achievement-oriented forms of individualism may contribute to insecurity, weaken social trust and relationships. It is, therefore, not theoretically justified to treat materialist values as inherently individualistic, or postmaterialist values as inherently collective or socially beneficial ones.

Research on individualism, social trust, social cohesion, and economic performance also produces mixed findings (Beugelsdijk et al., 2005; Tabellini, 2008; Bützer et al., 2013; Kaasa, 2016; Kostis, 2021). These debates indicate that relational resources may mediate how economic and cultural change is experienced, but they do not establish a simple correspondence between postmaterialism and social cohesion. In this dissertation, recalling Section 1.2.4, social capital therefore serves as a sensitising theoretical perspective for considering how social support, trust, and community ties shape experiences of security. It is not treated as a component of the postmaterialism construct or as a separately operationalised empirical variable.

These perspectives do not invalidate Inglehart's materialism–postmaterialism framework, but they *do* challenge its interpretation as a normatively positive and unidirectional transition. Late-modern capitalist societies may simultaneously expand individual autonomy and self-expression while producing new forms of economic, relational, and existential insecurity. **The dissertation, therefore, treats materialist and postmaterialist orientations as empirical priorities rather than as morally ranked stages of development.** The following subsection examines how the structure of the postmaterialism index further complicates the empirical identification and interpretation of these orientations.

1.5.3. Measuring materialist and postmaterialist values: Index limitations and the possibility of coexistence

Inglehart's hypothesis led to the creation of the Postmaterialism Index (which is used in the World and European Value Studies), which categorises individuals based on their values and priorities (Inglehart, 1981). For the 4-item Postmaterialist Index, respondents are asked to choose two goals – their first and second priorities – from a list of four political objectives. The items are paired so that two reflect materialist concerns with physical and economic security, while two reflect postmaterialist concerns with self-expression and political participation.

The four items are: (1) maintaining order in the nation (materialist); (2) giving people more say in important government decisions (postmaterialist); (3) fighting rising prices (materialist); (4) protecting freedom of speech (postmaterialist). Based on the two selected priorities, the respondents are classified as: (1) materialist if both chosen goals are materialist, (2) postmaterialist if both chosen goals are postmaterialist, and (3) mixed if one of each is chosen (Inglehart, 1971). This forced-choice format is methodologically useful for comparative research, but it also creates limitations. Respondents are required to prioritise two goals even if they value all four, reject all four, or interpret the listed priorities differently depending on the political and economic situation of their country.

The mixed category requires particular caution. It indicates only that a respondent selected one priority classified as materialist and one classified as postmaterialist from the four available items. Nevertheless, its empirical prevalence is theoretically relevant. In Pavlović's (2015) analysis of 20 Eastern European societies, the mixed category comprised more than a half of respondents in 18 countries in 2008–2010. Only in Russia and Moldova did materialists slightly outnumber the mixed group, and in no country did postmaterialists constitute the largest category. Moreover, value change between 1999–2001 and 2008–2010 was often reflected in the expansion or contraction of the mixed category rather than in a corresponding decline of materialism and rise of postmaterialism.

These findings complicate the assumption of a straightforward replacement process. However, the mixed category does not, by itself, demonstrate the coexistence of two coherent value systems or reveal how respondents understand and reconcile the selected priorities. The quantitative classification can, therefore, identify a combination of item choices, but the broader meanings and possible coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist orientations require additional contextual and qualitative interpretation.

Inglehart later developed a 12-item Postmaterialist Index that included a broader range of priorities related to economic security, defence, social order, political participation, freedom, and quality of life (Inglehart, 1977). However, the availability of the 12-item measure varies across EVS and WVS waves and countries, whereas the four-item index offers substantially broader coverage for the cross-national and longitudinal comparisons conducted in this dissertation.

The four-item measure is, therefore, selected for reasons of data coverage and comparability rather than because it is assumed to provide a more comprehensive or theoretically superior representation of value orientations. This decision necessarily narrows the empirical construct and leaves dimensions such as creativity, emotional well-being, self-realisation, spirituality, and ecological concern largely outside the quantitative measure.

Savicka (2004) identifies a further cross-contextual problem that is especially relevant to postsocialist societies. Referring to Inglehart's own analyses, she notes that the twelve items did not cluster among Central European respondents in the same way as in Western societies: most strikingly, the priority of economic growth, which the scale classifies as materialist, entered a postmaterialist cluster. Inglehart interpreted this difference as a consequence of the historical meaning of economic growth under state socialism, where it could signify radical socioeconomic change and liberation from state authority rather than support for the established order (Inglehart, 1997, as discussed in Savicka, 2004).

Regardless of this substantive explanation, the result indicates that not only the meanings attributed to individual items but also the internal dimensional structure of the scale may be context-dependent. Savicka additionally cautions that results obtained with the twelve-item scale in 1990 and the shortened four-item scale of 1999 cannot be used to infer temporal dynamics directly, although they remain suitable for comparisons across countries within the same survey. This strengthens the case for treating the four-item index used in this dissertation as a context-sensitive indicator rather than a universally invariant measure, while also supporting the 4-item index choice for country comparison.

More broadly, the validity of the index has been questioned (Davis & Davenport, 1999; Tranter & Western, 2010; Rabušic, 2000), thereby suggesting that responses should not be interpreted through an uncomplicated materialist–postmaterialist dichotomy. Reliance strictly on these categories limits the capacity to capture the complexity of contemporary value systems and may lead to misinterpretations of value change. Some items may express

situational priorities or concerns that differ from the theoretical meanings assigned to them.

Pavlović (2015), for example, notes that a respondent concerned about unemployment, which is not represented in the four-item battery, might select "giving people more say in important government decisions" as a demand for more accountable economic policy. In this case, a formally postmaterialist response could express an underlying material concern. Similarly, "maintaining order in the nation" may indicate an authoritarian preference in one context but a desire for stability following social disruption in another, while "fighting rising prices" may become especially salient during periods of inflation regardless of a respondent's broader value orientation.

Therefore, the postmaterialist thesis requires additional hypotheses and empirical support to substantiate its claims (Warwick, 1998). For this reason, the index is treated in this dissertation not as a complete or transparent measure of value orientations, but as a historically influential and cross-nationally comparable indicator that requires contextual interpretation.

This problem can be framed more precisely through Poviliūnas's (2016) reconstruction of how sociological facts are produced in research based on European Values Study data. Poviliūnas shows that survey responses do not directly disclose theoretical constructs: researchers select questionnaire variables, assign them theoretical meanings, and combine them into indicators. In his example, a question about satisfaction with one's present life is also interpreted as a measure of happiness, while the same concept of social capital refers to different constructs depending on whether organisational participation and sociability alone, or generalised trust as well, are included.

Therefore, Poviliūnas (2016) warns that, without examining their operationalisation, differently constructed indicators may be mistakenly treated as measuring the same phenomenon. Applied to the postmaterialism index, this means that its four priorities are not transparent or unambiguous measures of materialism and postmaterialism. A preference for "giving people more say in important government decisions" may reflect dissatisfaction with existing political representation, while the importance attributed to "protecting freedom of speech" may be shaped by experiences of censorship or democratic instability rather than by a general postmaterialist orientation. The index, therefore, captures responses that have already been translated through the theory's classificatory scheme and should be treated as constructed, context-sensitive indicators rather than as direct observations of values.

From this perspective, the relationship between materialist and postmaterialist values should not automatically be understood as a linear transition applicable equally across all societies. Symmetrical anthropological

approaches instead emphasise that different societies and historical trajectories should not be interpreted through hierarchical distinctions between 'advanced' and 'less advanced' forms of modernity.

Empirical studies support the claims by questioning the assumption that materialist and postmaterialist values are mutually exclusive (Bean & Papadakis, 1994; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004; Strenze, 2021). Individuals may prioritise material security in some domains while simultaneously supporting autonomy, freedom of expression, participation, or self-realisation in others. These orientations may interact and acquire different meanings depending on social position, historical experience, and the domain of life under consideration. The literature, therefore, opens the theoretical possibility of coexistence, but it does not establish that all mixed priorities constitute a single coherent hybrid value orientation.

These critiques suggest that the relationship between materialist and postmaterialist orientations should be treated as an empirical question rather than be assumed to constitute a universal linear transition. The quantitative analysis applies Inglehart's four-item index as a historically influential and cross-nationally comparable indicator of prioritisation, while recognising that it cannot fully capture the meanings, combinations, or contextual variability of value orientations.

Therefore, the qualitative analysis subsequently examines how participants understand and negotiate concerns related to security, autonomy, self-expression, and social relations. In this way, the literature establishes coexistence as a theoretical possibility, while the dissertation evaluates its empirical relevance without presupposing it as a finding.

1.5.4. On the matter of religion: Traditional-secular-rational dimension and beyond

In the later development of Inglehart's theory, religion is primarily associated with the traditional–secular-rational dimension, which is analytically distinct from the survival–self-expression dimension. Traditional values emphasise the importance of religion, deference to authority, parent–child ties, and conventional family norms, whereas secular-rational values assign less importance to these sources of authority (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Nevertheless, the two dimensions are related rather than completely independent: postmaterialist or self-expression orientations do not necessarily imply the disappearance of religious belief. Inglehart and Appel (1989) suggested that individuals with postmaterialist orientations may be more

inclined to reflect on the meaning of life and may, therefore, remain interested in religious or spiritual questions. At the same time, individual spirituality may persist or be reconstructed while participation in institutional religion and acceptance of its authority weaken (Davie, 1990). This distinction between institutional religiosity and individualised spirituality is particularly relevant when analysing generations socialised in postsocialist societies.

The postsocialist context complicates this distinction because secularisation was shaped not only by socioeconomic modernisation and individual rationalisation, but also by state-led atheisation and the subsequent restoration of religious freedom. Žiliukaitė's (2007) research identified a shift from traditional towards secular-rational values in twentieth-century Lithuanian society and linked it partly to the atheisation implemented under the socialist regime.

More recent generational analysis provides a more differentiated account of the subsequent change. Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) show that the first decade after the restoration of independence was marked by a religious revival: the share of people professing a religion increased, and the attendance at church on major religious holidays became more widespread, whereas the share of regular practitioners changed comparatively little. The Transitional and First Independence Generations experienced weaker religious socialisation than older cohorts and contain relatively small proportions of regularly practising believers. Cultural believers nevertheless remain prominent in both generations, while religious indifference and non-religion are more characteristic of their religious profiles than of those of older cohorts.

The authors caution that this should not be understood as a straightforward transition to non-religion. They conclude that some form of individualised religiosity or spirituality characterises most members of the youngest generations. Generational replacement, therefore, appears to weaken institutional religiosity, while the changing religious profiles of younger generations make it necessary to consider growing religious diversity alongside secularisation.

Inglehart and Baker (2000) themselves acknowledged that state-sponsored atheisation played a particularly important role in the movement towards secular-rational values in postsocialist societies. This complicates the general expectation that non-Western societies necessarily experience a delayed value transition. In Lithuania, the weakening of traditional religious authority occurred broadly during the same historical period as secularisation in Western societies, but similar timing does not imply an identical causal process.

Whereas Western secularisation is commonly associated with socioeconomic modernisation and generational replacement, secularisation under socialism was also produced through the coercive restriction of religious institutions and practices. Consequently, movement along the traditional–secular-rational dimension in postsocialist societies cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of individual rationalisation, postmaterialisation, or the voluntary abandonment of religious meanings.

These developments indicate that postsocialist secularisation did not simply eliminate religion, but, instead, that it contributed to the differentiation of religious meanings and practices. In Romania, alternative forms of spirituality among younger people have emerged partly in response to the limitations of established religious institutions and have become associated with more individualised forms of subjectivity (Gog, 2016).

Evidence from Georgia likewise cautions against assuming a universal relationship between economic security and religious decline. Based on nationally representative surveys conducted in 2010 and 2011, Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili (2014) found that the perceived economic position was positively rather than negatively associated with religiosity, while the broader expectations of the emancipative-values approach were only partially supported.

At the same time, research in Russia and Poland shows that grandparents continue to act as important transmitters of religious and cultural traditions to younger generations, enabling intergenerational continuity despite the weakening of institutional religious authority (Vrublevskaya et al., 2019). Conversely, the disruption of shared normative frameworks may also contribute to experiences of anomie and social instability, as observed in Russia (Kostina et al., 2018). Thus, secularisation, intergenerational religious transmission, individualised spirituality, and renewed or continuing religiosity may coexist rather than represent successive and mutually exclusive stages of value change.

The religious context is also relevant at the societal level, although it should not be reduced to individual religiosity or treated as a direct cause of value orientations. Akaliyski and Welzel (2020) found that, following the collapse of state socialism, former communist countries that joined the European Union increasingly converged with Western European societies in their emphasis on emancipative values, whereas a widening cultural divide emerged between the European Union and its eastern neighbours.

The authors relate this divergence to competing supranational identities rooted partly in different religious traditions and increasingly reinforced through geopolitical and political narratives. A dominant religious

denomination can, therefore, be treated as an indicator of broader historical, cultural, and geopolitical alignments rather than as evidence that theological differences directly determine individual values. However, emancipative values should not be equated with postmaterialism: this research informs the interpretation of the wider societal context but does not directly test the materialist–postmaterialist dimension examined in this dissertation.

These considerations define the limited but analytically relevant role of the traditional–secular-rational dimension in this dissertation. As noted above, the merged dataset did not contain a precomputed index for this dimension, and the constituent items were not available for all countries and survey years. The findings should, therefore, not be interpreted as a full empirical test of value change along this axis. Instead, individual religiosity is included in the quantitative analysis as a micro-level independent variable associated with materialist–postmaterialist orientations, while the dominant religious denomination is considered a macro-level characteristic of the countries' broader historical and cultural contexts.

The qualitative analysis considers religious belonging and spirituality only insofar as they appear within the participants' wider accounts of values and life orientations, rather than treating them as a separately measured value dimension. The discussion of religion, therefore, provides contextual and interpretative support for the primary analysis of materialist–postmaterialist value change without conflating the two dimensions of Inglehart and Welzel's model.

1.6. Values of the First Postsocialist Generation

1.6.1. Contradictory and context-dependent patterns of value change

As discussed in Section 1.2, the transformation following the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by a severe economic downturn, employment insecurity, housing shortages and rising housing costs, and the reorganisation or withdrawal of former state guarantees (Roberts, 2003; Stankūnienė & Maslauskaitė, 2009; Dimitrov, 2020). The transformations also intensified social inequality and marginalisation, as different groups possessed unequal resources for adapting to the rapidly changing conditions (Eyal et al., 1998; Stoilova, 2010; Stankūnienė & Maslauskaitė, 2009). The disruption of established social guarantees and normative structures contributed to deprivation and anomie, while marketisation, changing gender relations, and new possibilities for migration altered the life trajectories available to young people.

The first postsocialist generation was, therefore, socialised not only under conditions of expanding personal freedom, cultural liberalisation, and global openness, but also amid economic insecurity, inequality, and disrupted social guarantees. Expanding personal freedom, cultural liberalisation, and global openness cannot be assumed to have eliminated materialist concerns, even if they simultaneously expanded exposure to values of autonomy, individual choice, and self-expression. The relevant question is, consequently, not whether postmaterialist values simply replaced materialist ones, but how orientations towards security, consumption, autonomy, and self-expression were combined under historically specific postsocialist conditions.

Studies conducted across postsocialist societies have identified generational differences associated with the distinct contexts in which successive cohorts were socialised. Estonian research (Saar, 2008; Kalmus et al., 2013) indicates that older generations educated during socialism tend to place a greater emphasis on political engagement, social responsibility, and forms of culture associated with the normative standards of the socialist period.

Meanwhile, younger generations shaped by market-oriented reforms and global cultural exchange place a greater emphasis on personal freedom, consumer choice, and engagement with the Western popular culture. These differences suggest generational change, but they do not correspond to a simple opposition between collectivist older generations and postmaterialist younger ones, because consumerist and self-expression-oriented values may develop alongside one another.

Further Estonian research emphasises that generational value differentiation was influenced not only by economic development but also by cultural exchange accelerated through globalisation. Cohorts born between 1980 and 1990 absorbed emerging liberal values and practices while distancing themselves from Soviet experiences (Raudsepp et al., 2013; Lilleoja & Raudsepp, 2016). Although these cohorts precede the first postsocialist generation as defined in this dissertation, their experiences illustrate how changing social conditions began to differentiate younger cohorts from generations socialised primarily under socialism.

Research in Serbia has identified a rise in emancipative values centred on individual freedoms and self-expression (Pavlović, 2018), while studies in Latvia and Azerbaijan have reported stronger postmaterialist orientations among younger generations (Bushina & Ryabichenko, 2018). Although, emancipative values are related to, but not equivalent to, the materialist–postmaterialist dimension examined in this dissertation. However, taken together, these studies indicate greater exposure of younger postsocialist

generations to liberal, individualistic, and self-expression-oriented values, without demonstrating a uniform decline in materialist orientations.

Comparative evidence from Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe directly demonstrates that postmaterialist value change has followed divergent national trajectories. By using the standard four-item index, Pavlović (2015) found that, in 2008–2010, postmaterialists constituted 10.8 per cent of respondents in Czechia, 10.4 per cent in North Macedonia, 6.8 per cent in Albania, and 4.1 per cent in Lithuania. The available longitudinal comparisons indicated an increase in the proportion of postmaterialists in Czechia, North Macedonia, and Albania, but a decline in Lithuania.

At the same time, the mixed category comprised more than a half of respondents in all four societies, thereby demonstrating that changes in the proportion of postmaterialists did not amount to a uniform replacement of materialist priorities. Because these findings concern national adult populations and the data extend only to 2008–2010, they cannot be treated as direct evidence concerning the 1991–2000 cohort. They, nevertheless, establish different national trajectories and contextual baselines, within which, the first postsocialist generation was socialised. Related research similarly indicates that movement towards greater individual choice is constrained and mediated by economic instability, insufficient existential security, and inherited historical and cultural conditions (Manea & Rabušic, 2021; Savelyev, 2016).

Research conducted in Lithuania likewise points to mixed and period-sensitive patterns of value change. Savicka (2015) found that Lithuanian society was characterised by heterogeneous value orientations, and that materialist values strengthened in the aftermath of the economic crisis. The continuing importance of material security has been observed both among the generation born between 1984 and 1990 (Žiliukaitė, 2016c) and among the first postsocialist generation born between 1991 and 2000 (Dauksaite, 2021). Similar persistence is visible in Estonia, where respondents across all generations born between 1940 and 1999 attached importance to money and higher salaries (Kalmus, 2020). These studies indicate that the younger generations' increasing exposure to liberal and self-expression-oriented values does not necessarily diminish the importance of income, employment, and material security.

At the same time, Lithuanian research also identifies orientations associated with autonomy and self-expression. Alongside persistent materialist concerns, the first postsocialist generation expressed a strong emphasis on postmaterialist values (Dauksaite, 2021). Younger generations reported greater freedom in choosing their lifestyles than older generations

(Leonavičius & Žilys, 2021). Žilinskienė and Kraniauskienė (2024) likewise found a strong emphasis on individualism, self-discovery, and self-expression relative to family relationships and community belonging. Although these orientations are relevant to the broader postmaterialist and self-expression dimensions, they should not be treated as direct equivalents of Inglehart's materialist–postmaterialist index, because the cited studies employ different concepts and methods.

The recent research by Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) similarly indicates that younger Lithuanian generations express stronger orientations towards individual autonomy, self-expression, and social liberalisation than the cohorts socialised predominantly under socialism. However, the same generational context also retains concerns related to economic security, personal achievement, and family stability.

This literature, therefore, admits the possibility that value change in postsocialist Lithuania involves the simultaneous presence of orientations towards self-expression and material security rather than a straightforward replacement of one by the other. Whether a comparable pattern characterises the first postsocialist generation across different national contexts remains an empirical question to be addressed in this dissertation.

Research on value change in Lithuania also raises the question of whether apparent value change always reflects the emergence of entirely new orientations. Liubinienė (2002) notes that homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide were publicly denied, silenced, or excluded from legitimate discussion during the socialist period, whereas cultural liberalisation and democratisation created conditions in which these issues could be discussed openly. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Butler (1997), Fraser (1997, 2013), and Moran (2014, 2020), this change can be interpreted not only as the emergence of new values but also as a transformation of the social and political conditions, under which, previously marginalised experiences and positions could be publicly articulated. Consequently, changes in expressed attitudes may reflect both changes in underlying value orientations and changes in the legitimacy and possibility of expressing them.

Studies from Belarus demonstrate a different configuration of generational and contextual influences. Danilov and Rotman (2019) describe value change in Belarus as gradual, and argue that established values cannot be rapidly transformed through external pressure. Research on Belarusian millennials, nevertheless, identifies a growing discrepancy between young people's aspirations and the opportunities available to realise them, complicating their identities and relationships with the established social institutions

(Grishchenko & Titarenko, 2019). These findings suggest that younger generations may be exposed to global cultural exchange, digital communication, and transnational imaginaries even when national political and institutional structures change more slowly. Therefore, such cultural influences should be treated neither as independent of economic and political conditions, nor can they be reduced entirely to the level of national economic development.

Research from the South Caucasus region and Central Asia reveals additional configurations of value change. Based on nationally representative surveys conducted in Georgia in 2010 and 2011, Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili (2014) found only partial support for the expected relationship between economic resources and emancipative values. Education was more consistently associated with gender equality and tolerance than perceived economic position, while the findings concerning political participation and autonomy were internally contradictory. Because the study examined emancipative values rather than the four-item postmaterialism index, it informs the broader interpretation of value change without providing a direct measure of materialist–postmaterialist orientations.

In Central Asia, Haerpfer and Kizilova (2020) found that Kyrgyzstan came the closest among the three analysed societies to a mixed materialist–postmaterialist profile, but postmaterialism did not increase significantly among the youngest cohort born in 1984–1993. The authors relate this pattern to the economic, social, and political instability of the first postsocialist decades. At the same time, research from Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan demonstrates that the socioeconomic position shapes young people's aspirations, opportunities, and capacity to realise individual choices in different ways (Rigi, 2003; Roberts & Pollock, 2009; Bhat, 2013). These findings further caution against treating either national populations or the first postsocialist generation as internally homogeneous.

At the same time, differences in socioeconomic resources do not necessarily mean that value orientations are entirely class-specific. Estonian research indicates that individualism is present across different social-class settings, but its expressions and possibilities for realisation vary according to young people's socioeconomic circumstances (Nugin, 2013). Individualism may, therefore, be broadly shared as a cultural orientation, while the practical capacity to realise individual choices in education, employment, consumption, mobility, and relationships remains unequally distributed and is, therefore, expressed in different forms depending on the socio-economic situation.

A comparison of Russian respondents with respondents from 31 European countries found that the Russian value profiles were more similar to those

observed in other postsocialist societies than to those prevalent in Western Europe (Magun & Rudnev, 2013). Russian respondents expressed a weaker commitment to orientations such as care, tolerance, equality, and environmental protection and placed greater emphasis on competitive success, wealth, and power. These indicators as well derive from a broader value framework, and therefore should not be interpreted as direct measures of Inglehart's materialist–postmaterialist dimension.

Nevertheless, the study illustrates the continuing importance of competitive and material orientations in a postsocialist context. Studies from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan similarly identify emerging individualist orientations alongside continuing priorities of survival, security, development, and economic advancement (Dadabaev, 2007; Adilova et al., 2021). These findings, again, suggest that generational value change may involve the combination of orientations originating from different historical and cultural conditions rather than a uniform transition towards a single value model.

Overall, the existing literature does not provide evidence of a single or uniform value trajectory for the first postsocialist generation. Studies across different parts of the postsocialist region identify stronger orientations towards individual choice, autonomy, self-expression, and social liberalisation among younger generations. At the same time, material security, consumerist aspirations, personal achievement, family stability, and context-specific cultural legacies remain important.

Due to the fact that these studies examine different countries, cohorts, periods, and value constructs, their findings cannot be treated as direct evidence of one coherent generational value profile. Rather, the literature opens the possibility that materialist and postmaterialist orientations may coexist and acquire different meanings under different postsocialist conditions.

Therefore, the quantitative analysis in this dissertation examines whether the first postsocialist generation differs from older generations on the materialist–postmaterialist dimension, while the qualitative analysis explores how these value orientations are experienced, justified, and whether or not they can be combined.

1.6.2. Work and education

Postsocialist economic transformations reshaped young people's transitions through education and employment, as well as the meanings attached to these life domains. Political, economic, and social upheavals disrupted previously institutionalised pathways to adulthood and altered

expectations surrounding higher education, stable employment, and long-term planning. Economic uncertainty made educational and career decisions less predictable and contributed to the postponement of leaving the parental home and forming a family (Roberts et al., 2009; Roberts, 2010; Daukšaitė, 2019; Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024; Kraniauskienė, 2024). These developments do not in themselves demonstrate value change, but they constitute structural conditions under which stability, professional achievement, education, and personal autonomy acquire particular meanings.

Across postsocialist societies, young people have consequently had to navigate changing labour markets while adapting to institutional and economic conditions different from those experienced by older generations (Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2012). Research in Serbia indicates that such transformations have lasting effects on young people's choices, aspirations, and expectations, and may subsequently influence the conditions under which later cohorts enter education and employment (Mojić, 2016). Nevertheless, these effects should not be understood as uniform, because young people's opportunities to respond to labour-market change are differentiated by their family background, education, region, and access to resources.

The transition to capitalism did not eliminate inequalities associated with social origin but transformed the mechanisms through which they affected educational and labour-market outcomes. The family class position and access to economic, cultural, and social resources continued to shape young people's opportunities, identities, and capacity to adapt to new economic conditions, thereby reproducing patterns of inequality and social stratification (Roberts, 2003). Parents also transmit expectations concerning education, work, and success, providing both continuity with previous generations and resources for responding to social change (Hamzallari, 2018). The family, therefore, influences value formation not only through the direct transmission of norms but also by enabling or limiting the life strategies through which young people can pursue education, professional achievement, mobility, and independence.

This dynamic is particularly visible in educational and career decision-making, where access to cultural capital and educational resources affects both social mobility and the range of choices available to young people (Gugushvili, 2017; Chakhaia et al., 2014; Daukšaitė, 2020; Maslauskaitė, 2021; Kraniauskienė, 2024; Žilinskienė, 2024). Research from Lithuania and Georgia indicates that young people with greater access to these resources are generally better positioned to navigate educational institutions and changing labour markets, whereas those from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter greater barriers to upward mobility. Education may therefore be associated with value orientations both through socialisation and through the different

opportunities and forms of security that educational attainment provides. For this reason, education is included in the quantitative analysis as an individual-level factor associated with differences in materialist and postmaterialist orientations.

The effects of unequal economic and cultural resources may be partly buffered by supportive family relationships and other forms of familial social capital (Mikutavičienė, 2009; Daukšaitė, 2020; Žilinskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024). Emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and support for educational aspirations may expand young people's capacity to pursue mobility even when their families possess limited economic resources. On the other hand, some members of the first postsocialist generation experienced insufficient economic or psychological support as a motivation to seek higher social positions than those occupied by their parents (Žilinskienė, 2024). This should not be interpreted as a universal positive effect of deprivation, but as one possible response to a perceived lack of security and opportunity.

Lithuanian research also identifies differences in the sequencing of education and employment. Those born during the 1980s tended to attach greater importance to completing education before entering employment, whereas people born after 1990 were more likely to prioritise employment before, alongside, or instead of further education (Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024). Greater priority given to employment and professional career may also contribute to the postponement of family formation (Žilinskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024). However, such sequencing should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that education or family has become less valuable, because it may reflect economic constraints, opportunity structures, or attempts to achieve security before making long-term commitments.

Recent youth studies from less frequently represented parts of the postsocialist region illustrate how education and work may simultaneously acquire meanings related to security, autonomy, and personal achievement. In Albania, only approximately one-quarter of surveyed young people believed that an Albanian university degree would enable them to obtain appropriate employment within a year, while inadequate wages and unsatisfactory working conditions were the most frequently cited reasons for refusing a job (Çela, Kamberi, & Gega 2024).

In North Macedonia, salary and job security were the two most highly ranked employment characteristics, but sufficient leisure time and the feeling of achieving something followed immediately thereafter (Topuzovska Latkovikj et al., 2024). Georgian youth expressed relatively strong confidence that education would prepare them for the labour market, although a majority

of respondents were not employed at the time of the survey (Shubladze et al., 2023). In Kyrgyzstan, difficulties in converting educational qualifications into suitable employment were connected to insecure work, low income, informal recruitment practices, and economically motivated migration (Harring et al., 2021).

Because these studies define youth by age at the time of the survey rather than through a common 1991–2000 birth cohort, they provide contextual comparisons rather than direct evidence concerning the first postsocialist generation as defined in this dissertation. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that education and employment cannot be interpreted through a simple opposition between material security and self-realisation.

In rural settings, generational differences in work orientations are also shaped by the specific economic and familial structures of agricultural life. Research on family-farm succession in Czechia demonstrates tensions between inherited expectations to continue a family's economic activities and younger people's changing educational aspirations, occupational preferences, and understandings of professional autonomy (Zagata et al., 2019). This example shows that generational change in work values does not occur independently of place and family resources: the meaning of individual choice differs when occupational decisions are connected to the continuation of inherited property, family obligations, and rural ways of life.

Studies of younger generations also identify an increasing emphasis on work–life balance, flexibility, and meaningful professional engagement relative to traditional markers such as long-term job security, adherence to organisational rules, and hierarchical advancement (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Žilinskienė & Kraniauskienė, 2024; Kraniauskienė, 2024). Research on Czech youth likewise points to the growing legitimacy of non-traditional career paths and personal fulfilment outside conventional employment trajectories (Macek et al., 2007).

However, these tendencies should not be treated as universal characteristics of an entire generation, as their realisation depends on occupational position, income, education, and national labour-market conditions. Furthermore, the search for meaningful and flexible work does not eliminate material concerns. It may instead create a tension between self-realisation, income, employment security, professional status, and the capacity to maintain boundaries between work and personal life.

Cross-national research on work values provides further grounds for questioning the assumption that security-related and self-expression-related orientations necessarily replace one another. By using the European Values Study and the CUPESSE survey, Gesthuizen with colleagues (2019) distinguished extrinsic work values, including pay and job security, from

intrinsic values related to an interesting job, the use of one's abilities, achievement, responsibility, and initiative. The two dimensions were positively rather than negatively related across countries, thereby indicating that stronger expectations concerning intrinsic qualities of work may be added without displacing concerns with income and security.

Descriptive EVS results for Albania, Czechia, Georgia, Lithuania, and North Macedonia likewise show that extrinsic and intrinsic qualities may both be considered important, although the relative importance and ordering of individual items differ between national contexts. Taken together, these findings indicate that intrinsic and extrinsic work values should not be treated as opposite ends of a single continuum, while also cautioning that apparently identical survey items may not carry identical meanings across contexts (Gesthuizen, Kovarek, & Rapp, 2019).

Until approximately the 1970s, individual success in Western societies was largely evaluated through relatively clear material and positional criteria, including income, occupational status, and hierarchical advancement. In the post-Fordist period, and particularly in the twenty-first century, these criteria have become more flexible and individualised, making success increasingly dependent on subjective life goals and personal definitions of fulfilment (Nugin & Onken, 2010).

Nevertheless, self-realisation continues to be pursued to a considerable extent through work and professional achievement (Pagis, 2021). Work may consequently function both as a source of personal fulfilment and as a measure of individual worth. Within a neoliberal framework, individuals are encouraged to invest continuously in their human capital, productivity, and employability, while professional achievement also supports consumption and social status. Pivoriūtė and Poškauskaitė (2019) describe the related phenomenon of 'demonstrative busyness', in which intensive work and a visible lack of time can themselves become signs of productivity, usefulness, and success.

These post-Fordist and neoliberal orientations did not replace postsocialist concerns with employment and economic security but became intertwined with them. Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) show that younger Lithuanian generations attach greater importance than older generations did at the same age to both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of work. Good pay and convenient working hours remain highly valued alongside opportunities to show initiative, achieve something, undertake responsible work, and express oneself through professional activity. Kalmus (2020) similarly found that a lack of time functioned as an indicator of a higher social status across Estonian generations born between 1940 and 1999.

These findings suggest that the pursuit of self-realisation through work may coexist with competitiveness, productivity pressures, and persistent material concerns. Meaningful work and professional autonomy should, therefore, not be interpreted as purely postmaterialist orientations, because they may simultaneously serve personal fulfilment, material security, consumption, and status.

Contemporary crises can also alter the meanings attached to education and employment. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education, employment, and young people's readiness or capacity for social and professional activity (Perikova et al., 2021), while educational inequalities created additional obstacles to achieving independence and stability (Broka & Toots, 2022). The pandemic should be understood primarily as a period effect rather than as evidence of a distinct cohort orientation. Nevertheless, its unequal consequences may reinforce or reactivate concerns with employment, income, and material security among a generation otherwise socialised under conditions of greater cultural openness and individual choice.

Overall, the literature indicates that work and education cannot be classified in advance as either materialist or postmaterialist domains. Education may serve as a means of economic security, status, and upward mobility, but also as a route towards self-development and autonomy. Similarly, work may provide income and stability while simultaneously functioning as a source of meaning, identity, self-realisation, and personal freedom. The same orientation towards professional achievement may, therefore, combine material, consumerist, and self-expression-related meanings.

In this dissertation, education is not investigated quantitatively as a separate explanatory mechanism. **Educational attainment is included in the quantitative models as a covariate when estimating differences in materialist and postmaterialist orientations, while the qualitative analysis explores how members of the first postsocialist generation understand the role of education alongside work, success, security, and self-realisation in their life trajectories.**

1.6.3. Political participation

Political participation constitutes one of the domains in which value orientations may be expressed, although participation practices should not be treated as direct measures of values. Research does not indicate a uniform generational increase in political engagement across postsocialist societies. Rather, generational differences may concern the forms, issues, and channels of participation. Younger generations have greater access to activism and

public expression through digital platforms, which circulate global political repertoires and liberal norms, as well as consumerist and individualised forms of identity.

However, access to digital communication does not necessarily produce sustained civic involvement. Research in Czechia, for example, indicates that civic participation may occupy a less central place in some young people's identities (Šerek, 2017). Younger generations may, therefore, distance themselves from traditional civic organisations while engaging selectively through other channels.

Postmaterialist orientations have been associated with alternative forms of political participation, including the use of consumer choices to express social, ethical, and environmental concerns (Copeland, 2014). Political consumerism may allow individuals to connect everyday consumption with broader political priorities, although boycotts and other consumer practices can also be motivated by economic, national, or pragmatic considerations and should not automatically be interpreted as postmaterialist manifestations.

Research in Lithuania found that members of the first postsocialist generation were more willing to express political positions through signing petitions, boycotting products, participating in protests, strikes, or social movements than through voting or sustained involvement in formal institutional politics (Dauksaite, 2021). This finding points to a change in the repertoire of political participation rather than necessarily to an overall increase in political engagement.

The diversification of political participation is also visible in the issues and identities around which younger people mobilise. Research in Lithuania identifies the emergence of new left-wing movements among members of the first postsocialist generation, involving the rejection of some dominant political narratives and a search for alternative collective identities corresponding more closely to their lived experiences (Dauksaite, 2021). In Estonia, younger people's civic participation has been described as more individualised and oriented towards changing their immediate living environment (Kalmus et al., 2018). Romanian research demonstrates how younger generations may challenge older generations' narratives concerning the symbolic legacy of socialism (Rusu & Croitoru, 2021).

Studies from Central Asia similarly identify demands for democratic change, social justice, rights, social mobility, and political reform among parts of the younger population (Roberts et al., 2009). These examples should not be generalised into a single postsocialist pattern, as the opportunities, risks, and meanings of political participation differ substantially between democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian political contexts.

Evidence from other countries examined in this dissertation further demonstrates the context-dependent meanings of political participation. Research on the youth wings of Albania's two dominant centre-left parties found that young people's political representation depended more strongly on the organisational autonomy and internal structures of political parties than on formal institutional mechanisms intended to promote their inclusion (Lleshi & Kalemaj, 2024). Low participation in conventional politics may, therefore, reflect restricted organisational opportunities rather than the absence of political concerns.

Among Georgian university students, cultural citizenship, grounded primarily in shared language and culture, was more prevalent than either exclusively civic or ethnic conceptions of citizenship and was associated with national identification, patriotism, nationalism, and religious orthodoxy (Mestvirishvili, 2019). In North Macedonia, political consumerism, including refusal to purchase products for political or environmental reasons, formed part of young people's reported participation repertoire alongside comparatively limited involvement in formal party politics (Topuzovska Latkovikj et al., 2024). Research on environmental mobilisation in Kyrgyzstan likewise found that environmental beliefs contributed to protest behaviour, although mobilisation could not be explained solely by affluence, postmaterialist concerns, or economic grievances (Wooden, 2013).

Although these studies examine different populations and do not directly operationalise Inglehart's materialist–postmaterialist index, they show that political participation may combine demands concerning democratic accountability, cultural belonging, environmental protection, economic opportunity, and material security.

Overall, alternative, issue-based, and individualised forms of political participation are compatible with orientations towards autonomy, self-expression, and social liberalisation. Nevertheless, they should not be classified in advance as expressions of postmaterialist values. Participation may also be shaped by distrust in formal institutions, limited opportunities for institutional influence, digital-media practices, national identity, or material grievances concerning employment, inequality, and social security. The same protest or civic action may therefore combine demands for individual rights and self-expression with concerns about economic security and social justice. In this dissertation, political participation itself is not operationalised as an individual-level quantitative outcome.

The quantitative analysis, instead, uses the Deliberative Democracy Index to examine whether the broader democratic institutional context is associated with cross-national differences in postmaterialist orientations

among members of the first postsocialist generation. In the qualitative analysis, political participation is treated as a domain through which value orientations may be expressed in the participants' narratives, including accounts of voting, activism, political expression, institutional trust, and disengagement.

1.6.4. Relationships and family formation

Family and relationship trajectories in postsocialist societies have been reshaped by the interaction of socioeconomic transformations and changing cultural expectations. The postponement of union formation was already observable among cohorts born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, preceding the first postsocialist generation defined in this dissertation (Kraniauskienė, 2011). Comparative research also connects changing patterns of partnership, childbearing, and family formation with economic uncertainty, relationship instability, and changing gender roles (Billingsley & Oláh, 2022).

These developments form part of a broader destandardisation of the transition to adulthood, but demographic behaviour should not be interpreted as a direct measure of values. Delayed partnership, marriage, or parenthood may reflect economic constraints, changing expectations concerning relationships, or higher perceived prerequisites for commitment rather than a decline in the importance of family. Family formation is, therefore, treated as a domain in which autonomy, security, responsibility, intimacy, and self-realisation are negotiated.

Changing expectations concerning intimacy are also reflected in increasingly diverse and flexible forms of romantic relationships. Research on long-distance relationships in Latvia demonstrates how tensions between traditional authority and personal autonomy shape emerging forms of intimacy, commitment, and relationship maintenance (Jurkane-Hobein, 2015).

In Lithuania, Pivoriūtė (2024) describes people born in the 1990s as negotiating between "global enabling diversity" and "local limiting reality": globalised opportunities and experiences coexist with expectations and pressures transmitted through families, educational institutions, and social media. Pivoriūtė further argues that logics of choice, flexibility, evaluation, and optimisation associated with contemporary capitalism may enter intimate relationships, while expectations of authenticity and emotional fulfilment, which are traditionally associated with intimate life, may also be transferred to work. This interpretation connects changing relationship practices with the broader processes of individualisation, consumerism, and reflexive choice discussed in the preceding sections.

Lithuanian research indicates that changing gender expectations concerning childcare and domestic work contribute to more flexible and potentially more egalitarian understandings of family life, although these developments occur under conditions of economic unpredictability and persistent inequalities in the distribution of care (Ališauskienė & Maslauskaitė, 2021). Research on the first postsocialist generation also identifies further postponement of family formation and increasing destandardisation in the sequencing of partnership, parenthood, education, and employment (Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024).

Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026) distinguish the relative stability of the importance attributed to family from the gradual detraditionalisation of attitudes towards marriage. Younger generations are more likely to regard marriage as an outdated institution and to express greater tolerance of divorce, while fidelity, the sharing of domestic responsibilities, sufficient income, and good living conditions remain highly valued as conditions of a successful marriage. The importance attached to several of these conditions has strengthened rather than declined over time. Individualisation, therefore, does not necessarily eliminate family-oriented values. Instead, it may transform the institutional form of family life and increase expectations concerning the quality, equality, security, and conditions of intimate commitment.

The ideologies of 'intensive parenting' and 'responsible parenting' provide another explanation for the postponement of childbearing. These ideologies emphasise parents' responsibility to create the best possible emotional, developmental, and material conditions for children. The resulting expectations may increase pressure on prospective parents and produce doubts about their economic, emotional, and relational preparedness for parenthood (Tretjakova, 2023; Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024; Kraniauskienė, 2024; Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė-Mačkinė, 2024b). Delayed parenthood may therefore result not from the rejection of family but from the heightened importance attributed to responsible parenting. In this sense, insecurity may be transformed into intensified responsibility, making parenthood conditional on achieving standards that are difficult to fulfil.

Research also identifies self-oriented and globally oriented justifications for postponing or rejecting parenthood. The former emphasises self-realisation and the potential conflict between parenthood and other personal life projects, whereas the latter refers to global risks and doubts about bringing children into an uncertain world (Galdauskaitė, 2023). These orientations demonstrate that decisions concerning parenthood may involve different combinations of autonomy, responsibility, security, and concern for others. They should be understood as distinct justificatory repertoires rather than as uniform characteristics of the entire first postsocialist generation.

Housing constitutes another important condition linking transitions to adulthood, material security, and family formation. Lithuanian research indicates that obtaining independent housing is a significant life event for members of the first postsocialist generation. It may signify the beginning of an independent life associated with education or career development, but it may also represent a prerequisite for cohabitation and family formation (Indriliūnaitė, 2021). The form of housing tenure is likewise meaningful. Renting is often understood as a temporary arrangement associated with study, early employment, or childless cohabitation, whereas home ownership remains an important aspiration and marker of stability (Žilys, 2018; Kraniauskienė, 2024; Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024).

Housing consequently carries multiple meanings that should not be reduced to a single value orientation. It is a material asset and source of economic security, but it can also symbolise autonomy, privacy, adulthood, relational stability, and readiness for family formation. The aspiration to own a home should, therefore, not automatically be classified as materialist, just as leaving the parental home should not inherently be interpreted as the rejection of family interdependence. The meanings attributed to housing depend on how material security, independence, relationships, and future life plans are combined.

Comparative evidence from other parts of the postsocialist region likewise reveals no simple replacement of family-oriented values by individual autonomy. A qualitative study of 97 childless young adults aged 18–30 in eight European countries, including Albania and North Macedonia, found that the participants simultaneously questioned gendered procreative pressures and reproduced the expectation that parenthood constitutes a normal or desirable life objective (Vialle et al., 2026). Although they expressed a desire for greater freedom and equality in decisions concerning parenthood, many found it difficult to imagine non-traditional family arrangements for themselves, with traditional family aspirations remaining particularly prominent in the Albanian and North Macedonian interviews. The small purposive samples in each country mean that these findings should be treated as evidence of available justificatory repertoires rather than their population-level prevalence.

Research in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia similarly found that the normative sequence of marriage followed by parenthood remained resilient and was partly sustained by the older generation's control of housing and young adults' reliance on intergenerational assistance (Roberts et al., 2009). Prolonged co-residence could, therefore, constitute both a constraint on autonomy and a rational strategy for obtaining childcare, housing, and economic support.

In Kyrgyzstan, nationally representative marriage histories indicate that arranged marriages and marriages involving bride kidnapping declined during

the postsocialist period, despite expectations of cultural retraditionalisation (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). These studies examine family practices and representations rather than the materialist or postmaterialist values, but they demonstrate how autonomy, changing gender expectations, family continuity, material interdependence, and the gradual transformation of traditional practices may coexist.

Overall, the literature indicates that changing patterns of intimacy and family formation cannot be interpreted as a straightforward replacement of family-oriented values by individualism. Members of younger generations may seek autonomy, emotional fulfilment, and equality in intimate relationships while simultaneously attaching considerable importance to stable partnerships, family support, responsible parenthood, and secure housing. The postponement of family formation may reflect material insecurity, high standards for relationships and parenting, competing life projects, or concerns about future risks. Relationship and family practices therefore provide a domain in which orientations towards self-realisation, relational connectedness, responsibility, and material security may overlap.

In the quantitative analysis, the marital status and the number of children are included as individual-level covariates when estimating differences in materialist and postmaterialist orientations, rather than investigated as separate explanatory mechanisms. The qualitative analysis examines the meanings attributed to family, parental influence, intimate relationships, friendships, community ties, housing, and decisions concerning parenthood.

1.7. Theoretical Model of the Dissertation

Figure 1 presents the author's reconstruction and contextualisation of Inglehart's value change theory for the analysis of postsocialist societies. **It integrates Inglehart's theoretical propositions with the complementary perspectives reviewed in this chapter and distinguishes three interrelated levels: historical and contemporary societal conditions at the macro level, generational socialisation and mediation at the meso level, and individual circumstances and value orientations at the micro level.** The model provides the initial theoretical framework for empirical analysis. Selected propositions are examined in the quantitative and qualitative chapters, and a revised version of the model is presented in the discussion in light of the empirical findings.

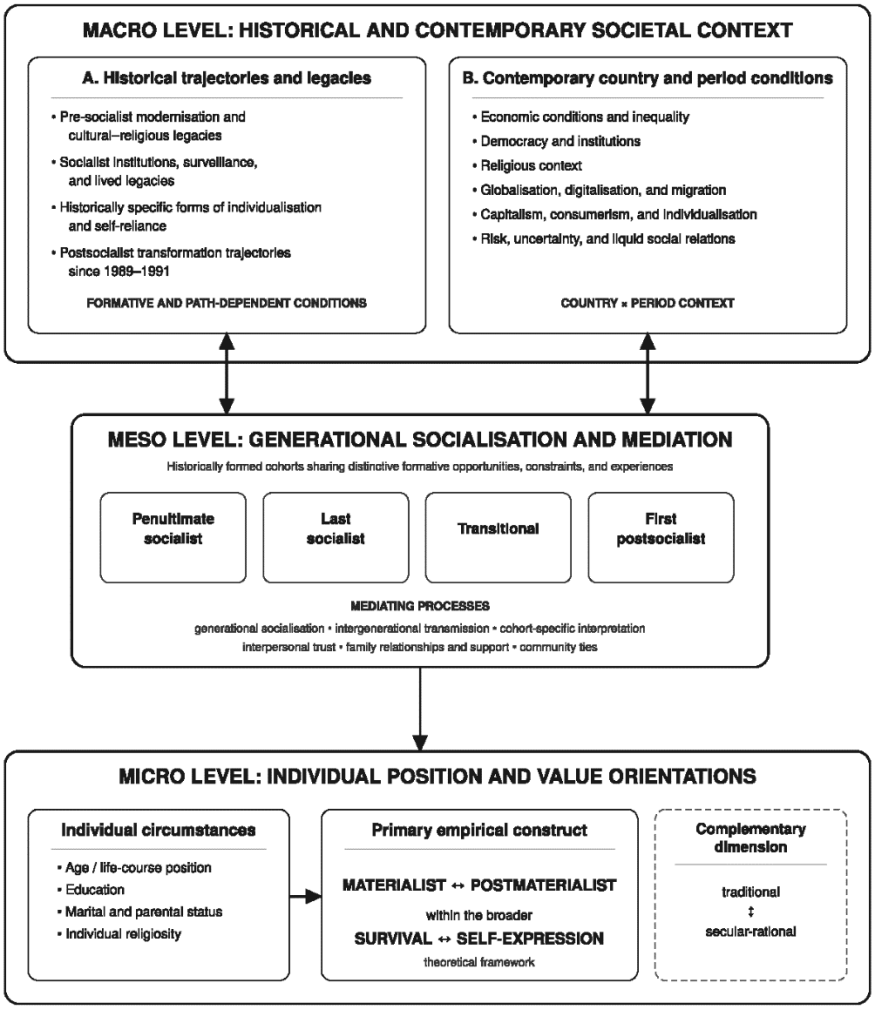


Figure 1. Initial theoretical model of materialist–postmaterialist value orientations in postsocialist societies, tested in Chapters 2 and 3. *Source:* Author's reconstruction and contextualisation of Inglehart's value change theory

The first macro-level dimension comprises historical trajectories and legacies. These include pre-socialist modernisation and cultural–religious legacies, socialist institutions, socialisation and lived experiences, and the different trajectories of postsocialist transformation since 1989–1991. As discussed in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, socialist modernity interacted with pre-existing national, institutional and cultural conditions rather than replacing them uniformly. Postsocialism is, therefore, used as a comparative historical category, and not as an assumption that all the societies included in the study followed identical trajectories.

These historical conditions may also have produced ambivalent forms of individualisation. In some contexts, individualisation was expressed through autonomy, private resistance and the preservation of identities that differed from publicly imposed norms; in others, or simultaneously, it could take the form of defensive self-reliance fostered by surveillance, insecurity and interpersonal distrust. Historical trajectories may thus shape generational socialisation through uneven relational legacies, including forms of self-reliance, interpersonal distrust and disrupted family support. These legacies are treated as contextually variable and potentially contested conditions rather than as uniform or deterministic outcomes of socialism.

The second macro-level dimension comprises contemporary country and period conditions. These include economic conditions and inequality, democracy and institutions, religious (and spiritual) context, globalisation, digitalisation and migration, as well as capitalism and consumerism. They also encompass processes of late-modern individualisation, risk and uncertainty, and increasingly liquid social relations. These contemporary processes do not operate independently of historical trajectories: similar global influences may be encountered and interpreted differently depending on inherited institutions, cultural legacies, and paths of transformation.

At the meso level, generations are conceptualised not merely as age categories or descriptive cohort labels, but as historically formed structures of socialisation and mediation. Combining a cohort-based definition with a Mannheimian understanding of generations, the model treats generational cohorts as sharing a location in historical time and being exposed to distinctive configurations of opportunities, constraints and formative experiences. The four cohorts distinguished in this dissertation therefore represent different socialisation locations while remaining internally heterogeneous.

Generation is located at the meso level not because it constitutes a spatial or organisational unit, but because it functions analytically as a historically situated structure of socialisation and mediation that connects societal transformations with individual value formation. Generational position is analytically distinguished from the age or life-course position and period, although the age–period–cohort relationship means that these dimensions cannot be separated unambiguously.

Generations mediate between macro-level conditions and individual value orientations through generational socialisation, intergenerational transmission, and cohort-specific interpretation. The model also recognises that these processes take place within relational environments, including family relationships and support, interpersonal trust, and community ties.

These relational conditions are not treated as a separate empirical level or as a distinct social capital construct.

Rather, social capital literature is used as a sensitising perspective for considering how accessible and supportive relationships may buffer insecurity, whereas fragmented family relationships or restricted networks may contribute to distrust, withdrawal, or defensive self-reliance. No uniform directional effect is assumed: the significance of these relational conditions depends on their quality, accessibility, and a wider historical and societal context.

At the micro level, the model distinguishes between individual circumstances and value orientations. Age and life-course position, education, marital and parental status, and individual religiosity locate individuals differently within the opportunities and constraints associated with their generational and societal contexts. The primary theoretical construct is the materialist–postmaterialist orientation, interpreted within the broader survival–self-expression dimension. The traditional–secular-rational dimension is retained as a complementary dimension relevant to religious and cultural change but is not treated as equivalent to materialism–postmaterialism or combined with it into a single continuum. **Value orientations are understood as relatively stable but contextually embedded systems of meaning that guide perception, evaluation and action.**

Arrows connecting the levels and components in Figure 1 indicate the direction of theorised relationships. The downward macro–meso arrows represent contextual influences on generational formation, while the upward arrows represent the (re)interpretation or transformation of these contexts by generations. For the historical block, the upward direction concerns the continuing meanings and consequences of inherited legacies, and not changes to past events. However, older generations could shape the conditions of the past when it was still ‘present’ as active co-creators and participants.

The meso–micro arrow represents the formative role of generational socialisation in individual value formation. The horizontal arrow within the micro level links individual circumstances to variation in materialist–postmaterialist orientations. These connecting arrows do not represent statistically established causal effects.

The bidirectional arrows between value labels mark the poles of the respective dimensions. They do not suggest reciprocal influence or an inevitable transition between these poles.

Within this model, security is not reduced to economic conditions alone. Interpersonal trust, family and community support, institutional conditions and individual life circumstances may also shape how security

and insecurity are experienced. Consequently, the literature does not require value change to follow a uniform linear replacement of materialist orientations by postmaterialist ones. It opens the possibility that **materialist, postmaterialist, traditional and individualised (secular/rational) orientations may coexist, acquire context-specific meanings or be combined in different ways. The dissertation takes this possibility as an open theoretical question to be answered empirically rather than as a conclusion established in advance**.

1.7.1. Epistemological and social ontological assumptions

This dissertation adopts a multi-level and epistemologically pluralist approach to the study of values, grounded in a relational understanding of social reality (social ontology). Ontologically, values are treated as socially embedded orientations that emerge through the interaction between historical structures, socialisation processes, and individual interpretation. They are neither purely objective properties of social systems nor purely subjective individual choices but are constituted within the interplay of structural conditions and lived experience.

The framework adopts a structure–agency perspective, recognising that social actors are both shaped by and actively engaged with the social environments in which they are embedded. Structural conditions, such as economic systems, political institutions, and cultural legacies, delimit but do not mechanically determine the range of available possibilities. Individuals may interpret, negotiate, internalise, or resist these conditions in different ways. This is particularly relevant to generational analysis: members of different cohorts encounter inherited structural conditions from distinct locations in historical time but articulate them through contemporary practices and reflexive self-understandings. This perspective allows for both constraint and variation, continuity and change.

Epistemologically, the dissertation combines a post-positivist approach to quantitative inquiry with an interpretivist approach to qualitative inquiry, while recognising that neither provides direct or exhaustive access to values. The quantitative analysis uses standardised indicators to identify comparable patterns in responses associated with value orientations across generations and societal contexts. These indicators are treated as useful but necessarily partial and theoretically mediated representations: similar responses may carry different meanings in different sociohistorical contexts, while comparable orientations may be expressed through different responses or practices. Qualitative accounts, likewise, do not

provide transparent access to an individual's internal value system. They constitute situated and interpreted articulations of values produced through the participants' reflections and the research interview context.

Rather than treating these epistemological approaches as incompatible, **the dissertation adopts a complementarist logic. Quantitative analysis supports the identification of comparative structural and generational patterns, while qualitative analysis supports the interpretation of how values are articulated, experienced, and negotiated within particular sociohistorical contexts and may illuminate the mechanisms underlying these patterns.** Neither form of evidence is treated as exhaustive or inherently privileged. Their integration reflects the underlying ontological assumption that social reality is both structured and interpreted.

Within this perspective, value change is understood as a process that cannot be fully explained either by structural conditions alone or by individual agency in isolation. Instead, it is conceptualised as emerging from the interaction between factors operating at different levels. This approach allows the dissertation to move beyond deterministic and purely individualistic explanations, offering a more comprehensive account of value formation in postsocialist societies.

2. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS: AN APPLICATION OF INGLEHART'S MODEL

The study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in which, the quantitative analysis identifies general patterns and associations in value change, while the qualitative analysis examines their contextual meanings and contributes to their interpretation. This combination allows the integration of structural analysis with the interpretation of lived experiences, contributing to the refinement of the theoretical framework.

To examine trajectories of value change in postsocialist countries and the value orientations of the first postsocialist generation, the quantitative analysis compares this generation with three earlier generations. The analysis uses harmonised data from the *World Values Survey* and the *European Values Study*, which provide repeated cross-national observations for most of the postsocialist countries included in the study.

The hypotheses tested in the quantitative analysis are derived from the theoretical framework discussed in the literature review, particularly Inglehart's theory of value change, as well as its critiques in the postsocialist and late capitalist contexts. Inglehart's theory suggests that value change is driven by generational replacement and socio-economic development, leading to a shift from materialist to postmaterialist values.

At the same time, previous research, including Inglehart himself, highlights the importance of contextual factors, particularly economic conditions, political systems, and cultural legacies, as well as individual-level characteristics such as education, religiosity, and socio-economic status. Therefore, while some hypotheses and assumptions reflect expectations derived directly from Inglehart's framework, others are formulated to test its limitations in the postsocialist and late capitalist contexts.

Based on these theoretical considerations, the hypotheses are grouped according to the analytical questions addressed below: country-level contextual factors, generational, survey-period, and age-related patterns, and religious context along with individual religiosity. This grouping follows the order of the empirical analysis and makes clear which hypotheses are examined in the same model.

Country-level contextual factors

H1: Higher levels of economic development are associated with higher levels of postmaterialist values in the first postsocialist generation.

H2: Higher levels of democracy are associated with higher levels of postmaterialist values in the first postsocialist generation.

Generational, survey-period, and age-group patterns

H3: Each successive generation is more postmaterialist than the preceding generation in postsocialist countries.

H4: The first postsocialist generation is more postmaterialist than each of the older generations in postsocialist countries.

H5: Later survey periods are associated with higher levels of postmaterialist values across generations in postsocialist countries.

H6: Older respondents are less likely to express postmaterialist value orientations than younger respondents in postsocialist countries.

Religious context and individual religiosity

H7: In countries classified as Roman Catholic religious contexts, postmaterialist values in the first postsocialist generation are stronger than in countries classified as Orthodox or Muslim religious contexts.

H8: Stronger individual religiosity is positively associated with postmaterialist values in the first postsocialist generation.

2.1. World Values Survey and European Values Study, 1990–2022

Both the *European Values Study* (EVS) and the *World Values Survey* (WVS) are cross-national repeated surveys designed to obtain nationally representative samples of the adult resident population, although the sampling procedures, fieldwork modes, target ages, and achieved sample sizes vary by country and wave. EVS harmonisation and sampling standards became progressively stricter across survey waves; earlier rounds included both probability-based and quota-based national designs, whereas later rounds required probability samples. WVS generally requires representative probability-based or stratified national samples of residents aged 18 or older, although some national samples include respondents from age 16, and a minimum of approximately 1,200 completed interviews is normally expected, with 1,000 sometimes accepted in countries with populations below two million. Country- and wave-specific deviations are documented in the respective survey metadata[3].

The analytical dataset was constructed from the EVS Trend File 1981–2017 (fieldwork conducted between 1981 and 2021) and the WVS Trend File 1981–2022. The official EVS–WVS merge syntax was used as a harmonisation guide, and the data-processing steps were implemented in *R*

[3] World values survey website. Fieldwork and Sampling: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=FieldworkSampling
European values study website. Surveys: EVS https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/surveys/surveys-evs/

software. The two sources contain separate respondent samples; consequently, their records were appended as additional rows rather than matched since they did not describe the same individuals. The combined file was then restricted to the 24 postsocialist countries and survey years used in this study.

To verify that row-wise appending did not introduce duplicate records, the combined file was checked by using a composite identifier consisting of the study source, country, survey year, and unified respondent number. All 177,524 records had valid values on these components, and no duplicated composite identifiers were found. The same check identified no duplicates among the 89,004 respondents born between 1961 and 2000; consequently, no observations were removed as duplicates.

EVS and WVS are repeated cross-sectional surveys: each national survey samples respondents at a particular point in time rather than following the same individuals longitudinally. The present analysis was restricted to surveys conducted between 1990 and 2022 and to 24 postsocialist countries. Respondents born from 1961 to 2000 were classified into four ten-year birth cohorts: the penultimate socialist (1961–1970), last socialist (1971–1980), transitional (1981–1990), and first postsocialist (1991–2000) generations. Two older birth cohorts available in the harmonised surveys were excluded because they fall outside the dissertation's theoretically defined sequence of late-socialist, transitional, and postsocialist socialisation and provide even less age–period overlap with the first postsocialist generation.

The four cohorts were defined to compare the respondents whose formative years were situated differently in relation to socialism and the postsocialist transformation. Ten-year birth cohorts provide groups large enough for comparison across all countries. The year 1991 is, therefore, used as a common analytical boundary, and not as a claim that political and social change began at exactly the same time or unfolded in the same way in every country. The cohort labels identify historically situated socialisation contexts, but they do not imply that all members of a cohort had identical experiences.

The survey coverage differs across countries, years, and cohorts. The analytical sample contains 110 country–survey-year groups, and younger cohorts are necessarily absent from surveys conducted before they had reached the survey age. Annex Table A1 reports the number of respondents in every country, survey year, and cohort.

2.2. Research Methodology

The quantitative analysis proceeds from description to explanation. First, percentages, means, and cross-tabulations are used to show how value

orientations are distributed across generations, countries, and survey periods. Statistical tests then examine whether the observed differences are larger than what would be expected from sampling variation. Finally, regression models estimate whether the generational pattern remains when the age, survey period, country, and individual characteristics are considered together. Section 2.2.2 explains each method at the point where it enters this sequence.

The analysis begins with country-level correlation analyses examining whether postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation is associated with economic development and democracy. It then estimates generation, survey-period, and age-group associations together in the principal pooled model. The final set of analyses distinguishes between country-level religious context and individual religiosity. Annex Table A1 documents the composition of the principal pooled model's analytical sample. H1–H2 and H7–H8 use the separate country- or respondent-level samples specified in Section 2.2.2.

The dependent variable is the EVS/WVS four-item postmaterialism index, represented by three ordered categories: materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist. The harmonised four-item postmaterialism index was used directly because the first purpose of the quantitative analysis was to examine what Inglehart's own instrument reveals when it is applied to postsocialist generations. Its wider availability across countries and survey waves is an additional practical advantage over the twelve-item version.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the measure is nevertheless narrower than the full idea of postmaterialism: it asks respondents to rank a small set of state priorities, and the mixed category can contain different combinations of preferences. The quantitative findings, therefore, concern this specific ordered instrument. The qualitative analysis later broadens the interpretation beyond what the index alone can capture.

The principal temporal predictors are four birth cohorts, five age groups (16–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, and 55 or older), and three survey periods (1990–2004, 2005–2014, and 2015–2022). The country is included as a 24-category nominal variable. The cohort, age group, and survey period are entered as categories rather than being forced into one linear trend.

The individual religiosity measure used in this dissertation needs to be distinguished from the broader traditional–secular-rational values index. A precomputed score for the latter was not available in the merged EVS/WVS dataset used for this study, and the constituent items were not available for all countries and survey years. As the WVS documentation explains, the factor scores depend on the pooled data used for their estimation, and missing

constituent items may prevent scores from being calculated for some surveys[4]. Obtaining comparable scores would, therefore, require a separate reconstruction procedure and explicit assessment of incomplete item coverage.

The religiosity index used in this dissertation serves a narrower purpose: it measures individual religious orientation and allows its relationship with materialist–postmaterialist orientations to be examined. It does not encompass the broader combination of religious, moral and authority-related orientations represented by the traditional–secular-rational dimension. Consequently, the analyses involving religiosity should not be interpreted as a comprehensive test of value change along that dimension.

The substantive analyses use an original additive religiosity index constructed from seven EVS/WVS indicators: the importance of religion in life, belonging to a religious denomination, religious self-identification, comfort and strength derived from religion, belief in God, the importance of God in life, and membership in a religious organisation. The indicators were assigned points representing increasing religiosity and then summed up. For the importance of religion in life, three, two, and one points were assigned to response categories 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Belonging to a religious denomination, deriving comfort and strength from religion, believing in God, and belonging to a religious organisation each contributed one point when coded '1'. Religious self-identification contributed two points for category 1 and one point for category 2. The importance of God contributed three points for category 10, two points for categories 6–9, and one point for categories 2–5. All remaining values contributed zero points. The resulting additive index ranges theoretically from 0 to 12, with higher scores indicating stronger religiosity.

The original construction is a weighted additive operationalisation rather than an equally scaled average of the seven indicators. The importance of religion in life and the importance of God can each contribute up to three points, religious self-identification can contribute up to two points, and each of the four dichotomous indicators contributes one point. Consequently, the two importance indicators have greater influence on the total score than the dichotomous indicators. In addition, the original coding assigns zero to all responses outside of the specified substantive categories, including missing or otherwise invalid values. Missing information is, therefore, not distinguished from a response contributing no religiosity points. These features are acknowledged as measurement limitations of the original index.

[4] World Values Survey website. Building the Tradrat and Survself factors: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=tradrat

A rescaled version of the religiosity index was subsequently constructed as a measurement-validation exercise. The same seven indicators were recoded so that higher values consistently represented greater religiosity and were rescaled to a common 0–1 metric before aggregation. Unlike the original weighted sum, the reconstructed measure gives the indicators a common numerical range. Among the respondents with valid information on all seven indicators, the reconstructed items showed a satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$; standardised $\alpha = 0.78$; N = 47,923).

The reconstructed measure was strongly, although not perfectly, associated with the original 0–12 index used in the substantive analyses (Pearson's $r = 0.811$; Spearman's $\rho = 0.805$). This indicates substantial convergence between the two operationalisations despite their different scaling and aggregation rules. The reconstructed measure was used to assess the internal consistency of the constituent items and its correspondence with the original operationalisation; it was not entered as an alternative predictor in the reported models. The original 0–12 additive index was retained throughout the substantive analyses. Consequently, the reported religiosity coefficients and odds ratios represent the change associated with a one-point increase in this index.

The individual-level controls were selected on substantive grounds. Education, marital status, number of children, and religiosity follow directly from the theoretical discussion of cognitive resources, family and life-course circumstances, and normative orientation. Sex was included as a demographic control to account for possible differences in reported value priorities between men and women and in their composition across cohorts, thereby reducing the risk of attributing such differences to generation.

Sex (1 = male, 2 = female) and marital status (1 = married, 2 = living together as married, 3 = divorced or separated, 4 = widowed, 5 = single/never married) are treated as nominal variables, as they do not have an inherent ordering. The number of children is treated as a numerical count ranging from 0 to 8. Education was retained as a three-level ordered measure and entered as a mean-centred numerical predictor. As education served as a control rather than a focal explanatory variable, this specification provided a parsimonious adjustment for the overall educational gradient. The town size is an ordered measure used only in the sensitivity analysis.

The economic wealth variable was constructed from two survey items, capturing the respondents' subjective socio-economic status and family savings during the past year. As these items were not available simultaneously across all survey waves, a harmonised variable was created by retaining valid responses from either item. The resulting variable ranges from 1 to 4 and is treated as an ordinal (quasi-continuous) measure.

The town size and individual economic wealth are substantively relevant, but their availability differs greatly across countries and survey years. Addition of both variables reduced the common sample from 78,889 to 31,123 respondents. They are, therefore, examined in a sensitivity analysis on the same smaller group of respondents rather than included in the principal model.

The democratic context is operationalised by using the *V-Dem Deliberative Democracy Index* for 2020. The index ranges from 0 to 1 and combines electoral democracy with an assessment of the deliberative quality of public decision-making. Its deliberative component considers public reasoning, orientation towards the common good, respect for counterarguments, consultation and societal engagement (Coppedge et al., 2025).

The rationale for using this index lies in its attention to the quality of public decision-making and the consideration of different voices and arguments This provides a theoretically relevant institutional context for the postmaterialist priorities of giving people greater influence over government decisions and protecting the freedom of speech. Within the V-Dem framework, liberal democracy places additional emphasis on rights and constraints on executive power, participatory democracy on active citizen involvement, and egalitarian democracy on equality in the protection and exercise of political rights. The deliberative index brings the quality of public discussion and justification into the assessment of the democratic context while retaining its electoral foundations (Coppedge et al., 2025). Its use, therefore, reflects a particular analytical emphasis rather than the assumption that alternative dimensions of democracy are irrelevant. As the index combines electoral and deliberative components, the observed association with postmaterialism concerns this combined democratic context and does not isolate the contribution of deliberation alone.

Table 1. Theoretical constructs and their quantitative operationalisation

Theoretical construct	**Level**	**Empirical operationalisation**	**Interpretive scope and limitation**
Postmaterialist orientation	Individual	Harmonised four-item postmaterialism index: materialist, mixed, postmaterialist	Specific forced-choice ordinal measure; narrower than the full theoretical domain of self-expression
Generational socialisation and path dependence	Cohort / country	Four ten-year birth cohorts; country adjustment, country-specific contrasts, and country-by-generation heterogeneity	Path dependence guides interpretation of persistence; it is not directly measured or causally identified

Theoretical construct	Level	Empirical operationalisation	Interpretive scope and limitation
Economic security and development	Individual / country	Economic wealth in a sensitivity model; 2020 GDP per capita (PPP) in country-level analysis	Measures respondents' current resources and countries' current relative prosperity; it does not directly measure security during childhood
Democratic context	Country	2020 V-Dem Deliberative Democracy Index	Shows whether countries that were more democratic in 2020 also had higher postmaterialism; it cannot establish that democracy caused the difference
Religious context and religiosity	Country / individual	Country group based on the most frequently reported denominational affiliation; country share of postmaterialists in the first postsocialist generation; original weighted additive individual religiosity index ranging from 0 to 12; separately reconstructed common-scale index used for measurement validation	The country classification is a contextual measure rather than a direct measure of religious doctrine; the individual index does not distinguish between institutional religion and individualised spirituality. The original index gives a greater weight to the importance-of-religion and importance-of-God items and codes missing or otherwise unrecognised responses as zero; the reconstructed index is used to assess convergence rather than to replace the analytical measure.
Social position and family circumstances	Individual	Sex, marital status, number of children, and education; town size and economic wealth in sensitivity analysis	Adjustment variables are used to reduce compositional confounding, not separate causal hypotheses

Note. Unless otherwise indicated, individual-level measures are derived from the harmonised EVS/WVS data for 1990–2022. The H1–H2 and H7 country-level outcomes use observations of the first postsocialist generation from surveys conducted in 2017–2022. GDP per capita and the Gini index refer to the World Bank data for 2020, while the Deliberative Democracy Index refers to V-Dem data for 2020. Historical transformation and path dependence are represented indirectly through a theoretically defined cohort, period, and country comparisons; formative economic insecurity, direct exposure to political conflict, family socialisation, and other biographical mechanisms are not directly measured in the quantitative analysis.

Quantitative analysis has several limitations. First, the principal pooled model is estimated without survey weights, and countries and survey years contribute unequal numbers of respondents. Consequently, unequal selection and non-response probabilities are not corrected, and country-survey samples containing more valid observations exert a greater influence on the pooled coefficients. The findings should, therefore, be interpreted as conditional associations within the observed harmonised sample rather than as population-representative estimates for the postsocialist region or as an equally weighted average of the 24 countries.

The principal model uses conventional model-based standard errors rather than standard errors adjusted for clustering within country-survey samples. If responses within the same country and survey year are correlated, the reported standard errors may be smaller and the confidence intervals may be narrower than cluster-adjusted alternatives. Statistical significance is, therefore, interpreted together with effect sizes, confidence intervals, omnibus block tests, country-specific estimates, the country-by-generation interaction, and the sensitivity analysis.

Further limitations concern temporal coverage and measurement. Countries, survey periods, age groups, and cohorts are represented unequally, and the first postsocialist generation is concentrated in later surveys and is represented much more extensively in 2015–2022 than in 2005–2014 and within the younger part of the life course. The country-level indicators use a common 2020 reference year, whereas the underlying surveys were conducted between 2017 and 2022. Because the analysis does not include a Western European comparison group, it cannot determine whether the observed generational and temporal patterns are uniquely postsocialist, or if they form part of broader European value change.

The four-item postmaterialism index captures a narrower domain than the broader theoretical concept of self-expression. The analysis does not test whether the same generational patterns appear in alternative EVS/WVS indicators of imagination, creativity, or self-expression; consequently, the robustness of the findings beyond the four-item postmaterialism index remains untested. As discussed in Section 1.4.3, priorities such as maintaining order and fighting rising prices may reflect immediate insecurity and context-specific interpretations as well as stable value orientations. The quantitative index should, therefore, not be treated as an exhaustive or context-independent measure of postmaterialism.

In addition, the original 0–12-scoring religiosity index uses unequal component weights and assigns zero points to responses outside the positively scored categories, including missing or otherwise unclassified responses. The

independently reconstructed standardised score provides evidence that the original index captures a broadly similar dimension of religiosity, but it does not eliminate the limitations of the original coding. **These limitations do not invalidate the observed patterns, but they narrow their interpretation and identify questions that require further examination in the qualitative analysis.**

2.2.1. The age–period–cohort identification problem and conditional analytical strategy

The age, survey period, and birth cohort represent conceptually different temporal processes. Age may reflect the life-course position, survey period may capture the historical circumstances shared by the respondents observed at a particular time, and birth cohort may reflect formative experiences shared by people born during a similar historical period. Empirically, however, the three dimensions are structurally dependent: at the individual level, the birth year is determined by the survey year and age. Consequently, variation attributed to one temporal dimension can be represented in more than one way by the other two. This is the age–period–cohort identification problem, and not merely an ordinary correlation or a conventional multicollinearity problem among otherwise independent predictors.

No statistical model can separate age, period, and cohort effects from the observed data without additional assumptions or restrictions. Three issues must, therefore, be distinguished: whether the model can be estimated; whether the chosen assumptions produce one specific set of coefficient estimates; and whether these estimates can be interpreted as separate causal effects of age, period, and cohort.

A model may produce one set of coefficients because of the restrictions imposed by the researcher, even though different restrictions could divide the same observed temporal pattern differently among the age, period, and cohort. The APC literature has, therefore, proposed several approaches, including constrained regression models, intrinsic estimators, hierarchical and random-effects models, smoothing and regularisation approaches, mechanism-based models, and partial-identification strategies. These approaches impose different assumptions and estimate different aspects of temporal change, but none can separate three pure age, period, and cohort effects without relying on assumptions (Fosse & Winship, 2019a; Bell, 2020).

The classical response to the identification problem has been to impose explicit equality or trend constraints. Constrained APC models can, for example, assume that two adjacent age, period, or cohort coefficients are

equal, that one temporal dimension has no linear trend, or that a particular combination of temporal parameters is fixed (Mason et al., 1973; Fienberg & Mason, 1979). Once such a restriction has been imposed, a unique set of coefficients can be estimated.

The limitation is that alternative restrictions may fit the observed data equally well while producing different allocations of the linear trend among the age, period, and cohort. The identifying restriction must, therefore, be justified by substantive knowledge rather than selected only because it allows the model to be estimated. Glenn's (1976) critique was directed precisely at attempts to infer the relative importance of the age, period, and cohort from a mechanically selected statistical constraint.

The intrinsic estimator was proposed as a general-purpose method for selecting one solution from the underidentified APC model. It uses the Moore–Penrose generalised inverse to remove the unidentified component of the model and produces a unique set of age, period, and cohort coefficients without requiring the researcher to select a conventional equality constraint manually (Yang et al., 2008).

However, subsequent analyses have shown that the intrinsic estimator does not eliminate the need for an identifying assumption. Instead, it imposes an implicit constraint on the relationship between the linear age, period, and cohort components. The selected solution may also depend on the number, coding, and boundaries of the temporal categories, while the substantive validity of its implicit constraint is generally difficult to verify (Luo, 2013). The intrinsic estimator is, therefore, a particular constrained solution rather than an assumption-free empirical separation of APC effects.

Hierarchical age–period–cohort models offer another influential strategy for analysing repeated cross-sectional surveys. In the specification developed by Yang and Land (2006), individual age is commonly represented as a fixed predictor, while survey periods and birth cohorts are treated as cross-classified random contexts within which the respondents are located. This formulation recognises the nested and cross-classified structure of repeated survey data and uses partial pooling to estimate variation between periods and cohorts.

Nevertheless, representation of periods or cohorts as random effects does not make the linear APC dependency disappear. It introduces assumptions concerning the distribution, exchangeability, and shrinkage of the random effects, and these assumptions influence how the common temporal trend is divided between period and cohort variation. Simulation studies and subsequent methodological analyses have shown that hierarchical APC estimates may substantially misallocate temporal trends when their underlying

assumptions do not correspond to the data-generating process (Bell & Jones, 2014; Luo & Hodges, 2020).

Smoothing, regularisation, and Bayesian APC models similarly obtain stable estimates by penalising abrupt changes or by specifying prior expectations about the continuity and variability of temporal effects. Such models may be useful when there are substantive reasons to expect gradually developing age, period, or cohort trajectories, but smoothness is itself an identifying assumption rather than information supplied exclusively by the data (Fosse & Winship, 2019a; Bell, 2020).

A related strategy is to group the age, period, and cohort into categories of different widths. Unequal or broad grouping may remove exact rank deficiency from the resulting design matrix, apparently allowing the three sets of coefficients to be estimated together. Luo and Hodges (2016), however, show that this does not eliminate the APC problem: grouping implicitly imposes block constraints by treating observations within each category as sharing the same temporal coefficient and by locating possible changes at the selected category boundaries. The estimated temporal contrasts may, therefore, depend on how the categories are constructed.

This critique does not imply that temporal categorisation is inherently inappropriate. Categories may be substantively useful when they represent theoretically meaningful life-course positions, historically distinctive survey periods, or cohorts formed under different socialisation conditions. The crucial distinction concerns the purpose attributed to categorisation. If categories are introduced as a technical device that is claimed to recover pure APC effects, their implicit restrictions remain inadequately defended.

If they are introduced to operationalise theoretically specified comparisons, and the resulting coefficients are explicitly interpreted as conditional on those categories, they can support a more limited descriptive and hypothesis-testing strategy. In the latter case, the full rank establishes that the selected model can be estimated, but it does not establish that the underlying causal APC components have been uniquely identified.

More recent approaches have partly shifted attention from selecting a mechanical point estimate towards changing the substantive question posed to APC data. Mechanism-based models seek to identify and measure the social processes through which the age, period, and cohort location may influence the outcome, rather than treating the three temporal indices as sufficient causal explanations in themselves (Winship & Harding, 2008). Partial-identification approaches use explicit theoretical assumptions to derive ranges of plausible temporal effects instead of selecting a single point estimate (Fosse & Winship, 2019b). The age–period–cohort interaction model, in turn, conceptualises

cohort effects as deviations from general age and period patterns and examines both differences between cohort careers and change within cohorts over the life course (Luo & Hodges, 2022). These approaches do not provide interchangeable technical solutions: each defines a different estimand and requires different theoretical information or patterns of temporal overlap in the data.

A particularly relevant recent Lithuanian application is provided by Savicka and Žiliukaitė (2026), who use four Lithuanian EVS waves (1990, 1999, 2008, and 2017) with the objective to implement a theory-guided, multi-stage APC strategy rather than a uniquely identified decomposition of the three temporal dimensions. They first examine period-by-age, period-by-generation, and age-by-generation patterns through descriptive, visual, and non-parametric comparisons and then, drawing on Reid and Allum (2019), estimate a reduced linear regression containing the survey year and the respondents' birth year to compare the direction and relative magnitude of generational replacement and apparent within-generation change.

Savicka and Žiliukaitė explicitly acknowledge that this procedure does not resolve the APC identification problem: age is omitted from the final regression, which means that within-generation change cannot be separated into ageing and period components, while interpretation depends on the preceding pairwise analyses and on the assumption of a broadly directional and sufficiently monotonic long-term trend.

This strategy is relevant to the present dissertation because it similarly treats APC interpretation as theory-guided triangulation rather than an assumption-free statistical decomposition, but it is not directly transferable. Their approach is designed to compare generational replacement and intragenerational change within a single national series of common survey waves, whereas the present study jointly tests pre-specified generation, survey-period, and age-group hypotheses in pooled cross-national data with uneven country-period coverage and with the first postsocialist generation heavily concentrated in the latest broad survey period and represented much more sparsely in 2005–2014.

Moreover, adopting the same reduced model would omit the age-group pattern explicitly tested in H6. Savicka and Žiliukaitė's application is, therefore, treated as an important methodological precedent for cautious and conditional APC interpretation, but not as a model that can be reproduced unchanged with the present research questions and data structure.

Against this methodological background, the choice of an analytical strategy follows from the substantive estimand of the dissertation. The principal objective is not to reconstruct three continuous population

trajectories of age, period, and cohort, or to determine how a single overall temporal slope should be divided among them. It is to test pre-specified contrasts between four theoretically defined postsocialist cohort-generations, and to determine whether the expected generational pattern remains visible after broad observed age-group and survey-period differences have been considered. The relevant parameters are, therefore, conditional comparisons between historically defined groups rather than estimates of three unrestricted temporal curves.

A conventional constrained APC model or intrinsic estimator was not selected because the theoretical framework does not provide a defensible basis for imposing a particular equality constraint or for accepting the intrinsic estimator's implicit allocation of the linear temporal trend. A hierarchical APC specification was also not treated as automatically preferable. The analysis includes only four theoretically defined generations and three broad survey periods, which are not conceptualised as exchangeable random samples from larger populations of possible cohorts and periods. An attempt at estimating random-effect distributions from so few substantively selected temporal contexts would introduce additional assumptions without resolving the underlying identification problem. Smoothing approaches are similarly poorly aligned with a framework that anticipates historically discontinuous change around the collapse of socialism rather than a necessarily gradual temporal trajectory.

The APC interaction approach addresses a related but different question: whether particular cohorts deviate from general age and period patterns, and how their trajectories develop as they move through the life course. Its application would be most informative where the same cohorts are observed across a sufficiently broad range of ages and periods. The limited temporal career of the first postsocialist generation in the available surveys restricts the support for such an analysis. A bounding strategy would, likewise, require defensible quantitative assumptions concerning the possible direction or magnitude of the unidentified temporal slopes.

Although the theoretical framework provides directional expectations about postsocialist generational differences, it does not provide sufficiently precise information to define non-arbitrary numerical bounds. **The present analysis, therefore, adopts a more limited conditional strategy rather than replacing the APC identification with restrictions that cannot be substantively defended.**

The adopted specification represents the birth cohort, age, and survey period by substantively meaningful categories. Four birth cohorts distinguish the penultimate socialist, last socialist, transitional, and first postsocialist

generations; age is represented by five groups; and surveys are grouped into three historical periods. Within the observed data structure, the dummy-variable representation of these categories produces a full-rank design matrix and allows their mutually adjusted associations to be estimated.

The categorisation, nevertheless, imposes substantive simplifications: it assumes relative similarity within each category, places temporal differences at the selected boundaries, and does not capture variation occurring within the categories. The boundaries serve different analytical purposes. The generation categories operationalise theoretically defined differences in postsocialist socialisation contexts, while the age groups provide a broad representation of the life-course position. The survey years are grouped into early, intermediate, and recent periods so that to allow interpretable comparisons across unevenly available survey waves.

These groupings are analytical operationalisations rather than a mathematical solution to the APC identification problem. The resulting estimates, therefore, remain conditional on the category definitions, reference categories, observed combinations of predictors, and additive restrictions of the model specification.

The repeated cross-sectional design provides partial, but not complete, overlap between the three temporal dimensions. Earlier generations are observed at different ages and in several survey periods, whereas the first postsocialist generation is absent from the 1990–2004 period and is strongly concentrated in later surveys. In the principal analytical sample, 998 members of the first postsocialist generation are observed in 2005–2014, and 6,030 in 2015–2022 (see Annex Table A1).

Not every theoretically possible combination of generation, age group, and survey period is, therefore, present in the data. The available overlap, nevertheless, allows the model to examine whether generational differences remain detectable when broad observed differences in the age and survey period are included simultaneously. The estimated generation coefficients draw on this partial and uneven overlap and on the model's additive structure; they should not be interpreted as comparisons generated by a fully crossed experimental design.

The strong concentration of the first postsocialist generation in the latest survey period requires particular attention. The generation and survey period are not identical predictors: members of the first postsocialist generation are observed in both 2005–2014 and 2015–2022, while the respondents from the older generations are observed alongside them in these periods, and also in 1990–2004. The generation coefficient, therefore, draws on the limited cross-period observations of the first postsocialist generation, on within-period

comparisons with older generations, and on the age-group and survey-period patterns estimated from the wider sample.

As most members of the first postsocialist generation are observed in 2015–2022, the adjusted generational contrast is supported predominantly by comparisons involving the latest period. It cannot establish how this generation would have responded in 1990–2004, or whether its present value orientation will remain unchanged as its members grow older.

Generation has analytical priority because the dissertation's central theoretical argument concerns generational replacement in postsocialist societies. H3 and H4 are, therefore, evaluated by asking whether the expected generational pattern remains after broad age-group and survey-period differences have been taken into account. In this sense, inclusion of the age and period serves as a robustness-oriented adjustment: it tests whether the pooled generational pattern is reducible to the measured temporal composition of the samples. A generation coefficient that remains present in this specification indicates that the observed generational contrast is not fully accounted for by the modelled age-group and survey-period composition of the sample. It is interpreted as a conditional generational association under the selected categorisation and additive model, and not as a pure causal cohort effect isolated from all age and historical-period processes.

The survey period and age group are also examined directly because they are the subjects of H5 and H6. Their inclusion is, therefore, not limited to their role as controls. Nevertheless, their coefficients are interpreted under the same APC limitation. The survey-period coefficients represent adjusted differences between the respondents observed in different groups of survey years; they do not identify the causal effect of a historical period, nor do they show that the same generations changed uniformly over time.

Since the principal model does not include a survey-period-by-generation interaction, H5 concerns the pooled survey-period association after adjustment for generation rather than a separately demonstrated period trajectory within every generation. Similarly, the age-group coefficients compare different respondents observed at different ages and do not measure within-person ageing. H6 is, therefore, evaluated as a conditional cross-sectional age-group pattern rather than as evidence that individuals become more materialist as they grow older.

Due to the fact that not all combinations of age, survey period, and generation are observed in the data, the analysis does not attempt to reconstruct complete generational trajectories. The reported coefficients and planned contrasts are model-based comparisons estimated from the available observations under the additive model specification. Comparisons involving

sparsely represented or unobserved combinations, therefore, depend partly on the model assumptions, and are not interpreted as direct observations of those combinations.

Finally, numerical diagnostics are used to distinguish model estimability from causal identification. The full-rank design matrix, successful convergence, and a small maximum gradient show that the selected categorical partial proportional-odds model can be estimated, and that its parameters are not computationally indeterminate. These diagnostics do not demonstrate that pure age, period, and cohort effects have been separated. **The analytical strategy, therefore, neither ignores the APC problem nor claims to solve it. Instead, it uses a transparent, theory-guided categorical specification to estimate pre-specified and mutually adjusted temporal contrasts, gives analytical priority to the generational comparisons, and limits substantive conclusions to patterns supported under the chosen model and the observed data structure.**

2.2.2. Data analysis methods

Statistical analyses were conducted primarily in *R*, by using *RStudio* as the working environment, while the *SPSS* platform was used for selected data-preparation and descriptive tasks. The methods were chosen to answer consecutive analytical questions.

Country-level contextual factors

The analysis first describes the data. Percentages and cross-tabulations show how materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist orientations are distributed across generations in each country. Pearson's chi-square test is used at this stage to ask whether the three-category distribution differs across generations within a country. When some expected cell counts are too small, a simulated p is used so that the significance test remains reliable. These tests describe unadjusted national patterns and do not yet separate generation from the age or survey period.

H1 and H2 are tested at the country level, with *country* as the unit of analysis (N = 24). For each country, the postmaterialism measure is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the individual-level four-item postmaterialism index coded as '1' = materialist, '2' = mixed, and '3' = postmaterialist. The calculation is restricted to the respondents born between 1991 and 2000 (the first postsocialist generation) and observed in eligible EVS/WVS surveys conducted between 2017 and 2022.

Where a country has more than one eligible survey during this period, the respondent records are pooled before the country mean is calculated. The

resulting country score, therefore, indicates the relative position of the first postsocialist generation on the ordered materialist–postmaterialist measure; it is not a population-weighted estimate, and it does not represent change within individuals over time.

Spearman's rank correlations are calculated between the 24 country-level postmaterialism means and three country indicators measured in 2020: GDP per capita (international, USD) at purchasing power parity, the Gini index, and the V-Dem Deliberative Democracy Index. The correlation with GDP per capita directly tests H1, whereas the correlation with the Deliberative Democracy Index directly tests H2. The Gini index is included as an additional contextual indicator of income inequality, and it does not correspond to a separate hypothesis. Spearman's correlation is appropriate because the analysis contains only 24 country-level observations and examines whether the countries ranked higher on one measure also tend to rank higher or lower on another. The coefficient ρ ranges from -1 to $+1$. These correlations identify bivariate country-level associations and do not establish that economic development, democracy, or inequality caused the observed differences in postmaterialism.

For descriptive comparison, countries are additionally divided according to whether their year 2020 GDP per capita and Deliberative Democracy scores are above or below the arithmetic mean of the 24 analysed countries. The corresponding cut-off values are 24,897.6 international dollars for GDP per capita (PPP) and 0.414 for the Deliberative Democracy Index. The resulting four groups are labelled "wealthy and democratic", wealthy and undemocratic", "democratic and economically disadvantaged", "undemocratic and economically disadvantaged**". These are relative positions within the analysed 24-country sample rather than absolute classifications of the national wealth or democratic status. The grouping is used only to organise the descriptive country tables; the direct tests of H1 and H2 are the Spearman correlations.**

Generational, survey-period, and age-group patterns

The next analytical step jointly tests H3–H6 by using a partial proportional-odds ordinal logistic regression. Ordinal logistic regression is appropriate because the dependent variable consists of three naturally ordered categories – materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist – while the distances between these categories cannot be assumed to be equal. Unlike linear regression, the ordinal model does not impose equal distances between the outcome categories. Instead, it estimates the cumulative odds that a respondent belongs to a higher, more postmaterialist category rather than to a lower category.

The principal model includes the generation, survey period, and age group, which are directly involved in H3–H6, together with the country and five individual-level covariates: sex, marital status, number of children, education, and the religiosity index. The country variable is included to account for differences in the distribution of value orientations across the 24 national contexts. Education, marital status, number of children, and religiosity are included because the theoretical framework identifies them as potentially relevant to value orientation. Sex is included as a demographic control because the reported value orientations may differ between male and female respondents, and the sex composition of the generational groups may not be identical. Country and the five individual-level variables serve as adjustments that help distinguish the estimated generational differences from cross-national and compositional differences, rather than as tests of additional hypotheses. The town size and individual economic wealth are examined separately in the sensitivity analysis because their inclusion substantially reduces the available analytical sample.

The principal pooled model is estimated by using an unweighted complete-case sample of 78,889 respondents with valid values for the dependent variable and all predictors included in the model. The term 'pooled' indicates that the respondents from all 24 countries are analysed together. Because the analysis is unweighted, every respondent contributes equally to the estimation. Consequently, country-survey samples containing more respondents have a greater influence on the pooled estimates, and the resulting coefficients should not be interpreted as an equally weighted average of the 24 countries.

The reference categories are the first postsocialist generation, respondents aged 16–24, the 2015–2022 survey period, Albania, men, and married respondents. The first postsocialist generation is selected as the generational reference category because H4 compares this generation with each of the three older generations. The number of children, education, and religiosity are entered as numerical predictors and centred around their respective means in the analytical sample. After centring, a value of zero represents the sample mean of the relevant predictor. Centring facilitates interpretation of the model thresholds but does not alter the fitted probabilities or the estimated comparison between the respondents who differ by one unit.

A standard proportional-odds model assumes that the relationship between each predictor and the dependent variable is the same across both cumulative divisions of the outcome: materialist versus mixed or postmaterialist, and materialist or mixed versus postmaterialist. Tests of this assumption indicated that it was adequate for the generation, age group, sex, and number of children,

but was too restrictive for the survey period, country, marital status, education, and religiosity. The assumption was, therefore, retained for the former predictors and relaxed for the latter.

A likelihood-ratio comparison showed that the resulting partial proportional-odds model fitted the data substantially better than the standard proportional-odds model, which constrained all predictors to have the same coefficients across both divisions of the outcome, LR $\chi^2(32) = 423.62$, $p < 0.001$. **The standard proportional-odds model thus served as a restricted comparison model, whereas the partial proportional-odds specification was used as the principal model for testing H3–H6.**

As the partial proportional-odds model is estimated by maximum likelihood rather than by ordinary least squares, the conventional OLS F statistic is not applicable. The overall statistical contribution of the predictors is instead evaluated by using a likelihood-ratio comparison between the principal model and an intercept-only model. Model fit is additionally summarised by using the *Akaike Information Criterion* (AIC), *Bayesian Information Criterion* (BIC), and Nagelkerke pseudo-R^2.

As a supplementary assessment of model performance, modal classification was evaluated by assigning each respondent to the outcome category with the highest fitted probability. The overall accuracy and the percentage correctly classified within each observed category were calculated. The mean fitted probabilities were also compared with the observed category shares in order to assess aggregate in-sample calibration. Since these diagnostics were calculated by using the same observations on which the model was estimated, they describe in-sample performance and do not constitute out-of-sample predictive validation.

Model results are reported as coefficients and *Odds Ratios* (ORs). For predictors satisfying the proportional-odds assumption, a single coefficient and OR apply to both cumulative divisions of the outcome. For these proportional effects, the OR is obtained by exponentiating the estimated regression coefficient (β), that is $OR = \exp(\beta)$; an OR value above 1 indicates higher cumulative odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category, whereas an OR score below 1 indicates lower cumulative odds.

The ordinal logistic regression model was fitted using the clm function from the ordinal package in R. For predictors entered into the nominal part of the model, including the survey period, separate coefficients are estimated at the two cumulative outcome boundaries. In the clm parameterisation, these nominal coefficients represent shifts in the estimated thresholds. To express

their results consistently as odds of belonging above the relevant threshold, the corresponding higher-category ORs are calculated as exp(−β).

The first boundary compares a mixed or postmaterialist orientation with materialist orientation, while the second threshold compares postmaterialist orientation with materialist or mixed orientation. For these reported ORs, a value above 1 indicates higher odds of belonging above the specified threshold. The 95% confidence intervals describe the precision of the OR estimates; intervals containing 1 do not provide evidence of a statistically significant association at the 0.05 *p* level.

The contribution of generation as a whole is evaluated by using a likelihood-ratio block test comparing the principal model with an otherwise identical model excluding generation. This omnibus test establishes whether the inclusion of a generation improves the model fit but does not determine the direction of particular generational differences. **H3 is, therefore, evaluated by using three planned contrasts between successive generations, whereas H4 is evaluated by using three comparisons between the first postsocialist generation and each of the three earlier generations.**

H5 is evaluated primarily through the survey-period block test and four threshold-specific estimates comparing the two earlier survey periods with the 2015–2022 reference period. The block test establishes whether the survey period contributes to the model as a whole, but a statistically significant block does not – by itself – demonstrate the successive increase proposed in H5. The direction of the threshold-specific estimates is, therefore, used to determine whether the adjusted period association is consistent with the hypothesis. Due to the fact that the survey period does not satisfy the proportional-odds assumption, separate estimates are retained at the materialist/mixed and mixed/postmaterialist boundaries.

The observed materialist and postmaterialist shares across the survey periods are additionally reported as descriptive evidence. These percentages show the unadjusted composition of the period samples and are not treated as substitutes for the period coefficients from the principal model. **H5 is, therefore, assessed primarily from the adjusted block and threshold-specific estimates, while the observed percentages are used to determine whether the raw temporal pattern is consistent with the hypothesised direction.**

No survey-period-by-generation interaction is included in the principal model. Accordingly, the phrase ‘across generations’ in H5 refers to the pooled association between the survey period and the value orientation after adjustment for generation; it does not imply a separate demonstration that the same period pattern occurs within every generation.

H6 is evaluated by using the age-group block test and comparisons of each older age group with the respondents aged 16–24. Since the age group satisfies the proportional-odds assumption, one common estimate is reported for each comparison across both cumulative outcome divisions. The block test establishes whether the age group contributes to model fit as a whole. Full support for H6 requires statistically supported older-versus-younger differences across the age range, whereas a significant block accompanied by estimates that generally point in the hypothesised direction but are not individually significant for every age group is interpreted as partial support. H6 does not require a strictly stepwise decline between every pair of adjacent age groups.

To examine whether the position of the first postsocialist generation specified in H4 is also observed within individual countries, the first postsocialist generation is compared separately with each of the three earlier generations in all 24 countries, thus producing 72 country-specific comparisons (Annex Table A2). These comparisons assess whether the direction and magnitude of the pooled H4 pattern are similar across national contexts; they do not constitute country-specific tests of the three successive-generation contrasts specified in H3.

The country-specific analyses were estimated separately for each of the 24 countries by using reduced partial proportional-odds models. Within each country, generation was included as the focal predictor, and the survey period was retained with threshold-specific coefficients. The age group and the five individual-level covariates from the principal pooled model were omitted in order to reduce estimation instability arising from smaller national samples and sparsely represented combinations of the generation, age, and survey period. The resulting 72 generational comparisons are, therefore, adjusted for the survey period, but not for the age group or the individual-level covariates. They provide complementary evidence about the direction and cross-national heterogeneity of generational differences rather than country-specific replications of the fully adjusted principal pooled model.

Because conducting multiple contrasts increases the probability of obtaining small *p*-values by chance, Holm adjustment is applied across the three pre-specified H3 contrasts in the pooled analysis. For the 72 country-specific H4 comparisons, Annex Table A2 reports both a within-country Holm adjustment across the three comparisons and a more conservative Holm adjustment across the complete family of 72 contrasts.

The adjustment across all 72 comparisons is used to identify the country-specific differences that remain statistically significant after controlling the family-wise error rate across the entire set. The Holm adjustments affect the

p-values used for statistical inference but do not change the estimated coefficients, odds ratios, or the direction and magnitude of the comparisons.

Two additional analyses assess the robustness and cross-national uniformity of the pooled generational findings.

First, the principal specification and an expanded specification additionally including the individual economic wealth and the town size are both estimated by using the same 31,123 respondents with valid data for these variables. Holding the analytical sample constant makes it possible to assess whether changes in the generational estimates result from adding the two covariates rather than from changes in the sample composition.

Second, cross-national heterogeneity is assessed by using a pooled country-by-generation interaction. A reduced interaction model is compared by a likelihood-ratio test with a corresponding reduced additive model containing the same main effects. The two models differ only in the inclusion of the 69 country-by-generation interaction parameters. The likelihood-ratio test, therefore, provides an omnibus test of whether the association between a generation and postmaterialist orientation varies across countries. A statistically significant result indicates that the pooled generational association cannot be treated as uniform across the 24 national contexts, although it does not identify which countries or generational comparisons produce the heterogeneity. Because this comparison is based on a reduced rather than the complete principal specification, it is interpreted as a complementary heterogeneity analysis and not as a replacement for the principal pooled model.

Religious context and individual religiosity

H7 is tested at the country level, with *country* as the unit of analysis (N=24). For each country, the outcome is the unweighted share of respondents born between 1991 and 2000 who are classified as postmaterialist among the respondents with a valid response to the postmaterialism index. All eligible EVS/WVS surveys conducted between 2017 and 2022 have been included. Where a country has more than one eligible survey, the respondent records from these surveys are pooled before the country share is calculated.

Countries are classified into four religious-context groups according to the denominational affiliation most frequently reported in the analysed country data: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, or no denominational affiliation. The Kruskal–Wallis test ranks the 24 country shares and evaluates whether their distributions differ across the four groups. **Because the omnibus test does not identify which groups differ, two H7-specified Dunn comparisons are subsequently conducted: Roman Catholic versus Orthodox contexts and Roman Catholic versus Muslim contexts. Holm adjustment is applied across these two planned comparisons.**

H8 is tested directly at the individual level among the respondents from the first postsocialist generation who have valid values for both the postmaterialism index and the religiosity index (N=7,020). Unlike H7, this analysis is not restricted to the 2017–2022 country-level comparison period: it uses all observations available for this generation in the harmonised dataset.

A pooled Spearman correlation first summarises the unadjusted monotonic association between the original 0–12 additive religiosity index and the ordered postmaterialism measure. A cumulative-logit ordinal regression then estimates how a one-point increase in religiosity is associated with the odds of belonging to a higher postmaterialism category. The proportional-odds specification is compared by a likelihood-ratio test with a non-proportional-odds model in which the religiosity coefficient is allowed to differ across the two cumulative divisions of the outcome. The proportional-odds restriction is not rejected in the direct pooled model ($LR\chi2(1)=2.10$, $p=0.147$). Consequently, one religiosity coefficient and odds ratio are reported.

As a robustness analysis, a second ordinal model accounts for the country by allowing country-specific threshold shifts. The proportional-odds restriction for religiosity is, likewise, not rejected in this model ($LR\chi2(1)<0.001$, $p=0.990$). The country-adjusted model is used to assess whether the pooled individual-level association remains after having accounted for national differences.

Pooled and country-specific Spearman correlations across all four generations are retained as the exploratory context for cross-national heterogeneity. They do not directly test H8, nor do they establish that the religiosity association differs between generations. The country-specific correlation *p*-values are, therefore, interpreted descriptively rather than as separate confirmatory hypothesis tests.

2.3. Findings of Statistical Analysis

The following sections present the results of the empirical analysis and test the hypotheses outlined at the beginning of Chapter 2.

2.3.1. Country-level contextual factors

This section first presents descriptive generational distributions within countries and then directly tests H1 and H2 by using country-level Spearman correlations. Table 2 reports the unadjusted distribution of materialist, mixed, and postmaterialist orientations across the four generations within each country. These distributions provide a descriptive context for the country-level hypotheses, but they do not themselves test whether GDP or democracy

are associated with postmaterialism and are not adjusted for the age group or survey period. Countries are organised into four relative groups according to whether their year 2020 GDP per capita and Deliberative Democracy scores are above or below the respective means of the 24-country sample.

In 17 out of the 24 postsocialist countries, the first postsocialist generation shows a general movement away from materialist and towards postmaterialist orientations. The last socialist and transitional generations often contain comparatively stronger materialist orientations, which is consistent with the economic and institutional uncertainty surrounding the transformation period. The first postsocialist generation nevertheless records a higher postmaterialist share in most countries. This broad pattern is the first evidence that generational replacement matters, although the country exceptions show that it does not unfold uniformly.

To assess whether the observed differences in value distributions between generations are statistically significant, chi-square tests of independence were conducted separately for each country (see Table 3). In cases where the expected cell counts were small, chi-square tests with simulated *p*-values were used. The results indicate that, in the majority of postsocialist countries, the association between the generation and postmaterialist values is statistically significant.

However, in four countries – specifically, in Lithuania, Czechia, Ukraine, and Bulgaria – the null hypothesis of an identical generational distribution could not be rejected at the 0.05 *p* level. This does not demonstrate that the observed percentages are exactly equal across generations; it indicates that the differences were not sufficiently large or precise to be statistically distinguishable in the corresponding national samples. The country-specific chi-square results, therefore, show that the descriptive generational pattern is not entirely statistically uniform across the postsocialist region.

The national exceptions also indicate that the observed value patterns may be connected with forms of insecurity not captured by GDP or the Deliberative Democracy Index. In Russia, Ukraine, Croatia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, a military conflict and prolonged geopolitical insecurity provide a plausible contextual interpretation for renewed concern with material security (Norkus, 2023).

However, the present analysis does not measure the respondents' individual exposure to conflict and cannot identify war as the cause of the observed generational distributions. Conflict is, therefore, treated as a theoretically relevant contextual condition to be examined further rather than as a mechanism demonstrated by the quantitative results.

Table 2. Unadjusted distribution of value orientations across generations by country, pooled EVS/WVS data, 1990–2022

Country group	Country	Materialist (%)				Mixed (%)				Postmaterialist (%)				Indication of value change
		Penult.	Last	Trans.	First	Penult.	Last	Trans.	First	Penult.	Last	Trans.	First	
Wealthy and democratic	Czechia	22.7	20.1	18.6	20.9	69.1	67.0	67.3	64.8	8.2	12.8	14.2	14.3	
	Slovenia	20.0	11.8	18.4	3.9	71.8	66.9	63.9	56.3	8.2	21.3	17.6	39.8	
	Lithuania	19.8	24.3	28.8	21.6	61.8	67.9	63.9	67.8	18.3	7.8	7.3	10.6	
	Estonia	26.2	38.0	24.8	9.4	67.3	57.5	66.5	75.5	6.5	4.5	8.6	15.1	
	Slovakia	35.5	37.6	20.5	22.6	56.8	57.9	59.8	57.9	7.7	4.5	19.7	19.5	
	Latvia	19.9	21.9	29.4	18.5	69.5	69.6	64.2	59.7	10.6	8.4	6.4	21.8	
	Croatia	n/a	10.0	20.3	12.2	n/a	61.2	70.3	64.8	n/a	28.8	9.4	23.0	
Wealthy and undemocratic	Poland	26.3	34.6	30.7	19.7	56.5	56.3	59.3	61.2	17.2	9.1	10.0	19.1	
	Hungary	35.4	47.0	28.5	24.1	59.3	49.8	61.6	49.8	5.3	3.2	9.9	26.1	
	Romania	31.3	38.3	37.2	23.3	56.0	51.5	57.0	62.2	12.7	10.2	5.8	14.5	
	Russia	28.4	41.5	48.1	41.3	62.5	56.3	50.1	50.7	9.1	2.2	1.8	8.0	
	Kazakhstan	n/a	n/a	52.1	40.1	n/a	n/a	45.8	54.4	n/a	n/a	2.1	5.5	
Democratic and economically disadvantaged	Bulgaria	n/a	40.4	38.2	36.0	n/a	54.8	59.8	58.6	n/a	4.8	2.0	5.4	
	North Macedonia	n/a	29.3	22.6	15.0	n/a	62.7	59.8	66.4	n/a	8.0	17.6	18.6	
	Georgia	n/a	n/a	29.4	21.2	n/a	n/a	57.9	61.2	n/a	n/a	12.7	17.6	
	Armenia	n/a	n/a	28.5	37.3	n/a	n/a	59.7	57.4	n/a	n/a	11.8	5.3	
	Ukraine	n/a	40.7	41.0	45.2	n/a	54.1	56.9	50.4	n/a	5.2	2.1	4.4	
Undemocratic and economically disadvantaged	Montenegro	n/a	38.5	30.9	16.8	n/a	51.2	59.9	69.9	n/a	10.4	9.1	13.3	
	Belarus	26.6	37.1	31.4	29.2	64.0	54.5	59.5	55.5	9.5	8.4	9.1	15.3	
	Serbia	n/a	39.9	37.5	33.2	n/a	52.6	56.1	53.8	n/a	7.6	6.4	12.9	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	n/a	29.0	37.6	29.4	n/a	67.1	59.0	61.1	n/a	4.0	3.4	9.5	
	Azerbaijan	n/a	n/a	49.3	49.4	n/a	n/a	46.9	49.4	n/a	n/a	3.9	1.3	
	Albania	n/a	42.5	27.5	15.2	n/a	51.7	61.6	69.6	n/a	5.8	11.0	15.2	
	Kyrgyzstan	n/a	31.7	42.6	25.7	n/a	61.2	52.9	65.8	n/a	7.2	4.5	8.6	

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* The final column summarises the descriptive direction of the generational pattern across the available generations: a black rectangle indicates a decrease in the materialist share and an increase in the postmaterialist share; a grey rectangle indicates increases in both materialist and postmaterialist shares; whereas, a white rectangle indicates an increase in the materialist share and a decrease in the postmaterialist share. n/a indicates that the relevant cohort was not observed in the available country surveys. Penult. = penultimate generation; Trans. = transitional generation.

Table 3. Chi-square tests of the association between generation and value orientation by country, pooled EVS/WVS data, 1990–2022

	Country	χ^2	*p*
Wealthy and democratic	Czechia	8.03	0.236
	Slovenia	52.97	<0.001
	Lithuania	6.67	0.353
	Estonia	29.51	<0.001
	Slovakia	63.83	<0.001
	Latvia	26.83	<0.001
	Croatia	26.32	<0.001
Wealthy and undemocratic	Poland	19.94	0.003
	Hungary	88.30	<0.001
	Romania	51.84	<0.001
	Russia	53.02	<0.001
	Kazakhstan	12.98	0.043
Democratic and economically disadvantaged	Bulgaria	10.15	0.115
	North Macedonia	90.97	<0.001
	Georgia	82.26	<0.001
	Armenia	13.17	0.040
	Ukraine	6.96	0.324
Undemocratic and economically disadvantaged	Montenegro	25.57	<0.001
	Belarus	33.11	<0.001
	Serbia	27.60	<0.001
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	17.49	0.008
	Azerbaijan	24.09	<0.001
	Albania	118.69	<0.001
	Kyrgyzstan	26.27	<0.001

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* The test examines whether the distribution of value orientations differs across generations within each country. For Bulgaria, the Pearson chi-square test used a simulated *p*-value because expected cell counts were too small for asymptotic approximation.

Table 4 presents the country-level indicators and the mean postmaterialism score of the first postsocialist generation. The year 2000 GDP values are included to provide a descriptive historical context, whereas the direct H1 test uses the common year 2020 GDP per capita measure. Table 5 reports the Spearman correlations between the country-level postmaterialism means and the three 2020 contextual indicators. GDP per capita directly tests H1, the Deliberative Democracy Index directly tests H2, and the Gini index is included as an additional contextual indicator of income inequality.

Table 4. Country-level indicators for 2000 and 2020 and mean postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation, pooled eligible EVS/WVS surveys, 2017–2022 (H1–H2)

Country	GDP per capita, PPP, 2000	GDP per capita, PPP, 2020	Gini Index, 2020	Deliberative Democracy Index, 2020	Survey year(s) used	Mean postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation
Czechia	16238.6	42049.2	25.0	0.64	2017, 2022	1.93
Slovenia	18004.7	40124.3	24.6	0.57	2017	2.36
Lithuania	8447.0	39191.9	35.7	0.69	2018	1.89
Estonia	9423.1	37925.1	30.3	0.70	2018	2.06
Poland	10674.2	34406.2	30.2	0.38	2017	1.99
Hungary	11855.5	33253.9	29.6	0.25	2018	2.02
Slovakia	11378.8	32014.6	25.0	0.67	2017, 2022	1.97
Romania	5848.9	31945.7	35.8	0.38	2018	1.91
Latvia	8040.6	30568.5	35.7	0.68	2021	2.03
Croatia	10669.4	29134.0	29.7	0.57	2017	2.11
Russia	6825.4	28213.4	37.5	0.14	2017	1.67
Kazakhstan	7725.0	26744.4	27.8	0.13	2018	1.65
Bulgaria	6422.8	24620.0	41.3	0.48	2017	1.69
Montenegro	6002.6	20542.7	38.5	0.34	2019	1.97
Belarus	5801.8	20231.7	25.3	0.09	2018	1.86
Serbia	6019.9	19366.8	36.2	0.26	2017, 2018	1.80
North Macedonia	6152.6	17015.2	33.0	0.43	2019	2.04
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4127.6	15732.8	33.0	0.34	2019	1.80
Georgia	3101.0	14761.5	35.9	0.52	2018	1.96
Azerbaijan	3381.7	14474.3	26.6	0.04	2018	1.52
Albania	3861.3	13899.9	33.2	0.32	2018	2.00
Armenia	2572.4	13307.2	29.9	0.64	2018, 2021	1.68
Ukraine	4260.3	13056.7	26.6	0.43	2020	1.59
Kyrgyzstan	1861.6	4962.9	29.7	0.24	2020	1.83

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data; GDP per capita and Gini index data: World Bank (2023); Deliberative Democracy Index: V-Dem (2020). *Note.* GDP per capita is expressed in current international dollars, converted by using *Purchasing Power Parity* (PPP). Mean postmaterialism is the unweighted arithmetic mean of the individual-level four-item postmaterialism index, coded as '1' = materialist, '2' = mixed, and '3' = postmaterialist, among respondents born between 1991 and 2000 with valid index values. The calculation includes 6,255 respondents across 24 countries. The survey-year column reports the eligible surveys conducted between 2017 and 2022. Where more than one eligible EVS/WVS survey was available, the respondent records were pooled before the country mean was calculated. For Romania, Russia, and Ukraine, EVS and WVS observations are coded under the same listed survey year; the year, therefore, appears only once in the table.

Czechia and Lithuania are among the more economically developed countries in the analysed sample. Among the 24 countries, Czechia had the highest GDP per capita in 2020, Slovenia was the second highest, and Lithuania was the third highest. According to Norkus (2023), Czechia and Lithuania belong to the group of countries in which postsocialist transformation was economically successful. Both were already middle-income countries in 1989, and Czechia was the only postsocialist country to have reached a high-income status by 2018 (Norkus, 2023).

Nevertheless, their mean postmaterialism scores of 1.93 and 1.89, respectively, did not place them among the highest-scoring countries in Table 4. Lithuania also had a relatively high Gini index, showing that a high average national income may coexist with substantial income inequality. However, because the country-level association between the Gini index and postmaterialism was statistically non-significant (Table 5), the present analysis does not establish income inequality as an explanation for the Lithuanian value pattern. The Czech and Lithuanian cases, therefore, qualify the general GDP association and show that aggregate economic prosperity does not translate mechanically into higher postmaterialism.

Slovenia and Estonia are cases which are more clearly consistent with the positive country-level association between economic prosperity and postmaterialism. In the first postsocialist generation, the materialist shares were descriptively low in both countries: 3.9% in Slovenia and 9.4% in Estonia. Slovenia had the highest mean postmaterialism score among the 24 countries (2.36), while Estonia was also located near the upper end of the country, by ranking at (2.06). In 2020, Slovenia had the second-highest GDP per capita in the sample, while Estonia ranking the fourth-highest, after Czechia, Slovenia, and Lithuania.

According to Norkus (2023), both countries were already among those closest to the high-income threshold in 1989, and Slovenia briefly entered the high-income group before the 2008 economic crisis. These cases are, therefore, consistent with the association between economic prosperity and postmaterialism identified by Spearman correlation. Nevertheless, they do not by themselves demonstrate that economic prosperity caused the observed generational patterns.

Economic prosperity is, therefore, not the only factor associated with the observed generational patterns. In several countries whose year 2020 GDP per capita was below the 24-country average – notably, in Georgia, North Macedonia, Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kyrgyzstan, and Serbia – the descriptive distributions show a higher share of

postmaterialists in the first postsocialist generation than in the transitional generation. According to Norkus (2023), postsocialist transformation in Kyrgyzstan culminated in state failure, while Georgia, North Macedonia, and Serbia became economically poorer relative to their position in 1989. Taken together with the country-level chi-square results, these cases indicate that generational differences in value orientations are context-dependent and cannot be fully explained by economic development or democratic institutional quality alone.

Table 5. Spearman correlations between 2020 country-level indicators and mean postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation, pooled eligible EVS/WVS surveys, 2017–2022 (N = 24; H1–H2)

Country-level indicator (2020)	Spearman's ρ	*p*
GDP per capita (PPP)	0.51	0.011
Gini Index	−0.08	0.710
Deliberative Democracy Index	0.48	0.017

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data; GDP per capita and Gini index data: World Bank (2023); Deliberative Democracy Index: V-Dem (2020). *Note.* N = 24 countries. Spearman correlations were calculated by using the unrounded country mean of the individual-level postmaterialism index among respondents born in 1991–2000. GDP per capita directly tests H1, the Deliberative Democracy Index directly tests H2, and the Gini Index is included as an additional contextual indicator.

Table 5 shows that GDP per capita was moderately and positively associated with country-level postmaterialism, $\rho = 0.51$, $p = 0.011$. Countries with a higher year 2020 GDP score per capita, therefore, tended to have higher mean postmaterialism scores in the first postsocialist generation. H1 was supported as a bivariate country-level association. The Deliberative Democracy Index was also moderately and positively associated with postmaterialism, $\rho = 0.48$, $p = 0.017$. H2 was consequently supported as a bivariate country-level association. By contrast, the association with the Gini index was weak and statistically non-significant, $\rho = -0.08$, $p = 0.710$. The analysis, therefore, provided no evidence of a systematic association between the country ranking of income inequality and the country ranking of postmaterialism in this sample.

Taken together, the results show that GDP per capita and deliberative democracy are associated with the cross-national ranking of postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation, but they do not, by themselves, explain the heterogeneous generational patterns observed across countries. As the correlations are cross-sectional and use common 2020 contextual indicators, they cannot establish that economic development

or democratic quality caused either the cross-national differences in postmaterialism or the generational patterns reported in Table 2.

The results, therefore, leave an important question for the qualitative analysis: why does the first postsocialist generation display comparatively stronger postmaterialist orientations than older cohorts in some economically disadvantaged national contexts, while, also, weaker postmaterialism is observed in some economically wealthier postsocialist countries?

2.3.2. Generational, survey-period, and age-group patterns

This section presents the results of the principal pooled partial proportional-odds model, which jointly examines generational, survey-period, and age-group associations with postmaterialist orientation. It first evaluates the expected progression across successive generations (H3) and the distinct position of the first postsocialist generation relative to all three earlier generations (H4). It then examines the survey-period pattern specified in H5 and the age-group pattern specified in H6.

Presenting these results together is analytically important because the estimated generational differences are conditional on the age group and survey period, while the period and age-group associations are, likewise, estimated with the generation included in the model. The estimates should, nevertheless, be interpreted as mutually adjusted associations rather than as pure causal age, period, and cohort effects.

2.3.2.1. Generational patterns and cross-national heterogeneity (H3–H4)

Generation was entered into the principal model as a four-category predictor, with the first postsocialist generation as the reference category. The likelihood-ratio test for the generation block evaluates whether the generation contributes to the model as a whole, but it does not identify which generations differ. Two sets of hypothesis-specific comparisons are therefore reported.

The direct model coefficients compare each earlier generation with the first postsocialist generation and are used to evaluate H4. Three additional model-derived contrasts compare successive generations and are used to evaluate the stepwise progression proposed in H3. Holm adjustment is applied across the three pre-specified H3 contrasts.

Table 6. Generation coefficients and planned contrasts for value orientation in the pooled 24-country partial proportional-odds model, EVS/WVS 1990–2022 (N = 78,889; H3–H4)

Panel	Comparison	β	OR	95% CI	*p*
Panel A. Earlier generations compared with the first postsocialist generation (H4)	Penultimate socialist vs first postsocialist	−0.1782	0.837	0.755–0.928	<0.001
	Last socialist vs first postsocialist	−0.1585	0.853	0.788–0.924	<0.001
	Transitional vs first postsocialist	−0.0923	0.912	0.856–0.971	0.004
Panel B. Successive generation contrasts (H3)	Last socialist vs penultimate socialist	-	1.020	0.974–1.068	0.399
	Transitional vs last socialist	-	1.068	1.017–1.122	0.017
	First postsocialist vs transitional	-	1.097	1.029–1.169	0.013

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. N = 78,889. *Note.* Panel A reports the direct model coefficients and coefficient-specific Wald *p*-values for comparisons with the first postsocialist generation. Panel B reports model-derived odds ratios for the three pre-specified successive-generation contrasts; the corresponding *p*-values are Holm-adjusted across these three comparisons. A dash indicates that a separate β coefficient is not reported for the derived contrast. Generation block: LR $\chi^2(3) = 15.33$, $p = 0.002$. The overall model versus the intercept-only model: LR $\chi^2(73) = 5{,}711.35$, $p < 0.001$. Model fit: AIC = 134,711.57; BIC = 135,407.25; Nagelkerke pseudo-$R^2 = 0.084$. OR = odds ratio, CI = confidence interval.

The model's in-sample classification accuracy was only slightly above the majority-category baseline (57.3% versus 56.3%), thereby indicating its limited ability to distinguish individual outcome categories (Annex A5).

In the pooled 24-country sample, the generation block made a statistically significant contribution to the model, LR $\chi^2(3) = 15.33$, $p = 0.002$. This omnibus result indicates that the distribution of value orientations is not identical across all four generations after the age group, survey period, country, sex, marital status, number of children, education, and religiosity have been taken into account. Since the block test does not identify where the differences occur, the substantive interpretation is based on the hypothesis-specific comparisons reported in Table 6.

H4 compares the first postsocialist generation with each of the three earlier generations. With the first postsocialist generation as the reference category, every earlier generation had lower adjusted odds of belonging to a higher, more postmaterialist category. The odds ratios were 0.837 for the penultimate

socialist generation, 0.853 for the last socialist generation, and 0.912 for the transitional generation. In substantive terms, their odds were approximately 16.3%, 14.7%, and 8.8% lower, respectively, than those of the first postsocialist generation. All three comparisons were statistically significant. **H4 is, therefore, supported in the pooled model: the first postsocialist generation has higher conditional odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category than each of the three earlier generations**.

H3 proposes a progression across successive generations and is evaluated by using the three adjacent-generation contrasts. All three odds ratios point in the expected direction, but the size and statistical distinguishability of the steps vary. The last socialist generation does not differ significantly from the penultimate socialist generation, OR = 1.020, Holm-adjusted $p = 0.399$. By contrast, the transitional generation has higher odds of postmaterialist orientation than the last socialist generation, OR = 1.068, Holm-adjusted $p = 0.017$, and the first postsocialist generation has higher odds than the transitional generation, OR = 1.097, Holm-adjusted $p = 0.013$. H3 is, therefore, supported only partially. **The pattern is not a perfectly even generational staircase: little change is visible between the two earlier socialist generations, while the clearest movement occurs between the cohorts socialised before, during, and after the postsocialist transformation**.

The town size and individual economic wealth were not included in the principal specification because requiring valid information for both variables would reduce the analytical sample from 78,889 to 31,123 respondents. To determine whether their omission affected the estimated generational pattern, the core and expanded models were, therefore, re-estimated on the same restricted sample of 31,123 respondents. Holding the sample composition constant is important because it separates the effect of adding the two variables from the effect of analysing a substantially smaller – and potentially different – group of respondents.

Addition of the town size and economic wealth improved the overall model fit, LR $\chi^2(2) = 46.75$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the two variables jointly contain information relevant to the distribution of value orientations. However, they left the generation estimates virtually unchanged. For the penultimate socialist, last socialist, and transitional generations, respectively, the ORs in the restricted-sample core and expanded models were 0.760 versus 0.760, 0.793 versus 0.793, and 0.859 versus 0.858. The likelihood-ratio test and the stability of the generation coefficients answer two different questions: the former shows that the additional variables improve the overall fit of the model, whereas the latter shows that they do not materially account for the

observed generational differences. The principal specification, therefore, retains the broader analytical sample, while the expanded model serves as a sensitivity analysis demonstrating that the pooled generational pattern is not produced by the omission of the town size and economic wealth.

The pooled coefficients summarise the conditional respondent-level generational pattern in the combined unweighted sample. They do not represent an equally weighted average of 24 national effects, because country-survey samples containing more respondents contribute more strongly to the pooled estimates. Nor do the pooled coefficients imply that the same generational pattern occurs with an equal magnitude or direction in every country. Country-specific models and a pooled country-by-generation interaction were, therefore, used as complementary analyses of cross-national heterogeneity. Annex Table A2 reports all 72 comparisons between the first postsocialist generation and the three earlier generations, including the estimated direction, odds ratio, confidence interval, unadjusted *p*, and Holm-adjusted *p*.

Before adjustment for multiple comparisons, at least one generational contrast was statistically significant in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Slovakia. Statistical significance, however, is only one component of the cross-national pattern, particularly because some country samples provide relatively imprecise estimates. Across all 72 contrasts, 47 pointed in the same direction as the pooled result. In 11 countries, all three estimates placed the first postsocialist generation above the earlier generations.

By contrast, in Croatia, Estonia, Montenegro, and Ukraine, all three estimated odds ratios were below 1, thus indicating that the first postsocialist generation had lower estimated odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category than each of the three earlier generations. The country-specific evidence, therefore, suggests substantial variation not only in the statistical precision and magnitude of the estimates but, in some cases, also in their direction.

Holm adjustment addresses the full family of 72 country-specific tests and asks which individual contrasts remain statistically distinguishable from zero when the risk of false-positive findings across all comparisons is controlled. Four contrasts met this stricter criterion: two in Lithuania and two in Russia. This result should not be interpreted as evidence that generational differences exist only in those two countries. The adjustment is deliberately conservative in a large family of tests, while the absence of an adjusted significant result may also reflect limited within-country precision. For this reason, the substantive interpretation considers the overall direction and distribution of

the 72 estimates together with the adjusted results, rather than reducing the cross-national analysis to the four smallest *p*-values.

The country-by-generation interaction provides the direct omnibus test of whether the generational pattern varies across countries. Adding the interaction significantly improved the model fit, LR $\chi^2(69) = 171.94$, $p < 0.001$, demonstrating that the size, and, in some settings, the direction of generational differences depends on the national context. This result does not invalidate the pooled-sample support for H4 or the partial pooled-sample support for H3, but it limits their interpretation as region-wide uniformities. The pooled coefficients describe the pooled respondent-level pattern in the observed unweighted sample, whereas the interaction tests whether that pattern can be treated as a uniform one.

Taken together, the results indicate an overall shift towards greater postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation, accompanied by substantial national variation in how strongly and consistently that shift appears. This contextual variation is central to the dissertation's argument that the postsocialist value change cannot be adequately represented by one universal national trajectory.

2.3.2.2. Survey-period and age-group associations (H5–H6)

The same principal partial proportional-odds model provides tests of the survey-period pattern specified in H5 and the age-group pattern specified in H6. H5 expects later survey periods to be associated with higher postmaterialist orientation, whereas H6 expects older respondents to have lower odds of postmaterialist orientation than the respondents aged 16–24. As the generation, survey period, and age group are included simultaneously, each set of estimates is conditional on the other two temporal dimensions and on the remaining variables in the model. The estimates, nevertheless, remain mutually adjusted associations rather than pure causal age, period, or cohort effects.

The reference period is 2015–2022, and the reference age group is 16–24. The survey period does not satisfy the proportional-odds restriction and is, therefore, represented by separate estimates at the materialist/mixed and mixed/postmaterialist boundaries. The age group satisfies the proportional-odds restriction, and thus one common odds ratio is reported for each comparison with the respondents aged 16–24. Table 7 presents the resulting hypothesis-specific estimates.

Table 7. Survey-period and age-group associations with value orientation in the pooled 24-country partial proportional-odds model, EVS/WVS 1990–2022 (N = 78,889; H5–H6)

Panel	Comparison	Cumulative outcome comparison	β	SE	OR	95% CI	*p*
Panel A. Adjusted survey-period contrasts from the principal model (H5)	1990–2004 vs 2015–2022	Mixed or postmaterialist vs materialist	−0.2756	0.0370	1.317	1.225–1.416	<0.001
	1990–2004 vs 2015–2022	Postmaterialist vs materialist or mixed	−0.4131	0.0475	1.511	1.377–1.659	<0.001
	2005–2014 vs 2015–2022	Mixed or postmaterialist vs materialist	−0.2124	0.0233	1.237	1.181–1.295	<0.001
	2005–2014 vs 2015–2022	Postmaterialist vs materialist or mixed	−0.4895	0.0352	1.631	1.523–1.748	<0.001
Panel B. Adjusted age-group contrasts from the principal model (H6)	25–34 vs 16–24	Common across both cumulative comparisons	−0.1078	0.0245	0.898	0.856–0.942	<0.001
	35–44 vs 16–24	Common across both cumulative comparisons	−0.1150	0.0358	0.891	0.831–0.956	0.001
	45–54 vs 16–24	Common across both cumulative comparisons	−0.0698	0.0493	0.933	0.847–1.027	0.157
	55+ vs 16–24	Common across both cumulative comparisons	−0.1293	0.0677	0.879	0.769–1.003	0.056

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* The reference period is 2015–2022, and the reference age group is 16–24. The survey period is included in the threshold-specific (nominal) component of the partial proportional-odds model, allowing its coefficients to vary across the two cumulative outcome thresholds. Its reported β coefficients, therefore, represent threshold shifts, and the higher-category odds ratios are calculated as exp(−β). OR = odds ratio, CI = confidence interval, SE = standard error. For the H5 rows, an OR above 1 indicates that the respondents in the earlier period had higher conditional odds of belonging above the relevant outcome threshold than the respondents in 2015–2022. The age group is estimated in the proportional part of the model; for the H6 rows, an OR below 1 indicates lower cumulative odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category than among the respondents aged 16–24. Survey-period block: LR $\chi^2(4) = 208.78$, $p < 0.001$. Age-group block: LR $\chi^2(4) = 27.23$, $p < 0.001$.

The survey period made a statistically significant contribution to the model, LR $\chi^2(4) = 208.78$, $p < 0.001$. However, the adjusted estimates pointed in the opposite direction to H5. The respondents observed in both earlier periods had higher conditional odds of being above the materialist and postmaterialist thresholds than the respondents surveyed in 2015–2022 (ORs = 1.237–1.631, all $p < 0.001$). **H5 is, therefore, not supported by the adjusted model.**

The observed distributions show a different descriptive pattern. The materialist share declined from 38.3% in 1990–2004 to 37.2% in 2005–2014 and 33.0% in 2015–2022, while the postmaterialist share was 6.9%, 6.5%, and 9.7%, respectively. The latest period, therefore, had the largest observed postmaterialist share, although the increase was not continuous across all three periods. These percentages describe the unadjusted composition of the period samples and provide only partial descriptive evidence consistent with H5.

The age group also made a statistically significant contribution to the model, LR $\chi^2(4) = 27.23$, $p < 0.001$. All four older age groups had lower estimated odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category than the respondents aged 16–24, which is consistent with the direction proposed in H6. However, only the comparisons for the respondents aged 25–34 and 35–44 were statistically significant; the confidence intervals for those aged 45–54 and 55 or older included 1. **H6 is, therefore, partially supported.**

2.3.3. Religious context and individual religiosity

This section distinguishes two analytical levels. H7 concerns the national religious context and is tested, first, by comparing the country-level postmaterialist shares of the first postsocialist generation across four religious-context groups: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, and no denominational affiliation. The hypothesis itself is evaluated through the two pre-specified comparisons of Roman Catholic contexts with Orthodox and Muslim contexts. The no-denominational-affiliation group is retained to represent the full empirical classification of the 24 countries but is not part of the two confirmatory H7 contrasts. H8 subsequently concerns individual religiosity and tests whether more religious respondents within the first postsocialist generation have higher odds of postmaterialist orientation. The two levels are examined separately because a country's religious-historical context is not equivalent to an individual respondent's religiosity.

At the country level, the analysis used each country's share of respondents classified as postmaterialist within the first postsocialist generation. These country shares are proportions. Table 8 reports the same values multiplied by 100 as percentages. Thus, the test ranked the 24 country shares, and the scale

(0–1 or 0–100) does not affect the Kruskal–Wallis result. The distributions differed significantly across the four religious-context groups, $H(3) = 10.03$, $p = 0.018$ (N = 24 countries). The mean (median) country shares were 22.4% (19.5%) in Roman Catholic contexts, 11.5% (13.1%) in Orthodox contexts, 8.0% (8.6%) in Muslim contexts, and 19.3% (18.4%) in contexts with no denominational affiliation.

Table 8. Postmaterialist shares in the first postsocialist generation by country and religious-context group, pooled eligible EVS/WVS surveys, 2017–2022 (H7)

Religious context	Country	Survey year(s)	N	Postmaterialists (%)
Roman Catholic	Slovenia	2017	128	39.8
No denominational affiliation	Hungary	2018	241	26.1
Roman Catholic	Croatia	2017	196	23.0
No denominational affiliation	Latvia	2021	124	21.8
Roman Catholic	Slovakia	2017, 2022	261	19.5
Roman Catholic	Poland	2017	152	19.1
Orthodox	North Macedonia	2019	247	18.6
Orthodox	Georgia	2018	250	17.6
Orthodox	Belarus	2018	209	15.3
Muslim	Albania	2018	270	15.2
No denominational affiliation	Estonia	2018	106	15.1
Orthodox	Romania	2018	421	14.5
No denominational affiliation	Czechia	2017, 2022	287	14.3
Orthodox	Montenegro	2019	143	13.3
Orthodox	Serbia	2017, 2018	325	12.9
Roman Catholic	Lithuania	2018	208	10.6
Muslim	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2019	357	9.5
Muslim	Kyrgyzstan	2020	257	8.6
Orthodox	Russia	2017	525	8.0
Muslim	Kazakhstan	2018	217	5.5
Orthodox	Bulgaria	2017	111	5.4
Orthodox	Armenia	2018, 2021	474	5.3
Orthodox	Ukraine	2020	361	4.4
Muslim	Azerbaijan	2018	385	1.3

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* Country-level shares were calculated among respondents born in 1991–2000 by using all eligible EVS/WVS surveys conducted in 2017–2022. When a country had more than one survey in this period, the respondent records were pooled before the country share was calculated. N denotes respondents with a valid four-item postmaterialism index. The religious context refers to the most frequently reported denominational affiliation in the analysed country data; in the no-denominational-affiliation group, this response was the largest category.

Table 8 shows that the largest shares of postmaterialists in the first postsocialist generation are concentrated in Roman Catholic contexts or in countries where no denominational affiliation is the most frequently reported category. Lithuania, Estonia, and Czechia are notable lower-ranking cases within those two groups. Orthodox and Muslim contexts generally appear lower in the ranking, which is consistent with the broad regional pattern in the Inglehart–Welzel World Cultural Map (World Values Survey, 2023). The exceptions are retained as part of the result rather than treated as noise.

Countries in which no denominational affiliation is the most frequently reported category also display comparatively high postmaterialist values. This indicates that the observed country ordering cannot be reduced to the Catholic doctrine.

Together, the omnibus test, the ordering in Table 8, and the two H7-specified Dunn comparisons support H7. After Holm adjustment, Roman Catholic contexts had higher mean ranks than Orthodox contexts (18.8 versus 10.0; $z = 2.27$, $p = 0.023$) and Muslim contexts (18.8 versus 7.2; $z = 2.59$, $p = 0.019$). Roman Catholic country contexts generally occupy the upper part of the postmaterialism ranking, while Orthodox and Muslim contexts are concentrated lower. The comparatively high postmaterialist shares in several countries with no dominant denominational affiliation add an important qualification: the pattern is not simply an effect of the Catholic doctrine but is consistent with historical connections among the Catholic religious tradition, secularisation, and the Western cultural orientation.

The religious context, therefore, contributes to the explanation of cross-national differences without determining them on its own. It helps organise a broad regional pattern, while the exceptions and the increase of postmaterialism in some economically disadvantaged countries point to interactions with other historical and social processes.

Before turning to the direct analysis of individual religiosity in H8, Table 9 provides descriptive individual-level context. Roman Catholics and respondents reporting no denominational affiliation have the largest postmaterialist shares, whereas Orthodox Christians and Muslims have the smallest shares. These distributions concern the respondents' own affiliations and should not be interpreted as a test of H7, which is evaluated at the country-context level.

Table 9. Distribution of value orientations in the first postsocialist generation by individual religious affiliation, pooled available EVS/WVS surveys, 2008–2022

Religious denomination	Materialist	Mix	Postmaterialist
Does not belong to any religion	24%	59%	17%
Roman Catholics	21%	61%	18%
Orthodox Christians	31%	58%	11%
Muslims	33%	60%	7%

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data.

Before testing H8 directly, Table 10 describes cross-national differences in the mean individual religiosity of the first postsocialist generation. The table shows that the average level of the 0–12 religiosity index varies substantially across the 24 countries. These country means provide a descriptive context for the individual-level analysis but do not themselves test whether religiosity is associated with postmaterialist orientation.

Table 10. Mean individual religiosity in the first postsocialist generation by country, pooled available EVS/WVS surveys, 2008–2022 (context for H8)

Country	N	Mean religiosity index
Georgia	408	9.017
Armenia	552	8.112
Albania	270	8.030
Montenegro	154	8.006
Kyrgyzstan	412	7.864
Bosnia and Herzegovina	361	7.856
Azerbaijan	475	7.345
North Macedonia	262	7.336
Romania	504	7.280
Croatia	199	7.080
Poland	221	6.878
Serbia	357	6.415
Kazakhstan	339	6.327
Ukraine	455	5.688
Bulgaria	120	5.342
Slovakia	265	5.026
Hungary	255	4.980
Russia	632	4.979
Lithuania	212	4.934
Slovenia	163	4.926
Belarus	293	4.908
Latvia	129	3.760
Estonia	180	2.761
Czechia	303	2.729

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* Means are unweighted and refer to the original 0–12 additive religiosity index among the respondents born in 1991–2000.

As an exploratory context, Spearman correlations were also calculated in the pooled sample across all four generations and separately within each country. In the pooled all-generation sample, religiosity was very weakly negatively associated with postmaterialism, $\rho = -0.041$, $p < 0.001$. Table 11 presents the corresponding country-specific correlations. These analyses describe the broader cross-national pattern across all generations; they do not directly test H8, which is restricted to the first postsocialist generation.

Table 11. Exploratory Spearman correlations between individual religiosity and postmaterialism across all four generations by country, pooled EVS/WVS data, 1990–2022

Country	Religious-context group	Spearman's ρ	*p*
Serbia	Orthodox	−0.084	< 0.001
Georgia	Orthodox	0.088	< 0.001
Belarus	Orthodox	−0.082	< 0.001
Ukraine	Orthodox	−0.065	< 0.001
North Macedonia	Orthodox	−0.056	0.001
Romania	Orthodox	0.053	0.018
Armenia	Orthodox	−0.056	0.002
Bulgaria	Orthodox	−0.029	0.143
Montenegro	Orthodox	0.016	0.435
Russia	Orthodox	0.013	0.525
Kazakhstan	Muslim	−0.082	< 0.001
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Muslim	−0.068	< 0.001
Kyrgyzstan	Muslim	0.028	0.046
Azerbaijan	Muslim	0.014	0.346
Albania	Muslim	−0.002	0.908
Croatia	Roman Catholic	−0.124	< 0.001
Slovakia	Roman Catholic	−0.101	< 0.001
Poland	Roman Catholic	−0.076	< 0.001
Slovenia	Roman Catholic	−0.038	0.001
Lithuania	Roman Catholic	−0.029	0.142
Czechia	No denominational affiliation	0.046	0.003
Latvia	No denominational affiliation	0.033	0.142
Estonia	No denominational affiliation	−0.017	0.349
Hungary	No denominational affiliation	0.000	0.997

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data from 2017–2022. The religious-context group corresponds to the most frequently indicated religious denomination affiliation in each country. In the no-denominational-affiliation group, this was the most frequently reported response category; it was not necessarily reported by an absolute majority of the respondents.

In 11 of the 24 countries, higher religiosity was significantly associated with lower postmaterialism. The correlations ranged from $\rho = -0.124$ to $\rho = -0.038$, indicating weak individual-level associations.

The country pattern is heterogeneous. Five Orthodox countries show a weak but significant negative correlation (more religious people are less postmaterialist). Among the countries classified as Muslim religious contexts, only Kazakhstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina show the same tendency. Among Orthodox and Muslim countries, Georgia, Romania, and Kyrgyzstan are outliers, showing weak positive correlations (by suggesting that more religiosity is associated with higher postmaterialism). All other Muslim-dominated countries do not show any significant association.

Among all religious traditions, Roman Catholic countries show the most consistently significant and strongest negative correlations between religiosity and postmaterialism. This suggests that, in these societies, being religious is more closely associated with lower levels of postmaterialist values. This does not contradict H7, because H7 concerns a country-level contextual classification, whereas these correlations concern differences between individuals within countries. The two analytical levels should not be treated as interchangeable.

Within the no-denominational-affiliation group, Czechia was the only country with a statistically significant positive correlation. Although the association was weak, higher individual religiosity scores were associated with slightly higher postmaterialism in this country. Table 10 also shows that the first postsocialist generation in Czechia had the lowest mean religiosity score among the 24 countries. In such a low-religiosity context, variation in the index may capture not only institutional religious belonging but also more individualised forms of spirituality, which may be more compatible with postmaterialist orientations. However, the survey indicators cannot directly distinguish or test this interpretation.

In countries with positive correlation, religion may be linked with values that support postmaterialist ideals, e.g., community, moral and socially sensitive frameworks, and identity-building. It can also be a sign of individual spirituality, which is tied to self-realisation and thus to postmaterialist values. However, the survey indicators cannot distinguish these mechanisms directly, and thus they are treated as theoretically informed interpretations to be explored in the qualitative analysis rather than as conclusions already proven by the correlations.

H8 was tested directly among 7,020 respondents from the first postsocialist generation. Spearman's correlation summarised the unadjusted monotonic association, whereas cumulative-logit models treated the materialist, mixed,

and postmaterialist categories as an ordered outcome. For each ordinal model, a proportional-odds specification was compared with a model allowing the religiosity coefficient to vary across the two cumulative thresholds. The proportional-odds restriction was not rejected in either the direct pooled model (LR $\chi^2(1) = 2.10$, $p = 0.147$) or the model controlling for the country (LR $\chi^2(1) < 0.001$, $p = 0.990$); a single religiosity coefficient is, therefore, reported for each model.

Table 12. Ordinal logistic regression of postmaterialism on individual religiosity in the first postsocialist generation, pooled available EVS/WVS surveys, 2008–2022 (N = 7,020; H8)

Model	N	β (SE)	OR	95% CI	*p*	PO test *p*
Direct pooled model	7,020	−0.045 (0.009)	0.956	0.940−0.972	< 0.001	0.147
Country-adjusted robustness model	7,020	−0.056 (0.011)	0.945	0.926−0.965	< 0.001	0.990

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* OR = odds ratio, CI = confidence interval, SE = standard error, PO = proportional odds. Coefficients and odds ratios refer to a one-point increase in the original 0–12 additive religiosity index. The country-adjusted robustness model allows country-specific threshold shifts. The PO-test *p* is from the likelihood-ratio comparison of the proportional-odds and non-proportional-odds specifications.

The direct H8 results consistently indicate a very weak negative association. The pooled Spearman correlation was $\rho = -0.046$ ($p < 0.001$). In the direct ordinal model, a one-point increase in the religiosity index was associated with 4.4% lower odds of belonging to a higher postmaterialism category (see Table 12). The result remained substantively unchanged after controlling for the country. H8 is, therefore, not supported: the observed association is opposite to the hypothesised direction and substantively very small.

Overall, H7 is supported at the country-context level, whereas H8 is not supported at the individual level. In the two planned H7 comparisons, Roman Catholic contexts had higher country-level postmaterialist ranks than Orthodox and Muslim contexts. Several countries classified in the no-denominational-affiliation group also showed comparatively high postmaterialist shares, although this was a descriptive qualification rather than a separately hypothesised contrast.

Within the first postsocialist generation, however, stronger individual religiosity was associated with slightly lower rather than higher postmaterialist orientation. The contrast between these results indicates that a religious-historical context and individual religiosity capture different social processes and should not be treated as interchangeable explanations.

2.4. Summary of Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis provides differentiated rather than uniform support for the proposed explanations of postmaterialist value change. At the country level, economic development and deliberative democracy were positively associated with postmaterialism in the first postsocialist generation, thus supporting H1 and H2 as bivariate cross-national associations. These results do not establish causal effects, and the persistence of heterogeneous national trajectories indicates that neither economic prosperity nor democratic quality alone explains the observed value differences.

The principal pooled model provides the clearest evidence for a generational pattern. H4 is supported because the first postsocialist generation had higher adjusted odds of postmaterialist orientation than each of the three earlier generations. H3 is supported only partially: all successive-generation contrasts pointed in the expected direction, but the difference between the penultimate and last socialist generations was not statistically significant after Holm adjustment. Moreover, the significant country-by-generation interaction shows that the magnitude and, in some countries, the direction of generational differences vary across the national contexts.

The results for survey period and age group provide limited support for the hypotheses. H5 is not supported by the adjusted model because the threshold-specific survey-period estimates point in the opposite direction to the hypothesised increase, even though the latest survey period has the largest unadjusted postmaterialist share. H6 is partially supported: all older age groups had lower estimated cumulative odds of belonging to a more postmaterialist category than the respondents aged 16–24, but only two of the four individual comparisons were statistically significant. These findings represent conditional cross-sectional associations and do not constitute pure causal age, period, or cohort effects.

Finally, H7 is supported at the country-context level, as Roman Catholic contexts ranked higher in postmaterialism than Orthodox and Muslim contexts in the planned comparisons. H8 is not supported at the individual level: stronger religiosity within the first postsocialist generation was associated with a slightly lower rather than higher postmaterialist orientation. Taken together, the results suggest that postsocialist value change is structured by generational replacement but remains conditional on the national, temporal, and cultural context. The qualitative analysis, therefore, examines how these broader statistical patterns are experienced, interpreted, and reproduced in individual biographies.

3. RELATIONAL SUPPORT, INSECURITY, AND VALUE TRANSFORMATION IN THE FIRST POSTSOCIALIST GENERATION

3.1. Research Methodology

The qualitative research followed quantitative analysis and was designed as the explanatory second stage of a sequential mixed-methods study. In an explanatory sequential design, quantitative analysis precedes qualitative inquiry and informs its sampling and data-collection priorities, while the qualitative material is used to interpret or elaborate the patterns identified quantitatively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Mixed-methods integration may occur through connecting, when one phase informs the sampling of another, through building, when the results of one phase shape the data-collection instrument of the next, and through integration at the interpretation and reporting stage (Fetters et al., 2013).

In this study, the preliminary quantitative findings informed the selection of countries and the interview guide's emphasis on the conditions, under which, materialist and postmaterialist priorities persisted, strengthened, or coexisted. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with the quantitative results during interpretation. However, the qualitative research was not restricted to explaining previously identified statistical patterns: it also generated concepts and relationships that were used to elaborate and revise the original theoretical model. **It, therefore, performed both an explanatory and a theory-elaborating function.**

The term *first postsocialist generation* is used here as an historically situated analytical category rather than as a claim that all individuals born between 1991 and 2000 constitute a culturally homogeneous generation. Members of this group underwent childhood and formative socialisation after the collapse of state socialism, whereas members of the transitional generation, born between 1981 and 1990, experienced at least part of their childhood during late socialism and/or the immediate systemic transformation.

The distinction between first postsocialist and transitional generations, therefore, identifies different historical locations in relation to institutional and cultural change while allowing for substantial variation within each generation. Global labels such as *Millennials* or *Generation Z* are not used as the primary analytical categories because their conventional boundaries overlap with the 1991–2000 group and do not capture the specific historical timing of postsocialist socialisation.

Semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted with members of the first postsocialist generation, born between 1991 and 2000, in Lithuania, Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. The six countries were selected purposively following the preliminary descriptive quantitative analysis conducted before the qualitative fieldwork. Economic development was used as the principal comparative dimension, while the geographical location and the dominant religious context were considered to increase the variation represented by the selected cases. The relative economic position of the countries was assessed by using the World Bank GDP per capita, PPP (current international USD, 2023), as described in Section 2.3.1. The distinction between economically more and less advantaged countries served as the principal basis for comparison, without implying that the countries within either group were internally homogeneous.

Lithuania and Czechia were selected as economically more advantaged cases whose preliminary generational distributions did not indicate a simple replacement of materialism by postmaterialism. In Czechia, the materialist and postmaterialist shares both increased in the first postsocialist generation compared with the transitional generation, while, in Lithuania, the materialist share remained slightly higher than in the penultimate socialist generation and postmaterialism partially recovered relative to the last socialist and transitional generations (see Table 2 in Section 2.3.1).

Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan were selected as economically less advantaged cases, in which, the first postsocialist generation nevertheless displayed a strengthening of postmaterialist orientations. The comparison was, therefore, designed to examine why postmaterialist orientations may strengthen under different levels of economic development, and why materialist concerns may persist even in comparatively affluent postsocialist contexts. Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus were excluded from the feasible fieldwork locations in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Although other countries also displayed relevant preliminary generational patterns, the six cases were selected because they combined some of the clearest preliminary changes in value distributions with geographical and religious diversity. The design did not aim to include every quantitatively salient country or to identify a statistically representative set of postsocialist societies. It constituted a purposive, contrastive case selection informed by the preliminary quantitative findings. These descriptive patterns informed the fieldwork design but are not treated as controlled country-specific cohort effects in the quantitative analysis.

In total, the researcher conducted 66 interviews between March and October 2024 (see Table 13). However, one interview conducted in Czechia was interrupted approximately halfway through, thus leaving only a partial recording. As the available material did not cover the full range of the interview topics and was not comparable in completeness to the remaining interviews, it was excluded from coding and qualitative analysis. The final analytical sample, therefore, comprised 65 interviews.

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 2.5 hours. In Lithuania and Czechia, the interviews were conducted both in person and remotely; in Georgia, all interviews were conducted remotely; and in Albania, North Macedonia, and Kyrgyzstan, they were conducted in person. Interviews in Lithuania were conducted in Lithuanian, while those in Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Georgia were conducted in English. In Kyrgyzstan, the participants could choose Russian, English, or a combination of the two languages. No interpreter was used.

Approximate country-level recruitment targets were established before the fieldwork, with larger samples planned for countries with larger populations. These targets were intended to distribute the qualitative fieldwork across the six cases rather than to produce statistically proportional or nationally representative samples. At the individual level, criterion sampling was combined with purposive diversity, convenience, and snowball sampling. To be eligible, the participants had to have been born between 1991 and 2000 and to have been born and raised in the country included in the comparison. The current residence in that country was preferred, although several participants who had subsequently moved abroad were also included because their formative socialisation had occurred in the country under study.

The participants were recruited through personal contacts, referrals, social media posts in country- and city-specific groups, and the sharing of recruitment announcements through wider networks. Efforts were made to obtain variation by gender, educational attainment, and urban or smaller-town background. The participants were not screened according to their presumed value orientation, nor were they subsequently assigned to fixed materialist, mixed, or postmaterialist categories. The analysis, instead, focused on the circumstances in which different value priorities appeared within their narratives.

Table 13. Characteristics of participants included in the qualitative analysis (N = 65)

Country	Number of participants	Distribution by gender		Distribution by education	
		Male	Female	Higher education	No completed higher education
Lithuania (LT)	8	4	4	7	1
Czechia (CZ)	17	9	8	14	3
Albania (AL)	10	5	5	10	0
North Macedonia (MK)	8	3	5	7	1
Georgia (GE)	11	6	5	11	0
Kyrgyzstan (KGZ)	11	5	6	10	1

Source: Author's qualitative interview dataset. *Note.* 'Higher education' refers only to completed tertiary education, without specifying further degrees attained, if any.

Despite the effort to diversify the sample, 59 of the 65 participants had completed higher education. Gender balance was largely achieved, and the sample included participants from both urban and smaller-town backgrounds, but the intended educational diversity could not be obtained. Individuals without higher education were more difficult to reach through the recruitment channels used and were less frequently represented in the social networks, through which, snowball recruitment developed.

The qualitative findings should, therefore, be understood as primarily reflecting the experiences of the more highly educated segment of the first postsocialist generation rather than the generation as a whole. The six participants without completed higher education were unevenly distributed across the four countries and were recruited through the same non-probability procedures as the remaining participants.

Because of the small and uneven composition of this subgroup, education was not treated as a separate comparative category, and no systematic conclusions about educational differences were drawn. Employment, partnership, parenthood, and migration experiences arose within the biographical narratives but were not recorded as standardised document variables, and were, therefore, not used for systematic demographic subgroup comparisons.

Data collection was not terminated according to one uniform saturation criterion across all six countries. Approximate country-level recruitment targets had been established before the fieldwork. In Czechia, where the largest number of interviews was conducted, recruitment was discontinued when additional interviews were no longer producing substantially new

information relevant to the research questions. In the other countries, the final sample largely reflected the number of eligible participants who could be reached within the fieldwork period and agreed to participate. The adequacy of the material was, therefore, assessed in relation to the explanatory purpose of the study and the possibility of comparing recurring and contrasting experiences across the six cases, rather than through a claim of complete thematic saturation.

The combination of sampling strategies reflected the principle that purposive qualitative sampling seeks information-rich cases relevant to the phenomenon under investigation rather than statistical representativeness (Palinkas et al., 2015). Criterion sampling ensured that the participants belonged to the first postsocialist generation and had undergone their formative socialisation in the country under study, while purposive diversity sampling sought variation within the sample. Convenience and snowball sampling provided practical access to eligible participants but also increased the likelihood of recruiting individuals from overlapping social networks.

The semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore value orientations through the participants' biographical experiences, relationships, perceptions, and life choices. Materialism and postmaterialism were not initially introduced as abstract labels. Instead, the participants were invited to discuss concrete domains such as childhood, family relationships, work, economic and political situation, freedom, self-development, leisure, social involvement, and future aspirations. The theoretical concepts were introduced more explicitly only when clarification was needed.

This approach was adopted because the participants generally responded more fully to descriptions of concrete experiences and value conflicts than to abstract terminology. The preliminary quantitative findings informed not only the selection of countries but also the guide's emphasis on identifying the biographical and contextual conditions under which materialist and postmaterialist priorities persisted, strengthened, or coexisted. However, the guide was not constructed to confirm that the participants from particular countries would necessarily hold a predetermined value orientation.

The interview guide was organised into five thematic clusters (detailed interview guidelines can be found in Annex 4): (1) the generational landscape, including perceptions of youth in their country and differences across urban-rural, gender, and ethnic lines; (2) personal histories and relational dynamics, focusing on childhood experiences, family relationships, and life milestones; (3) macro-level influences, such as religion, politics, and economy, and their perceived effects on the participants' lives; (4) the participants' current lives, including responsibilities, goals, and personal values; and (5) the tension

between materialist and postmaterialist values, exploring their attitudes towards work, freedom, self-development, leisure, and social engagement.

These thematic clusters were designed not as separate analytical categories but as complementary entry points into the respondents' lived experiences. Each block captures a different dimension of value formation: early socialisation (family and childhood), macro-level context (politics, economy, religion), and present-day practices and aspirations. This structure allowed the analysis to trace how materialist and postmaterialist orientations emerge across different life domains rather than treating them as isolated attitudes.

No separate pilot-interview stage was conducted. However, the early interviews served an adaptive function by showing which formulations generated clearer and more detailed responses. The same core domains were covered with all participants, but the wording and order of questions were adapted to the flow of each biographical narrative, and follow-up questions were used to explore experiences raised by the participant. The guide, therefore, provided a common thematic framework rather than a fixed questionnaire followed identically in every interview.

This balance between a common thematic structure and a flexible follow-up is consistent with the understanding of qualitative interviewing as a professionally guided but interactional form of knowledge production (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview guide ensured that comparable domains were addressed across cases, while flexible wording and probing allowed the participants to frame their experiences in their own terms and explore biographically significant events that could not have been anticipated in a fixed questionnaire.

All interviews were audio-recorded after written informed consent had been obtained. Lithuanian- and Russian-language recordings were transcribed by using the *Tilde* automated transcription tool, while English-language recordings were transcribed by using *Otter.ai*. All automatically produced transcripts were checked against the recordings, with particular attention being paid to unclear passages and transcription errors that could alter the meaning of the participants' statements. All quotations included in the dissertation were double-checked to ensure that they accurately represented the original statements.

English-language interviews were analysed in their original language, and Lithuanian-language interviews were analysed in Lithuanian. The Russian-language transcripts were anonymised and then translated in full into English with the assistance of *ChatGPT* before being imported into *MAXQDA*; the original Russian transcripts were retained separately. Only the Lithuanian quotations selected for inclusion in the dissertation were subsequently

translated into English. The researcher reviewed the translated material and retained responsibility for its interpretation. Automated and generative AI tools were used for transcription and translation only and were not used to code the interviews, select the evidence, or independently interpret the qualitative findings.

The qualitative study was reviewed and approved by the *Research Ethics Compliance Committee for Education, Pedagogy, Sociology, Social Work, Social Policy, and Criminology* (SSDI UMI AMTE Committee), operating at the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University. Before the interviews, all participants received information about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided written informed consent. The consent form covered voluntary participation, audio and, wherever applicable, video recording, the right not to answer individual questions, the possibility of interrupting or withdrawing from the study, anonymised use of quotations, and the storage and subsequent deletion of research data. Recordings and identifying information were stored separately from the analytical transcripts. The participants interviewed in person were offered a drink, but no monetary compensation was provided. The participant information sheet and consent form are included in Annex 5.

The interview material was analysed in *MAXQDA* by using theory-informed abductive qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis provides a systematic and transparent framework for segmenting textual material, assigning codes, developing categories, and interpreting patterns of meaning across a large qualitative dataset (Schreier, 2012; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023). Unlike quantitative content analysis, its principal purpose is not to estimate the numerical prevalence of predefined categories, but rather to interpret both explicit and contextually embedded meanings. The label theory-informed abductive qualitative content analysis is, therefore, used here to describe the analytical configuration employed in the study rather than to introduce a separate methodological tradition.

The analysis combined deductive sensitising concepts with predominantly inductive category development. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) distinguish between conventional qualitative content analysis, in which, categories are derived from the material, and directed analysis, in which, theory or previous findings guide the initial coding. The present study combined elements of these logics: materialism, postmaterialism, socialisation and parental influence, experiences of postsocialist transformation, insecurity, individualisation and emerging forms of spirituality provided theoretically informed points of departure, but they did not constitute a fixed or closed coding frame.

Additional codes, including collectivist forms of support, psychological struggles, experiences of chaos and hybrid individualism–collectivism, were developed through engagement with the interview material. This combination is also consistent with Graneheim et al.'s (2017) account of qualitative content analysis as permitting inductive, deductive, and abductive analytical movements at different levels of abstraction and interpretation.

The coding unit was a meaning-bearing segment of variable length. Depending on the context required to preserve its meaning, a coded unit could consist of a sentence, a longer passage, or a complete response. Meaning units can differ in length as long as they remain sufficiently coherent to support interpretation and subsequent abstraction into codes and categories (Graneheim et al., 2017). The same passage could receive several codes when it simultaneously addressed interconnected experiences, contextual conditions, or value orientations.

Because the category system was not fixed in advance as a closed codebook, coding remained iterative, and some earlier interviews were revisited when later material revealed categories that were also relevant to them. No inter-coder reliability statistic was calculated because all coding was conducted by the author. Coding consistency was supported through the iterative review of earlier interviews and the comparison of excerpts assigned to the same code.

Analytically, the process moved from coding meaning-bearing segments to comparing related codes, constructing higher-order analytical sections, identifying recurring explanatory links, and reconsidering the relationships proposed in the theoretical model. The analytical movement was abductive rather than exclusively inductive or deductive. Abductive analysis uses theoretically informed expectations as an initial point of reference but revisits them when empirical observations are surprising, contradictory, or insufficiently explained by the existing framework (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

In this study, the theoretical concepts and preliminary quantitative findings sensitised the analysis to particular processes, while the qualitative material revealed additional relationships, especially those involving social support, collectivist coping, psychological insecurity, and the coexistence of different value priorities, that required the original model to be reconsidered.

The transition from themes to explanatory mechanisms involved identifying recurring links between contextual conditions, biographical experiences, coping strategies, and expressed value priorities. Qualitative analysis can contribute to causal explanation by examining processes and

connections within individual cases rather than relying exclusively on associations between variables (Maxwell, 2004). **Nevertheless, the mechanisms proposed in this study are treated as interpretive and process-oriented explanations, and not as causal effects established through statistical identification.** A mechanism was considered analytically relevant when the proposed connection could be traced within the participants' accounts and compared across cases, while its scope was refined by cases in which the expected connection was absent or took a different form.

Cross-case comparison involved retrieving all material associated with a particular code, first examining its meaning within individual interviews and then comparing how related experiences were articulated across participants, countries, and the two broad economic groups. This movement between within-case interpretation and cross-case comparison helps preserve the biographical context while allowing recurrent and contrasting configurations to be identified (Miles et al., 2020). Economic development remained the primary comparative dimension, while the religious context, geographical location, and different postsocialist trajectories were used to interpret variation within and between the country groups. Cases that contradicted or complicated the dominant interpretation were deliberately examined so that the proposed mechanisms could be qualified rather than presented as universally applicable.

Based on the resulting thematic categories, three higher-order analytical sections were constructed for the presentation of the qualitative findings: (1) social support as a relational mechanism between insecurity and value orientations; (2) context-specific forms of insecurity, provisional planning, and coping strategies; and (3) the transformation and coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist values.

These sections were not parent codes in the *MAXQDA* code hierarchy, but, instead, higher-order interpretive groupings constructed to organise the findings. The final MAXQDA code system comprised 33 codes and 3,491 coded segments across the 65 interviews included in the analysis. Table 14, therefore, presents an analytical mapping of the codes to the findings sections rather than a hierarchical code tree. Frequencies were used as a descriptive audit trail and navigation aid only; they refer to coded meaning units and do not indicate the number of participants, the prevalence of a view, or statistically comparable differences between countries.

The three sections represent the most analytically relevant patterns rather than an exhaustive presentation of all coded material. Other identified themes, such as religiosity, political attitudes, and civic engagement, are integrated

within these sections as contextual factors rather than presented as separate analytical categories.

Table 14. Analytical mapping of *MAXQDA* codes to the qualitative findings sections

Topic and codes	Frequency
Social support as a relational mechanism between insecurity and value orientations	
Adverse childhood conditions	47
Community orientation	153
Complex family relationships	90
Emerging forms of spirituality	52
Family influence and value transmission	291
Importance and transformation of friendships	88
Importance of romantic relationships	51
Individualism	201
Religiosity	25
Reproduction of socialist legacies	5
Role of social environment (secondary socialisation)	10
Secularisation	32
Social exclusion	23
Context-specific forms of insecurity, provisional planning, and coping strategies	
Apathy	8
Civic disengagement	50
Community orientation	153
Distrust in political institutions	28
Experiences of chaos	72
Flexible future planning	136
Hybrid individualism–collectivism	40
Importance and transformation of friendships	88
Individualism	201
Need for stability and inner peace	69
Negative attitudes towards work	5
Negative evaluation of national context	441
Perceived generational differences	159
Perceived social control	32
Positive evaluation of national context	105
Psychological struggles	147
Traditional life scripts	113
The transformation and coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist values	
Chaotic transition experiences	33
Community orientation	153
Democratic values	46
Family influence and value transmission	291
Flexible future planning	136

Topic and codes	Frequency
Hybrid individualism–collectivism	40
Importance of leisure and hobbies	38
Importance of travel	73
Individualism	201
Materialist orientations	205
Negative evaluation of national context	441
Perceived social control	32
Postmaterialist orientations	623
Role of social environment (secondary socialisation)	10
Traditional life scripts	113

Source: Author's coding and analysis of qualitative interviews in *MAXQDA*. *Note.* Frequencies report the dataset-wide number of coded segments assigned to each *MAXQDA* code. A segment could receive multiple codes, and the same code could inform more than one analytical section. Repeated frequencies, therefore, refer to the same underlying code and must not be summed within or across analytical sections.

The researcher shared a similar generational and regional background with the participants. However, in the countries studied outside Lithuania, the author was also an outsider to the national context. As a researcher belonging to the same birth cohort as the participants and having grown up in a postsocialist society, the author was familiar with many of the historical references and generational experiences discussed in the interviews. This proximity could facilitate trust and mutual understanding, but it also created a risk of assuming shared meanings or interpreting the participants' experiences through the author's own generational expectations. In Kyrgyzstan, the Lithuanian background as a researcher from a former Soviet Union country and the author's ability to communicate in Russian facilitated access and trust in some interviews. In the remaining non-Lithuanian cases, the author occupied a clearer position as a foreign researcher.

Access was particularly difficult in Kyrgyzstan, where the researcher initially had no direct contacts, and some potential participants were hesitant to take part in research conducted by a foreigner. Participants without higher education were also more difficult to reach across the countries because they were less represented in the recruitment networks and were less likely to use English or Russian. Interviews conducted in English did not appear to be substantially constrained by language proficiency, as the recruited participants were fluent English speakers; in Kyrgyzstan, the participants could use Russian, English, or both. Similarly, remote interviews generally produced extensive and open accounts, although some participants interviewed in person appeared more willing to discuss personal experiences more openly.

No systematic difference in data richness by the interview mode was observed. Nevertheless, differences in the participants' linguistic and reflective fluency may have influenced how fully abstract value orientations were articulated. Translation may also have reduced some idiomatic or culturally specific nuances, despite the author's personal review of the translated material and verification of the quotations used in the dissertation.

No separate reflexive diary was maintained during the fieldwork or initial coding. Reflexivity was, therefore, incorporated retrospectively, during the methodological and analytical review, by reconsidering the assumptions brought to the comparison, checking quotations against their original contexts, and examining cases that challenged the dominant interpretation.

3.2. Qualitative Research Findings

The findings are organised into three higher-order analytical sections that trace how structural conditions and socialisation experiences are connected with value orientations through different forms of support, insecurity, and coping. The first section examines social support as a relational mechanism, through which, insecurity is experienced, managed, and translated into value orientations. The second section compares context-specific forms of insecurity and the strategies used to manage them. The third section considers how these processes contribute to the transformation and coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist values and to the emergence of value configurations that are not fully captured by this opposition.

Economic development provides the primary comparative axis, while religious, geographical, and postsocialist contexts are used to interpret variation within and between the two broad country groups. The identified patterns are not treated as uniform characteristics of all participants or countries. Particular attention is, therefore, given to within-group variation and to cases that contradict or qualify the dominant interpretation.

3.2.1. Social support as a relational mechanism between insecurity and value orientations

Through the interviews, social support emerged as a relationship-level mechanism connecting formative experiences with later ways of managing insecurity. Support took multiple forms, including emotional and material assistance from parents and extended family, dependable friendships and partnerships, and mutual help within close social networks. Its analytical relevance lay less in whether the participants could be classified as collectivist

or individualist than in whether their relationships provided practical assistance, emotional security, recognition, and a sense of belonging. In this section, the term ‘mechanism’ is used interpretively rather than as a claim of statistically estimated mediation: the analysis examines how relational support may shape the way structural and biographical insecurity is translated into value priorities.

The comparison did not reveal a simple division between limited support in economically affluent countries and strong support in economically less affluent ones. Accounts of parental absence, emotional distance, violence, and family conflict occurred in both country groups. Conversely, supportive family relationships, enduring friendships, and reliable partnerships were present not only in the economically less affluent settings but also in Lithuania and Czechia.

A recurrent contrast concerned the form and context of support: in several less affluent settings, close networks were described as compensating for material hardship or insufficient institutional assistance, whereas some accounts from Lithuania and Czechia placed a greater emphasis on selectively maintained relationships and individually chosen sources of support. These patterns should be understood as recurring configurations rather than exclusive characteristics of either country group.

Limited relational support could contribute to early self-reliance, difficulties in trusting others, and more individualised strategies for managing insecurity. However, this relationship was not deterministic. Strong family support could coexist with personal autonomy and individualistic orientations, while close family and community networks could simultaneously provide security and constrain individual choice. Economic conditions, therefore, shaped the context in which relational resources acquired importance, but they did not determine a single value orientation or coping strategy.

In both economically more and less affluent countries, some participants described family relationships marked by physical violence, verbal abuse, emotional distance, or the subsequent denial of harmful childhood experiences. These accounts reveal different ways in which close relationships, normally expected to provide security, could, by themselves, become sources of insecurity.

> My mother was very strict with me – sometimes she would slap me, even beat me up pretty roughly. But, despite that, our relationship today is quite good. We talk, we see each other regularly. I’ve tried to talk to her about the violence during my childhood, but she says I exaggerate and that I don’t remember things correctly. Still, I remember it feeling really bad at times. <…> I remember times when I was around 10 or 11, thinking seriously about calling the police for help, even though I didn’t have visible scars or bruises. (CZ, M, 1995).

This account shows that continued contact and an apparently improved present-day relationship did not necessarily resolve the participant's interpretation of his childhood experiences. His mother's denial or minimisation prevented a shared acknowledgement of the violence, while his childhood consideration of contacting the police indicates how unsafe the situation felt to him even in the absence of visible injuries. Relational insecurity here therefore concerned not only the original violence but also the later absence of recognition.

A participant from North Macedonia interpreted similar experiences through a more explicitly intergenerational lens:

> Many in my generation also got beaten. <…> My mother used to beat me. It wasn't light punishment; it would sometimes involve bleeding. She used shoes, cables, and other things. She didn't know any better because her mother beat her, and she thought it was normal. My mother's punishments weren't just physical; they were also verbal. She would insult my sister and me. My father wasn't aggressive like that, but he was distant, so we dealt with trauma from both sides. (MK, F, 1994).

In this case, physical and verbal violence was interpreted as a practice reproduced between generations and normalised through the mother's own upbringing. At the same time, the participant distinguished maternal aggression from paternal emotional distance, while presenting both as different forms of insufficient parental support. The account illustrates how harmful socialisation practices could persist when previously experienced violence was treated as an ordinary form of parenting.

The comparison, therefore, demonstrates that harmful family dynamics occurred across different macroeconomic contexts and cannot be explained by national economic conditions alone. The interviews suggest a possible relational pathway, through which, adverse parenting may strengthen self-reliance, reluctance to depend on others, or the search for alternative sources of support. They do not, however, support a deterministic conclusion that childhood adversity necessarily produces a particular materialist, postmaterialist, individualist, or collectivist orientation.

Several participants attributed relational distance from their parents to emotional unavailability, limited communication, lack of acceptance, or harmful family dynamics. These accounts should not be read as clinical assessments of the parents' emotional capacities. Rather, they reveal how the participants themselves evaluated different dimensions of parental support, which did not necessarily coincide within the same relationship.

> When you don't pay rent and don't contribute money for food, you pay with psychological violence. <…> [My father] really likes to interrupt when someone else is talking. <…> You will never be open, because you don't want to just open a can of worms and start talking to him about your emotional state, because then he will simply

not empathise at all. I don't think he will understand, and if he does, he simply won't know how to process it in order to help you. (LT, M, 2000).

This account does not describe a complete absence of family support. Living in the parental home reduced the participant's housing and food expenses, thereby providing a form of material security. However, he presented this assistance as carrying an emotional cost: communication with his father was experienced as psychologically harmful, while the anticipated lack of empathy discouraged him from disclosing personal difficulties. The case consequently demonstrates that the same family relationship could reduce economic insecurity without providing a corresponding sense of emotional security.

A Georgian participant described a more extensive and persistent form of emotional detachment:

Our relationship with our parents was pretty detached. Even today, we don't stay in touch often. It was a rough childhood emotionally. <…> It was the age of depressed mothers and absent fathers. My mother was often in her room, detached, and my father was never home. They had difficult relationships, and both were emotionally abusive. My mother was manipulative, and my father had narcissistic tendencies. There was also some abuse, [which is] common in Georgia, where beating kids was a norm. As we grew older, the dynamics changed, but there was still emotional turmoil. (GE, F, 2000).

Here, emotional unavailability was presented as a continuing relational pattern involving both parents rather than as a limitation affecting particular conversations. The descriptions of manipulation, narcissistic tendencies, and emotional abuse represent the participant's retrospective interpretation rather than clinical diagnoses. Similarly, her statement that physical punishment was common in Georgia should be understood as a contextual interpretation offered by the participant, and not as evidence that the practice characterised all Georgian families.

The contrast between these accounts shows why family support cannot be treated as a binary condition that is either present or absent. In the Lithuanian case, material assistance coexisted with limited emotional openness, whereas the Georgian account emphasised prolonged detachment and infrequent contact. Such configurations could encourage self-reliance, reluctance to disclose personal difficulties, or greater reliance on relationships outside of the family.

Parental separation did not have a uniform meaning across the interviews. In some biographies, however, it formed part of a broader configuration involving unstable living arrangements, conflict between caregivers, or emotionally and physically unsafe home environments. The following Czech account is particularly revealing because it combines parental care, family

instability, an abusive step-parent, and the participant's early departure from home:

> My parents had me when they were young – my mom was 18 and my dad was 21. They didn't know each other for long and got married when they found out they were pregnant. They divorced after a year or two, so my mom became my primary caretaker, which is typical in Czechia. <…> My mom had a hard life as a single mom, trying to find a partner and a stable life for us. She was very caring and always tried to spend time with me, but I don't remember much of my childhood because of trauma. We lived with a stepdad who was abusive, so that overshadowed many memories. <…> I distanced myself from [my mother], and by the time I was 15, I opted to live in a high school dorm rather than at home. I didn't have a strong relationship with my dad, either. He remarried and had another child, but I was mainly a free nanny for my stepsister. We never built a strong connection. (CZ, F, 1994).

The account does not present the participant's mother as simply absent or uncaring. On the contrary, maternal care coexisted with the mother's difficulties in creating a stable and safe household. This distinction is analytically important because it shows that the presence of affection did not necessarily ensure relational security when the wider domestic environment remained harmful.

Her decision to move into a school dormitory at the age of 15 demonstrates personal agency, but it should not be interpreted as autonomy arising solely from an individual preference for independence. It was a choice made between constrained alternatives, including remaining in a home she experienced as unsafe. Early self-reliance in this case can therefore be understood as an adaptation to relational insecurity. The emotionally distant relationship with her father, in which she experienced herself primarily as an unpaid caregiver for her stepsister, further illustrates the absence of reciprocal parental support.

This case helps explain how individualised coping and early autonomy may emerge even in an economically more affluent country. It identifies the combination of unsafe domestic conditions and unreliable parental support as a possible relational pathway, through which, independence becomes necessary before it becomes a positively chosen value.

In other biographies, family instability was accompanied by caregiving responsibilities that participants retrospectively regarded as excessive for their age. They described caring for siblings, parents, or grandparents while simultaneously managing education and other demands. Such experiences could contribute to competence and self-reliance, but this autonomy developed under pressure rather than through the gradual expansion of freely chosen independence:

> I had a very big life event during my teenage years when I had to take care of my sick grandpa, while my parents were on the verge of a divorce. It put a lot of pressure on me. I lived with my mom at the time, and I had to take care of her and my grandpa,

who was in hospital. At the same time, I was preparing for the national exam in high school. It was extremely stressful. I didn't manage to pass accounting that year, so I had to redo the test after the summer to be able to continue to the final year. It was a tough time, but it taught me that I'm a self-learner. The teacher couldn't teach me what I needed to know, but, during the summer, I learned everything myself, and, after that, I did really well. It shaped me, but I realised I had taken on too much responsibility for my age. (CZ, F, 1991).

The participant gave this period a dual meaning. On the one hand, the combination of parental conflict, caregiving, and educational demands generated considerable pressure and temporarily disrupted her education, as indicated by the failed examination. On the other hand, preparing independently for the repeated examination serves as evidence of her ability to learn and cope without reliable guidance. Her later self-reliance was, therefore, narrated both as a competence acquired through overcoming difficulty and as an adaptation made necessary by insufficient adult support.

This distinction complicates an interpretation of autonomy as a postmaterialist expression of individual freedom. In this case, independence initially arose from relational insecurity and prematurely assumed responsibility rather than from secure conditions enabling self-expression. The account illustrates how externally imposed responsibility could later be reinterpreted as personal strength.

Some Georgian accounts showed how parental labour migration reconfigured family support during childhood and adolescence. Migration-related separation did not necessarily amount to complete abandonment, because care could be provided by the remaining parent or extended family members. Nevertheless, the prolonged absence of a parent could alter the availability and timing of emotional support:

> The first memory I have is when my dad left for the U.S. I was three years old. <…> In third grade, my dad came back for the first time after six years. When I was 14, my mom left for Italy as a migrant. That was a big change. <…> When my dad left, it was okay because I was very young, and my mom was a great parent. I didn't feel like I was missing out. But when my mom left, it was harder. I was older and needed a parent, but my dad wasn't as involved. I lived with my grandmother, who was amazing, but I was going through a rebellious period, and I missed my mom. I didn't really have a support system, so I learned to rely on myself. That made me very independent, and, for many years, I didn't talk about my problems with anyone. (GE, F, 1996).

In this account, parental migration did not eliminate family support altogether: the participant described her mother as a supportive parent during childhood and her grandmother as an important caregiver after the mother's departure. Nevertheless, the mother's absence during adolescence altered the configuration of support at a time when parental presence was particularly needed. The resulting self-reliance, therefore, developed alongside remaining

family ties rather than through the complete absence of relational support. The case illustrates how migration may reconfigure support and responsibilities without necessarily dissolving extended-family relationships.

Beyond the family of origin, friendships and romantic partnerships could provide alternative or complementary sources of relational security. These relationships were not necessarily opposed to individual autonomy. Instead, chosen ties could combine independence with mutual assistance and could enable the participants to pursue personally meaningful decisions.

> I think I personally value individualism more. I like being able to do things on my own, without having to rely on others all the time. But I also appreciate the sense of community that collectivism brings, so I try to find a balance between the two. <…> When I was sick with Covid, my friends were placing alarm clocks on their phones at 3 a.m. just to call me and remind me that I needed to measure my temperature and take medicine. Another example is when I went to Germany. I was selling the house at the time and needed to move my furniture, so my friend offered to move it for me. He organised the brigade, paid for it and didn't ask me to repay. He didn't even complain that it was difficult; he just informed me when they started and when it was done. And that furniture stayed at his place for two years. <…> Maybe that collectivism isn't spread across the whole society, but we keep our small circles very close. You can call your friend in the evening and say, 'I am coming for a sleepover,' and your friend will ask you if you want coffee. (MK, F, 1994).

The participant explicitly resisted a simple opposition between individualism and collectivism. She valued the ability to act independently while simultaneously relying on a close circle characterised by reciprocal practical, financial, and emotional assistance. The examples of care during illness and help with moving demonstrate that this network functioned as a concrete social safety net rather than merely as an abstract preference for community. At the same time, she limited this interpretation herself by distinguishing solidarity within a small circle from collectivism across society more generally. Her account, therefore, represents a combination of personal individualism and strong bonding relationships rather than evidence of uniformly collectivist social relations in North Macedonia.

A Czech participant described a romantic partnership as a more concentrated source of support that partly compensated for emotional distance within her family of origin:

> Another big life event was when I met my current boyfriend. We've been together for 14 years, and we've accomplished a lot together. He supported me through my illness – I have endometriosis, which was diagnosed when I was around 21, but I had symptoms long before. I've had surgeries, and he's always been by my side. His support has been bigger than anything I got from my parents, who are more emotionally distant. His support helped me prioritise my happiness, which led me to change jobs, start freelancing, and eventually move abroad. (CZ, F, 1991).

In this biography, partner support was important not only as care during illness but also as a resource that increased the participant's capacity to make self-directed decisions. Relational security did not reduce her autonomy; it helped make changes in employment, working arrangements, and residence more feasible. Her prioritisation of happiness and personal choice may be related to orientations towards well-being and self-realisation, but these decisions should not automatically be classified as postmaterialist without considering their wider biographical and economic context.

The two cases consequently demonstrate different configurations of support beyond the family of origin. The North Macedonian account emphasised a close circle of friends mobilising reciprocal practical assistance, whereas the Czech account centred on a long-term partner who provided emotional continuity and enabled greater personal autonomy. These examples show that relational support can be constructed through different chosen ties, and that individual autonomy and dependable social relationships may reinforce rather than exclude one another.

Much of the support described across the interviews was concentrated within families, extended kinship networks, friendships, and other close relationships. In this respect, it corresponds more closely to bonding than to bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). Close ties could mobilise emotional care, practical assistance, accommodation, or financial help quickly, making them particularly important when formal institutional assistance was perceived as insufficient. Some accounts also described assistance extending beyond established personal networks. The presence of close relational support should, therefore, not be equated automatically with either generalised trust or its absence, nor with collectivism or societal cohesion as a whole.

Across the country groups, the participants sometimes distinguished between reliable assistance within their immediate social circle and willingness to trust or help strangers and members of other social groups. Some accounts described mutual assistance extending beyond the family, whereas others emphasised selective support, social fragmentation, pressure to conform, or reluctance to intervene outside of private networks. Relational security based on close ties could, therefore, coexist with limited broader trust, as well as with constraints on individual autonomy. The relevant mechanism is the capacity of close relationships to buffer insecurity, rather than an assumption that the surrounding society as a whole is cohesive.

Experiences of family conflict, emotional neglect, or bullying sometimes made it more difficult to trust others and to form durable relationships. The participants, therefore, turned to alternative sources of social support, where they could gradually learn how to construct and maintain it. Psychological

self-development, psychotherapy, and religious or spiritual practices formed an additional set of resources, through which, some participants sought to manage distress and strengthen their capacity for relationships:

> [Spirituality] plays a bigger part when I'm going through difficult times. For example, a couple of months ago, I went through an abortion, which was really hard for me emotionally. During that time, I turned to spiritual practices like meditation and reading Buddhist texts to help me cope with the difficult emotions. I feel like when I lose touch with that side of myself, something is missing in my life. It's not something I need to survive, but it definitely makes my life better and helps me feel more balanced. (CZ, F, 1993).

This account illustrates the reflexive use of spiritual practices as a self-selected coping resource during a period of emotional distress. The participant did not describe these practices as an inherited obligation or an exclusive belief system but as resources that could be selectively incorporated into her life when needed. It is important, however, not to collapse psychotherapy, spirituality, and religiosity into a single category. Although each may be individually chosen, they involve different sources of authority, institutional relationships, and forms of emotional or social support. The findings, therefore, point to a diversification of meaning-making and coping resources rather than to a simple replacement of institutional religion by psychology or alternative spirituality.

Several participants described psychotherapy, self-development, or reflective spiritual practices as ways of managing emotional difficulties and improving their relationships with themselves and others. These practices may express priorities related to well-being, self-understanding, and autonomy, but they should not be classified automatically as postmaterialist values. In the present analysis, they are treated primarily as coping and meaning-making strategies whose relationship with value orientations must be established from the wider biographical context.

Religious participation could also provide a more explicitly collective resource. This function appeared in some biographies across country groups, although the clearest examples discussed here came from Albania and Kyrgyzstan. Religious involvement could offer a framework of meaning, opportunities for social interaction, and, in some cases, a sense of belonging during periods of uncertainty or isolation:

> I have noticed, recently, we have some kind of existential need to go to some religion, it seems to me. And we have a lot of mosques since I remember leaving from here. When I came back, for example, where my mother lives and where my aunt lives. These are different areas. This is on the outskirts of Bishkek. A lot of mosques have appeared there. You walk around the city, and there are a lot of people in hijabs. The mosques are overcrowded. I just think that this is the change I noticed that now people are just looking for something. (KGZ, F, 2000).

> I met the church – someone of my friends introduced me, and, since then, I have been a frequent believer. And that is another point that I would like to highlight, because I think if I didn't start going to church and to be part of that community, my life would be very different. And since I didn't have anyone here, any friends or I was a bit introverted, and I didn't talk to anyone… it doesn't seem now because everything has changed. (AL, F, 1995).

The two quotations represent different types of evidence. The Kyrgyzstani participant described a perceived societal turn towards religion, interpreting it as a response to an existential search. Her observation does not – in itself – demonstrate that she personally received support from a religious community. By contrast, the Albanian participant directly connected church involvement with the formation of social ties and a transformation of her everyday life. Religion could, therefore, function as social infrastructure in some biographies, but this pathway cannot be generalised to all participants or to all economically less affluent settings.

Other participants in the same country group were nonreligious, approached religion selectively, or maintained religious practices primarily as cultural traditions. In other cases, religious institutions were associated with family pressure, political influence, or social control. Some parents had resumed or adopted religious practices only after the collapse of socialist regimes, producing discontinuous rather than stable intergenerational transmission.

The interviews consequently revealed several forms and pathways of meaning-making: religious practices inherited through family traditions or organised through religious institutions; religious commitments adopted later through personal networks or during periods of uncertainty; individually assembled forms of spirituality; and secular practices of psychological self-development. Individually assembled spiritualities appeared in all six country cases, while inherited and reflexively adopted forms of religion (or spirituality) could coexist within the same country or biography. These pathways were not mutually exclusive. The distinction between institutional and reflexive orientations is, therefore, used as an analytical continuum rather than as a dichotomy between country groups or as a linear historical sequence.

Overall, social support operated as a relational mechanism embedded in broader macroeconomic and institutional conditions. These conditions formed the context of the insecurities which the participants encountered, while family relationships, friendships, partnerships, and community networks influenced how those insecurities were experienced and managed. Limited support could contribute to self-reliance, difficulties in trusting others, and individualised coping, but this relationship was not deterministic. Strong relational networks could buffer material insecurity while also creating

obligations or pressures that restricted autonomy. The participants could also construct alternative sources of support through chosen relationships, psychotherapy, religion, or spirituality.

These patterns also clarify how relational security was connected with the participants' value priorities. In some biographies, dependable support appeared to enable a greater emphasis on nonmaterialist aspects of life, including meaningful relationships, autonomy, well-being, and self-development, even under conditions of economic insecurity. Conversely, unreliable or conditional support was associated with a stronger emphasis on establishing security independently. Relational support should not itself be equated with postmaterialism. Rather, it represents one pathway through which structural insecurity was experienced and interpreted within individual biographies.

These findings do not in themselves invalidate the traditional–secular/rational dimension of value change. They show, however, that the interview material cannot be adequately organised as a single transition from inherited religious tradition to secular individualism. Instead, institutional and reflexive orientations frequently coexisted, while religious, spiritual, psychological, and relational resources were combined in context-dependent ways. The implications of this coexistence for the theoretical model are developed in the integrative discussion chapter.

3.2.2. Context-specific forms of insecurity, provisional planning, and coping strategies

The interviews revealed that insecurity was present across all six country cases, but its sources, intensity, and interpretation varied both between and within them. In the less affluent postsocialist contexts, the participants often emphasised low wages, high living costs, limited employment opportunities, weak institutions, political instability, geopolitical threats, and environmental problems. However, material insecurity was not absent from Lithuania and Czechia, where the participants also discussed housing affordability, inflation, unstable employment, and regional or social inequalities.

Conversely, aspirations related to autonomy, meaningful work, self-development, and flexible life planning were also found in Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia. The distinction between economically more and less affluent countries is, therefore, used here as a comparative contextual frame rather than as a binary classification of homogeneous national experiences. The following account serves to exemplify a form of structural insecurity discussed in the less affluent cases:

> It's very bad, actually. <…> Even in Tbilisi, people work for very low wages – about 300 to 600 laris per month, which is around 200 euros. And the cost of living in Georgia is absurd. Prices are as high as in Europe, sometimes higher. <…> There's a huge disparity between the rich and the poor. <…> There's no way to save money, and loans are incredibly high-interest. (GE, F, 1999).

This account located insecurity in the relationship between wages, living costs, debt, and economic inequality rather than in income alone. The participant's statement that "most people live below the poverty line" represents her assessment of the national situation and should not be treated as a population estimate. Analytically, the account shows how perceived institutional and economic arrangements could restrict the capacity to save up, plan, and convert employment into longer-term security. Material insecurity was, therefore, narrated as structurally produced rather than simply as the outcome of individual choices or insufficient effort.

Political insecurity could also be a direct biographical experience rather than a general evaluation of the national situation:

> [The protesters] have come out for the third revolution. <…> We had battles here. I myself was wounded by a high explosive; I myself was hit by a grenade and a bullet. There were many wounded. Our battles ended at 4 a.m., and then the division of power simply began. (KGZ, M, 1996).

Unlike more general expressions of dissatisfaction with the government or political institutions, this participant's account connected political instability with physical danger and personal participation in violent events. Political insecurity was consequently incorporated into the participant's biography as an experience that could affect expectations of institutional continuity and personal safety. This should not be generalised to all Kyrgyzstani participants, but it demonstrates the intensity that political uncertainty could acquire in particular cases.

A different Kyrgyzstani account showed how environmental insecurity could be inseparable from poverty and deficient urban infrastructure:

> Every winter, the city is covered with smog, it becomes impossible to breathe. Sometimes the air is so dirty that you can run your hand across the table and it will be black. <…> Favelas do not have central heating, and because poor people live there, they burn waste, garbage, tires, you name it, and this black smoke rises and covers the entire city. (KGZ, M, 2000).

Here, environmental degradation was not presented primarily as an abstract concern with ecological protection. It was experienced as an immediate threat to health and was attributed to transport patterns, poverty, inadequate heating infrastructure, and limited institutional capacity. This distinction is theoretically important because concern with the environment cannot automatically be classified as postmaterialist. In this account, the

environmental problem was directly connected to physical security and unmet materialist and infrastructural needs.

Together, these accounts demonstrate that structural insecurity was multidimensional. Economic inequality, political violence, environmental risk, and institutional weakness could overlap, but they did not constitute a single experience shared uniformly by all participants in Georgia or Kyrgyzstan. Compared with the housing, employment, and choice-related insecurities discussed in the Lithuanian and Czech cases, these particular accounts connected uncertainty more explicitly to political disruption, infrastructural inadequacy, and immediate health or safety risks. The comparison concerns differences of relative emphasis rather than mutually exclusive national patterns.

The participants in every country also combined critical assessments of their national situation with accounts of positive developments and available opportunities. Responses from the less affluent contexts did not indicate a uniform lowering of expectations or an exclusive orientation towards day-to-day survival. The participants continued to formulate educational, professional, relational, and personal-development goals, although the timing and feasibility of these goals were frequently reconsidered in response to changing circumstances. Structural insecurity, therefore, shaped the conditions, under which, values and aspirations were pursued, but it did not mechanically determine a materialist value orientation.

One recurring response to uncertainty was, therefore, provisional planning: the participants retained aspirations but kept their routes, timing, or alternatives open. In less affluent contexts, such flexibility was often related to political and economic instability, migration possibilities, limited employment opportunities, or uncertain institutional conditions. In Lithuania and Czechia, it was associated with housing costs, unstable work arrangements, rapid social change, and the pressure of choosing between multiple possible life trajectories. The following account illustrates this uncertainty:

> But [if we talk about] some long-term perspective, it seems like the world is changing too fast for me to have any goals, or maybe I don't even want to have those goals, I don't know, maybe I'm afraid to have any goals. (LT, F, 1997).

The Lithuanian participant did not describe a complete absence of aspirations. Elsewhere in the interview, she discussed wanting a home, a garden, time for creative activities, and a life close to her family. What became difficult was committing to a stable long-term trajectory in a world perceived as changing too quickly. Her uncertainty, therefore, concerned the temporal organisation of aspirations rather than the disappearance of goals. Avoiding

fixed commitments could function as a protective response to uncertainty while preserving the possibility of revising future choices.

The Czech participant located uncertainty more explicitly in the perceived economic and normative pressures experienced by her generation:

> For some, they are having their first or second real job, and they are just overwhelmed with the responsibilities they need to face. And, I think, most of them feel that they will never buy their own place. <…> When I imagine what my generation is feeling, it's pressure and stress. (CZ, F, 1996).

This account combines early-career responsibility, restricted access to home ownership, and a broader expectation that adulthood should already be taking a stable form. However, the wording "when I imagine what my generation is feeling" makes clear that this was the participant's interpretation of her peers rather than direct evidence of the prevalence of these experiences among Czech young adults. Its analytical value lies in identifying a perceived generational script: the participants could experience pressure not only because their future was uncertain, but because socially expected markers of adulthood appeared increasingly difficult to secure.

The two accounts consequently identify different but related pathways towards provisional planning. In the Lithuanian case, the rapid change reduced confidence in long-term commitments even though concrete lifestyle aspirations remained. In the Czech account, employment responsibilities, housing constraints, and socially expected adulthood produced pressure and stress. Neither form of uncertainty was equivalent to unrestricted individual choice, but neither eliminated agency or aspiration.

Flexible or uncertain planning was not exclusive to the more affluent cases. Similar combinations of aspiration, uncertainty, and adjustment appeared in all six countries, although the participants responded to different configurations of economic, political, institutional, and biographical constraints. The interpretive relationship between uncertainty and provisional planning was also reflected in segments assigned both the 'chaos' and 'flexible future planning' codes. This co-coding does not demonstrate the prevalence of the relationship or establish a causal effect. It identifies a recurring association in the interview material: flexibility could operate as an adaptation, through which, the participants attempted to preserve agency when the conditions or timing of their goals could not be secured in advance.

Country-level economic classifications may also obscure substantial inequalities within countries. The participants discussed differences between capitals and peripheral regions, unequal access to education and employment, housing inequalities, and the importance of social networks for obtaining information and opportunities. These accounts were especially visible in the

Czech material but were also present in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, national affluence provides one contextual dimension of comparison, but it does not determine the security or opportunities experienced by every participant.

Work constituted an important arena in which material security, stability, personal meaning, and self-development intersected. Several participants in Lithuania and Czechia discussed unstable work arrangements, limited possibilities for professional growth, dissatisfaction with organisational environments, and difficulties in coordinating employment with other life plans. However, their accounts revealed different ways in which employment became connected to broader biographical (in)security.

> That instability [affected me], because I control myself very well through discipline, through the regime, when I have a lot of activity, a lot of work, when I have plans for the future <…>. For now, I can plan very little. I can't plan my vacation <…> because [currently] there is no work. I can't even plan my house construction. <…> It's terribly difficult, and even relationships suffer because of it. (LT, F, 1993)

In this account, employment instability affected more than current income. It disrupted the participant's everyday routine, limited her capacity to plan holidays and house construction, and placed strain on her relationship. Work, consequently, functioned as an organising basis for temporal, material, psychological, and relational security. The reference to holidays and house construction also shows that material insecurity in a relatively affluent context did not necessarily concern immediate physical survival. It could concern the interruption of an anticipated lifestyle and the inability to maintain control over medium- and long-term plans.

A Czech participant, by contrast, described employment decisions in relation to organisational environment and personal fit:

> I eventually found a job at a bank <…>. It was very noisy, and the environment was strict. <…> After a few months, I quit. <…> I applied for a job at the Ministry <…>. The working environment there wasn't great. Most of my colleagues were elderly <…>. After a year, I decided to quit and switch to project management. (CZ, M, 1994).

The participant did not explain these job changes primarily through insufficient income. Instead, his narrative focused on the working environment, organisational culture, and the possibility of finding a more suitable professional role. His capacity to leave unsatisfactory workplaces also indicates a degree of agency that cannot be assumed for every participant. In this account, employment was evaluated not only as a source of livelihood but also according to whether it supported autonomy, personal well-being, and professional development.

The immediate material function of employment was more explicit in the following Kyrgyzstani account:

> I'm neutral about [self-development], I can do it later. Because you won't always find a job that pays a living wage. For example, if my apartment rent costs 35 thousand, a taxi costs 10 thousand a month and there are some other expenses. And all this needs to be paid for somehow. <…> money is more important. Now, it seems to me, this is the only thing that allows you to exist normally and distinguish yourself. (KGZ, F, 2000).

Here, self-development was not rejected as unimportant but postponed until employment could secure the resources required for everyday life. The priority given to money was, therefore, conditional: it emerged in relation to rent, transport, housing, and the difficulty of finding work that paid a living wage. The reference to money as a means of distinguishing oneself also suggests that income could carry a dimension of social position (as well as a frequent use of taxi), but the dominant emphasis of the account remained protection against immediate economic constraints.

These accounts do not establish two mutually exclusive national meanings of work. The participants in Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia also sought meaningful, flexible, or personally fulfilling employment, while the participants in Lithuania and Czechia remained concerned with their income, housing, and employment security. Rather than opposing survival-oriented work in less affluent countries to self-realising work in more affluent ones, the interviews reveal different thresholds and combinations of materialist and postmaterialist priorities.

Employment could provide subsistence, enable longer-term plans, protect relational and psychological stability, or serve as a setting for autonomy, meaning, and self-development. These functions could coexist within the same biography and become differently prioritised as circumstances changed. The analytical distinction, therefore, concerns the meaning assigned to work and the resources available to choose between employment alternatives, and not a fixed classification of participants or countries as materialist or postmaterialist.

Beyond the immediate labour-market conditions, the participants also described the burden of choosing between alternative careers, relationships, places of residence, and family trajectories. Expanded possibilities could provide autonomy, but they could also make individuals feel personally responsible for anticipating the consequences of every decision. This tension was articulated particularly clearly in the following Czech account:

> Every workplace has some kind of rules. Like being in academia has some rules <…>, becoming a mother has rules, and everything has rules. So now I see myself in a world full of rules, full of many labyrinths, and I need to decide whether to put my time and effort into this particular labyrinth or that one, and how it will affect my whole life. <…> I feel like I'm running, running, trying to catch up with life, and trying to take the locus of control, really, and be the one in charge. (CZ, F, 1996).

This narrative is consistent with accounts of late-modern individualisation, in which, expanded freedom is accompanied by greater personal responsibility for constructing a coherent life trajectory. In the present data, however, reflexive choice remained embedded in material and institutional conditions and was not limited to the economically more affluent cases.

The participants also described pressure from family members, peers, and wider society to follow what was perceived as a 'normal', expected, or desirable life course. Some resisted these expectations, while others negotiated them, combined them with personal aspirations, or adopted them as their own goals. The content of these expectations varied: the participants encountered both conventional expectations concerning career and family formation along with newer demands to remain mobile, adaptable, and continuously successful.

> You see, life is completely unstable. I don't know what I'm going to do. I want to quit my job, but I can't because it gives me the opportunity to go somewhere. My parents say that maybe it's time to change jobs. Then I had a conversation with former classmates who work in HR, <...> and they said that if you sit there for two years at [one] job, it's already becoming too suspicious, because you've worked there for too long. (LT, M, 2000).

This participant was responding to several conflicting expectations. His own dissatisfaction encouraged him to consider leaving, his parents suggested that it was time to change jobs, while acquaintances working in human resources presented prolonged employment in one organisation as potentially disadvantageous. At the same time, the existing job provided opportunities for mobility that he did not want to lose.

The account, therefore, does not describe a single externally imposed life course. It shows how individualisation could produce pressure to manage contradictory norms of stability, career mobility, personal satisfaction, and future opportunity. Having more possible choices did not remove social expectations; it made the individual responsible for deciding which expectations to follow.

A Czech participant described a different form of pressure organised around the perceived timing of adult achievements:

> We went to Canada on working holidays, and, during that time, I began feeling like I was behind in life, which I think many people feel between 25 and 30. You start thinking, 'Should I have the career, the family? Am I missing out?' That feeling of being stuck or left behind is common, I think. (CZ, F, 1993).

Travel and geographical mobility had expanded the participant's experiences, but they had not eliminated the conventional reference points of career and family. Instead, these reference points became a biographical timetable against which she evaluated whether she was 'behind'. The account

reveals how the conventional markers of adulthood could continue to regulate self-evaluation even within relatively flexible and mobile life trajectories.

Similar tensions appeared in the less affluent country cases, although they were not limited to conventional family or collective expectations:

> I do feel anxious at times. There's always this pressure to live up to expectations – whether it's my own or those of others. People see me as the top student or the one who's going to succeed, and that can be stressful. For example, I applied for an internship at the OSCE in Vienna, and everyone assumed I would get it because I'm one of the top students. But there's no guarantee, and the pressure of not meeting those expectations was overwhelming at times. (KGZ, F, 1996).

In this account, the pressure concerned individual educational and professional achievement rather than conformity to a traditional family trajectory. The expectation to become successful had been partly internalised, but it was also reinforced by how other people positioned the participant as a high achiever. Uncertainty about the internship consequently became a possible threat not only to a professional opportunity but also to an identity constructed around anticipated success. This demonstrates that individualised responsibility and achievement pressure were also present in a less affluent context and should not be treated as exclusive characteristics of Lithuania or Czechia.

Taken together, these accounts show that individualisation did not displace social regulation. It altered some of the forms through which it operated. The participants could be expected to establish a career and family at the appropriate time, but they could simultaneously be expected to remain mobile, adaptable, self-developing, and visibly successful. These demands could conflict with one another and produce uncertainty about whether stability represented an achievement or a failure to progress.

The value implications of these expectations were also mixed. Socially recognised success could be associated with income, housing, career position, and other materialist priorities, but it could also be defined through autonomy, mobility, meaningful work, or self-realisation. Lithuanian and Czech participants particularly discussed career progress, independence, housing, relationships, and the timing of family formation.

Meanwhile, accounts from Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and North Macedonia additionally highlighted extended-family expectations, gendered obligations, regional differences, and the consequences of deviating from collective norms. These differences concerned the relative emphasis and social consequences of particular expectations rather than homogeneous national value systems. They are patterns identified within the participants' accounts, that cannot be attributed uniformly to entire societies.

Close relationships could consequently be experienced as ambivalent: they provided belonging, practical assistance, and emotional security, but they could also constrain autonomy when acceptance was perceived as dependent on conformity. This tension is illustrated in the following account:

> <…> In Macedonia, we kind of tend to walk on eggshells. Sometimes we're not very fond of conflict. We try to avoid it. So many times, people make decisions that they know their family or people in their surroundings would be most comfortable. <…> Because when you're in a collective all the time, it's really hard to form your own opinions and be the person that you are, because you kind of just blend in with the collective, and you never get truly experience, okay, who am I as a person? Without all these people around, who am I when nobody's watching? Who am I when nobody's judging? Do I really like this place? Or am I coming just because my friends like it? (MK, F, 1994).

The account also demonstrates that relational security and individual autonomy were not necessarily opposites. The participants could value collective belonging while simultaneously attempting to establish personal boundaries and independent identities. Gendered and regional inequalities were particularly salient in several accounts from Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and North Macedonia. The following Kyrgyzstani participant described how limited income, educational opportunities, and family expectations could restrict the choices available to some women living outside of the capital city:

> Women in the regions do not have their own income, they cannot afford this education; <…> this is really sad, even when my wife entered the university somehow having persuaded her brother because her brother said: why do you need an education you will get married anyway. <…> As a girl is already finishing school and they usually match her up there and then it's like, she can either go to the city like my wife, or they can just kidnap her for the purpose of marriage, or she just voluntarily bows down and says everything is fine, I will do as you want. At the same time in our capital, there are generally two extremes, either if the family is poor, then the scenario is repeated as in the region, but already softer, because, already as a city, there is already a different mentality, or the girl, if from a good family, then she also studies, that is, she studies quite well, becomes a grantee. (KGZ, M, 2000).

This account identifies a possible intersection between economic dependence, regional inequality, and gendered expectations. As the participant was describing the experiences of women in particular social and regional settings rather than reporting his own experience, the extract should be interpreted as a situated perception of this mechanism, not as evidence of its prevalence throughout Kyrgyzstan or all less affluent postsocialist countries. However, it presents that women, especially in provincial areas, experience additional forms of restrictions and insecurity.

The participants across both country groups discussed mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depressive episodes, exhaustion, and problems with concentration or motivation. They situated these experiences within

different combinations of relationships, education, work, social isolation, uncertainty, and biographical transitions. These retrospective accounts show how the participants made sense of psychological difficulties, but they cannot establish that any single contextual factor directly caused a particular psychological condition.

> Another significant period was finishing my bachelor's degree. During that time, I struggled a lot with mental health. I had a depressive episode, but I didn't ask for help. I had bad friendships and felt socially isolated. (CZ, F, 1996).

The Czech participant connected the depressive episode with a period that combined the completion of her studies, unsupportive friendships, social isolation, and the absence of help-seeking. Her account, therefore, located psychological insecurity at the intersection of a biographical transition and deteriorating social relationships. However, these factors represent the participant's retrospective interpretation of that period rather than an independently established causal explanation of the depressive episode.

The North Macedonian participant's account involved a different combination of individual, educational, family, and peer experiences:

> I later found out that I have ADHD, which contributed to my difficulty in focusing, but back then, [the teacher] called me names and insulted me in front of the class. She even slapped me once, but I didn't tell my parents because I was used to the violence at home. I developed anxiety by the time I was in second grade. <…> I continued to experience bullying from some girls in my class. (MK, F, 1994).

Restoring the wider context of this account is important. The participant did not attribute her difficulties solely to ADHD. She retrospectively linked problems with concentration to a later diagnosis, while situating her anxiety within experiences of humiliation and physical violence at school, violence at home, and bullying by peers. Psychological insecurity was, therefore, narrated as emerging within several overlapping relational and institutional settings. The later diagnosis provided a framework, through which, the participant could reinterpret her earlier difficulties, but it did not account for the abusive responses she encountered.

Together, the accounts demonstrate that mental-health difficulties entered the participants' biographies across both economically more and less affluent contexts, although the circumstances and meanings attributed to them differed. In the Czech account, social isolation and the absence of help were particularly salient; in the North Macedonian account, psychological difficulties were intertwined with violence, bullying, educational treatment, and retrospective diagnostic understanding.

The presence of anxiety, depression, ADHD, or other psychological difficulties should also be distinguished from a value orientation. A psychological condition is not in itself evidence of postmaterialist values. The

value dimension becomes analytically relevant when participants make mental well-being, self-understanding, personal boundaries, or access to support important criteria for evaluating their lives.

Even then, the language and practices through which psychological well-being is pursued depend on the availability, affordability, and social acceptability of professional and relational support. Mental well-being, therefore, constituted an additional domain of security and value evaluation, but not a direct indicator of a particular value type.

In a small cluster of three Czech interviews, uncertainty was expressed through reduced motivation, procrastination, or difficulty in identifying personally meaningful goals. The following account illustrates this more limited pattern:

> [I was kicked out of the master's programme] because it didn't really matter to me. I thought maybe it would work out. I do a lot of things that way, thinking, "Maybe it will work out," and if it doesn't, what's the worst that can happen? I didn't pay for it, so who cares? <…> Currently, I don't really work that much, <…> I was a bit bored. <…> But I mostly sit at my computer all the time. <…> I'd like to try things I haven't had time for, like writing. I used to write a lot, and I'd like to get back into that, but I wouldn't say it's what I want to do the most. I'm not sure what that is yet. <…> I procrastinate a lot. It annoys me, but I still do it. (CZ, M, 1991).

As this pattern was confined to a small and internally varied group of Czech cases, it is treated as a limited case cluster rather than as a characteristic of economically affluent postsocialist contexts.

Across all six countries, the participants repeatedly described peace, stability, and predictability as desirable. Stability, nevertheless, had several meanings. It could refer to protection against material, institutional, or geopolitical risks, including insufficient income, unstable employment, insecure housing, inadequate healthcare, weak social protection, or war. It could also refer to dependable relationships, an established place of residence, a predictable everyday routine, mental well-being, or moments of peace in nature. These meanings should be distinguished because the expressed desire for 'stability' did not, by itself, indicate a particular value orientation.

The institutional dimension of stability was especially clear in the account of a Georgian participant who was living in France at the time of the interview:

> I value stability and peace. Peace in every sense. I know that if I wake up tomorrow, there will not be a war in France. <…> If tomorrow I need money, I can ask my boss, or ask the bank, or get social aid. <…> That kind of stability and peace, where in case of need, you know what to do, and you don't have to panic or fight for your life – that's what I value. (GE, F, 1999).

The participant defined stability through the anticipated reliability of several institutions: protection from war, access to credit or social assistance, and the availability of healthcare. This was not an account of the Georgian

institutional context, because the participant was describing the security she experienced while living in France. Its analytical relevance lies in the contrastive perspective produced by migration. The experience of a more predictable institutional environment made visible how public provision could reduce the need to maintain individual emergency resources or prepare for sudden disruption. In this account, peace and stability remained closely connected to physical, economic, and institutional protection, and therefore should be classified rather as materialist aspirations.

A Lithuanian participant articulated a more psychological and experiential meaning of peace:

> I really like peace, maybe because I was very restless in my youth, and sometimes I'm anxious inside because of the whole political situation around me, so I really appreciate going out into nature, where you just don't hear anything, you don't see anything, it's really good. <...> We want to live outside the centre because we just want to take a break from all that hustle and bustle. (LT, F, 1997).

Here, peace does not mean that political uncertainty had disappeared. Instead, time in nature and the preference for living outside of the city were presented as ways of regulating anxiety and distancing oneself temporarily from political and urban pressures. Stability was consequently sought through control over one's immediate environment, and also through the protection of psychological well-being. The experiential aspiration towards the quiet points to rather postmaterialist ideals.

A second Lithuanian participant located stability in everyday routine and relational predictability after a period of frequent mobility:

> I understand that there is no such stability. But <…> when I had to move so constantly, I now know that, on Tuesday, I will go to the dentist for hygiene, <…> that today I will go to take pictures, <…> and what I will do for at least the next couple of months. <…> I simply value that there is some kind of routine, where I have finally settled. <…> I am now simply content because I know that my girlfriend will probably return to Europe at some point. (LT, M, 2000).

The participant explicitly acknowledged that his employment, residence, and longer-term future remained uncertain. What he valued was a more limited and provisional form of stability: a predictable schedule, a temporary sense of settlement, and the prospect of geographical proximity to his partner. Routine did not eliminate structural uncertainty, but it made everyday life more manageable. This account, therefore, shows how relational and temporal predictability, both being nonmaterialist sources of security, could compensate partly for the absence of secure long-term arrangements.

Stability should consequently be understood as an umbrella term rather than as a value category in itself. Its analytical meaning depended on what the participants wanted to stabilise and why. Income, employment, housing, healthcare, and protection from war were connected directly to material and

institutional security. Partnership, routine, nature, and psychological well-being represented relational, temporal, and experiential sources of security. These dimensions could coexist within the same biography and support one another.

The pursuit of stability, therefore, did not demonstrate that materialist values had been replaced by postmaterialist ones. Homeownership or secure income could protect against vulnerability, enable autonomy, or maintain a desired lifestyle, while relationships and psychological well-being could remain important under conditions of continuing material insecurity. Stability functioned as an integrative goal through, which material, institutional, relational, psychological, and experiential priorities were combined, but the precise value orientation could be determined only from the meaning which the participants attributed to each aspiration.

However, the coping strategies described by the participants did not divide neatly into individualised strategies in the more affluent countries and relational strategies in the less affluent ones. Therapy, spirituality, time in nature, self-management, family relationships, friendships, partnerships, and community involvement appeared across the country cases, although their accessibility, social acceptability, and personal importance varied. Individual and relational strategies were frequently combined: the participants sought autonomy while maintaining supportive ties or relied on other people while also using individual practices to regulate their well-being.

A Kyrgyzstani participant explicitly rejected the treatment of individualism and collectivism as mutually exclusive principles:

> <…> an individual cannot exist without a collective. At the same time, the collective also cannot exist without this group of individuals. In this sense, a person as an individual can reveal himself to the maximum only in a collective. You can really do something cool. You can build some kind of clock that will run for 100 million years. <…> But what's the point if no one can see it? (KGZ, M, 2000).

This account presented individuality as something realised through social recognition rather than outside collective life. The participant's example did not deny personal creativity or achievement; it suggested that individual accomplishments acquire meaning when they are recognised, shared, or used within a social world. The quotation expresses the participant's philosophical position on the relationship between individuals and collectives rather than providing evidence about the actual strength or availability of support networks in Kyrgyzstan. Its analytical significance lies in challenging the assumption that individuality necessarily requires detachment from collective belonging.

An Albanian participant similarly questioned the value of individual achievement without relationships, but placed a greater emphasis on the practical and emotional functions of support:

> <…> this one person reaching his career and goals and stuff that are useless without having families and friends and people to share it with. <…> If you're living alone, you have all these new sicknesses, anxiety, stress, all these things that when you have friends and family, they are not called sicknesses. They are called just a bad day. <…> If you fall down, they will be the first ones to <…> pick you up and put bandages on your wound. At least, that's how I grew up seeing the world; I grew up in a house of 17 people. (AL, M, 1995).

The account linked relationships to the sharing of resources, the interpretation of difficulties, and the provision of assistance during periods of distress. Its meaning was grounded in the participant's experience of growing up in a large household and should not be generalised to all Albanian participants. References to anxiety, stress, and 'sickness' should also be read as a metaphorical description of the buffering role attributed to family and friends, and not as a medical claim that social support prevents or eliminates psychological disorders.

The two accounts consequently described related but distinct relational mechanisms. In the Kyrgyzstani account, collective recognition gave individual action social meaning. In the Albanian account, close relationships provided practical help, emotional interpretation, and the expectation that someone would respond when difficulties occurred. Neither participant rejected personal goals, careers, or individual agency. Instead, both presented individual achievement as dependent on, or made more meaningful by, relationships.

Strong social relationships should not be interpreted as removing the need for professional or individually pursued forms of psychological support. Participants in Albania, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia also discussed therapy, self-management, spirituality, and other individualised practices, while Lithuanian and Czech participants described family members, friends, and partners as important sources of support. The empirical pattern is, therefore, one of overlapping support repertoires rather than a national substitution between collectivist and individualist coping.

Relational support could enable both materialist and postmaterialist priorities: it could provide money, labour, housing, or practical assistance, but it could also support autonomy, self-development, psychological well-being, and individually chosen life paths. It should, therefore, be analysed as a mechanism affecting how insecurity and aspirations were experienced, not as a value type or as automatic evidence of collectivism or individualism. What varied across individual cases was the combination of relational, professional,

institutional, and self-directed resources available and the extent to which each form of support was regarded as trustworthy, acceptable, and accessible.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that forms of insecurity were context-sensitive, but they did not divide into two mutually exclusive national patterns. Economic hardship, political instability, institutional weakness, environmental problems, and geopolitical risks were particularly salient in several accounts from the less affluent cases. However, material insecurity, including housing and employment insecurity and regional inequality, was also present in Lithuania and Czechia. Similarly, pressures associated with choice, self-realisation, social expectations, and individual responsibility appeared across both country groups. The economic grouping, therefore, helps identify differences in contextual emphasis, but does not explain each and every participant's experience.

The findings also show that uncertainty did not necessarily eliminate long-term aspirations. The participants frequently responded through provisional planning, while adjusting the timing and routes of their goals while attempting to retain agency. Stability emerged as a multidimensional value that could be pursued through material resources, reliable institutions, close relationships, predictable routines, or psychological well-being. Material-security concerns and postmaterialist priorities could, therefore, coexist within the same participant and reinforce rather than simply replace one another.

These findings qualify – rather than independently disprove – Inglehart's model. The qualitative data indicate that individualism and collectivism cannot be treated as straightforward equivalents of postmaterialism and traditionalism: participants could seek autonomy within close relationships, while relational support could serve both traditional obligations and individually chosen forms of security. Likewise, individualised coping could reflect autonomy but also insufficient access to social support. The interviews cannot – by themselves – test a linear theory of value change or establish why a particular value orientation increased in a particular country. Instead, they identify mechanisms, through which, material insecurity, relational security, individual agency, and postmaterialist aspirations may coexist.

3.2.3. The transformation and coexistence of materialist and postmaterialist values

In this section, materialist and postmaterialist values are treated as analytical starting points rather than as mutually exclusive types of participants. The qualitative coding was informed by the materialist–

postmaterialist distinction, but the codes were applied to meanings expressed in particular interview segments and were not used to classify each participant as one value type. Across all six country cases, every interview containing materialist-coded passages also contained postmaterialist-coded passages, while some individual meaning units were assigned both codes. The analysis, therefore, focuses on the ways how these values were combined, conditionally prioritised, and reinterpreted within the participants' biographies. As the comparison developed, some accounts no longer fit within the original opposition. These empirically emerging configurations are introduced progressively in the analysis below.

Family socialisation constituted one pathway, through which, different value priorities were formed across all six country cases. The participants described expectations concerning education, career, income, independence, and social mobility. However, education and professional achievement did not have an exclusively materialist meaning: they could simultaneously represent economic security, social recognition, personal autonomy, intellectual development, or the possibility of pursuing a meaningful life. Moreover, these expectations were transmitted not only by parents but also through peers and wider social definitions of successful adulthood.

> Previously, maybe in 2016, when I started studying, everyone was talking a lot about career aspirations, about getting the highest salary possible, because we were quite behind, I mean, in this area in Lithuania, and there was a lot of pressure from people around you, from your family, from friends, and from society, I would say, to reach the highest level possible. Look, you definitely need to study, [because otherwise] you will be nobody. (LT, M, 1996).

The Lithuanian participant connected educational attainment with career advancement, higher income, and social worth. The warning that, without education, one would "be nobody" indicates that the pressure concerned not only protection from economic insecurity but also recognition and conformity to a socially valued model of success. Although the family formed part of this process, the participant located the expectation within a wider social environment comprising relatives, friends, and society. This account, therefore, represents the social diffusion of achievement-oriented priorities rather than the direct reproduction of parental values alone.

The Czech participant described a more specifically family-based process through which expectations were gradually internalised:

> I was brought up in a competitive environment. There was always a push to perform well in school – getting straight A's was expected, and anything less would prompt questions about what went wrong. That focus on academic achievement was a big part of my upbringing. <…> It didn't feel uncomfortable. After a while, the expectations just got under my skin, and I took them on myself. It wasn't them constantly telling me

I needed straight A's. It became my own goal. It wasn't unhealthy, I didn't feel like a failure if I didn't get an A, but I was definitely motivated by it. (CZ, M, 1994).

Here, parental expectations became self-imposed standards even when they were no longer communicated continuously. Importantly, the participant did not describe this internalisation as entirely harmful: he regarded it as motivating and distinguished it from feeling personally worthless when he failed to achieve the highest grade. The case, therefore, illustrates how achievement-oriented socialisation can become part of personal agency rather than remaining an externally enforced obligation. Academic performance in itself cannot be classified as a materialist or postmaterialist value, because the account foregrounded motivation, recognition, and competence rather than income or occupational security alone.

In the North Macedonian account, the expectation of higher education shaped not only whether the participant would study but also how demanding and prestigious her chosen field should be:

In my family, higher education was expected. My sister knew from a young age what she wanted to do, but I struggled to choose a path because I was interested in so many things. Eventually, I chose bioengineering, partly because my mom challenged me by saying, 'I think you can do better.' That pushed me to pursue something more challenging. <…> I studied bioengineering, but I didn't have a passion for it. I was just trying to prove that I could do something difficult. (MK, F, 1994).

The mother's challenge was interpreted as encouragement to demonstrate ability, but the resulting educational choice was disconnected from the participant's own interests. Education consequently operated both as an opportunity and as a standard against which competence had to be proven. The tension between choosing a demanding field and lacking passion for it reveals a potential conflict between externally recognised achievement and self-realisation.

Together, the three accounts demonstrate that educational and career socialisation did not transmit a single, clearly bounded value orientation. Similar expectations could connect education with the income and social status, turn academic performance into an internalised personal standard, or produce tension between recognised achievement and intrinsic interest. The participants did not merely reproduce these expectations: they interpreted, incorporated, and sometimes reassessed them in relation to their own experiences.

In some biographies, financial insecurity was communicated less through explicit instructions than through childhood exposure to parental anxiety, conflict, or economic instability:

My parents struggled with money and fought about it, and that created a lot of fear for me. I had a fear of being homeless, even though that was far from reality. But you

know how kids think. In reality, everything was fine, but that fear stuck with me. (CZ, F, 1991).

This account illustrates how an early experience of financial instability could remain biographically significant even when the objective threat was limited. Across the wider dataset, however, intergenerational influence did not operate as the straightforward reproduction of parental values. The participants described accepting some parental priorities while rejecting or revising others. Experiences of scarcity could intensify the pursuit of financial security, but they could also encourage participants to reject work-centred lives, excessive accumulation, or the postponement of personal well-being.

The participants' own accounts of generational change were correspondingly heterogeneous. Some described the younger generation as more oriented towards income, career, consumption, and status, while others emphasised greater concern with self-realisation, autonomy, mental health, and work–life balance. These contrasting interpretations occurred even within the same national case. They indicate that generational change involved a reweighting and recombination of priorities rather than a uniform movement in a single direction.

> Compared with older generations, we are more inclined towards self-realisation. <…> We value our well-being more than subordinating ourselves in order to earn more. <…> Older people may be more inclined to work more and pursue career achievement, whereas people of our age are more likely to think about self-realisation. (LT, M, 1996).

Beyond family socialisation and the participants' direct experiences of economic and political change, the interviews identified global mobility, transnational cultural exposure, and digital media as additional contexts of value formation. Comparable accounts from Georgia and Lithuania situated generational differences in the transition from restricted or television-based access to information towards the internet, mobile technologies, and a social life increasingly mediated through digital devices. However, these influences did not transmit a single coherent value pattern. They expanded the range of lifestyles, identities, and standards, against which, the participants evaluated their own lives, while simultaneously circulating new expectations of consumption, achievement, and social visibility.

A participant from North Macedonia explicitly connected travel, internet access, and exposure to other cultures with the younger generation's changing horizons of choice:

> We are starting to open up a bit more to the rest of the world, and, I think, we are more influenced by it than the older generation was. <…> Travel is more available, there's the internet, and, I think, people are slowly opening their minds. (MK, F, 1994).

In this account, greater openness was associated not simply with the availability of technology, but, instead, with access to alternative ways of

living and making choices. Such exposure could support priorities related to autonomy, self-expression, and acceptance of difference, which overlap with postmaterialist values. Nevertheless, global exposure should not itself be treated as evidence of postmaterialism. Its value implications depended on what the participants encountered, how they interpreted it, and which possibilities they regarded as desirable or attainable.

This interpretive process was particularly visible in a Kyrgyzstani participant's description of an identity formed between the local expectations and globally circulating cultural models:

> I feel in between because I consume a lot of Western media, especially in English. I studied in the US for a year, and I've travelled to Germany. <…> We're not fully traditional Kyrgyz, but we're not completely Western, either. We're somewhere in between. (KGZ, F, 1996).

The account does not describe a simple replacement of Kyrgyz values with Western ones. Instead, global media and mobility supplied additional points of comparison, through which, existing traditions, opportunities, and restrictions could be evaluated reflexively. The resulting orientation was hybrid: greater autonomy and freedom from prescribed life paths coexisted with attachment to the participant's country, family, and cultural background. Moreover, the refusal to "settle for less" remained analytically ambiguous. It could refer to freedom, personal development, or quality of life, but it could also involve higher expectations of consumption and material comfort. Global exposure could, therefore, contribute to several value orientations at the same time.

Digital media were also described as transmitting visible models of wealth, lifestyle, and success. An Albanian participant illustrated this through an observation of her younger sister:

> I saw that she had that attraction to have money, to have a lifestyle that is <…> what she was looking on *Instagram* or *TikTok* or social media, that was what she wanted to have. <…> So that's why I'm thinking that social media <…> has a great impact on these young people. (AL, F, 1995).

As this was an observation concerning a younger family member, it does not provide direct evidence of the focal generation's own value orientation. It nevertheless identifies a perceived mechanism of value socialisation: digital platforms made particular lifestyles continuously visible, and converted them into standards, against which, personal success could be evaluated. Importantly, the participant also reported that her sister's priorities changed as their relationship became closer. The account therefore suggests that media influence was neither uniform nor deterministic; digitally mediated consumer aspirations could be reinforced, questioned, or moderated through close relationships.

Digital mediation did not only intensify comparison or consumer aspiration. It could also facilitate relationships and the formation of chosen communities:

> From my experience, my relationships are solid. The people in my life are consistent. Social networks and the internet help me find like-minded people and do the things I enjoy, like meeting new people at techno parties. That's where I've met a lot of people <…> with similar interests. (CZ, M, 1991).

Here, digital networks supported – rather than displaced – relational security. They enabled the participant to find people organised around shared interests and to construct social ties beyond inherited family, neighbourhood, or institutional networks. This illustrates how individualised choice and relational belonging could become mutually reinforcing: the freedom to select one's activities and social environment produced new forms of community rather than necessarily resulting in isolation.

Taken together, these accounts indicate that global and digital influences operated as cross-cutting mechanisms rather than as a separate value type. They could widen access to information, alternative identities, chosen communities, and ideas of autonomy, while also circulating consumer lifestyles, status comparisons, and expanded standards of material success. **Globalisation and digitalisation could, consequently, contribute to the simultaneous development of postmaterialist aspirations and transformed materialist values. This dual influence provides one context for understanding why value change in the first postsocialist generation did not proceed through the simple replacement of materialist values by postmaterialist ones.**

The accounts coded as materialist did not all refer to the same form of material concern. At one end, participants discussed subsistence and protection against immediate risks, including food, rent, healthcare, stable employment, and the ability to meet everyday expenses. In other accounts, income, savings, financial independence, or home ownership served as enabling resources that could protect autonomy and make meaningful work, care for relatives, travel, or personal development possible. A third group of accounts extended material aspirations further, by connecting security and successful adulthood with property accumulation, investment, consumption, status, holidays, and the maintenance of a socially expected standard of comfort. These meanings could coexist within the same biography, and they did not correspond mechanically to the two country groups, although their relative salience and the resources available to realise them differed across various contexts.

The object of an aspiration did not by itself determine its analytical meaning: home ownership narrated as protection against rent, eviction, or poverty in old age differed from property sought as an investment, status marker, lifestyle upgrade, or source of additional income. Similarly, travel could represent either consumerist lifestyle maintenance or an aspiration towards experience and self-development, depending on the meaning attributed to it by the participant.

The threshold character of material security was particularly clear when the participants were asked to choose between financial security and self-development:

> In my case, that would be self-development. There's a certain line of financial stability that I wouldn't cross. But when it's above this line, I would rather focus on self-development. <…> The basic needs, I mean. <…> Since I plan to buy an apartment, for example, I'd say self-development is what I prioritise, but not at the expense of total financial instability. (CZ, M, 1994).

This account demonstrates the coexistence and conditional activation of materialist and postmaterialist values. Self-development was prioritised once a financial threshold had been reached, and yet the aspiration to purchase an apartment kept materialist values active above the level of immediate subsistence. Home ownership, in this context, should not be classified as physical survival. It represented a security-oriented materialist aspiration whose precise meaning depended on whether ownership was primarily narrated as protection from economic vulnerability, or else as part of a broader consumer and investment-oriented lifestyle. The account, therefore, illustrates why materialist and postmaterialist values cannot be treated as mutually exclusive, or as outright successive stages.

More importantly, several Lithuanian and Czech accounts described material aspirations that clearly exceeded physical survival or the satisfaction of basic needs. The participants discussed career success, property ownership, larger or more comfortable housing, investment, holidays, financial independence, and the ability to maintain a desired standard of living. Security and successful adulthood were consequently associated not only with protection against deprivation, but also with the capacity to own, accumulate, consume, travel, and participate in a socially normalised lifestyle.

The Lithuanian participant explicitly connected the priorities of his generation with a consumer-capitalist model of achievement:

> I think we have adopted the so-called 'American Dream' and are strongly oriented towards material well-being. Among people my age, some of the main values are material aspiration, career success, and money. For some reason, these are exceptionally important to us. When I talk to older people, I can see a difference, but I don't know whether this is because we are living in a particular period or whether it is simply a characteristic of people in their twenties and thirties. (LT, M, 1998).

Material well-being, career success, and money were presented here as ends that defined socially recognised success, and not merely as protection against hunger, homelessness, or other immediate threats. The reference to the "American Dream" situates these priorities within aspirations towards upward mobility, achievement, and accumulation. This is, therefore, an explicitly materialist account whose content extends beyond the classical survival concerns. At the same time, the participant himself questioned whether the perceived difference reflected a generation, a life stage, or an historical period. His statement should consequently be treated as a generational interpretation rather than as independent evidence of a cohort effect.

The Czech participant described similarly consumer-oriented aspirations, but placed clearer limits on how much time and effort should be sacrificed to attain them:

> It's more about wanting a nice place to live, going on nice vacations, but if [my generation] have to sacrifice too much time or effort to get that, they would rather lower their expectations. It's about finding balance – putting in medium effort to increase their living standard but stopping if it becomes too stressful or time-consuming. <…> I value having a stable life, good relationships, a nice family, and no major issues to worry about. (CZ, M, 1994).

A 'nice' home, holidays, and an increased standard of living cannot be reduced to physical survival or the satisfaction of basic needs. They refer to comfort, consumption, and participation in a desired lifestyle. The participant's willingness to lower these expectations when their pursuit became excessively stressful did not remove their consumerist materialist content. Instead, it placed material aspirations alongside limits derived from well-being, leisure time, stable relationships, and family life. Materialist and postmaterialist values were, therefore, conditionally balanced within the same account.

The contrast between the two accounts is one of an emphasis rather than the presence or absence of materialist values. The Lithuanian participant foregrounded money, career, and upward mobility as prominent generational priorities, whereas the Czech participant described the pursuit of comfort and consumption as legitimate but negotiable. In both cases, material aspirations exceeded protection against immediate deprivation. They, therefore, point to a transformed form of materialist values that cannot be adequately captured by the concept of survival-oriented materialism alone.

This transformed form of materialist values is conceptualised here as neo-materialism. Its most explicit expression consisted of consumerist materialist values, in which, security and successful adulthood were defined through property, investment, consumption, mobility, and the maintenance of a desired lifestyle. Neo-materialism does not refer simply to

the persistence of classical survival concerns in economically more affluent settings. It refers to a transformation of materialist values in consumer-capitalist contexts.

Where basic needs were largely satisfied, material security could be redefined through an expanded or 'inflated' minimum: owning suitable property, having sufficient income for holidays and leisure, preserving a comfortable lifestyle, and remaining capable of participating as a consumer. Economic development may, therefore, transform and reproduce materialist values rather than progressively displacing them.

In several less affluent cases, the classical materialist values were more immediately visible. The participants discussed insufficient income, food, housing, healthcare, migration for work, and difficulties in obtaining reliable public services. These priorities were more directly connected to survival and protection against immediate material risks than the consumerist aspirations particularly visible in Lithuania and Czechia.

However, the classical materialist values were not exclusive to the less affluent cases, nor were the participants in these countries exclusively oriented towards survival. The same biographies could combine immediate materialist concerns with aspirations towards property, mobility, comfort, status, meaningful work, self-development, and relationships. **Neo-materialist and postmaterialist values could, therefore, coexist with the classical materialist values under conditions of economic insecurity, although the resources available for their realisation were more constrained.** One contextually salient feature was that informal networks could operate as practical infrastructures of security when institutional support was unavailable or insufficient:

> If the state cannot pave a road, a local appears and says, 'I'm tired of this; I'll do everything at my own expense.' Or the locals simply get together and build a road. <…> It is sad that the state cannot help, but it shows that, not only out of desperation, we ourselves can improve the comfort that we need. Here, probably, [there is] mutual assistance, collectivism. <…> You know this person, he knows another person, she knows this person, and everything starts working right away. (KGZ, M, 1992).

This account describes informal networks taking over functions that the participant expected public institutions to perform. The residents' labour, private money, and personal contacts made it possible to improve roads and other shared infrastructure when the state provision was considered inadequate. The participant interpreted this capacity positively as mutual assistance and collectivism, but he also acknowledged that it emerged partly from institutional failure. Community self-provision should, therefore, not be romanticised: it demonstrated collective agency while simultaneously transferring the responsibility and cost of public provision onto residents.

Moreover, the importance attributed to personal contacts suggests that access to such solutions could depend on possessing an effective social network.

The second account concerned a more immediate and individual form of material insecurity:

> Sometimes, it happens to me that I don't even have money for food. I have the last 20 soms left, which I save to get to work in the morning, and I don't even know what money I'll use to get home from work in the evening. But, thank God, we have this kind of mutual assistance, and I can borrow from one of my friends. <…> Luckily, you can call and say, 'Fuck, dude, <…> I really want to eat, I have nothing to eat, please send me some [money].' <…> When my salary comes, I pay off my debts. (KGZ, M, 1997).

Here, friendship networks operate as an emergency safety net against food and transport insecurity. The possibility of requesting money provides immediate protection, but it does not remove the underlying problem: the participant described a recurring cycle, in which, salary was used to repay existing debts before new borrowing would become necessary. Informal support consequently buffered classical material insecurity without producing stable financial security.

The two accounts reveal distinct scales of collective coping. In the first case, residents pooled labour, money, information, and contacts to provide shared material good; whereas, in the second case, a friend supplied short-term assistance to meet an individual's immediate survival needs. Neither practice should be classified as postmaterialist merely because it involved cooperation. Their direct objects – public infrastructure, food, transport, and money – remained materialist. At the same time, willingness to help, reciprocity, interpersonal commitment, and collective responsibility expressed relational nonmaterialist values. The same practice could, therefore, respond to classical materialist needs while simultaneously enacting values extending beyond individual material acquisition.

The interviews cannot establish that these support practices caused the higher probability of postmaterialist responses found for the first postsocialist generation in the pooled quantitative analysis. They, instead, identify a possible mechanism, through which, material insecurity and relational nonmaterialist values may coexist.

Material constraints and relational arrangements could also become intertwined in everyday living arrangements:

> The main difference is we don't earn much money, so young people don't usually move out and live alone. The standard way of living is that you live with your family until you get married or can afford to move out. This limits your independence compared to Europe, where people tend to live more individualistic lifestyles. In Georgia, it's more communal. (GE, F, 1996).

This account shows that co-residence and relational interdependence could simultaneously provide support and restrict individual independence.

Communal living should, therefore, not be interpreted solely as either a freely chosen collectivist value or an unavoidable consequence of poverty. It could contain elements of both constraint and valued belonging.

The participants also explicitly combined materialist values with relational nonmaterialist priorities. Financial security, career, and mobility could remain important without becoming the sole criteria of a good life:

> I would say young people value family. While money and career opportunities are appealing, many people still prioritise spending time with their family. Even those who move abroad for work often return because they miss family. Social life and friendships are also very important. We enjoy mingling with others, including people from foreign countries. This is something my friends abroad miss the most – our strong social connections. (MK, F, 1998).

Overall, the findings challenge both a linear interpretation of value change and the treatment of materialist and postmaterialist values as exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories. In the interview, material, classical materialist values referred primarily to survival, economic security, and protection against immediate risks. A suggested term – neomaterialist values, by contrast, reflected a transformed definition of material security within consumer-capitalist conditions. They extended materialist aspirations towards property, investment, career success, status, mobility, consumption, and the maintenance of a desired standard of living.

Consumerist materialist values constituted the clearest expression of neo-materialism, but the two concepts are not treated as complete synonyms: not every materialist aspiration or concern with security is consumerist. Its meaning depended on whether income, housing, travel, or other resources were narrated as protection from vulnerability, enabling conditions for autonomy, or components of accumulation, status, and lifestyle maintenance. Consumerist materialist values were particularly visible in the Lithuanian and Czech accounts, but they were not exclusive to the economically more affluent cases.

Values extending beyond material acquisition were similarly heterogeneous. **Suggested reconceptualisation – "relational nonmaterialist values" – emphasised family, friendship, reciprocity, solidarity, mutual assistance, and community as valued ends rather than merely as instruments for obtaining material resources.** However, their presence should not automatically be equated with collectivism, generalised trust, societal cohesion, or postmaterialism.

On the other hand, a **more reflexive and liberal configuration emphasised autonomy, self-realisation, mental well-being, meaningful work, and the construction of personally meaningful life paths. This configuration, although closer to classical postmaterialism and self-**

expression values, is conceptualised here as neo-nonmaterialist values, with liberal nonmaterialist values used as a more descriptive designation of the same configuration rather than as a separate value type. The prefix ‘neo-’ does not imply that such values arise only after materialist concerns have disappeared, as the ‘post’ materialist was suggesting. It, rather, locates their formation within late-modern conditions, in which, reflexively constructed identities and life paths coexist with continuing classical and neo-materialist concerns.

Postmaterialist values remain the appropriate term when referring to Inglehart’s theoretical category and to the responses measured by the quantitative postmaterialism index. Relational nonmaterialist and neo-nonmaterialist values are qualitative distinctions developed to differentiate meanings that the original materialist–postmaterialist opposition may combine or leave unspecified. They partially overlap with postmaterialist priorities but are not treated as synonyms for postmaterialism, self-expression values, emancipative values, or individualisation. A participant could express materialist, postmaterialist, relational nonmaterialist, and neo-nonmaterialist priorities within the same biography, while particular practices could carry more than one meaning. The proposed categories, therefore, describe analytically distinguishable configurations rather than mutually exclusive types of people.

The findings also locate value formation across interconnected analytical levels. At the macro level, economic development, institutional provision, political and geopolitical conditions, and consumer capitalism shaped the insecurities and opportunities participants encountered. At the meso level, the first postsocialist generation, families, peer groups, friendship networks, partnerships, religious communities, and global and digital cultural environments mediated these conditions through socialisation, expectations, support, and social comparison. At the micro level, the participants interpreted these experiences, developed coping strategies, and conditionally combined different value priorities within their biographies.

Across these interconnected levels, the findings also revealed variation in how values and sources of meaning were formed, justified, and revised. Institutional orientations were grounded primarily in inherited institutions, traditions, and collective authorities, whereas reflexive orientations involved individual evaluation, selection, and reinterpretation. These orientations were not mutually exclusive: inherited institutional meanings could be reflexively reconsidered, while individually selected meanings could remain connected to institutions, traditions, and communities.

The resulting model therefore conceptualises value change through two interrelated analytical axes. The first revises the materialist–postmaterialist opposition by distinguishing four analytically distinct value configurations that may coexist and recombine: classical materialist values, neomaterialist values (of which, consumerist materialist values are the clearest expression), relational nonmaterialist values; and neo-nonmaterialist, or liberal nonmaterialist, values. The second reconceptualises the traditional–secular/rational opposition as an institutional–reflexive axis that intersects with each of these configurations.

The theoretical contribution does not lie in claiming that this study is the first to demonstrate the coexistence of values. It lies in specifying how these configurations are combined under the particular structural, institutional, relational, and biographical conditions of postsocialist societies. Affluence and new forms of risks and insecurity may transform and reproduce materialist values rather than eliminate them, while economic insecurity does not necessarily prevent the formation of relational or neo-nonmaterialist priorities.

3.3. Summary of Qualitative Findings

At its broadest, the qualitative analysis examined how postmaterialist priorities could remain salient under conditions of economic insecurity and why materialist priorities could persist or become more prominent in economically more affluent postsocialist contexts. The findings show that national economic development formed an important context but did not determine a uniform value orientation. Structural conditions acquired different meanings through family socialisation, generational expectations, institutional provision, social networks, global and digital cultural influences, and the participants' own biographical interpretations.

First, relational support influenced how insecurity was experienced and managed. In some less affluent contexts, family members, friends, and local networks compensated for inadequate income or limited institutional provision by supplying money, care, labour, accommodation, and information. However, such support was neither universal nor necessarily experienced as liberating: close relationships could also involve obligations, control, violence, or emotional unavailability.

Conversely, the participants in Lithuania and Czechia were not uniformly isolated or individualistic. Friendships and partnerships could provide dependable support and also enable autonomy, self-realisation, and major life changes. The principal contrast was, therefore, not between collectivist poorer

countries and individualist affluent countries, but, rather, between different configurations, availability, and consequences of relational support.

Second, insecurity did not disappear with economic development, although its form changed. The participants in the less affluent cases more often emphasised low income, food, housing, healthcare, weak public provision, political instability, and labour migration. The Lithuanian and Czech participants also discussed housing affordability, employment, and financial security, but some extended the meaning of security towards property, career achievement, investment, holidays, comfort, and the maintenance of a desired lifestyle.

These aspirations cannot be reduced to physical survival. They indicate how consumer capitalism may reproduce materialist values by expanding the socially perceived minimum required for security and successful adulthood. At the same time, limits placed on work, stress, and accumulation showed that consumerist materialist values could coexist with well-being, relationships, autonomy, and self-realisation.

Third, religious and moral meaning-making did not follow a uniform shift from institutional tradition to secular-rational values. The participants drew on inherited religious institutions and family traditions, adopted religious commitments later through personal networks or during periods of uncertainty, assembled individual forms of spirituality, and engaged in secular forms of psychological self-development. Institutional and reflexive orientations were not mutually exclusive: inherited meanings could be reflexively reconsidered, while individually selected meanings could remain connected to institutions, traditions, and communities.

The qualitative analysis, therefore, modifies the original theoretical interpretation along two interrelated analytical axes. On the first axis, it shows that the postmaterialism index compresses priorities that coexist within individual biographies. The participants combined classical materialist and neomaterialist priorities with relational nonmaterialist and neo-nonmaterialist priorities, while these configurations only partially overlapped with the quantitative materialist–postmaterialist categories.

On the institutional–reflexive axis, the findings show that inherited and individually selected sources of meaning may coexist and be reinterpreted rather than replacing one another in a linear movement from traditional to secular-rational values. **The revised model, therefore, treats value change as a process of coexistence, recombination, and transformation across both axes.**

3.4. Limitations of the Qualitative Study

The qualitative study was designed with the objective to identify explanatory mechanisms and contrasting biographical configurations rather than to estimate their prevalence. The six countries and the participants within them do not constitute statistically representative samples of their respective national populations or of the first postsocialist generation. Case selection was theoretically and empirically informed, but it was also bounded by fieldwork feasibility and security considerations, including the exclusion of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Convenience and snowball recruitment increased the risk that the participants belonged to overlapping social networks and similar social or cultural environments. Most importantly, 59 of the 65 participants had completed higher education. The findings, consequently, reflect predominantly the more highly educated segment of the first postsocialist generation, whose ability and willingness to discuss self-realisation, psychological well-being, spirituality, or abstract value orientations may differ from that of less highly educated members of the same generation.

The six participants without completed higher education were too few and too unevenly distributed across the countries to support a systematic comparison. Employment, partnership, parenthood, urban–rural background, and migration experience were not recorded as standardised document variables and could not be analysed as consistent demographic subgroups. Participants living abroad were retained because they had undergone their formative socialisation in the country under study, but their later transnational experiences may also have shaped their current values.

The data were collected in Lithuanian, English, Russian, and mixed Russian–English interviews and through both face-to-face and remote formats. No systematic reduction in openness or data richness was observed in the remote or English-language interviews, and the participants who used English were fluent speakers. Nevertheless, linguistic fluency, and capacity for biographical reflection varied between participants and may have influenced how fully (i.e., to what extent) particular value orientations were articulated. Moreover, where participation required foreign-language proficiency, this requirement may also have limited the inclusion of people whose cultural and informational experiences, and potentially their value orientations, differed from those represented in the sample.

The use of descriptions and concrete examples, instead of immediately introducing theoretical labels, reduced, but could not remove, possible differences in the ways how questions concerning individualism, collectivism,

materialism, or postmaterialism were understood. Automated transcription and the translation of Russian transcripts and selected Lithuanian quotations may also have reduced idiomatic or culturally specific nuances despite the author's review of the translations and verification of every quotation used in the dissertation.

The researcher's membership in the same birth cohort and familiarity with postsocialist experiences facilitated trust and contextual understanding but also created a risk of assuming shared meanings. In other country cases, the researcher's position as a foreign interviewer may have influenced which experiences the participants considered relevant, or how they represented their societies. No reflexive diary was used, and all coding and interpretation were conducted by the author without independent coding or external review.

Analytical consistency was supported through repeated comparison of material assigned to the same codes, retrieval of quotations in their original contexts, and the reconsideration of earlier interviews, but the resulting categories remain interpretive constructions rather than independently reproducible measurements.

The explanatory sequential design creates risk of privileging material that confirmed the preliminary quantitative findings or the initial materialist–postmaterialist framework. This risk was addressed by allowing the categories to develop from the interviews, examining cases that contradicted the dominant interpretation, and revising the theoretical model when the original categories proved insufficient.

Nevertheless, complete elimination of confirmation bias cannot be claimed. **These limitations do not negate the identified patterns, but they restrict the conclusions to theoretically informed interpretations of the analysed interviews. The study identifies plausible mechanisms and value configurations; it does not establish their national prevalence, statistically comparable country differences, or causal effects.**

4. DISCUSSION: CONDITIONAL GENERATIONAL CHANGE, VALUE COEXISTENCE, AND REVISION OF INGLEHART'S MODEL

This discussion integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings to examine how the value orientations of the first postsocialist generation are shaped across macro, contextual, generational and relational, and individual levels. Rather than treating the qualitative study as a separate confirmation or a direct causal explanation of the statistical results, the discussion considers the two strands as distinct but complementary forms of evidence.

The quantitative analysis identifies population-level generational, age-group, survey-period and cross-national associations, whereas the qualitative analysis reveals the heterogeneous meanings, biographical configurations and plausible interpretive pathways that the survey indicators cannot distinguish. Their integration, therefore, helps interpret the quantitative patterns, reconsider the meanings of the measured categories, and revise the initial theoretical model. Throughout the discussion, the findings are compared with Inglehart's scarcity and socialisation hypotheses, subsequent developments of value change theory, and earlier empirical research on postsocialist societies.

4.1. Economic Development, Democratic Conditions, and Differentiated Forms of Insecurity

The country-level findings provide partial support for the economic-security and democratic-opportunity components of Inglehart's theory. Across the 24 postsocialist countries, higher GDP per capita was moderately positively associated with the mean postmaterialism score of the first postsocialist generation. A similar association was found for the Deliberative Democracy Index. These results are consistent with the scarcity hypothesis and the broader survival–self-expression argument: economic resources and institutional opportunities for political voice appear to create more favourable conditions for postmaterialist priorities, autonomy, and participation.

However, more importantly, the cross-national distribution shows that neither economic prosperity nor democratic quality is sufficient on its own. Slovenia and Estonia relatively clearly combine high economic development with comparatively high postmaterialism, but several other economically stronger societies do not occupy correspondingly high positions. Czechia and Lithuania, for example, display lower postmaterialism among the first postsocialist generation than a simple economic-development model might predict.

Conversely, comparatively high postmaterialism or favourable generational shifts have also been found in some less affluent societies. Similar inconsistencies between economic development and postmaterialist values have been reported in earlier studies of postsocialist countries (Brym, 2016; Nový et al., 2017; Pavlović, 2015). The present findings, therefore, confirm that the countries' economic performance matters while challenging their interpretation as a uniform or sufficient driver of value change.

The additional analysis of income inequality does not resolve these inconsistencies. The association between the year 2020 Gini Index and the mean postmaterialism score of the first postsocialist generation was weak and statistically non-significant. Inequality may still influence how resources, opportunities, and insecurity are distributed within particular countries, but the present aggregate test did not identify a consistent regional relationship.

The qualitative findings help interpret why similar levels of national prosperity may coexist with different experiences of security, although they do not statistically explain the country-level coefficients. Material insecurity remained salient across all six qualitative cases, but its objects, intensity, and socially perceived thresholds differed. The participants in Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia more frequently emphasised low incomes, food and housing costs, access to healthcare, limited employment opportunities, unreliable public provision, political instability, and geopolitical insecurity.

These accounts correspond most closely to the classical scarcity argument, in which, limited material and institutional security restrict the resources available for autonomy and self-expression. Yet, the same participants also articulated aspirations for meaningful work, mobility, personal development, and individually chosen life paths. These 'non'-materialist rather than 'post'-materialist aspirations, therefore, did not necessarily emerge only after material insecurity had been resolved.

Material insecurity was also present in the Lithuanian and Czech accounts. The participants discussed housing affordability, inflation, employment uncertainty, regional inequalities, and difficulties in constructing a predictable future. However, some accounts extended the meaning of security beyond protection from immediate deprivation towards home ownership, investment, career progression, holidays, comfort, and the maintenance of a desired lifestyle. Economic development may, therefore, alter the content and socially perceived threshold of material security rather than progressively eliminate materialist priorities. **Under consumer-capitalist conditions, material resources can serve not only survival and protection but also mobility, status, identity, autonomy, and lifestyle continuity.**

These findings suggest that insecurity should be understood as multidimensional and socially interpreted. White's (2010) account of well-being is useful here because it distinguishes material, relational, and subjective dimensions rather than treating income as an exhaustive indicator of experienced security. National prosperity may coexist with insecure employment, unaffordable housing, weak confidence in institutions, fragmented relationships, status competition, or uncertainty about future family formation.

Conversely, limited national prosperity does not prevent individuals from accessing relational resources or cultural repertoires of autonomy, mobility, psychological well-being, and self-expression. The qualitative accounts, therefore, qualify the assumption that materialist and nonmaterialist priorities necessarily follow a fixed hierarchy, in which, one set of needs must be fully satisfied before another can become relevant.

This qualification is consistent with broader critiques of late-modern individualisation. Economic development may expand choice and autonomy while simultaneously producing new forms of insecurity related to employment, social recognition, identity, relationships, and individual responsibility (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000).

The Lithuanian and Czech accounts in particular suggest that relative prosperity does not necessarily generate the stable existential security anticipated by a strictly developmental Inglehart's theory. Instead, individuals may experience pressure to construct successful, mobile, psychologically fulfilling, and consumption-compatible biographies while bearing increasing responsibility for managing risks that also have structural and relational sources. Materialist and nonmaterialist aspirations can consequently expand together rather than replace one another.

The positive association with deliberative democracy should be interpreted in a similar way. Stronger democratic institutions may provide a more favourable opportunity structure for voice, participation, and self-expression; however, the interviews did not directly measure the causal influence of democratic quality on individual values.

The participants' accounts, instead, revealed varying confidence in institutions, uneven perceptions of opportunity, and different strategies for coping with unreliable public provision. Political participation was not equally prominent in all six qualitative cases. **The qualitative findings, therefore, support the importance of institutional reliability and perceived possibilities for action, but they do not establish (deliberative) democracy as the mechanism producing particular individual value configurations**.

Globalisation and digital mediation further complicate an exclusively economic explanation. The participants across the six cases drew on transnational repertoires of mobility, self-realisation, therapeutic self-development, liberal life choices, and individual spirituality. At the same time, the same global and digital channels circulated ideals of consumption, status, professional achievement, and lifestyle optimisation.

This corresponds with Savicka's (2004) argument that cultural globalisation may facilitate the diffusion of postmaterialist orientations in postsocialist societies without reproducing the developmental sequence assumed in the original model. **However, global and digital influences do not have a single value direction: they may simultaneously strengthen neo-materialist and neo-nonmaterialist aspirations, which are subsequently interpreted through national histories, local opportunities, and individual biographies.**

4.2. Generational Change under Age, Period, and National Heterogeneity

The macro-level findings indicate that economic and democratic conditions are associated with postmaterialism but do not produce a uniform cross-national trajectory. The next question is whether historically differentiated socialisation contributes to value differences between generations once national context, contemporary conditions, life-course position, and individual characteristics have been considered. The quantitative findings support the relative distinctiveness of the first postsocialist generation, but they do not indicate an automatic or universally cumulative process of generational replacement.

In the pooled model, members of all three earlier generations had significantly lower adjusted odds of being positioned in a more postmaterialist response category than the members of the first postsocialist generation. Although the generational block was statistically significant, the statistical reliability of this association should be distinguished from its relatively modest substantive magnitude.

The sequence of adjacent-generation contrasts further tested a linear replacement interpretation. No statistically significant difference was found between the penultimate and last socialist generations after an adjustment for multiple comparisons, whereas significant shifts appeared between the last socialist and transitional generations, and between the transitional and first postsocialist generations. The pattern, consequently, does not resemble a regular staircase, in which, every successive birth decade becomes uniformly

more postmaterialist. More visible changes occur among generations whose formative experiences were differently positioned in relation to the collapse of socialism and the consolidation of the postsocialist order.

This finding is consistent with Mannheim's understanding of generations as historically situated social locations rather than merely technical categories based on the birth year. Members of a generation share a position in historical time which exposes them to particular opportunities, constraints, and interpretive problems, but this shared position does not necessarily create a homogeneous set of attitudes. From this perspective, the first postsocialist generation is analytically distinctive because its members grew up and socialised entirely after the systemic rupture, even though the social consequences and meanings of that rupture varied substantially between countries and families.

The age-, period-, and cohort-related findings also prevent the generational pattern from being interpreted as a pure causal cohort effect. The age, period, and cohort are intrinsically interdependent, and the categorical specification used in this dissertation constitutes a theory-guided analytical strategy rather than a definitive solution to the identification problem (Fosse & Winship, 2019a; Bell, 2020). The generational association remains present when broad age-group and survey-period categories are included, strengthening its interpretation as a conditional generational pattern. Nevertheless, its estimated magnitude depends on the selected categories and on the incomplete overlap between generations, age groups, and survey periods. The model, therefore, shows that the generational association cannot be reduced entirely to the observed age and period composition, but it does not isolate the independent causal effect of formative socialisation.

The age-group results provide only limited support for a life-course explanation. The respondents aged 25–34 and 35–44 had significantly lower adjusted odds of occupying a more postmaterialist category than the respondents aged 15–24, while the estimates for the older groups did not form a consistent monotonic pattern. This does not demonstrate that individuals become progressively more materialist as they age. The surveys are repeated cross-sections rather than longitudinal observations of the same respondents, and the age groups differ in their generational composition and exposure to historical periods. The partial overlap between the youngest age group and the first postsocialist generation makes a particularly strict separation of the age and the generation impossible.

Survey-period patterns were also more complex than the original hypothesis had anticipated. In the unadjusted distributions, the 2015–2022 period contained the lowest proportion of materialists and the highest

proportion of postmaterialists. Once country, generation, age group, and individual characteristics had been included, however, the threshold-specific period coefficients indicated higher conditional odds in the earlier periods than in 2015–2022. These findings are not necessarily contradictory. The unadjusted distributions capture changes in the countries, generations, age groups, and social characteristics represented in each period, whereas the adjusted coefficients compare periods conditional on the included variables. They consequently answer different questions.

Given the structural relationship between the age, period, and cohort, the adjusted period coefficients should not be interpreted as evidence of a causal decline in postmaterialism. Rather, they demonstrate that the most recent survey period contained distinctive conditions that were not exhausted by generational replacement or social composition. The period between 2015 and 2022 included the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, geopolitical insecurity, and the beginning or intensification of military conflict in parts of the region. Such developments may reactivate concerns with prices, order, physical safety, and institutional protection across generations. These mechanisms were not separately measured, but their plausibility illustrates why contemporary conditions cannot be treated as residual influences of secondary theoretical importance.

The strong period pattern contradicts the most deterministic version of the socialisation hypothesis. Formative experiences may establish relatively durable orientations, but values remain responsive to subsequent historical events and changing opportunities. This interpretation is consistent with recent Lithuanian evidence showing that generational patterns coexist with substantial period sensitivity, and that orientations towards security, family, autonomy, and self-expression do not develop in a single direction (Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026). Generational socialisation and period responsiveness should, therefore, be understood as interacting processes rather than mutually exclusive explanations.

The interpretation of generational change was further tested by cross-country comparison. The statistically significant country-by-generation interaction shows that the magnitude and direction of the generational contrast differ between national contexts. Although most country-specific comparisons followed the direction of the pooled model, they did not do so universally or with equal strength. This should not be interpreted as evidence that generational differences exist *only* in those countries. The significant omnibus interaction and the distribution of country-specific estimates provide the more relevant conclusion: the pooled association represents an average regional pattern embedded in divergent national trajectories.

This heterogeneity challenges the treatment of postsocialism as a uniform developmental condition. The countries share the experience of systemic rupture, but they differ in pre-socialist legacies, the institutional forms and lived experience of socialism, transformation strategies, economic development, democratisation, religious histories, migration, geopolitical position, and exposure to later crises.

Earlier research has similarly identified uneven and period-sensitive trajectories of materialism, autonomy, and self-expression across postsocialist societies (Pavlović, 2015; Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026). **Postsocialism should, therefore, be understood as a historically coherent but internally differentiated field rather than as a single cultural or generational pathway.**

4.3. Generational Transmission and Relational Pathways of Security

The conditional generational pattern identified in the quantitative analysis raises the question of how historically differentiated societal conditions become incorporated into individual value orientations. Generations do not internalise structural circumstances mechanically or respond to them uniformly. Their historical location is mediated through families, educational and institutional environments, friendships, intimate partnerships, and wider cultural expectations.

The qualitative findings indicate that these relational environments influence how insecurity is experienced, which resources are considered available, and whether autonomy, mutual dependence, or self-reliance appears possible or necessary. The meso level, therefore, connects the macro-level conditions discussed above with the biographical interpretation of value priorities.

Intergenerational transmission involved more than the direct reproduction of parental values. The participants described family expectations concerning education, employment, income, home ownership, marriage, children, and respectable adulthood, but they did not simply accept or reject these expectations as coherent packages. Some interpreted parental experiences of scarcity and instability as reasons to pursue financial independence, stable employment, or property. Others treated the same experiences as warnings against sacrificing personal well-being, meaningful work, or close relationships to economic achievement. Intergenerational transmission could, therefore, reproduce material-security priorities, motivate their reflexive rejection, or transform them into new combinations.

The qualitative findings, nevertheless, do not support a binary distinction in which economically more affluent societies are characterised by individualised coping while less affluent societies depend on families and communities. Emotional, practical, and material support from family members, friends, and partners was found across all six country cases.

The participants from both country groups could rely on extensive relational support, or similarly, could experience weak, conflictual, or unreliable family relationships and respond through self-reliance. Relational and community-based support could remain important in economically disadvantaged settings without excluding aspirations for autonomy, mobility, or individual development. The economic context influenced which resources and insecurities were foregrounded, but it did not divide relational strategies into two homogeneous groups.

The analytically relevant issue was the quality, accessibility, and meaning of particular relationships. Supportive relationships could provide housing, money, childcare, practical assistance, emotional recognition, or a reliable source of help during periods of uncertainty. These resources could reduce the immediate consequences of material insecurity and expand the range of available choices. Family or partner support could make education, geographical mobility, meaningful employment, separation from an unsuitable relationship, or another individually selected life path more feasible. Material interdependence and autonomy were thus not necessarily opposites: practical support could enable – rather than restrict – independent action.

This pattern is consistent with Kağıtçıbaşı's (1996, 2007) autonomy–relatedness perspective, which challenges the assumption that individual autonomy requires emotional or relational separation. The qualitative findings similarly indicate that close relationships and individual choice(s) may be mutually enabling. They also correspond with research describing the family as a source of informal insurance where formal welfare provision is limited, difficult to access, or unreliable (Costa-Font & Nicińska, 2023).

However, the instrumental resources provided through relationships should be distinguished from relationships valued as ends in themselves. The participants did not discuss family, friendship, reciprocity, and solidarity only as substitutes for state provision. Emotional intimacy, mutual recognition, belonging, and the ability to rely on others were themselves central elements of a meaningful and secure life.

At the same time, relational embeddedness was not uniformly protective. Families and close communities could transmit restrictive obligations, gendered expectations, pressure concerning marriage and parenthood,

limitations on mobility, or demands for conformity. Material assistance could generate dependence, while dense close networks could coexist with distrust of outsiders or limited access to wider institutional and professional connections. Some participants described family relationships as emotionally unavailable, conflictual, controlling, or violent. Relational environments could, therefore, buffer one form of insecurity while producing another. Their theoretical relevance lies not in an assumed positive effect of close ties, but, rather, in how they distribute resources, recognition, obligations, and constraints.

For this reason, social-capital theory functions in this dissertation as a sensitising perspective rather than as a directly tested causal explanation. Bourdieu's (1986) approach draws attention to resources accessible through social relationships, while Putnam's (1993, 2000) distinction between bonding and bridging social capitals helps differentiate support within close networks from connections, extending beyond them.

The study did not, however, independently operationalise bonding or bridging social capital, generalised trust, or societal cohesion. The interviews cannot demonstrate that social capital statistically mediated the association between structural context and postmaterialism. Close relationships may provide practical and emotional security without generating trust outside the immediate network, and their resources may be used to pursue material, relational, or self-expression-oriented priorities.

The findings also complicate the interpretation of individualisation dimension of postmaterialism. Self-reliance, early independence, boundary-setting, psychological self-work, and flexible planning may express autonomy and reflexive agency, but they may also arise from unavailable support, unstable institutions, or the transfer of responsibility for structural problems to individuals. Beck's (1992) account of individualisation is relevant here because expanded personal choice may coexist with the individualisation of risk and responsibility. The requirement to construct one's own successful biography does not mean that the economic, institutional, and relational conditions, under which this biography is constructed, are individually controlled.

The therapeutic language employed by some participants reflects this ambivalence. Therapy, psychological knowledge, and practices of self-reflection may help individuals recognise harmful relationships, challenge inherited patterns, reduce mental-health stigma, and construct more liveable biographies. At the same time, therapeutic solutions may frame insecurity primarily as a matter of individual adaptation or self-management even when its sources are also structural and relational.

As Norkus and Jokubaitis (2006) suggest, therapeutic responses in contemporary capitalist societies may assist individuals in adapting their expectations to available conditions. The relevant problem is, therefore, not psychotherapy itself, but the dominance of individualised responses when employment insecurity, unaffordable housing, social isolation, or unreliable institutions also require collective and structural forms of intervention.

These processes can also be considered in relation to social fragmentation and anomie. Norkus (2003) associates the pluralisation of choices and values in postmodern societies with the weakening of common normative frameworks and the fragmentation of social life into groups with increasingly differentiated lifestyles. The qualitative findings do not establish a general state of anomie in the six countries, but the participants' accounts of loneliness, weak trust, unstable relationships, and difficulties in constructing reliable forms of belonging are compatible with a more limited interpretation of this argument. An expanded choice and individual autonomy may coexist with uncertainty about relationships, responsibility, and the social conditions of a meaningful life.

Alternative relationships were particularly important in preventing the meso level from being reduced to the family. Friends, intimate partners, and chosen communities could compensate for weak or conditional parental support and provide recognition of life choices that were not accepted within the family of origin. These relationships demonstrate that relational resources are not only inherited through intergenerational transmission. They may also be actively created, revised, and reorganised across the life course.

The first postsocialist generation, consequently, appears not merely as a recipient of parental values and relationship patterns but also as an agent capable of reinterpreting them. However, the ability to construct alternative support remains unequally distributed and depends partly on education, mobility, economic resources, and access to wider social environments.

These findings identify a contextually grounded interpretive pathway: macro-level conditions and generational location are experienced through relationships that may provide support, impose constraints, or perform both functions simultaneously. **Rather than translating structural conditions directly into value orientations, the findings suggest their influence is mediated through relational experiences that shape how security and insecurity are perceived, interpreted, and experienced.**

The following section explores how these relationally mediated experiences are expressed in materialist and nonmaterialist orientations, and how these orientations coexist and recombine within the same life domains.

4.4. Value Coexistence, Recombination, and Biographical Meaning

The quantitative analysis identifies conditional differences in the respondents' positions on the materialist–postmaterialist continuum, but it does not classify complete individual value systems. The four-item index records the prioritisation of selected national goals and assigns respondents to materialist, mixed, or postmaterialist response categories. Its principal value lies in enabling a consistent comparison across countries, generations, and survey periods. However, it cannot establish all the meanings that the respondents attach to order, prices, political voice, or freedom of expression, nor can it distinguish the different reasons for selecting the same item.

The predominance of the mixed category is particularly important. Selecting one materialist and one postmaterialist item demonstrates heterogeneous priority selection, but it does not – by itself – prove that two coherent value systems coexist within an individual. Mixed responses may result from different combinations of concerns, changing interpretations of national priorities, reactions to current circumstances, or the absence of a stable hierarchy between the available goals.

Earlier critiques have similarly demonstrated that the four-item index compresses substantively different orientations, and that the structure and meaning of postmaterialism indicators vary across contexts (Warwick, 1998; Davis & Davenport, 1999; Rabušic, 2000; Tranter & Western, 2010). Savicka's (2004) analysis further suggests that even the wider postmaterialism battery may not reproduce the expected structure consistently in Central European societies. These limitations do not make the index unsuitable for comparative analysis, but they *do* restrict the individual-level meanings that can be inferred from it.

The qualitative analysis provides a different form of evidence. Rather than inferring coexistence from the mixed survey category, it identifies coexistence where materialist and nonmaterialist concerns are articulated within the same biographical accounts. The participants connected economic security with autonomy, housing with family formation and privacy, employment with both income and meaningful activity, and mobility with both material opportunity and personal development. These combinations occurred as tensions, compromises, enabling conditions, and mutually reinforcing priorities. The qualitative evidence consequently demonstrates the coexistence of meanings within individual narratives, although it cannot estimate the population-level prevalence of particular configurations.

Coexistence should also be distinguished from simple heterogeneity between individuals. The finding is not merely that some participants

expressed materialist values while others expressed nonmaterialist ones. Different orientations frequently appeared within the same narratives and sometimes within discussions of the same decision or life domain. Moreover, these orientations did not necessarily remain independent. Material stability could enable a participant to leave an unsuitable job, obtain privacy, form a family, pursue meaningful work, or protect psychological well-being. Conversely, autonomy and self-expression could be pursued through education, career achievement, property, travel, or consumption. **These functional relationships indicate recombination: orientations conventionally placed on opposite sides of the materialist–postmaterialist distinction may become conditions or means for one another.**

Housing illustrates this interpretive complexity particularly clearly. Home ownership may provide protection from rental insecurity or poverty in later life, but it may also support privacy, independence from parents, partnership, and family formation. In other accounts, property functions as an investment, a marker of achievement, or a component of a desirable lifestyle. Home ownership, therefore, cannot automatically be classified as either a survival concern or consumerism.

Its value meaning depends on the vulnerability it addresses, the objective it enables, and its position within the participant's wider biography. This interpretation corresponds with research showing that housing in postsocialist societies remains closely connected to transitions to adulthood, residential autonomy, family formation, and intergenerational support (Žilys, 2018; Indriliūnaitė, 2021; Kraniauskienė, 2024; Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024).

Family and intimate relationships provide another example. The continued importance of family does not necessarily indicate an unchanged traditional or collectivist orientation. The participants may value family as a source of emotional intimacy, mutual support, belonging, and a freely chosen life project while rejecting prescribed gender roles, unconditional obligations, or institutional expectations concerning marriage.

Conversely, postponing partnership or parenthood does not necessarily mean that the institute of family has become less important. It may reflect economic insecurity, housing constraints, competing life projects, or increasingly demanding expectations concerning relational quality and responsible parenthood (Tretjakova, 2023; Kraniauskienė & Damaševičiūtė, 2024; Juozeliūnienė & Budginaitė-Mačkinė, 2024b). Individualisation can, therefore, transform the expected form and conditions of family life without eliminating family-oriented values (Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026; Vialle et al., 2026).

Consumption also demonstrates why materialist practices cannot be interpreted solely through the distinction between necessity and affluence. Materialist objects and consumption practices may communicate the status and social distinction, but they may also express identity, taste, ethical commitments, creativity, or belonging. Research on young people's consumer identities shows that digital environments circulate luxury and status-oriented consumption alongside second-hand, sustainable, and politically motivated consumption styles.

The same field of consumption can thus contain status competition, self-expression, moral positioning, and group identification (Wilska, Holkkola, & Tuominen, 2023). This supports the qualitative finding that materialist practices may serve both materialist and nonmaterialist purposes, and that their meaning cannot be inferred from the consumed object alone.

On the basis of these findings, four analytically distinct but overlapping value configurations can be identified. Classical materialist values concern survival, reliable income, access to housing and healthcare, and protection from immediate economic, physical, or geopolitical risks. This configuration most closely corresponds to the concerns represented by Inglehart's original materialist category.

Neomaterialist values refer to the transformed significance of materialist priorities under consumer-capitalist conditions. They include property accumulation, investment, professional achievement, mobility, status, comfort, and the maintenance or improvement of a desired standard of living. Consumerist values constitute the clearest expression of neomaterialism when material resources are valued primarily for accumulation, lifestyle differentiation, symbolic recognition, or consumption-based identity. Neomaterialism is, nevertheless, broader than consumerism, and it cannot be identified from the materialist object alone. Housing, income, career, and travel acquire a neo-materialist meaning through the purposes and expectations attached to them.

Relational nonmaterialist values concern family, friendship, reciprocity, solidarity, mutual assistance, and community as valued ends rather than only as instrumental resources. These orientations cannot be reduced to collectivism, bonding social capital, or generalised trust. Close relationships may be highly valued even where trust does not extend beyond the immediate network, and relational commitments may support autonomy while also involving material interdependence.

Neo-nonmaterialist values encompass autonomy, self-realisation, mental well-being, and meaningful work. **Liberal nonmaterialist values constitute a liberal expression of this configuration, by emphasising**

personal freedom, tolerance, and freedom of choice, rather than constituting a separate fifth category. These priorities overlap with aspects of postmaterialism, self-expression, and emancipative values, but they are not direct equivalents, since they may coexist and be combined with classical materialist or neomaterialist values.

These four configurations are not mutually exclusive types of people, and have not been quantitatively validated as a new scale. They distinguish meaning structures identified in the qualitative material. The same participant may articulate all four orientations across different life domains or combine several within one decision. Their relative importance may also change through partnership, parenthood, employment transitions, migration, economic shocks, or changing relationship experiences. The contribution of the framework is, therefore, not to replace the materialist–postmaterialist index with four new fixed categories, but, rather, to specify substantively different value configurations that the forced-choice measure may compress.

The dissertation does not claim to be the first to demonstrate that values can coexist. Critiques of the postmaterialism index, later developments of value change theory, and research on individualisation already challenge a simple replacement model. Previous studies of younger postsocialist generations have likewise identified combinations of economic pragmatism, consumerism, individualism, family security, autonomy, and liberal self-expression (Kalmus et al., 2013; Kalmus, 2020; Magun & Rudnev, 2013; Manea & Rabušic, 2021; Savicka & Žiliukaitė, 2026).

The more specific contribution of the present study lies in differentiating four empirically grounded configurations and relating their coexistence and recombination to transformed forms of insecurity, consumer-capitalist expectations, relational environments, and biographical interpretation.

4.5. Religious Context, Institutional and Reflexive Orientations

The quantitative findings indicate that the national religious context and individual religiosity are associated with postmaterialism in different ways. However, these results concern different analytical levels, and thus they should not be treated as alternative measurements of the same religious mechanism.

At the country level, the distribution of postmaterialism within the first postsocialist generation differed significantly across four religious-context groups. The comparisons showed higher mean ranks in the Roman Catholic

country contexts than in Orthodox and Muslim contexts, thus supporting H7. Countries with no predominant denominational affiliation also displayed a comparatively high mean level of postmaterialism. The overall pattern is consistent with the expectation that historically formed religious contexts are related to cross-national differences in value orientations.

These differences should not be interpreted as direct effects of the religious doctrine. The country context was classified according to the most frequently reported denominational affiliation, which does not necessarily constitute an absolute majority or measure the intensity of religious belief and practice. The categories also overlap with wider historical and geopolitical divisions. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, and comparatively non-affiliated postsocialist societies differ in their relationships with Western European institutions, experiences of socialism and state secularisation, nation-building trajectories, and the institutional position of religious organisations. H7, therefore, identifies differences between historically constituted country contexts rather than demonstrating that a particular theology directly produces materialist or postmaterialist values.

This interpretation is consistent with Inglehart and Baker's (2000) argument that religious traditions may preserve long-term cultural legacies even under conditions of economic and institutional modernisation. More specifically, the higher level of postmaterialism found in Roman Catholic than in Orthodox country contexts parallels the cultural divide identified by Akaliyski and Welzel (2020). They show that, following the collapse of state socialism, predominantly Catholic and Protestant countries integrated into the European Union increasingly converged with Western Europe in their emphasis on emancipative values, whereas many predominantly Orthodox countries remained more closely connected to a Russian-centred geopolitical space, in which, traditional values were being increasingly reinforced.

The present findings extend this argument by indicating that a similar division is visible in the materialist–postmaterialist dimension, although emancipative values and postmaterialism should not be treated as equivalent constructs. Religious tradition may, therefore, mark enduring historical and cultural orientations, but its contemporary association with values is intertwined with European integration, geopolitical alignment, and competing supranational identities.

At the individual level, the results differed from the direction predicted by H8. Among members of the first postsocialist generation, stronger religiosity was associated with a slightly lower postmaterialist orientation. The bivariate correlation was statistically significant but extremely weak. The association also remained when 'country' was included in the robustness model. H8 is,

therefore, not supported: stronger individual religiosity was not associated with higher postmaterialism.

The difference between H7 and H8 is theoretically meaningful rather than contradictory. H7 compares historically formed national contexts, whereas H8 compares individuals according to reported religious beliefs, belonging, and practices. A Roman Catholic country's aggregate position may partly reflect historical institutional alignment, secularisation, and location within a wider European cultural and political space. Within the same country, however, stronger individual religiosity may be related to reliance on inherited authority, social order, communal continuity, or protection from uncertainty.

More importantly, the religiosity index combines aspects of religion that may have different relationships with value orientations. It does not clearly distinguish denominational affiliation, institutional participation, ritual practice, doctrinal belief, reliance on faith, communal belonging, and individual spirituality. Two individuals with similar numerical scores may, therefore, relate differently to religious institutions, inherited authority, community, morality, and personal meaning. The qualitative findings help differentiate these relationships, although they do not constitute an additional statistical test of H7 or H8.

The interviews revealed several partly overlapping ways of relating to religious and secular meaning. One involved inherited and institutionally organised religious practice transmitted through families and communities, highly varying on meaning attached to it. Another involved religious commitment adopted or strengthened later through personal relationships, periods of uncertainty, or biographical turning points. The third consisted of individually assembled forms of spirituality drawing selectively on religious, philosophical, psychological, and therapeutic repertoires. The fourth involved secular psychological self-development through reflection, therapy, boundary-setting, and the active construction of personal meaning. These forms appeared across the qualitative cases and could coexist within the same country or individual biography.

This heterogeneity complicates the assumption of a straightforward transition from inherited religion to secular individualism. Institutionally embedded religion did not necessarily exclude personal reflection, since the participants could actively reconsider and reflexively affirm inherited beliefs and practices. Conversely, individually selected spirituality could remain connected to collective traditions, and also to established moral frameworks.

Secular psychological self-development shared some features with individualised spirituality, particularly reflexive self-examination and the search for meaning, but should not itself be classified as religious. **The**

findings, therefore, support neither a binary opposition between religious tradition and secular autonomy nor the consolidation of all individualised meaning-making into one undifferentiated category.

Davie's (1990) distinction between believing and belonging is useful for interpreting the separation of personal belief from institutional participation. Research on postsocialist religion likewise indicates that the declining institutional authority does not necessarily imply the disappearance of religion, but, instead, that it may alter the forms through which belief, morality, spirituality, and belonging are expressed (Gog, 2016; Vrublevskaya et al., 2019).

Savicka and Žiliukaitė's (2026) differentiation between actively practised, cultural, individualised, and independently maintained forms of religiosity similarly demonstrates that the religious affiliation, institutional participation, personal belief, and spirituality do not necessarily coincide. Cultural religiosity is particularly relevant because it shows how religion may persist as an inherited tradition and source of collective identification without involving extensive religious practice or unquestioned acceptance of institutional authority.

Qualitative research with young adults in Czechia is particularly relevant to the present findings. Havlíček and Klingorová (2021) identify a 'subjective turn', in which, personal belief becomes partly detached from institutionalised religion and is assembled through mobility, relationships, authenticity, and self-reflection. Their participants constructed individually differentiated combinations of religion and spirituality rather than moving uniformly from religious belief to secularity. This closely corresponds with the individualised and selectively constructed forms of spirituality found among Czech participants in the present research and supports the distinction between institutional anchoring and reflexive selection without treating them as mutually exclusive positions.

On this basis, **the dissertation distinguishes between institutional orientations and reflexive orientations. Institutional orientations refer to the anchoring of norms and meanings in established religious or social institutions, inherited frameworks, collective traditions, and recognised forms of authority. Reflexive orientations refer to the active evaluation, selection, reinterpretation, and personal reconstruction of norms and meaning. This distinction concerns how meanings are anchored and interpreted, and not whether their substantive content is inherently traditional, secular, materialist, or nonmaterialist.**

Institutional and reflexive orientations do not constitute opposite endpoints of a single linear continuum, nor do they correspond directly to Inglehart's

traditional and secular-rational dimension. This dimension combines the substantive content of beliefs with attitudes towards religion, authority, and inherited norms, whereas the distinction proposed here concerns how values and meanings are anchored and interpreted.

Institutional orientations may sustain traditional religious norms and practices, involve (or not) its institutional articulation, while also being combined with active reconsideration; on the other hand, reflexively constructed meanings may be religious, spiritual, or secular and, as well, they may remain embedded in established traditions and communities.

This distinction, therefore, reformulates rather than reverses Inglehart's dimension by separating institutional anchoring from reflexive interpretation and allowing them to coexist. It also intersects with the revised materialist–postmaterialist axis: classical materialist, neomaterialist, relational nonmaterialist, and neo-nonmaterialist values may each be institutionally supported, reflexively interpreted, or combine both modes of orientation.

The revised model (see Figure 2) consequently replaces two linear transitions: from materialist to postmaterialist, and from traditional to secular-rational values, with intersecting fields, in which, the substantive content of values and the ways in which they are anchored, evaluated, and reconstructed, may vary independently and recombine across biographies and contexts.

4.6. The Revised Theoretical Model of Value Formation and Change in Postsocialist Societies

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings led to a revision of the initial theoretical model presented in Section 1.7. The revised model retains the original multilevel architecture, according to which, value orientations are shaped through the interaction of macro-level historical and contemporary conditions, meso-level generational socialisation and mediation, and individual circumstances. The principal revision concerns the micro-level conceptualisation of value orientations and the relationships between them.

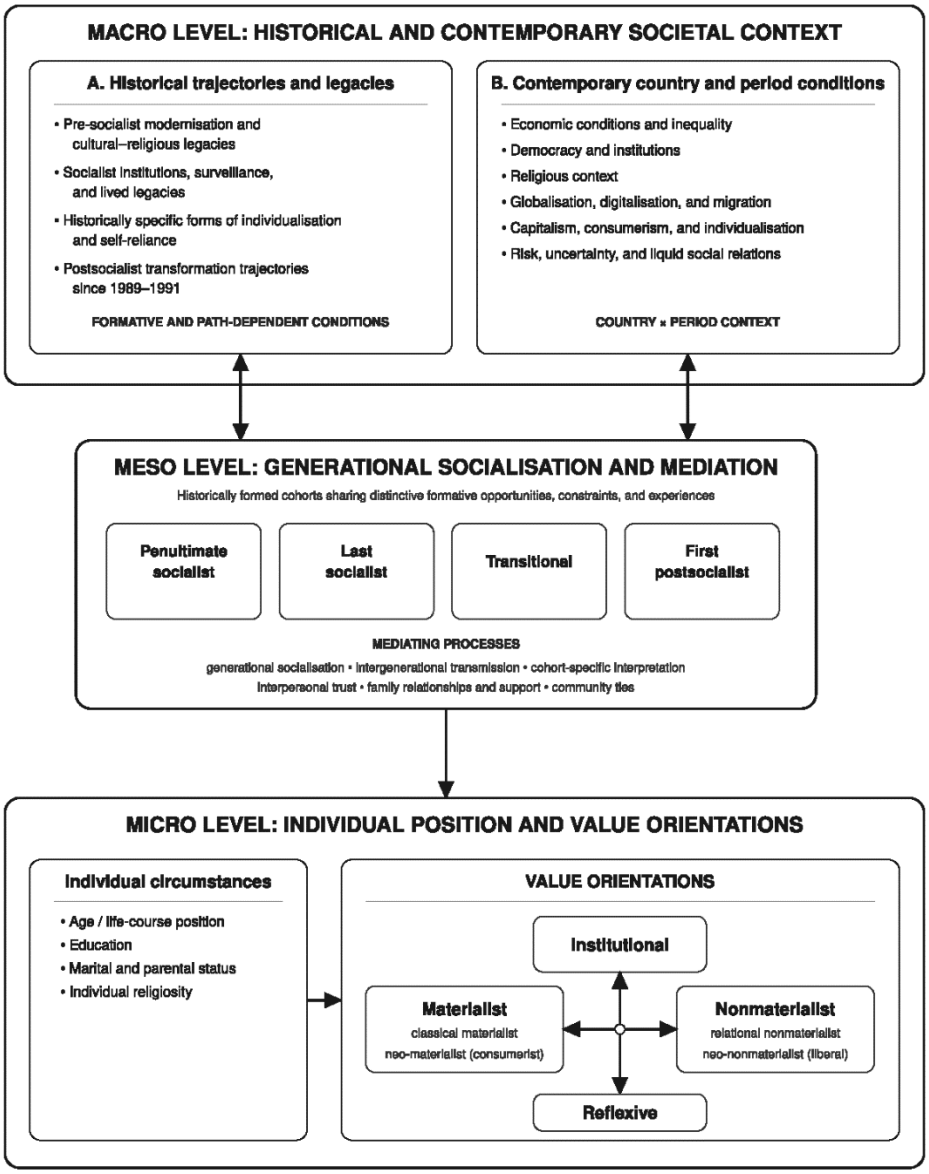


Figure 2. Revised theoretical model of value formation and change in postsocialist societies

At the macro level, the revised model preserves the distinction between historical trajectories and legacies, on the one hand, and contemporary country and period conditions, on the other. Historical trajectories include pre-socialist modernisation and cultural-religious legacies, socialist institutions and lived experiences, historically specific forms of individualisation and self-reliance,

and divergent trajectories of postsocialist transformation since 1989–1991. These constitute formative and path-dependent conditions that continue to shape the institutional and cultural environments in which successive generations are socialised.

Contemporary country and period conditions include economic conditions and inequality, political regimes, particularly, the level of democracy and (political/democratic) institutions, religious context, globalisation, digitalisation, migration, capitalism, consumerism, individualisation, risk, uncertainty, and increasingly fluid social relations. These conditions do not directly determine individual values. Their implications depend on how they interact with inherited institutions, national histories, available resources, and relational environments. Similar economic or political developments may consequently be experienced and interpreted differently across postsocialist societies.

The bidirectional arrows between the macro and meso levels indicate that historical legacies and contemporary conditions are connected through generational experience. The penultimate socialist, last socialist, transitional, and first postsocialist generations occupy different historical positions in relation to socialism, systemic transformation, and the consolidation of the postsocialist order. They were exposed to different combinations of institutional continuity, economic disruption, cultural liberalisation, globalisation, digitalisation, migration, and late-modern individualisation.

At the same time, these experiences were nationally differentiated and did not produce homogeneous generational value types. Nevertheless, older generations could shape the conditions and institutions they were living in, while current conditions are shaped by all living generations as well. Moreover, historical conditions and their meanings are reflexively evaluated and accordingly internalised. Reciprocal arrows, therefore, indicate that generations, despite being shaped by social conditions, are not passive recipients and have a conditional agency.

The meso level represents the processes through which broad societal conditions are translated into lived experience. Generational socialisation, intergenerational transmission, and cohort-specific interpretation connect historical change with individual value formation. Family relationships, interpersonal trust, community ties, friendships, intimate partnerships, and other forms of support influence which resources are available and how insecurity, dependence, autonomy, and responsibility are understood.

At the micro level, individual circumstances include age and life-course position, education, marital and parental status, and individual religiosity. These characteristics influence how individuals encounter and interpret the

conditions transmitted through macro- and meso-level processes. They do not function as isolated determinants of values but locate individuals differently within generational, relational, institutional, and cultural environments.

The most substantial theoretical revision concerns the field of value orientations. The findings indicate that materialist and nonmaterialist concerns are internally differentiated and may coexist within the same biography. The model, therefore, distinguishes between classical materialist and neo-materialist orientations within the broader field of materialist values. Classical materialist orientations concern survival, economic stability, and protection from immediate risks. Neo-materialist orientations concern a transformed materialism involving accumulation, investment, professional achievement, comfort, mobility, status, and lifestyle maintenance, with consumerism as their clearest expression.

Within nonmaterialist values, the model distinguishes relational nonmaterialist and neo-nonmaterialist orientations. Relational nonmaterialist orientations concern family, friendship, reciprocity, solidarity, mutual support, and community as valued ends. Neo-nonmaterialist orientations emphasise autonomy, self-realisation, meaningful work, mental well-being, liberal life choices, and reflexively selected lifestyles, with liberal nonmaterialism as their clearest expression.

These four configurations do not represent mutually exclusive types of individuals. They may coexist across different life domains, and may also be combined within the same decision. Material resources may enable autonomy, meaningful activity, family formation, or relational security, while nonmaterialist aspirations may be pursued through property, employment, education, mobility, or consumption. The four-directional arrows in the model represent the overlap, movement, and recombination between these orientations rather than a predetermined sequence in which one value set replaces another.

Institutional and reflexive orientations intersect with the materialist and nonmaterialist configurations. Institutional orientations refer to the anchoring of norms and meanings in established institutions, inherited frameworks, collective traditions, and recognised authorities. Reflexive orientations refer to their active evaluation, selection, reinterpretation, and personal reconstruction. These orientations are also not mutually exclusive. Institutional belonging may involve substantial personal reflection, while reflexively selected beliefs and moral positions may remain embedded in religious, familial, or communal traditions.

The model should be understood as an empirically grounded theoretical proposal rather than as a fully operationalised and validated

measurement model. Its contribution is to specify how the original macro–generational–individual architecture can be retained while the micro-level understanding of value orientations is expanded. In this way, the model does not reject Inglehart's framework but reformulates it to account for the coexistence, transformation, and recombination of values within the historically differentiated postsocialist context.

4.7. Theoretical Contribution, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

The principal theoretical contribution of this dissertation lies in refining the explanation of value change in postsocialist societies by connecting conditional generational change with historically differentiated societal contexts, relational environments, and transformations in the substantive meanings of materialist and nonmaterialist values. The findings neither simply confirm nor reject Inglehart's theory. They demonstrate that existential security and formative socialisation remain analytically relevant, while showing that their effects cannot be understood as a uniform sequence, in which, economic development produces the gradual replacement of materialist by postmaterialist values.

The mixed-method design was central to developing these theoretical revisions. The quantitative analysis established population-level associations between comparative value priorities, generation, period, country context, and individual characteristics. The qualitative analysis did not reproduce these estimates or causally explain the country-level coefficients. It revealed meanings and configurations that the survey indicator could not distinguish. **Integration was therefore reciprocal: preliminary quantitative patterns informed the comparative qualitative design, while qualitative findings revised the interpretation of the survey categories and the initial theoretical model.**

Several limitations, nevertheless, restrict the conclusions that can be drawn from the quantitative findings. **First, the pooled EVS/WVS data are unweighted and unevenly distributed across countries, survey years, generations, and age groups.** Countries and survey waves with larger samples, consequently, exert greater influence on the pooled coefficients, which should not be interpreted as an equally weighted regional average. **Country fixed effects account for stable differences between the included countries, but they do not remove unequal sample contributions, nor do they capture every contextual process relevant to value formation**.

Second, the categorical age–period–cohort specification is estimable, but it does not identify pure and independent causal effects of the age, period, and cohort. These dimensions are intrinsically interdependent. The use of repeated cross-sectional surveys means that the same respondents are not observed over time. The generations are also represented at different ages, and they do not overlap equally across all survey periods. **The generational coefficients should, therefore, be interpreted as conditional associations under the selected categorisation rather than as definitive causal cohort effects.**

The survey-period findings are also subject to related limitations. The most recent period included the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and geopolitical insecurity, any of which may have influenced the responses concerning prices, order, and security. The four-item index may, therefore, capture reactions to immediate circumstances as well as relatively durable value orientations. As these crises were not independently operationalised, their effects cannot be separated from the broader survey-period differences.

Third, the country-level analyses are limited by the temporal correspondence between the macro-level indicators and the survey data. Common indicators from 2020 were used alongside surveys conducted between 2017 and 2022. These indicators describe contemporary country characteristics but cannot be treated as direct measures of the economic, democratic, or religious conditions experienced during the respondents' formative years. The country-level results, consequently, identify contextual associations rather than causal effects of socialisation conditions or transformation trajectories.

Fourth, the four-item postmaterialism index measures forced choices among a limited set of national political and economic goals. It enables long-term cross-national comparison but does not encompass the full theoretical meanings of material security, autonomy, political voice, belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life. The mixed category combines substantively different selections, while the meanings of maintaining order and fighting rising prices may vary between countries and periods. The questions also concern priorities for the country rather than directly asking about the respondents' wider personal values.

The decision to use the four-item index rather than the twelve-item battery further limits the width of the operationalisation. Alternative indicators of autonomy, creativity, meaningful activity, and self-expression were not analysed as separate outcomes. The qualitative study partly compensates for this limitation by examining meanings excluded from the forced-choice measure, but it cannot transform the index into a

measure of the four configurations proposed in the revised model. These configurations, as well as the wider concepts of relational security and institutional and reflexive orientations, remain only partially operationalised.

The religiosity measure presents additional limitations. The original index combines seven components with unequal numerical weights and does not fully distinguish missing information from responses contributing no religiosity points. It also combines the affiliation, belief, practice, personal importance, and reliance on religion, although these elements may have different relationships with value orientations. The reconstructed common-scale index validates the general convergence of the included items but does not eliminate the conceptual limitations of the original measure.

The qualitative analysis is subject to different constraints. The analysis is based on 65 interviews with members of the first postsocialist generation in six purposively selected countries. The specific cases were selected to maximise theoretically relevant variation rather than to represent the entire postsocialist region. The contrast between economically wealthier and economically disadvantaged countries functioned as a comparison, and it should not be interpreted as a division into two internally homogeneous national types. The findings identify available meanings and configurations but cannot estimate their prevalence within any country.

Recruitment through personal contacts, social media, convenience sampling, and snowballing may have increased the likelihood of participants coming from interconnected social environments. **The qualitative sample was also strongly education-selective: 59 of the 65 analysed participants had completed higher education. The findings, therefore, predominantly reflect the repertoires of relatively highly educated members of the first postsocialist generation.** This may have increased the visibility of autonomy, mobility, psychological self-development, meaningful work, and reflexive self-expression, while other value configurations may be more prominent among people with lower levels of education or more precarious socioeconomic positions.

Differences in the interview format may also have affected the character of the material. Some interviews were conducted face to face, while others were implemented remotely. Remote interviewing increased geographical accessibility but may have changed the interaction, the visibility of non-verbal communication, and the conditions, under which, sensitive experiences were discussed. The research design did not systematically compare responses according to the interview mode, and thus, possible mode-related differences cannot be separated from the country, language, or individual variation.

The multilingual character of the study constitutes both a strength and a possible source of semantic loss. The interviews were conducted in Lithuanian, English, Russian, or a combination of English and Russian. Automated transcription tools were used; Russian-language interviews were translated into English, while Lithuanian interviews remained in the original language and only the quotations used in the dissertation were translated. Although all transcripts were checked against the recordings, and every cited extract was verified, culturally specific meanings, ambiguities, and linguistic nuances may have been reduced through transcription and/or translation.

The abstract character of some questions concerning values, or the meaning of a 'good life' may also have been understood differently according to language, education, and preferred modes of self-expression. Some participants produced highly reflexive and elaborated accounts, while others articulated their priorities more concretely through descriptions of work, housing, family, or everyday decisions. Differences in narrative elaboration should not automatically be interpreted as differences in the presence or absence of particular values.

The author of this dissertation also belongs to the first postsocialist generation examined in the dissertation. This generational proximity may have facilitated interaction and recognition of shared historical and cultural references, while also increasing the possibility that familiar assumptions were taken for granted, or that particular interpretations appeared more intuitively plausible. Attention to contradictory cases, transparent coding procedures, and repeated comparison between countries and biographies reduced – but could not eliminate – this interpretive influence.

The explanatory sequential design creates a related possibility of confirmation bias. The country selection and the interview guide were informed by preliminary quantitative patterns, which may have made accounts consistent with the expected contrast more analytically visible. The systematic consideration of cases contradicting the initial interpretation helped revise the simple division between materialist and postmaterialist values, but it cannot fully exclude the influence of the original analytical expectations. **The proposed pathways should, therefore, be understood as theoretically and contextually grounded interpretations rather than as causal mechanisms independently confirmed by the qualitative study.**

The comparative interpretation was additionally affected by unequal access to country-specific and regional literature. Research available in English and Lithuanian was more extensive for Lithuania, Czechia, and parts of Central and Eastern Europe than for Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Relevant scholarship published in other national and regional

languages may consequently be underrepresented. This imbalance limits the extent to which every country case can be situated within an equally detailed historical and sociological literature context.

Finally, the absence of a Western European or another non-postsocialist comparison group restricts claims about regional specificity in both empirical components. The study shows how value change is configured within the postsocialist cases examined, but it cannot determine whether the proposed value reconceptualisations are unique to postsocialism or broader characteristics of late-modern capitalist societies. The postsocialist specificity may lie not in the exclusive existence of these orientations, but in the historical conditions, under which, they are combined, interpreted, and transmitted.

These limitations point to several directions for future research. Longitudinal panel studies or cohort-following designs would make it possible to observe how the values of the same individuals change across the life course and in response to major historical events. Quantitative studies could use macro-level indicators matched to specific country-survey waves, or to the respondents' formative periods. Survey weights, country-balanced estimands, cluster-robust or multilevel models, and comparisons with Western European or other regional samples would strengthen the interpretation of country, regional and generational differences.

The four proposed value configurations also require dedicated operationalisation and validation. Future surveys could combine the twelve-item postmaterialism battery with indicators of subsistence security, property, consumption, status, relational support, autonomy, meaningful work, mental well-being, social belonging, and self-expression. Analysis could then examine whether classical materialist, neo-materialist, relational nonmaterialist, and neo-nonmaterialist configurations can be identified quantitatively, how frequently they overlap, and whether their distribution differs by generation and country.

Institutional and reflexive orientations similarly require more precise measurement. Future research should distinguish between religious affiliation, institutional participation, practice, doctrinal belief, personal importance, national-religious identity, individualised spirituality, secular morality, and reflexive meaning-making. This would enable systematic testing of how institutional and reflexive orientations overlap, and how they intersect with materialist and nonmaterialist values.

Further qualitative research should broaden the social composition of the sample by including more participants without higher education, people in precarious employment, rural populations, minority groups, and individuals with limited transnational mobility. Repeated biographical

interviews could examine how value configurations change through partnership, parenthood, migration, employment instability, political crisis, or war. Direct comparison with non-postsocialist societies would help determine which configurations are associated specifically with postsocialist trajectories, and which reflect wider transformations of late modernity.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation examined how materialist and postmaterialist value orientations differ between the first postsocialist generation and earlier generations, and how these differences can be understood across macro-level historical and contemporary conditions, meso-level generational and relational processes, and micro-level individual circumstances and interpretations.

The research question is answered as follows. In the observed postsocialist sample, the first postsocialist generation occupies a modest but significantly more postmaterialist position than the three earlier generations, after accounting for broad age-group and survey-period differences, country, and individual characteristics. This pattern is not uniform across countries and cannot be interpreted as a pure causal cohort effect.

It is embedded in divergent postsocialist trajectories and is best understood by examining generational socialisation, intergenerational transmission, institutions, relationships, and biographical interpretation together. Value change in the postsocialist countries is rather characterised by the coexistence, transformation, and recombination of value orientations than by the complete replacement of materialism by postmaterialism.

1. The dissertation has established a multilevel theoretical framework for analysing generational value change in the postsocialist countries. These countries shared a systemic rupture and institutional reorganisation, but differ in pre-socialist histories, socialist modernisation, transformation paths, economic and democratic development, religious traditions, migration, digitalisation, and exposure to later crises. Generation was, therefore, conceptualised as a historically situated structure of socialisation and mediation at the meso level. The theoretical model connected macro-level historical legacies and contemporary conditions with micro-level individual life circumstances and value orientations through meso-level generational socialisation and intergenerational transmission, while emphasising the importance of meaningful relational environments. Its central theoretical implication is that structural conditions delimit opportunities and risks but acquire value significance only through social settings and individual interpretation. Existential security must consequently be understood as multidimensional rather than reduced to national or individual economic wealth.

2. The quantitative analysis showed that, across the pooled sample of 24 postsocialist countries, the first postsocialist generation was more postmaterialist than all three earlier generations, even when the age, survey

period, country, and individual characteristics were taken into account. The generational progression was not linear: the two socialist generations were similar, while clearer shifts emerged from the last socialist to the transitional generation, and from the transitional to the first postsocialist generation. Country-specific results generally followed the pooled pattern, but in Croatia, Estonia, Montenegro, and Ukraine, the first postsocialist generation was less postmaterialist than all three earlier generations. The temporal findings, likewise, did not reveal a uniform progression. Although the observed distribution showed the highest share of postmaterialist respondents in the latest survey period, the period pattern pointed in the opposite direction to the expected increase after adjustment. The expectation that postmaterialism would increase over time was, therefore, not supported. Respondents in all older age groups tended to be less postmaterialist than those aged 16–24, but clear differences were found only among those aged 25–34 and 35–44. The expected age pattern was, therefore, supported only partially. **Taken together, these findings support the first thesis to defend: the first postsocialist generation generally occupies a modestly more postmaterialist position, but generational value change is neither linear nor universal and varies across national contexts.**

3. The findings of this dissertation have shown that postmaterialist orientations were generally stronger in more economically developed and deliberatively democratic societies, although this relationship was also not uniform. Slovenia and Estonia broadly conformed to the expected combination of higher prosperity and stronger postmaterialism, but Lithuania and Czechia displayed lower levels of postmaterialism than the national income alone would suggest, while postmaterialist value orientations also strengthened in several less affluent societies. **Taken together, these findings support the second thesis to defend: economic development and deliberative democracy are positively associated with postmaterialist orientations, but neither condition alone accounts for their heterogeneous distribution across postsocialist societies.**

4. The qualitative findings showed that insecurity was experienced across all six national contexts, although its forms and the resources available for managing it varied. In less affluent contexts, the participants more often described insecurity in relation to economic hardship, housing, inadequate public provision, political instability, migration, and geopolitical risks. However, material insecurity was also present in Lithuania and Czechia through housing costs, unstable employment, inflation, and regional inequality. Across all contexts, family, friends, partners, and communities could mitigate insecurity through material, practical, and emotional support,

but the same relationships could also reproduce dependence, obligations, control, emotional insecurity, or violence. Supportive relationships sometimes enabled mobility, meaningful work, boundary-setting, and other autonomous choices, whereas self-reliance could arise from the absence of social support. Therefore, autonomy and relatedness are not mutually exclusive – reliable support can enable autonomous choices; however, at the same time, relational environments cannot be treated as a uniformly beneficial form of social capital. **Taken together, these findings support the third thesis: insecurity is experienced and managed through social relationships, which may provide both security and reproduce dependence, obligation, control, and emotional insecurity.**

5. The qualitative findings showed that materialist priorities did not appear in isolation: those participants who expressed them also articulated postmaterialist priorities; moreover, individual choices often carried several meanings at once. Work and housing, for example, could provide income and protection while also enabling identity, self-realisation, privacy, or family formation, whereas travel could express consumption and status as well as experience and self-development. A priority could, therefore, not be assigned a fixed value orientation without considering the meaning attributed to it. Classical materialist concerns with survival and immediate protection were more pronounced in less affluent contexts, but they also coexisted with autonomy, meaningful work, mobility, and self-development. In more affluent contexts, materialist priorities were not limited to survival but were also expressed through property, investment, career achievement, comfort, consumption, status, and lifestyle maintenance. On this basis, the dissertation proposes a revised model which distinguishes survival-oriented classical materialism from accumulation, achievement, mobility, and status-oriented neomaterialism, with consumerism as its clearest expression. It also distinguishes relational nonmaterialism, in which, family, friendship, reciprocity, solidarity, and community are valued as ends, from neo-nonmaterialism, centred on autonomy, meaningful work, mental well-being, liberal choice, and self-realisation. These configurations are neither sequential stages nor mutually exclusive types: individuals may combine them, and their relationship may change across life domains and biographical transitions. **Taken together, these findings support the fourth thesis to defend: value change proceeds through the coexistence, transformation, and recombination of materialist and postmaterialist orientations rather than through the linear replacement of one by the other.**

6. The quantitative findings disclosed different relationships between religion and postmaterialism at the country and individual levels. Roman

Catholic country contexts generally showed higher levels of postmaterialism than Orthodox and Muslim contexts, while several countries in which religious non-affiliation was most common also ranked comparatively high. These patterns reflect broader historical, cultural, institutional, and geopolitical contexts rather than a direct effect of the religious doctrine. At the individual level, stronger religiosity within the first postsocialist generation was weakly associated with lower – rather than higher – postmaterialism. The qualitative findings showed diverse forms of religious and moral orientation, including inherited religious traditions, institutionally organised practice, religious commitments adopted through personal networks or periods of uncertainty, individual spirituality, and secular psychological self-development. On this basis, the dissertation proposes to revise the initial theoretical model by distinguishing institutionally anchored orientations, grounded in established institutions, inherited frameworks, collective traditions, and recognised authorities, from reflexive orientations, based on the individual evaluation, selection, and reinterpretation of beliefs and meanings. These orientations are not opposite endpoints: institutional belonging may be reflexively affirmed, while individually selected beliefs may remain connected to traditions, institutions, and communities. This distinction refines Inglehart's traditional–secular-rational dimension by separating the substantive content of beliefs and values from the way in which they are anchored and interpreted. **Taken together, these findings support the fifth thesis to be defended: religious and moral change in the first postsocialist generation does not follow a uniform movement from traditional to secular-rational values, but involves institutionally anchored and reflexive orientations that are analytically distinct, which yet may coexist and overlap.**

7. The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings produced the dissertation's main theoretical contribution: a context-sensitive revision of Inglehart's model for postsocialist societies. Inglehart's model remains useful for relating value differences to economic and democratic conditions, formative socialisation, generational succession, and changing historical conditions. However, it does not explain the observed patterns when security is reduced primarily to economic prosperity, societies are placed along a single developmental trajectory, or materialist versus postmaterialist priorities are treated as mutually exclusive. The revised model addresses these limitations by treating security as material, institutional, relational, and psychological, and by locating value formation within a dynamic macro–meso–micro process. At the macro level, historical trajectories and current economic, political, religious, and late-modern conditions, including transnational and

digital environments, shape opportunities and risks. At the meso level, families, institutions, peers, partnerships, and communities influence how these conditions are experienced, while, at the micro level, individuals interpret and combine their meanings within their biographies. The revision also reconceptualises the two value dimensions. The materialist–postmaterialist dimension is reconceptualised through four overlapping configurations: classical materialism, neomaterialism, relational nonmaterialism, and neo-nonmaterialism. The traditional–secular-rational dimension is refined by distinguishing institutionally anchored and reflexive orientations, which describe how values and meanings are sustained, selected, and reinterpreted rather than representing fixed value endpoints. The two dimensions intersect: each substantive value configuration may be institutionally anchored, reflexively interpreted, or combine both modes. **The resulting revised model represents value change as a context-sensitive process of continuity, coexistence, transformation, and recombination rather than as a linear transition. However, it is an empirically grounded theoretical proposal rather than a fully validated and operationalised replacement model.** The four-item postmaterialism index remains useful for standardised comparison, but it captures only a limited part of individual value systems.

The dissertation contributes to the sociology of values by combining comparative evidence from 24 postsocialist countries with 65 biographical accounts from six postsocialist countries and showing how similar priorities acquire different meanings across national, relational, and individual contexts. It develops a context-sensitive revision of Inglehart's model that explains value change through multiple forms of security, multilevel social processes, and the coexistence and recombination of value orientations. It also demonstrates how qualitative analysis can extend standardised cross-national measurement by revealing meanings and configurations that the four-item postmaterialism index does not capture.

However, the dissertation has its limitations that should be taken into account. The quantitative evidence is based on unweighted and unevenly distributed repeated cross-sectional data. **The interdependence of age, period, and cohort prevents a purely causal interpretation of generational differences.** Contemporary country indicators – GDP per capita and the deliberative democracy index, as well as the narrow postmaterialism and religiosity indices – capture formative conditions and value systems only partially. The qualitative analysis identified meanings and plausible pathways rather than their prevalence or causal effects. **Moreover, its six-country**

sample was dominated by highly educated participants, thus limiting the representation of variety.

Longitudinal panels and repeated biographical interviews are needed to distinguish individual change from cohort replacement. Future quantitative research should use country-balanced and multilevel approaches, include indicators of formative macro-level conditions, and compare postsocialist with non-postsocialist societies. New instruments should operationalise and test the four value configurations and the institutional–reflexive distinction across countries, while also distinguishing among different elements of religiosity. It should also evaluate and compare the proposed revised model in the light of already existing reconceptualisations of Inglehart's theory, including emancipative values as well as Schwartz's theory of basic human values.

Broader qualitative samples should include more participants without higher education, people in precarious employment, rural residents, and other participants from more disadvantaged social groups. More generally, following the logics of this dissertation, comparative value research should examine not only which priorities people select, but also what those priorities mean, and how they are socially anchored before interpreting them as successive stages of development.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Codes of literature review

Code	Frequency
Pandemic	2
Consumerism	32
Parent–Child Dynamics	30
Communitarianism and Traditionalism	49
Individualism	90
Postmaterialist Values	64
Materialism	33
Transition and Transformation Theory	14
Modernisation Theory	25
Youth Theories	17
Path Dependency	30
Identity Theories	45
Value Change Theory	118
Cohorts and Generations	104
Methodology	7
Age–Period–Cohort Effects	18
Social and Cultural Change	55
Youngest Generation	61
Central Asia	18
Chaos, Instability, and Risk	86
New Forms of Political Participation	2
Importance of Religiosity	4
Primary and Generational Socialisation, Collective Memory	20
Impact of Technology and Globalisation	34
Importance of Economic Development and Security	33
Institutional Learning	6
Importance of Secondary Socialisation	8
Importance of (Non-)Democratic Contexts	19
Importance and Impact of Education	9
(Post-)Socialist Context	176
Importance of Local Culture and Context for Values and Identity	30

Annex 2.

Annex Table A1. Principal analytical sample by country, survey year, and birth cohort

Country	Survey year	N	Penultimate socialist	Last socialist	Transitional	First postsocialist
Albania	1998	419	233	186	0	0
Albania	2002	505	217	198	90	0
Albania	2008	935	337	219	379	0
Albania	2018	1035	296	240	232	267
Armenia	1997	1027	437	590	0	0
Armenia	2008	871	284	260	327	0
Armenia	2011	613	190	178	188	57
Armenia	2018	1093	251	251	276	315
Armenia	2021	762	200	192	217	153
Azerbaijan	1997	1074	525	549	0	0
Azerbaijan	2011	710	214	195	223	78
Azerbaijan	2018	1452	288	324	455	385
Belarus	1996	727	436	291	0	0
Belarus	2000	392	158	200	34	0
Belarus	2008	925	305	269	351	0
Belarus	2011	943	268	266	327	82
Belarus	2018	1062	266	270	317	209
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2001	614	250	279	85	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2008	888	225	313	350	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2019	1140	306	250	243	341
Bulgaria	1997	343	159	184	0	0
Bulgaria	1999	286	161	117	8	0
Bulgaria	2006	444	186	171	87	0
Bulgaria	2008	587	218	186	183	0
Bulgaria	2017	794	263	233	187	111
Croatia	1999	431	190	226	15	0
Croatia	2008	766	229	219	318	0
Croatia	2017	875	247	196	239	193
Czechia	1998	325	159	166	0	0
Czechia	1999	610	289	278	43	0
Czechia	2008	770	260	271	239	0
Czechia	2017	885	240	284	233	128
Czechia	2022	789	198	224	212	155

Country	Survey year	N	Penultimate socialist	Last socialist	Transitional	First postsocialist
Estonia	1996	327	192	135	0	0
Estonia	1999	396	168	203	25	0
Estonia	2008	686	263	211	212	0
Estonia	2011	800	236	225	270	69
Estonia	2018	641	179	172	185	105
Georgia	1996	847	386	461	0	0
Georgia	2008	816	268	308	240	0
Georgia	2009	842	287	298	256	1
Georgia	2014	824	215	222	240	147
Georgia	2018	1291	381	332	329	249
Hungary	1998	235	105	130	0	0
Hungary	1999	326	157	159	10	0
Hungary	2008	859	277	277	305	0
Hungary	2009	559	174	189	188	8
Hungary	2018	883	203	260	182	238
Kazakhstan	2011	1127	281	343	405	98
Kazakhstan	2018	950	201	241	312	196
Kyrgyzstan	2003	717	245	284	188	0
Kyrgyzstan	2011	1140	323	298	386	133
Kyrgyzstan	2020	906	194	204	280	228
Latvia	1996	441	232	209	0	0
Latvia	1999	322	165	149	8	0
Latvia	2008	771	254	229	288	0
Latvia	2021	768	226	209	215	118
Lithuania	1997	376	206	170	0	0
Lithuania	1999	394	196	182	16	0
Lithuania	2008	757	272	200	285	0
Lithuania	2018	866	257	217	188	204
Montenegro	1996	93	58	35	0	0
Montenegro	2001	422	177	222	23	0
Montenegro	2008	825	255	281	289	0
Montenegro	2019	635	167	189	139	140
North Macedonia	1998	370	248	122	0	0
North Macedonia	2001	491	214	224	53	0
North Macedonia	2008	805	246	273	283	3
North Macedonia	2019	753	184	197	164	208
Poland	1997	341	178	163	0	0
Poland	1999	335	179	154	2	0
Poland	2005	441	150	144	147	0
Poland	2008	780	242	242	296	0

Country	Survey year	N	Penultimate socialist	Last socialist	Transitional	First postsocialist
Poland	2012	497	140	138	158	61
Poland	2017	747	200	180	218	149
Romania	1998	510	258	252	0	0
Romania	1999	396	184	191	21	0
Romania	2005	684	262	284	138	0
Romania	2008	606	231	180	195	0
Romania	2012	782	255	236	226	65
Romania	2018	1606	414	455	354	383
Russia	1995	544	361	183	0	0
Russia	1999	825	433	368	24	0
Russia	2006	1117	371	320	426	0
Russia	2008	776	244	255	277	0
Russia	2011	1354	383	419	461	91
Russia	2017	2469	552	653	748	516
Serbia	1996	396	224	172	0	0
Serbia	2001	470	223	215	32	0
Serbia	2006	502	176	202	124	0
Serbia	2008	751	268	260	223	0
Serbia	2017	655	164	164	194	133
Serbia	2018	979	221	269	310	179
Slovakia	1998	381	207	174	0	0
Slovakia	1999	538	272	231	35	0
Slovakia	2008	475	217	154	104	0
Slovakia	2017	773	259	203	176	135
Slovakia	2022	749	251	191	196	111
Slovenia	1995	315	169	146	0	0
Slovenia	1999	399	171	218	10	0
Slovenia	2005	469	175	167	127	0
Slovenia	2008	638	235	202	201	0
Slovenia	2011	470	173	146	123	28
Slovenia	2017	593	170	148	147	128
Ukraine	1996	766	477	289	0	0
Ukraine	1999	364	201	151	12	0
Ukraine	2006	561	167	223	171	0
Ukraine	2008	715	247	219	249	0
Ukraine	2011	834	226	240	291	77
Ukraine	2020	1933	455	554	571	353

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* The table contains 110 country–survey-year groups and 78,889 respondents. Zeros for younger cohorts in early survey years reflect the design of the repeated cross-sections rather than missing cases.

Annex Table A2. All 72 country-specific contrasts: first postsocialist generation versus each earlier generation

Country	Earlier generation	OR	95% CI	*p*	Holm *p* (3)	Holm *p* (72)
Albania	Last socialist	1.854	1.172–2.932	0.008	0.025	0.530
Albania	Penultimate socialist	1.831	1.018–3.292	0.043	0.087	1.000
Albania	Transitional	1.343	0.930–1.938	0.116	0.116	1.000
Armenia	Last socialist	0.920	0.661–1.283	0.624	1.000	1.000
Armenia	Penultimate socialist	0.804	0.521–1.240	0.324	0.971	1.000
Armenia	Transitional	1.043	0.813–1.339	0.739	1.000	1.000
Azerbaijan	Last socialist	0.968	0.657–1.426	0.869	1.000	1.000
Azerbaijan	Penultimate socialist	1.116	0.663–1.879	0.680	1.000	1.000
Azerbaijan	Transitional	0.910	0.682–1.214	0.521	1.000	1.000
Belarus	Last socialist	1.221	0.854–1.747	0.274	0.654	1.000
Belarus	Penultimate socialist	1.264	0.804–1.989	0.310	0.654	1.000
Belarus	Transitional	1.198	0.898–1.599	0.218	0.654	1.000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Last socialist	1.493	0.965–2.311	0.072	0.216	1.000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Penultimate socialist	1.714	0.950–3.092	0.073	0.216	1.000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transitional	0.988	0.703–1.389	0.944	0.944	1.000
Bulgaria	Last socialist	1.947	1.081–3.504	0.026	0.079	1.000
Bulgaria	Penultimate socialist	2.206	1.049–4.640	0.037	0.079	1.000
Bulgaria	Transitional	1.477	0.899–2.427	0.124	0.124	1.000
Croatia	Last socialist	0.773	0.450–1.326	0.349	1.000	1.000
Croatia	Penultimate socialist	0.714	0.351–1.451	0.352	1.000	1.000
Croatia	Transitional	0.992	0.661–1.490	0.969	1.000	1.000
Czechia	Last socialist	1.134	0.755–1.703	0.545	1.000	1.000
Czechia	Penultimate socialist	1.174	0.702–1.962	0.541	1.000	1.000
Czechia	Transitional	1.183	0.857–1.635	0.307	0.920	1.000
Estonia	Last socialist	0.665	0.418–1.058	0.085	0.170	1.000
Estonia	Penultimate socialist	0.528	0.297–0.939	0.030	0.089	1.000
Estonia	Transitional	0.817	0.556–1.202	0.306	0.306	1.000
Georgia	Last socialist	0.912	0.652–1.275	0.590	1.000	1.000

Country	Earlier generation	OR	95% CI	*p*	Holm *p* (3)	Holm *p* (72)
Georgia	Penultimate socialist	0.912	0.596–1.396	0.673	1.000	1.000
Georgia	Transitional	1.066	0.817–1.390	0.639	1.000	1.000
Hungary	Last socialist	1.171	0.756–1.813	0.481	1.000	1.000
Hungary	Penultimate socialist	1.075	0.610–1.895	0.803	1.000	1.000
Hungary	Transitional	1.075	0.759–1.522	0.685	1.000	1.000
Kazakhstan	Last socialist	1.012	0.637–1.610	0.958	1.000	1.000
Kazakhstan	Penultimate socialist	1.113	0.617–2.006	0.723	1.000	1.000
Kazakhstan	Transitional	0.911	0.656–1.263	0.575	1.000	1.000
Kyrgyzstan	Last socialist	1.719	1.141–2.591	0.010	0.029	0.606
Kyrgyzstan	Penultimate socialist	1.703	0.988–2.937	0.055	0.055	1.000
Kyrgyzstan	Transitional	1.473	1.095–1.982	0.010	0.029	0.640
Latvia	Last socialist	2.203	1.250–3.884	0.006	0.019	0.417
Latvia	Penultimate socialist	2.505	1.243–5.047	0.010	0.020	0.632
Latvia	Transitional	1.501	0.937–2.403	0.091	0.091	1.000
Lithuania	Last socialist	2.680	1.555–4.620	< 0.001	0.001	0.027
Lithuania	Penultimate socialist	3.433	1.716–6.867	< 0.001	0.001	0.034
Lithuania	Transitional	2.014	1.304–3.111	0.002	0.002	0.107
Montenegro	Last socialist	0.833	0.466–1.488	0.537	1.000	1.000
Montenegro	Penultimate socialist	0.866	0.419–1.790	0.698	1.000	1.000
Montenegro	Transitional	0.830	0.506–1.362	0.462	1.000	1.000
North Macedonia	Last socialist	1.011	0.612–1.671	0.965	1.000	1.000
North Macedonia	Penultimate socialist	1.029	0.546–1.939	0.928	1.000	1.000
North Macedonia	Transitional	0.729	0.482–1.101	0.133	0.399	1.000
Poland	Last socialist	0.891	0.584–1.360	0.592	0.946	1.000
Poland	Penultimate socialist	1.222	0.707–2.110	0.473	0.946	1.000
Poland	Transitional	0.804	0.573–1.127	0.205	0.614	1.000
Romania	Last socialist	1.276	0.911–1.788	0.157	0.313	1.000
Romania	Penultimate socialist	1.467	0.951–2.263	0.083	0.248	1.000
Romania	Transitional	1.057	0.806–1.386	0.689	0.689	1.000
Russia	Last socialist	1.638	1.245–2.154	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.029

Country	Earlier generation	OR	95% CI	*p*	Holm *p* (3)	Holm *p* (72)
Russia	Penultimate socialist	1.796	1.259–2.562	0.001	0.001	0.085
Russia	Transitional	1.491	1.206–1.842	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.016
Serbia	Last socialist	1.000	0.682–1.466	0.999	1.000	1.000
Serbia	Penultimate socialist	1.096	0.666–1.805	0.717	1.000	1.000
Serbia	Transitional	0.975	0.723–1.316	0.869	1.000	1.000
Slovakia	Last socialist	1.723	1.112–2.670	0.015	0.030	0.888
Slovakia	Penultimate socialist	1.706	0.983–2.960	0.058	0.058	1.000
Slovakia	Transitional	1.642	1.137–2.369	0.008	0.024	0.527
Slovenia	Last socialist	1.138	0.692–1.870	0.610	1.000	1.000
Slovenia	Penultimate socialist	0.940	0.504–1.754	0.847	1.000	1.000
Slovenia	Transitional	1.294	0.859–1.950	0.218	0.653	1.000
Ukraine	Last socialist	0.858	0.636–1.157	0.315	0.315	1.000
Ukraine	Penultimate socialist	0.720	0.489–1.060	0.096	0.288	1.000
Ukraine	Transitional	0.833	0.655–1.059	0.136	0.288	1.000

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* OR (odds ratio) values above 1 indicate higher cumulative odds of a more postmaterialist category in the first postsocialist generation. Holm *p* (3) adjusts the three contrasts within each country; Holm *p* (72) adjusts all country-specific contrasts together. CI = confidence interval

Annex Table A3. Likelihood-ratio tests for all predictor blocks in the principal partial proportional-odds model

Predictor block	LR χ^2	df	*p*	Role in the analysis
Age group	27.23	4	< 0.001	H6
Generation	15.33	3	0.002	H3–H4
Survey period	208.78	4	< 0.001	H5
Country	4,448.19	46	< 0.001	Country adjustment
Sex	56.80	1	< 0.001	Individual control
Marital status	67.68	10	< 0.001	Individual control
Number of children	6.12	1	0.013	Individual control
Education	442.50	2	< 0.001	Individual control
Composite religiosity	38.83	2	< 0.001	Individual-level control in the principal model; examined directly in the H8 analysis

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. LR = likelihood ratio, df = degrees of freedom.

Annex Table A4. Fit and numerical diagnostics of the principal partial proportional-odds model

Indicator or estimate	Value
Analytical N	78 889
Estimated parameters	75
Log likelihood	−67 280.78
Overall model versus intercept-only model	LR $\chi^2(73) = 5{,}711.35$, $p < 0.001$
AIC	134 711.57
BIC	135 407.25
McFadden pseudo-R^2	0.0407
Cox–Snell pseudo-R^2	0.0698
Nagelkerke pseudo-R^2	0.0840
Maximum absolute gradient	5.90×10^{-12}
Convergence status	Successful convergence
Design matrix	Full rank
PPO versus proportional-odds model	LR $\chi^2(32) = 423.62$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. LR = likelihood ratio.

Annex Table A5. In-sample probability calibration and modal classification of value-orientation categories in the principal partial proportional-odds model

Panel A. Observed outcome shares and mean fitted probabilities

Category	Observed N	Observed share	Mean fitted probability	Expected N from fitted probabilities
Materialist	28 380	36.0%	36.0%	28 379.9
Mixed	44 414	56.3%	56.3%	44 422.0
Postmaterialist	6 095	7.7%	7.7%	6 087.1
Total	**78 889**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**78 889.0**

Panel B. Observed and modal predicted categories

Observed category	Predicted materialist	Predicted mixed	Predicted postmaterialist	Observed N	Correctly classified
Materialist	5 679 (20.0%)	22 701 (80.0%)	0 (0.0%)	28 380	20.0%
Mixed	4 919 (11.1%)	39 495 (88.9%)	0 (0.0%)	44 414	88.9%
Postmaterialist	270 (4.4%)	5 825 (95.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 095	0.0%
Total predicted N	**10 868**	**68 021**	**0**	**78 889**	**57.3% overall**

Source: Author's calculations based on harmonised EVS/WVS data. *Note.* Panel A compares the observed outcome distribution with the mean category probabilities fitted by the principal model. Expected counts are obtained by summing up the fitted probabilities across the respondents. Panel B assigns each respondent to the category with the highest fitted probability and reports frequencies and row percentages. The model reproduced the aggregate outcome shares closely, but modal classification was uneven: 20.0% of materialists, 88.9% of mixed-category respondents, and 0.0% of postmaterialists were correctly classified. The maximum fitted probability of postmaterialism was 45.8%, but postmaterialism was never the most probable of the three categories. The overall in-sample accuracy was 57.3%, compared with a 56.3% majority-class baseline. These results assess in-sample calibration and discrimination and do not constitute out-of-sample predictive validation.

Annex Table A6. Number of respondents per country, generation and survey period

	Penultimate socialist generation			Last socialist generation			Transitional generation		First postsocialist generation
Country	**1990–2004**	**2005–2014**	**2015–2022**	**1990–2004**	**2005–2014**	**2015–2022**	**2005–2014**	**2015–2022**	**2015–2022**
Albania	472	347	296	404	228	240	399	233	270
Armenia	451	485	488	600	454	456	536	517	493
Azerbaijan	539	214	294	556	195	332	223	469	396
Belarus	866	583	276	546	550	282	697	327	209
Bosnia and Herzegovina	259	229	312	290	335	258	369	252	361
Bulgaria	516	432	271	361	387	241	299	194	120
Croatia	463	243	255	547	235	207	353	253	199
Czechia	1054	286	464	582	294	558	287	477	303
Estonia	583	505	188	440	444	181	483	198	108
Georgia	392	784	394	469	843	339	756	339	259
Hungary	427	458	218	341	476	274	501	193	247
Kazakhstan	n/a	281	224	n/d	343	264	405	351	241
Kyrgyzstan	255	335	205	288	304	216	403	292	276
Latvia	621	259	247	416	238	224	295	230	129
Lithuania	655	275	271	465	211	230	298	194	212
Montenegro	252	283	182	281	316	207	339	157	154
North Macedonia	488	267	201	374	305	207	323	187	258
Poland	531	552	213	353	553	191	638	228	157
Romania	709	811	455	545	755	490	636	387	436
Russia	1201	1046	581	651	1050	679	1245	788	539
Serbia	457	526	401	402	566	465	445	552	357
Slovakia	836	236	532	497	171	406	113	388	265
Slovenia	557	639	183	465	569	162	491	157	132
Ukraine	740	658	488	519	695	590	726	606	378

Annex Table A7. Generalised Variance Inflation Factors (GVIF) for Model Predictors

Predictor	GVIF^(1/(2·Df))
Age	1.25
Period	1.54
Generation	1.33
Size of town	1.05
Education level	1.10
Sex	1.01
Importance of religiosity	1.03
Number of children	1.26
Marital status	1.26
Economic wealth	1.06

Annex 4. Interview guidelines

Evaluation of own generation

1. Tell me about your country. How is life for young people there?
2. What do young people value there, what is important for them? How are they, what are they seeking, prioritizing? What are the differences between urban/rural, women/men, ethnicities, religions?
3. Are young people different from the older generations? How?

Personal contexts, influencing values

4. Can you tell me, please, about your childhood, how it was, what was the relationship with your parents?
5. Can you guide me through your main life events that have happened to you up until now?
6. Tell me about your current relationship with your parents. What part do they play in your life currently? How does it affect your perception and actions?
7. Tell me about your other relationships, what importance does it have to you? How does it affect your perception and action?

Macro factors, influencing values

8. Do you consider yourself religious/spiritual? What role does religion/spirituality play in your life?
9. How would you evaluate the political situation in your country? How important is politics to you and how does it affect your life?
10. What is your engagement with politics, your political or civic participation (social movements, activism)?
11. How would you evaluate the economic situation in your country? How important is it to you, and how does it affect your life?

Picture of current life

12. What does your life look like now? What are the main parts of it/main responsibilities?

13. What are the most important goals of your life currently? What do you think you lack, and want to achieve? What's your main focus now?

14. What do you value the most of all currently in your life?

Materialist/postmaterialist values

15. What are your attitudes and thoughts about the importance of job, financial security, money, and material things in general? How would you evaluate your current economic situation? What do you have, and what do you lack/wish to have? How important is it to you? Why?

16. What does freedom mean to you? How much do you value personal freedom, political freedom? Do you feel independent? How much control do you feel you have over your life?

17. Are you interested/investing in self-development? How are you realizing yourself, how is it important to you? What part of your life does it take?

18. Tell me about what you like doing the most. Is there any discrepancy between what you are doing and what you would like to do?

19. What does your free time look like?

20. What is your engagement with charitable, humanitarian, or voluntary action?

21. What are the social/society issues you are mostly concerned about now?

22. What do you value the more – collectivism or individualism?

23. Are you happy about your life?

Annex 5. Informed consent form

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Philosophy

Institute of Sociology and Social Work

Name and surname of the informant:

Contacts of the informant:

Name and surname of the researcher, status: Laura Dauksaite, PhD student

Phone number of the researcher: +37065245600

Email of the researcher: laura.dauksaite@fsf.stud.vu.lt

INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Trajectories of the value (re)production and their determining factors in the first post-communist generation

This research is an integral part of the doctoral thesis focusing on value change in post-communist countries. Six post-communist countries (Lithuania, Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan) are selected for in-depth analysis. In order to gather information about the values of younger generation (born between 1991 and 2000) and their determining factors in these countries, interviews with them are planned. Therefore, I am contacting you with a request to participate in my research.

The duration of the interview is about 1.5 hours. The questions cover topics such as childhood experiences and context, relationship with parents and friends, important life events, current life context, activities, preferences, goals, obstacles, opportunities and existing influences on your life choices and values.

The interview will be conducted online or in person, depending on your availability and accessibility. After receiving your consent (below), the interview will be recorded (in the case of online interviews, the video will also be recorded if you agree). Online interviews will be conducted via the Teams or alternative online platform.

The information collected during the interview will be confidential and will only be used in an anonymised form. The recordings will only be needed for transcription and accurate information gathering, and will be deleted after the end of the research. This form with personal information will be safely stored separately from the interview transcripts on my personal computer and

deleted 3 years after the end of the research. All your personal information is confidential and only I will have access to it. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time during or after the interview, but no later than the end of September 2024, and all your information will be deleted immediately.

The anonymised quotes or paraphrases will be used when the research article is published in 2025, as well as in the dissertation text and at the scientific conferences where these publications will be presented.

		Check the box if you agree	Check the box if you disagree
1.	I confirm that I have been introduced to the objectives of this research, I have read the information above and understand it. I had the opportunity to ask questions and get answers to them.	☐	☐
2.	I am informed that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or after until above stated date, without giving a reason, suffering any negative consequences or receiving penalties.	☐	☐
3.	I am informed that the instrument and design of this study was reviewed and approved by the committee responsible for compliance with research ethics in sociological research at Vilnius University.	☐	☐
4.	I am informed about the conditions of my personal data storage and deletion.	☐	☐
5.	I am informed that the results of the research will be made public and drafts will be shared with me before publishing.	☐	☐
6.	I am informed of who to contact about the research.	☐	☐
7.	I consent to audio recording.	☐	☐
8.	(*Applicable only for online interviews*) I consent to video recording.	☐	☐
9.	I am informed that audio (and video) recordings will be used only for transcription in order to capture precise information and to summarize research results.	☐	☐
10.	I agree that my quotes will be anonymised when summarizing research results.	☐	☐
11.	I agree to participate in the study.	☐	☐

Name, surname of the informant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

SANTRAUKA

Tyrimo aktualumas

Valstybinio socializmo ir Sovietų Sąjungos žlugimas daugeliui Vidurio ir Rytų Europos, Balkanų, Kaukazo bei Vidurinės Azijos visuomenių reiškė bendrą sisteminį lūžį, tačiau šis lūžis nesukūrė vienodos posocialistinės raidos krypties. Šios visuomenės skyrėsi tiek ikisocialistine sąranga ir patirtimi, tiek socialistinės modernizacijos pobūdžiu, instituciniu palikimu bei vėlesne ekonomine ir politine raida (Blokker 2005; Kokushkin 2011; Lazić 2011; Myant 2007; Norkus 2008, 2023; Offe and Adler 2004; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017). Skirtingai jose reiškėsi ir vėlesni procesai – globalizacija, migracija, skaitmenizacija, vartotojiško kapitalizmo plėtra, ekonomikos krizės ir geopolitinis nesaugumas. Todėl posocializmas šiame tyrime suprantamas ne kaip vienalytė regiono savybė, o kaip istoriškai susijęs, bet vidujai diferencijuotas lyginamasis laukas.

Posocialistinių visuomenių transformacija dažniausiai vertinama pasitelkiant ekonominės raidos, demokratizacijos ir institucinių pokyčių rodiklius. Jie leidžia palyginti valstybių raidos trajektorijas, tačiau neatskleidžia, kaip struktūriniai pokyčiai patiriami, interpretuojami ir atkuriami kasdieniame gyvenime. Individualių vertybių tyrimai leidžia papildyti šią perspektyvą, atskleidžiant, kaip žmonės vertina saugumą, autonomiją, pilietinį ir socialinį dalyvavimą, socialinius santykius ir gyvenimo tikslus jiems prieinamų galimybių ir patiriamų ribotumų kontekste.

Visuomenės vertybių kaita dažnai yra analizuojama pasitelkiant kartų palyginimą. Kartos užima skirtingas istorinio laiko pozicijas, todėl jų socializacijos laikotarpiu skiriasi institucinė aplinka, kultūriniai lūkesčiai ir patiriamos saugumo bei nesaugumo formos (Mannheim 1952).

Disertacijoje pirmąja posocialistine karta laikomi 1991–2000 m. gimę asmenys, kurių pirminė socializacija vyko jau žlugus valstybiniam socializmui. Jie nepatyrė socialistinės santvarkos taip, kaip ankstesnės kartos, tačiau augo visuomenėse, kurių institucijas, šeimas ir socialinius santykius tebeveikė socialistinis palikimas ir nevienoda posocialistinė transformacija. Pirmosios posocialistinės kartos palyginimas su priešpaskutine socialistine (gimusia 1961–1970 m.), paskutine socialistine (1971–1980 m.) ir pereinamojo laikotarpio (1981–1990 m.) kartomis leidžia įvertinti, ar skirtinga istorinė socializacijos aplinka susijusi su besikeičiančiomis vertybinėmis orientacijomis.

Ronaldo Ingleharto vertybių kaitos teorija yra viena iš įtakingiausių teorijų, aiškinančių egzistencinio saugumo, socializacijos, kartų kaitos ir ilgalaikio perėjimo nuo materialistinių prie postmaterialistinių vertybių ryšį (Inglehart

1971, 1977, 1997). Vis dėlto pagrindinės šios teorijos prielaidos buvo suformuluotos remiantis pirmiausia Vakarų industrinių ir poindustrinių visuomenių patirtimi.

Socialistinės modernizacijos sąlygomis ekonominis išsivystymas, individuali gerovė ir politinės galimybės nebuvo susijusios taip pat kaip Vakarų visuomenėse, o posocialistinę raidą daugelyje šalių pertraukė ekonominiai sukrėtimai, institucinė kaita, migracija, karai ir kiti nesaugumai. Kartu kultūrinė liberalizacija, skaitmenizacija ir atsiradusios sąlygos mobilumui galėjo stiprinti autonomijos bei saviraiškos siekius net ir ten, kur materialinis saugumas išliko ribotas. Todėl posocialistinis kontekstas yra teoriškai reikšmingas lyginamasis laukas, siekiant patikrinti Ingleharto pasiūlytą vertybių kaitos modelį ir nustatyti jo ribotumus, siekiant paaiškinti regiono patirtis.

Tyrimo problema

Ankstesni tyrimai nerodo vienos nuoseklios posocialistinių visuomenių vertybių kaitos trajektorijos. Jaunesnės kartos dažnai yra mažiau tradicinės šeimos, lyčių vaidmenų ir individualaus pasirinkimo klausimais, tačiau pastebima, kad postmaterialistinės vertybinės orientacijos nevienodai stiprėja skirtingose šalyse ir skirtingais laikotarpiais (Manea and Rabušic 2021).

Vienuose tyrimuose jaunesnės kartos siejamos su didesniu individualizmu, savarankiškumu ir emancipacinėmis vertybėmis (Pavlović 2018; Surzhko-Harned and Turkina 2018), kituose pabrėžiamas vertybinių orientacijų tęstinumas, materialistinių prioritetų išlikimas, nepasitikėjimas institucijomis ir dideli nacionaliniai skirtumai (Kalmus et al. 2018; Lilleoja and Raudsepp 2018; Žiliukaitė 2016a; Savicka and Žiliukaitė 2026; Gavreliuc and Gavreliuc 2018; Savelyev 2016).

Dažniausiai šiuose tyrimuose yra remiamasi arba kiekybiniais tarptautiniais palyginimais, arba pavienių šalių tyrimais. Plataus masto kiekybiniai kartų palyginimai retai integruojami su biografiniais duomenimis, leidžiančiais nagrinėti, kaip visuomenės kontekstinės sąlygos atsiskleidžia per šeimos socializaciją, tarpasmeninius santykius, institucines patirtis ir individualią interpretaciją. Todėl mokslinėje literatūroje nėra pakankamai paaiškintas ryšys tarp makrolygmens transformacijų ir kartų socializacijos, socialinių santykių aplinkos ir sąsajų su konkrečiomis žmonių vertybinėmis orientacijomis.

Kita problema susijusi su pačia vertybių kaitos samprata ir jos matavimu. Keturių teiginių Ingleharto postmaterializmo indeksas yra tinkamas ilgalaikiams ir tarptautiniams palyginimams, tačiau juo matuojami priverstiniai pasirinkimai iš siauro valstybės prioritetų sąrašo, o ne visas materialinio saugumo, autonomijos, dalyvavimo, priklausymo ir saviraiškos

turinys. Tas pats pasirinkimas skirtingais laikotarpiais ir skirtingose visuomenėse gali turėti nevienodą prasmę.

Todėl, atsižvelgiant į šio matavimo ribotumus, šioje disertacijoje atliekant kiekybinę analizę tiriamas būtent šiuo indeksu išmatuojamas materialistinių ir postmaterialistinių vertybinių orientacijų pasiskirstymas posocialistinėse visuomenėse, o kokybinė analizė pasitelkiama nagrinėjant, kaip šie prioritetai patiriami, jungiami ir interpretuojami individualiose biografijose.

Tyrimo objektas, klausimas, tikslas ir uždaviniai

Tyrimo objektas – kartų posocialistinėse visuomenėse materialistinių ir postmaterialistinių vertybinių orientacijų kaita, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant pirmajai posocialistinei kartai.

Tyrimo klausimas: kuo pirmosios posocialistinės kartos materialistinės ir postmaterialistinės vertybinės orientacijos skiriasi nuo ankstesnių kartų vertybinių orientacijų posocialistinėse visuomenėse ir kaip šiuos skirtumus galima suprasti siejant makrolygmens istorines ir dabartines sąlygas, mezolygmens kartų socializacijos ir socialinių santykių procesus bei mikrolygmens individualias aplinkybes ir interpretacijas?

Tyrimo tikslas – ištirti kartų posocialistinėse visuomenėse materialistinių ir postmaterialistinių vertybinių orientacijų kaitą, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant pirmajai posocialistinei kartai, ir, integruojant lyginamuosius kiekybinius ir kokybinius duomenis, įvertinti ir empiriškai patikslinti Ronaldo Ingleharto vertybių kaitos modelį.

Tikslui pasiekti iškelti šie **uždaviniai**:

1. Susisteminti ir kritiškai įvertinti teorinius ir empirinius kartų, vertybių kaitos ir posocializmo tyrimus bei sukurti daugiapakopį konceptualų modelį, jungiantį makrolygmens istorines ir šiuolaikines kontekstines sąlygas, mezolygmens kartų ir socialinių santykių procesus bei mikrolygmens individualias aplinkybes ir vertybines orientacijas.
2. Remiantis jungtiniais Pasaulio vertybių tyrimo ir Europos vertybių tyrimo duomenimis, išanalizuoti keturių istoriškai apibrėžtų kartų 24 posocialistinėse visuomenėse materialistinių ir postmaterialistinių vertybinių orientacijų pasiskirstymą ir įvertinti jų sąsajas su karta, amžiaus grupe, apklausos laikotarpiu, šalimi, individualiomis charakteristikomis, religingumu bei šalies ekonominiu, demokratiniu ir religiniu kontekstu.
3. Ištirti, kaip šešiose tikslingai atrinktose posocialistinėse šalyse pirmosios posocialistinės kartos atstovai patiria, išreiškia, jungia ir interpretuoja materialistinius ir postmaterialistinius prioritetus bei religines ir moralines orientacijas, taip pat nustatyti jų formavimuisi ir kaitai reikšmingus socialinių santykių bei biografinius procesus.

4. Integruoti kiekybinius ir kokybinius rezultatus, įvertinti Ingleharto (post)materializmo modelio aiškinamąsias galimybes ir ribas posocialistiniame kontekste bei sukurti empiriškai patikslintą daugiapakopį modelį, pritaikomą istoriškai diferencijuotoms posocialistinėms ir vėlyvosios modernybės kapitalistinėms visuomenėms.

Teorinės prielaidos

Ingleharto vertybių kaitos teoriją sudaro dvi pagrindinės prielaidos. Stokos hipotezė teigia, kad žmonės didesnę reikšmę teikia tam, ko jiems labiausiai trūksta, pirmiausia – išlikimą užtikrinantiems poreikiams. Socializacijos hipotezė numato, kad pamatinės vertybinės orientacijos daugiausia formuojasi vaikystėje ir ankstyvoje jaunystėje. Todėl kartos, socializuotos didesnio ekonominio ir fizinio saugumo sąlygomis, turėtų labiau vertinti autonomiją, dalyvavimą, saviraišką ir gyvenimo kokybę. Šioms kartoms pakeičiant nesaugumo sąlygomis susiformavusias kartas, materialistinius prioritetus turėtų palaipsniui keisti postmaterialistiniai (Inglehart 1971, 1977, 1997).

Disertacijoje skiriama ankstyvoji materializmo–postmaterializmo teorijos formuluotė ir vėlesnis jos išplėtojimas į dvimatį kultūrinį žemėlapį. Pagrindinis teoriškai ir empiriškai tiriamas konstruktas yra materialistinės–postmaterialistinės vertybinės orientacijos, interpretuojamos platesnės išlikimo–saviraiškos dimensijos kontekste. Tradicinių – sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių dimensija naudojama kaip papildoma religinės ir kultūrinės kaitos perspektyva, tačiau ji nėra tapačiai matuojama kaip materializmo–postmaterializmo dimensija.

Kartos konceptualizuojamos derinant dešimtmetes gimimo kohortas su Karlo Mannheimo kartos kaip istoriškai apibrėžtos socialinės pozicijos samprata (Mannheim 1952). Toks apibrėžimas apibūdina kartos bendrą santykį su istoriniu laiku ir formavimosi aplinka, tačiau nereiškia vienodų visų kartos narių patirčių ar vertybių.

Karta konceptualiai skiriama nuo amžiaus ir laikotarpio: amžius nurodo gyvenimo eigos poziciją, laikotarpis – konkrečiu metu visus respondentus veikiančias istorines sąlygas, o karta – gimimo laiko ir formuojamųjų istorinių patirčių nulemtą poziciją. Vis dėlto šie trys dėmenys yra struktūriškai susiję, o statistiniai testai neleidžia visiškai atskirti jų grynųjų priežastinių efektų (Bell and Jones 2013; Fosse and Winship 2019a).

Ingleharto teorija papildoma vėlyvosios modernybės, individualizacijos, rizikos ir santykių saugumo perspektyvomis (Beck 1992; Bauman 2000, 2007). Ekonominė raida gali plėsti pasirinkimo galimybes ir autonomiją, bet kartu kurti su darbu, būstu, socialiniu pripažinimu, tapatybe, santykiais ir individualia atsakomybe susijusį nesaugumą.

Todėl disertacijos teorinis modelis sieja makrolygmens istorines trajektorijas ir dabartines ekonomines, politines, religines bei visuomenines sąlygas su mikrolygmens individualiomis aplinkybėmis per mezolygmens kartų socializaciją, tarpgeneracinę reprodukciją ir socialinių santykių aplinką. Šie lygmenys laikomi ne nepriklausomais ar determinuojančiais veiksniais, o sąveikaujančiomis sąlygomis, kuriomis vertybės formuojamos, atkuriamos ir perinterpretuojamos.

Mokslinis naujumas ir disertacijos indėlis

Disertacijos naujumą sudaro ne kartų vertybių kaitos ar Ingleharto teorijos taikymas posocialistinėms visuomenėms, o trijų retai integruotų tyrimo perspektyvų derinys: platus lyginamasis keturių kartų tyrimas 24 posocialistinėse šalyse, kontrastingų pirmosios posocialistinės kartos biografinių patirčių analizė šešiose posocialistinėse šalyse ir abiejų duomenų rūšių integravimas kritiškai peržiūrint teorinio modelio aiškinamąją apimtį bei jo kategorijų turinį.

Empirinis kiekybinės dalies indėlis – suderintais 1990–2022 m. Pasaulio vertybių tyrimo ir Europos vertybių tyrimo duomenimis nustatytas santykinis kartų skirtumas. Bendroje imtyje pirmoji posocialistinė karta yra labiau postmaterialistinė už kiekvieną iš trijų ankstesnių kartų, tačiau skirtumai nedideli ir jų mastas bei, kai kuriose šalyse, kryptis, nevienodi. Kokybinės dalies indėlis – remiantis 65 biografiniais interviu atskleistos kontekstinės tų pačių vertybinių prioritetų prasmės ir galimi būdai, kuriais šeima, socialiniai santykiai, bendruomenė, migracija, darbas, vartotojiškumas ir individuali interpretacija susieja platesnes visuomenės kontekstines sąlygas su vertybinėmis orientacijomis.

Metodologinis indėlis kyla iš aiškinamojo nuoseklaus mišrių metodų dizaino. Pirminiai kiekybiniai rezultatai padėjo tikslingai pasirinkti kokybinio tyrimo šalis ir suformuoti interviu temas, o kokybinė analizė leido ne tik interpretuoti statistinius skirtumus, bet ir kritiškai įvertinti, kokias prasmes aprėpia ar praleidžia standartizuotos materialisto, mišraus tipo ir postmaterialisto kategorijos. Taip parodoma, kad lyginamuosiuose vertybių tyrimuose būtina klausti ne vien, kokius prioritetus respondentai pasirenka, bet ir ką tie prioritetai reiškia jų istoriniame, socialiniame ir biografiniame kontekste.

Pagrindinis teorinis indėlis – empiriškai pagrįsta, kontekstui jautri Ingleharto modelio revizija. Joje egzistencinis saugumas nėra redukuojamas į ekonominę gerovę, o apima materialinę, institucinę, santykių ir psichologinę dimensijas. Vertybių kaita aiškinama dinamišku makro–mezo–mikroprocesu, o ne vienakrypčiu struktūrinių sąlygų poveikiu individui.

Materializmo–postmaterializmo dimensija patikslinama išskiriant keturias susisiejančias konfigūracijas: klasikinį materializmą, neomaterializmą, santykiais grindžiamą nematerializmą ir neonematerializmą. Tradicinių – sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių dimensija papildoma skiriant institucines ir refleksyvias vertybines orientacijas pagal tai, kaip vertybės ir prasmės palaikomos, pasirenkamos ir perinterpretuojamos.

Tyrimo metodologija

Tyrimas paremtas struktūruota naratyvine literatūros analize ir sinteze bei aiškinamuoju nuosekliu mišrių metodų dizainu. Bendra analizės logika yra abdukcinė: teoriškai pagrįstos hipotezės tikrinamos kiekybiškai, o kokybinėje dalyje teorinės sąvokos derinamos su iš interviu medžiagos kylančiomis kategorijomis ir prieštaraujančiais atvejais. Abiejų dalių integracija naudojama teoriniam modeliui įvertinti ir patikslinti.

Kiekybinėje dalyje analizuoti jungtiniai Pasaulio vertybių tyrimo ir Europos vertybių tyrimo duomenys, surinkti 1990–2022 m. 24 posocialistinėse šalyse. Respondentai suskirstyti į keturias dešimties metų gimimo kohortas. Priklausomas kintamasis – trijų kategorijų keturių teiginių Ingleharto postmaterializmo indeksas, skiriantis materialistines, mišrias ir postmaterialistines orientacijas.

Į pagrindinį statistinį modelį įtraukti 78 889 respondentai. Jame kartu vertintos kartos, amžiaus grupės, apklausos laikotarpiai, šalys, lytis, šeiminė padėtis, vaikų skaičius, išsilavinimas ir individualus religingumas. Atskirai tirtos sąsajos su šalies ekonominiu išsivystymu, deliberatyviosios demokratijos lygiu ir religiniu kontekstu, taip pat ryšys tarp kartų ir šalių. Rezultatai interpretuojami kaip sąlyginės sąsajos stebimoje suderintojoje imtyje, o ne kaip grynieji priežastiniai amžiaus, laikotarpio, kartos ar šalies konteksto efektai.

Kokybinė dalis atlikta po preliminarios aprašomosios kiekybinės analizės. 2024 m. kovo–spalio mėn. Lietuvoje, Čekijoje, Albanijoje, Šiaurės Makedonijoje, Sakartvele ir Kirgizstane surinkti 66 pusiau struktūruoti biografiniai interviu su pirmosios posocialistinės kartos atstovais. Vienas nepilnas interviu neįtrauktas į galutinę analizę. Šalys parinktos tikslingai, siekiant sugretinti skirtingą ekonominį, institucinį, geografinį ir religinį kontekstą. Interviu vyko lietuvių, anglų, rusų arba rusų ir anglų kalbomis. Medžiaga analizuota MAXQDA programa, taikant teorija grįstą abdukcinę kokybinę turinio analizę.

Tyrimo atitiktis mokslinio tyrimo etikai buvo įvertinta ir patvirtinta Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto atitikties mokslinių tyrimų etikai (SSDI ir UMI AMTE) komitete. Dalyviai buvo informuoti apie tyrimo tikslą

ir procedūras, konfidencialumą ir anonimiškumą. Iš visų dalyvių gautas rašytinis informuotas sutikimas. Interviu medžiaga buvo nuasmeninta.

Ginamieji teiginiai

1. Pirmosios posocialistinės kartos postmaterialistinės vertybinės orientacijos yra stipresnės nei ankstesnių kartų, tačiau kartų vertybių kaita yra netolygi ir priklauso nuo konteksto.
2. Šalies ekonomikos ir deliberatyviosios demokratijos lygis yra teigiamai susiję su postmaterialistinėmis vertybinėmis orientacijomis, tačiau nė viena iš šių sąlygų atskirai nepaaiškina lyginamų posocialistinių visuomenių šių vertybių pasiskirstymo skirtumų.
3. Nesaugumas patiriamas ir valdomas socialinių santykių aplinkoje. Šeimos, draugų, partnerių ir bendruomenės ryšiai gali suteikti saugumą ir paramą, tačiau taip pat gali kurti priklausomybę, įsipareigojimus, kontrolę ar emocinį nesaugumą.
4. Vertybių kaita vyksta ne postmaterialistinėms vertybinėms orientacijoms keičiant materialistines, bet joms koegzistuojant, kintant ir susijungiant į naujus derinius. Patikslintame modelyje klasikinis materializmas, orientuotas į išlikimą, yra skiriamas nuo į vartojimą ir pasiekimus orientuoto neomaterializmo, o santykius ir solidarumą pabrėžiantis nematerializmas yra skiriamas nuo autonomiją ir savirealizaciją pabrėžiančio neonematerializmo.
5. Pirmosios posocialistinės kartos religinių ir moralinių vertybių kaita nėra vienakryptis perėjimas nuo institucinės tradicijos prie sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių. Patikslintame modelyje skiriamos institucinės vertybinės orientacijos, grindžiamos paveldėtomis tradicijomis, kolektyvinėmis normomis ir pripažintais autoritetais, bei refleksyvios vertybinės orientacijos, grindžiamos individualiu įsitikinimų ir prasmių vertinimu, pasirinkimu ir perinterpretavimu.

Disertacijos struktūra

Disertaciją sudaro įvadas, keturi skyriai, išvados, literatūros sąrašas ir priedai. Pirmajame skyriuje, remiantis struktūruota naratyvine literatūros sinteze, plėtojamas teorinis modelis ir aptariami posocializmo, kartų bei vertybių (kaitos) teorijos, teoriniai konceptai ir empiriniai tyrimai. Antrajame skyriuje pateikiama 24 šalių kiekybinė lyginamoji analizė. Trečiajame skyriuje analizuojami 65 interviu su pirmosios posocialistinės kartos atstovais šešiose posocialistinėse šalyse. Ketvirtajame skyriuje abiejų tyrimo dalių rezultatai integruojami, vertinamos Ingleharto modelio aiškinamosios galimybės posocialistiniame kontekste ir plėtojama kontekstui jautri šio modelio revizija. Pabaigoje pateikiamos disertacijos išvados.

Svarbiausi tyrimo rezultatai

Ekonominis, demokratinis ir religinis šalių kontekstas

Pirmosios posocialistinės kartos postmaterializmo vidurkis 24 šalyse buvo vidutiniškai stipriai ir teigiamai susijęs tiek su bendruoju vidaus produktu vienam gyventojui, tiek su deliberatyviosios demokratijos indeksu. Tai patvirtino hipotezes, kad didesnė ekonominė gerovė ir didesnės demokratinės galimybės sudaro palankesnes sąlygas postmaterialistinėms orientacijoms.

Vis dėlto šios sąsajos nebuvo vienodos. Slovėnija ir Estija iš esmės atitiko didesnės ekonominės gerovės ir stipresnio postmaterializmo derinį, tačiau Lietuvoje ir Čekijoje postmaterializmo lygis buvo žemesnis negu būtų galima tikėtis vien iš nacionalinių pajamų. Taip pat pirmosios posocialistinės kartos postmaterialistinės orientacijos stiprėjo ir kai kuriose mažiau pasiturinčiose šalyse. Todėl ekonominė raida ir demokratijos kokybė yra reikšmingos, bet jų nepakanka nevienodam šalių ir kartų pasiskirstymui paaiškinti.

Religinio konteksto analizė parodė, kad šalys, kuriose dominuoja Romos katalikai, pagal pirmosios posocialistinės kartos postmaterializmo lygį vidutiniškai užėmė aukštesnes pozicijas nei šalys, kuriose vyrauja stačiatikiai ir musulmonai. Didesniu postmaterializmu pasižymėjo ir šalys, kuriose didžiausia respondentų grupė nenurodė konfesinės priklausomybės. Todėl šis rezultatas interpretuojamas kaip platesnių istorinių, kultūrinių, institucinių ir geopolitinių trajektorijų, o ne tiesioginio religinės doktrinos poveikio išraiška.

Individualaus religingumo rezultatas buvo priešingos krypties. Tarp 7 020 pirmosios posocialistinės kartos respondentų stipresnis religingumas buvo susijęs su nežymiai silpnesne postmaterialistine vertybine orientacija. Atsižvelgus į šalį, vienu balu aukštesnis religingumo indeksas susijęs su 5,5 proc. mažesniais šansais patekti į aukštesnę postmaterializmo kategoriją. Taigi šalies religinis-istorinis kontekstas ir individualus religingumas indikuoja socialinius procesus, kurie turi skirtingą įtaką postmaterializmui.

Kartų, laikotarpio, amžiaus ir šalių skirtumai

Bendroje 24 šalių imtyje pirmoji posocialistinė karta buvo labiau postmaterialistinė už visas tris ankstesnes kartas, kartu atsižvelgus į amžiaus grupę, apklausos laikotarpį, šalį, lytį, šeiminę padėtį, vaikų skaičių, išsilavinimą ir religingumą. Palyginti su pirmąja posocialistine karta, priešpaskutinės socialistinės kartos šansai patekti į aukštesnę, labiau postmaterialistinę kategoriją buvo 16,3 proc., paskutinės socialistinės kartos – 14,7 proc., o pereinamojo laikotarpio kartos – 8,8 proc. mažesni.

Vis dėlto kartų vertybių kaita nėra tolygi ar tiesinė. Tarp priešpaskutinės ir paskutinės socialistinių kartų statistiškai reikšmingo skirtumo nenustatyta. Statistiškai reikšmingų poslinkių nustatyta tarp paskutinės socialistinės ir pereinamojo laikotarpio kartų bei tarp pereinamojo laikotarpio ir pirmosios

posocialistinės kartų. Tai rodo ne vienodą postmaterializmo augimą su kiekviena jaunesne gimimo kohorta, o ryškesnius skirtumus tarp kartų, kurių socializaciją labiausiai paveikė pereinamasis laikotarpis ir posocialistinės tvarkos įsitvirtinimas.

Šalių analizė parodė, kad bendrame modelyje nustatytas kartų skirtumas nėra vienoda visam regionui būdinga tendencija. Iš 72 pirmosios posocialistinės kartos palyginimų su trimis ankstesnėmis kartomis 47 sutapo su bendrame modelyje nustatyta kryptimi. Vienuolikoje šalių pirmoji posocialistinė karta visuose trijuose palyginimuose buvo labiau postmaterialistinė.

Tačiau Kroatijoje, Estijoje, Juodkalnijoje ir Ukrainoje nustatytas priešingas rezultatas – pirmoji posocialistinė karta buvo mažiau postmaterialistinė už visas tris ankstesnes kartas. Statistiškai reikšminga šalies ir kartos sąveika taip pat parodė, kad kartų skirtumų kryptis ir mastas priklauso nuo nacionalinio konteksto.

Skirtingų apklausos laikotarpių palyginimas nuoseklaus postmaterializmo stiprėjimo taip pat neatskleidė. Nors 2015–2022 m. nepakoreguota „postmaterialistinių“ atsakymų dalis buvo didžiausia, atsižvelgus į imties pasiskirstymą pagal šalis, kartas, amžiaus grupes ir individualias respondentų charakteristikas išryškėjo priešinga nei numatyta hipotezėje tendencija. Taigi hipotezė, kad vėlesniais apklausų laikotarpiais postmaterializmas nuosekliai stiprėja, nepasitvirtino.

Tai nereiškia, kad naujausiu laikotarpiu postmaterializmas dėl paties laikotarpio priežastingai silpnėjo. Rezultatai tik rodo, kad, atsižvelgus į kitus analizuotus veiksnius, duomenys nepatvirtina nuoseklaus jo augimo. Pandemija, infliacija, geopolitinis nesaugumas galėjo iš naujo sustiprinti kainų stabilumo, tvarkos, fizinio saugumo ir institucinės apsaugos svarbą, tačiau šie galimi mechanizmai kiekybinėje analizėje atskirai netirti.

Matuojant amžiaus įtaką postmaterializmui, visų vyresnių amžiaus grupių rezultatai parodė mažesnį postmaterializmą nei 16–24 metų grupėje, tačiau statistiškai reikšmingų skirtumų nustatyta tik tarp 16–24 metų respondentų ir 25–34 bei 35–44 metų grupių. Todėl numatytas amžiaus dėsningumas pasitvirtino tik iš dalies. Bendrame modelyje išlikęs kartų skirtumas leidžia jį laikyti sąlyginiu dėsningumu, tačiau nesuteikia pagrindo teigti, kad buvo nustatytas savarankiškas priežastinis socializacijos poveikis postmaterializmui.

Nesaugumas ir santykių aplinka

Interviu su pirmąja posocialistine karta atskleidė, kad nesaugumas patiriamas visose šešiose posocialistinėse šalyse, tačiau skiriasi jo formos, intensyvumas ir prieinami ištekliai jam įveikti. Informantai iš Albanijos,

Šiaurės Makedonijos, Sakartvelo ir Kirgizstano dažniau kalbėjo apie mažas pajamas, maisto ir būsto kainas, sveikatos priežiūros prieinamumą, ribotas darbo galimybes, nepakankamą valstybės teikiamą apsaugą, politinį nestabilumą, migraciją, geopolitines grėsmes ir aplinkosaugos rizikas. Materialinis nesaugumas buvo svarbus ir Lietuvoje bei Čekijoje, ypač kalbant apie būsto įperkamumą, nestabilų darbą, infliaciją ir netolygias galimybes skirtinguose regionuose.

Šeimos nariai, draugai, partneriai ir vietos bendruomenės padėjo sušvelninti patiriamą nesaugumą suteikdami finansinę paramą, būstą, priežiūrą, praktinę pagalbą, informaciją ir emocinį palaikymą ar būdami patikima atrama ištikus krizei. Tačiau tie patys ryšiai stiprino priklausomybės ir skolingumo jausmą, lyčių vaidmenimis grindžiamus įsipareigojimus, spaudimą prisitaikyti, kontrolę ir emocinį nesaugumą ar net tapo smurto šaltiniu. Patikima socialinė parama kartais suteikdavo galimybę keisti gyvenamąją vietą, rinktis prasmingą darbą, nustatyti asmenines ribas ir priimti kitus savarankiškus sprendimus. Kita vertus, ankstyvas savarankiškumas kartais buvo ne laisvas pasirinkimas, o socialinės paramos stokos pasekmė.

Taigi autonomija ir artimi ryšiai nėra priešybės. Patikima aplinkinių parama gali suteikti žmogui daugiau laisvės priimti savarankiškus sprendimus, tačiau pabrėžtinas savarankiškumas nebūtinai rodo postmaterialistinę laisvę – jis gali atsirasti dėl būtinybės verstis be kitų pagalbos. Todėl socialinių santykių aplinkos negalima savaime laikyti teigiamą įtaką postmaterializmui augti darančiu socialiniu kapitalu. Priklausomai nuo socialinių ryšių prieinamumo ir kokybės nesaugumo jausmas gali didėti arba mažėti, taip pat nuo to priklauso, kaip žmogus patiria ir supranta patį nesaugumą.

Materialistinių ir nematerialistinių orientacijų koegzistavimas

Kiekviename interviu, kuriame kalbėta apie materialistinius prioritetus, atsiskleidė ir nematerialistiniai prioritetai. Be to, tas pats sprendimas neretai turėjo kelias skirtingas reikšmes. Darbas galėjo užtikrinti pajamas ir stabilumą, bet kartu suteikti tapatybės, prasmės ir savirealizacijos galimybių. Būstas saugojo nuo pažeidžiamumo, tačiau taip pat suteikė privatumo ir sudarė sąlygas kurti partnerystę ar šeimą. Kelionės galėjo reikšti vartojimą ir statusą (taip pat kaip ir būstas) arba būti siejamos su naujomis patirtimis, mobilumu ir saviugda. Todėl vien iš pasirinkto prioriteto negalima patikimai spręsti apie žmogaus vertybinę orientaciją – būtina atsižvelgti į jo paties tam prioritetui suteikiamą prasmę.

Mažiau ekonomiškai pasiturinčiose šalyse labiau išryškėjo klasikiniai materialistiniai rūpesčiai, susiję su išgyvenimu ir apsauga nuo tiesioginių grėsmių, tačiau jie buvo derinami su autonomijos, prasmingo darbo,

mobilumo ir saviugdos siekiais. Labiau pasiturinčiose šalyse materialistiniai prioritetai dažnai neapsiribojo išgyvenimu – jie apėmė nuosavybę, investavimą, profesinius pasiekimus, komfortą, atostogas, statusą ir siekį išlaikyti norimą gyvenimo lygį.

Remiantis šiais rezultatais, klasikinis materializmas yra siejamas su išgyvenimu, ekonominiu stabilumu ir apsauga nuo tiesioginių grėsmių. Jis skirasi nuo neomaterializmo, kuris simbolizuoja turto kaupimą, profesinius pasiekimus, komfortą, mobilumą, statusą ir siekį išlaikyti pasirinktą gyvenimo būdą. Ryškiausia neomaterializmo išraiška yra vartotojiškumas. Santykiais grindžiamas nematerializmas apima šeimą, draugystes, solidarumą, tarpusavio paramą ir bendruomenę, kurie yra vertinami kaip savaime svarbūs.

Neonematerializmas siejamas su autonomija, prasmingu darbu, psichologine gerove, liberaliais gyvenimo pasirinkimais ir savirealizacija. Šios keturios konfigūracijos nėra nei viena kitą pakeičiančios raidos pakopos, nei tarpusavyje nesuderinami vertybių tipai. Jos gali sutapti, viena tapti priemone kitai įgyvendinti ir kisti skirtingose gyvenimo srityse ar biografijos tarpsniuose.

Religinių ir moralinių vertybių kaitos interpretavimas

Kokybiniai duomenys padėjo paaiškinti, kodėl šalies religinio konteksto ir individualaus religingumo rezultatų negalima tiesiogiai sutapatinti. Dalyvių pasakojimuose buvo derinamos šeimoje paveldėtos religinės tradicijos, institucinė religinė praktika, per asmeninius ryšius ar nesaugumo laikotarpiais atrastas institucinis religingumas, individualus dvasingumas ir sekuliari psichologinė saviugda.

Priklausymas religinei institucijai nebūtinai rodė nekritišką tradicijos perėmimą, kaip ir institucinis religingumas nebūtinai reiškė dalyvavimą religinėse institucijose, pavyzdžiui, kai religinės tradicijos yra internalizuojamos kaip kultūrinis paveldas. Taip pat ir savarankiškai, refleksyviai pasirinkti tiek dvasingumo, tiek sekuliarūs įsitikinimai galėjo išlikti susiję su religine tradicija ir bendruomene.

Patikslintame modelyje institucinės vertybinės orientacijos apima prasmes, grindžiamas nusistovėjusiomis institucijomis (šeima ir bendruomene kaip institucija bei tradicinėmis religinėmis institucijomis), paveldėtais interpretaciniais rėmais, kolektyvinėmis tradicijomis ir pripažintais autoritetais. Refleksyvios vertybinės orientacijos reiškia, kad žmogus aktyviai vertina, pasirenka, iš naujo interpretuoja ir pertvarko jam prieinamas prasmes.

Šios vertybinės orientacijos nėra priešingi vienos skalės poliai: institucinė priklausomybė gali būti sąmoningai apsvarstyta ir patvirtinta, o individualiai pasirinkti įsitikinimai gali būti palaikomi institucijų, tradicijų ar bendruomeninių ryšių. Ši skirtis patikslina Ingleharto tradicinių ir

sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių dimensiją, nes leidžia atskirti įsitikinimų turinį nuo to, kaip jie socialiai įtvirtinami ir individualiai interpretuojami.

Integruotas patikslintas vertybių kaitos modelis

Kiekybiniai ir kokybiniai rezultatai rodo, kad Ingleharto modelis tebėra vertingas aiškinant vertybių skirtumus: juos padeda suprasti ekonominės ir demokratinės sąlygos, socializacija, kartų kaita ir vėlesnių laikotarpių sukrėtimai. Vis dėlto modelio aiškinamosios galimybės susiaurėja, kai saugumas iš esmės sutapatinamas su šalies ekonomine gerove, visuomenės yra išdėstomos vienoje raidos sekoje, o materialistinės ir postmaterialistinės vertybės laikomos nesuderinamomis.

Patikslintame modelyje išlaikoma dinamiška makro-, mezo- ir mikro-lygmenų sąveika. Makrolygmeniu istorinės raidos trajektorijos ir dabartinės ekonominės, politinės, religinės bei vėlyvosios modernybės sąlygos, įskaitant globalizaciją ir skaitmenizaciją, formuoja galimybių ir rizikų lauką, tačiau tiesiogiai nenulemia vertybinių orientacijų. Mezolygmeniu šias sąlygas perteikia ir įprasmina kartų socializacija, tarpgeneracinė reprodukcija bei kiti socialiniai ryšiai ir aplinka – šeima, institucijos, bendraamžiai, partneriai ir bendruomenės. Mikrolygmeniu šios prasmės yra individualiai interpretuojamos, tarpusavyje derinamos ir įtraukiamos į savo gyvenimo istorijas.

Šioje disertacijoje siūlomas Ingleharto materializmo ir postmaterializmo dimensijos rekonceptualizavimas į susisiejančias klasikinio materializmo, neomaterializmo, santykiais grįsto nematerializmo ir neonematerializmo vertybines orientacijas. , sudarantis Kita ašis, perkonceptualizuojanti Ingleharto tradicinių ir sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių dimensiją – institucinės ir refleksyvios vertybinės orientacijos – pirmosios nusako, kaip vertybės ir prasmės palaikomos socialinėje aplinkoje, o antrosios – kaip jos individualiai perinterpretuojamos.

Kiekviena iš keturių pirmosios dimensijos konfigūracijų gali būti instituciškai įtvirtinta, refleksyviai interpretuojama arba derinti abu šiuos būdus. Taigi vertybių kaita perkonceptualizuojama ne kaip vienakryptė raidos seka, o kaip nuo konteksto priklausantis tęstinumo, koegzistavimo, transformacijos ir rekombinacijos procesas.

Patikslintas modelis yra empiriškai pagrįstas teorinis pasiūlymas, tačiau dar nėra operacionalizuotas ir validuotas kaip Ingleharto vertybių kaitos modelio alternatyva. Keturių teiginių postmaterializmo indeksas tebėra naudingas standartizuotiems palyginimams, bet jo kategorijos neaprėpia visos individualių vertybių sistemų įvairovės.

Išvados

Į pagrindinį tyrimo klausimą galima atsakyti taip: analizuotoje posocialistinių šalių imtyje pirmoji posocialistinė karta yra šiek tiek, tačiau statistiškai reikšmingai labiau postmaterialistinė nei trys ankstesnės kartos. Šis skirtumas išlieka atsižvelgus į amžiaus grupę, apklausos laikotarpį, šalį ir individualias respondentų charakteristikas, tačiau nėra vienodas visose šalyse ir negali būti laikomas grynuoju priežastiniu kartos ar socializacijos poveikiu.

Nustatytą skirtumą padeda suprasti skirtingos posocialistinės raidos trajektorijos, kartų socializacija, tarpgeneracinė reprodukcija, institucijų ir socialinių ryšių įtaka ir tai, kaip žmonės, atsižvelgdami į savo individualią situaciją, interpretuoja savo biografines patirtis. Vertybių kaitą posocialistinėse visuomenėse tiksliau apibūdina skirtingų vertybinių orientacijų koegzistavimas, transformacija ir rekombinacija, o ne visiškas materialistinių vertybių pakeitimas postmaterialistinėmis.

1. Atlikus mokslinės literatūros analizę išskirti pagrindiniai teoriniai argumentai, kuriais grindžiamas kartų vertybių kaitos posocialistinėse šalyse teorinis modelis. Bendras sisteminis lūžis nesukūrė vienodos posocialistinės raidos, nes skyrėsi šalių ikisocialistinė sąranga ir patirtis, socialistinės modernizacijos pobūdis, transformacijos keliai, ekonominė ir demokratinė raida, religinės tradicijos, migracijos ir skaitmenizacijos procesai bei vėlesnės krizės. Karta šioje teorinėje perspektyvoje suprantama kaip istoriškai apibrėžta socializacijos terpė. Makrolygmens kontekstinės sąlygos susijusios su kartų socializacija, tarpgeneracine reprodukcija ir socialiniais santykiais su individualiomis aplinkybėmis bei biografine interpretacija ir vertybinėmis orientacijomis. Struktūrinių sąlygų poveikis vertybėms nėra tiesioginis: jos apibrėžia galimybes ir rizikas, tačiau yra įprasminamos socialinėje aplinkoje ir individualiose biografijose. Todėl egzistencinis saugumas negali būti redukuojamas į šalies ar individo ekonominę gerovę – jis apima materialinį, institucinį, santykių ir psichologinį saugumą. Šie teoriniai argumentai susisteminti daugiapakopiame kartų vertybių kaitos posocialistinėse šalyse teoriniame modelyje.

2. Bendroje 24 šalių imtyje pirmoji posocialistinė karta pasižymėjo labiau postmaterialistinėmis vertybėmis nei visos trys ankstesnės kartos. Vis dėlto kartų vertybių kaita nėra tolygi: priešpaskutinė ir paskutinė socialistinės kartos statistiškai reikšmingai nesiskyrė, o reikšmingų poslinkių nustatyta tarp paskutinės socialistinės ir pereinamojo laikotarpio kartų bei tarp pereinamojo laikotarpio ir pirmosios posocialistinės kartų. Daugumos šalių palyginimo kryptis sutapo su bendru rezultatu, tačiau Kroatijoje, Estijoje, Juodkalnijoje ir Ukrainoje pirmoji posocialistinė karta buvo mažiau postmaterialistinė už visas tris ankstesnes kartas. Laikotarpio hipotezė nepasitvirtino: nors naujausiu

laikotarpiu nepakoreguota postmaterialistinių atsakymų dalis buvo didžiausia, tačiau, atsižvelgus į kitus veiksnius, numatyto augimo naujausiu laikotarpiu nenustatyta. Amžiaus hipotezė pasitvirtino tik iš dalies: visų vyresnių amžiaus grupių rezultatai rodė mažesnį postmaterializmą nei 16–24 metų grupės, tačiau statistiškai reikšmingų skirtumų nustatyta tik tarp jauniausios ir 25–34 ir 35–44 metų grupių. Taigi pirmasis ginamasis teiginys pagrįstas: pirmoji posocialistinė karta yra šiek tiek labiau postmaterialistinė, tačiau kartų kaita nėra nei tiesinė, nei vienoda visose šalyse – jos pobūdis priklauso nuo nacionalinio konteksto.

3. Postmaterialistinės vertybinės orientacijos apskritai buvo stipresnės ekonomiškai labiau išsivysčiusiose ir deliberatyviosios demokratijos šalyse. Vis dėlto kai kuriose pasiturinčiose šalyse postmaterializmo lygis buvo žemesnis nei būtų galima tikėtis pagal šalies pajamų lygį, o kai kuriose mažiau pasiturinčiose visuomenėse postmaterialistinės orientacijos taip pat stiprėjo pirmojoje posocialistinėje kartoje. Taigi antrasis ginamasis teiginys pagrįstas: ekonominis išsivystymas ir deliberatyvioji demokratija yra teigiamai susiję su postmaterializmu, tačiau nė vienas iš šių veiksnių atskirai nepaaiškina nevienodo šių vertybių pasiskirstymo posocialistinėse visuomenėse.

4. Disertacijos kokybinio tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad nesaugumas patiriamas pirmosios posocialistinės kartos informantų visose šešiose tyrime dalyvavusiose posocialistinėse šalyse, tačiau skiriasi jo formos ir prieinami ištekliai jam valdyti. Mažiau pasiturinčiose šalyse dažniau kalbėta apie ekonominius sunkumus, būstą, nepakankamą valstybės teikiamą apsaugą, politinį nestabilumą, migraciją ir geopolitines grėsmes, tačiau materialinis nesaugumas išliko svarbus ir labiau ekonomiškai pasiturinčiose Lietuvoje ir Čekijoje. Šeima, draugai, partneriai ir bendruomenės galėjo suteikti materialinę, praktinę ir emocinę paramą, bet tie patys ryšiai taip pat galėjo stiprinti tarpusavio priklausomybę, įsipareigojimo jausmą, kontrolę ir emocinį nesaugumą ar tapti smurto šaltiniu. Patikimi socialiniai ryšiai tiek galėjo sudaryti sąlygas savarankiškiems pasirinkimams, tiek pats savarankiškumas kartais atsirasdavo būtent dėl paramos stokos. Taigi trečiasis ginamasis teiginys pagrįstas: nesaugumas patiriamas ir valdomas per socialinius santykius, tačiau santykių aplinkos negalima be išlygų laikyti teigiamą poveikį postmaterializmui auginti darančiu socialiniu kapitalu.

5. Kokybiniai rezultatai parodė, kad materialistiniai ir postmaterialistiniai prioritetai egzistuoja greta, o tam pačiam sprendimui žmogus gali suteikti ir materialistinę, ir postmaterialistinę reikšmę. Mažiau pasiturinčiose šalyse labiau išryškėjo klasikinis rūpestis išgyvenimu ir apsauga nuo tiesioginių grėsmių, tačiau jis buvo derinamas su autonomijos, prasmingo darbo, mobilumo ir saviugdos siekiais. Labiau pasiturinčiose

šalyse materialistiniai prioritetai apėmė ne tik išgyvenimą, bet ir nuosavybę, investavimą, profesinius pasiekimus, komfortą, statusą bei siekį išlaikyti norimą gyvenimo būdą. Todėl patikslintame modelyje skiriamas klasikinis materializmas, neomaterializmas (vartotojiškumas), santykiais grindžiamas nematerializmas ir neonematerializmas. Šios konfigūracijos nėra nei nuoseklios raidos pakopos, nei tarpusavyje nesuderinami vertybių tipai: jos gali sutapti ir kisti skirtingose gyvenimo srityse bei biografijos tarpsniuose. Taigi ketvirtasis ginamasis teiginys pagrįstas: vertybių kaitą tiksliau nusako skirtingų vertybinių orientacijų koegzistavimas, transformacija ir rekombinacija, o ne tiesinė materialistinių-postmaterialistinių vertybių kaita.

6. Religijos analizė atskleidė, kad šalies religinis kontekstas ir individualus religingumas su postmaterializmu susiję skirtingai. Šalys, kuriose dominuoja Romos katalikų tikėjimas, pagal postmaterializmo lygį vidutiniškai užėmė aukštesnę vietą nei šalys, kuriose vyrauja stačiatikiai ir musulmonai. Tačiau pirmosios posocialistinės kartos individualus religingumas buvo labai silpnai susijęs su žemesniu, o ne aukštesniu postmaterializmu. Interviu atskleidė įvairius religinių ir moralinių vertybinių orientacijų derinius: paveldėtas (religines-kultūrines) tradicijas, institucinę religinę praktiką, per socialinius ryšius ar nesaugumo laikotarpiais atrastą religingumą, individualų dvasingumą ir sekuliarią psichologinę saviugdą. Todėl patikslintame modelyje skiriamos institucinės ir refleksyvios vertybinės orientacijos. Jos nėra priešingi poliai ir gali sutapti. Taigi penktasis ginamasis teiginys pagrįstas: religinių ir moralinių vertybių kaita nėra vienakryptis perėjimas nuo tradicinių prie sekuliarių-racionalių vertybių. Norint ją suprasti, būtina atskirti vertybių turinį nuo jų socialinio įtvirtinimo ir individualaus interpretavimo būdo.

7. Pagrindinis teorinis disertacijos rezultatas – empiriniais duomenimis pagrįsta Ingleharto vertybių kaitos modelio revizija posocialistiniame kontekste. Ingleharto modelis tebėra naudingas siejant vertybių skirtumus su ekonominėmis ir politinėmis sąlygomis, socializacija, kartų kaita ir skirtingais istoriniais laikotarpiais. Vis dėlto saugumo sutapatinimas su ekonomine gerove, šalių išdėstymas vienoje raidos sekoje bei prielada, kad materialistinės ir postmaterialistinės vertybės yra nesuderinamos, prieštarauja empiriniams (kiekybiniams ir kokybiniams) duomenims. Patikslintas modelis vertybių kaitą aiškina kaip dinamišką makro-, mezo- ir mikrolygmenų sąveiką, o dvi Ingleharto vertybių dimensijas perkonceptualizuoja kaip dvi susikertančias vertybines ašis. Vieną iš jų sudaro keturios vertybinės konfigūracijos, kitą – institucinis ir refleksyvus vertybių įtvirtinimo bei interpretavimo būdas. Vertybių kaita šiame modelyje suprantama kaip nuo konteksto priklausantis tęstinumo, koegzistavimo, transformacijos ir rekombinacijos procesas. Tai

empiriškai pagrįstas teorinis pasiūlymas, kuriam reikėtų tolesnės operacionalizacijos ir validacijos.

Tyrimo ribotumai ir tolesnių tyrimų kryptys

Kiekybinė analizė atlikta naudojant nesvertinius pakartotinių skerspjūvių duomenis, netolygiai pasiskirsčiusius tarp šalių ir apklausų, todėl didesnės atskirų šalių ir apklausų imtys turėjo daugiau įtakos bendriems įverčiams. Dėl struktūrinės amžiaus, laikotarpio ir kohortos tarpusavio priklausomybės nustatytų kartų skirtumų negalima teigti esant grynuoju priežastiniu socializacijos poveikiu. Dabartinį ekonominį ir demokratinį šalių kontekstą apibūdinantys rodikliai bei siauri postmaterializmo ir religingumo indeksai tik iš dalies atspindi respondentų socializacijos sąlygas ir jų ryšį su vertybių sistemomis. Kokybinė analizė leido atskleisti vertybių prasmes ir galimus jų formavimosi kelius, tačiau neįvertino šių reiškinių paplitimo tarp skirtingų demografinių grupių, kadangi šešių šalių kokybinėje imtyje vyravo aukštąjį išsilavinimą turintys dalyviai.

Tolesniuose tyrimuose reikėtų taikyti longitudinį dizainą ir kartotinius biografinius interviu. Jie padėtų atskirti, kiek individualiai vertybių kaitai turi įtakos kartų pasikeitimas, amžiaus ar laikotarpio įtaka, bei leistų stebėti, kaip vertybių konfigūracijos kinta keičiantis užimtumui, migruojant, kuriant partnerystę, tampant tėvais ar susiduriant su krizėmis ir karu. Kiekybiniuose tyrimuose reikėtų taikyti svorius arba kitus metodus, užtikrinančius vienodesnį šalių indėlį į bendrus įverčius, naudoti daugiapakopius modelius, įtraukti respondentų socializacijos laikotarpį tiksliau atspindinčius makrolygmens rodiklius ir lyginti posocialistines visuomenes su kitais regionais.

Naujais tyrimo instrumentais reikėtų operacionalizuoti keturias siūlomas vertybines konfigūracijas bei institucinių ir refleksyvių vertybinių orientacijų perskyrą, patikrinti jų palyginamumą skirtingose šalyse ir atskirai matuoti skirtingus religingumo elementus. Siūlomą modelį taip pat reikėtų palyginti su emancipacinių vertybių teorija ir Schwartzo bazinių žmogaus vertybių teorija. Kokybinius tyrimus svarbu papildyti aukštojo išsilavinimo neturinčių, nestabilų darbą dirbančių, kaimo vietovėse gyvenančių ir kitų mažiau socialiai privilegijuotų informantų patirtimis.

TRUMPOS ŽINIOS APIE DISERTANTĘ

Išsilavinimas

2021–2026 m. Sociologijos doktorantūros studijos, Vilniaus universitetas.

2019–2020 m. Politikos mokslų magistro studijos, Centrinės Europos universitetas.

2014–2018 m. Sociologijos ir antropologijos bakalauro studijos, Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas.

Moksliniai interesai

Vertybių kaita, kartų sociologija, posocialistinių visuomenių transformacija, jaunimo sociologija, lyginamieji ir mišrių metodų tyrimai.

Mokymai

- Europos socialinį tyrimą Lietuvoje įgyvendinančios Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto mokslininkų grupės mokymai „Trūkstamos reikšmės anketinės apklausos tyrimuose: nekreipti dėmesio, analizuoti ar modifikuoti“, 2023 m. gegužės 31 d. (1 val.).
- ECPR žiemos metodų mokykla (ECPR Winter School in Methods and Techniques), Leveno katalikiškasis universitetas, Belgija, 2023 m. vasario 6–10 d. Kursas „Multivariate Statistical Techniques for Comparing Countries“ (3 ECTS).
- Europos socialinį tyrimą Lietuvoje įgyvendinančios Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto mokslininkų grupės mokymai „Klasterinės analizės bendrieji principai socialiniams duomenims“, 2022 m. spalio 7 d. (1,5 val.).
- Utrechto universiteto vasaros mokykla, Nyderlandai, 2022 m. rugpjūčio 22–26 d. Kursas „Survey Research: Statistical Analysis and Estimation“ (1,5 ECTS).
- Vilniaus universiteto doktorantų bendrųjų gebėjimų mokymai „MAXQDA programinės įrangos taikymas kokybiniuose ir mišrių metodų tyrimuose“, 2022 m. kovo mėn. (24 akad. val.).
- DoctorateHub nuotolinis seminaras „Triangulation in Research“, 2022 m. vasario 12 d.

Mokslinė stažuotė ir stipendija

2024 m. gegužės–birželio mėn. pagal Utrecht Network Young Researcher’s Grant programą atlikta mokslinė stažuotė Masaryko universitete Brno (Čekijoje). Jos metu vykdytas kokybinis tyrimas disertacijos tema; stažuotę kuravo prof. dr. Ladislav Rabušic.

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

Education

2021–2026. Doctoral studies in Sociology, Vilnius University.

2019–2020. Master's studies in Political Science, Central European University.

2014–2018. Bachelor's studies in Sociology and Anthropology, Vytautas Magnus University.

Research Interests

Value change, sociology of generations, transformation of postsocialist societies, sociology of youth, comparative research, and mixed methods research.

Academic Training

- Training organised by the Lithuanian European Social Survey team at Vytautas Magnus University, "Missing Data in Survey Research: Ignore, Analyse or Modify?", 31 May 2023 (1 hour).
- ECPR Winter School in Methods and Techniques, KU Leuven, Belgium, 6–10 February 2023. Course: "Multivariate Statistical Techniques for Comparing Countries" (3 ECTS).
- Training organised by the Lithuanian European Social Survey team at Vytautas Magnus University, "General Principles of Cluster Analysis for Social Data", 7 October 2022 (1.5 hours).
- Utrecht University Summer School, the Netherlands, 22–26 August 2022. Course: "Survey Research: Statistical Analysis and Estimation" (1.5 ECTS).
- Vilnius University transferable-skills training for doctoral candidates, "Using MAXQDA Software in Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research", March 2022 (24 academic hours).
- DoctorateHub online seminar, "Triangulation in Research", 12 February 2022.

Research Visit and Grant

May–June 2024. Research visit at Masaryk University in Brno, Czechia, funded by the Utrecht Network Young Researcher's Grant. The visit supported qualitative research for the dissertation and was hosted by Prof. Ladislav Rabušic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my doctoral supervisor, Prof. Habil. Dr Zenonas Norkus, who guided me throughout the entire process of preparing this dissertation with exceptional attentiveness, patience, and encouragement. I am deeply grateful for the time and effort you devoted to my work, for your insightful advice, and unwavering support. I also thank my dissertation consultant, Assoc. Prof. Dr Rūta Žiliukaitė.

I sincerely thank the reviewers of the dissertation during its consideration at the Department of Sociology, Dr Milda Pivoriūtė, Dr Dovilė Galdauskaitė, and Assoc. Prof. Dr Irma Mačkinė, for reading successive drafts so carefully and for their valuable comments and assistance in improving the dissertation. I am also grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr Daumantas Stumbrys and the external reviewer, Dr Aida Savicka, for their important comments and advice. I greatly appreciate the careful work and assistance of the Vilnius University Press editors, Dr Armandas Rumšas and Danutė Petrauskienė, in preparing the dissertation for publication.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Dissertation Defence Panel, Assoc. Prof. Dr Irma Mačkinė, and its members, Prof. Dr Veronika Kalmus, Prof. Dr Aušra Maslauskaitė, Dr Aida Savicka, and Assoc. Prof. Dr Laima Žilinskienė, for the time they devoted to carefully reading and evaluating the dissertation, for their valuable reviews, and for agreeing to serve on the Dissertation Defence Panel.

I am grateful to the entire community of the Department of Sociology at the Institute of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, as well as to fellow sociologists in Lithuania and abroad, for their encouragement, support, and advice at moments when it was particularly needed. I also sincerely thank Jūratė Rapalavičiūtė, Doctoral Studies Coordinator at the Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, and Julija Orlovskaja, Administrative Officer at the Institute of Sociology and Social Work, for their guidance, assistance in navigating administrative matters, and support throughout my doctoral studies. I am especially grateful to my companions on the doctoral journey – Goda Damaševičiūtė, Dr Rima Žilinskaitė, Dr Uršulė Toleikytė, Dr Jūratė Litvinaitė, and Dr Ulijona Kaklauskaitė. Thank you for your understanding, encouragement, and solidarity as we made our way together along the demanding path of doctoral studies.

My sincere gratitude extends to all my teachers, as I would not be where I am today without you. I thank my primary school teacher, Sandra

Mykolaitienė, and all my teachers at the former Kaunas Nemunas Secondary School for laying the strong foundations of knowledge and character on which my later achievements have been built. I am particularly grateful to my Bachelor's thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr Aušra Maslauskaitė, who encouraged me to continue along the academic path, and to my Master's thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr Greskovits Bela, for his support, guidance, and consistently warm approach. I also thank all the lecturers at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University, and Department of Political Science at Central European University for the knowledge, inspiration, and support they provided.

I am grateful to Prof. Dr Ladislav Rabušic, who supervised my research visit at Masaryk University, for his support, valuable assistance, and care during my fieldwork in Czechia.

A separate and especially important expression of gratitude goes to the research participants from Lithuania, Czechia, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. This study and the findings presented in the dissertation would not have been possible without your willingness to share your life stories. I am deeply grateful for your trust, openness, and time.

I am also sincerely grateful to the managers and colleagues at the organisations where I worked while preparing this dissertation for their support, encouragement, and for creating the conditions that enabled me to complete the dissertation and prepare for its defence. At the Research Council of Lithuania, I thank Dr Eugenijus Stumbrys, Dr Daiva Karužaitė, and all my colleagues. At Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI), I thank Research Director Rimantas Dumčius, Research Director Hanna Siarova, my unit manager Loes van der Graaf, and all my colleagues. At the Social Welfare Division of Vilnius City Municipal Administration, I thank the Head of the Division, Lina Juškevičienė, and all my colleagues. At the Research Unit of the Information and Communication Department of the Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, I thank the Head of the Unit, Dr Alvidas Lukošaitis, and all my colleagues.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank my parents for their unconditional support of my education and academic journey, for their constant help, and for giving me the opportunities and conditions necessary to pursue my goals. I thank my partner, Rytis Kazlauskas, for his patience, understanding, and presence throughout the past year and a half, when completing this dissertation demanded so much of my time, attention, and emotional energy. I am also deeply grateful to my entire family and to my friends for their encouragement and support.

Thank you all for being by my side and accompanying me through this important stage of my life.

Finally, I would also like to thank myself – for having the courage to set this goal and pursue it, for the determination not to give up even in the most difficult moments, and for the endless patience that this long journey required. I thank myself for seeing it through and accomplishing what I set out to do.

PADĖKA

Pirmiausia nuoširdžiai dėkoju savo disertacijos vadovui prof. habil. dr. Zenonui Norkui, kuris viso disertacijos rengimo proceso metu mane lydėjo atidžiai, kantriai ir palaikančiai. Esu dėkinga už Jūsų skirtą laiką, kruopštų darbą ir vertingas įžvalgas. Taip pat dėkoju savo disertacijos konsultantei doc. dr. Rūtai Žiliukaitei.

Nuoširdžiai dėkoju disertacijos svarstymų Sociologijos katedroje recenzentėms dr. Mildai Pivoriūtei, dr. Dovilei Galdauskaitei ir doc. dr. Irmai Mačkinei už atidų disertacijos juodraščių skaitymą, vertingus komentarus ir pagalbą ją tobulinant. Už reikšmingas pastabas ir patarimus taip pat dėkoju doc. dr. Daumantui Stumbriui ir išorinei recenzentei dr. Aidai Savickai. Taip pat nuoširdžiai dėkoju Vilniaus universiteto leidyklos redaktoriams dr. Armandui Rumšui ir Danutei Petrauskienei už kruopštų darbą ir pagalbą rengiant disertaciją leidybai.

Dėkoju disertacijos gynimo komisijos pirmininkei doc. dr. Irmai Mačkinei ir komisijos narėms prof. dr. Veronikai Kalmus, prof. dr. Aušrai Maslauskaitei, dr. Aidai Savickai ir doc. dr. Laimai Žilinskienei už skirtą laiką, atidų disertacijos skaitymą, vertingus atsiliepimus ir sutikimą dalyvauti gynimo komisijoje.

Esu dėkinga visai Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto Sociologijos ir socialinio darbo instituto Sociologijos katedros bendruomenei, taip pat kolegoms sociologams Lietuvoje ir užsienyje už palaikymą, padrąsinimą ir kartais ypač reikalingus patarimus. Nuoširdžiai dėkoju Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto doktorantūros studijų koordinatorei Jūratei Rapalavičiūtei ir Sociologijos ir socialinio darbo instituto administratorei Julijai Orlovskajai už pagalbą, konsultacijas, sklandų administracinių klausimų sprendimą ir lydėjimą viso doktorantūros proceso metu. Ypač dėkoju savo doktorantūros kelio bendrakeleivėms Godai Damaševičiūtei, dr. Rimai Žilinskaitei, dr. Uršulei Toleikytei, dr. Jūratei Litvinaitei ir dr. Ulijonai Kaklauskaitei. Ačiū už tarpusavio supratimą, padrąsinimą ir palaikymą drauge einant nelengvu doktorantūros keliu.

Nuoširdžiai dėkoju visiems savo mokytojams, nes be jūsų nebūčiau ten, kur esu šiandien. Dėkoju savo pradinių klasių mokytojai Sandrai Mykolaitienei ir visiems buvusios Kauno Nemuno vidurinės mokyklos mokytojams, padėjusiems tvirtus žinių ir charakterio pamatus. Esu ypač dėkinga savo bakalauro darbo vadovei prof. dr. Aušrai Maslauskaitei, paskatinusiai mane toliau eiti akademiniu keliu, ir magistro darbo vadovui prof. dr. Greskovits Béla už palaikymą, pagalbą ir visuomet draugišką santykį. Taip pat dėkoju visiems Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Socialinių mokslų

fakulteto Sociologijos katedros ir Centrinio Europos universiteto Politikos mokslų katedros dėstytojams už suteiktas žinias, įkvėpimą ir palaikymą.

Dėkoju stažuotės Masaryko universitete vadovui prof. dr. Ladislav Rabušic už palaikymą, vertingą pagalbą ir rūpestį atliekant lauko tyrimą Čekijoje.

Atskira ir labai svarbi padėka tenka šio tyrimo dalyviams iš Lietuvos, Čekijos, Albanijos, Šiaurės Makedonijos, Sakartvelo ir Kirgizstano. Be jūsų pasidalijimo savo gyvenimo istorijomis nebūtų šio tyrimo ir disertacijos rezultatų. Nuoširdžiai dėkoju už pasitikėjimą, atvirumą ir skirtą laiką.

Taip pat nuoširdžiai dėkoju vadovams ir kolegoms darbovietėse, kuriose dirbau rengdama šią disertaciją, už palaikymą, padrąsinimą ir sudarytas sąlygas. Lietuvos mokslo taryboje dėkoju dr. Eugenijui Stumbriui, dr. Daivai Karužaitei ir visiems LMT kolegoms. Viešosios politikos ir vadybos institute (PPMI) dėkoju tyrimų vadovui Rimantui Dumčiui, tyrimų vadovei Hannai Siarovai, mano skyriaus vadovei Loes van der Graaf ir visiems PPMI kolegoms. Vilniaus miesto savivaldybės administracijos Socialinės gerovės skyriuje dėkoju skyriaus vedėjai Linai Juškevičienei ir visiems skyriaus kolegoms. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo kanceliarijos Informacijos ir komunikacijos departamento Tyrimų skyriuje dėkoju skyriaus vedėjui dr. Alvidui Lukošaičiui ir visiems skyriaus kolegoms.

Iš visos širdies dėkoju savo tėvams už besąlygišką mano mokymosi ir akademinio kelio palaikymą, nuolatinę pagalbą ir suteiktas galimybes siekti savo tikslų. Savo partneriui Ryčiui Kazlauskui dėkoju už kantrybę, supratingumą ir buvimą šalia per pastaruosius pusantrų metų, kai baigiamieji disertacijos darbai pareikalavo itin daug mano laiko, dėmesio ir emocinių jėgų. Dėkoju visai savo šeimai ir draugams už padrąsinimą ir palaikymą.

Ačiū Jums visiems, kad buvote šalia ir lydėjote mane šiame svarbiame gyvenimo etape.

Galiausiai dėkoju ir sau – už drąsą išsikelti šį tikslą ir jo siekti, už ryžtą nepasiduoti net sunkiausiais momentais ir už begalinę kantrybę, kurios pareikalavo šis ilgas kelias. Dėkoju sau už tai, kad šį tikslą pasiekiau.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Publications

1. Daukšaitė, Laura. 2023. "Ekonominių ir religinių veiksnių įtaka postmaterialistinių vertybių sklaidai pirmojoje pokomunistinėje kartoje: lyginamoji 24 šalių analizė [The Impact of Economic and Religious Factors on the Spread of Post-Materialist Values in the First Post-Communist Generation: A Comparative Analysis of 24 Countries]." *Filosofija. Sociologija 34(4, Special Issue): 76–91. DOI:* 10.6001/filsoc.2023.34.4Priedas.Special-Issue.7

2. Daukšaitė, Laura. 2026. "Beyond Nonmaterialism: The Limits of Economic Growth in Shaping Individualism and Collectivism in the First Postcommunist Generation." *Comparative Sociology 25(1): 1–41. DOI:* 10.1163/15691330-bja10157

Conference Presentations

1. 9–11 May 2022. Paper "Trajectories of Value (Re)production in the First Post-Communist Generation" presented at the European Values Conference 2022, "A Look at the Past, Present and Futures", Tilburg University, Tilburg, the Netherlands.

2. 11 November 2022. Paper "Trajectories of Value (Re)production in the First Post-Communist Generation" presented at the 6th Interdisciplinary Research and Practice Conference for Youth Researchers, "The Year of Youth in Lithuania: Visible and Invisible Youth", Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania.

3. 2 December 2022. Paper "Trajectories of Value (Re)production in the First Post-Soviet Generation" presented at the 14th Conference of the Lithuanian Sociological Association, "Universities, Sociology and Civil Society in Times of Crisis", Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania.

4. 5–7 April 2024. Paper "The Value Change in the First Post-Communist Generation from the Viewpoint of Ronald Inglehart's Theory: Critical Analysis" presented at the Annual Conference of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), Robinson College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

5. 12–14 June 2024. Paper "The Impact of Economic and Religious Factors on the Spread of Post-Materialist Values in the First Post-Communist Generation: A Comparative Analysis of 24 Countries" presented at the 16th

Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS), “Youth in a Just and Fair World”, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland.

6. 27–30 August 2024. Paper “The Impact of Economic and Religious Factors on the Spread of Post-Materialist Values in the First Post-Communist Generation: A Comparative Analysis of 24 Countries” presented at the 16th Conference of the European Sociological Association, “Tension, Trust and Transformation”, Porto, Portugal.

7. 6–11 July 2025. Paper “Trajectories of Value (Re)production: The Limits of Economic Growth in Shaping Individualism and Collectivism in the First Postcommunist Generation” presented at the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology, “Knowing Justice in the Anthropocene”, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco.

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