PLURALISM ANXIETY

ACTING SOCIALLY IN LATVIA

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Introduction

Sergei Kruk

1 Pluralists and monists

Since the reestablishment of the sovereignity in 1991 the Republic of Latvia engaged in the process of nation-state building, which had been interrupted by the Soviet communist experiment in 1940. The 19th century idea of nation-state based on a common national culture and language envisages a homogenous society as a collective subject bearing the common interest represented by the government. A monist image of society coexists with the recognition of pluralism of group interests to be considered in policy planning process. 'Involvement of society' in decision-making is a popular topic in the political discourse of the last decade, since the beginning of the crisis. Scholars and policy documents express support for individual responsibility, initiative and social activism as a prerequisite for economic growth.

American political scientists began questioning the idea of a unified nation in the 1920s (Gunnell 2012). Walter Lippmann (1925) criticised the concept of public opinion representing the will of a homogenous society. Real society consists of different interest groups and the task of democracy is to prevent any group from speaking on behalf of the public interest. Isaiah Berlin's lecture *Two Concepts of Liberty* ([1958] 2002) gave an impetus to the pluralism debate in philosophy (e.g., Kekes 1993; Larmore 1987; Lukes 1991; Raz 1986; Williams 1981). Berlin juxtaposed pluralism of Western democracies to monism of authoritarian Communism. Human goals are many, and not all of them are commensurable, stress pluralists. Monists advance a single standard of judgment derived from an imagined future perfection or past tradition. Berlin argues that these absolute ideals are preserved at the expense of actual human lives.

People live and act in their unique environement experiencing individual emotional reactions to a variety of factors constituting their particular situations (Archer 2000). Pluralism refers to sensitivity to the diverse kinds of objects and properties that exist (Bevir 2012); thereby it respects the uniqueness of individual experience. Seeking the best decision, individuals highlight the most appropriate factors, and there may be more than one correct choice in a particular situation. Monists reduce choices to a common measure or rank them hierarchically, but goods cannot be ranked because they are qualitatively heterogeneous. Pluralists admit the existence of a short list of basic goods leaving the rest for the individual concepts of a good life. In other

words, individuals may hold different concepts on what constitues a good life for them. "[F]or pluralists the goal is to achieve what we individually want to achieve, while for monists the goal is to achieve what all individuals alike ought to want to achieve" (Kekes 1993: 14). As distinct from relativists, pluralists hold that moral judgments can be justified or criticized on objective grounds because there are context-independent conventions of morals.

For political pluralism that means that the government cannot take decisions referring to a general interest: instead, non-governmental civic associations should be accorded rights to participate in formulation of public policies. This principle of decision-making known as governance reflects the dispersion of power which "necessitates bargaining and negotiating and inhibits the formation of permanent political majorities" (Rosenblum 1989: 220).

Latvians hardly recognize such indeterminacy. According to an SKDS poll held in 2017 (N = 1004) only one in ten respondents accepts pluralism. Pluralism anxiety does not promote cooperation with others: low social trust is a remarkable characteristic of Latvians who prefer to collaborate only with those with whom they maintain direct and enduring emotional relations (Kalniņa 2016; Vasiļjeva 2016). A recently published collection of articles by Latvian philosophers, *Values: Latvia and Europe*, offers monist and pluralist approaches to the problem of social integrity. The scholars inclined to pluralism contend that values and norms are not ontological reality, but social constructions (Misāne 2016), recognition of diversity of experience enlarges potentialities of human being (Jankovskis 2016), reasonable agreement on values enables social integration (Jankovska 2016), and value pluralism is not to be confused with value relativism (Vējš 2016). Describing the paradigms of western scholars these authors, however, avoid a critical discussion of Latvian philosophical thought and, despite the book's title, they do not develop a research agenda for the study of domestic social issues. "This is a topic for future publications", explains Agita Misāne (2016: 307).

On the contrary, monists insist firmly on practical application of their paradigm, even if they have missed analytical argumentation. They perceive diversity of opinions as a manifestation of excessive egoism leading to social fragmentation. "Axiology raises a question: in post-material societies like the 21st century Latvia, does individual liberty often deteriorate into assertive egoism, and self-expression into negligence of common good?", Maija Kūle (2016: 12) puts rhetorically. The key to social integrity is culture, which constitutes social goals and basic morals. This is possible because culture expresses the highest values existing objectively in the Platonic realm of ideas. Equating national identity with cultural one, Rihards Kūlis (2012, 2016) reduces all human behavior to culture. He sees culture as an ordered and coherent structure of meaning whose units stand for certain traits of national mentality. Homogeneity of culture guarantees that individuals possess an aggregate of intrinsic long-term cultural characteristics that determine behaviour. Since individuals constituting an ethnic

group are similar, the group can be regarded as a fully integrated collective personality. Multiple individual identities endanger social integrity.

> As the homogenous national identity (which does not exclude changes and differences) dissolves itself in plurality of different identities, any discussion on national values loses sense because the universal common baseline for analyzing values is being lost (a value becomes a value only in relation to a conjunction). (Kūlis 2016: 62)

Māris Kūlis (2016) further reduces community to language. Language constitutes worldview and conditions knowledge thereby maintaining social bond. To support the idea Māris Kūlis draws on Vico's concept of *sensus communis* and Gadamer's hermeneutics.

> *Sensus communis* is the sphere where values 'dwell', but this 'reason' draws its values from common work – culture which, on its turn, is determined by language as a condition of understanding. Therefore, values can be interpreted as elements of historically determined culture which simultaneously are its products and driving force (p. 294).

An omnipresent language is the ultimate determinant of human conduct; speaking subjects cannot even identify their dependance on it, Māris Kūlis contends. Nevertheless, seeking to explain the weakness of a social bond among the co-nationals, his colleagues have to reject the determinist argument (see Kūle 2002, 2005, 2016; Kūlis 2012). Shared culture and language, *ipso facto,* do not condition human conduct. Development of national mentality requires individual awareness about culture and its functions. Missing awareness causes empirically observed distortions like corruption, irresponsibility, and excessive consumerism. It is the task of the intellectual minority to discover the components of culture, specify their mutual relations and hierarchy, and ultimately define the basic structures of national identity, i.e., those durable components of culture, which are responsible for the nation's endurance. These components form an 'ideological theoretical foundation of culture' serving as an outline for the artists and literati who implement the cultural code in practice by creating and distributing meaning in artistic forms.

2 A Monist sign concept

For the sake of social integrity individuals should abandon their egoistic interests in favor of the common interest expressed in culture and promoted by the state. Consensus cannot be reached in bargaining and negotiating – the concept of sign developed by Kūle and Kūlis (1998) rules out a possibility of communication about difference. The concept resulted from a superficial interpretation of semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. His triadic model of signs envisages that communicators engage in continuous semiosis because signs do not cover all aspects of objects they intend to represent. We perceive

only a portion of the object – the immediate object – which is represented in the sign-vehicle. The object itself is called 'dynamic' because we can improve our knowledge about it over time. Relation between the sign-vehicle and the object is established by the interpretant. Peirce distinguishes among three kinds of interpretant. The immediate interpretant is "all that is explicit in the sign apart from its context and circumstances of utterance" (5.473), it catches the primary impressions such as colors, lines, forms. The dynamic interpretant is "whatever interpretation any mind actually makes of a sign" (8.315). The gist of the dynamic interpretant is caught by a popular Latvian saying *katram savs* – each gets their own. We say it when we do not want to engage in discussions on conflicting interpretations. More broadly, this saying implies also that we cannot agree on a shared meaning and communication is doomed to failure. For Peirce, this problem is resolved by the third, and final interpretant defined as truth, which can be formulated in a logical proposition after sufficient development of thought (8.343). Meaning evolves in continuous semiosis that is in continuous movement from the direct to the dynamic and to the final interpretant in changing circumstances of communication. It is important to highlight that Peirce provides for mutual understanding when communicators apply an effort depending on their pragmatic purposes.

Kūle and Kūlis mistranslate 'interpretant' as 'interpreter', but this does not imply the recognition of real communicators. On the contrary, the philosophers seek to avoid the problem of *katram savs* introducing a more powerful 'interpreter' called a 'cultural epoch in the broadest meaning'. Enrichment of knowledge about the dynamic object turns out to be impossible because the sign carries an exhaustive meaning formulated in the past: "understanding of a symbol is grounded on traditions, habits, paradigms of an epoch" (Kūlis & Kūle 1998: 568). Communication is reduced to the exchange of already known information whereas casting doubt upon 'paradigms of an epoch' or introducing new topics to the discussion would have required a completely new semiotic repertory associating new sign-vehicles with new reality. It should be reminded that Kūlis and Kūle discuss Perceian semiotics in general, not the hermeneutics of ancient texts requiring a profound knowledge of history.

Linguists have developed a similar concept of signs, but their endeavour owes to an excessive rationalization of semiosis. Aina Blinkena (2009), Jānis Rozenbergs (1995), Valentīna Skujiņa (2000, 2001, 2003) contend that the reality itself is ordered systematically; beliefs reflect this coherency in concepts and, consequently, in language. Since language is also a part of reality, it is ordered coherently too. The outcome of this ordering is a natural structural isomorphism between the expression-forms and content-forms. Normative grammar and explanatory dictionaries safeguard the correspondence between language and reality, and by virtue of this fact the standard language guarantees main functions of thinking, expression, communication, and storage of thoughts. Grammar is conceived of as a frame which is being filled with content by words. No conflict of interpretation will arise when communicators use the correct names of things

and follow the syntactic rules. Since the use of the standard language is sufficient to ensure the objectivity of a proposition linguists ban the speaking subject from discourse. For instance, only impersonal propositions are accepted in business style (*lietišķais stils*) language: 'The cup is broken' fits the business style requirements better than 'I have broken the cup' (see Kruk 2011 for a detailed discussion).

The strength of the linguistic code simply does not correspond to reality. Even if Latvian has a good system of male and female morphemes not all of them are accepted. For example, we say *kaķis* / *kaķe* (cat / she-cat) but the possibility of the pair *žirafis* / *žirafe* (giraffe / she-giraffe) is not realised as the male form is not permitted. Neither filling the grammar frame with content by words is that simple as linguists believe. The standard grammar and dictionary offers a variety of forms permitting to express basically the same idea. Two propositions about the broken cup tell us the same truth about reality: there is no cup anymore. But there is a considerable difference regarding the subjective responsibility for the resulting situation.

Subjectivity binds utterance to the extralinguistic context of the act of communication. It is required not only for understanding of such a group of words as shifters (words 'I', 'here', 'now' etc.) – their meaning can be grasped either in the actual context of communication or inferred from verbal descriptions included in the text. This problem is touched upon in enunciative linguistics, e.g., Charaudeau (1992, 1995); Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2009). Perceian idea of continuous semiosis provides that communicators elaborate interpretants because the sign-vehicles do not carry fixed meanings. Since people of different ideological formations use the same language to express their experience of reality, the adequate meaning of words can be grasped in the context of communication (Voloshinov 1973). The context includes identities of communicators, social settings of interaction, and cognitive schemes corresponding to the topic of conversation (discourse macrostructures, encyclopedia); in case of written communication the contextual cues are to be included in the text.

Latvian linguists ignore the extralinguistic context of communication arguing that the meaning of words is fixed in the dictionary. The fallacy of this argument is explored in Latvian jokes about 'a baffled blonde' who recons with certainty on the academic dictionary but fails at the pragmatic language games. The jokes expose her failure to find a situationally appropriate meaning from the encyclopedia. The dictionary-like representation concerns only linguistic competence while the encyclopedia-like representation considers the whole of our world knowledge (Eco 1984: 255). Unable to recognize the extralinguistic context, 'the baffled blonde' cannot retrieve from her memory cognitive schemes corresponding to the topic of conversation.

Misrecognition of the extralinguistic context creates another obstacle to pluralism. Scholars prescribe delocutionary modality, i.e., concealment of the sender and receiver. Since the identities of communicators are not taken into account they cannot manifest themselves as bearers of a distinctive subjectivity which, in fact, is in the focus of

bargaining and negotiating interests, opinions, and experience. Latvian linguists argue in support of textual delocution, e.g., impersonal propositions representing the state of affairs as an objective reality existing independently of the acting subjects. The 'cultural epoch' as the final 'interpreter' proposed by philosophers coincides with the intertextual delocution resting in unquestioned authority.

The term 'pluralism anxiety' I see as such a state of mind when individuals avoid cooperation with those upholding different values, opinions, norms and/or social practices; and at the same time avoid seeking common ground by reflecting on and communicating about implications of the perceived difference in order to combine efforts to resolve an issue in the given context of interaction. In this book the authors pay more attention to cultural and institutional constraints for cooperation, rather than examine its forms. In Latvian policy documents and media this aspect of human conduct is called 'togetherness', 'social cohesion', 'social integration', 'social participation'; here we use words 'sociality' and 'cooperation' referring to individual ability to act together with close and distant others when a joint effort could be a more effective way to solve a problem.

3 Plan of the book

Monists thus hold that cultural homogeneity is a precondition of social integrity and heterogeneity can not be negotiated. In Chapter One I demonstrate that political discourse and policy documents reflect similar ideas. The intracultural heterogeneity is not questioned, and it is rarely outlined interpreting the sociological data and drafting policy documents. The empirically observed diversity of opinions and conduct is attributed to the flawed cultural socialization rather than to the individual experience of social reality. Seeking to enable agency, the government proposes to improve individual psychology educating 'feeling of belonging' and 'statehood awareness'. Scholarly publications and policy documents offer no theoretical arguments and empirical evidence proving the cultural socialization as an enablement of agency. At the same time, there are multiple examples of institutional rules and procedures constraining agency.

Xavier Landes discusses analytically the role of culture in Chapter Two. Culture intends to shape individual and collective preferences, but this entails the construction of 'us' *vs.* 'them' groups. Besides, empirical psychology has demonstrated that educating character by shaping preferences has limited effects on moral behavior. The alternative is creation of institutions, which promote cooperative mechanisms having positive social effects, e.g., supporting social cohesion. The more human cooperation produces positive outcomes, the more individuals support these mechanisms and the society built on them.

Chapter Three introduces the method of anomia prediction elaborated by psychologists Jeļena Ļevina and Kristīne Mārtinsone. The empirical data corroborate Landes'

argument about the importance of social cooperation: indeed, participation in social activities enhances the level of interpersonal integration and allows to find life meanings. Thus, social activities decrease anomia and affect subjective well-being positively.

Chapters Four and Five disprove the image of cultural homogeneity empirically. Sociologists Ritma Rungule and Silva Seņkāne crosstabulate the data of values studies with the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. According to the World Values Survey Latvians adhere to survival values, which are not conducive to social change. However, there are socio-demographic groups, which differ considerably from the statistically mean result of the whole population. Notably, employers, self-employed people, and those who run their own family business appreciate conformity and traditions much less than the country's value indicators suggest and they express openness to change. Likewise, Diāna Kalniņa has found that socio-demographic corellates attitudes to social action. The position of an individual in social economic structure (described by age, education and employment status) enhances the positive attitudes. These two chapters suggest that the provision of institutional structures and resources can enable agency. Landes advanced a similar argument writing about the need to guarantee decent access to all citizens to the outcomes of social cooperation.

Aija Kažoka argues that the availability of institutional structures and resources is not a sufficient precondition for successfull agency. Professional organizations of medical doctors studied in her research have well-organized structures and enjoy high membership rates of educated individuals. But nevertheless, these NGOs failed to insist that the parliament and the government respect their arguments about health care models in policy planning documents. Kažoka maintains that medical professionals lacked discursive competence to bargain and negotiate their ideas with the political decision-makers.

Social anthropologist Kristīne Rolle has conducted field-work in the economically depressive Latvian-Russian border area where people engage in transborder commerce to earn for subsistance. Officially this is an illegal business activity ascribed to flawed character: legal ignorance and poor awareness about values. Rolle shows that her informants are rationally reflecting actors who take their decisions considering the structures available to them, both institutional and cultural. In policy-making the government plays down the objectivity of structural economic and political constraints experienced by the residents of economically disadvantaged territories.

In Chapter Eight social anthropologist Klāvs Sedlenieks explores a cultural constraint to agency – the vernacular concept of state. Analysing Internet comments and interviews with his informants Sedlenieks has found that people blend the state and civil society. As the subject – object distinction is absent, citizens fail to make a meaningful effort to improve the public institutions they are dissatisfied with.

The problems of the sign concept discussed in the Introduction are touched upon in the study of political discourse by communication scholars Ilva Skulte and Normunds

Kozlovs. They set as their task to reveal the logic of a welfare state policy. Examining the contextual use of the word *labklājība* (welfare) in the parliamentary discourse in 1993–2017 the researchers concluded that the Latvian concept of welfare state is not the same as the ones used in Western Europe. Misguided thinking constrained the elboration of an adequate model of welfare state in Latvia, but the parliamentary majority silenced critical voices inviting to clarify the meaning of the words *labklājība* and 'welfare'.

The development of local press is an illustrative example of pluralism anxiety and disregard for procedures. Anda Rožukalne analyzes the role of free municipal gazettes in local media market. Editors hold that since the elected local governments represent the general will of the local population, the official newspapers can be regarded as the sources of impartial information whereas private media promote the unbalanced opinion of their owners. The gazettes distributed free of charge distort the media market, but the national government is reluctant to enforce the existing legal provisions protecting diversity of opinions.

The argument of this book can be stated as follows. Agency requires institutional enablements which among others are provided and guaranteed by legal acts. Formulating laws and regulations the decision-makers draw from their cultural representations about an individual, society and agency. Understanding social integrity as an effect of cultural homogeneity the decision-makers establish institutions, which do not tackle the real problems of modern differentiated socety. Individuals cannot rely on the existing institutions to bargain and negotiate their interests, and the lack of understanding about the causes of differentiation makes it difficult to anticipate future actions of others. Low social trust and social passivity are the corollaries of pluralism anxiety.

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1 Enabling Agency among Latvians: Cultural Socialization and Political Procedures

Sergei Kruk

1.1 Introduction

In economics, methodological individualism contends that rational people make utilitarian choices and engage in strategic interactions in a liberal market. Some scholars have extended this idea to social and political life more broadly and many predicting the outcome of a post-communist transition envisaged that individuals, once emancipated from coercive structures of communist states, would establish genuine liberal democracy based on this theory. Sociologists described the transition metaphorically as a 'return to the West' or a 'return to normality'. Contrary to expectations, such agency – or faculty for action (Ritzer & Ryan 2011:8) – did not develop in a linear and automatic way. Latvia and its residents still face considerable social and political challenges as a country as well as individuals. Among these challenges is the fact that many citizens are hesitant to engage in civic activities that might lead to social progress.

Opinion polls conducted in Latvia over a number of years attest to high levels of dissatisfaction with public administration. However, citizens are reluctant to promote change and underrate their capacity to influence decision-making (Kruks 2016). During the economic crisis of 2008, Latvians preferred individual survival tactics. They did not exhibit social solidarity and eschewed cooperative action that would articulate and defend shared interests (Lāce & Rungule 2016; Vasiļjeva 2016). Low sociality is a striking characteristic of this country. In a recent survey, only 23% of respondents reported belonging to a voluntary association (SKDS poll, March 2017), but membership does not necessarily fully correlate with sociality in any case (Vasiļjeva 2016).

Among the obstacles to cooperation is pluralism anxiety. A majority of Latvians sort people categorically into those who support justice and those who not, and believe that a diversity of opinions is dangerous for a group. An evaluation of two statements regarding diversity and social harmony suggests that only one out of ten respondents supports pluralism (Table 1.1). Forty one percent agreed with both statements negating pluralism. Another 23% hold a contradictory attitude (agree with one statement and disagree with another one), and a large number (27%) of people failed to formulate an opinion about one or both statements.

Table 1.1 Attitude to pluralism, percent

		If members of a group hold many different opinions this group cannot exist for a long time			
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know / NA	Total
In general, there are two categories of people: those who support justice and those who not	Agree	**41.1**	14.6	8.2	63.9
	Disagree	8.0	**9.8**	2.0	19.7
	Don't know / NA	4.8	2.6	9.0	16.4
	Total	53.9	27.0	19.2	100.0

Source: SKDS, 2017, n = 1004.

Latvian scholars tend to view flawed personal identities as the major cause of low sociality. Latvians hold plural, fragmented and often contradictory identities, observed sociologist Aivars Tabuns (2014). Their weak affinity for the state, their way of thinking, and their lifestyle were incompatible with the idea of a territorial community and national identity. In turn, this provokes disloyalty and destroys relations between individuals, the sociologist inferred pessimistically. The political scientist Ivars Ījabs (2015) argues that a 'considerable part' of Latvian society is alienated from democratic institutions despite the satisfactory framework for the operation of civil society that has been created since the reestablishment of independence. Further, political discourse at the parliamentary level depicts society as an aggregate of conflicting individuals unable to reach consensus (Kruks 2008). Many social scientists hold that strengthening national identity can improve sociality (Muižnieks & Rozenvalds 2010; Šķilters & Lasmane 2010; Zepa & Kļave 2011; Bela & Zepa 2012; Kļave 2013). For these scholars, national identity is expected to develop appropriate attitudes of sociality through cultural socialization for both ethnic minorities and the majority (e.g., *Guidelines on National Identity* 2011; Kūlis 2012, 2016).

This chapter reveals structural constraints to sociality in Latvia. By structures, I mean that culture provides agents with ideas about society and formal institutions establish rules and distribute resources. I use an analysis of legal acts, policy documents, and presidential speeches to uncover the institutional impediments to agency and show the culturally embedded ideas, which decision-makers use to explain and legitimize the set-up of institutions. The effects of cultural socialization on agency will be discussed through an example of a popular collective cultural practice – the Song and Dance Festival. Finally, the analysis of parliamentary debates suggests that cooperative social action is constrained by lack of agreement on political procedures.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Karl Popper contends that, besides individual attitudes, scholars should analyze objectively existing social institutions as external variables. Social institutions are not "explicable in terms of needs, hopes, or motives", rather they are "the indirect, the unintended and often the unwanted by-product of [human] actions" (Popper 2002: 305). New institutionalism treats political institutions as actors in their own right, because they are designed as collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend interests (March & Olsen 1984: 738). Institutions of the state are capable of responding to pressures and influences brought to bear upon the state by rational autonomous individuals (Hay 2002). The power of institutions is their control over material and ideational resources that affect social action. According to March and Olsen (2006: 3) institutions provide:

- rules and practices which prescribe appropriate behavior for specific actors in specific situations;
- structures of meaning embedded in identities and belongings which provide common purposes and accounts that give direction and meaning to behavior, as well as explain, justify, and legitimate behavioral codes;
- resource structures which enable action.

These are the constraints and enablements of action. Of course, the design and development of institutions itself is a product of human activity. Every action is embedded to some extent in a horizon of affect and meaning, thus institutions also have an ideal foundation shaping their organization and goals and providing context for debates over their legitimation, maintains cultural sociology (Alexander 2003). In planning actions, actors not only consider the availability of resources but also draw on their knowledge about the institution in order to assess what is feasible, legitimate, possible, and desirable (Hay 2006: 65).

How do ideas impinge on institutions? Margaret Archer (1996, 2000, 2004) makes an analytical distinction between a cultural system (CS) and socio-cultural interaction (S-C). The former is a set of ideas about the world conditions and the environment of S-C. If in the process of S-C individuals reveal CS constraining their social action, they may also engage in cultural elaboration, reformulating ideas and subsequently change institutions in an effort to eliminate the identified constraints. The power of cultural elaboration, however, is distributed unequally. Archer describes this power as the intertwining of personal and social identities and warns against excessive socialization of human beings. Inner life cannot be reduced to sociality, she argues, because our emotions, which are among the facets of inner life, reflect affective awareness of situation which is one's own concern. Since emotions are 'commentaries upon our concerns' (2000: 195) emotionality cannot be a gift of society, therefore the concept of self must be defended from exaggerated importance of social relations.

"Differentiation of the social comes later on, and is itself predicated upon the distinction between the self and other things having already been established", she writes (2000: 125).

First, differentiation takes place as individuals become primary agents. Being an agent means to occupy a position within society's distribution of scarce resources. Despite sharing the same life-chances, primary agents often abrogate their capacity to express interests and organize for strategic pursuits. Socialization enables an awareness of common interests and the formation of organized groups, called corporate agents, which can articulate these interests and act collectively exercising corporate influence in decision-making or the reshaping of social structures. To endorse individual interests as collective ones, corporate agents have to develop an institutional structure (List 2005; List & Pettit 2011). Corporate agents assign roles and thus social identities to their members. In this process of personification, individuals become social actors.

Once again it should be stressed that Archer makes a clear distinction between social identity which is assumed in society, and personal identity which results from the subject's considered response to its encounters with nature and social practices via an internal conversation. The individual's concerns are not exclusively social, therefore society cannot grant a personal identity.

1.3 The Presidents of Latvia: Traits of personal identity constrain agency

This section clarifies the representation of individuals, society and social action as evidenced in political discourse since 2004, the year Latvia joined the European Union. Presidential speeches on November 18, Latvia's Independence Day, serve as empirical sources. These speeches are epideictic belonging to the ceremonial oratory genre. They include praise and blame for the current state of affairs in the society. Delivered by presidents, they carry the imprimatur of a key structural component, the state. Latvia's presidents deliver these speeches to individuals assembled at the foot of the Freedom Monument in Riga and via television to the whole country. All of the presidents, who have given such speeches, have been concerned with the social passivity of Latvians, which they claim hampers the country's economic development, but they offer slightly different solutions to the problem.

1.3.1 Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga (2004–2006)

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga consistently urged her compatriots toward social activity which now is favored by good conditions. Latvia's membership in the EU 'opened all possibilities', she said in 2004. The state reached conformity with all international standards, was recognized by the international authorities, and gained the protection

of NATO and the EU. She said that Latvians possess many positive qualities that enabled the development of the country: strength, the ability to set goals, self-confidence, diligence, initiative, aspirations for a better future, love for their country, and cooperation skills. Despite these faculties, however, she said the nation failed to combine individual efforts for the benefit of the state. Apprehension toward the common good depends on a holistic identification with the state which Vīķe-Freiberga compared to maternal authority in the family. The state is personified as Mother Latvia who is the source of goals and aspirations for her sons and daughters. In return, she demands love and care. References to fairy tales intensify moralization and the president, a scholar of folklore as well as psychology, warned citizens about many-headed dragons, devils and vermin who "are living on our evil thoughts, words and deeds" (2006). She encouraged people to act: "Latvia is like the third son in the end of fairy tales who has gained the princess and the right to rule the kingdom. There remains only to take care of the little princess – the regained freedom – and rule the state wisely" (2006).

Vīķe-Freiberga conceives of the state as an ideal abstract entity personified by a maternal image. The state is the source of ethnic collective identity on which the one's sense of self could depend entirely:

> One has to feel oneself as a part of a single community like the bees who live cell by cell in the hive, building their common success in harmony. This is an uplifting and emotional feeling of belonging: you are not alone in the world, you belong to your ethnic community whose common spirit carries you on wings. (2006)

The president did not, however, describe concrete goals and actions to be performed by the citizens for the country's development.

1.3.2 Valdis Zatlers (2007–2010)

Valdis Zatlers was more concrete when describing the purpose of social agency. "Everything we are doing for ourselves, loving our land, we are doing for the state's benefit… Assuming responsibility for the state means finding new solutions at one's workplace, taking risk, being politically active, voting with competence, and engaging in politics" (2010). An unhealthy moral environment hinders agency, he said, and leads to ignorance of and intolerance to differences of opinion, looking after number one, an absence of mutual trust, and distrust of the state. The remedy is mutual respect, participation and responsibility, dialog, cooperation, long-term planning, and competitiveness. These positive attributes can be developed through the personal change in accordance with values incorporating social ideals. He continued that the internalization of values is a factor in the natural identification with the state and the transmission of tradition. Work ethics, unity, courage, will, sense of purpose, creativity, selflessness, wisdom, and love of the motherland are all characteristics that are inherited by every "child of Mother Latvia", he said. "Our roots are in this soil. It gives us

strength!" (2008). Following this rhetoric, nobody is intended to question values he enunciates because they are "encoded in the people's wisdom" and thereby reflected in the state administration (2007).

Why does an "unhealthy moral environment" persist if the inherited values is a quasi-biological process? Zatlers explained that a subjective effort is required to discover values in oneself. The cultivation of personal identity should start with the feeling of belonging to the Latvian state which cannot be acquired – everybody must find it in one's heart. However, a feeling of belonging is a constitutive part of patriotism which also cannot be acquired – it is already dwelling in individuals. A feeling of belonging to one's family, city, people and the state is imparted by parents and subsequently is developed as an attitude to one's own living environment. "Exactly the strength of our rootedness in this soil, regardless the place of residence, determines our patriotism", he said (2010). The shared living environment permits the inclusion of ethnic minorities in a collective identity. The subjective experience of the place is tantamount to 'objective' determinants of collective identity as much as ethnic culture and native language. Thus, ethnic minorities are Latvia's patriots because they are rooted in this country. "We are making a single common society. All of us we are the insiders", said Zatlers (2010).

1.3.3 Andris Bērziņš (2011–2014)

Andris Bērziņš agreed that unity is a precondition of development but understood unity as cooperation between social groups rather than individual identification with the social whole. Inter-group harmony is a recurrent topic in all of his addresses: "Let us not look after the enemies! Let us look after the likeminded fellows! Let us support each other!" (2011). Hunting enemies "destroys our good will, devaluates our high aims, and finally turns us against ourselves" (2012). A concrete obstacle to cooperation is the primordial ethnic collective identity leading to inter-ethnic conflicts in a multicultural society. "[We should] cast away clichés and backward representations of ethno-cultural Latvian identity, of 'us' and 'them', because all ethnicities living in this country respect our language, traditions and symbols, have proven cooperation skills and can assume responsibility for themselves and the country" (2012). Bērziņš admitted that animosity was being constructed by various forces but concealed the agents stirring conflict in impersonal sentences such as "Tendencies to split us and oppose against each other persist" (2013). The president warned about fratricidal conflicts driven by cynical and sinister interests existing in Latvia's past. Another issue regarding interaction between groups was international cooperation. Bērziņš urged Latvians to abandon their ethnocentrism and cooperate with foreign countries, neighboring Estonia and Lithuania in particular.

In a nutshell, Bērziņš recognizes pluralism of identities and admits that consensus can be achieved through interaction rather than by imposing a homogenous collective identity.

1.3.4 Raimonds Vējonis (2015–2017)

Raimonds Vējonis dedicated his first Independence Day address to the development of personal identity and the ethics of interpersonal relations. He urged Latvians to help and inspire others, support peers who launch a new businesses, work honestly, and respect the basic values of the state. Values are important because they secure trust and cooperation, but only one value was specified in the speech: the free state. The next year, Vējonis turned to the social constraints of agency. He recognized inequality, injustice and vertical social tension (between elite and ordinary citizens, rich and poor) as huge problems for Latvia. He stressed that material deprivation and negative personal experience with state authorities discredit the ideals of statehood. Nevertheless, instead of institutional solutions, the president insisted on the urgency of character improvement. The starting conditions are the same for everybody because the state is an objective ideal structure: "Justice has been laid in the foundation of our state, it composes Latvia's genetic code". The effect of the code depends on subjective effort. Courage, self-determination, leadership abilities, and concern for the state are the personal characteristics that permit externalization of values, in his view. The state is a value *per se* and every nation strives for its own state because it "reflects belief in freedom", Vējonis said in 2017. However the state is not static and a conscious effort is needed to make life better in the future. This is the task of the parliament which "is entrusted with rights to represent the society and duty to guide forward our state". The duty of the citizenry is to make a responsible choice of candidates. Vējonis urged his listeners: "Follow state affairs, defend your interests, discuss, and talk. Personally reflect and engage with your close ones… Do not remain aloof".

1.3.5 Summation of speeches

Each of the presidents recognized the social passivity and a lack of cooperation as obstacles to the country's development. Vīķe-Freiberga believes that Latvians lack comprehension of the common good, but that it can be acquired with a holistic primordial identification with the state – Mother Latvia. Zatlers and Vējonis contend that in the ideal, state values exist objectively and individuals must develop personal identity enabling their externalization. While admitting the existence of institutional constraints to agency, the speakers do not propose solutions. Bērziņš treats the problem as social rather than psychological one. He holds that individuals refrain from cooperation because some powerful agents set their diverse collective identities against each other. Bērziņš also believes that an inclusive collective identity free of ethno-cultural particularism can improve interaction.

1.4 Treatment of sociality in policy documents

The problems of cooperation and social cohesion outlined in the presidential addresses are reflected in government legal acts. The executive branch follows directions set in four levels of documents. The Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, working under the auspices of the government, drafts a long-term Development Strategy and middle-term National Development Plan, which address problems to be resolved. The ministries work out the guidelines for sectoral policy and, finally, the Cabinet adopts the regulations setting up a legal framework for the resolution of specific issues. For this study, I selected documents, which the Government database polsis.mk.gov.lv categorizes as pertaining to civil society and democratic policy. The documents adopted since Latvia joined EU in 2004 will be discussed in chronological order.

1.4.1 Policy Guidelines for Strengthening Civil Society, 2005–2014

The most acute problems specified in the document are low sociality, low mutual trust, lack of knowledge about NGOs, and 'alienation from governance' (citizens distrust public institutions, misunderstand their goals, and perceive participation in policy making as senseless). The guidelines suggest that public authorities should set up institutional enablements of agency: create 'real opportunities' for sociality; adopt mandatory regulations guaranteeing civil society access to policy making; provide communication infrastructure and information; and provide access to financial resources. The proposed policy directives are vague: 'activate municipalities', 'further participation', 'further charity', 'further accessibility of financial sources', and 'further the improvement of goal-oriented activities for NGOs' (*Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas politikas pamatnostādnes* 2005). Personal identity is not treated as a problem in the guidelines and civic education aimed at training in civic participation skills is intended for children only.

1.4.2 National Development Plan, 2007–2013

The National Development Plan again recognized low sociality as Latvia's key problem expanding the list of institutional constraints to agency to include inefficient public administration (red tape, abstruse legal acts, lack of transparency and dialogue) and poor citizen feedback mechanisms that impede economic activity and foster distrust in institutions. Grassroots voluntary organizations were not adequate structures to enable civic activism. The network of NGOs was distributed unevenly in the country, their resources were scarce, and their range of activities limited by the law. The Plan proposed providing financial support to community initiatives, assigning more functions

to trade unions, involving civil society in decision-making and sharing some public administration tasks with NGOs.

The Plan treated personal identity as a problem. Citizens should develop a "high sense of responsibility and duty to their state and peers" which includes public activism, expression of opinions and ideas, tolerance of different opinions, and respect for decisions taken by the majority (*Nacionālās attīstības plāns* 2006: §4.2). The listed characteristics pertain to the actorial level. Individuals develop these skills acting as members of voluntary organizations, whereas according to the Plan their acquisition is a psychological process of individual contact with a 'homogenized culture space' (*vienotā kultūras telpa*). The latter provides common values for diverse social groups, enabling the formation of a cohesive civil society. Therefore, the culture space is a precondition of a stable society. The government policy envisions the provision of access to culture and the protection of heritage as aids to the creation of superior cultural values. What bears on these actions for common values and social cohesion is not explicated. Other proposed initiatives – promotion of intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity – support civil society but are in no way related to the homogenized culture space.

1.4.3 Public Administration Policy Development Guidelines, 2008–2013

These guidelines broke the principle of continuity of government policy by abandoning the references to culture and personal identity abundant in the hierarchically superior National Development Plan. The provision of institutional enablements of agency is the main focus of the guidelines so as "to increase social activity and participation in the state governance by securing feedback and improving the level of evaluation and consideration of opinions" (*Valsts pārvaldes politikas attīstības pamatnostādnes* 2008: §5.1). Civil society should be involved in drafting processes at the earliest stage, stresses the document. Participation requires high competence, e.g., civil society organizations need resources to retain experts and lawyers. Lobbying principles should be introduced in order to avoid a disproportional impact of financially strong groups on decision-making. Another issue, the improvement of legal awareness and knowledge, deals with actor's identity. To enable active roles in civic society *vis-à-vis* the state, individuals should acquire knowledge about the duties of public administration, rights and duties of citizens, as well as about conflicts of interests and prevention of corruption.

1.4.4 Government Communication Policy Guidelines, 2008–2013

Institutional enablements of agency are discussed further in these guidelines. The government assumes the obligation to eliminate institutional barriers and adopt legal regulations fostering the citizens' participation in drafting laws and policy

documents. Public authorities are expected to use various communication channels (e.g., discussions, forums, opinion polls, media monitoring, seminars) for engaging civil society in public discussions and consultation from the very beginning of drafting legislation. The following paragraph demonstrates that the appropriate regulatory act, adopted in 2009, implemented the guidelines superficially.

1.4.5 Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process

Time limits and other duties of public officials fixed by the Procedures turned public discussions and consultations into a pure formality. Civil society is only enjoined in the latest stage of drafting government documents.[1] The Procedures do not require that officials respect the essence of public opinion in legal acts.[2] Contrary to the policy guidelines, the feedback is limited to two communication channels (consultations and discussion), no monitoring of the process is institutionalized.[3]

1.4.6 Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030

The economic crisis and subsequent reshuffling of the political elite resulted in a new codification of the concept of civil society in Latvia. In 2009–2016, the new government coalition lead by liberal party *Vienotība* translated the cultural socialization rhetoric into the language of policy documents and laws. The long-term Sustainable Development Strategy published in 2010 sets culture – or more precisely the 'development of culture space' – as the main strategic goal of the government. The first section

[1] NGOs are given only 14 days to prepare an expert opinion and comment the draft while officials have no time at all to consider the proposals and integrate them in the draft. The Procedures stipulate that discussion should be announced 'not later' than 14 days before submitting the development planning document to the decision-making body for taking a final decision. In effect it is permissible that the discussion takes place on the same day as the draft is submitted to a higher authority because the pertinent files should be provided for the public also 'not less' that 14 days before the discussion. Another form of engagement is public consultation; it lasts 30 days but it does not provide for a direct exchange of opinions between the interested parties.

[2] In two weeks after the meeting the summary of discussion and the list of participants should be posted on the institution's website. In case when a draft document is to be approved by the government, the objections expressed by the civil society are to be listed in an information sheet. There is no demand to analyze and respect the critical remarks formulated during the discussions and consultations.

[3] Practical implementation of the Procedures in the ministries is hampered by the lower level regulations. Communication departments are not assigned specific duties the responsibility being dispersed among various officials who prefer contacts with organized groups and elite experts. The government does not use digital platforms to enable feedback channels for non-organized citizens and civic groups disposing low resources (Krūmiņa 2017).

of the document is dedicated entirely to this issue. The paramount importance of culture space is its political function: "our unique, inherited and newly created material and spiritual values" are the foundation of a national identity which "joins and unites the society for the creation of new economic, social and cultural values, which are appreciated and known around the world" (*Sustainable Development Strategy* 2010: §30). More details about culture space are given in §51.

> **Strengthening of the sense of belonging to the culture space of Latvia.** Inhabitants of Latvia have a common material and non-material heritage, which has been accumulated in creative work that has lasted for centuries. Culture determines the foundation for what we are and what we want to be. Common cultural heritage, language, traditions and perception of values are the main components, which ensure the sense of belonging to a specific community and promote the unity of the society. In wider sense, culture is a system of values, which is the foundation of the identity and lifestyle of an individual, community, and nation. Concurrently culture is also a mechanism for the creation of such values, analysis and transfer thereof, creating the sustainability of the culture space of Latvia.

Throughout the text ontological and constructivist conceptions of culture are mixed in a contradictory way. On the one hand, 'common' and 'historically developed' concepts and traditions create "the social environment and the public life order of the culture space" (p. 104). Individual autonomy is minimized as social action depends on "the idea of single national culture, ideals and practice" (§54), and individuals are obliged to sociality because "belonging [to a collective] guarantees a certain welfare, safety and certainty to their existence" (§54). On the other hand, individuals must undertake a conscious effort to develop the sense of belonging to the culture space and this process is mediated by state institutions. This is the Strategy's purpose formulated in the Section 1. Moreover, shared culture *per se* does not produce social cohesion but merely it ensures 'the sense of belonging' to community and 'promotes' unity. This is why in other paragraphs of the same section priority is accorded to practices of cooperation: "Creative activity, tolerance, co-operation and participation promote the unity and safety of the society and cultural diversity" (§41) and "A unified society, firstly, is a society involved in cultural processes" (§63). The Strategy envisions public authorities that "create a qualitative cultural environment" (p. 13), arrange institutional structures facilitating the involvement of individuals in culture-related practices. The constructivist conception opens the way for the integration of ethnic minorities. The Strategy strives to broaden the ethno-cultural definition of the nation by recognizing cultural pluralism. The identity of the nation is constituted by "values created by Latvians and other nations living in Latvia, as well as the Latvian diaspora" (p. 104).

Alongside the culture's political function the Strategy discusses its economic value. Culture develops personal qualities such as creativity, imagination, openness to new things, and intuition which fosters human capital in general and creative industries in

particular. The realization of this function depends on an institutional arrangement: state-sponsored vocational, lifelong, and other forms of education aimed at the improvement of creative competences and skills. Since access to education depends on resources, the state should combat socio-economic inequality and poverty.

Section 7, "Innovative government and public participation", abandons references to culture altogether. Resources and institutions are the main factors of agency. In this section, the Strategy declares that the reason for social passivity is the malfunction of public administration rather than the lack of cultural socialization. The government should improve the bottom up communication, ensure there are possibilities and motivation for participation. State officials should respect diversity and consider the opinions of all interested groups in law-making process. Public activism skills should be developed through civil education rather than cultural socialization.

1.4.7 Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy, 2012–2018

The guidelines authored by the Ministry of Culture embrace state moral paternalism explicitly. A program of cultural socialization is intended to make people morally better by developing their emotional attachment to the state.

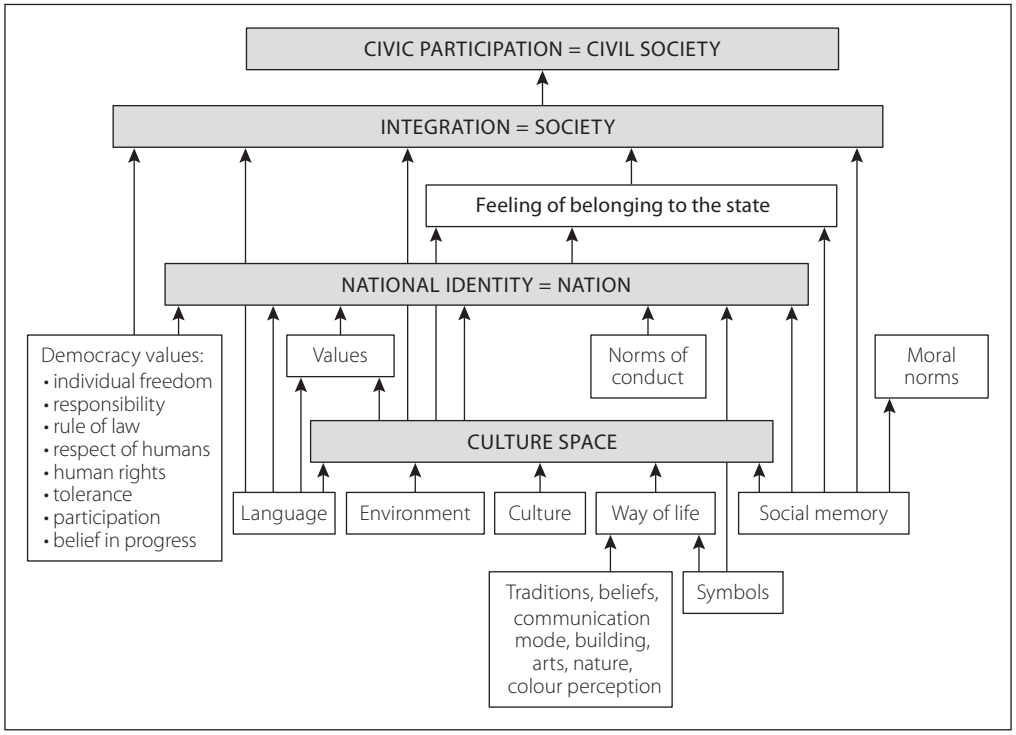
> A State creates the framework in which democracy can operate, and democracy cannot function without people who feel they belong to the particular country and who feel responsibility for it. Therefore, a feeling of belonging to Latvia and responsibility for it are a precondition for the sustainability of the democratic State of Latvia, the Latvian nation and the Latvian people. (*Guidelines on National Identity* 2012: §1.2)

Virtues to be inculcated in population are reduced to ethnic Latvian identity called alternatively as the 'national' or 'cultural-historical' identity of the state based on language, culture and social memory. "It is the common foundation connecting all the people of Latvia, making it a democratic participatory community" (§1.2). Cultural identity determines agency because social action depends on feeling of belonging to a particular country where the action is taking place, "therefore, the cultivation of local and national uniqueness requires a more active national policy which is necessary to create a sustainable and conscious feeling of belonging" (§1.2). Section 9 suggests that individuals develop this feeling in contact with cultural artifacts. The specific policy measures sees access to cultural heritage, professional art, and amateur cultural practices as "the strengthening of traditional culture's role in creation of ethnic Latvian living space" (§9.2.3). Minorities, supposedly missing such artifacts and practices, should be assisted in the restoration of their cultural historical memory. Construction of the past, called 'the proper organization of social memory' is another instrument fostering the feeling of belonging to the State (§3.3). The government should develop and implement a policy aimed at the formulation of 'consolidated social memory'.

In Section 3, the guidelines recognize some institutional constraints to agency. Specifically, civil society organizations are weak financially, disproportionally concentrated in the capital city, and their opportunities to participate in policy-making are reduced. The Government should eliminate these constraints by creating a civic initiatives support fund and amending laws in order to share some government tasks with these organizations thus securing their rights to participate in policy making. In particular, the improvement of the Procedures for public participation is suggested (see section 1.4.1 above). As to the constraints existing on a personal level, their description and proposed solutions lack clarity and precision. Distrust in public institutions, skepticism about civil society's ability to shape policy making, and intolerance of diversity is to be redressed by information campaigns 'shaping comprehension about civic skills' (§9).

Figure 1.1 systematizes the causality culture – agency drawn from the explicit and contextual definitions of the terms 'society', 'nation', and 'culture'. Individuals are unable to agree on the conditions of cooperative conduct because the possibility of consensus is provided by the particular culture rather than by context-free rules. Thus, civic rights of public participation are made dependent on cultural socialization.

Figure 1.1 Causality culture – agency according to the Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy, 2012–2018.



Source: Kruks (2016).

1.4.8 National Development Plan, 2014–2020

"What have you personally done to make Latvia richer and better?" – this rhetorical question opens the second National Development Plan approved in December 2012. All the citizens should join their individual efforts to assure an 'economic breakthrough' in order for Latvia to recover from crisis. "Order cannot be created artificially from the top down", the Plan warns against exaggerated expectations of government proposed solutions (*National Development Plan* 2012: 3–4). According to the document, agency depends on institutional and personal factors. To boost economy, an 'outstanding business environment' – predictable, reasonable and supportive to businessmen – must be created. Still, the old institutional failures are cramping business. There is inefficient public administration, incoherent regulatory implementation, volatile tax policy, red tape, and an unreliable judicial mechanism for the resolution of economic disputes (§§135, 136, 160). Also, the government communication policy is unsatisfactory. Officials do not explain decisions to citizens and ignore public opinion (§§338, 342).

On personal level, lack of certain personality characteristics and faculties[4] restrain agency. Their cultivation depends on educational institutions which are not accessible for all due to an unequal distribution of material resources. In order to balance the odds for all Latvians, the government should reduce inequality, cut the tax burden, and develop regional infrastructure (§82). The cultivation of necessary competencies depends on the internalization of culture which possesses inherent mechanisms linking individuals together. Cultural values provide a root network which enables cooperation (§212) and language and culture are the foundations that unite the society (§316). State institutions are entitled to mediate culture and shape national identity through traditional and innovative initiatives (§337), promoting the values of national identity (§316) and spreading awareness about unifying values and goals (§338). Government sponsored institutions select appropriate items of culture establishing the Cultural Canon, which is "an instrument for shaping the national policy of culture, education, national unity and cohesion and the identity of Latvia" (§43).

Alongside top-down cultural socialization in one paragraph, culture is treated as praxis. Participation in the creation and maintenance of culture facilitates cooperation between members of different ethnic groups (§44). The vague term 'culture space' broadly employed in the Strategy 2030 is mentioned only once in the pragmatic context of economics. Culture space is a totality of cultural and recreational services offered in Latvia. Belonging to Latvia's culture space means the consumption of these services in the country (§223).

[4] Respect of law, responsibility, capacity to take care of oneself and others in need, initiative, cooperation skills, benevolence, self-confidence, self-improvement, language skills, knowledge and command of information and communications technologies, communication and cooperation skills, entrepreneurial ability, civic consciousness, creativity, ability to think critically, to plan finances, to assess risks and identify solutions to such risks.

1.4.9 Public Administration Policy Development Guidelines, 2014–2020

The Guidelines criticize the Procedures for public participation (section 1.4.5 above) by admitting that public opinion has no impact on the decision making and, in the final account, state and municipal institutions discourage civic participation. Civic education policy (section 1.4.3 above) is reproached for its formalism, absence of concrete aims, homogenization of audiences, and ill-defined institutional responsibilities. Government communication in general is identified as constraining agency. Texts are written in sophisticated language, messages lack background information, and feedback is stunted. The absence of reliable information undermines trust and a feeling of belonging to the state. Recall that the presidents proposed a reversed causality: the feeling of belonging is a culture-related trait of character which is to be developed with the help of public institutions. This policy document claims that institutions themselves are the problem.

Despite its detailed critique, no substantial solutions are proposed. Officials are urged to improve the quality of public services by analyzing the needs and habits of its clients as well as "to offer clear means of involvement and provide sufficient information ensuring participation in due time" (*Valsts pārvaldes politikas attīstības pamatnostādnes* 2014: §4.2.3). Civic education sees the "organization of campaigns about the values of democracy, strengthening patriotism, awareness of statehood, and the feeling of belonging to the state" (§4.2.1).

1.4.10 Summation of government documents

Recognizing the importance of enhancing individual agency, the government toggles between institutional and cultural requisites. Institutional ones are discussed more convincingly in general policy documents, but regulations fail to support the substantial improvement of public institutions. The conceptualization of cultural necessities rests on a fallacious epistemology. Accordingly, the proposed policy measures are ill-founded and their effect on social conduct is not explicated. The most important epistemological fallacies are the following.

1) Reduction of the cultural system (CS) to national culture. Though cultural heritage does not cover all the bases of new complexity faced by agents. In differentiated society agents reach consensus on issues of their specific concerns claiming no general approval like national culture does and interaction does not require that agents interiorize a broad spectrum of shared characteristics.
2) Reduction of socio-cultural interaction (S-C) to cultural socialization ignoring other spheres of human interaction (e.g., local community, professional organizations, friends) and equating participation in national culture to the development of social trust. Empirical data suggest the contrary:

the experience of social interaction is more salient for the development of national identity than cultural socialization (Birka 2014). However, the next section of this chapter will show that participation in national culture does not necessarily lead to more social trust.

3) Confusion of two concepts of culture defined by Kymlicka (1989) as cultural character (a set of specific traits) and structure of culture (a set of institutions). According to the policy documents, paternalistic institutions elaborate restrictive interpretations of cultural character to be internalized by the population, but at the same time the structure of culture is expected to enable individual autonomy by facilitating creativity, cooperation, and tolerance. Section 6 will argue that the idea of cultural character supports an unequal distribution of power.

1.5 Culture and social action: The social effects of choirs

Choirs and folk dance groups are the most popular civil society organizations in Latvia attracting 5.9% of population in 2017. Religious (5.5%), sports (4.8%) organizations and trade unions (3.6%) are the next three important organizations. Choir singing has a special significance for the national identity invented by 19th century nation-builders (Bula 2000). The choir is regarded as an ideal model of the nation – a group of individuals charged with a unified and disciplined spiritual effort (Klotiņš 1998: 37). This section argues that participation in such national culture does not necessarily enable agency and foster social trust. Even if poetry and music can provide motives for social action, the arrangement and maintenance of the cultural practice itself depends on availability and shape of structures and resources.

The Latvian tradition of collective singing originated in the northern province of Vidzeme in 18th–19th century. The first regional song festival was arranged by locals in 1864. The expansion of choir singing started after the construction of numerous parish houses and the foundation of teachers' college in this region. Kurzeme, the Western province, lacked this kind of infrastructure and choir singing was slower to develop there (Straube 2017). The first nation-wide Latvian Song festival was held in 1873 and nowadays it takes place every five years. In 1920s the festival organizing committee set as its task the preservation and development of *a cappella* polyphonic singing. The festival contains a complex mandatory repertoire, which implies rigorous criteria for admission to the event. Hence, amateurs must invest time and resources to rehearsals and undergo regional competitions. This trend of professionalization created a dependence of grassroots cultural practices on centralized management and government resources which makes Latvian choir singing dissimilar to Estonian and Lithuanian traditions. Another difference is the extension of Latvian song festival's scope to include folk dance performances. Since 1965, it has been designated a Song and Dance Festival.

It sounds cogent that the regular collective cultural practice can enable the skills and networking of the participants, but the presumption lacks supporting empirical data. Sociological studies are limited to surveys of the participants in the festivals but researchers have neglected the folk groups' workaday routines between the national gala concerts (cf. Tisenkopfs *et al*. 2002, 2008; Laķe 2014). For the purposes of this study a representative opinion poll was held in October 2014 – fourteen months after the latest festival.[5] The activities of singers and dancers before and after the festival are summarized in Table 1.2. Attendance at rehearsals increased shortly before the national event and declined thereafter. Activity increased in 2017 as the amateurs started to rehearse the repertoire of the upcoming 2018 festival. Every fourth amateur agreed that their collectives enabled public activism (organizing a discussion or fundraising campaign, providing support to non-members). Private in-group activity (mutual help, collective trips) was reported twice more often. Among socio-demographic groups, students are the most committed to their artistic collectives. They attend rehearsals, perform in concerts, act socially twice or even more often than the mean result.

Table 1.2 Participation in choirs and dance collectives, 2012–2014 and 2017, percent

Activity	Mean	Students	Age 18–24
Attended rehearsals before the Festival in 2012–2013	5.4	16.3	13.9
Participant of the 2013 Festival, poll	3.5	18.2	8.4
Participant of the 2013 Festival, fact[1]	2.4	NA	NA
Attended rehearsals weekly after the Festival*	3.5	14.9	8.7
Performed in a concert after the Festival**	3.9	14.2	8.4
Collective arranged a public event after the Festival**	1.0	3.8	2.4
Collective arranged a private event after the Festival**	2.3	9.5	4.1
Acquired social skills and duties in the collective	1.1	3.9	1.7
Attended a concert after the Festival**	26.8	43.6	25.6
Membership in a choir and dance collective in 2017[2]	5.9	22.8	11.3

Sources: SKDS, October 2014. N = 1,004, age 18–74.

[1] *Latvijas Nacionālais kultūras centrs*. Including non-specified number of persons under the age of 18;

[2] SKDS, March 2017. N = 1,003, age 18–74.

Notes:

* A six months period beginning nine months after the Festival.

** A twelve months period beginning three months after the Festival.

Percentage calculated for the poll's target age group between 18–74 years. Margin of statistical error is ± 1.14%.

[5] The 2013 Festival organizers have counted 39,000 participants (excluding foreigners but including an unspecified number of artists from the age group below 18 years) which equals to 1.95% of Latvia's population. According to the poll, 3.5% of the respondents aged 18–74 or 2.8% of the whole population participated in the Festival as singers and dancers. The margin of statistical error ± 1.14% allows treating the poll data as reliable.

The corresponding age group 18–24 years is considerably less vibrant. A plausible explanation is that the students, unlikely their working peers, have access to free of charge infrastructure in universities, colleges and high schools. The state run institutions of education arrange regular concerts attracting audience of students' friends and relatives. Also, the timing of artistic activities is adapted to students' schedules.

Respondents in the survey agreed that an external organization, state and municipal financial support, and professional leadership are more important for the survival of choirs and dance groups than the efforts of amateur artists. The Law on the Song and Dance Festival, passed in 2005, prescribed new duties for state and municipal institutions. The government appropriated LVL 3.8 million (€ 5.4 million) for the 2008 Festival – a remarkable increase (by seventeen times) compared to the LVL 0.22 million spent in 1993.[6] The actual expenses exceeded the estimate and cannot be calculated. A 'very significant' municipal subsidy and personal spending by singers (e.g., acquisition of the festive folk garment) was never surveyed (Počs 2008). The available financial data is summarized in Table 1.3.

Robert Putnam (2000) claims that voluntary associations are important for the society because here individuals acquire the skills of interaction and cooperation with others, such interpersonal networks multiply social capital. Italian choral societies created networks of civic engagement which possessed a great potential to develop and reinforce trust and solidarity (Putnam 1993). How do Latvian folk music and dance groups promote civic activism?

Latvian authors mention emotions, togetherness, and feeling of belonging as the social effects. Musicologists contend that collective singing exemplifies a model of social cohesion: emotions experienced by the singers standing side by side with thousands of compatriots at a gala concert prove that subjectivity and sociopolitical cleavages can be overcome and selfish individuals can cooperate beyond the concert stage (Boiko 2002; Klotiņš 1998; Koļeda 1998). Sociologists mention networking as an effect of collective cultural practices, but their research provides no evidence of social interaction (e.g., Tisenkopfs *et al.* 2008). Polled participants of the 2013 festival do not consider the cultural activity as an important enablement of networking. Private emotions, maintenance of tradition and holistic identification with a group were far more important for them than the opportunity to build relational connectedness with the peers (Table 1.4).

Analyzing Italian choral societies Putnam (1993) concluded that the cultural practice was an important factor enabling networking. Latvian case shows that in itself participation in cultural practices is not sufficient to enhance social capital. The festival opted for the professionalization of tradition in order to maintain a complex technique of polyphonic *a cappella* singing as a mark of cultural distinction of Latvians from

[6] National Archives of Latvia, LVA, 236.1a.103.23.

other nations (Silabriedis 2013; *Summary* 2008). Managers of amateur folk song and dance groups do not consider development of social skills as an important task of cultural practice. It is not the cultural system *per se* (the content of traditional songs) but its historical elaboration by the artistic elite as a corporate agent that conditions socio-cultural interaction.

Table 1.3 Breakdown of revenues of the Song and dance festival 2008, EUR

Financing source	EUR	Target expenses
State budget	5,638,664	Catering, accommodation, concert organization, honoraria, safety, broadcasting, etc.
Box-office and licensing	843,822	
Sponsorship	1,183,428	
Riga municipal budget	458,250	Safety and transportation
Other municipal budgets	494,160	Catering
State and Riga budget	15,678,909	Renovation of facilities, 2007–2008
State and Riga budget	2,449,308	Salaries of group leaders in Riga
State and municipal budgets	NA	Salaries, garments, transportation

Source: Počs (2008). Converted to euro, exchange rate LVL / EUR 1.42.

Table 1.4 Major gains from the participation at the festival, multiple choice question

Experience gained at the Festival	Respondents, %
Emotional experience	73
Feeling of togetherness with Latvian people	36
Participation in the maintenance of this tradition	36
Strengthened national identity, patriotism	30
Unique experience of maintaining traditions	28
Participation in the collective ritual	26
Breaking away from daily routine	15
Energy for work in the future	10
Strengthened belonging to the Latvian state	8
Acquired new friends	6
Communication with members of other collectives	5
Being together with people representing other regions, cultures, values	4
Being with family	2
Gained new knowledge	2
Recognition and support from others	2
Other	3

Source: Laķe (2014).

Note: N = 1105, participants of the 2013 Festival polled by e-mail.

1.6 Culture's political role: a double contract

Policy documents and contemporary Latvian academic literature do not demonstrate how culture causes cohesion and action. A more or less logical discussion of causality can be found in a collection of essays by the interwar philosopher Pauls Jurevičs (1936). I turn to this old book because the problems discussed now and then are not dissimilar. Latvian scholars characterize the interwar society as split, quarrelsome, unable to compromise (Bleiere *et al.* 2005; Dreifelds 1996; Zaķe 2008). Jurevičs' ideas are reflected in the juridical discourse of lawyer Egils Levits (2013) who seeks to overcome contemporary pluralism anxiety by substantiating culture's legal role.

1.6.1 Cultural similarity as a foundation of cooperation

Jurevičs writes in an erratic style, often digressing from his topic. To understand his argument, I examine the philosopher's explicit and contextual definitions of individual and collective agents and the conditions of their social cooperation scattered all across the book. The following agents are mentioned in the book: individual, intelligentsia, the people, society and the state.

According to Jurevičs individuals are not autonomous rational beings able to establish cooperative relations. Cooperation requires some historically developed circumstances. Common language and history, kinship, shared customs, living conditions and territorial proximity produce mentally similar individuals. The basic similarity is a precondition of the people (*tauta*) which in its turn is a foundation for culture (p. 173). Still it is not a sufficient factor for cooperation because the individuals have to overcome their egoism. They can do it by self-control which depends on the trained will. The will is ability to realize the ideas and aims recognized as good (p. 199), while the ability to apply the will is the ability to control "trends of actualization of one's own thoughts" (p. 201). Refinement of the will is an individual psychological process, which starts with inquiring into and finding oneself (p. 203). One's whole mental life is an internal conversation with oneself (p. 156). Should a person fail in any stage of self-development, society must provide help. Society is an aggregation of surrounding people who inculcate supra-individual characteristics and educated manners. More specifically, agency is ascribed to some exceptional people called intelligentsia. "Society as such, as a crowd, never creates anything; rather it is a gifted individual", he wrote (p. 165). Gifted persons succeed at self-development in their own way and thereby they make the environment for the development of others. Intellectuals secure the transmission of tradition which is supposed to replace the individual consciousness and determine continuity of mental development. The intelligentsia creates culture while the people are passive participants in the process. The masses provide material for the intellectuals and then either accept or reject their creative works.

A viable society depends on its past. Since consciousness has been developed in the past, Jurevičs explains, the reliance on it guarantees the similarity of individuals nowadays and this is a condition of cooperation. The adopted heritage results in mechanical behavior permitting members of the society to expect that others behave in a certain manner. The state is the practical side of people's existence as civilized human beings. Here social life takes place and private persons turn into an organized whole. Social organization becomes possible because the state impairs individual freedoms (p. 169). Thereby the state creates a framework for the development of the best personal characteristics (p. 174) and individual perfection (p. 197). The state itself is a project of poets and intellectuals; common people just have to acknowledge it as an expression of their own wills. However, in the final account, the highest norms reigning in the society must coincide with the innermost essence of every person (p. 207). Maintenance of balance between the individual freedoms and the state's interests is the state leader's responsibility whose tact and anticipation are the guarantees against the abuses of power (p. 170).

The principles of social life are determined by national cohesiveness rather than rational necessity, Jurevičs contends. His concept of the state does not envision room for the negotiation of heterogeneous identities and interests. Individuals have to attenuate their difference before they engage in cooperative relations with others. The ability to subordinate individual desires is the purpose of internal self-development whose communication model is the soliloquy. Historically, Jurevičs contends, Latvians are individualistic. They lack trust and coordination of effort. They are driven by anarchic wills. A remedy to social anomie is aesthetics because individuals are bound together by the unconscious experience of ideas and symbols rather than by practice. Culture is a realm where personal selves are being corrected so that they can merge into a harmonious community.

1.6.2 Culture as the foundation of the state

In recent years, culture has found its way into legal acts in Latvia. The lawyer Egils Levits, who was among the authors of the Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy, drafted the Preamble to Constitution stressing the crucial role of ethnic culture for the state. The Parliament adopted the Preamble in 2014. One year earlier, the juridical argumentation of culture's political role appeared in the *Comments to the Administrative Process Law* (Levits 2013). Discussing the notion of democracy, Levits distinguishes between four connotations which he describes as the upper principles of democracy:

1) democracy in a narrow sense (specific procedures eliciting the citizens' will);
2) rule of law;
3) socially responsible state (assurance of social justice);
4) national state.

First three principles do not raise questions while the fourth one needs a longer comment. The national state is conceived of as a cultural unity. Its task is to assure the existence of a Latvian nation state and protect and develop ethnic Latvian language and culture. The nation state as a new collective agent formulates the legally binding national cultural identity of the state. However Levits ignores that a collective agent does not take decisions as a legal entity, it has to contract some individual actors to decide on behalf of the collective. Political procedures pertaining to the first upper principle cannot be applied in this case because democracy in narrow sense encompasses all Latvia's citizens, while the nation state excludes non-titular citizens.

1.6.3 Summation of philosophical and legal rhetoric

The philosopher Jurevičs and the lawyer Levits provided a more or less coherent description of culture's causality. Culture represents collective consensus reached in the past, its internalization is a precondition of access to the public sphere. Individuals should attenuate the difference in the private sphere but they cannot advance it to a public discussion, Jurevičs holds. Levits envisions a vague agent who enacts laws on behalf of the national cultural identity referring to the nation's foundational principles.

Jurevičs and Levits reason in terms of double contract of German natural law (discussed in Kersting 2006; Lessnoff 1986: 71–74). In a pact of unity, individuals make a culturally bound community – the people. Holding many contradictory opinions and divergent wills, individuals cannot agree on the goals and ends to be pursued. In a pact of submission, governance is instituted by the people rather than individuals. Jurevičs contends that by virtue of cultural similarity individuals constitute the people but it is the intellectual elite acting on behalf of the people which institutes the political structure of the state. Levits respects the liberal single contract as the first upper principle of democracy, but the concept of ethnic nation-state introduces the second contract. On behalf of the nation-state, some anonymous persons determine the non-specified national cultural identity of the state which is elevated into a significant part of the Constitution. In this way references to culture legitimize social engineering by elite groups and ultimately justify the top-down conception of democracy.

1.7 Procedures

Policy documents hold that culture helps individuals to develop a holistic identification with a large collective bringing about integration ('unity' and 'cohesion' are two other widely used terms) of differentiated society. What happens to the pluralism of interests, opinions, and identities held by diverse groups and individuals? In the classics of sociology, society is a divided community consisting of loosely related independent

groups competing for resources (Weber 1949, 1968). Interaction between groups is secured by invented practices of conflict resolution rather than by their similarity stemming from allegedly shared culture. This section argues that an overestimation of culture inhibits agreement on political procedures dealing with pluralism.

Politics can be defined as an "activity that involves collective conflict and its resolution" (Bealey 1999: 261), "the recognition and conciliation of conflicting interests" (Scruton 2007: 535), or "deliberations through which people or factions that have divergent interests are said to arrive at shared resolutions" (Etzioni 2003: 95). Conflicts of interest is a normal condition and it is the task of political actors to find consensus. This would be the everyday professional duty of the members of Latvian parliament, however, their concept of 'political' suggests the opposite. Table 1.5 shows the collocations of the word 'political' (*politisks*, in Nominative case, singular) in the parliamentary debates.

'Political' is used to mean a decision, question, or proposal which may be or not be 'only' or 'merely' political. In the context of use, the word *politisks* acquires negative connotations.

1) Political decision-making disregards procedures and laws; e.g., "From the legal point view this is absolutely illiterate… This is a political proposal entirely" (Tsilevich, 17 May 2012).
2) Political decision lacks argumentation; e.g., "I've asked: what is the substantiation? I merely heard basically this is a political decision" (Liepiņš, 25 April 2013).
3) Political decision lacks a pragmatic purport; e.g., "This is not a political decision, this is a very important project for Latvia's audiovisual market" (Seiksts, 10 September 1998).

Table 1.5 Collocations of the word *politisks* (political), 1993–2016

Collocations (lemmas)	Frequency	T-score
būt / to be	161	11.232
lēmums / decision	88	9.328
jautājums / question	84	9.028
nebūt / not to be	46	6.330
tīri / purely	23	4.787
pieņemt / accept	21	4.398
tikai / only	19	4.134
spēks / force	16	3.912
arī / also	18	3.451
raksturs / character	12	3.450
kāds / some	11	3.022

Source: Parliamentary debates corpus, http://nosketch.korpuss.lv/.

As a juridical term 'political decision' reflects the principle of the division of power implying that some enactments are not subjected to the court control (Briede 2013: 42). Several bills of complaint regarding the substance of political decisions have been brought to the Supreme Court Senate. Dismissing the bills, the Senate, however, did not refer to this principle explicitly. Its vague argumentation pushes the boundaries of legal discourse suggesting that the nature of political decisions is such that they cannot be evaluated in other discursive fields. According to the jurists political decision is premised on:

- political belief (LR Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2006);
- internal conviction of a state official (LR Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2010);
- subjective criteria held by a state official (LR Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2010);
- criteria non-defined in legal norms (LR Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2006).

It follows from these definitions that a politician possesses a specific individual experience of reality which cannot be expressed and evaluated dialogically therefore it is permissible to dispense with public argumentation. All in all, the decisive role belongs to the majority opinion which is not obliged to consider all the necessary conditions, the Supreme Court Senate declared (LR Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2006). A legislator's freedom of action is so large that she is not obliged to evaluate whether the decision is appropriate, necessary and adequate, argue law scholars (Briede & Danovskis 2015).

In an earlier paper I have demonstrated that members of parliament undermined civil society's ability to engage in critical debate on political issues. The MPs have argued that the procedure for general elections grants them legitimate rights to enact laws and under their current mandate nobody is allowed to interfere in their work (Kruks 2008; see also Auers 2015: 125). This research reveals that the parliamentary majority rejects the opposition's invitation to critical discussion of draft documents invoking the juridical definition of 'political decision'. Indeed, courts cannot evaluate criteria not specified in legal acts. However, besides a legal duty, politicians have moral duty to justify their decisions (Habermas 1989; Rawls 1996). Confusion in discursive fields devaluates politics. The purpose of a 'political decision' is to compensate for the incapacity of juridical acts to address all facets of modern social complexity; it allows politicians to assume responsibility for decision making. Latvian parliamentarians use it against minority opinion to justify majority rule.

1.8 Conclusion

Modern complex societies provide plural and variable circumstances for our lives. Necessarily, individuals are primary agents seeking to realize their needs in the given conditions and some of them happen to occupy similar positions tackling similar problems. A combination of individual efforts at corporate agency increases a capacity to articulate interests and exercise influence on decision making in government institutions.

Primary agents act privately, but as members of corporate agency they develop social roles enabling the public action of social actors. A majority of Latvian primary agents do not succeed at this and prefer individual tactics. Why do they not stand for their vested interests?

To act collectively, individuals should aggregate their beliefs and judgments into corresponding collective beliefs or judgments endorsed by the group as a whole (List 2005). Corporate agency therefore includes discursive activity which depends on rules and procedures for forming propositional attitudes of the group, its preferences and judgments (List & Pettit 2011). The Habermasian concept of discursive democracy suggests that propositions of common interest be subjected to public reasoning which respects discursive rules of clarity, logic, truth and accountability (Habermas 1990). I argue that anxiety about pluralism among Latvians is caused by the lack of agreement on discursive rules and the failure to reach such an agreement I attribute to structural constraints. Lack of resources for the operation of corporate agency and ineffective legal provision of bottom-up communication channels are among the institutional constraints. A negative attitude toward individual autonomy pertains to cultural constraints. Gerald Dworkin defines autonomy as "a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth, and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences" (1988: 20). Policy documents attribute a lack of sociality to flawed personal identity which is to be corrected by inculcation of higher-order preferences in government-managed cultural socialization. Culture's role should not be dismissed altogether, however. The idea of double contract shared by the decision-makers and some scholars justifies moral monism and state paternalism shaping the logic of legal acts which institutionalize the rules of sociocultural interaction. In our case, citizens have rights to participate in drafting policy documents but regulatory enactments do not bind the public authorities to consider the expressed beliefs and judgments. The experience of failure in exercising influence on decision-making weakens a commitment to decisions cast and discourages further collective action. Acting privately, primary agents do not develop discursive procedures enabling them to deal with pluralism. This is a pragmatic choice of autonomous individuals. It is not a failure of reflexive capacity, which many Western democratic romanticists attribute to some sort of lingering "Soviet mentality".

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2 Is a Common Culture a Public Good?

Xavier Landes

2.1 Introduction

The literature in political theory on multiculturalism and nationalism often depicts a common, shared culture as a good that creates positive outcomes. Will Kymlicka (1989, 1995), for instance, considers that a common 'societal' culture supports a context of choice, which provides individuals with meaningful options. Charles Taylor (1995) characterizes culture as an 'irreducibly social good'. Ronald Dworkin articulates the idea of culture as a public good, i.e., a good endowed with a strong positive spillover effect (Dworkin 1985; Macleod 1997). According to Jacob Levy (2000a), the challenge faced by many endangered minorities is to control free riding from those members who integrate into the mainstream society and leave to others the burden of preserving the minority culture.

All these views assume or discuss a similar idea, namely that a shared culture, be it minority or national, is a good that is beneficial to all members of a given community. A shared culture would belong to what economists call a 'public good', along with justice, police, national defense, and so forth. As such, like other public goods, a shared culture would produce benefits for its members while being vulnerable to free riding (Levy 2000a). Moreover, such dynamics would be particularly salient at the national level.

In this chapter, I argue that culture, whether minority or national, is not a public good in the sense given by economics. Moreover, I claim that the loose idea that a shared culture produces positive outcomes encounters serious difficulties. In other words, a shared culture is not necessarily tied to the kind of positive outcomes public institutions usually search to instantiate in a society (e.g., social cohesion, mutual and institutional trust, political stability). Thus, public institutions, especially at the national level, should mainly focus on supporting social cooperation – instead of trying excessively to promote a shared culture. I develop my argument through three steps.

Firstly, I briefly elaborate on what culture as a public good is, or could be, based on the canonical economic formulation. I recognize that the argument of culture as a public good *may* be useful to capture the idea of a good beneficial to all the members of a political community. Secondly, I discuss in detail the thesis that a shared culture *inevitably* generates positive outcomes or a spillover effect (one of the characteristics of

a public good) at a local or national level. I consider several versions of the argument. A first version is to consider that a specific cultural element is the active substance for generating positive outcomes such as social cohesion or trust. A second version is to consider that culture (as an unspecified/underspecified entity or a bundle of elements) is the active substance. This discussion shows that the assimilation of a common culture into a public good is defective because the thesis cannot be proven, and the promotion of a shared culture may generate the opposite of what public institutions intend promoting (social cohesion, mutual and institutional trust, political stability, and so forth).

Finally, I contrast two views about the positive outcomes allegedly created by a shared culture. The first view claims that social goods traditionally associated with a shared culture are produced by shaping individual preferences along ethnicity, language, history, values, etc. The second view argues that social goods traditionally associated with a shared culture are produced by institutional design, particularly the design of cooperative mechanisms. This dimension is particularly relevant at nation-state level. I conclude that the latter view (institutional design) is superior to the former (preference shaping) when it comes to thinking about public policies aimed at strengthening social cohesion. By claiming so, I hope to contribute to debates related to social capital and the political stability of democratic societies.

2.2 Culture as a public good

Culture as a public good has received many formulations. Most (if not all) of them share the core idea that a shared culture benefits everyone in a given society or group. (It is important to note that my argument is aimed at the two main cultural forms or levels: minority and national cultures). For instance, John Stuart Mill (1867) claims that a common national culture is necessary for supporting liberal institutions. Todd Gitlin (1995) posits that a common culture nurtures a feeling of shared destiny that is necessary for a country. David Miller (1995) stipulates that a common culture secures (or contributes to securing) social cohesion, stability, solidarity or trust. Kymlicka has a similar idea in mind when he notes that "focusing on shared values, mythical history, or the excitement of deep diversity might help to sustain that level of solidarity" (Kymlicka 1995).

Before proceeding, it is worth making a clarification. In normative theory, culture is presented as having either intrinsic or instrumental value (Song 2007). On the one hand, culture could be intrinsically valuable. In that case, culture is a good, whose value is independent of its effects, particularly on individuals within a group or a nation. Taylor (1995) advocates for such a view. He argues that culture is an irreducibly social good in two ways: it provides the grammar of our moral evaluation of other goods and it incorporates a common understanding of these other goods. Culture and its positive outcomes are indistinct. A minority or national culture is not good *for* it is good

in itself. On the other hand, there is the thesis of the instrumental value of culture. A minority or national culture is a good because it produces positive outcomes, i.e., it has a positive spillover effect (Dworkin 1985). The positive outcomes can be produced either by the culture as a whole or by specific cultural elements. Thus, culture is good mainly because it is good *for* something else (usually the members of the minority or national group).

The intrinsic value of culture falls outside the scope of this chapter since according to this argument culture has an inherent value that is independent of its consequences, i.e., the benefits for the individuals or the society. The difference with the public good argument is obvious. The public good argument suggests that the (positive) value of culture stems from its (positive) impact on individuals and the society. It is not to deny that culture *might* have an intrinsic value, it is simply not the topic of this chapter, which investigates the claim that a shared culture is a good 'thing' because it produces good outcomes.

If we assume that culture or some cultural elements produce positive outcomes (the famous spillover effect), three issues emerge.

(a) How to define culture?
(b) What are the positive outcomes?
(c) How (b) is related to (a)?

In this text, I deal with (a) and (c). However, before addressing those questions, it is important to define the concept of public good and see how it could apply to a common culture. The concept comes from economics (Samuelson 1954), which canonical formulation was coined by Mancur Olson (1971: 14–15).

> A common, collective, or public good is here defined as any good such that, if any person Xi in a group X1, …, Xi, …, Xn consumes it, it cannot feasibly be withheld from the others in that group. In other words, those who do not purchase or pay for any of the public or collective good cannot be excluded or kept away from sharing in the consumption of the good, as they can where noncollective (*sic*) goods are concerned.
>
> Economists attribute two fundamental characteristics to public goods.
> 1) Non-rivalry: the consumption of a given public good by one agent does not reduce the volume of public good available to other agents.
> 2) Non-excludability: the consumption of a given public good by one agent does not impede other agents for accessing this good.

This definition could be criticized as being an empty box. It could be argued that the conditions for qualifying as a public good are so stringent that no material good can fulfill them. Despite the salience of the issue of economics, the question whether exist material goods that fit the definition is irrelevant here. The reason is that it is not because national defense, police forces, justice and clean atmosphere did not fit the previous definition that culture *qua* an immaterial good would not be able to fulfill the definition.

In any case, this definition can be reframed using philosophical terminology. Non-excludability refers to a *clause of universality*: no one can be excluded from the enjoyment of a public good. The public good or its benefits should be accessible to every member of the minority or national community. In the case of culture, no member of the political community can be excluded from the enjoyment of culture (through its benefits). Non-rivalry appeals to the *clause of potential equal access*: no one can reduce the amount of the public good available to others, which means that access is *theoretically* equal for every member of the minority or national community (even if it might prove unequal in practice). For our purpose, it could be restated as follows: in principle, the culture is equally accessible to everyone.

Public goods usually display a third characteristic, derivative from the two previous ones: the creation of *positive externalities*. A public good creates positive effects that are external to a market transaction, i.e., effects that are not accounted for in the price of the transaction itself and benefit third parties who were not part of the original exchange. Expressions such as 'positive outcomes' or 'spillover effect', which refer to the benefits produced by a shared culture, epitomize this dynamic. For instance, the fact that people around the world use French language creates positive externalities for me, even if I live in Latvia. They make the French culture lively, which in turn increases my cultural choices.

The classical example in economics is the lighthouse[1]. Lighthouses provide light to all ships, irrespectively of whether ships contribute to this provision. Applied to culture, the fact that other people engage in cultural practices render such practices easier to pursue for you, especially because many of those practices are social by nature, i.e., they require the involvement of other people. But you do not have to participate in those activities. The only fact that someone else undertakes such practices somewhere has positive effects on you. The most important effect is that culture is alive, making meaningful choices accessible to you. At least the argument goes.

Non-rivalry and non-excludability are at the core of this third characteristic (positive externalities). Since access to public goods are unrestricted, all individuals can enjoy the benefits. More precisely, non-rivalry and non-excludability contribute to the production of positive externalities.

Approaching culture as a public good as defined by economics has some analytical advantages. First, it may help to conceive the diffusive effects of culture, i.e., the fact that one does not need to be actively involved in cultural practices to enjoy some of the benefits. Differently put, cultures generate a halo of positive outcomes or a general environment that is beneficial to even distant individuals. Second, and more importantly from a practical point of view, the concept of culture as a public good could help to

[1] For a critical review of the place of the lighthouse in economic thought, the reader can refer to Ronald Coase (1974).

analyze the cultural politics pursued by states and communities. A prominent illustration is the policies of some minorities or endangered cultural groups like the ethnic Latvian community. Culture as a public good offers a stylized explanation (and a potential justification) of the constraints that many minorities impose on their members for preserving parts of their culture such as language (e.g., the stringent linguistic regulation in Latvia or Quebec). Levy offers a clear formulation of this idea.

> Each member of a minority culture prefers that the culture remain (*sic*) viable – that the language continue to be spoken, that children continue to be raised in the traditions, that all that which makes the culture unique not die out. But, as long as the culture is a minority culture, each person has a strong interest in leaving the preservation to others, in gaining for him or herself the advantages of being in the majority. (Levy 2000a: 114–115)

If we paraphrase Levy, since individuals cannot be excluded from the benefits provided by cultural membership (as the public good argument says), they are tempted to free ride (e.g., sending their children to majority language schools while enjoying cultural activities offered by the minority community, not contributing in money or time to minority institutions while taking advantage of intra-community solidarity). According to Levy, who applies the tools of rational choice theory[2], the context of decision has the structure of a prisoner's dilemma. It is more rational for minority members to leave the burden of preserving their culture to other members while adopting the individual strategy with the broadest individual pay-off, which is to assimilate to the majority culture.

If we accept the premises of game theory (e.g., in regard to individuals' instrumental rationality), many minority (as well as national, if we expand Levy's point) members will not co-operate to the provision of the shared, minority (or national), culture. Their contribution could even be too low for securing the survival of the minority or national culture. The literature on public goods offers a response to this collective action problem. The solution to free riding on public goods such as national defense, public transportation, and so forth is to force every group member or citizen to contribute through taxation. Likewise, the institutions regulating cultural groups can (and very often do) force their members to contribute, e.g., by requiring them to send their children to community schools, to learn the language, to pay for cultural programs, and so forth.

The prisoner's dilemma structure of the preservation of minority (and some national) cultures explains why minorities or cultural groups that feel threatened tend to adopt stringent policies for the language of education, the public use of the language

[2] Rational choice theory formalizes human action as resulting from instrumental rationality. Individuals have interests and they are attempting to realize those interests through suitable means. Rational choice theory emerged in economics, but has spread to psychology, sociology, politics, or philosophy ever since.

and other practices. Contemporary history offers countless illustrations: Quebec after the Quiet Revolution (Carens 1995), Latvia and other former communist states after 1991 (Kelley 2004). It is nonetheless a mistake to think that the issue is limited to minority groups. Minority and national communities whose survival is not threatened in any sense also enforce restrictive policies or informal norms for protecting their culture, e.g., France in the case of language.[3]

The public good argument can explain or justify obliging individuals to participate in the cultural life of their cultural or national community, e.g., by educating their children in the minority or national language. The impossibility to exclude or restrict access to the goods provided by a common culture explains or justifies such constraints, whereas the provision of cultural goods depends on having enough individuals contributing to their provision. This argument for compulsory participation has the following form.

1) The derivative benefits of culture as a public good are non-rival and non-exclusory.
2) Even without contributing to the provision of the culture, one can still enjoy its derivative benefits.
3) To maintain provision, a certain amount of community or national members should contribute.
4) To preserve the benefits of a shared culture *qua* public good, institutions of a given culture are entitled to constrain their members.

The point of importance is that the assimilation of a shared culture to a public good may support compulsory participation in the cultural activities for minorities *as well as* majority groups such as national communities.

In this text, I tackle the argument of culture as a public good. In sum, I claim that a shared culture cannot be conceived as a public good for two reasons. First, by definition – i.e., when considering how culture is characterized – it excludes individuals, which would not be a problem if it excluded only individuals outside the cultural community. However, it excludes individuals from within the community or the nation (e.g., dissident, sexual, nonconformist, traditionalist or liberal, minorities within the cultural group). Therefore, using the argument of culture as a public good for supporting compulsory participation fails. For instance, when promoting a shared religion, institutions exclude several groups of people in virtue of the very definition given to what a shared culture is (i.e., a shared religion).

Second, the promotion of a shared culture may have *de facto* mixed outcomes (in the sense of outcomes that are both positive *and* negative) in terms of social capital (e.g., social inclusion, trust, political stability), which directly undermines its assimilation to a public good. Indirectly, it undermines the compulsory participation conclusion

[3] More generally, the issue at stake here partially overlaps with a broader one, not addressed in this text, namely *how nation building may be compatible with liberalism?* (Norman 2005).

drawn from the public good argument: if people can be excluded from the benefits of the promotion of a shared culture (or, worse, if they can be harmed by such a promotion), it means that the benefits stemming from a common culture are not accessible to everyone in a given community, which diminishes the justifications for compulsory participation.

For reaching this conclusion, the strategy is the following. In the next section, I critically discuss different versions of how to conceive a shared culture within the public good framework. More precisely, what is the active substance that is presumed to create the positive outcomes? Is it a given cultural element, culture as a whole or culture as a bundle of elements? I claim that all these versions fail at constituting proper public goods.

This conclusion is the starting point of the third section where I distinguish between two views regarding how public institutions could sustain positive outcomes such as social cohesion, trust, stability, etc. The debate is actually between preferences/identity shaping and institutional design. The second option seems fruitful, especially when one considers that the true public good in political communities is probably less a shared culture than the underlying mechanisms that support social co-operation.

2.3 Shared culture and positive outcomes

What are the benefits of a shared culture, especially as identified in the literature on multiculturalism and nationalism? Political theory and public discourses mention various positive outcomes of a shared, minority or national, culture, ranging from true collective goods, such as a common identity or a feeling of a common fate (Gitlin 1995), to purely individual benefits such as a meaningful context of choice (Kymlicka 1995). In addition, different theories of nationalism identify different positive outcomes of a shared national culture such as the support it offers to solidarity[4], redistributive policies, political stability[5] or trust (Miller 1995).

The diversity of positive outcomes renders the public good argument imprecise to formulate and challenging to dissect. My goal is nonetheless to discuss the very rationale of the public good argument, not all its versions in relation to the positive outcomes. Therefore, the central point is to retain for discussion a positive outcome that overlaps with most of these versions. *Social cohesion* is a reasonable candidate. The concept is tightly connected to social capital (Putnam 2000). Social cohesion refers to the degree of trust (both mutual, i.e., citizens towards each other, and institutional, i.e., citizens

[4] Many authors challenge this assertion (e.g., Kymlicka & Banting 2006).

[5] Usually, it is the reverse thesis that is advanced: increased diversity will undermine political stability, for instance, by gauging 'cultural wars' (Schlesinger Jr. 1992) or redistributive policies (Barry 2001).

towards their public institutions) and solidarity in vigor within a community, either local or national (Breidahl *et al.* 2017; Hooghe 2007).

Except for versions of the argument of culture as a public good that posit only individual benefits of a shared culture (e.g., individual autonomy), the other variants highlight, in one way or another, the effect that a shared culture has on the social mesh. Such effect could be to stabilize social relations, incentivize individuals to co-operate, support redistribution or trust each other. In other words, the argument is that a shared culture renders a given community more cohesive.

The use of social cohesion is not without ambiguity, which is obvious in the definitions of cohesion given by the Oxford dictionary for instance: 'the action or fact of forming a united whole'. In physics cohesion is 'the sticking together of particles of the same substance'. At the very general level of definitions, cohesion postulates some degree of homogeneity that could become (morally) problematic when enforced too aggressively or at the expense of basic liberties and rights. In any case, social cohesion remains a decent candidate for an umbrella term that could account for most of the positive outcomes of a shared culture. This is the case despite the controversies surrounding the definition and use of the concept of social cohesion (Breidahl *et al.* 2017: 3).

When reflecting on these positive outcomes produced by a shared culture, the issue is whether it is the culture per se or some of its elements that generate such outcomes. In this section, I evaluate the two possibilities in turn: cultural elements and culture itself.

2.3.1 Cultural elements

The first option is to posit that a given cultural trait, or a specific set of traits, produces positive outcomes (in our case social cohesion). Then, it is necessary to prove a link of causation between the given cultural trait, or a specific set of traits, and the positive outcomes. In the literature in social sciences and humanities, cultural traits that are seen as generating social cohesion in minority and national communities include the following 'usual suspects': (a) language, (b) religion, (c) history, (d) values and (e) ethnicity. Hence, the argument is that sharing a common language, religion, history, values, or ethnicity produces positive outcomes such as social cohesion, mutual trust or political stability.

Before going further, we can say that the problem with this argument is twofold. Firstly, the argument is *a non-sequitur*: it is not because individuals share one of these characteristics (or 'something' in these categories) that it will *necessarily* create or enhance social cohesion, mutual trust, and so forth. Secondly, the argument is self-defeating. One of the major blows against understanding culture as a cultural element is not only the absence of necessity between a given cultural trait and positive outcomes such as social cohesion, but also the fact that the promotion of this trait can undermine these positive outcomes. As shown below, many counter-examples in real-world politics suggest both the absence of necessity and the self-defeating nature of culture as a public good.

Shared language. Concerning *language*, individuals may share a language without experiencing social cohesion, mutual trust or political bound. Speakers of the same language may belong to distinct communities. Both French and Wallon people speak French without being socially cohesive. Moreover, citizens of the same state who speak the same language can display low levels of trust towards each other or towards the institutions (e.g., in Brazil or Columbia). The history of colonialism offers examples where both colonized and colonizing populations speak a single language while tensions nevertheless cripple the society.

A last issue is that the promotion of a shared language can degenerate in the promotion of an authentic language, which might lead distrust. The bias toward linguistic authenticity is perceptible in most of countries: there is, on the one hand, the official, 'proper', language and, on the other hand, dialects, *patois* and other variations that are not considered as pure/authentic/conform/appropriate than the official idiom. Depending on how and how much public institutions emphasize authenticity, individuals and groups may feel threatened or humiliated by politics of linguistic authenticity. Furthermore, it can nurture tensions and distrust, which are damageable to social cohesion. It is not to deny that one or two shared languages are necessary for institutions to function properly, but it means that a shared language is not the place where to find the active substance that turns a shared culture into a public good.

Shared religion. The public promotion of a *shared religion*, especially at the state level, most of the time alienate three groups of citizens: non-believers, believers of other religions and internal dissenters or 'heretics' (i.e., those who share the religion without adhering to the official dogma). European wars of religion illustrate the danger of trying to root a shared, national, culture on a single religion. In reply, the neutrality of the state on religious matters has been the solution for going out of religious wars and moderating tensions in Europe (Locke 1686). A variant has been to strictly separate the church from the state, as in the case of France. This illustrates the centrality of secularism for democratic states as well as the prohibition it imposes on assimilating shared culture to a specific religion.[6]

Therefore, the claim that a common religion is compatible with social cohesion *might* be true as an empirical, contingent, statement. For instance, this might be true for very cohesive national communities where all members endorse a single religion. However, it should be demonstrated that the relation goes beyond conjunction or correlation, particularly when the discussion bears on policies of social cohesion.

Then, the question becomes: does the promotion of a shared religion plausibly strengthen social cohesion? In pluralistic societies, reasons for not imposing a common

[6] It does not mean that states should absolutely be secular. It means that states should be as secular as possible, which is of course broad and vague. Secularism comes in various degrees, e.g., strict or moderate. For a critical discussion of moderate secularism, the reader can refer to the works of Sune Lægaard (2008).

religion for social cohesion purposes are *practical* – the risk of nurturing unintended and adverse outcomes – as well as *moral* – the respect due to non-believers, believers of other cults and internal dissenters. When considering moral reasons, it is enough to determine that a state, which endorses and actively promotes a specific religion favors one religion over the others (and therefore *de facto* advantages the believers of the official religion at the detriment of the other citizens). Such endorsement renders more difficult for minority believers (or atheists) to identify with or support the state. In short, a religiously partisan state does not treat and respect citizens equally. This is a problem when one considers that liberal democracies are founded on a double commitment to equal treatment and treatment as equals (Dworkin 1977: 273).

In sum, it is far from assured that the promotion of a shared culture, under the form of a common religion, has a positive spillover effect in terms of social cohesion. In fact, historical evidence shows quite the contrary while moral reasons provide arguments against this kind of politics.

Shared history. The promotion of a *common history* does not necessarily guarantee a positive spillover. Discussions on education and citizenship in political theory have highlighted that attempts of promoting too overtly a shared history may nourish tensions, especially between public institutions and cultural, national, and religious minorities.[7] One of the most contentious points in multicultural controversies is education, in particular the content of the school curriculum on history (the famous 'culture wars' [Snyder 2015]). This illustrates that a shared, minority or national, history is never given. This also indicates that attempts to establish a common history may be crippled by serious difficulties that could lead to inter-group distrust, shaming, blaming, etc.

However, it could be argued that some minimal, non-controversial, elements could constitute the basis of a shared history. One may claim that we should make a distinction between the current situation, where attempts at creating a shared history have so far turned controversial, and a pacified inclusive history, which is still possible. This last possibility has inspired the proposition of multicultural curricula in European and North American countries: instilling a sense of membership among school pupils that could, ultimately, enhance cooperation, support to public institutions, social cohesion, and so forth. But such a task of designing and implementing a non-controversial and fully inclusive history raises daunting challenges. On three respects at least, there are limits to how inclusive history, as a collective narrative, can be.

[7] In 2005, the French law on colonialism with the article 4, paragraph 2, on the teaching of the positive role played by colonization provoked controversies between people who think colonization had positive effect and critiques who refuse to acknowledge any positive dimension. Other examples include the place reserved for indigenous peoples in the national history of Australia, Canada, New Zealand or United States, the use of symbols that are found offensive by some groups (Levy 2000b).

Polarizing events. Some historical events cannot be used for fostering social cohesion, especially violent or controversial ones. It does not mean that they cannot be taught in a more or less objective way, but that they cannot be used for positively shaping a shared culture. Civil wars, military coups, colonization, genocide, exploitation, slavery potentially belong to this category. They cannot be used because they are intrinsically contentious or offensive, at least when they are not distant in time.

Contradictory elements. A second limit is that a truly shared history, i.e., as encompassing as possible, may have to include elements that contradict each other. The problem is not that such events are morally problematic in themselves, it is rather that they offer conflicting views on the national history or that various groups or citizens hold interpretations that are incompatible or at odds with each other. An example is the 'discovery' of Americas by Europeans and the legal status of such lands as *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one)[8]. Such tensions make very difficult for public institutions to positively build on this basis an inclusive history that is conducive to social cohesion.

Material limits. A last limit is the maximum degree of diversity that shared history can accommodate. In diverse societies, not all perspectives can be represented or can be on an equal footing, which may nurture misunderstandings, disappointments, and tensions. There is a limit in the number of hours that can be devoted to history classes as well as to history manuals.

It is not to say that a common history is impossible. The claim is that a shared history may not be perceived as shared enough by individuals to whom it is taught and, consequently, have mixed or adverse effects on social cohesion. However, this does not imply that a shared history cannot produce positive outcomes – none of the criticisms completely discards this possibility. Nonetheless, a common history cannot be assumed to be *the* cultural feature for promoting social cohesion.

Shared values or principles. The fourth 'usual suspect' is shared values or principles[9]. The argument is that the degree of cohesion of a given community depends on the degree of commonality or overlap in the values or principles endorsed by individuals. A question immediately arises: what kind of values or principles is presumed to be conducive to social cohesion? The argument is usually understood to refer to either moral

[8] In international law, *terra nullius* is a land that does not belong to a state or a political entity and, therefore, can be freely claimed by any state or political entity. Different parts of the so-called 'New World' were considered as *terrae nullius* at the arrival of Europeans (such as Australia or parts of Canada and United States for instance) despite the presence of indigenous peoples. This allowed the appropriation of indigenous and aboriginal lands.

[9] Political philosophy distinguishes values from principles, values are moral concepts about good and bad, principles are political about right and wrong. In this chapter, I am treating them as equivalent.

values or political principles. Public discourses commonly assumed that moral values offer a proper and acceptable basis for a cohesive, functioning society. The argument is popular among conservatives, providing them the opportunity to deplore aspects of the modern society: people are less likely to co-operate with each other than in the past because of the moral corruption/failure of modern society, through the promotion of individualism for instance.

If there is a widespread agreement on the definition of a good moral value and the list of ultimate good values (who does not think that respect, generosity, or honesty is a good value?), the proof that endorsing such moral values actually makes a difference for social cohesion is lacking. Findings in social and moral psychology are ambiguous. Based on a review of the evidence provided by decades of psychological experiments, John Doris (2002) claims that the endorsement of moral values is not a reliable predictor of moral conduct. Personality traits (e.g., OCEAN traits, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) appear to have a deeper influence on actions than moral values. Therefore, if the argument is that a commitment to specific moral values is *necessarily* conducive to positive social outcomes, it is controversial.

Political principles are different from moral values. When the centrality of specific moral values in a culture is not involved in public debates, it is common to call to items such as equality, human rights, freedom, solidarity, and so on. Unfortunately, the argument is often stretched to draw a fictive contrast between the 'nationals' and some 'outsiders' who would not share democratic values and, as a result, would represent a threat to social cohesion. This argument is characteristic of far-right movements in Europe.

The problem for the pursuit of social cohesion is that political principles are never self-explicit. They are subject to interpretations and frequently mobilize diverging or conflicting moral intuitions. Furthermore, political principles are rarely (or never) shared in a deep, comprehensive, manner. For instance, at an abstract level, most citizens endorse equality as a core value for their society. It is, however, very unlikely that they share the same interpretation of the concept of equality. To some, their conception of equality is legal (every citizen enjoying the same rights), whereas others understand it as material (every citizen enjoying the same amount of resources). Some interpret equality as expressing the principle of 'the same amount of X for every citizen' while others consider that it comes to 'a sufficient amount of X given to every citizen' or a 'priority given to the worse-off citizens' (Sen 1980).[10] The same goes for most, if not all, political principles: liberty, solidarity, fraternity, and so forth. By themselves, without further precision, concepts are unspecific while their interpretation is often controversial in the situation of moral pluralism that marks liberal democracies.

[10] If the reader remains skeptical about the lack of consensus surrounding such a basic principle as equality, a little detour by the literature on political theory on the topic will prove useful (e.g., Holtug 2012).

However, one may argue that a precise interpretation of basic political principles does not have to be shared by citizens for producing social cohesion. Beyond the fact that this argument articulates a rhetorical appeal to principles, the problem is that the diversity of interpretations could generate dissension that is harmful for social cohesion. In short, moral pluralism often does hinder the social outcomes of a shared culture. For sure, any political community needs political values. In addition, it might be legitimate for the state to diffuse these values, most notably through civic education.[11] But the point stands: the promotion of political values does not necessarily increase social cohesion. Such promotion may achieve the opposite by fueling social tensions if the different conceptions of the 'shared' principles clash too harshly.[12]

An alternative could be to promote *neutral* political values (Larmore 1990; Rawls 1993), i.e., political values skimmed off from their most contentious parts.[13] Watered down principles can then serve as a basis for promoting social cohesion. Whether such principles constitute 'cultural elements' is debatable, especially if principles are free from comprehensive content and if we consider that culture is precisely about that: a comprehensive view on life.

Nevertheless, neutral political principles display at least the characteristics of a public culture: something that is widely shared across the board and may be used by citizens for addressing each other. However, a difficulty may be that such neutral principles could not be identified because they do not exist. Alternatively, if they can be, they say nothing valuable on the community since they have been framed in such a (non-controversial) manner that any reasonable citizen would agree to or not oppose them.

In sum, shared values, moral and political, do not seem to fit with the framework of culture as a public good. The reason is pluralism. Due to the diversity of moral and political views in a given society, it is unlikely that a promotion of specific values that is more than rhetorical creates the expected social cohesion.

Shared ethnicity. The last 'usual suspect' is ethnicity. It is the easiest candidate to debunk. Shared ethnicity constitutes a proper institutional lever for promoting social cohesion only in countries where ethnic homogeneity is already realized. For other countries, the use of shared ethnicity is doomed to generate exclusions, discriminatory

[11] The underlying issue here is the conditions for maintaining democratic institutions. Civic liberals such as Amy Gutmann (1995) or Stephen Macedo (1995) argue that civic education is necessary for creating conditions that help to support political stability.

[12] As an illustration, the reader can think about equality as the 'shared' value of revolutionaries in February 1917 (mostly, revolutionary socialists, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) and how this shared value contributed to social cohesion few months after, in October.

[13] The process is slightly technical, but it could be summed up as follows: neutral political principles are principles expressed in such a way that any rational and reasonable individual *could* endorse them or, at least, *would not* oppose them. For more details, the reader can refer to the literature identified as 'political liberalism' and identified with John Rawls.

practices, and social tensions – the contrary of what a shared cultural element promises to deliver. For obvious reasons, shared ethnicity cannot be assimilated to a public good and its promotion cannot be assumed to have positive outcomes of the sort I have been considering here.

To sum up, it is not obvious that the society benefits from the promotion of cultural elements. Quite the opposite, social cohesion, trust, stability is often undermined by the promotion of a shared culture through specific elements. Now, it suggests something more profound: the fact that culture strongly diverges from the canonical formulation of a public good. In short, community members can be excluded from the enjoyment of cultural membership by the promotion of a common language, history, ethnicity, or shared values. Thus, the public good dimension of a shared culture cannot be located in any particular cultural element since the public promotion of such an element does not necessarily entail increased social cohesion or other benefits and, more importantly, the promotion of a particular cultural element could be proved detrimental to social cohesion itself.

2.3.2 Culture in itself

The second option is that culture itself produces positive outcomes. This option can receive different readings. In this article, I am discussing the two most common interpretations: (1) culture itself as an unspecified (or underspecified) entity creates positive outcomes; (2) culture *qua* a bundle of cultural elements creates positive outcomes. The difference between (2) and 2.3.1 is that positive outcomes are not attached to any cultural element in particular, but to a combination of cultural elements.

Culture as an unspecified entity. This view creates difficulties. First, the thesis of culture as a public good, i.e., a good with a strong positive spillover effect, is difficult to prove. It is difficult to prove that culture *en bloc*, notwithstanding its features, is *necessarily* favorable to social cohesion. And such difficulty operates at two levels.

The first level is epistemic: how to demonstrate (or at least reasonably support) the hypothesis of culture as a public good? How to define culture for including individuals in the sample to be tested? The second level is moral: the promotion of a minority or national culture as a whole contains a risk of reification if public institutions assume that culture has a specific, fixed content that promotes social cohesion. Such an essentialist view could conduct to or justify excluding individuals who do not share this canon (Appiah 2005).

In other words, the risk is not to take seriously the 'Geertzian' revolution where anthropology dropped culture as a fixed, clearly defined, and immutable entity in favor of adopting a view of culture as a contested set of artifacts, sociofacts and mentifacts. In brief, culture is not something that exists outside people's interpretations and power relations. Historically, culture is a political issue that is subject to strategic uses and abuses from various social actors (Johnson 2002).

More generally, the argument of the culture as a whole producing positive outcomes, without any distinction of the particular effects of its constituents, collapses into attributing an intrinsic value to culture. If it is the culture *en bloc* that produces social cohesion, the temptation is great to sanctify this bloc as being the ultimate source of value and, therefore, to have an intrinsic value.

The shift toward the intrinsic value hypothesis is reinforced if the positive outcomes are more presumed than proven (which highlights the epistemic difficulty above). In this case, a link of necessity is postulated between a given interpretation of a culture and given positive outcomes (e.g., mutual trust, solidarity, institutional stability). This renders possible the shift to culture as intrinsically valuable: since culture as defined as C necessarily produces X, Y and Z, and since X, Y and Z are positive outcomes, therefore C is ultimately valuable.

In any case, culture cannot be left unspecified (or underspecified) if used for public policies that aim at generating a strong positive spillover under the form of increased social cohesion, mutual or institutional trusts, political stability and so forth. There are both epistemic and moral reasons for that.

Culture as a bundle. A possible reply to this criticism is to define culture as a bundle of cultural elements. In short, it is neither the shared language, religion, history, common values, ethnicity, etc. that create the spillover effect, nor culture as a whole, but a mix of the aforementioned elements.[14] For instance, Kymlicka's 'societal culture' approximates this idea of culture as a bundle (and this bundle creates positive outcomes, most notably, according to him, in terms of enhanced individual autonomy).

> By a societal culture, I mean a territorially-concentrated culture, centered on a shared language which is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both public and private life – schools, media, law, economy, government, etc. – covering the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life. I call it a societal culture to emphasize that it involves a common language and social institutions, rather than common religious beliefs, family customs, or personal lifestyles. (Kymlicka 2001: 18)

A more serious risk is to exclude or coerce individuals who do not share this cultural blueprint.[15] In that case, the two principles of culture as a public good – universality and equality – are violated, which undermines the legitimacy of the state to constrain

[14] To some extent, this approach mirrors the use of identity as the proper source of positive spillover effects.

[15] This process is blatant in any traditionalist community or totalitarian regime where religious, moral, cultural or sexual orientation conformism is pursued at the expense of individual 'deviants' such as members of religious, moral, cultural minorities, as is the case in the 74 countries where homosexuality was illegal in 2016 (in 12 countries homosexuality may be punishable by death). http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/gay-lesbian-bisexual-relationships-illegal-in-74-countries-a7033666.html/.

individuals for contributing to the provision of a shared culture. In fact, the more content is injected in the conception of the shared culture, the more likely individuals will not recognize themselves in this cultural blueprint, will be excluded and the less the state will be legitimate (according to the public good argument) to constrain them to participate to the provision of the shared culture.

The whole dynamic represents a threat to social cohesion: by defining more closely the content of a culture *qua* bundle of cultural elements, public institutions render difficult for a large number of individuals to identify with it. Moreover, the process itself may undermine social cohesion, mutual or institutional trust, by nurturing social discontents. Concrete manifestations are the inversion of the stigma when oppressed or marginalized groups turn their depreciated or outsider identity into a subject of pride (Wieviorka 2005) such as in French *banlieues*[16], internal conflicts to indigenous communities in Canada and United States where conformism has gauged oppositions and violence within communities.

The full process of reification and exclusion is the result of the temptation, strong in politics, of defining more in detail what a common culture could or should be (Song 2007). This temptation can often be understood as a desperate tentative from public institutions or political thinkers to prove the value of a shared culture, i.e., the essential connection between culture and its positive consequences. As already indicated above, this temptation leads to politics based on cultural reductionism (Roseberry 1992; Turner 1993; Rorty 1994; Cuche 2004; Appiah 2005; Ford 2005), i.e., attempt of founding policies on an anthropological view that represents a regression from the Geertzian idea that cultures are fluid entities constantly under revision and contention.

As for the cultural elements, it is very unlikely that culture in itself could be identified a public good. By its tendency toward reification (and the consequences of such reification), culture in itself does not respect the principle of non-excludability. Furthermore, it is also unlikely that the promotion of a shared culture as a whole or a bundle is conducive to social cohesion, mutual trust, political stability, etc. As for the cultural elements, there are indications to the contrary.

2.4 Shaping preferences *vs.* Designing institutions

As shown, the identification of culture to a public good runs into theoretical and practical difficulties. Nonetheless, there is a deeper and essential issue: under which conditions public institutions can create and sustain the kind of attitudes needed from citizens in order to guarantee positive outcomes such as social cohesion,

[16] This inversion of the stigmata jeopardizes social cohesion, but also the very idea of a shared culture.

trust, political stability? The apparent success of Scandinavian societies in relation to indicators ranging from happiness to social trust has recently fed the debate.[17] This issue is at the heart of the literature on social capital (e.g., Putnam 2000): which conditions are likely to secure a functioning society where members enjoy high quality of life?

Democratic states try to find ways for delivering the kind of public goods that support functioning societies (e.g., trust, happiness, stability). From a bird's view, there are two competing approaches to guaranteeing that a shared culture produces positive externalities such as social cohesion, trust, tax compliance. Although these two approaches are not incompatible, they are nonetheless conceptually different and justify different kinds of public policies, which can clash.

Preferences' design. The first conception, discussed in the previous pages, covers theories that *mostly* promote individual and collective preferences shaping. The argument is the following: in order to create a positive spillover, it is necessary to shape citizens' preferences or identity.

This conception has two major downsides. On the one hand, it tends to disregard the negative interdependent form of individual preferences, especially cultural ones. Cultural preferences may bring satisfaction, make sense, or create positive outcomes for their bearers to the extent that they are widely shared. For instance, the fact that other people share the same linguistic preference as you renders your life easier. (And, presumably, the more widely spread your linguistic preference, the easier your life becomes.) Your satisfaction as a bearer of culture C* is linked to my satisfaction as the bearer of culture C*. Therefore, the argument goes that promoting cultural preferences produces interdependent positive effects throughout a population.

Cultural preferences, however, take a negative interdependent form too. For instance, what makes people proud of being French, Quebecois, Danish, etc. is the fact that the community has boundaries and that they are different from German, Anglo-Canadians, Swedish, etc. Moreover, for delivering some of its positive outcomes, cultural preferences sometimes require excluding individuals or groups, even when members from two cultural groups share many characteristics, i.e., have very similar identities (e.g., French and Québécois, Czechs, and Slovaks). It illustrates Freud's 'narcissism of small differences'.

On the other hand, preferences or identity shaping face a practical issue, namely the fact that, like character shaping, they may be mostly inefficient to produce specific positive attitudes or outcomes. As shown by studies in psychology, there is a limit to what character-shaping is able to produce in terms of moral behaviors (Doris 2002). The criticism may seem stretched since the studies refer to moral behavior, but the point

[17] See, for instance, the different *World Happiness Reports* published by the Earth Institute (Columbia University).

is worth considering: there is no reasonable certainty that intently shaping the mind, character, cultural values, etc. of individuals will produce the expected result in terms of social cohesion, trust, or any other positive outcome.

Institutional design. The second conception encompasses theories that *mostly* rely on institutional design. Instead of attempting to shape individuals' preferences or identity, an alternative is to intervene on institutions, *qua* cooperative mechanisms, known for generating or supporting specific social goods. Such mechanisms can be found within the welfare state: social insurance (mainly unemployment benefits, health coverage and public pensions), 'free' (i.e., paid by taxpayers) public education. Social insurance is an interesting case, since, contrary to transfers that oppose a donor and a recipient within a relation that looks like charity, it is built on self-help and mutual coverage (Landes 2013). If governments are interested in sustaining goods such as social cohesion, a possibility is to identify cooperative mechanisms that actually have such effects (e.g., OECD's analysis [OECD 2012]). In other words, institutional design relies on favoring cooperative mechanisms that allow or nurture stable, mutually beneficial and fair interactions, even in contexts marked by low levels of mutual and institutional trust, feelings of common fate, and so forth.

According to this second approach, the public good is less a shared culture than cooperation, more precisely the specific cooperative mechanisms that a shared culture is presumed to sustain. Therefore, the central question becomes: which cooperative gains for which kinds of institutions? In other terms, the challenge for public institutions is to identify precisely the positive outcomes to be achieved. The next step is not to try isolating cultural elements or a cultural mix that might be conducive to such positive outcomes, but identifying cooperative mechanisms that may produce such outcomes. An additional advantage of such approach is to leave room for contextual analysis since it is very likely that two political communities are not influenced by or responsive to *exactly* the same cooperative mechanisms. There, the social conditions, history and other contingent elements that are usually subsumed under the label of 'shared culture' could come into play. In other words, it does have to be one size fits all.

This division between shaping preferences/identity and designing cooperation is at work in Kymlicka's distinction between culture 'as a character' and culture 'as a structure' (Kymlicka 1989). Culture as a character covers 'the norms, values, and their attendant institutions in one's community (e.g., membership in churches, political parties, etc.)' (Kymlicka 1989: 166) while culture as a structure is 'a cultural community viewed as a context of choice' (Kymlicka 1989: 166). According to Kymlicka, individual autonomy and self-respect justify protecting culture as a structure, not as a character (Song 2007).

A lot could be said on Kymlicka's distinction, especially on the conception of a community ('societal culture') on which his analysis is rooted and whether his conception is compatible with the promotion of individual autonomy and self-respect.

However, culture as a structure encapsulates the idea that cultural life is supported by the institutions involved in the cultural practices, such as libraries, schools, media, etc. (Seymour 2004). Ultimately, the active ingredient at the core of culture as a structure is *social cooperation*, what is worth promoting is the fact that individuals put their energy together for conserving and making accessible documents (libraries), diffusing information and thoughts (media), educating children (schools), and so forth.

This is the idea behind cooperation as a public good. The very public good here is social co-operation, not the fact that individuals share a given culture which content is nearly impossible to define without raising theoretical and practical difficulties. Furthermore, what most social indicators (such as trust, well-being, happiness, and perceived corruption) capture is not how effective is a given common culture, but how effective is social interactions for a given population. More precisely, they capture how efficient specific mechanisms of social cooperation are, i.e., how efficient money, social insurance, information networks, legal rules, individual initiatives, associations, civil society, and so on have been for generating social cohesion, mutual and institutional trust, political stability.

The idea of social cooperation as the public good runs against the intuitive idea that social cohesion needs to be grounded on thick features that are related to individuals' identity such as moral values, religion, culture, etc. It offers a perspective on social issues such as tax avoidance, political instability, lack of commitment to public institutions, social distrust, in thinner, institutional terms that avoids many controversies about the definition of the proper content for a common culture and many adverse consequences of preferences/identity shaping.

A criticism against this view could be built on the accurate observation that identity shaping is an inescapable reality of the life of political communities, especially nation-states. No matter how much public institutions wish to avoid such shaping, many political decisions imply or result in it. Thus, it is absurd to deny that public institutions influence individuals' identity. As a matter of facts, governments are engaged in shaping citizens' preferences. Moreover, such identity shaping seems inescapable *to some extent*. A country needs an official language for administration purpose. Choices need to be made related to state school curriculum. National symbols ought to be adopted and put on display. More broadly, nation states necessarily come with a collective narrative that expresses views and interpretations of historical events.

However, to recognize this fact does not tell us, which kind and how much of identity shaping is morally acceptable. It does not provide indications about the limits to impose on states when they meddle with our identity. In other words, the existence of nation building is silent on the morality of identity shaping. This is the direction at which the end of this chapter point: when public institutions think about promoting positive outcomes such as social cohesion or trust, it is a better idea, both morally and practically, to bolster concrete cooperative mechanisms than to try modelling thick

characteristics individuals should share. A last point is worth mentioning: this reflection on how liberal institutions ought to operate in diverse societies is the domain of the 'ethics of nation building and identity shaping' (Norman 2005), a field far too broad for this chapter to explore.

2.5 Conclusion

The idea that social cooperation, instead of a shared culture, is *the* public good raises two issues for political theorists and decision-makers. The first issue is about improving the gains and reducing the dead weight of human cooperation. The more human cooperation can produce positive outcomes, the more individuals will support these mechanisms and the society built on them. This is probably the main lesson from the noticeable performance of Scandinavian societies on various happiness rankings. The fact that Danes, Swedes, Icelandic or Norwegians report high subjective well-being tells us probably less about how cheerful or smiling they are than about their positive evaluation of the various ways their co-citizens cooperate through the welfare state, voluntary work, gender equality, etc. The second issue bears on the redistribution of cooperative gains. Producing more positive outcomes is not enough according to the rationale of the public good argument, what is important is to guarantee a decent access to all citizens to those outcomes.

The two questions underline the salience of two dimensions of a social order: efficiency and equality. Of course, economic, and political theories have extensively discussed efficiency and equality. However, it is interesting to consider them in relation to debates about multiculturalism, nationalism, and identity building, because they have something to say about public policies implemented in liberal democracies.

A large chunk of work has been left outside the scope of this chapter, namely the political decisions and structures, which can be justified by the view of social cooperation as public good. In addition, there is the question of the actual difference between such decisions and structures and the kind that a shared culture could justify. In other words, the issue is to determine the political value of social cooperation. This indicates room for future research.

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3 Anomia, Social Participation and Subjective Well-being: a Psychological Perspective

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Levels of diversity and the availability of a variety of choices are important characteristics of contemporary societies. In such conditions individuals are faced with the necessity to search for their paths in life, to choose their goals, and to make value judgments. One of the leading developmental psychologists, Erik Erikson ([1950] 1993), claimed that society always provides individuals with opportunities of self-realization, and it is up to the individual to decide which of these opportunities to take advantage of. While Erikson believed that self-determination and development of a sense of identity are the most important developmental tasks in adolescence, in modern, diverse societies, especially during post-crisis periods or periods of social, economic and cultural change, an individual faces new challenges. As a result, previous goals and values may lose their significance, leading individuals to re-organization of their lives in search of a sense of subjective well-being.

In this chapter we discuss what Latvians can experience at the individual level and which factors interfere and promote the achievement of subjective well-being. We pay particular attention to anomia and social participation. Low sociality and political passivity are common in Latvia (Ījabs 2014; Vasiļjeva 2016). Government policy documents maintain that development of characteristics of personality in a process of cultural socialization can increase sociality of Latvians (Kruk 2016; see also Chapter 1 in this book). Our purpose is to check, from a psychological perspective, whether and how low social participation influences anomia and subjective well-being. We assume that sociality has a positive influence on individuals. Low sociality is only partly determined by stable psychological characteristics of personality and it can be developed through participation in social activities.

In this chapter we address classical sociological and psychological theories and modern research, and present our model of the relation between social participation, anomia, and subjective well-being.

3.1 Anomia and its psychological consequences

3.1.1 Social diversity, anomie and anomia

One of the most important characteristics of Latvian society is diversity and 'multi-variety', i.e., the presence of various ethnic and cultural groups, and social and economic statuses. Diversity and variety generate both the necessity and possibility of choice. However, diversity and freedom of choice cause uncertainty and instability, and requires individuals to reconsider their values (Ļevina, Mārtinsone, Mihailova & Gintere 2015). Anomie at the societal level and anomia at the individual level are possible consequences of this uncertainty and instability. Emile Durkheim ([1897] 1951), who introduced the concept of 'anomie', defined it as a breakdown of social norms and guidance for members of a society. Robert Merton (1964) further defined this term as the discrepancy between common social goals and the legitimate means to attain them. In its turn, anomia can be defined as subjectively perceived anomie (Lytkina 2012).

In traditional theories the main factors that influence both anomie and anomia are rapid social and economic changes experienced by a society, such as social and economic crises. A recent example of such a profound transformation is the fall of the communist system. It is not surprising that scholars devoted significant attention to investigating anomie in post-communist countries overall (Arts, Hermkens & Van Wijck 1995), and in Russia (Golovakha & Panina 2005), Ukraine (Golovakha & Panina 2005; Salnikova 2014), and Bulgaria in particular (Ådnanes 2007; Genov 1998). These studies investigated the reaction to social transformations.

Durkheim maintained that the deficit of consensus on values makes societies anomic. Though anomia becomes 'most virulent in times of crisis and turbulent change' (MacIver 1950: 84), a significant factor that determines both anomie and anomia is inconsistency of values among members of a society. Thus, regarding Latvia one can infer that its 'multi-variety', multi-ethnicity, social, economic and cultural diversity, freedom of choice and consequent uncertainty and instability, can lead to inconsistency of values and individual disorientation, and thus cause anomia among Latvians.

In the next section the concept of anomia will be clarified, and a new integrative multidimensional model of anomia will be introduced.

3.1.2 The concept and the integrative multidimensional model of anomia

We define anomia as an individual psychological state in which a person experiences perceived *normlessness*, *social isolation* and *meaninglessness* (Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2015c; 2016a). Normlessness is defined as a perceived breakdown of the social order in which norms no longer regulate social conduct. Social isolation is a loss

of a sense of community. Meaninglessness is an absence or ambiguity of terminal goals, or the meaning of life, which can serve as prescriptions for behavior.

Each of these three major dimensions of anomia includes two sub-dimensions:

1) perceived normlessness: *an individual's deviation from prescribed rules or customs* and *social distrust*;
2) social isolation: *estrangement from others* and *cultural isolation*;
3) meaninglessness: *a goal ambiguity* and *a generalized sense of meaninglessness*.

The adequacy of the proposed model was checked empirically, and the stability of its structure was examined in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. The secondary data from European Quality of Life Survey (2012) was used in this research (Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2016a). Similarity of structural components of anomia found in three countries suggests a possibility of a cross-cultural, universal structure of anomia.

3.1.3 Psychological signs and consequences of anomia

Psychological signs and consequences of anomia are well established theoretically and have been investigated empirically. Using the notion 'anomy' Robert MacIver claimed that this state is experienced as a breakdown of the individual's sense of attachment to society.

> [Anomy] signifies the state of mind of one who has been pulled out from his moral roots, who has no longer any standards but only disconnected urges, who has no longer has any sense of continuity, of folk, of obligation. The anomic man has become… responsible only to himself… He derides the values of other man. (MacIver 1950: 84)

According to Durkheim ([1897] 1951), at the individual level, when individuals feel that they are not integrated into the society, they can experience a sense of meaninglessness. A feeling that life does not make sense anymore, a sense of anomie, loneliness, disruption of social ties, mismatch between personal norms and values, and norms and values of society can cause anomic suicide. Furthermore, Leo Srole (1956) maintains that anomia is experienced as a generalized sense of 'self-others alienation', 'self-to-others distance'. Herbert McClosky and John Schaar, like MacIver, used the term 'anomy'. They considered that a major sign of anomy is the feeling of moral emptiness (McClosky & Schaar 1965). There has also been many empirical studies conducted on signs of anomia. In the research of anomie among Bulgarian university students (Ådnanes 2007) the following factors associated with feelings of anomie were found: individual psychological reactions indicating personal helplessness towards the post-communist transition, and feelings of nostalgia and normlessness in the face of that transition.

Following on from the existing theoretical and empirical research, we have developed a new integrative model of anomia (Levina & Martinsone, 2015; Levina,

Martinsone, Kolesnikova & Perepjolkina 2014; Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2015b, 2015c, 2016a). According to this model the main signs of anomia are disrespect towards social norms; readiness to engage in acts of deviance and to use non-normative means to achieve desirable goals; a lack of trust in government, other social institutions, as well as other people; a sense of a lack of social support; a feeling of loneliness; a sense of alienation; a sense of inferiority; a sense of a loss of internalized social norms and values of the group to which a person belongs; existence without desirable and sensible goals; a sense of a lack of control and freedom; a sense of boredom; pessimism towards one's own future. As discussed above, in a situation of social, national, cultural diversity and variety of possible choices, an individual can be disoriented, experience uncertainty, confusion regarding life goals and meanings, important relationships and interactions, norms and rules. This situation can lead to 'values' conflicts, when a certain goal is subjectively significant but not attainable, and 'value vacuums', when a certain goal is subjectively attainable but non-significant (Fantalova 2001). Taking into account this psychological mechanism of experiencing a situation of diversity that can cause anomia, research of the links between anomie/anomia and values is topical. Thus, re-evaluation of values can be one of the most important psychological consequences of anomia.

A stable pattern of correlation between anomia and values was found in an analysis of the secondary data from the European Values Study (2008) in the Baltic countries. The importance of such values as politics and religion was negatively associated with all indices of anomia identified in this research: local social distrust, local social isolation, normlessness, global social distrust and global social isolation (Table 3.1). The only exception was the absence of a statistically significant correlation between a value of religion and global social distrust in Latvia.

Let us comment on the indices of anomia constructed in this study. The first index and, respectively, the first dimension of anomia, is local social distrust. As previously shown, social distrust can be considered as a sub-dimension of normlessness. However, in this research it appears as a separate component of anomia. Local social distrust means a lack of trustworthiness and confidence in local national authorities and other national social institutions, such as the government, parliament, political parties, health care and education systems.

The second index and second dimension of anomia is local social isolation. This means a lack of concern about the living conditions of other members of the society of one's own country, e.g., sick and disabled, poor children, or elderly people.

The third dimension is normlessness. In this research normlessness was connected to financial aspects of life, and included such signs as tax evasion, accepting bribes, non-payment of public transport fares.

The next index of anomia was interpreted as global social distrust. In contrast to local social distrust, this dimension of anomia is connected to a lack of confidence in international organizations and institutions like the UN, NATO, or European Union.

Table 3.1 Spearman's correlation coefficients for measures of anomia and values of politics and religions of inhabitants of the Baltic states

Country	Value	Dimension of anomia				
		Local social distrust	Local social isolation	Norm-lessness	Global social distrust	Global social isolation
Results for the Baltic states	Politics	–.127**	–.150**	–.142**	–.157**	–.129**
	Religion	–.066**	–.182**	–.124**	–.067**	–.202**
Results for Latvia	Politics	–.079**	–.116**	–.174**	–.133**	–.087*
	Religion	–.072**	–.116**	–.185**	.042	–.147**
Results for Lithuania	Politics	–.143**	–.174**	–.140**	–.166**	–.105**
	Religion	–.104**	–.242**	–.220**	–.080*	–.164**
Results for Estonia	Politics	–.153**	–.154**	–.084**	–.183**	–.241**
	Religion	–.112**	–.236**	–.146**	–.091**	–.219**

Source: Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Klince (2016).
Note: $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$

Finally, the fifth index of anomia was labelled as global social isolation and meant a lack of concern with living conditions of Europeans and humankind in general.

The identified pattern suggests that anomia can be related to a devaluation of civil authorities and spiritual entities, or politics and religion overall. Moreover, a person can lose the sense of trust, interpersonal integration, and a sense of 'self-to-others belongingness', as it was called by Srole (1956). In other words, an individual is fixed on his or her own selfish needs.

To sum up, anomia is experienced as interpersonal disintegration and a sense of alienation from others. It is manifested through a loss of trust and confidence in authorities and other people, a sense of moral emptiness, as a lack of respect towards social norms and a readiness to break them, attribution of low significance to such values as politics and religion, the presence of a sense of meaninglessness, helplessness and pessimism. With such characteristics, it is inevitable that anomia decreases subjective well-being.

3.1.4 Anomia and subjective well-being

In a series of empirical research projects links between anomia and subjective well-being were explored. Subjective well-being reflects how and why people experience their lives in positive ways, including both cognitive judgments and affective reactions (Diener 1984). According to Myers and Diener (1995), high subjective well-being reflects a dominance of positive thoughts and feelings about one's life. At the cognitive level,

subjective well-being includes an overall sense of satisfaction with life, as well as with specific life domains, such as one's job, family, and other domains. At the affective level, high subjective well-being is connected to feeling primarily pleasant emotions, related to an individual's positive appraisal of on-going events. On the contrary, a person who perceives their life's events as negative or undesirable has a low subjective well-being and feel negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, or anger.

Myers and Diener (1995) define subjective well-being by three distinct factors: the relative presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life. The affective component of subjective well-being can be also operationalized as a general sense of happiness. It is possible to suppose that anomia is an important factor that can decrease the level of subjective well-being. Losing clear vision of social norms and guidance, trust in government, social institutions and other people, as well as losing a sense of purpose, experiencing instead an alienation from others, a sense of cultural isolation, and meaninglessness, leads to a person being more disoriented and susceptible to stress. This, in turn, leads to negative evaluations of life's circumstances, more frequent bad moods, lower self-confidence and higher impact of obstacles or failures. Obviously, such a person will be unhappy and dissatisfied with life in general.

Empirical evidence shows that under the conditions of anomie persons are dissatisfied with their material well-being (Arts, Hermkens & Van Wijck 1995), namely, (1) a certain part of the population feels a strong sense of injustice regarding the income they receive and (2) a certain part of the population is highly dissatisfied with the income and the living standard they can afford, and believe strongly that they do not receive what they need.

Anomia is an important factor in predicting subjective well-being. Analysis of the secondary data from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) showed that three dimensions of anomia – social distrust, social isolation and meaninglessness – were negatively associated with different indices of subjective well-being, namely, with overall satisfaction with life, satisfaction with particular life domains, and a general sense of happiness (Levina, Martinsone & Kamerade 2015). In this research it was also discovered which dimensions of anomia predict different components of subjective well-being best of all. In particular, it was found that meaninglessness best of all predicted satisfaction with education. Satisfaction with one's present job, family life and social life, as well as satisfaction with health, could best be predicted by a combination of meaninglessness and social isolation. Satisfaction with the present standard of living, with accommodation, and satisfaction with the economic situation in the country can be predicted best by a combination of meaninglessness, social isolation and social distrust. Overall satisfaction with life can be predicted best of all by all three dimensions of anomia – meaninglessness, social isolation and social distrust. In turn, a general sense of happiness can be predicted best of all by meaninglessness and social isolation.

The negative relations between anomia and subjective well-being allow to suggest that anomia is an important factor in determining subjective well-being. Which factors decrease levels of anomia? The next section will show that one of the most influential factors that help to overcome anomia is social participation.

3.2 Social participation as a factor decreasing the level of anomia

3.2.1 Defining social participation

Social participation is widely acknowledged to be an important factor of a successful and healthy life, and is strongly related to one's quality of life (Levasseur, Desrosiers & St-Cyr Tribble 2008). Therefore, social participation can be considered as a factor which can decrease levels of anomia and thus positively affect subjective well-being.

Bukov, Maas and Lampert (2002) define social participation as socially oriented sharing of individual resources and consequences of activities for the social environment. Lindstrom (2005) conceptualized social participation as civic and social participation within organizations as well as formal and informal social networks, which serve to strengthen the norms and values of society and to promote generalized trust and reciprocity between its citizens. According to Del Bono *et al.* (2007), social participation is the advantages that come with developing and maintaining a variety of social relationships and involvement in the community. Aspects of social participation include contact with a partner, adult children or other family members, interactions with neighbors and friends, as well as engagement in voluntary work and local leisure and social activities. Mars *et al.* (2008) consider that social participation can be characterized by contribution or receipt of resources between the subject and society, and is related to a positive experience with social contacts and through social activities, work and informal support networks, cultural activities as well as public events, as well as political or media activities.

Thus, despite the importance of social participation, there is no agreement on its definition. Levasseur *et al.* (2010) developed taxonomy of social activities mentioned by various scholars. The definitions mostly focus on the person's involvement in activities which provide interactions with others in society or the community. Depending on the main goal of these social activities, six levels of involvement of the individual with others were identified:

1) Doing an activity in preparation for connecting with others;
2) Being with others;
3) Interacting with others without doing a specific activity with them;
4) Doing an activity with others;

5) Helping others;
6) Contributing to society.

This taxonomy of social activities covers all levels of social involvement: participation (levels 1 through 6), social participation (levels 3 through 6) and social engagement (levels 5 and 6).

3.2.2 Participation in social activities as a factor predicting anomia

By participating in social activities individuals can build or recover social ties, discover similar values, and develop a system of social norms. Ļevina, Mārtinsone and Kamerāde (2016b) used the secondary data from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) to examine whether participation of Latvians in social activities performed with others or for others, was negatively associated with the level of anomia. The results show that such dimensions of anomia as social distrust, social isolation and meaninglessness are negatively associated with such social activities as interacting with others without doing a specific activity with them, doing an activity with others, helping others, and contributing to society. These social activities refer to the 3rd–6th levels of the taxonomy of social activities proposed by Levasseur *et al.* (2010). They are performed in interaction with others and, as such, can be classified as social participation. In essence, the empirically observed negative relations between all dimensions of anomia and participation in social activities suggest that social participation is an important factor in decreasing the level of anomia.

3.3 Social participation, anomia and subjective well-being

3.3.1 Relations between social participation, anomia and subjective well-being

Dimensions of anomia can predict different components of subjective well-being (Levina, Martinsone & Kamerade 2015). Though there are relations between participation in social activities and anomia, on the one hand, and anomia and subjective well-being, on the other hand, all three concepts were not investigated together. This fact raises a series of questions about the relationship between social participation, anomia and subjective well-being.

Does social participation relate to subjective well-being?

Does social participation predict subjective well-being?

As demonstrated above, social participation is an important factor in determining one's quality of life. As such, it can be expected that socially active persons have a higher

level of subjective well-being. Furthermore, does a lower level of anomia serve as a mediator in the relationship between social participation and subjective well-being? Negative relations between anomia and social activities allow to propose that participation in social activities develops a sense of social belonging and inclusion; it helps one to re-evaluate the system of social norms, incites trust in other people, helps to set important goals, and, consequently, reduces the level of anomia. All these factors also increase the level of subjective well-being.

Thus we are going to empirically test whether social participation allows to predict different components of subjective well-being, and evaluate whether low levels of anomia can serve as a mediator in the relationship between social participation and subjective well-being.

We propose the following hypotheses:

H.1: Social participation predicts lower levels of dimensions of anomia.

H.2.1: Lower levels of certain dimensions of anomia predict a higher level of overall satisfaction with life.

H.2.2: Lower levels of certain dimensions of anomia predict a higher level of a general sense of happiness.

H.3.1: Social participation predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life.

H.3.2: Social participation predicts a higher level of a general sense of happiness.

The main research questions are as follows:

1) Do dimensions of anomia function as a mediator between social participation and overall satisfaction with life?
2) Do dimensions of anomia function as a mediator between social participation and a general sense of happiness?

3.3.2 Method

Participants

In order to investigate the relations between social participation, anomia and subjective well-being of Latvians, the secondary data from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) was used. The Latvian sample consisted of 1009 respondents aged between 18 to 92 years, 34.9% male, and 65.1% female.

Instruments

Social participation. For measuring social participation we used nine questions from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012). The questions were selected on the basis of the taxonomy of social activities (Levasseur *et al.* 2010) and measured

the 5th and the 6th levels of involvement of the individual with others, namely, helping others and contributing to society (Table 3.2).

Further in this study we conduct principal component analysis and develop an original scale of social participation.

Anomia. For measurement of the levels of anomia, the Anomia Scale developed by Ļevina, Mārtinsone and Kamerāde (2015c) was used. The Anomia Scale includes three subscales: Social distrust, Social isolation and Meaninglessness. This Anomia Scale was developed on the basis of the questionnaire of the EQLS, the integrative multidimensional model of anomia (Levina & Martinsone 2015; Levina, Martinsone, Kolesnikova & Perepjolkina 2014; Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2015b, 2015c, 2016a) and psychometric properties of developed subscales (Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2015c). The Anomia Scale includes 13 questions from the EQLS (Table 3.3).

Subscales of the Anomia Scale showed high internal consistency levels ranging from .69 to .84.

Subjective well-being. For measurement of subjective well-being of Latvians two questions from the European Quality of Life Survey were used (Table 3.4).

Table 3.2 Questions selected from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) and different levels of involvement of the individual with others based on the taxonomy of social activities (Levasseur *et al.* 2013)

Questions from EQLS		Levels of involvement of the individual with others
Q22	**Please look carefully at the list of organisations and tell us, how often did you do unpaid voluntary work through the following organisations in the last 12 months?**	Helping others – being a volunteer (Level 5)
Q22a	Community and social services (e.g., organisations helping the elderly, young people, disabled or other people in need).	
Q22b	Educational, cultural, sports or professional associations	
Q22c	Social movements (for example environmental, human rights) or charities (for example fundraising, campaigning)	
Q22d	Political parties, trade unions	
Q22e	Other voluntary organisations	
Q23	**Over the last 12 months, have you…?**	Contributing to society – civic activities (Level 6)
Q23a	Attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or political action group	
Q23b	Attended a protest or demonstration	
Q23c	Signed a petition, including an e-mail or on-line petition	
Q23d	Contacted a politician or public official (other than routine contact arising from use of public services)	

Table 3.3 Questions from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) included in the Anomia Scale after component analysis with varimax rotation and subscales of Anomia Scale (Ļevina, Mārtinsone & Kamerāde 2015c)

	Questions from EQLS	Subscales of Anomia Scale
Q28	**Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the following institutions**	Social distrust
Q28a	Latvian Saeima	
Q28b	The legal system	
Q28c	The press	
Q28d	The police	
Q28e	The government	
Q28f	The local (municipal) authorities	
Q29e	I feel left out of society	Social isolation
Q29f	Life has become so complicated today that I almost can't find my way	
Q29g	I feel that the value of what I do is not recognised by others	
Q29a	I am optimistic about the future	Meaninglessness
Q29b	I generally feel that what I do in life is worthwhile	
Q29c	I feel I am free to decide how to live my life	
Q45e	My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	

Table 3.4 Questions from the third European Quality of Life Survey (2012) chosen for measurement of subjective well-being

	Questions from EQLS	Components of subjective well-being
Q30	All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days?	Overall satisfaction with life
Q41	Taking all things together on a scale of 1 to 10, how happy would you say you are?	General sense of happiness

Procedure

At the first stage a scale measuring social participation was developed. At the second stage the question of whether correlations between social participation, dimensions of anomia and components of subjective well-being exist was explored. At the third stage, the questions of whether social participation and dimensions of anomia allow to predict components of subjective well-being, and whether dimensions of anomia serve as a mediator between social participation and subjective well-being were investigated.

3.3.3 Results

Results of the construction of the Social Participation Scale

To construct the Social Participation Scale, a principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the responses which were initially selected as referring to different social activities directed at helping others (being a volunteer) and contributing to society (civic activities) (Table 3.2). The principal component analysis revealed a structure of three components, which explained 50.92% of variance. KMO = .65 and the Bartlett test is statistically significant: χ^2 (36) = 857.03 (p = .000). The component matrix for the three-component solution is shown in Table 3.5.

The obtained components were identified as *Participation in peaceful political activities and trade unions* (*C1*), *Participation in non-political social movements and organizations* (*C2*), *and Participation in political protests* (*C3*). At first glance, the obtained three-component structure could allow us to construct three sub-scales of social participation. However, further exploration of the psychometric properties of the possible three sub-scales forced us to refrain from using three separate sub-scales of social participation due to unsatisfactory indices of internal consistency (Table 3.6).

Table 3.5 Results of the Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation for questions referring to participation in social activities in the sample of Latvians

	Component loadings			
	C1	*C1*	*C2*	*C3*
Social activities and variables	Before rotation	After rotation		
Q23a Attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or political action group	.61	**.85**	.00	.14
Q22d Made unpaid voluntary work in political parties, trade unions	.61	**.83**	.13	–.07
Q23d Contacted a politician or public official	.45	**.38**	.22	.13
Q22c Made unpaid voluntary work in social movements or charities	.49	–.03	**.73**	.08
Q22a Made unpaid voluntary work in community and social services	.48	.04	**.62**	.11
Q22b Made unpaid voluntary work in education, cultural, sports or professional associations	.57	.29	**.58**	–.02
Q22e Made unpaid voluntary work in other voluntary organisations	.44	.14	**.52**	–.01
Q23b Attended a protest or demonstration	.32	.22	–.12	**.76**
Q23c Signed a petition, including an e-mail or on-line petition	.40	–.06	.29	**.75**
Eigenvalues		1.70	1.68	1.21
% of variance		18.88	37.50	50.92

Table 3.6 Indices of internal consistency for possible sub-scales of social participation

Possible sub-scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Participation in peaceful political activities and trade unions	3	.59
Participation in non-political social movements and organizations	4	.52
Participation in political protests	2	.42

A very limited number of items can be among the possible reasons resulting in unsatisfactory indices of internal consistency. The first component had high loadings for all items before rotation. Consequently, we decided to include all selected items in one integral scale, namely, the Social Participation Scale. This integral scale showed satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .60). Thus, the Social Participation Scale was developed including nine items. It measures participation in social activities directed at helping others (being a volunteer) and contributing to society (civic activities).

Results of the research of correlations between social participation, anomia and subjective well-being

At first, in order to clarify correlations between social participation, different dimensions of anomia and various components of subjective well-being of Latvians the Pearson's correlation analysis was used (Table 3.7).

Correlations between social participation and anomia. In this research we found that social participation is statistically significantly related to two dimensions of anomia, namely, social isolation and meaninglessness ($p < .01$), yet it is not related to the third dimension of anomia – social distrust.

Table 3.7 Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations coefficients for measures of social participation, anomia and subjective well-being of Latvians

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	*M*	*SD*
1.	**Social participation**	—	–.051	–.178**	–.192**	.136**	.147**	–.13	4.24
	Dimensions of anomia								
2.	Social distrust		—	.331**	.273**	–.310**	–.192**	.05	4.37
3.	Social isolation			—	.553**	–.528**	–.429**	–.03	2.43
4.	Meaninglessness				—	–.556**	–.532**	–.06	2.85
	Subjective well-being								
5.	Overall satisfaction with life					—	.642**	7.03	2.18
6.	General sense of happiness						—	7.31	1.96

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Correlations between anomia and subjective well-being. Secondly, it was found that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between all dimensions of anomia and components of subjective well-being, namely, overall satisfaction with life ($p < .01$) and a general sense of happiness.

Correlations between social participation and subjective well-being. Thirdly, the obtained results show that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between social participation and overall satisfaction with life ($p < .01$) and a general sense of happiness ($p < .01$).

Results of the research of the effect of social participation of Latvians on subjective well-being through decreased anomia

Overall satisfaction with life, social participation and anomia. The empirical study reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between overall satisfaction with life and social participation ($p < .01$). Social participation statistically singnificantly negatively correlated with only two dimensions of anomia – social isolation ($p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($p < .01$). There are also statistically significant negative relations between overall satisfaction with life and all three dimensions of anomia, namely, social distrust ($p < .01$), social isolation ($p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($p < .01$). Thus, the obtained results demonstrate a link between all of the variables, with the exception of social participation and social distrust (Table 3.7).

Although no statistically significant link between social participation and social distrust was demonstrated, Preacher and Hayes (2008) contend that it is important to test the connection with a multiple mediation model without excluding any of the mediators that are of importance to the model.

The hypothetical multiple mediation model is reflected in Figure 3.1, where social participation (X) is the independent variable, social distrust (M_1), social isolation (M_2) and meaninglessness (M_3) act as mediators, and overall satisfaction with life (Y) is the dependent variable.

By using the multiple mediation analysis by Preacher and Hayes (2008) the total indirect effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life ($X \rightarrow M_1$, M_2, $M_3 \rightarrow Y$), the specific indirect effects of social participation on overall satisfaction with life through low social distrust ($X \rightarrow M_1 \rightarrow Y$), low social isolation ($X \rightarrow M_2 \rightarrow Y$) and low meaninglessness ($X \rightarrow M_3 \rightarrow Y$), and the direct effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life ($X \rightarrow Y$) were tested. Individual parts of the multiple mediation model were analyzed ($X \rightarrow M_1$; $X \rightarrow M_2$; $X \rightarrow M_3$; $M_1 \rightarrow Y$; $M_2 \rightarrow Y$; $M_3 \rightarrow Y$) based on the unstandardized regression coefficient (Figure 3.2). Bootstrapping analysis was used to assess the total indirect effect and specific indirect effects (Table 3.8).

Figure 3.1 Mutual connection between social participation, anomia and overall satisfaction with life: a hypothetical multiple mediation model

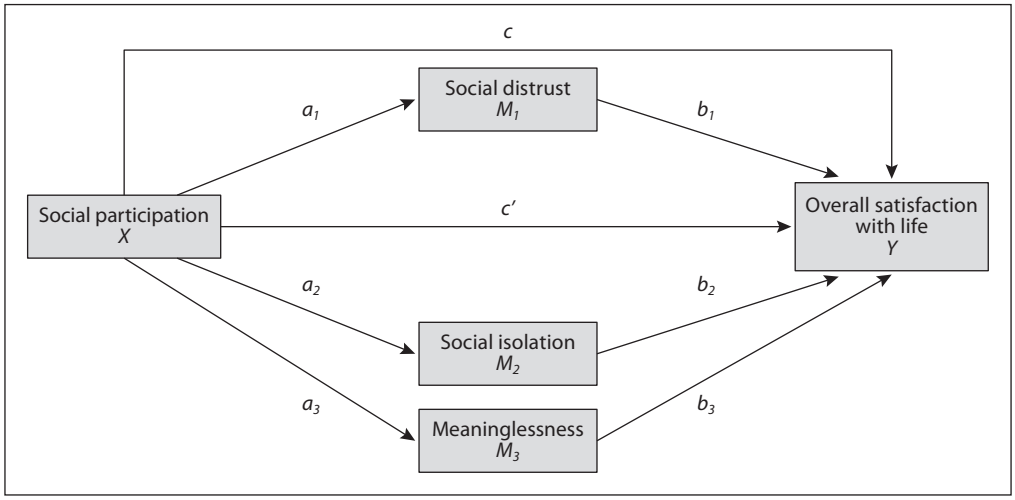


Table 3.8 Mediation of the effect of social participation of Latvians on overall satisfaction with life through low social distrust, low social isolation and low meaninglessness

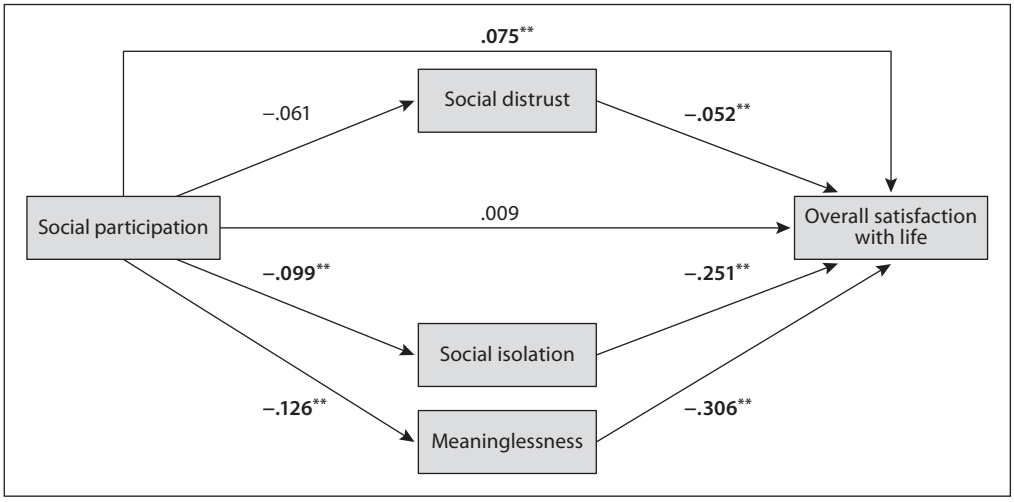
		Bootstrapping	
		BC 95% CI	
Social participation	Point estimate	Lower	Upper
Social distrust	.003	.000	.008
Social isolation	.025	.016	.037
Meaninglessness	.038	.027	.053
Total	.067	.050	.084

Note: BC, bias corrected; 5,000 bootstrap samples.

In order to test the first research hypothesis and to explore whether social participation predicts a lower level of anomia, a regression analysis for the individual parts of the multiple mediation models was conducted. The obtained results show that social participation predicts lower levels of social isolation ($B = -.099$, $p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($B = -.126$, $p < .01$), yet does not predict a lower level of social distrust ($B = -.061$, $p > .05$) (Figure 3.2).

In order to test the first part of the second hypothesis and to explore whether a lower level of anomia predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life, a regression analysis for the individual parts of the multiple mediation model was also conducted. The obtained results show: (1) a lower level of social distrust predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life ($B = -.052$, $p < .01$); (2) a lower level of social isolation predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life ($B = -.251$, $p < .01$); (3) a lower level of meaninglessness predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life ($B = -.306$, $p < .01$) (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Regression analysis indicators of individual parts of the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation of Latvians on overall satisfaction with life through low social distrust, low social isolation and low meaninglessness



Notes: $N = 776$, some cases were deleted due to missing data.
$R^2 = .396$; $F(4,771) = 126.372$, $p = .00$; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$
The figure shows unstandardized regression coefficients.

In order to test the first part of the third hypothesis and to explore whether social participation predicts a higher level of overall satisfaction with life, the direct effect of the multiple mediation model was analyzed. It was found that social participation does not predict a higher level of overall satisfaction with life ($B = .009$, $p > .05$) (Figure 3.2).

In order to answer the first research question, whether dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and overall satisfaction with life, the total indirect effect and specific indirect effects were analyzed.

An assessment of the total indirect effect showed that low levels of dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and overall satisfaction with life, since the confidence interval does not contain a zero. An examination of the specific indirect effects indicates that social isolation and meaninglessness are mediators, as their confidence intervals do not contain a zero. Social distrust does not act as a mediator between social participation and overall satisfaction with life, since its confidence interval contains a zero. Thus, social distrust does not contribute to the indirect effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life (Table 3.8).

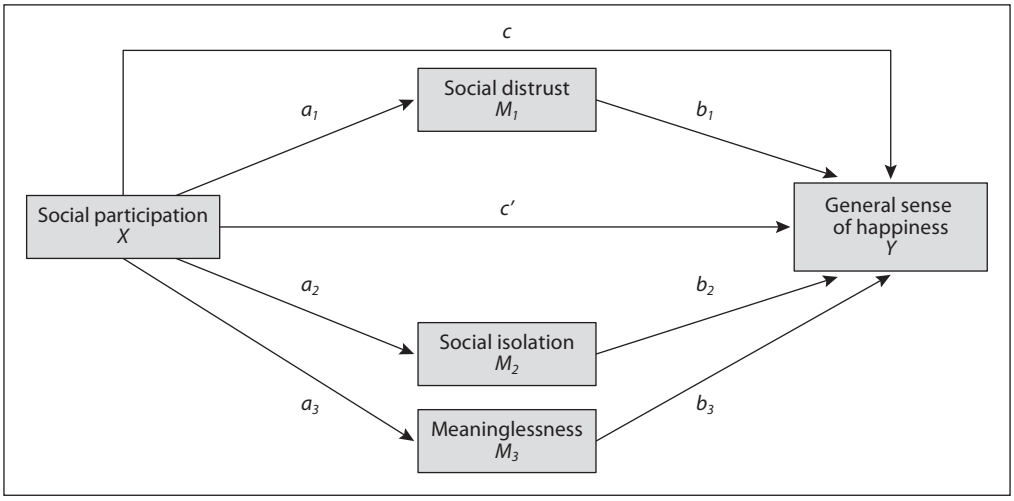
The obtained results and the directions of the *a* and *b* paths are consistent with the interpretation that a greater social participation leads to a lower social isolation and to a lower sense of meaninglessness, which, in turn, leads to a greater overall satisfaction with life.

General sense of happiness, social participation and anomia. In order to establish whether low levels of certain dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and a general sense of happiness, and in order to re-test the first hypothesis, as well as second parts of the second and third hypotheses, at first the link between anomia (social distrust, social isolation and meaninglessness), social participation and a general sense of happiness was analyzed. A statistically significant positive relationship between a general sense of happiness and social participation ($p < .01$) was found. Earlier it was shown that social participation statistically significantly negatively correlated only with two dimensions of anomia – social isolation ($p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($p < .01$). It was also found that there are statistically significant negative relationships between a general sense of happiness and all three dimensions of anomia, namely, social distrust ($p < .01$), social isolation ($p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($p < .01$). Thus, the obtained results show that there is a link between all of the variables, with the exception of social participation and social distrust (Table 3.7).

Although no statistically significant link between social participation and social distrust was found, it will be included in the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation on a general sense of happiness through low anomia. At the second stage, in order to evaluate whether low levels of certain dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and a general sense of happiness, a multiple mediation analysis with a Preacher and Hayes's (2008) SPSS macro was conducted.

The hypothetical multiple mediation model is reflected in Figure 3.3, where social participation (X) is the independent variable, social distrust (M_1), social isolation (M_2) and meaninglessness (M_3) act as mediators and a general sense of happiness (Y) is the dependent variable.

Figure 3.3 Mutual connection between social participation, anomia and a general sense of happiness: a hypothetical multiple mediation model



By using the multiple mediation analysis by Preacher and Hayes (2008) the total indirect effect of social participation on a general sense of happiness ($X \rightarrow M_1$, M_2, $M_3 \rightarrow Y$), the specific indirect effects of social participation on a general sense of happiness through low social distrust ($X \rightarrow M_1 \rightarrow Y$), low social isolation ($X \rightarrow M_2 \rightarrow Y$) and low meaninglessness ($X \rightarrow M_3 \rightarrow Y$), and the direct effect of social participation on a general sense of happiness ($X \rightarrow Y$) were tested. Individual parts of the multiple mediation model were analyzed ($X \rightarrow M_1$; $X \rightarrow M_2$; $X \rightarrow M_3$; $M_1 \rightarrow Y$; $M_2 \rightarrow Y$; $M_3 \rightarrow Y$) based on the unstandardized regression coefficient (see Figure 3.4). Bootstrapping analysis was used to assess the total indirect effect and specific indirect effects (see Table 3.9).

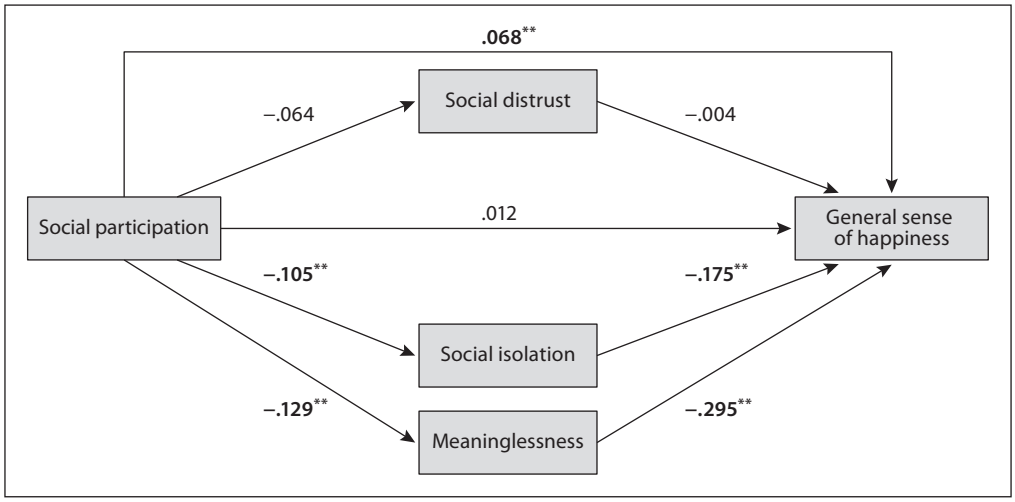
A regression analysis for the individual parts of the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation of Latvians on a general sense of happiness through low social distrust, low social isolation and low meaninglessness showed almost the same results as in the case of the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life through low levels of dimensions of anomia[1]: social participation predicts lower levels of social isolation ($B = -.105$, $p < .01$) and meaninglessness ($B = -.129$, $p < .01$) yet does not predict a lower level of social distrust ($B = -.064$, $p > .05$) (see Figure 3.4).

In order to test the second part of the second hypothesis and to explore whether a lower level of anomia predicts higher levels of a general sense of happiness, a regression analysis for the individual parts of the multiple mediation model was conducted. The obtained results show: (1) a lower level of social distrust does not predict a higher level of a general sense of happiness ($B = -.004$, $p > .05$); (2) a lower level of social isolation predicts a higher level of a general sense of happiness ($B = -.175$, $p < .01$); (3) a lower level of meaninglessness predicts a higher level of a general sense of happiness ($B = -.295$, $p < .01$) (see Figure 3.4).

In order to test the second part of the third hypothesis and to explore whether social participation predicts a higher level of a general sense of happiness, the direct effect of the multiple mediation model was analyzed. It was found, that social participation does not predict a higher level of a general sense of happiness ($B = .012$, $p > 05$) (Figure 3.4).

[1] Small differences of unstandardized regression coefficients, that were obtained in two investigated multiple mediation models of the effect of social participation on subjective well-being through low anomia, are explained by the fact that due to missing data and deleted cases the size of the sample was 776 in the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life through low levels of dimensions of anomia, while in the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation on a general sense of happiness through low levels of dimensions of anomia the size of the sample was 772. As a result, the data used data is not identical for these two models.

Figure 3.4 Regression analysis indicators of individual parts of the multiple mediation model of the effect of social participation of Latvians on a general sense of happiness through low social distrust, low social isolation and low meaninglessness



Notes: $N = 772$, some cases were deleted due to missing data.
$R^2 = .323$; $F(4,767) = 91.432$, $p = .00$; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$
The figure shows unstandardized regression coefficients.

Table 3.9 Mediation of the effect of social participation of Latvians on a general sense of happiness through low social distrust, low social isolation and low meaninglessness

		Bootstrapping	
		BC 95% CI	
Social participation	Point estimate	Lower	Upper
Social distrust	.000	–.002	.003
Social isolation	.018	.011	.029
Meaninglessness	.038	.027	.051
Total	.057	.043	.072

Note: BC, bias corrected; 5,000 bootstrap samples.

In order to answer the second research question whether dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and a general sense of happiness, the total indirect effect and specific indirect effects were analyzed.

An assessment of the total indirect effect showed that low levels of certain dimensions of anomia function as mediators between social participation and a general sense of happiness, since the confidence interval does not contain a zero. An examination of the specific indirect effects indicates that social isolation and meaninglessness are mediators, since their confidence intervals do not contain a zero. Social distrust does not figure as a mediator between social participation and a general sense of

happiness, since its confidence interval contains a zero. Thus, social distrust does not contribute to the indirect effect of social participation on overall satisfaction with life (Table 3.9). The obtained results and the directions of the *a* and *b* paths are consistent with the interpretation that a greater social participation leads to a lower social isolation and to a lower sense of meaninglessness, which in turn leads to a greater general sense of happiness.

3.4 Discussion

The main purpose of the new original research was to explore the relations between social participation, anomia and subjective well-being. Firstly, it was found that social participation is negatively related to such dimensions of anomia as social isolation and meaninglessness. Social participation predicts lower levels of social isolation and meaninglessness yet does not predict lower level of social distrust.

Secondly, it was found that lower levels of social distrust, social isolation and meaninglessness predict a higher level of overall satisfaction with life, and that lower levels of social isolation and meaninglessness predict higher levels of a general sense of happiness. In other words, both overall satisfaction with life and a general sense of happiness depend on the existence of social ties and important life goals. Moreover, overall satisfaction with life depends also on the existence of trust in government and social institutions.

Thirdly, we found that low levels of social isolation and meaninglessness function as mediators between social participation and overall satisfaction with life, as well as between social participation and a general sense of happiness. These findings show how social participation affects subjective well-being and allow us to describe the mechanism of this influence as follows – greater social participation leads to lower social isolation and to a lower sense of meaninglessness, which, in turn, leads to a greater overall satisfaction with life and a general sense of happiness, that is, to a greater subjective well-being.

Social participation affects subjective well-being indirectly through low social isolation and meaninglessness. Participation in social activities directed at helping others (volunteering) and contributing to society (civic activities) allows one to re-establish social ties at the inter-individual level and to find important goals at the intra-individual level. However, it does not build trust in government, parliament and other large social institutions. (Trust in peers was not investigated in this study). In turn, re-established social ties and new significant life goals increase the level of subjective well-being.

3.5 Conclusions

Social diversity of the contemporary Latvian society provides various possibilities for self-realization. A person faces many potential choices and the necessity to plan the trajectory of one's own life. An individual who experiences confusion and an inability to make life choices can 'drop out' of society and the system of social norms and rules, feels a sense of isolation and alienation, does not see life goals and meanings, thus, experiences an anomic state. Whereas subjective well-being is a major indicator of the quality of life, on the one hand, and a significant determinant of physical and mental health, on the other, it is important that the empirical results demonstrate the link between subjective well-being, anomia and social participation. Anomia negatively affects subjective well-being, while social participation and social engagement allows one to enhance the level of interpersonal integration and to find meanings in life. While doing voluntary work, helping others, taking part in political and trade-union activities, as well as in non-political social movements and organizations, a person develops a sense of belonging and awareness of new important goals. Thus, social participation decreases anomia and positively affects subjective well-being.

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4 Values of Latvians Across Socio-Demographic Groups

Ritma Rungule and
Silva Seņkāne

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss the values of Latvians using the data collected by the World Values Survey (WVS), the European Values Study (EVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS). The available data permits an extensive diachronic analysis of the values because Latvia participated in these surveys relatively rarely. To compensate for the lack of the up-to-date statistics we have included some of the WVS questionnaire items in the representative opinion poll, held in Latvia by the opinion poll agency SKDS in 2015. We use in this analysis the Latvian data of the ESS Wave 7 held in 2014, which remains unavailable on the ESS homepage. One should keep in mind that the WVS and the ESS draw from different theoretical paradigms, and for this reason, before interpreting the data, we describe both methodologies. In the end of this chapter we discuss the values of Latvians from these two perspectives.

4.2 Traditional *vs.* Secular-rational and Survival *vs.* Self-expression values

The World Values Survey methodology is based on the paradigm developed by Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues (Inglehart 1997; Inglehart & Baker 2000; Inglehart & Welzel 2005). This approach groups values in two dimensions.

1) Traditional *vs.* Secular-rational values contrast the religious and traditional values typical of agrarian societies with the secular and rational values predominant mainly in urban industrial societies.
2) Survival *vs.* Self-expression values dimension reflects the shift from the emphasis on economic and physical security to the appreciation of self-expression, subjective well-being and the quality of life.

Development of both dimensions is related to economic advance. The first dimension is linked to the initial phase of industrialization and the rise of the working class; the second reflects the changes linked to the affluent conditions of advanced industrial society and to the rise of the service and knowledge sectors. Two dimensions enable

description of the cultural differences in value preferences so that each society can be located on the global map of cross-cultural variations. According to the WVS Wave 6 (2010–2014) results, Latvia demonstrates high score of secular-rational values, as is the case in the Protestant Europe, but the dominance of survival values over self-expression ones makes this country similar to the former European Communist countries like Russia and Serbia.

Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. Individuals embracing these values reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide; they demonstrate high level of national pride and nationalist political outlook. The preferences of individuals sharing s*ecular-rational values* are opposite to the ones motivated by traditional values. Less emphasis is placed on religion, traditional family values and authority, while divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. People consider their personal aspirations more important than social conformity, they have a rational belief in the progress of science and technology, and in an individual right to make important decisions regarding their own lives.

Survival values emphasize economic and physical security above all other goals, individuals striving for survival demonstrate a relatively ethnocentric political outlook and feel threatened by foreigners, ethnic diversity and cultural change. Low level of trust and tolerance is a characteristic of societies where survival values dominate. This leads to insistence on traditional gender roles, intolerance to minority groups, and authoritarian political outlook. Opposite to survival values are *self-expression values*, which give high priority to environment protection, gender equality, tolerance to otherness (e.g., foreigners and homosexuals), as well as demands for participation in economic and political decision-making. Trust, tolerance, subjective well-being, political activism are the characteristics of post-industrial societies with high levels of security. Inglehart and his colleagues argue that during the last half a century in the developed industrial countries the preferences have shifted from values stressing a sense of material and physical security toward 'post-modern' values stressing greater self-expression and quality of life.

Christian Welzel (2013) relates the contemporary social changes to emancipative values which include self-expression. Individualization plays a crucial role in these changes.

> [P]eople in knowledge societies experience weakening social control mechanisms, diminishing group norms, fading conformity pressures, and, more generally, individualization: a process that places behavioural control with people themselves. As this happens, institutions increasingly need people's voluntary commitment in order to function. Individualization increases the importance of people's values as a guide for their actions. (p. 5)

Emancipative values emphasize freedom of choice, which empowers humans permitting them to gain control over their lives and their society's agenda. It should be

stressed that emancipative values emerge as the psychological by-product of individualization but not the other way around.

The World Values Survey and the European Values Study use the methodology developed by Inglehart *et al.* These surveys reveal that Latvians share secular-rational and survival values. To discuss these results we will provide a more detailed analysis of the indicators of values dimensions. Latvia took part in four Values Surveys, in 1990 (EVS), 1996 (WVS), 1999 (EVS) and 2008 (EVS). For the comparison we have chosen the WVS 1996 and the EVS 2008 polls. Up-to-date information was collected in the SKDS representative poll in 2015 (N = 1004), which included the questions corresponding to the values indicators.

The indicators of traditional values are summarized in Table 4.1. The decreasing importance of religion attests to a decline of traditional values. More rarely, the respondents admit that God is very important in their life, and even a smaller share of them contends that religious faith should be taught to children. Respect for authority is also decreasing.

Statistically significant increase of occurrence of secular-rational values is attested by the growing autonomy index, which includes four indicators. From 2008 to 2015, the index has increased by 0.11 points (95% CI 0.03–0.19) (Table 4.2). The index would be –2 if both religious faith and obedience were mentioned, but not independence and determination-perseverance and, on the other extreme, +2 if both independence and determination-perseverance were mentioned, but not religious faith and obedience.

Table 4.1 Indicators of traditional values, 1996–2015, percent of population

Values indicators	1996	2008	2015
God is very important in respondent's life	46.0	43.2	38.0
It is more important for a child to learn obedience and religious faith than independence and determination (Autonomy index)			
Obedience	19.4	30.2	16.7
Religious faith	13.9	16.1	6.2
Independence	37.8	69.0	55.2
Determination	47.6	46.5	33.6
Abortion is never justifiable	12.0	29.7	26.1
Respondent has strong sense of national pride	15.5	32.3	ND
Respondent favors more respect for authority	29.6	40.6	21.0

Sources: WVS Wave 3 (1995–1998), EVS (2010), SKDS (2015).

Table 4.2 Autonomy index, 1996–2015

	1996	2008	2015
Autonomy index	0.52	0.55	0.66
Std. Deviation	0.99	1.01	0.91

Sources: WVS Wave 3 (1995–1998), EVS (2010), SKDS (2015).

The domination of survival values over self-expression values corresponds to a minor occurrence of individuals expressing post-materialist values (Table 4.3). To calculate the material *vs.* post-materialist values index Inglehart offers respondents to choose two priority values out of four. Those who choose two consequent values are categorized either as materialists or as post-materialists, accordingly. The share of proponents of post-materialist values has increased slightly since 1996: from 4 to 8 percent; at the same time the popularity of materialist values has decreased from 35 to 28 percent (Figure 4.1). The majority, however, opts for mixed values: in the questionnaires these respondents used to check one materialist and one post-materialist value. The statistically significant variables of this value scale are education and the place of residence. More proponents of post-materialist values are found among the respondents with university education and those living in Riga.

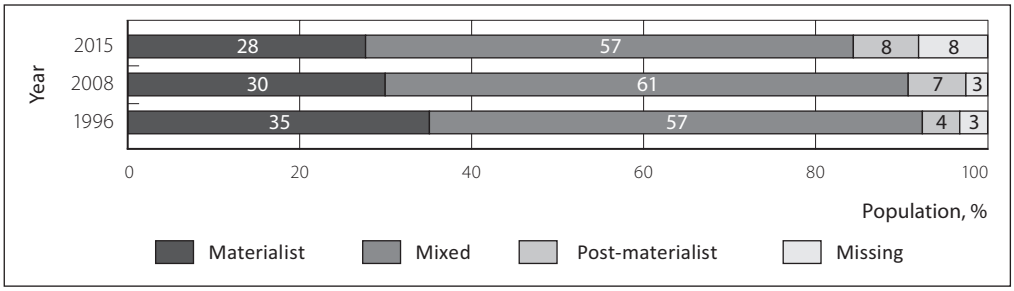
The four-proposition index of materialism *vs.* post-materialism scale has been criticized as being relatively robust and not reflecting the support to values (Davis & Darenport 1999). Inglehart (1997) developed a twelve propositions index, however still the old one is used for drafting the values map.

Table 4.3 Indicators of survival values, 1996–2015, percent of population

Values indicators	1996	2008	2015
Respondent gives priority to economic and physical security over self-expression and quality of life (4-item Materialist / Post-materialist Values Index)			
Maintaining order in the nation	55.6	30.8	47.3
Fighting rising prices	35.6	32.8	21.3
Giving the people more say in important political decisions	26.1	33.5	24.6
Protecting freedom of speech	20.5	2.9	6.8
Respondent describes self as not very happy	25.1	23.4	24.1
Respondent has not and would not sign a petition	29.1	43.0	31.4
Homosexuality is never justifiable	55.0	62.8	69.7
You have to be very careful about trusting people	75.3	74.5	73.5

Sources: WVS Wave 3 (1995–1998), EVS (2010), SKDS (2015).

Figure 4.1 Materialist *vs.* post-materialist values, 1996–2015



Sources: WVS Wave 3 (1995–1998), EVS (2010), SKDS (2015).

The attitude to homosexuality measured in the surveys is an indicator of tolerance level. Emancipative values imply more tolerance of deviant behaviors that leave personal integrity of other individuals untouched. Homosexuality and other benign forms of norm deviation are more tolerated as emancipative values grow strong. On the other hand, emancipative values mean less tolerance of behaviors that violate other people's integrity (Welzel 2013: 5). In Latvia, low tolerance attests to the domination of survival values. The share of respondents believing that homosexuality is never justifiable was steadily growing from 55% in 1996 to 70% in 2015.

4.3 Self-transcendence *vs.* Self-enhancement, Openness to change *vs.* Conservation

The European Social Survey uses methodology developed by Shalom Schwarz drawing on works by Milton Rokeach. Schwarz defines values as desirable trans-situational goals varying in importance and serving as guiding principles in individual's life. The crucial feature distinguishing values is the type of expressed motivational goal. Coordinating the pursuit of goals individuals represent the requirements of cooperation cognitively (linguistically) as specific values they communicate about. Ten motivationally distinct, broad and basic values are derived from three universal requirements of the human condition: the needs of individuals as biological organisms, the requisites of coordinated social interaction, and the survival and welfare needs of groups (Schwarz 2013). Schwarz characterizes each basic value by describing its central motivational goal.

Self-direction. Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.

Stimulation. Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.

Hedonism. Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.

Achievement. Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.

Power. Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.

Both power and achievement values focus on social esteem. However, achievement values emphasize actively demonstrating successful performance in concrete interaction, whereas power values emphasize attaining or preserving a dominant position within the more general social system.

Security. Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.

Conformity. Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. Conformity entails subordination to persons with whom one is in frequent interaction.

Tradition. Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self. Tradition entails subordination to abstract objects like religious and cultural customs and ideas.

> *Benevolence.* Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
>
> *Universalism.* Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. This contrasts with the in-group focus of benevolence values. (Schwarz 2007: 174)

Schwarz combines these values in two orthogonal dimensions. (1) Self-enhancement *vs.* Self-transcendence dimension juxtaposes power and achievement to universalism and benevolence. The dimension demonstrates whether values motivate individuals to pursue their self-interest or to be concerned for the welfare and interests of others. (2) Openness to change *vs.* Conservation dimension juxtaposes self-direction and stimulation to security, conformity and tradition. In the former case, values motivate to independent action, thought and feeling and readiness for a new experience, in the latter case, self-restriction, order and resistance to change are stressed. Hedonism shares elements of both openness and self-enhancement.

Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 196) contend that power and achievement are goals that aim at improving one's own standing, whereas the goals of benevolence and universalism indicate wider concerns that transcend oneself. Accordingly, they describe the first Schwarz's dimension as Selfishness *vs.* Unselfishness polarity. In the second dimension the goals of self-direction and stimulation emphasize the actualization of the potentials of an individual, whereas conformity and security imply deference to the norms and authority of the community. Hence Inglehart and Welzel identify this polarity as Individualism *vs.* Collectivism.

European Social Survey specifies individual values motivation with the help of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz 2002). The questionnaire includes short verbal portraits of different people describing a person's goals, aspirations, or wishes that imply the importance of a single value type. Respondents have to evaluate each portrait answering the question "How much like you is this person?" They check one of six boxes labelled 'very much like me', 'like me', 'somewhat like me', 'a little like me', 'not like me', and 'not like me at all'. Respondents' own values are inferred from their self-reported similarity to people who are described in terms of particular values, but these values are not stated explicitly in the proposed descriptions.

Numerical results of the survey are represented as means of the above-mentioned scale. To avoid influence of individual cases, the researchers center the respondents' ratings of each of these items on the particular respondent's average rating. The resulting ratings are mean-deviation scores. The higher a respondent rates a single item relative to her average rating, the larger positive numbers the scores yield; and *vice versa*. Thereby, researchers isolate the respondents' value priorities. This is important because the association-opposition structure of values refers to people's relative value priorities rather than to their absolute support and rejection levels (Inglehart & Welzel 2005: 197).

Latvia participated in three European Social Surveys in 2006, 2008 and 2014. Since the latest Latvian pool data is not yet available at the ESS web-page we have acquired it from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia, which conducted the poll. In this section we discuss the data of two last surveys. To secure a demonstrable presentation of the results we have recoded the scale of the questionnaire. Thus, in our presentation '1' corresponds to 'not like me at all' and '6' stands for 'very much like me'. The mean results were calculated and, seeking to avoid the individual differences, the results were centered. The principles of data analysis applied henceforth are described in the European Social Survey Education Net homepage, http://essedunet.nsd.uib.no/.

The results summarized in Table 4.4 suggest that security and benevolence are the dominant motivational values among Latvians. Universalism has outranked self-direction as the third most important value since 2008. Also, conformity and tradition gained in importance while achievement value became less pronounced. The least diffused motivational values are the ones of stimulation, hedonism and power. Thus, self-transcendence dominates over self-enhancement, and conservation dominates over openness to change values. That means that Latvians associate themselves more with collectivism rather than individualism and unselfishness dominates over selfishness values.

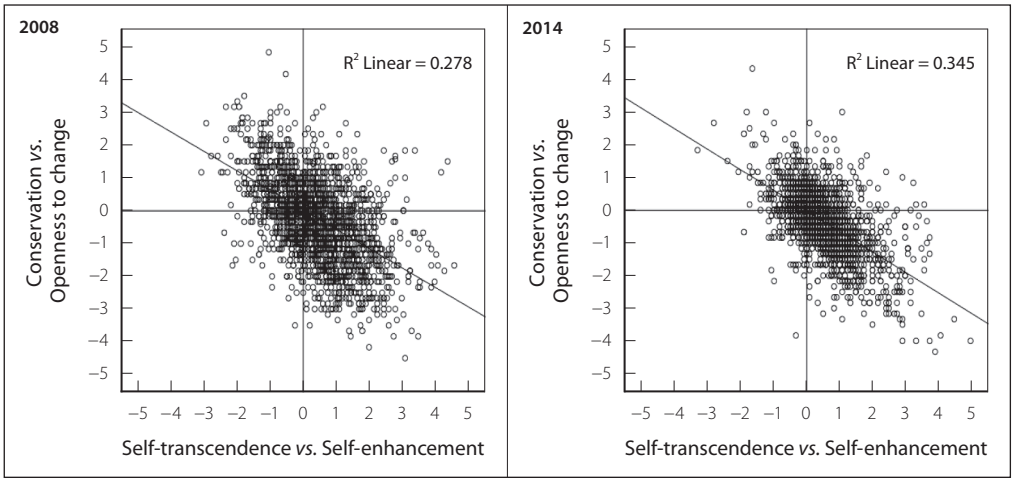
Preference of conservative values is a characteristic of post-communist societies because, earlier, the authoritarian political regimes reduced manifestation of individuality, Schwartz (2007) contends. Another common feature of these societies is a comparatively pronounced occurrence of self-transcendence values. In Northern and Western European societies self-transcendence values dominate, together with openness to change (Magun, Rudnev & Schmidt 2016).

Table 4.4 Motivational values of Latvian respondents, mean

	2008		2014		
Motivation value	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Difference
Security	.77	.74	.55	.74	−0.21
Benevolence	.35	.64	.29	.63	−0.07
Self-direction	.29	.69	.17	.65	−0.12
Universalism	.16	.68	.22	.56	0.06
Tradition	−.05	.94	.06	.77	0.11
Achievement	−.06	.85	−.23	.80	−0.17
Power	−.28	.85	−.28	.78	0.00
Hedonism	−.32	.98	−.29	.82	0.03
Conformity	−.41	1.00	−.15	.75	0.26
Stimulation	−.54	1.04	−.46	.88	0.07

Sources: ESS (2008); Latvia University Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (2014).

Figure 4.2 Values dimensions, 2008 and 2014



Sources: ESS (2008); Latvia University Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (2014).

Note: Max Conservation = –5, Max Openness to change = 5;
Max Self-transcendence = –5, Max Self-enhancement = 5.

Comparing dispersion of the results in 2008 and 2014, a growing inclination of Latvians towards collectivism/self-transcendence values becomes visible (Figure 4.2). Also, it should be noted that in 2008 individual/self-enhancement values correlated with openness to change Spearmens rho = –0.553; in 2014 this correlation was almost the same Spearmens rho = –0.522. Now preference of individualism values becomes coupled with conservation values as well.

4.4 Socio-demographic correlates of values

Ranking national value preferences by calculating mean results of data gathered in representative opinion polls maintains an image of nations as homogenous entities. To demonstrate the limits of such a treatment of empirical data we have cross-tabulated value preferences with socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Gender, age, and occupational status manifest statistically significant correlations with the values to be discussed in this section. Contrary to the belief commonly held in Latvia, the empirical data indicate no correlation with the language spoken by respondents in everyday settings. We have included this absent correlation in our discussion because the belief in linguistic determination of values has an impact on policy-making.

Statistically significant correlation exists between values dimensions and respondent's gender (Table 4.5). Women share conservation and self-transcendence values. This finding corresponds to the mean result in Latvian population; nevertheless, conservation values are more pronounced among female respondents.

Table 4.5 Motivational values of Latvian respondents by gender, 2008

Values	Total	Men	Women
Security. Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.	.77	.60	.87
Benevolence. Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	.36	.24	.42
Self-Direction. Independent thought and action. Choosing. Creating. Exploring.	.29	.40	.23
Universalism. Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.	.16	–.00	.26
Tradition. Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.	–.05	–.28	.09
Achievement. Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	–.06	.13	–.17
Power. Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	–.28	–.08	–.40
Hedonism. Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.	–.32	–.14	–.43
Conformity. Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	–.42	–.56	–.32
Stimulation. Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	–.54	–.31	–.68

Sources: ESS (2008).

Men express a larger openness to change in combination with self-enhancement values. Gender difference is evident comparing the mean results of each motivational value. Security is the most important for both genders, but still more pronounced among women. The second most important value is self-direction for men and benevolence for women. The third in the list is universalism for women, and benevolence for men. Conformity is the least popular motivational value among male respondents, but stimulation is the last priority for females. Statistically significant gender differences are found in all values. More often men are motivated by power, stimulation, and hedonism values, whereas women – by tradition and conformity.

Orientation to instrumental motivational values among men (power and achievement) and to community motivational values among women (universalism and benevolence) has been proved in other countries as well, however in Latvia the gender differences of values orientations is much more pronounced.

Values change in the course of life resulting in a generation gap. Young people (18–30 years) accept self-enhancement values, which include power and achievement. As individuals mature, self-transcendence motivational values of universalism and benevolence grow in importance. Openness to change decreases with age – mature people are more conservative than young generation. Positive correlation with age was found for the following motivational values: security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism; their corresponding mean indexes increase with age. Motivational

values related to self-enhancement – stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power – correlate negatively with age. These indexes are decreasing in older age groups. Similar trends were observed in other European countries: sharply universalism grows in importance at the age of 40–50 years, while the significance of self-enhancement values starts to decrease after 60 (Schwarz 2007).

To state that there is a fundamental difference between Latvian and Russian ethnic groups is a commonplace argument in Latvia. The ESS questionnaire does not include variables indicating ethnicity of respondents; in this research we correlate the data with the language spoken in family (Table 4.6). In general, the difference between the people speaking Latvian and Russian is not expressed as much as the one between the age groups. More often those who speak Latvian identify themselves with benevolence towards in-group members, while the Russian-speakers tend to espouse universalism supporting welfare for all. Tradition as a motivational value is more important for Russians; hedonism and stimulation are the characteristics of individuals speaking Latvian in the family.

One more socio-demographic characteristic we correlate here is the employment status. In Latvia, 87% of people active on labor market are employees (Central Statistical Bureau 2017) and their values are expressed in the mean indicators of the whole population (Table 4.7).

Table 4.6 Motivational values by language spoken in family, 2008, mean

Values	Total	Latvian language	Russian language
Security. Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.	.77	.77	.76
Benevolence. Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	.35	.39	.29
Self-Direction. Independent thought and action. Choosing. Creating. Exploring.	.29	.29	.30
Universalism. Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.	.16	.14	.21
Tradition. Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.	–.05	–.09	.05
Achievement. Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	–.06	–.08	–.01
Power. Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	–.28	–.30	–.25
Hedonism. Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.	–.32	–.30	–.38
Conformity. Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	–.42	–.42	–.41
Stimulation. Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	–.54	–.49	–.67

Sources: ESS (2008).

Table 4.7 Motivational values by employment status, 2008, mean

Values	Total	Employees	Employers, self-employed, family workers
Security. Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.	.78	.83	.53
Benevolence. Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	.36	.38	.34
Self-Direction. Independent thought and action. Choosing. Creating. Exploring.	.30	.28	.52
Universalism. Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.	.16	.20	–.09
Tradition. Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.	–.05	.01	–.36
Achievement. Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	–.06	–.11	.37
Power. Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	–.28	–.31	–.12
Hedonism. Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.	–.32	–.39	–.09
Conformity. Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	–.42	–.36	–.81
Stimulation. Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	–.54	–.62	–.24

Sources: ESS (2008).

Note: Sig < .05 for t-test for all motivational values without Benevolence.

Nevertheless, there is a statistically significant difference of these dominant values from ones shared by employers, self-employed and those running own family business. For this segment of Latvians self-direction is equally important to security, and they are more motivated by personal achievement rather than benevolence and universalism. Those who run their own business appreciate conformity and traditions much less than employees.

4.5 Conclusions

According to World Values Survey and European Social Survey, in Latvian population

- Secular-rational values dominate over traditional values (WVS),
- Conservation values dominate over openness to change values (ESS),
- Survival values dominate over self-expression values (WVS), and
- Self-transcendence values dominate over self-enhancement values (ESS).

The first and the second value preferences seem to contradict each other because secular rationalism usually is opposed to traditionalism, which, in turn, is a characteristic of conservation values. The inconsistency can be explained by the fact that the WVS and the ESS employ different methodologies. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) discuss the change of values in the framework of modernization theory. The transition from the agrarian to industrial society brings about bureaucratization favoring a mechanical worldview that gives rise to secular-rational values. The following transition from the industrial to knowledge society comes with increasing individualization, which feeds an emancipative worldview that gives rise to self-expression values. The mechanical worldview demystifies authority over people, whereas individualization shifts authority into the people themselves (Welzel 2013). Latvian data suggests diffusion of the mechanical worldview characteristic of the industrial society, but transition to knowledge society is retarded. Survival values continue to dominate over self-expression and conservation/collectivism values hamper individualization. In this case the polarity Individualism *vs.* Collectivism proposed by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) instead of the Schwartz's dimension Openness to change *vs.* Conservation enables a better understanding of the role of values in social change. The self-direction and stimulation goals emphasize the actualization of individual potentials, but Latvians share motivational values of conformity and security which imply deference to the community norms and authority.

As to the third and the fourth dominant values – survival and self-transcendence – they are complimentary, and their simultaneous domination does not raise contradictions. Self-transcendence values involve concern for the welfare and interests of others rather than pursuing one's own goals. Survival values imply collective top-down solutions to the problems of economy and physical security; they are linked to low levels of trust and tolerance. To enable cooperation, a collective institution guiding individual conduct is required in such conditions. Ethnic culture as the best candidate to fulfil this function invests in a relative ethnocentrism of individuals concerned with survival.

The financial crisis exposed the fundamental problems of Latvian polity and economy whose resolution requires social change. The Latvian government policy documents discussed in Chapter 1 recognize the need for change, for enhancement of individual activity. What can the values surveys tell us about the possibility and direction of social change? A moment ago, we suggested that transition to knowledge society is retarded by slow individualization. Welzel (2013) draws attention to emancipation process by which people internalize authority over their own lives; to do this, individuals must distance themselves from the sources of authority that are external to them. Freedom of choice and equality of opportunities are the results of emancipation. Collectivists would have objected that individualization weakens social ties, but Welzel argues that rather than bring the end of people's tendency to connect it only

changes the nature of social ties. Individualization diminishes people's dependence on support groups they have not chosen and at the same time it brings the freedom to connect and disconnect as people choose. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) contend that placing all humans on equal footing individualism defies solid group distinctions and makes people more open to concern for remote and dissimilar others. Collectivism in its primordial form maintains group-egoism, whereas individualism makes possible respect and concern for others with whom there is no immediate relation. The fact that individuals are granted rights to make personal decisions about group loyalties and collective affiliations makes individualization a powerful source of social capital, which generates more collective action and social activity, argues Welzel.

Emancipation values develop in the course of human empowerment (called also 'human development') freeing individuals from external constraints on pursuing their own and mutually-shared values (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000, 2006). The term can refer both to individuals and societies. For individuals, human empowerment means the development of personal agency – that is, a stage of maturation when one is conscious of one's values and chooses actions accordingly. For societies, human empowerment means the development of civic agency enabling all people to choose their actions in accordance with their own and mutually-shared values. Hence, human empowerment is about the freedom to pursue valued utilities, including individually and commonly valued utilities (Welzel 2013: 40).

As human empowerment advances, emancipative values emerge, providing the psychological link between freedoms' growing utilities and guarantees. Welzel holds that institutions guaranteeing universal freedoms are the result, not the cause, of this process. This argument challenges the prominent view that institutions are the cause of all development. Notably, in Latvian policy documents the institutional process of dissemination of values (cultural socialization) is conceived as *sine qua non* of social and economic development (see Chapter 1). Welzel, however, makes a useful distinction among three domains of human action: capability to act is enabled by action resources, motivation to act is secured by values, and civic entitlements provide guarantees for action (2013: 17). Thus, social change sought by Latvians nowadays depends less on value dissemination and internalization – action is a factor of structural conditions of social life. In our case that includes provision of education, healthcare, material welfare, and substantial entitlements for action. Human empowerment means that individuals themselves organize in interest groups formulating their preferences and interacting with others seeking to realize them. Collectivism values support top down formulation of preferences compulsory to all citizens. The current research demonstrates, on the contrary, that a homogenous set of values cannot characterize Latvians. Some individuals, such as the ones running their own business, share values motivating them to act in support of social change. Following Welzel, we could suggest that they lack action resources and civic entitlements providing guarantees for action.

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5 Attitudes to Social Action Across Socio-Demographic Groups

Diāna Kalniņa

5.1 Introduction

Latvian public opinion polls show a relatively low level of social activity among its inhabitants. According to an SKDS poll, in 2015 only one fifth (22%) of Latvia's permanent residents aged 18 to 74 engaged in nongovernmental organizations (in 2013 this figure was 17%). Only 14% of Latvians regularly follow political developments in the country (SKDS poll 2017), and this ratio has declined in recent years. A significant proportion of people (76%) believe that they have no influence on the actions of the *Saeima* (parliament) and the government, or on the manner of the said actions (SKDS poll 2016). It is a common topos in Latvian social science to underline the social passivity as a problem (Ikstens 2014: 96; Ījabs 2014: 224). Likewise, government policy documents agree that social participation is key to the country's development.

> [T]he most significant challenge for the government of Latvia is the ability to find new co-operation and participation mechanisms which would establish and multiply the social capital of the society… [N]ew mechanisms for participation of the society should be searched for and developed. (*Sustainable Development Strategy* 2010: §427)

The government has envisaged special policy measures in order

> to reduce the barriers for the development of Latvia's civil society and to promote civic participation skills of the population and opportunities to become involved in the solution of society's common issues. (*Guidelines on National identity* 2012: §3.1)

As is argued in Chapter 1, the government identifies constraints to social activity on a personal level. Accordingly, state institutions are charged with such educative tasks as the development of the 'feeling of belonging' or 'consciousness of values' supportive of cooperative conduct. Discussing social passivity, policy documents as well as academia refer to the 'inhabitants of Latvia' (*Latvijas iedzīvotāji*) (Ījabs 2015) or invoke ethnic and linguistic identity (Ņikišins *et al.* 2015; Tabuns 2014) as the correlates of

social activity. A reader can conclude that the missing sociality is a general characteristic of the 'post-Soviet mentality' or at least is determined by the native language and ethnicity. In this chapter I intend to correlate attitudes to social action with other sociodemographic characteristics measured in national representative opinion polls. I assume that Latvians express heterogeneous attitudes to social action and that the ethnicity and native language are not unique characteristics distinguishing this society. I follow Donald Fleming, defining attitude as "the deeply imbedded tendencies, extended in time and cutting across opinions from beneath, that underpin the individual's visible reaction to his environment" (1967: 362). Measurement of attitudes involves scales reflecting the degrees of favorability towards an object (Maio & Olson 1998: 300). I used the data of the nationally representative Omnibus polls of 2001–2016, selecting the questions relevant to this study. SKDS carries out polls monthly, interviewing at least 1,000 Latvian residents aged 15 to 74 for each study. The sampling method is the stratified random sampling. The criteria of stratification: administratively-territorial and national. Respondents are being interviewed in their domiciles; the selection principle: the random route method, the first birthday principle. To ensure maximum representability of the data against the general sample (all permanent residents of Latvia of a certain age) a weighing procedure is carried out according to the following parameters: gender, age, ethnicity and region.

5.2 National cultural dimensions and social action

First, using Geert Hofstede's (1980, 2011) national cultural dimensions, I will define attitudes that enable social action. Hofstede (2011) lists the following six value indexes of cultural dimensions:

1) Power Distance Index, PDI;
2) Individualism Index, IDV;
3) Masculinity Index, MAS;
4) Uncertainty Avoidance Index, UAI;
5) Pragmatic versus Normative Index, PAR (formerly Long Term Orientation Index, LTO);
6) Indulgence versus Restraint Index, IVR.

To operationalize the notion of social action in this research, I have selected four cultural dimensions: pragmatic *vs.* normative perception, power distance, individualism *vs.* collectivism, and indulgence *vs.* restraint.

The dimension of pragmatic *vs.* normative perception is characterized by how people perceive the condition that so much of the world around them cannot be rationally explained. In societies with a normative orientation, most people have a strong need to explain as much as possible (to find an explanation for all possible events and

developments). People in such societies genuinely concern themselves with defining the 'absolute truth', treating traditions with great respect and focusing on their continuous preservation. In turn, in societies with a pragmatic orientation, most people feel no need to explain everything, because they believe that it is impossible to fully understand the complexity of life. They demonstrate the ability to easily adapt traditions to changing circumstances, and people are characterized by their determination and perseverance in achieving their objectives (*Cultural Dimensions* ND).

The power distance dimension looks at the human level of equality in society, it indicates how distinctive the hierarchical system is and the extent to which people in institutions or organizations of lesser power accept that that power is distributed unevenly. Cooperative conduct is enabled by way of thinking that power is evenly distributed. Such a perception encourages the assumption of responsibility, courage, initiative; it promotes teamwork and collective decision-making.

The individualism-collectivism dimension characterizes culture by a loosely-knit social framework as opposed to a tightly-knit one. Individualism on the one side, and its opposite – collectivism (as a characteristic of the society rather than an individual) is an indicator of the extent to which people in society are integrated into groups (Hofstede 2011: 11). In collectivist cultures, people, from birth, are integrated into strong, united in-groups that continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Thus, independent thinking is not encouraged or supported in collectivist societies, one is required to submit to authority and fit into the group. Traditions are highly valued, and innovations are introduced very slowly. In turn, individualistic societies support an independent point of view, different opinions are accepted, and argumentation is heard out.

Hofstede developed the indulgence dimension in 2010, based on the data from the World Values Survey. It focuses on aspects that are not covered by the above-mentioned dimensions, in literature this dimension contains values known from the happiness research *(Cultural Dimensions* ND*).* In indulgent cultures that are agreeable to desires, greater importance is given to the freedom of expression and personal control while cultures that suppress desires (have restraint) have more of a pronounced helplessness with respect to personal destiny. Societies that support the gratification of desires have a greater proportion of people who consider themselves to be happy, they do not need externally defined norms, people believe that they determine their lives themselves, they are more optimistic and rely more on their own strengths. People who believe that they define their own lives, are also more active in forming and expressing their opinions, as well as defending public interests, and therefore are also focused on greater activity in the public sphere.

Which socio-demographic groups share positive attitudes to cooperative social action, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions? In order to define those groups, I used the data from "Intercultural Communication in the Business Environment:

Latvian Profile According to Hofstede's Indexes", research conducted in 2014 (Kalniņa 2016). 1,005 Latvian residents, aged 18 to 74, were surveyed in the Internet poll using the SKDS WebPanel[1] participants. The selection by quota sampling principles was shaped to represent all Latvian citizens in the target group. The respondents' quotas were set by the following parameters: gender, age, nationality and place of residence. The study used a Hofstede questionnaire (VSM 2013), which was translated into Latvian and Russian. I consider that the following criteria enable individuals to act socially: high indexes (51–100 points) of individualism, pragmatism and indulgence, and a low index (0–50 points) of power distance. Thus, the group is composed of people characterized by individualism, pragmatic perception, the ability to meet their own needs and the need for an even distribution of power. Of the surveyed 1,005 Latvian residents only five respondents met all these criteria. To expand the group of participants, the requirements were relaxed – at least three of the four conditions had to be met. 82 respondents corresponded to these requirements, around 8% of the Latvian population aged 18 to 74. Their socio-demographic profile is as follows: they are mostly people aged 35 to 44 with a higher education, entrepreneurs, in management positions and knowledge workers. There is a slight correlation with the ethnicity and the language spoken at home – there are fewer Latvians than Russians and the Russian-speaking families meet the segmentation criteria. Also, there is a lesser proportion of population that corresponds to the criteria in Kurzeme, Latgale and the rural areas. Other characteristics – gender, personal and family income – have no statistical significance (see Table 5.1).

To validate the raised assumption that pragmatism, openness to change, willingness to act, the value of taking responsibility for one's own life was expressed mainly by Latvians aged 35 to 44, with a higher education, entrepreneurs, in management positions and knowledge workers, I also summarized and analyzed other SKDS study data from 2001–2016.

[1] WebPanel – a special respondent body created for carrying out surveys online. The Research Centre SKDS has recruited WebPanel participants, employing various recruiting channels (i.e., specially arranged phone interviews, face to face interviews for other research needs etc.), which ensures diversity of participants. The WebPanel participants receive compensation for participating in the surveys. All participants, when registering in the panel, fill out a registration form, which includes various demographic and life-style questions, which are, over time, repeated, thus ensuring up-to-date data.

Table 5.1 Socio-demographic groups inclined to act socially

Socio-Demographic groups		Proportion of respondents in the group		Latvia's permanent resident statistics*
		Amount	Percentage	Percentage
Gender	Men	40	48.8	47.4
	Women	42	51.2	52.6
Age	18–24	9	11.6	12.8
	25–34	19	23.9	20.3
	35–44	29	**33.5** ⇧	18.6
	45–54	14	16.6	19.1
	55 and older	11	14.3	29.2
Ethnicity	Latvian	35	**41.7** ⇩	58.2
	Other	47	**58.3** ⇧	41.8
Language spoken at home	Latvian	38	**45.9** ⇩	59.1
	Russian	44	**54.1** ⇧	40.4
	Other	0	0	0.5
Education	Primary	4	5.1	12.6
	Secondary	10	12.2	24.6
	Professional secondary / Specialized secondary	18	22.2	36.6
	Higher	50	**60.6** ⇧	26.2
Personal monthly average income	Low	16	19.9	20.4
	Average low	24	29.8	23.1
	Average high	17	20.5	19.5
	High	19	22.7	18.7
	Undisclosed	6	7.1	18.3
Average monthly income per family member	Low	16	19.5	19.0
	Average low	18	22.1	18.9
	Average high	15	18.5	19.4
	High	16	19.1	18.8
	Undisclosed	17	20.7	23.9
Main occupation	Higher or mid-level manager	10	**11.7** ⇧	4.2
	Specialist, civil servant, non-manual labour	36	**43.4** ⇧	25.6
	Worker, working physical labour	14	16.9	26.8
	Has own company, self-employed	10	**12.7** ⇧	5.1
	Retired	2	2.6	20.2
	Student (school age, University)	5	6.5	4.8
	Homemaker, on parental leave	3	3.9	4.2
	Unemployed	2	2.3	9.3
Place of residence	Riga	29	34.9	32.3
	Other city	33	40.6	34.0
	Countryside	20	**24.5** ⇩	33.7
Region	Riga	29	34.9	31.7
	Around Riga	19	22.9	17.8
	Vidzeme	12	14.5	10.2
	Kurzeme	7	**8.1** ⇩	13.1
	Zemgale	10	13.6	12.3
	Latgale	5	**6.0** ⇩	14.9

Source: National Representative Internet Opinion Poll "Intercultural communication in the business environment: Latvian profile according to Hofstede's indexes", 2014.

Notes: Arrows indicate statistically significant differences in the allocated target group compared to the Latvia's permanent resident statistics. Arrow pointing up – statistically significant increase. Arrow pointing down – statistically significant decrease.

* The Interior Ministry of Latvia Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs Population Register data for January 21, 2013. Parameters include – gender, age, ethnicity, region. Other parameters of statistical data taken from the research center SKDS Omnibus data, summarizing the 2014 twelve month data arrays (the total number of respondents – 13,012).

5.3 Attitudes to social action in national representative opinion polls

SKDS asked questions about the openness to change, which is consistent with Hofstede's defined pragmatism dimension. Pragmatic societies are very tolerant of different interpretations of the truth, as well as flexible preservation of traditions, changing them by adapting to new conditions, and thus modernizing the implementation of traditions.

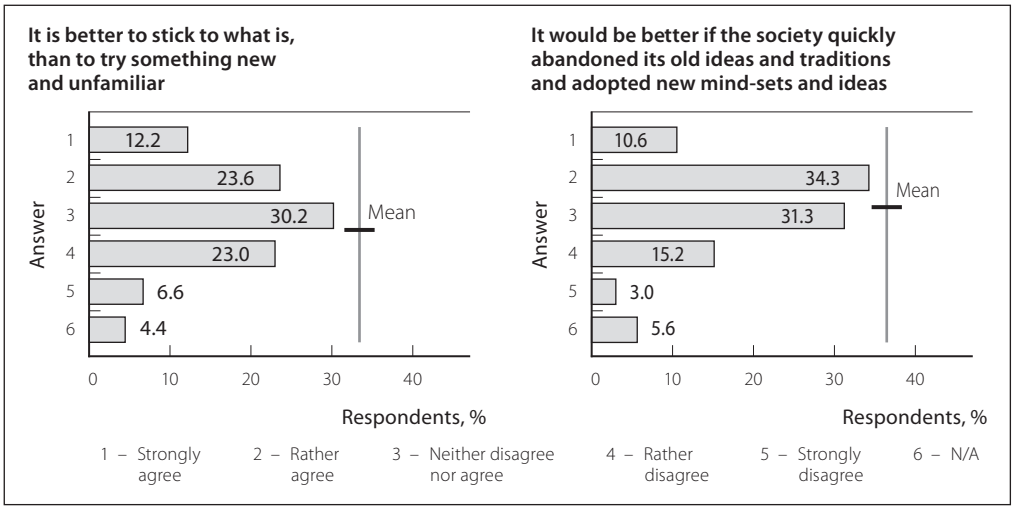
The survey respondents were able to evaluate two statements:

[1] It is better to stick to what is, than to try something new and unfamiliar.

[2] It would be better if the society quickly abandoned its old ideas and traditions and adopted new mind-sets and ideas.

Figure 5.1 shows that there is a similarity among the proportion of respondents who agree and those who do not agree with the first assertion (respectively, 23.6% and 23%). Another third of the respondents are neutral or do not express an opinion on the matter. Overall, the average marker is 3.12 points (5-point scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). This means that, in general, the respondents value sticking to the familiar, they have an unwillingness to try anything new or previously unknown. A slightly different conclusion can be drawn from evaluating the second assertion. There is slightly, but still predominantly more support for the view that it is better to adopt new ideas quickly and be more flexible in one's thinking. The mean in the five-point scale is 3.36 points.

Figure 5.1 Respondents' attitudes towards change



Source: POPULARES Latvia & SKDS, 2012.

Table 5.2 Respondents' (N = 957)[1] demographic parameters correlating with the attitude towards the statement "It is better to stick to what is, than to try something new and unfamiliar"

	Gender	Age	Family Status	Education	Ethnicity	Language spoken at home	Resident status	Main occupation	Income[2]	Place of residence[3]	Region
Pearson Correlation	–.069*	–.202**	.032	.119**	–.062	–.038	–.063	–.136**	.066*	.001	.041
Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.000	.316	.000	.055	.241	.053	.000	.042	.966	.206

Notes:

[1] analysis includes only those respondents that have provided specific answer (the answer "do not know" has not been evaluated); [2] average monthly income per family member; [3] division: Riga, other city, countryside

* moderate correlation; ** very strong correlation

Using Pearson's bivariate correlation method, data was obtained, which shows a marked correlation between the answers given to the first claim, and the respondent's age, education and occupation; moderate correlation between gender and income (see Table 5.2). Younger people, people with higher education, as well as working in leadership positions, knowledge workers and students are more open to change and innovation.

Analyzing Pearson's bivariate correlation in the results to the expressed attitude towards the statement [2] it would be better if the society quickly abandoned its old ideas and traditions and adopted new mind-sets and ideas, it is evident that there is a strong correlation with age, ethnicity and spoken language in the family, and a medium correlation with education (Table 5.3). People under the age of 34, ethnic Latvians and Latvian residents from the primarily Latvian-speaking families will more readily give up entrenched habits.

Table 5.3 Respondents' (N = 944)[1] demographic parameters correlating with the attitude towards the statement "It would be better if the society quickly abandoned its old ideas and traditions and adopted new mind-sets and ideas"

	Gender	Age	Family Status	Education	Ethnicity	Language spoken at home	Resident status	Main occupation	Income[2]	Place of residence[3]	Region
Pearson Correlation	.044	.101**	–.002	–.065*	.090**	.109**	.031	.037	–.036	–.028	–.018
Sig. (2-tailed)	.178	.002	.963	.044	.006	.001	.341	.257	.266	.384	.588

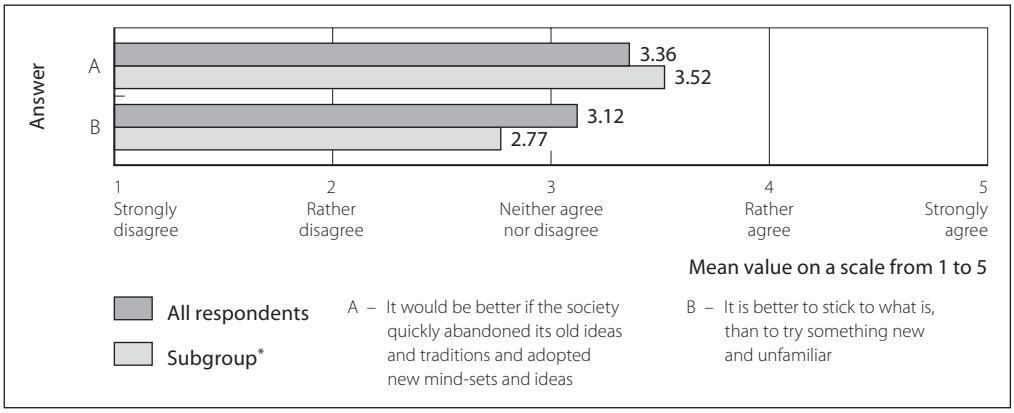
Notes:

[1] analysis includes only those respondents that have provided specific answer (the answer "do not know" has not been evaluated); [2] average monthly income per family member; [3] division: Riga, other city, countryside

* moderate correlation; ** very strong correlation

Combining the two readings, one can conclude that the respondents aged 15 to 34 years, people with higher education, leaders, self-employed workers and knowledge workers, students, as well as Latvians and Latvian-speaking families are more open to change than the rest. Summarizing the respondents with the relevant demographic characteristics, we obtain a subgroup – respondents whose answers to the above issues declare, to a greater extent, their readiness for change, and openness to new ideas and flexibility of thinking. Figure 5.2 reflects all respondents and the answers given by the subgroup.

Figure 5.2 Attitudes of all respondent groups and defined subgroup



Note: * Latvia's residents aged 15 to 34 years, people with higher education, leaders, self-employed and knowledge workers, students, as well as ethnic Latvians and Latvian-speaking families.

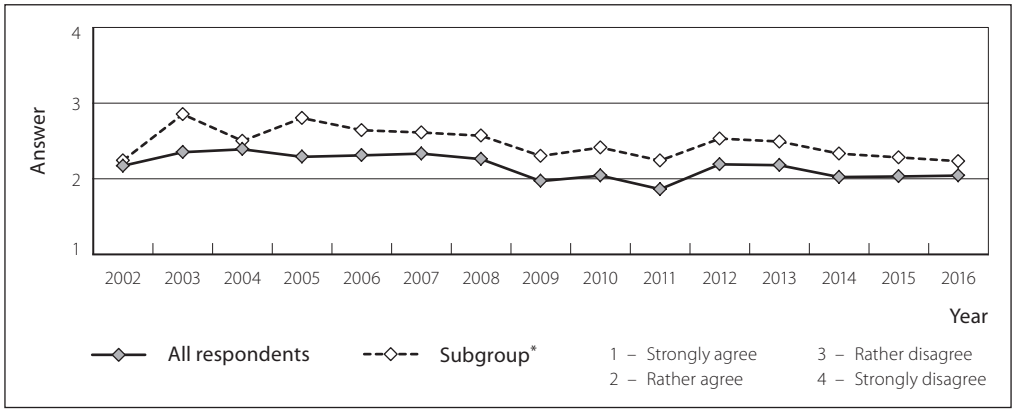
The next research objectives designated Hofstede's cultural dimension model – power distance. This dimension is correlated with the attitude towards the statement:

[3] To improve the situation in the country, Latvia needs one firm leader with extensive powers.

In the Omnibus surveys, this claim has been included every February since 2002. In general, power and inequality exist in all societies, it is normal, but in some countries this inequality is more pronounced than in others (Hofstede 2011: 9). In the societies, where the members accept the fact that some people hold more power than others, there is a clear hierarchy, and the centralization of power is popular, subordinates expect clear signals, and the words of the drivers of power are mostly undisputed. While the societies where the members support an equal dispersion of power, independence and equal rights are valued. The power is decentralized; and hierarchy is only used for convenience. Managers rely on their subordinates and team members' experience, and such a way of thinking promotes independent decision-making, initiatives and communication. Analyzing the responses to the statement [3], using Pearson's bivariate correlation method, it is possible to establish a strong correlation with the respondents' education and type of domicile. A significantly lesser number of respondents with higher education

and the residents of Riga support the opinion that Latvia needs a centralization of power. This correlation is observed in almost all successive polls (12 measurements taken from 15). Quite often we can observe the connection that the decentralization of power is mostly supported by younger people (under the age of 44), by people in management positions, self-employed workers and knowledge workers, students and people with high incomes. Figure 5.3 reflects the dynamics of the responses provided by the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup.

Figure 5.3 Attitude dynamics of the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup regarding the statement "To improve the situation in the country, Latvia needs one firm leader with extensive powers"



Note: * Rigans with a finished or unfinished university degree

The following statement correlates with Hofstede's cultural model of individualist dimension, included in surveys by SKDS since 2009.

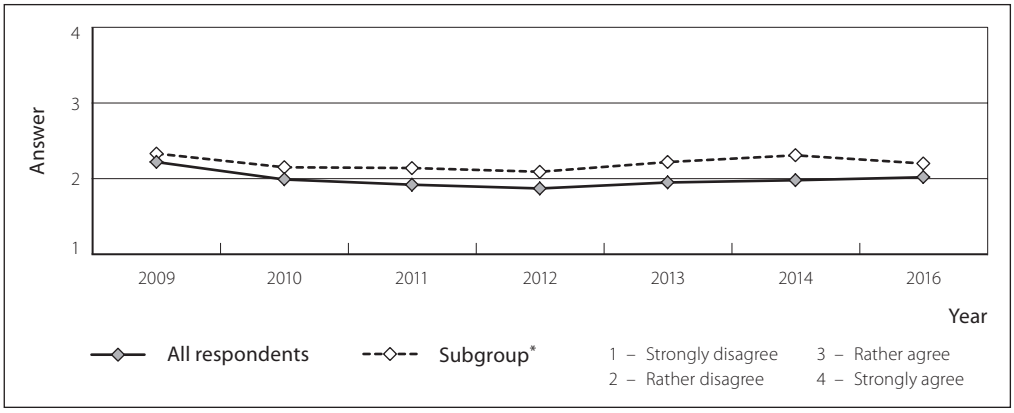
[4] The people themselves, and not the state should make sure they are secure in their old age.

Most of the respondents demonstrate values that are specific to the collective society. People want someone else (who is stronger and more able) to take care of them. In the individualistic cultures it is expected that everyone will take care of themselves and their families. The responses correlate with age, ethnicity, and status of citizenship. Younger respondents (aged 15–44), ethnic Latvians, families that primarily speak Latvian and Latvian-speaking citizens show less of the collective attitude. It should be noted that the whole of Latvian society (including the defined subgroup) is a carrier of the collectivist cultural values. This way of thinking is also determined by the fact that collectivist societies have a much less pronounced need for personal freedom, and privacy; an independent and individual point of view, its formation and expression is supported to a lesser degree. Innovations in collectivist societies are being implemented very slowly.

The responses to the survey question from the whole group of respondents, as well as the defined subgroup are presented in Figure 5.4.

The individualistic countries have high human rights figures. In the collectivist societies other people are classified as belonging to the in-group or they are foreigners (belonging to the out-group) – foreigners are seen as a threat.

Figure 5.4 Attitude dynamics of the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup regarding the statement "The people themselves, and not the state should make sure they are secure in their old age"



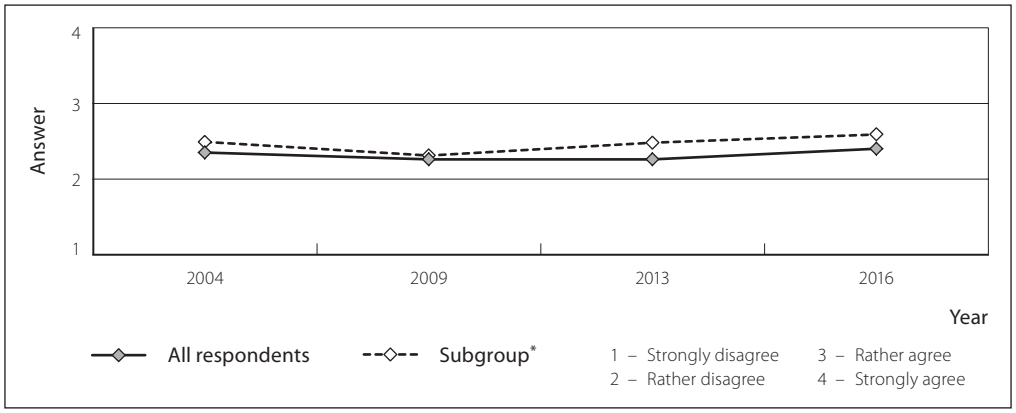
Note: * Latvia's residents aged 15–44, ethnic Latvians, Latvian speaking, citizens of Latvia. In 2015 the question was not asked.

With regards to trusting people, since 2004 SKDS has regularly asked people to assess the following claim:

[5] Generally speaking, most people can be trusted.

The study results show a relatively high level of distrust of people, which among Latvian residents, as a collective society, is inherent (Kalniņa 2015). Pearson's bivariate correlation method showed a correlation between the attitudes towards the statement of confidence and the respondents' income and education levels. It was not a very marked difference, but still it can be observed that people trust others more, if they are respondents with higher incomes and higher education levels (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 Attitude dynamics of the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup regarding the statement "Generally speaking, most people can be trusted"



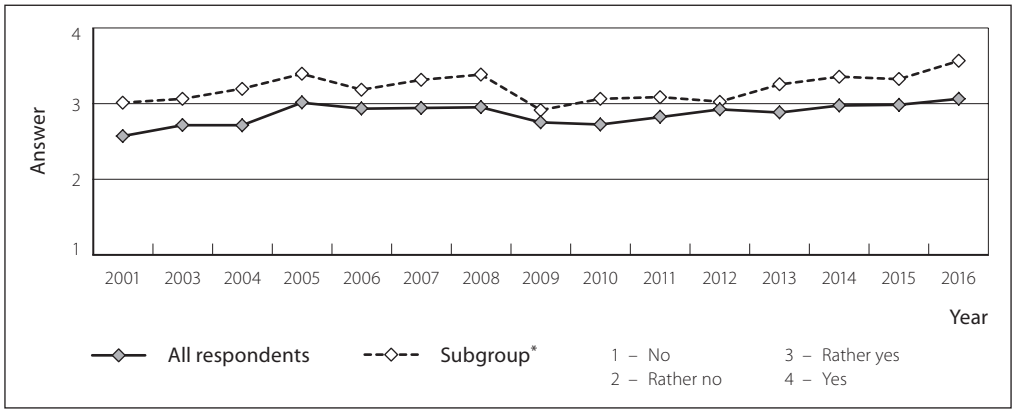
Note: * Latvia's residents with a higher education and higher income.

Hofstede's indulgence dimension, which is derived from the widely-used practice of happiness research, corresponds directly to the question:

[6] Do you feel happy overall?

Latvians under 44 years of age, ethnic Latvians, Latvian-speakers, people with higher incomes, higher education, working in leading positions, self-employed and knowledge workers, students, homemakers and Latvian citizens (Figure 5.6), in general, feel happier.

Figure 5.6 Respondents' answers to the question "Do you feel happy overall?"



Note: * Latvia's permanent residents (aged 15-44), with a higher education and a high income, ethnic Latvians, Latvian speakers, Latvian citizens, people in management positions, self-employed and knowledge workers, students, and homemakers. In 2002 this question was not asked.

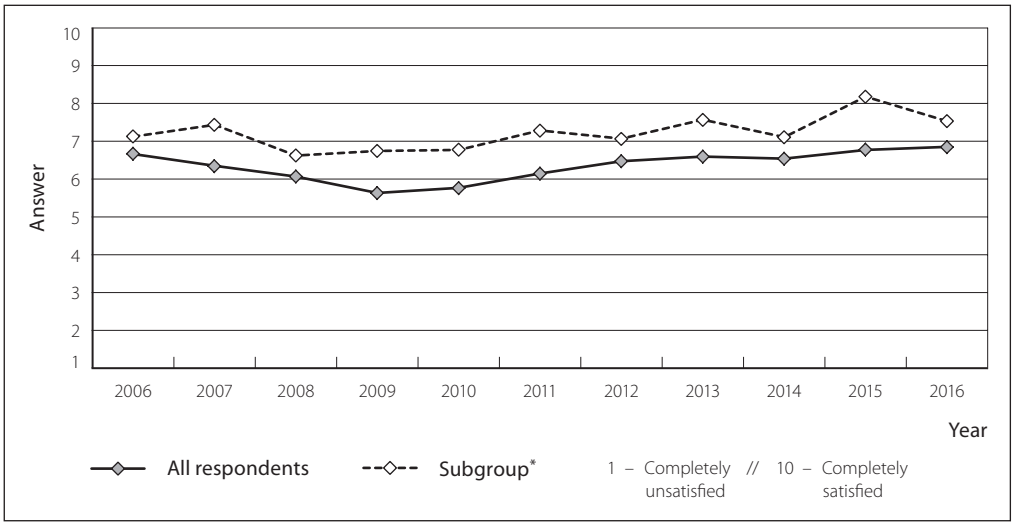
Hofstede's indulgence dimension is consistent with the question:

[7] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life in general?

It has been included in the polls since July 2006. Using bivariate Pearson's correlation method, one can see considerable differences among people of different ages and education levels, depending on their citizenship status, occupation and income (both the respondent's personal income and the average income per family member). These correlations are observed for all or almost all surveys. As a whole, younger respondents (aged 15 to 34), people with higher education, self-employed workers and knowledge workers, people in management positions and homemakers, as well as Latvian citizens and people with higher incomes are significantly more satisfied than others with their current life. In some studies, one can observe that ethnic Latvians, Latvian-speaking families, and Latvian residents are happier with their lives. Figure 5.7 reflects the dynamics of the responses provided by the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup.

I will discuss a few further answers to some questions, which are not directly linked to Hofstede's cultural model dimensions, however, they reflect the respondents' attitudes towards their willingness to express their views and to stand up for their own interests, to take responsibility for their lives, and to be active in the public sphere. Many of these issues were only included in the July 2014 survey, commissioned by the Rīga Stradiņš University.

Figure 5.7 Respondents' response to the question "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life in general?"

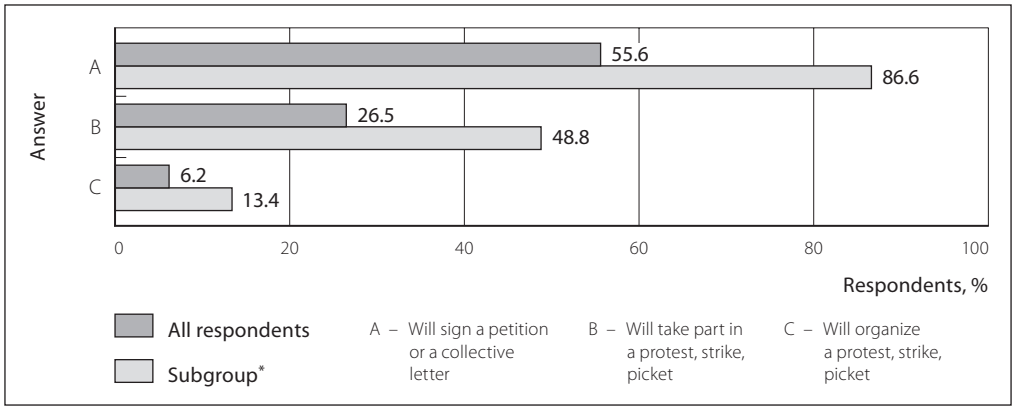


Note: * Latvia's permanent residents under 34, with a higher education and a high income, Latvian citizens, people in management positions, self-employed or knowledge workers, students and homemakers.

[8] If a decision adopted by the government or parliament would need to be influenced, which of the following would you be willing to do?

More than half of the respondents (56%) would be willing to sign a petition or a collective letter, 27% would participate in protests, strikes or pickets, only a small percentage (6%) expressed their willingness to be so susceptible as to organize some kind of political activity (Figure 5.8). Pearson's bivariate correlation method shows a correlation with the respondents' age, education, ethnicity, occupation, income and type of domicile. It is moderately expressed through the language spoken at home and the citizenship status. A greater readiness to take an active part in politics was expressed by people aged 25 to 44, with a higher education, and, similar to the above, people in management positions, specialists, self-employed workers and students, people with higher incomes, ethnic Latvians and residents of Riga. Figure 5.8 shows that almost all (87%) of the defined subgroup representatives expressed their willingness to sign a petition or a collective letter, nearly half would be willing to participate in a protest or a strike, and there is a higher than average proportion of those who expressed their willingness to organize such activities themselves.

Figure 5.8 Distribution of all respondent and subgroup answers



Note: * Latvia's permanent residents aged 25 to 44, with a higher education, people in management positions, specialists, self-employed workers and students, people with higher incomes, ethnic Latvians and residents of Riga.

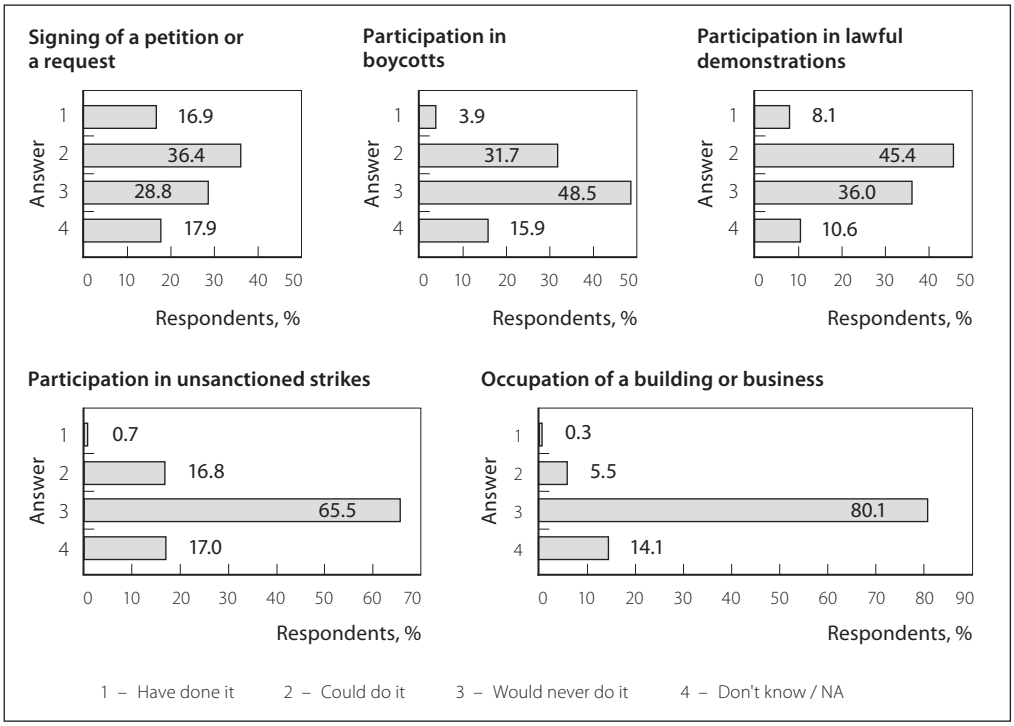
In July 2015, commissioned by the Rīga Stradiņš University, SKDS asked respondents about their willingness to act politically:

[9] Assess your readiness to take concrete political action: petitions, signing requests, participation in boycotts, participation in legitimate demonstrations, participation in unauthorized strikes and the occupation of buildings and businesses.

On average, respondents would be willing to take part in lawful demonstrations (mentioned by 45.4% of respondents, 8.1% said that they have already done so). Relatively fewer respondents are willing to sign requests and petitions, as well as participate in boycotts (respectively, 36.4% and 31.7%). The least popular response was the willingness to participate in the taking over of a building or business (Figure 5.9).

Pearson's bivariate correlation method shows a strong correlation with the respondents' level of education and occupation. Respondents with higher education support the signing of petitions and requests more as well as participation in legitimate demonstrations; while unauthorized strike, boycott and building or business occupation supporters are more likely to be a less educated citizens.

Figure 5.9 Respondents' answers to a question about readiness for political action



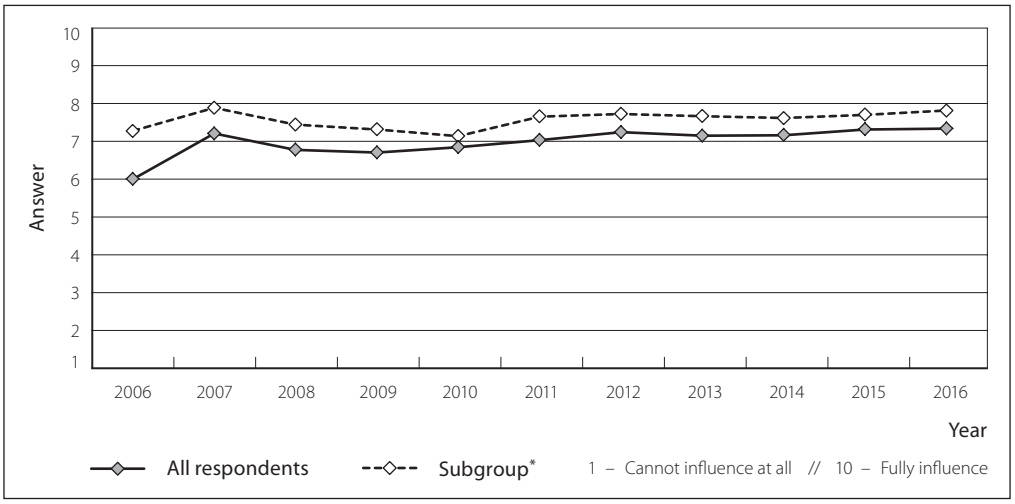
Working people are more willing to participate in boycotts and legitimate demonstrations, while a higher than average group of self-employed workers and farmers expressed their willingness to occupy buildings or businesses (here one must consider the small number of respondents who represent this group). There is a moderate correlation with gender, the main language spoken at home, income and region.

Once a year, since June 2006, SKDS has asked respondents to assess the following question:

[10] To what extent are you the decision maker of your life?

Pearson's bivariate correlation method shows that there is a significant correlation with education and main occupation – this correlation can be observed in all 11 years evaluated. In some years, the correlation is also seen in tandem with other parameters – the respondent's age, level of income and the type of domicile. A higher than average marker points to the people perceiving themselves to be the decision-makers of their lives, as people with a higher education, working in management positions, self-employed and knowledge workers. Elderly people, people with lower incomes and people living in rural areas, feel significantly less as decision-makers in their lives. Figure 5.10 illustrates the given response dynamics of the whole group of respondents, and the defined subgroup. Since the evaluation began in 2006, the number of people being the decision-makers in their own lives has increased, however marginally.

Figure 5.10 Answers to the question "To what extent are you the decision maker of your life?"



Note: * Latvia's residents with a higher education, people in management positions, self-employed workers and knowledge workers.

Once a year, since June 2010, SKDS has included the following question in its polls:

[11] Who is responsible for the fact that life is hard for many Latvians?

The answers correspond to the internal (individuals are themselves to blame) and external (unjust social system) locus of control. A greater part of respondents has an external locus of control, and this figure is relatively constant throughout the entire period of evaluation (Figure 5.11). There is a somewhat different situation among the people who work in management positions, as well as farmers and the self-employed. Answers to this question correlate well with the level of income. The higher the income, the more people find themselves responsible for their own life. In some years there was a small correlation with the gender of the respondents – men voiced more responsibility for their lives.

Figure 5.11 Distribution of answers of all respondents and the subgroup, in response to the question of the locus of control

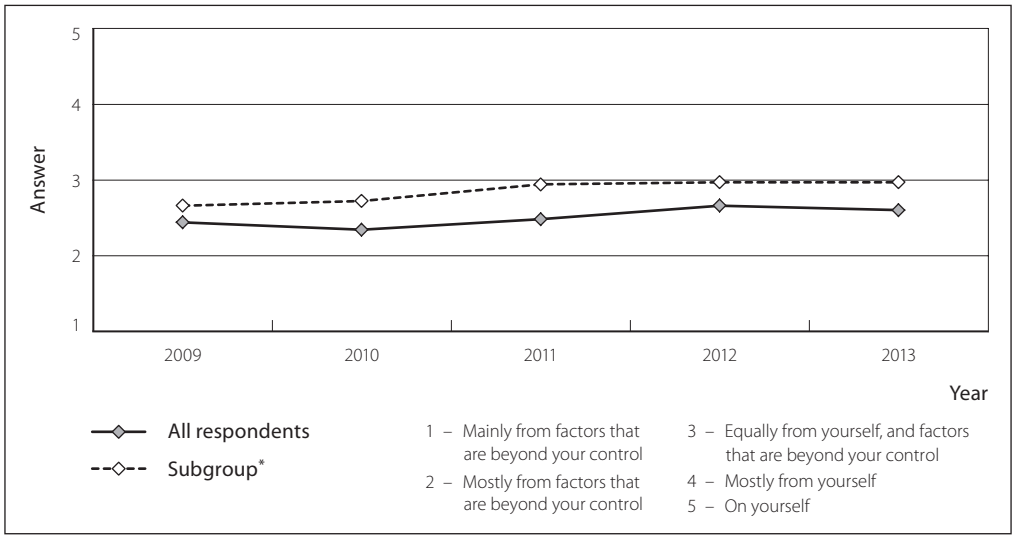
Note: * Latvia's residents with a high incomes, people in management positions, farmers and self-employed workers.

In 2009–2013 Research Center SKDS asked Latvian residents a question, which also reflects their willingness to take responsibility for their own life:

[12] What is the material status of a respondent more dependent on at this moment: from people themselves, their efforts, qualifications, diligence, or from external factors, which are not dependent on the people themselves (the overall situation in the country, the world, circumstances, successes, their supervisors, public officials, etc.)?

There is a significant predominance of the view that external factors, rather than the person himself is responsible for his material well-being (Figure 5.12). In 2010–2012 there was a noticeable tendency for the indicator to change slightly in the direction of greater accountability, but in 2013 the index fell again. Pearson's bivariate correlation method shows a strong correlation with age, educational level and occupation.

Figure 5.12 Respondents' answers to the question: "What do you think your material status depends on more, at the moment – on your own or external factors?"



Note: * Latvia's residents aged 15-44 years, higher education, managers, individual and intelellectual work

People under 44, with a higher education, in management positions, self-employed workers and knowledge workers, to a greater extent than the average, take charge of their own material well-being. The summary of research data from the entire group of respondents, as well as the subgroup is shown in Figure 5.12.

5.4 Conclusion

All information used for this study is summarized in Table 5.4: survey questions, study investigators, the year of the survey and the number of measurements made. Gathering all the data, it is evident that the correlation is expressed by the following parameters: age, education and occupation, and moderate income (Table 5.5). The table should not be read as a diachronic representation of attitudes change across socio-demographic groups.

Compiling and analyzing the secondary data, it can be concluded that positive attitudes to cooperative social action (operationalized in this research as pragmatism, openness to change, readiness to act, taking on the responsibility of one's own life and the good of the society as a whole) are mainly shared by Latvians under the age of 44, with a higher education, in management positions, self-employed and knowledge workers. The representatives of these demographics demonstrate a greater readiness for change, are more open to new ideas and flexible thinking. They support the decentralization of power, to a lesser degree, have a more pronounced need for personal freedom, privacy, and support the formation and expression of personal opinion more.

Table 5.4 Information used for this study

No	The study / question / statement formulation in the survey / study	Conducted by	Year	No of measurements
1	"Intercultural communication in the business environment: Latvian profile according to Hofstede's indexes".	Kalniņa	2014	1
2	It is better to stick to what is, than to try something new and unfamiliar.	POPULARES	2012	1
3	It would be better if the society quickly abandoned its old ideas and traditions and adopted new mind-sets and ideas.	POPULARES	2012	1
4	If a decision adopted by the government or parliament would need to be influenced, which of the following would you be willing to do?	RSU	2014	1
5	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life in general?	SKDS	2006–2016	11
6	Please assess, to what extent are you the decision maker of your life?	SKDS	2006–2016	11
7	To improve the situation in the country, Latvia needs one firm leader with extensive powers.	SKDS	2002–2016	15
8	Do you feel happy overall?	SKDS	2001, 2003–2016	15
9	The people themselves, and not the state should make sure they are secure in their old age.	SKDS	2009–2014, 2016	7
10	Generally speaking, most people can be trusted.	SKDS	2004, 2009, 2013, 2016	4
11	I will read some forms of political action. Tell me for each of them, whether you've ever partaken in such an activity, could or would never, under any circumstances, participate.	RSU	2015	1
12	Considering that many suffer in Latvia (i.e., high levels of poverty, unemployment, etc.), who, from the below-mentioned examples is responsible for this fact?	SKDS	2010–2016	7
13	What do you think your material status depends on more, at the moment – on your own or external factors?	SKDS	2009–2013	5

The members of this group trust people more, feel happier overall and are noticeably more satisfied with their current life than others. They express a greater readiness to stand for their interests, to take on the responsibility for their lives, to actively participate in public activities and express a greater readiness to act for the interests of the whole society and participate in political processes. They consider themselves to be the decision-makers in their own lives, to a greater degree than others; they consider themselves responsible for the events in their lives and take on responsibility over their material wellbeing. The other social-demographic parameters – gender, ethnicity, place of residence, type of domicile, main language spoken at home or the size of the family – have no statistical significance in their influence on the study results.

Table 5.5 Summary of correlating demographic factors

No*	Gender	Age	Education	Ethnicity	Language spoken at home	Citizen-ship	Main occupa-tion	Income	Place of residence	Region
1		XX	XX	X	X		XX		X	X
2	X	XX	XX				XX	X		
3		XX	X	XX	XX					
4		XX	XX	XX	X	X	X	XX	XX	
5		XX	XX	X	X	X	XX	XX		
6		X	XX				XX	X	X	
7		X	XX				X	X	XX	X
8		XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX		
9		XX		XX	XX	XX				
10			XX					XX		
11	X		XX		X		XX	X		X
12	X						XX	XX		
13		XX	XX				XX	X		
Total**		XX	XX				XX	X		

Notes: X – moderate correlation; XX – strong correlation.

* No – number of study / question / statement.

** The determination of the total was constructed by the following formula:

1) the factor has a moderate correlation, if its proportion of reference is 34–66%;
2) the factor has a strong correlation, if its proportion of reference is 67–100%.

If the factor in some parameters has had a moderate correlation, the relevant measurement is then assigned the coefficient 0.5, with a strong correlation – coefficient 1.

Example:

Age: $\frac{0.5 \times 2 + 1 \times 8}{13} \times 100\% = 69.23\% \rightarrow$ Strong correlation

Income: $\frac{0.5 \times 5 + 1 \times 5}{13} \times 100\% = 57.69\% \rightarrow$ Moderate correlation

In the references to the 'inhabitants of Latvia' in government documents, society is seen as a homogeneous. However, the data shows that, when looking at the respondents' attitudes towards social action, society should be viewed as heterogeneous. The attitudes of various socio-demographic group members are distinctly different. The Latvian government policy documents stress the importance of personality characteristics such as the acknowledgment of values, and the feeling of belonging as preconditions for cooperative conduct. This research suggests that the position of an individual in the social economic structure (described by age, education and main occupation) correlates with a positive attitude to social action. The positive attitudes, however, are not realized in the observed conduct. The reasons of social passivity, I would suggest, should be investigated on the structural level in terms of the availability of roles and resources enabling action.

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6 Civil Society in Action: The Professional Organizations of Medical Doctors

Aija Kažoka

6.1 Introduction

Diāna Kalniņa, in Chapter Five outlined sociodemographic characteristics of Latvians who acknowledge the importance of social change and express a positive attitude to social action. In this paper I analyze the social action of medical doctors who fit the characteristics mentioned by Kalniņa well: all of them have a higher education, many of them hold management positions and are entrepreneurs in state or private owned institutions, run their own business (self-employed), and / or perform intellectual work. Moreover, by virtue of a strong social organization this professional group qualifies as a corporate agent which, according to Margaret Archer (2000), can articulate its interests and act collectively exercising corporate influence in decision-making or reshaping structures.

Professional associations – the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) – have a well-organized network totaling 122 affiliates. All medical practitioners are members of a professional association, as they offer medical certification and distance learning. The state has delegated doctor certification and re-certification functions to the Latvian Medical Association, and this motivates all major professional healthcare associations and societies to operate under the umbrella of the Association. In addition to this, doctors also engage in other professional advocacy organizations, such as the Latvian Hospital Association, Latvian Association of Health Economics, Latvian Health and Social Care Workers Union. There is a strong connection between sectoral doctors and patient associations. For example, *Papardes zieds* works with questions of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Latvia and abroad, the Latvian Diabetes Federation unites the permanent diabetes associations of Latvia's regions and cities, and aside from various patient-representing and informative activities, it issues the magazine *Saule*.

Four professional healthcare magazines are published in Latvia (*Latvijas Ārsts, Medicus Bonus, Doctus, Materia Medica*) and four popular health-related magazines

with a wide audience (from 3 to 12 thousand subscribers).[1] All organizations actively participate in public policy discussions on healthcare and development using medical journals to shape public opinion.

Doctors got involved in politics in the early years of rebuilding the country. From 1991 to 2017, there were 29 members of parliament (MPs) with a medical degree, three more represented health sciences and six had a basic medical education. Surgeon Valdis Zatlers was the President of Latvia from 2007 to 2011, anesthesiologist Gundars Daudze was the speaker of parliament (2007–2010) and the vice-speaker (2010–2011, 2014–now). Professional medical staff have led and managed the Ministry of Health, leaving it in the hands of non-medics for only three years – 2004 to 2007.

General socialization contributes to the social capital of the professional groups: graduate medical education can be attained at the Rīga Stradiņš University, founded in 1950, as the Rīga Medical Institute. The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Latvia was established in 1919, eliminated in the Soviet times, but reinstated in 1997. Social capital should encourage communication of the health professionals' CSO with legislative institutions, thanks to the doctor-MPs. However, the weak healthcare policies point to problems in civil communication. Three-quarters (76%) of Latvians think that the healthcare system does not meet their needs, most often referring to the high cost of medical services (71%) and medication (69%), as well as to the lack of funding (63%) (DNB Latvian Barometer 2015). Only 1% of respondents believed that the healthcare system has no problems. One in three (30%) respondents voiced the fact that medical personnel receive very low wages. Remuneration deficiency causes not only the protests of medical staff, but is also conducive to the loss of doctors from in-patient hospitals and even emigration.

Experts estimate that, compared to other countries, Latvia shows excess illness rate and mortality in four areas: cardiovascular diseases, cancer, mental health and maternal and perinatal health (World Bank 2016). Experts draw attention to social exclusion and poverty of the people at risk. Solving these problems does not depend

[1] *Ievas Veselība* is the most influential magazine devoted to health, and its editor-in-chief received a Latvian Medical Association annual prize nomination for the Person of the Year in Public Health in 2016. *Ievas Veselība* covers a wide range of topics on health, placing great emphasis on the appeal, visual appearance and contemporary opinions, making an effort to attract younger audiences. *36,6* has positioned itself as a magazine for everyone looking for ways to live healthier lives, a large portion of the magazine is taken up by patient experience and emotional stories of fate. *Ko ārsti tev nestāsta* is the Latvian version of the UK publication *What doctors don't tell you,* and focuses on an alternative approach to medicine and warnings of treatment side-effects. All these magazines also issue thematic special editions. Similarly, the Latvian media system has many websites dedicated to healthcare (such as medicine.lv, rutks.lv, vesela.la.lv etc.). Television and radio programs in the field of specialized health programs have not resulted in success. Besides, doctors' associations also issue their own occasional newsletters, and companies and public organizations publish free materials on health and preventive measures. Latvia also has niche-based magazines, which mainly focus on home remedies.

solely on government action, but also requires civil society initiatives. For example, the Association of Latvian Journalists Excellence Award 2016 nominees included contributors to the project "The Twighlight Zone of Psychiatry", whose accomplishments in drawing attention to mental health is directly linked to the key problems.

Doctors debate the problems in the healthcare system and the need for reform as well, expressing views not only in the professional setting, but also in the media. Latvian Physicians' Association President Pēteris Apinis (2017) sums it up: "Healthcare reform is not just an issue for the Ministry of Health, but for the whole country, and needs a political agreement".

Hereinafter I will note, firstly, how professional organization leaders articulate healthcare deficiencies, what paths these organizations choose to include issues into the political agenda. Secondly, I will examine how doctor-MPs articulate these problems in the political field.

6.2 Professional medical CSOs

I have ascertained practitioner perceptions about their ability to influence healthcare policies through semi-structured interviews with eight doctors – professional medical association board members and representatives of public patient organizations. I selected the respondents based on the study, which was conducted in the framework of the EU-funded project "NGO expertise in the development of health policy" (2012), which defined the main public health problems in Latvia as follows:

- Cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and other problems caused by lifestyle;
- Women's and children's health, particularly regarding complications during pregnancy and childbirth;
- Health among young people aged 15–26, particularly regarding sexually-transmitted diseases;
- Infectious diseases.

For the interviews, representatives were selected from hospitals and departments of cardiology, oncology, diabetes, gynecology, sexually-transmitted diseases, and infectiology and general practitioner associations, as well as patient association board members and executives. All the surveyed professionals were practicing doctors. The semi-structured interviews addressed the following subjects and range of issues:

- An overview of the development of the industry since the 1990s, the respondents' views of the problems in the sector, the importance of political solutions to conflict resolution, public communication tactics with an aim to include the problem into the political agenda;
- Communication with professional doctors as legislative and executive body members, the significance of professional doctors as politicians and public confidence in them.

The interviews took place at the end of 2015 in the respondents' workplaces. The respondents are referred to in the text by the designation R1–R8.

All interviewees outlined their main problems in the field, the answers to which depend on political solutions; they admit that they struggle to raise awareness of these problems or to gain political support and resolutions. The association leaders do not consider political influence an appropriate professional organization activity, but name professional development and organizing trainings as a key. The professional organization leaders do not realize the potential of civil society in changing the system, assuming change occurs outside of the practitioner's influence. Draft laws in the Latvian parliament, the Saeima, are adopted through three readings, but initiation of legislative ideas may come from non-governmental organizations. The Saeima also performs a parliamentary control of the government's daily work, and the government, and each individual minister is politically accountable to the Saeima.

Thus, the structure of political institutions suggests that the Saeima is an effective instrument to propose ideas for systemic change in healthcare. However, of the eight CSOs, only the Latvian Oncology Association upholds contact with the parliament, the rest resolve their professional problems through the Ministry of Health, believing that the political center of power lies with the executive branch. The job for the Ministry is to develop and implement a national policy to safeguard public health by creating conditions for citizens to receive cost-effective, accessible and quality healthcare services. Thus, the parliament as a legislative power should be considered a more efficient institution to which the professional medical CSOs could propose ideas for systemic change in healthcare.

Seven medical association leaders believe the most effective type of communication is direct personal contact with the Minister of Health or the Ministry officials. In terms of civil service efficiency, the medical association executives in most cases understand this to be the National Health Service (*Nacionālais veselības dienests – NVD*), which is a subordinate authority to the Ministry of Health. *NVD* functions include the administration of the state budget resources intended for healthcare, but it does not make political decisions. The medical CSOs do not see their own potential in implementing change in the healthcare system through political means. The CSO leaders acknowledge that the parliament expresses interest in the problems of the field. The Saeima calls for the associations to express their views on draft legislation, but the associations perceive such consultations as a formality.

> If they [MPs] want to raise their ratings, then they give us a call – they want to help us solve some problem. Then we meet somewhere, chat, drink coffee and they deal with it – but in fact the solution [gesture that expresses the inexistence of a solution]. (R1)

The medical CSOs do not invite MPs or Ministry representatives to their meetings, even when examining significant healthcare issues. One of the respondents

perceives the doctor–practitioner participation as illustrative: doctors are summoned to political debates only selectively so that they could approve a specific point of view. The doctor believes that the opinions of specialists are strong political arguments in the rhetoric of MPs, as thus "[they can justify] their opinions with medical arguments – it's not because I think so, it's because it is so" (R2). The formal manner of consultation is incorporated into the procedures for public participation in the development-planning process; the weaknesses of this procedure are discussed in Chapter 1.4.5.

The respondents mention a range of reasons why they think communication with the MPs is not a productive means of solving problems in the sector. They believe that it is impossible to influence the parliamentary majority, that a professional's comments have no influence on decision-making. Doctors are confused by the formal attitude of politicians: practitioners' views and needs are heard at meetings, but recommendations are not considered. "We always seemingly receive an understanding response. But nothing changes". (R3)

None of the CSOs use doctor-MPs as mediators in this exchange, believing that their colleagues' contribution is negligible.

> We have quite a few doctors as politicians, but healthcare has not significantly changed from the mid 90's. (R4)

> We already had one happenstance where the parliament had ten doctors. The parliamentary speaker was a doctor. And the country's president was a doctor. And what did we get? Nothing. (R1)

To the question of cooperation with colleagues in the parliament, doctors respond negatively: "What do we need from them? There's nothing there". (R4) Yet, the question as to how should the MPs learn about problems in the sector, caused surprise:

> Yes, indeed – how can he find out if I do not turn to him – you asked a good question. Interesting. I have so far come to believe, that, nevertheless, well, let's say, this decision, if the minister does not have this political will, then nothing will happen anyway. Why don't we work with them? I don't know. But it wouldn't be wrong to try. (R5)

One respondent reveals that she has not made use of her colleagues, but believes that it is important to talk about medical issues publicly in the media, she also emphasizes the manner of presentation, the importance of expression, and the ability to confidently express one's opinions: "I just speak in a way that I am heard." (R2) An Oncology Association representative acknowledges that, although in 2015 – the year of Oncology, cooperation with individual MPs had been a regular practice, "it was not done deliberately", however, he sees the potential of this collaboration: "We have not deliberately sought out doctors to make the addressing of these issues easier. But it could be considered."

The respondents' attitudes toward doctors in the parliament are somewhat contradictory. On the one hand the advantage of a medical education is highlighted: it not only grants the exclusive right to judge the laws of health, but it is also useful for the public administration in general.

> I think that doctors are people who have one of the best educations, considering the years they have spent in training. Well, they are also among the more intelligent strata of society – they should be in the parliament. (R7)

Five of eight interviewees said that during elections they strongly support the doctors running as parliamentary candidates, adding pluses beside their colleagues' names. On the other hand, in response to specific questions about cooperation with the elected colleagues in the parliament, respondents are very skeptical: "It is naive to imagine that if someone is a doctor, he can go out and influence the decisions of the Saeima." (R7) The opportunities of colleagues to influence decisions in politics are assessed as low and practicing doctors do not see any pragmatic sense in participating in decision-making. The function of doctor-politicians is reduced to organizing meetings with major officials of the government. Doctors in parliamentary roles are deemed peculiar interpreters "it's good if there is someone on the other side who understands what it means – [medical] terminology and so on. That is essential" (R3). One respondent mentioned Romualds Ražuks' work in the commission as a positive example of cooperation; he procured additional funds for hepatitis C patients (R6).

When talking about politics in general, respondents highlighted the quality of medical education and its usefulness in the public administration, when talking specifically about the political activities of doctors, there have been visible efforts to exclude people from the positively esteemed in-groups. Turning to politics is linked to a 'full halt' in the professional field.

> Some think that they will change something for the better. Some, it seems to me, have not found their rightful place in medicine. The third lot – are perhaps propelled by other characteristics. (R6)

This highlights that a return to medicine after a political career has ended is difficult or even impossible; the respondents value activities in practical medicine higher. In response to the question about the education of the Minister of Health, the answers are varied. There is an argument that the minister must have a medical degree, because of the specific nature of the industry and the sensitivity regarding fundamental decision-making.

> [In medicine] you can't do everything mechanically– it's not just mathematics after all. Doctors will never make such rash motions as an accountant might. Doctors assess possible complications and side effects. Let's try it like this, let's try it like that – you can't do that in medicine, everything must be considered, all deviations must be done very slowly, you can't just cut like you want. (R4)

One respondent considers joint educational and practical experience an important factor, thus the doctor-minister would represent the industry's front-line doctors. Yet, in the practicing medics' point of view, although special education is required for the leader of the sector's ministry, it should be supplemented with studies in other areas. Allowing the possibility that the minister might not be a doctor, the respondents mentioned a doctor-advisor as mandatory. Later, though, one interviewee explains that doctors also need counsel. For example, endocrinology, or the diabetes patient care 'are very specific things' and medical education in one area may not provide an understanding of the problems in another. Thus, when making political decisions in these areas, one needs a specialist advice as well.

Two respondents state that the industry minister should not be a doctor, emphasizing the organizational side of this work as a key, and marking the common education and practice and acquired corporate relations as a disruptive element. Almost all the respondents named Gundars Bērziņš as the most successful minister of health, whose specialization was mechanical engineering. His most important contribution to the health sector proved to be his successful collaboration with his People's Party-led Ministry of Finance, through which he secured a significant increase in the budget for medicine.

Thus, the medical CSOs do not use the parliamentary route to make changes to the healthcare sector. The respondents do not consider the colleagues involved in the Saeima work as a powerful political force, do not use their representation and are dissatisfied with their activities regarding sectoral problems. The second conclusion from the interviews is the attitude towards medical education: it is an important affirmative self-identifying factor in professional groups. Though the respondents could not attest to it playing a positive role in the communication of medical CSOs with colleagues that hold positions in legislative and executive institutions.

6.3 Doctors' language of power

Through the eight interviews with the medical CSO leaders, problems, which required or still require a political solution, were defined. For example, the transition to invasive cardiology, references for the introduction of a medicinal products system, the smaller structure unification and the creation of a unified Oncology Centre, functioning of the 'Green Corridor', laboratory test procedures, home-care arrangements for patients with diabetes, queues at the endocrinologists, diabetes complications and insulin injections, the amounts of patient co-payments, maternal mortality, reproductive health, the prevalence of hepatitis C, the development of the capitation model, and the hospital-level organization. Does the Saeima agenda include doctors that have chosen political careers, in deliberating these issues, and how? I will determine this by analyzing the Saeima agenda with an on-line tool: saeima.korpuss.lv/. The speeches

can be found through the problems, named in the interviews, characterized by key words (i.e., 'green corridor', 'C hepatitis', 'hospital-level').

From 1993 to 2015, Saeima MPs have, in total, taken the podium 2170 times, to discuss healthcare problems; 15% or 319 of these speeches were made by the MPs with a medical degree (Table 6.1). Generally, doctor-politicians actively debate on topical problems in the Latvian medical industry. In 22 years, doctors have spoken from the parliamentary podium 11,000 times, in every fourth speech touching upon the areas analyzed in this study. So, the views of professionals are voiced in these debates, but how convincing are they?

'Modern' power in democratic societies manipulates and persuades instead of forcing, thus the discourse plays a key role in 'building consent' in society (van Dijk 2008: 66). Doctors have a professionally developed discursive practice in communicating with patients, and they could use this practice to convince other decision-makers in parliament. Teun van Dijk (2008) described the doctor's dialogue with a patient as the language of power, and he does not think that power can only be interpreted as something 'bad'. Power can be targeted to have a neutral and positive outcome, such as a child's upbringing, through protection (police) or in curing patients. This means that society cannot do without relations of legitimized power and domination. Is a doctor's discursive power in the hospital an asset in the doctor's political communication? In his book *Discourse and Power*, van Dijk discusses the power of medical discourse in detail and I will use his proposed method to analyze doctor-MPs in Latvia's Saeima, to assess whether it is focused on building consent.

Seen from the position of the language of power, the medical profession fits into the so-called 'assistive' profession. With this 'assistive' form, a function of control comes about in action and speech, thus doctors' and patients' conversations are marked by the presence of power, explains van Dijk.

Table 6.1 Speeches in parliament in the medical areas analyzed in this study, 1993–2015

No	Speciality	Amount of speeches by ministry deputies or representatives	Speeches by doctors	
			Amount	%
1	Hospitals	975	141	14
2	General practitioners	333	63	19
3	Gynecology	203	51	25
4	Sexually transmitted diseases	91	17	19
5	Infectiology	85	16	19
6	Oncology	84	13	15
7	Cardiology	49	10	20
8	Diabetes	40	8	20
	Total for eight specialties	1,860	319	15
	Total speeches overall	227,954	10,996	5

The social asymmetry between a doctor and a patient can be expressed through gender roles (such as, male doctors in relation to female patients often use a type of discourse that is 'friendly persuasion'), thus upkeeping a disbalance in the exchange of information (doctors initiate questions, cause question-answer sessions, while patients are too shy to ask questions). Qualitative and quantitative studies show that therapists, regarding their patients, practically take on a 'role of God', they treat their patients as beings who 'do not need to be questioned' and to whom there is no reason to ask anything. The discursive dominance of doctors is characterized by the term 'biomedical voice'. That is, the doctor's attention is centered on biomedical aspects, which, in turn, prevents them from fully understanding the concerns and complaints of the patient. In shutting out patient complaints, doctors often use irony, and incomprehensible (to the patient) technical language. In turn, when assessing the medical language forms in hospitals, it was determined that professionals in hospital admission departments use the language of power and act as bodyguards. When debating in the parliament, doctor-MPs used almost all medical language of power techniques defined by van Dijk, discursively creating asymmetrical relationships that are not conducive to building consent.

Hiding control with expressions of 'assistance'. A form of 'assistance' can be a useful instrument, to point to a represented group's (professional or party affiliation) desire to help, thus highlighting its affiliation with the ethical in-group category. 'We' as a helping power and 'our' assistance can be a direct argument in making a decision.

> And our requirement is for all Latvian citizens to feel safe, when they need assistance, they will also receive this assistance. (Circene, 29 June 2009)

The discourse on assistance can be manifested in parliament, highlighting the importance of representing professional groups, and emphasizing the group's inherent particular ethical factor. This is achieved by using the word 'help' to describe this assistance, for example, saying "you can't do your job properly, without the nurse's helping hands" (Circene, 16 September 2004) or claiming that medics work at several workplaces "not only to earn a basic livelihood, but also to ensure the work of these hospitals" (Circene, 14 November 2008).

It is relevant to point out that one can also appeal for 'assistance', every MP present, most likely, sooner or later will need, or might have already received, this help "one MP's life has been saved by coronary angioplasty" (Apinis, 10 December 1996).

The doctors' **use of technical language** during consultive discourse with patients infringes the patients' freedom and ability to make decisions. Doctors in parliament, creating unobjectionable arguments, use a similar tactic. Medical terminology, for example, a string of disease names, will not be comprehensible for non-doctor MPs, thus restricting them from participating in the debates. Even when supposedly explaining the manifestations of a particular disease and its various treatment options, the use of technical language is incomprehensible to a layperson, forcing one to rely on the expertise of the speaker.

> This is Turner's syndrome. 18 girls whose karyotype is 45,X0 and which are mentally fit usually do not grow more than 120–140 centimeters in height, and they need about five doses of growth hormones per day. (Apinis, 27 November 1997)

However, doctors use data more often than specialized medical terms, the rationale of which is not clarified in the framework of the speech and is based solely on the speaker's authority. The pace of occurrence for the disease and its link with the processes of illness is based on a representative reference implicating that the audience is content with the speaker's special 'knowledge' as someone with a medical education.

> We know that when assessing dental conditions, we can assess the health of the whole body. Out of this comes heart disease, rheumatism, chronic infection and hence long-term chronic diseases, which often lead to oncological diseases. (Ozoliņš, 21 April 1997)

> Latvia has research programs consistent with the global level, based on molecular genetics research foundations. Today patients are already being treated for cancer, diabetes, hemophilia, phenylketonuria, and even myocardial infarction. (Ražuks, 26 June 2001)

The specialized knowledge and guidelines irrelevantly intertwine with everyday statements. The use of technical language may also manifest as equal strings of terms with a conceptually small, but verbally spectacular effect.

> There are many serious diseases that arise from indirectly inhaled smoke… Tobacco smoke is toxic, pharmacologically active, mutagenic and carcinogenic. (Ģīlis, 16 December 2004)

The discursive dominance, which a doctor uses in consultation with a patient, has obtained the designation **'biomechanical voice'**. The doctor's concentration only on the medical aspects prevents the patient from expressing what she, in her position, sees as the main problem, which is why everything the doctor says is 'lost in translation'. These sorts of manifestations of speech can often be encountered in the parliament, though they are uniform. The flow of speech is monotonous, with a thick layer of fact, well-justified, with relevant reasoning, but during the speech the perception of the link between the problem and daily and real life is lost, along with the listener's attention, which is exhausted and broken.

Van Dijk notes that doctors often use **irony** to fend off patients' complaints. In parliamentary discourse, the direct reference to the opponent's mistakes is also a common case-scenario, where irony is frequently used.

> After such a passionate speech by the health minister I, of course, have two handkerchiefs with me, but really, it's difficult to control myself… (Saulītis, 21 December 1995)

> After Bojārs's presentation, it seems that distressful things are occurring in this country. (Vidiņš, 1 June 2000)

Professional superiority and appropriate strong identification with professional groups can be noted in a whole lot of examples of irony use in the parliamentary discourse among doctor-politicians. Doctors are ironic in admonishing the non-doctor MPs, when they speak about medical topics, 'misappropriating' healthcare (such as – medical education) related discourse. Doctors often scorn their fellow MPs' limited knowledge, 'amicably indicating' that they can provide advice as well as offering their professional assistance as a medical solution to governmental problems implicitly mocking the opponents – the causes of the problem (in these examples there is an overlap with 'friendly admonition').

> In order to know how to vote, I suggest that you, dear colleagues, call your general practitioner and find out what his opinion is. (Orlov, 30 January 2003)

Irony often appears in doctors' speeches, and it overlaps and fuses with other dominance techniques of medical language, such as the style of '**friendly persuasion**'. Bordering with intonations of "helpfulness", the speaker offers to 'help' understand the question.

> I understand that Mr. Saulītis and Ms. Kreituse, who are not in our committee, might not fully comprehend this or they might not have read the law in its entirety, but it was explained to Ms. Kušnere, who is in the committee. I repeat… (Jurdžs, 1 October 1997)

> Thanks to my two honorable colleagues. They defended their points of view with such dignity… You will still be able to purchase alcohol all day… You will still be able to go to pubs and discos and consume your favorite alcoholic beverage there. But… (Apinis, 28 February 2002)

The doctor-patient conversation is usually institutionalized and is strengthened by the healthcare system. In the parliamentary discourse, the implementation of **the institutional 'guard' function** can also be observed, though applicable more to the upkeep of a systemic 'guard' function and the reference to the system and its permanence as a value. Questions of the improvement of material status among professional groups can be viewed within the framework of system maintenance, bringing in aspects of hazard and safety of state in the system maintenance and improvement argumentation. Thus, the healthcare system can be strengthened as a system within the system. In the case of institutional or parliamentary discourse, the system's 'guard' function manifestations in the language of power, are closely tied to the doctor-MP identification with professional groups. Besides, the professional group's interests are aligned with the interests of society as a whole.

> Here the case is presented in such a way as if all of it was necessary for medicine, that the medical professionals, doctors, need those extra 23.7 Lats. I think, it would be more accurate to say that this increase is not just desirable for the health professionals, or doctors, but for our nation. (Kalnbērzs, 15 February 1996)

> I invite you to trust in an honest man, the good doctor. In Latvia, coincidentally, we have a doctor as the President, a doctor as the Mayor of Riga and a doctor might also become the Speaker of the Saeima. There, such a request has now been raised. Thank you! (Strazdiņš, 24 September 2007)

Indication of speech imperfection types. The male-doctor dialogue characterizes this language of power characteristic in the doctor-patient discourse with vulnerable patient groups, as well as in the doctor and student communication style. The parliamentary cabinet recorded only one such case, so the use of this language of power cannot be considered a trend.

> A person, who uses phrases like 'syphilist', 'a syphilist's syringe at a 100 Lats a piece', is obviously not endowed with any special intellectual ability, but he has his own charm, to a degree, and a wonderful capability of bringing forth miracles from his left pinky. (Rubins, 7 March 1996)

Treating patients as an entity, who should keep quiet, who should not ask questions and whose matters do not require being listened to can be described as taking on **'the role of God'**. This comes about in the parliamentary discourse in several ways. One of these is the expression of an absolute opinion that eliminates error on the basis of medical education.

> I believe that only special preparation, only a medical education can enable one to deal with such treatment methods. I want to protect the nation from misfortunes. (Kalnbērzs, 8 February 1996)
>
> I believe that doctors, who study for nearly 10 years, have the right to determine how to help pregnant women and what prenatal care should look like in our country. (Ķikuste, 29 March 2007)

Taking on the 'God's role' in a speech uses language dominated by irony. Doctors directly and personally exemplify the 'last chance' instance and exhibit themselves as saviors: "Therefore, all of us need to vote *for*, together, so that we can at least treat those backsides." (Rubins, 18 June 1998) It must be noted, that in most cases, taking on the 'God's role' borders with self-identification with professional groups, showing oneself more as a doctor, than a politician.

Instigation of a question and answer session. Verbal control is characteristic to doctor-patient dialogue, often realized with cascades of questions and question initiation, thus placing the patient in a subordinate position. This tactic is also used in two ways by doctor-politicians. The first one is used infrequently, as the parliamentary debate procedures do not expect immediate responses. The speakers in this case express their power, in the way the question is phrased, implying the opponent's incompetence. The doctor-politicians shape the question cascades more frequently with rhetoric questions, which they then answer themselves. The speakers organize their speeches, moderately debating with an imagined opponent. The Q&A session might also have

a decorative function, pointing out that although the speaker can answer his own questions, they are, instead, philosophical proclamations certifying his competence, rather than constructions that seek specific answers.

> I would like to begin my speech with the question: When and how can one learn to become a doctor in Latvia, and is it worth it? What is the motivation to study medicine today?… What did we want at the beginning of the Awakening?… What happened in the meantime? There is a reform… But what is reality?… What must we do?… What is the outcome of medical education today? (Boka, 10 September 1998)

> Five years ago, a structural reorganization began in the Baltic States. Except where? In Latvia, of course! Why?… Why am I saying so?… What do we see today?… (Circene, 2 June 2004)

Forms of address. When addressing patients, doctors tend to use only first names (sometimes also the diminutive form, especially in addressing female patients), regardless of how they are addressed by the patients, who, respectively, most commonly, use the formal forms of address. In the parliament, playing with forms of address, does not occur often, if it does happen, it is done to indicate the opponent as being of lesser worth, the weaknesses of his performance (speech) etc. In most cases, this is encased by the use of an ironic form of language: "Sasha!… Forgive me, Mr. Golubov!" (Vidiņš, 26 November 2001). As the address 'Miss' is inappropriate in the parliamentary discourse, even discriminatory, its use is definitely linked to a demonstration of power.

> Presiding colleagues! I was actually wooed onto the podium by our respectable compatriot from another continent, Miss Birzniece. I regret to say that I will speak from personal experience and tell you directly, Miss Birzniece! (Ozoliņš, 4 March 1998)

'Me' and 'You' identities. Asymmetrical relationships constituted by the medical power language, suggest that doctors continue to identify themselves with their professional groups rather than with their current political role, demanding symmetric communication with other decision-makers. 'Me' and 'You' identifications constructed by both sides strengthen the opposition between the politicians with and without medical education.

The 'assistance' intonations, irony and the use of technical language already appeared in identifying with a professional medical group. The number of doctors in the parliament is repeatedly stated as an argument in speeches, which might also be considered as a strong identification with the professional groups rather than the parliament as a whole. Doctor-MPs will happily outline their professional learning processes, difficulties in work-life, alternating between the first-person singular and plural forms, thus underlining and highlighting themselves as individuals and as a part of an elite group. They emphasize the ethical aspects of the medical profession, implying that they, specifically, can make ethical choices or they indicate an ethically impeccable road towards their decision-making.

> I stand here as a parliamentarian, but as you know, I am a doctor, and a department head at the Medical Academy. (Rubins, 15 February 1996)
>
> I am a medical professor, up until now I ran a large clinic and a department, and I have repeatedly participated in the Children's Clinical University Hospital tender commissions for medication, and I would like to say the following… (Pētersons, 12 December 2002)
>
> As a doctor, I have the honour, to give a speech in this decisive moment. (Strazdiņš, 31 May 2007)

The individual referral to colleagues in speeches, with the added comment 'and to the other members' is unfounded, because during parliamentary discourse, all MPs are equal when addressed. In this aspect, highlighting one's professional group, also in terms of topics of healthcare, forms an asymmetric relationship.

> And here I would like to say to colleagues in the medical profession and the other members. (Saulītis, 15 February 1996)

Highlighting the medical education and doctor's work features in the doctors' speeches. In addition to praising the profession, an example was noted, whereupon a person with a medical education has become known in society through a different area (writing), but her name is called upon from the parliamentary podium only in reference to her being a doctor, basing the prestige and status on this role only, and thus supporting one's claim.

The non-medical MPs oppose the doctors' efforts to build this asymmetric relationship. Before and after doctors' speeches they identify medical professional groups negatively or ironically.

> Dear colleagues! Dear medical luminaries! (Bojārs, 1 June 2000)
>
> In this case, we're long overdue in our invitation to our doctor parliamentary fraction for a serious discussion, that is, the 13 people who are very fond of the Latvian nation and of whom, at times, other doctors wonder: how can these honorable doctors vote in favor of laws that destroy Latvian healthcare? (Lujāns, 5 February 1998)
>
> You, Leopold, would have done better to remain silent, as Mr. Emsis already said a few things, which you should be ashamed of as a doctor. (Tabūns, 1 November 2004)
>
> I would particularly like to invite those, who have prepared to climb the podium for a tenth time, to refrain from doing so. Moreover, do not teach us, the Medical Academy students, what the heart is and so on. Do not recite these lectures and do not perpetuate this propaganda. (Tabūns, 10 December 1996)

Among the analyzed non-medical MP speeches on medical topics, there was not a single case discovered where a doctor's education or affiliation to a professional circle would have been recognized as the legitimizing factor of a doctor-MP's argument.

6.4 Conclusion

Civil society is a desirable arrangement of society, where the so-called intermediate level – associations, unions, civil initiative groups and movements – situated between the state and the private sphere play an important role, and this mediation then addresses the civic domain, which is intrinsically discursive (Habermas 1989, 1998). Agents of professional environments identify the problems, articulate and discuss different points of views, formulate preliminary solutions, and in the final account CSOs make these ideas public to shape public opinion and demand that political decisions be taken to resolve the problems. In practice, these processes must be resolved in the parliament, where "diverse flows of communication of the public sphere should merge" (Ījabs 2008: 13).

A strong CSO network and representation in the parliament secures Latvian doctors considerable social capital, which allows asserting, that the professional organizations of medical doctors are corporate agents able to influence decision-making and reshape structures. Why do doctors / practitioners not utilize this potential to its full degree? Archer (2010) maintains that a corporate agent's activity includes invention of the rules of the game and assigning social roles to its members. In this process of personification individuals become social actors able to interact with others. I would suggest that the medical doctors' CSOs fail at this stage. Sanita Vasiļjeva (2016) demonstrated the prevalence of the bonding capital over the bridging capital in Latvia. Latvians trust and cooperate more with their closest environment: family, neighbors, friends, colleagues, but they miss contact with distant others. This study suggests that doctors rely on the bonding capital: in the interviews, they are concerned with the maintenance of a positive image of their professional group, they remind us that only medics are able to deal with the issues of healthcare policy professionally. What we lack is the bridging capital. Doctors prefer to deal with healthcare problems mainly in their professional forte. In other words, by secluding themselves among the professional environment, by specialty, and by partnering up to address issues outside of their comfort zone, provided by the Ministry of Health and the civil service, not including or restricting the involvement of other potential partners from this discourse.

The discourse of the doctor-MPs creates barriers between 'us', professional medics, and 'them', the politicians. The doctor-MPs speak out about healthcare topics, on average, four times more often than politicians that are not medics, yet the doctor-patient dialogue, which is permeated with the use of power language, does not foster parliamentary deliberation. In the medical discourse, the doctor's authority strongly defines the positions 'doctor' and 'patient'. Using the doctors' power discourse in the Saeima, medics create an impression of the objectivity of their discourse, which is based on their professional knowledge; the reminders of education and professional ethics strengthen it. Parliamentary discursive arrangements offer the same power of voice to all its members, while doctors question the others' competence in discussing

and deciding on healthcare issues. Reliance on discursive competence pertinent to the professional sphere constraints communication with others in the political sphere, and I believe this is the reason that explains the domination of the bonding social capital over the bridging capital.

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7 Redrawing Border: Individual Economic Activity in the Latvian–Russian Borderland

Kristīne Rolle

7.1 Introduction

People with whom I discussed my research project on transborder economic practices often assumed that I was investigating smuggling. The assumption highlights a rather narrow understanding about informal economic activities practised in the borderland. While for consumers the line between legally and illegally imported goods is thin, it is clearly defined in the laws and regulations, and it is very likely that a person crossing the border is highly aware when he or she violates the rules set by the state. At the same time, if legally imported goods are easy to distinguish from illegal ones, it is more difficult to pinpoint the line between legal and illegal informal economic activities, especially if these practices have been formed and embedded in everyday life for centuries, or if they form survival strategies of households in the existing socioeconomic conditions in the borderland area.

Within the EU, Latvia is among the leaders of inequality in income distribution with the Gini coefficient of 35–38% (Dovladbekova 2016). The socioeconomic conditions of Latvia's eastern borderland area exacerbate the problems of its residents even further. The municipalities adjacent to the border of Russia display rather high unemployment rates – over 20% for many years in a row (Central Statistical Bureau 1996–2015; State Employment Agency 2008–2016). Particular problems are experienced by the peripheral villages that, in the Soviet era, were integrated into the collective farming system known as *kolkhoz.* Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union and liquidation of the *kolkhozes* many inhabitants were left without work; in fact, state and municipal institutions (local authorities, schools, libraries, post offices, etc.) remained the main and, at the time, the only employers. Unemployment stimulated the working-age population outflow to the bigger Latvian towns as well as workforce migration to the EU welfare states. In the south-eastern region Latgale alone, 24 300 residents or 6.4% of its population left between 2005 and 2010 (Locāne *et al.* 2010). Labor shortages, the poor accessibility of the region (bad roads, public transport provision), the outdated infrastructure (e.g., telecommunications, electricity supply), and the absence of state budget support

for regional development hampered the growth of entrepreneurship. The borderland area is the lowest business activity zone in Latvia (Ūdre 2017). However, despite the large void, despite the abandoned farmsteads and villages (Dzenovska 2012), there are people who still live and work in the area. Subjected to social exclusion and poverty and missing structures enabling business activity within the formal economy, people look for other resources to provide their livelihood. The Latvian-Russian border is among such resources.

How does the everyday life of people living in the borderland look like? What are the household survival strategies in the poor economic conditions? To answer these questions, in 2014–2015, I carried out ethnographic field-work in two Latvian municipalities on the border of the Russian Federation. I studied how the people who are unable to obtain necessary income for their households within the formal economy, that is, working legal jobs or developing legal business, create their own practices that fall outside of the formal economy and state surveillance or monitoring (e.g., domestic animal and vegetable cultivation for personal consumption, purchase of cheaper goods in Russia) or even violate state laws (e.g., conducting unregistered business, evading taxes, reselling goods bought in Russia). The legality of a practice is determined by the state, but it does not necessarily coincide with the available options and choices for its citizens. How individuals experience this moral dilemma building their survival strategies?

7.2 Borderland and its residents

The Latvian-Russian interstate border is 276 kilometers long, seven counties are adjacent to the Russian Federation. Formerly, in the Soviet Union, the border was open for every Soviet citizen. After the collapse of the USSR it was closed and with Latvia's accession to the European Union in 2004 it became the EU external border. Strict border control was instituted and the flow of people and goods across the border was reduced considerably. However, lower prices of goods and products in the neighboring country are rather attractive to Latvians motivating them to undertake regular shopping trips across the border. Excise goods – fuel, alcohol, and cigarettes – are the most demanded consumer goods from Russia. For example, in Russia gasoline is cheaper by a factor of *ca* 1.7. Latvian national regulations allow importing very limited quantities of excise goods for personal use without paying taxes: once in seven days a person can import two packs of cigarettes, one liter of strong alcohol (more than 22% indentured ethyl alcohol) or two liters of light alcohol (less than 22%), a full vehicle tank with gasoline and 10 liters in an extra can. Quite frequently the cross-border commuters violate these limits importing more goods than allowed, eschewing declaration to the border customs officers.

To enter Russia, Latvian citizens need a visa. There are several types of visas, but the borderland inhabitants are interested in two types. The first one is the multiple entry or business visa (fee 100–150 euros), often called the 'illegal' visa by locals. Latvians conducting their business in Russia are eligible for this visa, but in fact it is used for short trips to the nearest Russian settlement to purchase consumer goods. Hence the name 'illegal visa'. Normally, to receive a business visa, a person is required to prove his or her business interests in Russia (for example, indicating a business partner there). Borderland inhabitants usually use travel agency services to get the visa; the agency, in turn, takes care of such a 'formal' detail using its own connections in Russia to find a fictitious business partner.

> What kind of business could be made in 15 minutes? If someone wants a real business visa, then he needs a real company with real co-operation, everything should be real, but who here has that? Usually families with children drive and buy what they need – mostly fuel, maybe some food. (Anita, Director of a tour agency)

The other kind of document for crossing the border is the permission for preferential border crossing or the so-called 'free visa' issued free of charge. The issue of such permission is provided under the intergovernmental agreement. The permission may be acquired by those who have lived within a 50-kilometre radius from the border for longer than three years and have real estate, relatives, or a burial site of relatives in the other country's borderland area.

Finally, those residents of Latvia who were not granted citizenship after the breakup of the Soviet Union – the so called 'non-citizens' – have a right to enter the Russian Federation without a visa.

During my research, I focused on the experiences of eight people who at the time of the study or at some point in the past have lived in the borderland area. I came to be more acquainted with two families (households) that regularly crossed the border. Relying on the research methods of participant observation and interviews with household members, I investigated their everyday practices and involvement in the formal and informal economy.

One of the households is a young unmarried couple – Druvis[1] (31) and Inga (28). The main source of income for the family is Druvis' salary from his work for a state enterprise, which is in a nearby town around 20 kilometers from the family residence. His partner Inga does not have a permanent job, but she sometimes provides hairdressing services to a small range of clients. She has not, however, registered her business (thus the taxes are not paid), because she believes that the state does not deserve a cent from her as it neither gives her any help at finding "a regular, well-paid job", nor provides medical services, but does everything "to annihilate rural people by closing schools, raising taxes". Druvis and Inga do not have their own home; they share an apartment

[1] Research participant names have been changed.

with Inga's parents. The families have a garden where they grow vegetables for their own consumption. Druvis' income from his salary is generally sufficient to ensure the family's basic needs. It does not, however, provide an opportunity, as Druvis puts it, "to feel safer and live freer", for example, to attend events or to buy their own apartment. It is for this reason that the couple obtained a business visa and regularly drive to Russia to buy cheaper goods and products. The products are partially consumed by their own household, thus allowing to reduce the family budget expenses, but most of the goods are sold to their regular customers in Latvia. Excise goods – cigarettes, alcohol, and fuel – are the most requested and profitable ones.

The second family is a married couple with two adult children who are still students without permanent income of their own. Their father, Alexander (49), works at a sawmill and mother, Vera (48), is a cleaning lady at a school. The family lives in a private house inherited from Alexander's parents and refurbished by the couple. The household keeps livestock – a few cows, a calf, and hens. Milk from the cows is partly used for their own consumption, the rest – almost two tons per month – is sold to a milk factory and provides small additional income. Like the first family, they grow vegetables as well as fruits and berries for their own consumption. Regularly, once a week, Alexander and Vera go to Russia. One of the main reasons for such trips is to purchase cheaper fuel, because the family consumes a lot of it: the main family breadwinner Alexander works (legally, with social taxes paid) in another parish and the children must travel to a technical college more than 200 kilometers every week by car as a public transport route is absent in their district. Almost all goods and food that cannot be produced by household are bought in Russia. Unlike the first family that deliberately tries to gain additional profit from the imported goods, thus often breaking the law by disregarding the amount restrictions of certain goods and products, the second family strictly complies with the limits, because the car confiscation – the most severe punishment for importing undeclared goods and products – would be a big financial shock for the household. However, as the family has two cars and they travel to Russia for fuel weekly, the purchased amount is greater than necessary for their own consumption; therefore, part of the fuel is sold to others. However, cheaper goods and products are not the only reason for this family to cross the border: their relatives live in Pskov (a large town 70 km from the border), and in Lavry (5 km from the border) their grandparents are buried in an Orthodox cemetery.

7.3 Informal economy

As it can be observed, households have diverse involvement in informal economy: maintenance of backyard farms (cattle, garden), doing unregistered business, carrying out repairs on their own, purchasing goods in Russia and selling in Latvia, etc. What exactly is the informal economy? There are many definitions and understandings not only among different social science disciplines, but also within one discipline. One of

the reasons for the multitude of explanations is the different criteria and units selected for the observation of the informal economy (Bernabe 2006: 26). Some scholars understand the informal economy as an economy that operates outside the law (that is, formal regulations of the state) and is regulated by informal rules of the exchange or social relationships (Hart 1973; Portes 1994). Others see it through the forms of employment, treating all types of work that are not part of the formal employment, with taxes unpaid and no social security provided, as the informal economy (Williams & Round 2008). Yet another group of researchers consider informal economy to be an illegal, but within some larger groups legitimate set of economic activities through which agents identify and implement their facilities (Webb *et al*., 2009: 492).

Anthropologist Karl Polanyi highlights the formal and substantive approaches to understand economic practices. The first is characterized by rational decisions on how to use and maximize resources. In turn, substantive approach is based on the notion that the economy is the human interaction with the natural and social environment, which leads to satisfaction of human needs (Polanyi 1957: 243–245). Formalist and substantivist approaches greatly help understanding and explaining the economic practices in the borderland area. In my study, however, it is essential not only to find an explanation for the existence of certain economic practices in the borderland, but also to understand the line between legal and illegal, between legitimate and illegitimate economic practices drawn by the state and borderland inhabitants. The state's perception (defined in laws, regulations and policy documents) on what is correct and good is not always implementable in the everyday individual practices. Importantly, this is not due to incompetence or ignorance of people. Quite the opposite: they are very familiar with the formal structures that directly affect their daily practices and border crossing practices. Those who live in borderland are aware of any changes regarding the border crossing rules, for example, enforced restrictions aimed at combating the shadow economy, the EU sanctions against Russia, or African swine fever. The existing conditions (e.g., unemployment, poor infrastructure, border closures, distance from the center of country's economic activities, restrictions on household activities) do not provide the necessary environment that would allow individuals to keep their households in the border areas within the legal framework determined by the state. To violate the state laws is neither convenient nor safe, but it is often one of the few opportunities left in the borderland.

Within this study, the basic criterion for determining whether a practice complies with formal economy or lies within the sphere of informal economy is the following: is the activity state-supervised, controlled and accounted for (that is, formal), or does it remain outside the state control (informal). Analyzing a household's involvement in the informal economy, one can observe that families carry out both informal practices that generate cash income (such as the provision of services without paying taxes, working without a contract, importing goods and selling them in Latvia) and practices that do not have direct financial implications and are largely based on the household's

disposable resources or social capital (for example, producing products for personal use, employing neighbors or relatives in harvesting without paying salaries or paying for the work with the self-produced products, making barters).

Households also try to use all the available non-monetary resources fully, especially the land and their own work (keeping livestock and growing vegetables, doing all household maintenance and repair work), to reduce their demand for goods and services outside the household. They try to minimize expenses incurred outside the household, even if such practices do not always unambiguously comply with the law (for example, purchases of fuel and food for lower prices in Russia, paying for services "under the table" or providing services without paying taxes).

7.4 Informal equals illegal?

If the state treats the formal and the informal economy as two different sectors, which often correspond to the categories of legal and illegal, then the household's income from formal and informal economic practices form one common household budget, as both are closely integrated. The amount of income from each may vary in different periods of time, but households always seek options to provide a sum of income that meets the household needs. Consequently, income reduction in the formal economy prompts more rigorous search for new strategies in the informal economy. However, Alexander's narrative illustrates another aspect – both sectors can also be interdependent, with the loss of one reducing the possibility of using another one. "Every day I must drive to work 25 kilometers and then back home. With diesel purchased in Russia, it is half cheaper. Otherwise my entire salary would be spent on fuel", he says.

Although households do no look at income division from the perspective of formal and informal sector, they feel the presence of the informal sector through the ambiguous compliance with the law. The borderland inhabitants' deep involvement in the informal economy raises the question of the validity of dividing the informal economic activity into the categories legal and illegal, and legitimate and illegitimate.

According to Alexandra Hartnett and Shannon Lee Dawdy (2013), one of the essential problems arising from the formal – informal dualism is that it presents false categories – the white market and the black market – although most activities take place in the gray zone. That is, a practice can be informal, but not necessarily illegal. The range of informal practices within a household is wide: from those that are not regulated by the law at all (such as vegetable growing the back garden or house repairs), to those violating the law (such as purchasing goods in Russia and then selling them in Latvia, tax evasion, illegal employment). However, all of them (legal or illegal) are informal economic practices and have significant impact on the household's socioeconomic stability. In the following section I focus on illegal informal economic practices and their role and meaning in the lives of the borderland inhabitants.

7.5 Legitimized illegality

Even though in the recent years the state has introduced many restrictions for the flow of people and goods across the border, as well has actively implemented various measures for combating the shadow economy, illegal informal economic activities are still practiced. In addition, that is a well-known fact in the local, relatively small borderland communities (even to those who do not engage in the practice). It raises the question of why the community tolerates such behavior, which causes losses to the state budget as well to the inhabitants in the spheres of education, health or social support. This study allows to identify of a number of reasons for legitimizing illegal practices within the local community.

Firstly, we must consider the existing socio-economic and socio-geographical conditions. For the residents of the borderland whose life experience in the Soviet Union is longer than in the renewed Republic of Latvia (people over 50 years of age is the dominant generation in the borderland area), the concepts of borderland, boundary and life on the country's fringe is a new experience to which they try to adapt. Before the establishment of the Latvian–Russian border, people satisfied their household and individual needs (economic, educational, medical, cultural, religious and other) with the resources that were accessible more conveniently, faster, cheaper, regardless of their location in a country. Bronislava's (74) experience attests well to this point.

> At that time, when the border was not there, we moved around freely. Pskov was closer than Riga for us. All my brothers studied there in Russia – Pskov, because it was closer – only 70 kilometers, to Riga – 300 kilometers. We took our home-bred pigs to the market in Lavry [nearest village in Russia] and Pskov [nearest city in Russia]. In early youth, we went also to dance in a Lavry club, we made acquaintances there, that's why our relatives are there. We also have a cemetery there, as in the past here, in our own parish there was no cemetery.

Due to the geopolitical changes, borderland inhabitants acutely feel their peripheral and even marginal condition: their nearest city center moved a few hundred kilometers further. Simultaneously, the state's external border drew a dividing line not only geopolitically, but also economically – between the different economic conditions in Latvia and Russia. Anne White uses the concept of 'resource asymmetry' to explain the phenomenon.

> [I]f borders divided two places which were the same there would be no point in crossing the border; in practice, one side is usually richer, more expensive and more powerful than the other, leading to cross-border labor migration, trade and shopping. (White 2013: 3)

Resource asymmetry in the case of the Latvian borderland means the opportunity to purchase cheaper goods and products, as well as the availability to get access to products which are not sold in Latvia anymore due the EU regulations. Thus, the strengthening of the border and the limited entry in Russia has allowed many local people to develop new

practices, including illegal ones, to provide for their household needs. Bronislava's (74) story indicates that these practices are accepted in her local community, even if they are not crucial for the survival of a household.

> Those who drive [to Russia to buy goods] are mostly unemployed. Well, also those who have three cars at home go there and they drive across with all of them. They, of course, drive not only for the survival, they earn some money for themselves. But, thank goodness, they have an opportunity to save up some money – they may renovate their house or something else.

The other reason that shapes the local population's accepting approach to the unlawful practices is their attitude towards the state's endlessly changeable and ever-increasing regulation and control. In the last twenty years, there have been significant political and economic transformations in Latvia. Latvia's accession to the European Union in particular has brought major formalization process of daily practices that, previously (sometimes even for centuries), were in the hands of individuals, households and communities. The experience and story of the former borderland inhabitant Valdis (73) demonstrates vividly that during different epochs there existed different understanding of what is legitimate and what is not.

> In the Soviet years, it was possible to sell your home-grown tomatoes in Lavry or the Pskov market, and that was the only way to get some money when the *kolkhoz* did not pay salaries. It was not allowed to buy cabbage in Riga cheaper and then take it to market, for example, in Leningrad – you could get in prison for that! But now? To buy for less and sell for more is business, but to take my tomatoes to a market in Russia – just try!

The ability and willingness to adapt to this formalization process (that is, to respect and implement regulations) vary from household to household. The greatest resistance is caused by the need to accept that the practices, which for decades or even centuries have been allowed and even embedded in people's everyday life such as livestock breeding, milk production, communal harvesting events (*talkas*, in Latvian), suddenly are counted, controlled or even banned by the state. It creates a situation where informal practices are still being practiced, even if secretly. The economist and researcher of informal economy Hernando de Soto (1989) has noted this to be one of the features of informal economy. It is also revealed in the narrative of the borderland resident Inga (57 years).

> I cannot say anymore that I invite neighbors to help with hay gathering or potato harvesting, because then I must pay taxes for their work. If the State Revenue Service finds this out, they will impose such penalties on me! But I have my people to whom I can trust – if I ask they will always come to help. I, in turn, will help them with a basket of carrots or a sack of potatoes, whatever has grown more.

Other observable conduct of borderland residents is the avoidance of communication with any state institutions or other official institutions, which, in their view, could potentially cause problems for their practices. One of the difficulties I experienced

unexpectedly as I was preparing for a trip to Russia, was the impossibility to exchange euros for roubles in the local border town. Even though the rouble circulation among the population is quite extensive, the money exchange was not possible in any of the town's three banks. While on the Russian side, responding to the large demand for products from the Latvian population, the stores and fuel stations were located within a few hundred meters from the border and money could be exchanged even in grocery stores and pharmacies, it seemed that on the Latvian side the market had not responded to such economic activities. Druvis explained this situation as people's reluctance to be noticed by state institutions.

> Nobody goes to banks. Imagine if a person works informally or even has an official job for the minimum wage, and then goes every week to a bank to exchange, let's say, 70 euros, it is clear that the State Revenue Service will begin to check him sooner or later – where do you get the money from.

In fact, banks do not provide such information to state institutions; however, people deliberately avoid engaging in any activities that might identify their practices in the informal (cross-border) economy. Social anthropologist Klāvs Sedlenieks (2012: 102) indicates that in situations where the informal economy prevails over the formal, people are trying to create 'voids from the state', that is, places where the state presence is reduced or minimized (for instance, reduced law enforcement activities), because they do not trust the state and avoid engaging in official practices and aim to rely on their own efforts. People see banks as state institution derivatives that indirectly regulate and control their activities.

Both in the interviews and their daily practices, my respondents precisely indicate the line between the legality and illegality of their practices. As I mentioned earlier, they are quite familiar with the most up-to-date amendments to the legislation related to border-crossing. At the same time, the variability of the state laws and regulations and their divergence from the real socioeconomic situation in the border area give them a basis to rely more on their own norms or norms accepted in the local border community or wider community and to assess the compliance of practices with these social norms. Social understanding, including among the borderland inhabitants, of what is acceptable (and therefore legitimate) and the state's understanding of what is acceptable (and therefore legal) may be the same or may vary significantly. The informal economy is a sector where that can be clearly observed. Most frequently, the state's and the borderland inhabitants' understanding united when it comes to informal economic activities that have a clear negative or even violent impact (such as large-sized smuggling, drug trafficking, or human trafficking). Whereas, regarding other informal activities, especially those that are being implemented in order to ensure the basic needs of individuals and households, the understandings of the state and the society may vary significantly. As the study results confirm, a frequent situation is that the society seeing no violation of their social norms legitimizes a practice even if in terms of the state (the law) it is

illegal. The borderland inhabitants' attitude towards the import of cheaper goods from Russia and resale in Latvia or provision of services without payment of taxes is tolerated despite the non-compliance with legislation. Such collective tolerance is expressed also by the chairperson of a local municipality.

> Everyone calls it smuggling. But if a person is not provided with a job here locally and he must ensure everything himself, then he achieved this as he could. Now everyone benefits: for the locals it's an opportunity to earn money, for others – to get cheaper fuel. Money circulates in the parish.

Patience Kabamba, aiming to understand explanations of legality or illegality, refers to laws.

> [L]aws which make actions legal or illegal indeed are forms of social relations objectified or codified under certain conditions. If the conditions of the codification of the law disappear, the law loses its relevance. Legality and illegality are 'dependent variables' whose value depends on the continuing existence of the conditions which led to social relations being codified as law. (Kabamba 2015: 39)

In Kabamba's opinion, natural resistance to the law emerges from the inner capacity of human beings to pursue their aspirations through the best social arrangements they can produce. Similarly, the borderland inhabitants see these illegal informal activities primarily as an opportunity to live or survive in the border area, rather than a violation of the law. In the current unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, the main evaluation criterion becomes not the compliance of the economic practices with the legal framework (that also provides social protection), but its ability to satisfy all household and local community needs. Whereas, the state implemented formalization process in circumstances where opportunities for people to earn an income while working within the formal economy are limited, encourages the borderland inhabitants not only to build their understanding of what is acceptable and legitimate, but sometimes also justify illegal actions.

7.6 Redrawing borders

The availability or non-availability of the border as an economic resource or any other resource is largely determined by the state, exercising its political interests. The state's external border marks not only the territorial contour, but also the outline of its power and sovereignty. The state with its 'monopoly', using Dace Dzenovska's (2011) words, creates the rules and restrictions on people and goods flow. The situation at the Latvian border very clearly presents conflicts or clashes of interests, which are formed between the state (through its policies) and the borderland inhabitants' everyday practices and beliefs. My respondents identified the state as a problem that makes life difficult at the borderland. The main reason for the social, economic and geographical exclusion,

as the borderland inhabitants most often see it, is the state policy that has placed them to live on the country's edge by setting up the border and then being unable to provide the necessary resources for their social and economic security. Moreover, the state takes away the instruments that people have created for their survival, as it is expressed also by Druvis: "Smuggling, smuggling, it is easy to say so, but instead of taking it away, the state should be happy that we have found at least some option to survive here".

For those borderland inhabitants who can cross the border, its closeness is an important support instrument to satisfy household needs. At the same time, it should be noted that the role of the border in each household is different: some people see it as an economic aid (for instance, Druvis' family), but for others it has not only economic, but also social and religious connotations, because there are relatives and graves of deceased family members, as well the nearest Orthodox church on the other side of the border (as, for example, in the case of Alexander and Vera's family). For many borderland inhabitants, the division of the border suddenly split their daily practice space into two parts as well, leaving an important part of their life 'on that side' of the border. The deep social, economic and religious embeddedness of their daily practices is the reason why people still retain the status of non-citizens, which permits regular visa-free trips to Russia. At the same time, the border has also changed the time, space and status of these people. Everyday practices that once took a few minutes – going to a fuel station, church or cemetery on the Russian side –have become time-consuming; what once was close, now, even without having changed the location, has become distant. And, conversely, what was once far (a fuel station or bookstore at a local town 40 kilometers away), is now relatively close. Besides, the borderland inhabitants have become the subject of control and surveillance each time they cross the border, even if the reason for crossing is a service at an Orthodox church.

7.7 Conclusion

The transformation of the state's external border – from nonexistent to strictly-regulated and difficult to cross – has changed the socio-geographical and socio-economic position of the borderland inhabitants. Trying to gain economic and social security under the new circumstances, the borderland residents redraw the border of the space in order to provide for their economic and social needs. The space extension is obtained in a sector of the economy outside state regulations and in a territory outside the state external border. The practices that provide economic security in the extended space do not fit the formal economy monitored by the state, thus raising the question of the legality of such practices. The borderland inhabitants also redraw the boundaries of the legitimacy of practices, assessing their compliance with respect to the local community norms rather than state regulations, as the state has not been able to create structures to ensure the socioeconomic security of its citizens.

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8 State to Love, State to Hate: Vernacular Concepts of State in Latvia

Klāvs Sedlenieks

8.1 Introduction

The noun *valsts* (the state) is among the most often used words in the online comments left by the readers of Latvian news portals. Apparently, Latvians are concerned with the idea of the state. This certainly indicates a certain salience of the concept that needs further investigation the results of which are described in this chapter. The original data comes from two sources. First, 243 randomly selected readers' comments containing the word *valsts* published in 2011–2016. The texts were extracted from the corpus of comments barometrs.korpuss.lv, which processes the publications in three largest Latvian news portals Delfi.lv, TVnet.lv and Apollo.lv. The second source of the empirical data are twenty in-depth informal interviews carried out during a short field trip to the central (conducted by me) and northern (conducted by Kristīne Rolle) part of Vidzeme province in summer 2015. This material was combined with the field-data that I had collected over a longer period while carrying out research on other topics throughout Latvia, which occasionally contained information about attitude towards the state. The transcripts, notes and texts of the Internet comments were coded and analyzed in a manner of grounded theory. While the texts from the Internet required a lot of guess-work as of to what the authors actually meant and the meaning had to be extracted from the context and manner in which the noun 'state' was used, the interviews presented the possibility to get much more precise answers, test some assumptions and find out motivations.

Just like the 'expert' concept of the state, the Latvian vernacular concept presents a wide variety of perspectives in which the speakers discuss state, some of which are contradictory. Sometimes multiple concepts are, with no apparent confusion, used in the course of one or two consecutive sentences. Therefore, the vernacular concept of the state is not a coherent model that Latvians use in their everyday life, but rather it is a vague, ill-defined 'word' of everyday parlance. Nevertheless, it presents a spectrum of attitudes towards the state and also provides some clue as to why the term creeps up as the most frequently used noun in the Internet communication.

In this article I will argue that Latvians (the data comes almost exclusively from ethnic Latvians, all collected material was in the Latvian language), in contrast to at least part of the academic discourse, do not strongly contrast themselves as a body of subjects to the state in general. Instead, the picture is of a mixed and contradictory nature. Firstly, sometimes the state is strongly treated as a Latvian national/ethnic project. Thus, the state is mostly a representation of the Latvian ethnic community. This representation is well-visible in the discourse on the Latvian language as the state language. However, conceptually this is difficult to reconcile with the fact that much of what is the state now was the state during the Soviet regime. It is also quite clear that the actual process of running the state is not ideal, resulting in difficulties to associate the state buildings or political actors with the state, substituting them with generally honorable members of the community and buildings with historic value. This schism is further expressed in a generally perceived helplessness regarding influencing the state policy, which partly explains the activity of commenting the state on the Internet – a semi-magical means of influencing the reality.

8.2 Expert views on the state

What I am describing here is a vernacular concept of the state, i.e., one that is expressed by members of the general public who are not specialists or experts, but who use the concept without much conscious reflection upon its content. In contrast to the vernacular usage, academics have had long and difficult discussions about the nature and content of the state and, indeed, the very definition of the concept. In addition, there has been no shortage of authors who have argued against the possibility of using the concept of the state as an analytical concept (see Abrams 2006; Mitchell 2006).

Several large trends in expert interpretations of the concept can be identified. The first is the positive idea that the state is out there, and one can define it. Max Weber's definition of the state represents (and is often referred to) this direction: "[A] state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (1946: 78). Versions of legal definitions of the state also enumerate elements that a state should possess to be treated as a state. Thus, for instance, the Convention on Rights and Duties of States (the Montevideo declaration) gives this definition:

> "The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states"[1].

[1] Available online: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/intam03.asp/.

However, these kinds of definitions crumble as soon as one needs to use them for the purposes of social analysis. What, for instance, is the minimum of the state (regarding territory and community)? Who are the 'community' here? Who and over whom does the community have the monopoly of violence?

The opposite view deconstructs the state as a fiction of sorts. The classical Marxist approach portrays the state as an apparatus that is designed to protect the interests of the ruling class at the expense of the exploited classes. As a result the ultimate goal of social evolution according to the Marxist vision should be destruction of the state itself (Abrams 2006: 91). According to the Marxist interpretation the idea that the state is anything more than just a mechanism of exploitation is a fiction, part of the ideology needed to maintain this mechanism operational, a kind of ideological mask. American political scientists came to a similar conclusion when at the wake of the discipline in 1950s they dismissed the concept of the state as an analytical term in favor of 'political system' (Mitchell 2006: 171–72). This echoed what social anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown wrote in his foreword to a book conspicuously called "African Political Systems" (rather than states) that "The State, in this sense, does not exist in the phenomenal world; it is a fiction of the philosophers" (1950: xxiii). For an anthropologist studying traditional forms of political organization in Africa (divided by colonial empire-states) it was all too clear that the Weberian approach could not be applied to make sense of the ethnographically observed realities.

Eventually the concept of the state re-entered the academic discourse. While in some domains the concept denotes a particular type of social organizations (as in debates over strong, weak or failing states), in another, particularly where empirical reality of the state is studied, the state is left altogether undefined simultaneously accepting it as a social reality that exists in people's minds. The analysts that accept this perspective, move away from trying to understand what the state is to how is it made, enacted and experienced in everyday settings. The concepts of governmentality and discipline developed by Michel Foucault (1977; 1991) and of state effects proposed by Mitchell (2006) have a heavy influence upon the studies, especially in the field of anthropology of the state (see for instance Reeves *et al.* 2014; Mühlfried 2014). Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (2002; Gupta 2006) argue that the state is produced and enacted through the everyday encounters with various entities that stand for the state – including such details as the visit of a state inspector to the factory or an encounter with a policeman. Buildings and infrastructures certainly play an important role in producing the state and are routinely manipulated to this end (Scott 1998; Bissenova 2014; Laszczkowski 2014; Bellér-Hann 2014). However, whether buildings indeed produce the effect they are intended to and whether the citizens perceive a building as representing the state (and if so – which particular buildings) is not quite self-explanatory. Mühlfried (2014) has attempted to investigate, which buildings highland Georgians in Tushetia associate with

the state while Scott (1998) builds the whole 'state perspective' around architectural and space-linked elements.

There are several large lines of the academic discourse this article engages with. The first is the assumption about the opposition between the state and the citizens (or subjects) as two more or less cohesive entities. In this discourse the state is a power-holder that actually or potentially oppresses the citizens and the citizens are actively or passively resisting the oppression. Although as Mitchell (2006) has shown, this division and opposition is a result of particular mundane activities and in practice cannot be observed, contemporary policies that rely on the concepts of 'civil society' as opposed to the 'government' embed such division in concrete everyday experiences. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that when Latvians speak about *valsts* they would treat it as somehow separate from *tauta* (the people, the nation).

The second line states that it is a near natural desire of a citizen to be engaged with the state processes as deeply as possible. The active citizen suffers if he/she is not able to exercise the entitled power. An alternative line advanced by Clastres & Hurley (1989), Scott (2009), Sedlenieks (2013), Mühlfried (2014), is that citizens do not necessarily desire being engulfed by the state and consequently are prone to escape the state rather than actively and creatively cooperate with it. While the perspective whereby the citizenship is a uniformly desired entitlement is based on the idea that the state is a product of the community (as in Weber's definition) which acts as one, the second perspective tends to take an approach which interprets state in much less favorable manner. The state is not necessarily a beneficial force for every individual subject, it is, as Marx pointed out, also a mechanism of exploitation often usurped by one or another power-group. Sedlenieks and Mühlfried have argued that in societies such as the former socialist countries that have experienced a 'century of perestroikas' (Grant 1995) the safe bet for a subject is to keep away from being drawn into the state rather than engaging full-hartedly in the duties of an active citizen.

In what follows I demonstrate that the totality of positions and attitudes of Latvians vis-à-vis the state oscillates between three points. One point is the assumption that the state is in fact a Latvian ethnic project. Another point is that the state is an entity that is somehow distanced from the speaker and the group that she/he describes as 'us', but which is often benevolent, caring and protective. The third point is the evil one where the state is a clearly antagonistic power the aim of which is to exploit the subjects. However, these three points are more analytic rather than representing some kind of sociological groups or situations. Perhaps it is even possible that this large spectrum is possible because on the everyday level Latvians imbue the term *valsts* with meanings that might have been described analytically more precisely with some other words, for instance 'government', 'community', 'country' or even 'territory' and 'land'. This large spectrum of meanings that can be attributed to the word partially explains why *valsts* became a noun number one in the Internet comments.

8.3 State as an ethnic project

To a certain degree the idea of the state for contemporary Latvians cannot be separated from the ethnic idea, i.e., the state is an ethnic project and it is difficult to even think outside this frame. This became clearly visible in a conversation that I had with Guntis, a man of about 70 years. Most of his life he has lived in approximately the same area of central Vidzeme and most of these 70 years he had to spend in the Soviet Union. When I ask him about the similarities or differences between the state in the Soviet period and now, in the independent Latvia, this is what he answers: "The Soviet times – it was not a state. Did people have any power then? I would say it was the heaviest occupation for Latvia". For Guntis, the power of the people seems to be an element that differentiates the state from a 'heavy occupation regime'. This regime in turn cannot be the state because apart from the lack of popular power it was not the Latvian ethnic project that he now associates with the concept of *valsts*. Elsewhere Guntis is even more direct:

> Each nation (*tauta*[2]) has the right to self-determine. Latvians have Latvian state, its task is first of all ensuring existence of Latvian nation. I fear to think what will happen if the Africans arrive. There are plenty of Muslims from Central Asia already in Moscow … altogether one cannot know what will happen and if Latvians will last for long.

Thus, the state is here to protect ethnic Latvians and the regime that has not such an aim, cannot be even classified as a state. Unexpectedly, this became apparent when I asked Guntis and other interviewees to name people that they associate with the state. They mentioned people with 'national backbone' rather than politicians or policemen. Consider the following conversation with Uldis, a man of about 60 years:

> Yes, there is someone named Ainārs, he was the chief postman back in the days [Soviet period]. He originally is from Piebalga, but he has lived here all his life and knows all the people. I once nominated him for the Person of the Year prize and he got it. He was one of the first activists of the Popular Front, the chief of the horse-breeding section, he still remembers all names of all horses even from 30 years ago!
>
> *Question:* But why do you associate him with the state?
>
> Because he is a fierce nationalist. We have also Juris, he is also a fierce nationalist. He lives here nearby…

[2] The first definition of the word *tauta* given by the online *Modern Latvian Language Dictionary* (tezaurs.lv) outlines a group of people of common ancestry and language; the second definition is "totality of residents (in a state, country, territory etc."). *Tauta* does not have the citizenship component that the English term *nation* has. Latvians use also the term *nācija* to speak of *tauta* in relation to the state.

Thus, the person to be associated with the state is the one who is a good nationalist. The connection with the political or administrative state structures is not a pre-requisite for such an association.

More interesting facets of the close link between the ethnic belonging and the state are revealed in the Internet comments that mention the 'state language' (*valsts valoda*).[3] The Latvian language became the official (or in Latvian 'state language') in 1998 with the amendments to the Constitution. The subsequently adopted State Language Law (*Valsts valodas likums*) declares that Latvian is the 'state language' in Latvia. All other languages except the almost extinct Livonian are considered foreign.

When the 'state language' is mentioned in the Internet comments it is almost invariably in a xenophobic context. The authors, as it seems, draw a particular authority from the fact that they are native speakers of the state language. The fact that the commenters speak Latvian and the state also 'speaks' Latvian, creates a special, ethnic bond between these two actors. Consider the following comment:

> Vsem "osvoboditelyam" [to all "liberators" who comment in Russian]! I know the Russian language very well, but I am not about to use it here, therefore I am going to ask in the state language. (TVNet 2014)

The comment starts with a phrase in transliterated Russian, calling out to all "liberators". The double quotes emphasize that the supposed liberators were not, in fact, liberating, but occupying forces. The fact that this is written in Russian means that the "liberators" were Russian and that the descendants of the "liberators" (here identified with the occupation forces themselves) do not speak Latvian. Instead of saying 'the Latvian language' the author emphasizes that Latvian that he/she is using is the state language and Russian is not. The following quote indicates the same principle: "How about the right of the Latvian people [*tauta*] to use and popularize the state language in their own state and in the public media space?" (TVNet 2014).

In other situations, the xenophobic undertone becomes more prominent. The following comment is about the necessity to translate information from Latvian into the language spoken by the people for whom this information is intended.

> The worse they will know the state language the quicker they will give slip to where they feel better. The only case where there should be a [state sponsored] interpreter is in criminal courts. We should have regulation that in all other places in the state the communication must be in the state language. (Delfi.lv 2016)

The first sentence refers to the idea popular in the nationalist circles according to which the people who are not happy about the existing order in Latvia should leave. Most usually it is attributed to Russians, suggesting that they should move to Russia.

[3] Official translation of the term in English is 'the official language'. Therefore I put the 'state language' in inverted commas to emphasise the meaning in the Latvian language.

This sentence also suggests that ethnic non-Latvians do not belong to Latvia. The following comment reiterates "return to motherland" topic:

> If you don't want – nobody forces you [to stay in Latvia] – go where you can speak your tongue and don't ask that my country – Latvia 'teaches' the state language to the unwilling!! (Apollo.lv 2016)

The language is a particularly salient determinant of ethnic belonging in Latvia (just like in many other societies). It is by language that one often can establish connection between him/herself and a person that is otherwise a complete stranger. As Benedict Anderson has demonstrated, unification of language, creating of 'official' or 'literary' languages were instrumental in development of nations as 'imagined communities'. Anderson (2006: 88) describes how the Russian Emperor Alexander III attempted to unify the empire by making Russian the only official language, banning minority languages from the public use. The Baltic provinces of which the lands inhabited by Latvians were part, felt this 'Russification' significantly and the period is still remembered in Latvia as violence against basic national rights. 'Russification' was among the causes of discontent that lead to the revolution of 1905, which is widely treated in Latvian history as a precursor of attempts to create an independent Latvian state.[4]

Language thus creates a bond between the speakers, symbolically proclaiming that they are somehow the same and at the same time different from others – those that do not speak the language. The idea of the term 'state language' (in contrast to, for instance, 'the official language') thus establishes a particular link between those who speak the language and the 'state'. The state of Latvia speaks Latvian, it is the language of the state and thus those who speak this language belong to the same entity, they and the state are at this level identical – members or elements of the same community.

This link between Latvians, the state of Latvia and the Latvian language partially explains the agitated state that Latvian-speaking residents of Latvia descended into during the referendum on the state language in 2012. The organizers of the referendum proposed that the Constitution should be amended and the Russian language should be declared a second state language. There are, of course, many other reasons why Latvians felt threatened by this proposal and mobilized to a loud 'no' vote, but the association between the state and the ethnic Latvians was much to do with this mobilization. If there would be two state languages the unidirectional symbolic link between Latvians and the state of Latvia would be endangered. It might have also provided a possibility for Russian-speakers to identify with the state: should the referendum be successful, the state would now be speaking two languages Latvian and Russian.

[4] Establishing and standardizing the national variations of what used to be called the Serbo-Croatian language in the ex-Yugoslav countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia was an important step after the socialist Yugoslavia split into several independent states (Brković 2014).

The link between the state, the Latvian language and ethnic Latvians also gives opportunity to imagine that speaking the Latvian language is a declaration of loyalty while speaking Russian inevitably gives grounds to doubt the loyalty of the speaker. This explains the hostile tone of the above-quoted Internet comments.

The fears that the referendum of 2012 and some other events sparked among ethnic Latvians, lead to work on the so-called 'core of the constitution' initiated by lawyer Egils Levits. His idea was that there is an unwritten basic set of principles that the Latvian Constitution, Satversme was based on. The group of lawyers set to work and eventually a new, greatly extended preamble was developed and adopted by Saeima in 2014. This preamble was supposed to work as an explanation of why the state of Latvia exists and what are the core values of this state. Ethnic Latvians (*latviešu tauta*) and the Latvian language achieve a particularly prominent position in the document. The preamble states:

> Since ancient times, the identity of Latvia in the European cultural space has been shaped by Latvian and Liv traditions, Latvian folk wisdom, the Latvian language, universal human and Christian values. Loyalty to Latvia, the Latvian language as the only official language, freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, honesty, work ethic and family are the foundations of a cohesive society.

Although it is not self-evidently clear from the text, ethnic Latvians and the language are given here an extraordinarily central space. Thus, if the original preamble which was only 13-word long used the term 'The people of Latvia' (*Latvijas tauta*), not differentiating ethnic belonging of the 'people', the new preamble clearly set 'the ethnic Latvian people' (*latviešu tauta*) as more central to the state. The language of the Latvian ethnic group was clearly embedded in this imagery of the Latvian state. This embeddedness of the ethnic Latvians, and their language as core elements of the state of Latvia can be seen clearly in the following official commentary on the meaning of the above text by Ringolds Balodis, one of the authors of the new preamble.

> The first sentence mentions the Latvian language as an element of Latvian identity along with Latvian traditions, but in the second sentence Latvian language is emphasized as the state language which is the only one [the only state language] and it is linked together with loyalty to the state of Latvia. (2014: 131)

Consequently, it seems that the assumption that the state in Latvia (at least as long as it is the state that is defined by the current constitution) is a project of the Latvian ethnic group, and that this special link is defined through the language the use of which somehow indicates loyalty, is not only a vernacular idea but also one shared by some experts.

The assumption that the state is an ethnic project sometimes causes paradoxical problems when Latvians need to identify the state in more abstract terms. If the state is the state of ethnic Latvians, it seems, the organization that is not created by or for ethnic Latvians, cannot be state at all. This was well visible in the above-mentioned

quote where Guntis said that the Soviet Union was not a state but an occupation regime. This problem manifests itself also in the way some buildings are perceived in relation to the state. When it comes to the representations of the state, as some scholars have argued (Mitchell 2006; Sharma & Gupta 2006; Bissenova 2014), buildings stand prominently as symbols of the state. Therefore, following the example by Mühlfried (2014), I asked my interviewees what buildings they associate with the state. Contrary to what I expected, buildings of schools, museums, and even historic castles (which often are both, schools and museums) dominated the list. Although some interviewees spontaneously mentioned the local and even the central government, it was not the first choice. In one of the interviews it became clear that the interviewee perceived the functional overlap between the supposedly ethnic Latvian state and the Soviet state to be an insurmountable contradiction. When I asked Edmunds if he associates the current building of the local municipality (that also houses post office and several other municipal institutions) with the state, his answer after a very long and considered pause was: "Well, the office of the *sovkhoz* [the Soviet state-owned collective farm] used to be there. How can I associate it with the state?"

When speaking about the buildings that represent the state the academic discourse usually assumes that these are buildings that have been built, commissioned or supported by state institutions. The purpose of the construction then would be to give a clear and visible message to the subjects about the presence of the state. The difficulty of Edmunds to associate the building of the local government with the state comes from this kind of association. The building was constructed during the Soviet period by the local *sovkhoz*. The offices of the *sovkhoz* were situated there. For Edmunds it is clearly very difficult to reconcile the *sovkhoz* with the ethnically-bound Latvian state.

However, the interviews demonstrate also another possible, but rather different, way of treating the concept of 'state' in relation to buildings, i.e., the state is something that is created or owned by the society collectively, as is seen in this fragment of conversation between Mārīte and Visvaldis:

> *Mārīte:* "If that does not belong to me, then it belongs to everybody, if that does not belong to a single individual, then it belongs to something larger."
>
> *Visvaldis:* "Everything that has been built some time ago, whether 20, 50 or 100 years ago, that is all state. That is mine because I am the citizen of the state. That belongs to us."

Old buildings thus become part of the community and, by implication, part of the state. This explains why refurbishing and even reconstruction of old buildings (for instance reconstruction of the 18th century City Hall and the medieval House of Blackheads destroyed during the war in Riga) was such an important part of shaping the outdoor space in Latvia since regaining the independence. The buildings that once could have been perceived as representing the oppressive rule of the Baltic German

aristocracy (e.g., historic castles, manors or municipal buildings) were now safely included in the public imagery of the Latvian state. Regaining independence was legally positioned as a continuation of the state of Latvia, the existence of which was only interrupted by the Soviet occupation. Thus, reconstruction of the old buildings fitted the pattern of thinking. The buildings themselves were old enough to have lost the association with the current regime and acquire the features of the state as a common property. The more recent buildings, associated with the Soviet rule could not be as easily associated with the state as the above quotes indicate.

The ethnic Latvians thus see the state as a part of their national idea. This should mean that they feel a part of the state and have a personal identity-level connection to it. The reality is more complicated as the connection gets distracted by another perception of the state where the citizens have little power and the state is perceived as an entity on its own.

8.4 Together or apart from the state?

Analysis of the Internet comments leaves a mixed impression regarding whether the state subjects (commentators) feel a part of the state or separate and opposed to it. A large group of comments demonstrate that the authors clearly feel either a constituting part of the state or the part of the community which has created the state institutions as means to achieve some goals. Such statements are most often visible in comments that criticize the realities of the actual practice as in the following comment.

> But, first of all, the people of Latvia [*Latvijas tauta*] should clearly demonstrate its negative attitude towards the activities of S. Āboltiņa [an influential politician], because otherwise the state of Latvia will continue on the road of degradation of democratic order. We, the people of Latvia, risk that the degrading of state order will not stop at this precedent. (TVnet.lv 2011)

The state here is a common property, a tool that the people of Latvia have built. The activities of a particular politician can damage this tool and therefore the people need to do something – in this case 'demonstrate negative attitude'. Another commentator criticizes corruption and by that takes the position of some ownership: "The President needs to work in the [presidential] castle, he must draw changes to the law in order to start imprisoning those who steel from the state" (Apollo.lv 2016). The next example, though, gives somehow less clear picture as of whether the commentator feels a part of the state or not.

> This pal [an allegedly corrupt official] needs to be in charge of the amateur theatre in the Riga Central Prison. How rotten should be the state if thieves steel people's money for years on and nobody can do anything with that! We need corporal punishment – beating with lashes! Lash him to blood so that the back is raw and I doubt he will continue steeling! (Delfi.lv 2014)

Is the author treating the state as something that he/she also belongs to or not? Perhaps more the former as he/she clearly takes offense for the thieves, due to whom, one can assume, the state is so rotten, not that the thieves themselves are the state. Expressions such as 'our state' indicate that the author is talking about the state as something that is not separated from the society or which belongs to the society.

The ownership of the state and the sense and reasons for perceiving one as a part of the state, could be more clearly seen in the interviews, because here we had the possibility to ask the question directly. The interlocutors often agreed that the state is the society and as such they themselves belong to the state.

> *Osvalds:* "What is the state? We all are the state. The state is the territory that we inhabit and where all the laws and borders are established. We are part of that state [literary 'form the contents of the state']".
>
> *Helga:* "Can the state exist without us?"
>
> *Osvalds:* "It cannot! If there are no people, what happens? We are almost the most important ones [everybody laughs]. There are still no robots".

Osvalds' description echoes the two definitions of the state mentioned at the first part of this article, including such elements as the territory, laws and community. However, the idea that people might be the most important element of the state seems so absurd or so bold that it causes laughter. Thus the 'community' mentioned in Weber's definition remains an ill-defined part here. Moreover, at the end of the reply Osvalds mentions robots. It is not perfectly clear, but robots usually are perceived to be machines for work. Thus, the phrase might mean that Osvalds actually thinks they are the most important part of the state not because they are the ones who form the state but simply because they do all the work upon which the state exists.

Sarmīte another pensioner from Central Vidzeme replies similarly to my question of whether she feels like a part of the state: "[H]ow can I not be? I was born and live here, but as we talked with the friends: we are only the solders, we can listen how the parties talk and quarrel, but we cannot change much".

Accordingly, the fact that the subjects are part of the state or even constitute an element that the state cannot exist without, does not mean that the people actually are the state. In all the above examples the state is something rather external to the subjects even if they perceive the state as their own common property or instrument for achieving certain ends. Aina, a pensioner from Northern Vidzeme draws a close emotional link with the state, but also indicates that there is a rather patronizing reciprocation between the subjects and the state: "The state is something that we love. State is what gives us our pension… but only if it is deserved". Here the state gets almost fetishized as an all-encompassing provider and actor that requires reciprocal relationships. When we directly asked what the purpose or the benefits from having a state are all interviewees could come up with a list, which usually concentrated around security and stability.

Thus, although Smuidra lives in a private farm she still says: "In fact the state has provided me with everything that I have – the house and security".

Andris who has moved to England and talks to me while on vacation in Latvia tells that "the state is the one that takes care of the people". For him British state does take much better care of the citizens than Latvian state. In a similarly contrasting way Valentīns compares the current Latvian state to the Soviet state explaining that:

> Russia, Moscow gave everything. They gave everything: tractors and all. Do you think we could have earned all with our own hands? They gave everything. During the Soviet times there were *kolkhozs* [collective farms], if five tractors came then because the Moscow had assigned five tractors. The factory produced, and they shared. The same tractors were sent to Kazakhstan, but it is not like that here. Here the farmer is breaking his back, working hard, buys that tractor and nothing works and that's it. The state does not help.

The discourse of the state that is supposed to help and provide benefits (rather than redistribute the common wealth) was widely shared throughout the interviews, although not nearly always in as critical a light as described by Valentīns.

Although the state is a national project for Latvians and although it is a tool created by the people, it also can become an entity on its own, quite separate from the subjects and when it does, the behavior of the state is usually quite negative towards the citizens.

8.5 Persons to be identified with the state

This brings us back to the state as a Latvian national project. The state as described by the people in the interviews and the comments alike ideally is the Latvian ethnic project, it is something that they like and that they identify with through the means of shared language. This ethnic project, however, does not work quite like expected. It has been corrupted through crooked politicians and sometimes contaminated by survivals of the Soviet past (as represented through the buildings that are now used by the current state institutions, but which used to be Soviet offices of power). As a result, the politicians or high-ranking bureaucrats that one would expect to be associated with the state, do not achieve such a status. None of the people we interviewed spontaneously named a politician as somebody that they would associate with the state. Instead they named local people with apparent national/ethnic backbone. Thus, for instance, Ilze, the pensioner mentioned already before, says:

> Anna, my friend and neighbor is perhaps one of such people. Previously she worked at the Occupation Museum [in Riga]. She does not work there anymore, but she often actively participates [in social life] and reacts to all events. She is definitely a person with a state-oriented thinking. I don't know any other such person…

Ilze cannot think of another person that she would associate with the state. The politicians, bureaucrats that are in charge cannot be associated with the state as they are rather the reason why the state cannot work properly, why it cannot provide in the manner that it is supposed to. Such a discrepancy between the actual actors of the state institutions (like politicians or bureaucrats) and the individuals the interlocutors associate with the state illustrates another gap: despite being part of the state, the interviewees did not feel they could influence much in the way it operates. Sarmīte (above) says that she and her friend believe that they are 'soldiers' that can only march, while the commands are given by somebody else. Baiba links politicians with the people who elect them, but feels that the task of the voters is mostly to be commanded or ruled over:

> I would say that the MPs are also the state, because without the MPs we are small and insignificant: whatever they decide, we obey – to all the laws and all the parliaments. And without the people they are nothing – over whom are they going to decide to?

The space between the state as the entity that is 'our own', with which one identifies on a very personal level, mediated by the state that might be providing different benefits and the realization that one is just a soldier, a receptor of orders without many possibilities to do something, to participate on the level of decisions is important in understanding why there are so many references to the state in the Internet comments.

8.6 The magic of Internet

The comments on the Internet should not be treated simply as malignant ranting whereby some individuals who have nothing better to do are expressing their primordial hate. Instead, it should be treated as an attempt to turn the machine of the state to the correct path. I was prompted to this by Andra, who, upon hearing that I was researching relations of citizens and the state, exclaimed: "But I am, every day, actively participating in the state". Expecting that Andra was an activist of some NGO or another group, I asked what she meant. To my surprise she answered that she was posting comments on the Internet news portals. She perceived this activity not as a pastime or a channel for her anger but as a productive activity that she performed as a citizen. There was a clear sense of mission in what she was telling. From this perspective the comments that claim the state to be part of the society, as 'our' or 'us', may be read also as texts whose purpose is to attack the malady by words, by intentions, by the "energetic value" and thus improve the situation. The commenting on the Internet therefore becomes akin to a magic ritual whereby words are believed to have the potential to escape the medium on which they are written and influence the world. There is, indeed, a whole range of

comments that contain prayer-like formulas or curses, for instance: "God bless Ināra and Latvia! Latvia! Latvia!" (Apollo.lv 2016), "May she has God by her side when Devil takes her to hell" (Apollo.lv 2016).

Similarly, the comment quoted earlier in the text, which demands that people (probably on the Internet) express their negative attitude towards MP Solvita Āboltiņa so as to preserve democracy and the state, comes very close to this idea. It is, of course. difficult to draw a line between a simple use of metaphoric and powerful language and magic rituals. Both are supposed to have impact by means of words. It is clear, though, that at least for the people who engage into writing comments in the Internet news sites, the commenting becomes an arena of real or imaginary enactment of citizenship. Commenting that include swearing, telling jokes about the powerful (see, for instance, Mbembe 2006; Scott 2009) are widely used 'weapons of the weak'. Whether these weapons are effective in this or any other situation is a different story.

8.7 Non-Latvian perspective

The data on which this article is based, as stated in the introduction, comes almost exclusively from comments in the Latvian language and from the ethnic Latvian interlocutors. The perspective of the people who are not ethnic Latvians or do not speak Latvian has been left out. This is an important drawback of this study since only about 60% of inhabitants of Latvia are ethnic Latvians. However, it is possible to speculate that their discourse on the state in Latvia would not be remarkably different. If Latvians perceive the state in Latvia as a largely Latvian ethnic project, it can be expected that the non-Latvians would hold a similar idea. On these grounds they cannot be expected to have the same kind of positive identification with the state of Latvia. Quite the contrary – due to the language they speak, their relations with the state of Latvia would be perceived as somehow alien or antagonistic. The discourse on the 'state language' constantly reminds them of this awkward position of speaking the language that is not the 'state language'.

In this context it is possible to expect that the state as an actor on its own would be more prominent, leaving non-Latvians even less integrated in the project of the state as the ethnic Latvians themselves are. This situation could be observed during the construction of the large brand-new building, the Latvian National Library that lasted six years (2008–2014) and the costs rose to almost 270 million euro. Although the construction was criticized for the costs and lack of proper management, ethnic Latvians in general accepted the building as an achievement of their state. The building was nicknamed the Palace of Light (*Gaismaspils*) after a legend describing a millenary rebirth of a nation and put into poem and song by no less legendary poet Auseklis and composer Jāzeps Vītols about a century ago. For ethnic

Latvians the Palace of Light was thus both a national symbol and an expression of the common achievement of their state. However, the building received much more critical attitude among the Russian-speakers who generally saw the building as a waste of money.

That non-Latvians also perceived the Palace of Light as not particularly suited for their identity is apparent from the contents of the 'Peoples' bookshelf'. This is a bookshelf that is centrally displayed in the building and is several stories high. Everybody was (and, at the moment of writing this text, still is) invited to contribute a book that is particularly important for the donor. Although there are some books in other languages, and some books are in Russian, the absolute majority is in Latvian. Supposing that the majority of books were donated by the residents of Riga where ethnic Latvians are not a majority, it is clear that Russians were much more reluctant to donate books. For them, the Palace of Light then is a construction that Latvians erected, that represents the ethnic Latvian character of the state.

8.8 Conclusions

I started the paper with inquiring as to why the concept of state (or the noun *valsts*) is so prominent in the Internet comments. The expert concepts of the state fluctuate from treating the state as antagonistic to the citizens on the one hand, to being an expression of the citizens on the other, and then again being an imaginative effect with little physical reality. What becomes apparent after the analysis above is that for non-expert Latvians the state clearly is real enough. There is no notion (at least no visible notion) about the illusory nature of the state. It is no less real than the Latvian nation or the language. Since the Latvian interlocutors and the authors of the Internet comments treat the state as a part of their ethnic project (along with at least some experts), they feel that there exists some bond between them and the state. Perhaps in some moments they could even say that the people and the state are the same. Although such an idea is not something that would spring to mind readymade. That is because the state at the same time is treated as an (at least potentially) exploitative, threatening or simply unjust. People may form an important part in it, but not as equals. They are either soldiers or workers while, perhaps, politicians keep the steering to themselves and thieves (the concept that overlaps with the idea of politicians) appropriate the benefits that should have been distributed fairly.

This picture invites us to expect a rather revolutionary spirit. However, that is not something that could be seen in either of the materials I analyzed. The commentators or interviewees may be at times very critical and very disappointed. They clearly see deficiencies and they clearly see the fact that some resources are (due to ignorance or ill intentions) unequally and inadequately distributed. But the answer to this problem is not a willingness to change the system or as it seems – to engage in the political

struggle. Rather what could be observed was a reluctance to be involved in the political activities on an equal level. This possibility is replaced by restraint, an escape from the involvement or commenting on the Internet – an activity that resembles a magic act. The commenting could be interpreted in the light of Scott's ideas of the weapons of the weak, i.e., activities that are undertaken by those who do not see or do not have any other means of political struggle.

Thus, it seems that there are in fact two states – the ideal, cozy ethnic Latvian one, which is almost synonymous to the idea of an ethnic group or nation – it exists by itself, composed of the individuals and is somehow eternal, floating above the everyday problems. Then there is another one, which is difficult to identify with and which often is unfair or plainly evil. Reconciliation between these two parts is hard and at times creates some cognitive dissonances like exclusion of buildings of old Soviet-time buildings and active politicians from the spheres associated with the state.

At the same time the state itself never gets questioned. If there is an idea that the state is an unfair organization, it is not at all clear what could be done apart from punishment of the ones who steal. The state is treated as something that exists objectively, but at the same time quite independently of the people. Cognitively it is not only linked to the idea of nation or ethnic sentiments, but also is similarly related to the individuals, that is, the individuals form the body of the state (or nation) but have little or no influence over it. They feel proud or they love the state (or the nation), but that does not matter much because the state is going to be there anyway. Both the Internet comments as well as the interviewees were quite angry and critical when the state was in question. The analysis shows that this anger often comes from the notion of state as a common property or resource that should have been divided equally, but which is not. In addition, all common property becomes the state.

The state thus is a strange mix. It may be represented by buildings, by people, by some practices and rituals. It in some sense is eternal like nation or ethnic group, simultaneously it clearly did not – there were occupations and annihilations throughout the previous century. And still the common property was created, and it did belong to the people commonly, this property is something that lasts throughout the changing political regimes and acquires new, confusing meanings. So do some people and some structures. The concept of state is not clearly defined nor can it be defined, but this is precisely what makes it usable for wide coverage of both that which one loves and that which one hates.

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9 Depoliticization of the Saeima Debates: Loosing the Gist of 'Welfare'

Ilva Skulte and
Normunds Kozlovs

9.1 Depoliticization – a contemporary trend

Max Weber described rationalization of modern societies as bureaucratization of decision-making and its submission to the power of professional experts (Weber 1978: 212–300). A logical consequence of the process is depoliticization. The aim of political activity is resolution and mediation of conflict of diverging interests and priorities in search of consent between individuals and groups. Actions of agents are called 'political' when they follow the acknowledged and shared rules of the game. 'Politicization' means that one interprets the situation as a field of political action according to these rules (Palonen 1993). 'Depoliticization' means, on its turn, that in these situations there are no objects of the game to follow the political rules. As a result, political discourse appears as something superfluous, exaggerated, empty and the center of decision-making is moved to the administrative and expert structures. Persons elected to the parliament and entrusted to act politically on behalf of the nation delegate the decision-making rights to non-elected administration and professional experts. It is expected that good practice of private management would improve effectiveness of public administration. Inclusion of professionally competent actors in decision-making and enhancement of action-oriented form of governance is a positive outcome of depoliticization. But at the same time politicians bearing the citizens' mandate disburden themselves of the responsibility thereby contributing to the "undermining of the Nation-State as the ultimate instance of political decision" (Borriello 2017: 5). Depoliticization does the work of emptying a proposition or a notion of its political connotations and contexts, and this necessitates subsequent limitation of alternatives to be discussed in political debate (Palonen 1993; Muntigl 2002).

Politics can be analyzed as a communicative practice because politicians define problems, propose solutions, explain them, and support them with arguments. Depoliticization takes place when political discussion and argumentation is replaced with references to undisputable principles recognized as solid and objective: law, globalization, free market etc. Politicians demonstrate themselves as "no longer be reasonable held responsible for certain issue, policy field or specific decision" (Flinders & Buller 2006: 55).

Metapolitical discourse replaces political discourse, i.e. instead of discussing an issue, MPs advance arguments against opening a discussion (Kruk & Skulte 2016). An instrument of depoliticization thus is an arrangement of discursive rules excluding a possibility of exchange of alternative opinions.

9.2 *Saeima* discourse

Being the most spectacular place of political activity, the parliament is also the most telling place of the trend of depoliticization. In this chapter depoliticization is analyzed using the conceptualization of the notion of welfare (*labklājība* in Latvian) as an example. Welfare is the most acute problem of the current Latvian politics. The National Development Plan for 2014–2020 (2012: 3) states that welfare is the main goal to attain. Recently, jurists have recognized the welfare state (referred to as the 'socially-responsible state' in the publication) as one of four basic principles of democracy provided by the Constitution (Briede *et al.* 2013: 93, 100).

The Latvian word *labklājība* was introduced in the beginning of the 19th century connoting good material conditions (*laba situētība*), doing well (*laba klāšanās*), security, happiness, and wealth (Karulis 1992: 400). The Encyclopedia of Soviet Latvia gave a similar definition: "availability to people of the necessary material goods as well as of articles, services and preconditions required for intellectual development" (*Latvijas padomju enciklopēdija* 1984: 577). Analogous connotations are found in Tezaurs.lv, an online dictionary of the contemporary Latvian: "Living conditions, material situation characterized by prosperity, wealth". Close to this is the description found in the dictionary of political terms, defining welfare state as "a political system in which the state assumes the responsibility for peoples' welfare, satisfaction of their basic economic and social needs and provides certain social services" (Pabriks 2006: 199).

Contrary to Latvian definitions highlighting the idea of private well-being, the English 'welfare' and the German *Wohlfahrt* connote a public good with positive consequences for private individuals: the principles of social support, cooperation, and mutual aid. Largely, the welfare state is the result of state taking over insurance schemes offered by fraternal societies, which ensured solidarity among citizens so that they did not face risks on their own. Thus, the practice of mutual insurance in local communities moved to the national community (Ewald 1996; Cordery 2003). A similar system in the Soviet Union was known as 'public consumption funds' financed mostly by the state budget and mandatory contributions by industrial enterprises.

Since the regaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Latvia has strived to emulate European welfare states. Given two different understandings of welfare outlined above, it is essential to analyze how Latvian MPs conceptualized the notion and how they sought a substitute to the abandoned Soviet model of public consumption funds. For the contextual interpretation of the word *labklājība* we use two online

tools analyzing the Saeima corpus. Nosketch.korpuss.lv enables statistical analysis of word use, while Saeima.korpuss.lv is a handy tool for qualitative contextual analysis of words and propositions. Following Critical Discourse Analysis methodology (Van Dijk 1993, 2000), we relate the propositions to the speakers' ideological positions in social and political contexts as well as to their socio-cognitive structures. In the interpretation process we take into account the speaker's political affiliation, the mental constructs of the speech and its local (current speech act) and global (social, economic, political, cultural) contexts.

The lemma *labklājība* was used 5387 times in the parliamentary sessions held from 6 July 1993 to 19 January 2017, i.e., from the first meeting of the MPs elected after the fall of the Soviet Union until the last minutes uploaded to the corpus at the time of the research (Table 9.1). The most often used word form (3195) is *Labklājības* (with majuscule, in Genitive case) designating the Ministry of Welfare (e.g., *Labklājības ministrijas priekšlikum*s / 'The motion of the Welfare Ministry'). In another 1197 occurrences the word form *labklājības* (with minuscule, in Genitive case) designates the minister of welfare. Contextual connotations of the remaining 995 occurrences were analyzed here with the aim to reveal the development of discourse on welfare and to identify the depoliticization trends.

The first post-Soviet Latvia parliament, **the 5th Saeima (1993–1995)** declared welfare a priority strategic goal, to be achieved only by economic means. Privatization and foreign investments were expected to bring about perfect conditions for individual economic activity, so individuals themselves were responsible for their personal welfare. The only problem was a psychological one, as an MP of the liberal *Latvijas ceļš* party put it, *a propos* pension funds: "This is related to a psychological aspect indeed: perhaps society is not ready yet – perhaps not truly ready – to realize that its every member is responsible for securing his or her own welfare" (Elferts, 1 March 1995). According to MPs, their task is not to build the welfare state, but rather to create a legal framework enabling individuals to earn their welfare themselves.

Table 9.1 Occurrences of the lemma *labklājība* by cases

Word form	Case	Frequency
Labklājības ministrij*	Genitive	3,195
labklājības ministr*	Genitive	1,197
Labklājības	Genitive	375
Labklājību	Accusative	377
Labklājība	Nominative	177
Labklājībai	Dative	39
Labklājībā	Locative	27

Source: nosketch.korpuss.lv

MPs ignore the solidarity aspect of welfare, the idea of common good as well as citizens' rights to participate in politics expressing their needs and preferences. In the debates, welfare remains an abstraction, politicians do not specify its indicators and beneficiaries. Prime Minister Māris Gailis (the liberal *Latvijas ceļš*) reiterates the common topoi void of specific content.

> In the entire world people want to live in security and welfare, but it is not easy to achieve this goal… It is remarkable that the UN, for the first time in history, in 1995, named social development and welfare of all people as the highest priority… All in all, in Latvia, there are plenty of favorable conditions to speed up the country's economic development thereby securing increase of welfare for all population. (12 January 1995)

In contrast, the opposition talks about poverty, describing some cases in emotional terms. Despite the abundance of metaphors these arguments are more concrete and precise.

> According to the Ministry of Welfare, 85 percent of the population have to fill in the [income] declaration because their subsistence level is below 12.9 Lats [minimum subsistence amount]… The state should think about it because otherwise these 85 percent of the population may see no need for such a government… Today, in peace time, when 40 percent of manufacturing has been destroyed, it looks like Sarajevo. (Kide, the leftwing party *Saskaņa Latvijai*, 3 March 1994)

The conservatives and nationalists also criticize the liberal *Latvijas ceļš*. The Farmers' Union appeals to the communitarian values such as the concentration of forces, cooperation, and social contract. The nationalist *For Fatherland and Freedom* rejects an excessive opening of the economy to global markets, which would have accelerated the downfall of local enterprises and endanger national culture – both are defined as the foundations of business activity of ethnic Latvians and their welfare. The left-wing politicians oppose legitimization of social differentiation; however, they avoid a critical discussion of specific laws and decisions. The term 'welfare', as a vague reference, is used to discredit the majority rather than to discuss policy measures.

Critiques of the liberal *Latvijas ceļš* became even more pronounced in the **6th Saeima (1995–1998)**. The Democratic Party *Saimnieks* won 18 mandates of 100, the populist People's Movement *For Latvia* ranked third, gaining 16 seats. Welfare remained an important topic describing the goals of the state development, but now it was discussed in the moral context. Addressing the newly elected parliament, President Guntis Ulmanis demanded that MPs sacrifice themselves for important goals.

> I am convinced that the members of Saeima… will continue the reforms creating a democratic European welfare state. Today I wish you creative work in the three years of the Saeima mandate, which will require a good deal of your energy, and a good deal of self-sacrifice. I call on you today to sacrifice yourself for the sake of the people and the state. (7 November 1995)

Moral rhetoric of the convocation is a feature of depoliticization. Politicians talk about values in the debitive mood ignoring concrete political actions aimed at development. "Welfare of every human being is the main benchmark of the state responsibility and development. The government must take practical steps, avoiding a one-sided ideologization or politicization of its activities" (Čevers, *Saimnieks*, 7 December 1995). Also, one must change the human being, an MP must be responsible and act in the name of those who want to change themselves and to work; the people must be consolidated in the search of a unique, objectively correct way of conducting reforms; decision-making must be based on the opinions of professionals and experts; welfare issues must not be politicized. MPs depict welfare as a 'peculiar' and 'very painful sphere'; improvement of welfare requires consolidation of political forces. In the following quote from the speech by a member of the populist *For Latvia* the pronouns 'we', 'our', 'you', 'all', 'others' attest to a tentative to find general solutions to specific problems.

> All these proposals touch upon one very painful issue – the issue of welfare, including healthcare… As you know our electoral slogan was 'Welfare for All!' Going to people and talking to them we repeated it again and again that we stand for welfare for all – not only for the president, not only to the prime minister, not only for politicians or some other very successful grab-what-you-can privatization leaders, but we stand for welfare for all, also for children, the elderly, large families and other categories that are suffering… due to the severity of this transition period. (Saulītis, 15 February 1996)

The opposition speaks in support of a political perspective, against the bureaucratization of the issue. The aim is to articulate diverse needs of different social groups, at the same time avoiding splitting the society into the privileged and underprivileged classes.

The European Union and NATO enlargement was on the agenda of the **7th Saeima (1998–2002)**. Seeking to adapt the national legislation and institutions to the EU principles Latvian politicians considered a more adequate concept of welfare, but nevertheless the bureaucratic approach won. Prime Minister Vilis Krištopāns (the liberal *Latvijas ceļš*) addressed the elected MPs.

> The foundation of the welfare for the Latvian nation is economic development. That is why I am going to talk about the most important factors securing the latter. We are not going to abandon the strong financial discipline. The government will not allow the state institutions to spend more than the budget earns, and it will protect the stability of the national currency. I have repeatedly stressed that the foundation of welfare for Latvians is a stable Lats, low inflation and the independence of the Central Bank… Our government must secure opportunities for all Latvia's residents to receive quality education, so that every individual, within the limits of his or her abilities and fortitude, can obtain the most valuable starting capital – knowledge, and use it for augmentation of one's own welfare. Education, available to all, is the foundation of true equality in Latvian society. (26 November 1998)

In fact, the parliamentary majority rejected the welfare state concept renouncing solidary support to those who cannot care for themselves. "Soon we are going to call the party congress and I will try to say that our goal is welfare by means of work. It is unlikely that we will be able to attain welfare for everyone" (Godmanis, *Latvijas ceļš*, 30 November 2000).

The majority suggests that welfare is to be achieved outside the political discourse. The political component emerges when the issue of welfare is being discussed in the global and European context. The left-wing MPs oppose the NATO integration arguing that the financial costs of membership could be better spent increasing well-being. The right-wing parties, on the contrary, believe that the very membership in NATO and the EU would improve welfare.

The left-wing parties remind that welfare is in crisis, and demand solutions.

> The economic crisis affected the well-being of residents in a very negative way. In turn, the dramatic downfall of material well-being triggered a demographic catastrophe in the country: in the second half of 1980s, 40 thousand children were born annually, whereas in the second half of 1990s only 19 thousand. (Pliner, PCTVL, 30 November 2000)

> As we begun the discussions on the 2001 budget, the Ministry of Welfare handed in several alternatives to the Cabinet. Unfortunately, the Cabinet held no discussions on any of them. What kind of Cabinet of Ministers is it that ignores the proposals drafted by their own colleague, the minister of welfare, and does not discuss them? (Barča, Social Democratic Party, 30 November 2000)

For the majority, 'welfare' remains an empty signifier aimed at supporting any argument, such as this report on national security by Prime Minister Andris Bērziņš:

> The state security depends not only on international and military-political situation; an important role in maintaining security belongs to internal factors – the democratic foundations of the state, the economic development, the social security and welfare, the level of crime, the environment and other issues. (24 January 2002)

Addressing the newly elected **8th Saeima (2002–2006)** President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga named social inequality as the main problem of welfare.

> Today in Latvia, a narrow circle of nouveaux riches and 'money elite' is emerging next to the masses living below the poverty threshold. The gap between those two is growing, and the middle-class that lives comparatively comfortably remains too small. Your task, ladies and gentlemen, is to make sure that a narrow, privileged group is not the only one that enjoys the sweet fruits of welfare. (5 November 2002)

Vīķe-Freiberga also misses the essence of the welfare state: it is improbable that a narrow layer of rich people could have benefitted from the nonexistent system of social solidarity providing, among other benefits, the old age pensions, and benefits in case of work accidents.

The party *Jaunais laiks* obtained 26 of 100 seats in the parliament and formed the government. The new government majority criticized the ineffective policies of the predecessors using the poor welfare standards as a proof of their fiasco.

> Yes, *Jaunais laiks* used to act the way left parties tend to, taking care of the residents, each and every resident, in order to ensure his social protection and growth of the welfare level. Because, when [Prime Minister Einārs] Repše formed the government [of *Jaunais laiks*] the state was on the edge of a catastrophe, the poverty was overwhelming. And the first thing we had to do was to increase the minimum wage – 70 Lats, later 80 Lats. The budget draft for the next year already sets it at 90 Lats. We must not starve out our people! We have increased family benefits and disability allowances. (Brigmane, *Jaunais laiks*, 9 March 2004)

Nevertheless, the parliamentary majority conceptualizes welfare in terms of money influx rather than as a system of solidary support. Depoliticization excludes a possibility to discuss an alternative meaning of welfare. The MPs believe that problem solutions depend on the effective management of distribution of resources. The public administration reform is expected to enable economic activity of individuals, thereby improving their welfare. The MPs juxtaposed practical activities of the executive branch and the 'abstract' political debate, a new feature of the discourse on welfare. The candidate for prime minister, Einārs Repše assured the Saeima that his government possesses all the necessary knowledge and skills enabling it to make things better.

> We will fight any shortcomings in the public administration. No doubt, only by developing the economy we will attain welfare of the people. For this reason, the state will, at last, provide substantial support to the economic activity. Not only in words but in concrete deeds: by cutting taxes, by harmonizing different regulations and laws, by introducing tax exemptions for investments into manufacturing, and thereby creating new jobs for people. (7 November 2002)

Ingrīda Ūdre, speaker of the Parliament, put it succinctly in her Independence Day address: "Everyone of us must do our job honestly, because simply there is no other way to foster welfare of the Latvian state and of each individual" (18 November 2004).

The parliamentary majority knows what is to be done and the only quality demanded today is that of diligence and personal devotion, just as described in folk tales.

> The budget deficit has been reduced. This allows us to hope that a coordinated and productive work of the government will slow down the inflation growth. This is very important so that our people do not sink in poverty and so that their welfare increases. (Šadurskis, *Jaunais laiks*, 16 December 2004)

> Our task would be to work diligently, together, like little dwarfs, in order to secure welfare of the Latvian nation, so that the song would not be forgotten, so that everybody would have a spoon, a full bowl, a bed and a job. (Brigmane, *Jaunais laiks*, 20 February 2003)

The government reformed the welfare-related institutional structures. Some functions of the Ministry of Welfare were delegated to the newly established Ministry of Health and the Secretariat of the Minister of Special Assignments for Children and Family Affairs. The discourse of the new executive leadership is permeated with assertive and concrete proposals. "I have stated it clearly that nobody would remain in office if he or she thinks that tax-payer money can be squandered or pocketed to increase one's own wealth, or simply recklessly disbursed", declared Minister of Health, MD Āris Auders (*Jaunais laiks*, 30 January 2003). Several months later Auders himself fell victim of this reproach: he retired from the high position when his former patients told journalists he practiced extortion.

A fierce struggle for power is a characteristic of this period. Welfare issues are used as rhetoric tools to attack political rivals, blaming each other in emotional terms.

> So, my colleagues, all is clear: the elections are coming! I understand you. So, you must explain to your voters why there is a high inflation, why people leave for Ireland, why the welfare standards are not growing. And certainly, it is hard to give answers. You were in power. (Sokolovsky, the left-wing PCTVL, 2 February 2006)

In the political argumentation welfare is the incontestable value that is used by the MPs to either support or reject any legislative initiative. For example, policy measures aimed at inclusion of sexual minorities and fostering tolerance are depicted as ones endangering welfare.

> In front of us, there is yet another draft law worked out by our Ministry of Welfare. The key task of the Ministry would be to care about welfare of the state, to prevent a massive departure of people from Latvia abroad, as well as to ensure that widows and orphans are taken care of. But now we are faced with this amendment to the law providing for legalization of all kinds of sexual deviation. (Šmits, Christian LPP, 15 June 2006)

Despite the accession into the European Union in 2004, the political elite had not improved its understanding of the welfare state concept.

The parliamentary majority of the **9th Saeima (2006–2010)** promoted the concept of welfare as an economic development, disregarding the connotations of aid and support for persons in need. The majority disqualified the opponents from the debate by ignoring their interventions or treating their arguments as irrelevant. Just as the party *Jaunais laiks* in the previous parliament, the new prime minister of the conservative People's Party, Aigars Kalvītis, clearly juxtaposed effective action and useless debate. He invited the MPs to abandon political discussions for the sake of sustainable economic growth.

> Perhaps sometimes truth springs from argument, however welfare seldom springs from argument… Of course, the politics is changing, personalities are changing, there are new internal and foreign policy dimensions emerging, however, the state interests and the interests of people's welfare demand sustainable development. The goal is people's welfare in a modern, competitive, Latvian and European state. (7 November 2006)

The credit bubble made the word *labklājība* especially popular in the political discourse. During the 'years of plenty' it was ascribed new connotations, such as 'housing with all modern amenities', 'ostentatious consumption', 'travels to exotic places'. In a nutshell, for the politicians *labklājība* meant access to commodities, but not to public goods and services. The word was turned into a powerful argument representing the government decisions as the unique right solutions. Neither the expert warnings about the overheated economy, nor the subsequent financial crisis were able to change the assertive discourse depicting the government as the ultimate holder of knowledge and administrative competence. The parliamentary opposition raised objections to the depoliticization of the debate and the disqualification of a contestant opinion. As the crisis hit, the failed welfare became a yardstick to measure manipulative practices of the majority.

> [The majority] hid its lack of competence with the help of classical PR methods. Before the elections, they were telling fairy tales about their future actions, and afterwards they used clever tricks to hide that, in reality, the competence is absent, or it is being used in a completely different sphere instead of the improvement of social welfare. (Zaķis, *Jaunais laiks*, 11 December 2008)

The financial crisis, coupled with destabilizing of the economy, the dramatic cut of public expenses, the corruption as well as the social inequality pushing thousands of unemployed and underpaid Latvians abroad in search of better remunerated jobs – these factors triggered a transformation of the political arena and discourse. The minutes of the **10th Saeima (2010–2011)** are a testimony of the process under way. The former opposition won the elections and took the leadership in the Parliament and the Government. The new collective political actor – the electoral union *Vienotība* – was established, consisting of the prime minister's party *Jaunais laiks,* the conservative *Pilsoniskā savienība* and the socially-liberal *Sabiedrība citai politikai* (the latter two founded in 2008). The massive workforce emigration compelled the political elite to take measures against the outflow of human resources. The MPs advanced new conceptualizations of welfare. Realizing the risk of depopulation, welfare was conceptualized in terms of demography and regional development. The nationalists stressed that welfare was endangered by the 'misread' liberal human rights that they contrasted with the values of collectivism and traditional morals (Rasnačs, VL-TB/LNNK, 24 February 2011). The conservative People's Party and the left *Saskaņas Centrs* tied welfare to economic protectionism. The 10th Saeima, however, was short-lived. In order to give voice to the reform-oriented liberals against the conservative 'oligarch' parties, President Valdis Zatlers dismissed the legislature in May 2011.

The parliamentary majority of the **11th Saeima (2011–2014)** elaborated a contradictory discourse on welfare. The workforce emigration remained among the most acute problems for the politicians. The low living standards were mentioned as the reason

of the large-scale emigration; and improvement of welfare was thus conceived as a precondition for returning to home country. In political terms, welfare was defined as a factor of loyalty to the state and listed as a priori value alongside freedom, development, and sovereignty. The MPs depicted welfare as a form of emotional comfort provided by the social budget guarantees, government support to family and business development. Speaker of the Saeima Solvita Āboltiņa, however, discredited the state's ability to fulfil this task. Recalling the renewal of sovereignty in 1990, she put: "It was the beginning of a new path: the beginning of the new state, new politics and new opportunities for the development of our state and welfare of each individual. The victory is one side of our freedom and independence narrative" (4 May 2012). Touching upon the current politics she denied a possibility of bright future: "But the other side [of the narrative] is Mother Latvia with a millstone on her shoulders. One must bear the freedom millstone every single day, throughout one's life. This is our dearest and the hardest burden at the same time". The metaphor is disappointing because welfare as a political goal is presented as an empty and futile, but nevertheless beautiful burden the politicians saddled themselves with. It is not surprising then that the head of the Parliament could not envisage a single concrete activity to improve the standards of living.

In the bureaucratic approach to welfare articulated by the previous legislatures the government cares for supplying a minimum of welfare provisions depending on the country's economic growth. A different approach gains momentum in the 11th Saeima. The legislators realize the need to enable citizens to pursue their own life projects. Instead of larger allowances the government should guarantee long-term security, stability and predictability making possible the realization of one's own preferences. This approach is evident in the renewed debate on demography. The 2011 census showed a dramatic decrease, by 12.9 percent, of the population since 2000. Sustainability, stability, predictability of economy and politics were called now the critical factors of welfare. Minister of Welfare Ilze Viņķele advanced these arguments in her address to the Parliament (11 December 2011). The Pensions Act was discussed in a similar vein: citizens are solidary providing for old age for themselves and for others, avoiding charging their children with the payments on social budget debts (Ašeradens, *Vienotība*, 29 March 2012).

Addressing the elected **12th Saeima (2014–2018)** prime minister nominee Laimdota Straujuma (5 November 2014), integrated the ideas expressed in the two previous convocations. The aim of the welfare increase is to stop the depopulation and foster the sense of belonging to the state; individual interests and values are the foundation for defining his or her welfare, but it should be balanced against the perspective of the society as a whole, i.e., the state has to curtail the social inequality. Besides, material well-being is only one factor among others, such as education, healthcare, work, personal and national security, justice, and personal freedoms. The ideas of mutual

support and solidarity enrich the connotations of *labklājība*. Politicians demand that parents provide proper care for their children and children take care of their parents, the Parliament reminds that citizens must pay taxes and contribute to pension fund in order to avoid the old age charges on children.

However, the parliamentary majority was far from introducing a consistent concept of welfare. Still the word was used as a rhetorical tool supporting or discrediting any argument. In these quotations it designates 'good future', which cannot be doubted. "The illegal circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances threatens security and welfare as well as the development and stability of the state on a national scale" (Straujuma, *Vienotība*, 3 July 2014); "Our goal is inclusive quality education, consequently, education for all – education for the personal development, for welfare and for sustainable growth of the state" (Druviete, *Vienotība*, 22 May 2014).

Welfare is an abstract goal, which can be achieved sometime in the coming decades. Today one should endure the destitution and try to move forward under the guidance of politicians. When welfare is treated in a real context, the word is assigned a peculiar modality. In the national holiday address, Speaker of the Saeima Ināra Mūrniece spoke of welfare as a hope, a necessity, a promise, but never had she paired the word with verbs attesting to its actual existence, and she proposed no specific political actions in its support.

> Yes, during these 26 years not all have attained the welfare they had hoped for and that was promised by the political parties before the elections. And welfare is necessary for everybody to live a full life, with self-respect and a sense of security regarding the present and the future… But I would like to stress – the promised welfare will be truly attained when we will have created a large and strong middle class in Latvia. (4 May 2016)

The opposition MPs demand that the notion of welfare be filled in with specific content and supported by laws and decisions meeting the real needs of citizens rather than the ones of administration implementing the post-crisis austerity policy. The majority should not lose the human perspective, argues the left.

9.3 Government defining *labklājība*

The Saeima corpus does not contain a working definition of *labklājība*. Depoliticization of the parliamentary discourse shifts the burden of policy-making to the functionaries of the executive branch. The government regulations and policy documents provide an explicit definition of the notion neither. Let us retrieve the contextual definitions from the documents dealing with the welfare issues.

The scope of welfare can be apprehended analyzing the functions of the Ministry of Welfare, which include drawing up and supervising the implementation of the labor

policy, the social security policy, the policy of children's and family rights, the policy for equal opportunities of disabled persons and gender equality (The By-law of the Ministry of Welfare 2004–2015). The Law On Social Security (1995–2015) promotes the opportunity to freely select employment and to earn the necessary resources for life with one's work; equal pre-conditions for the free development of each individual; family protection, support and development; and the overcoming or reduction of particular difficulties in life, providing assistance and presenting opportunities for self-assistance. The law lists solidarity and social insurance as the basic principles of the social security system, however, the former is never described explicitly, while the latter envisages mandatory social insurance for certain groups of people. Section 2 listing the social rights does not specify the sources of the material aid to those in need pointing that the assistance is provided by other laws.

In the English translation of Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (2010) the word 'welfare' appears 11 times but it is not defined even in the glossary accompanying the document. Contextually, welfare is conceived of as a provision of material goods, which is a factor of the country's economic development: it depends on employment (§119), entrepreneurship (§175), energy policy (§196), economic activity (§308), commercialization of ecosystem (§243). The solidarity principle is sketched out discussing the poverty risks: social security mechanisms should help withstand poverty (§120). The mutual aid is implicit in §54 stating that belonging to social groups guarantees a 'certain welfare', however, only one ideological model of sociality is envisaged in the document – belonging to the 'culture space' or a 'single national culture'.

National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020 (2012) stops identifying *labklājība* with welfare. The official English translation renders the Latvian word as 'well-being'; in one proposition it is even omitted altogether. In Latvian the document promises "economic breakthrough for the interests of each individual's and the state's *labklājība*", whereas in English there is no reference to welfare: "economic breakthrough in the interest of the people of Latvia and the country" (§15). The Plan mentions *labklājība* 14 times giving no explicit definition. The context suggests the consumer-oriented approach tying *labklājība* to the individual effort and the overall development of economy: education (§31), healthy life-style (§35), decent work (§232), economic break-through (§63), capital investment in production and services (§105), the transfer of the resources to the regions (§346); among the indicators of *labklājība* is GDP per capita income (§77), household expenses for recreation and culture (§223). Only in one occurrence the word points at a positive public effect of *labklājība*: it enables acting in the common interest of society (§69).

The impasse of the concept of *labklājība* promoted by the Saeima and the Government has been recognized by jurists who replaced this word with the notion of the 'socially responsible state' respecting the idea of public good rather than the satisfaction of

individual consumer interests. The socially responsible state provides for social justice; besides the material benefits it envisages also the social position of individuals, levelling of extreme social inequality, guarantees of basic education and gratification of intellectual, social, and cultural needs (Briede *et al.* 2013: 100).

9.4 Conclusion

The contextual connotations of the word *labklājība* in the parliamentary debate express two distinct concepts.

1) Welfare is an individual responsibility of citizens who attain their private material wealth in the process of labor relations, while welfare to persons in need is provided by the state.
2) Welfare is an abstract, general good.

Scholars from the countries with strong welfare state traditions, on the contrary, decouple welfare from economy and outline the non-material benefits. The criterion for social rights is the degree to which they permit people to make their living standards independent of market forces. Thus, the welfare state decommodifies labor, i.e., diminishes citizens' status as 'commodities' (Esping-Andersen 1990); and the dignity of individuals who cannot take care of themselves becomes more salient than the economic considerations (Kuhnle & Hort 2004). Social insurance produces non-material benefits: it reduces uncertainty regarding the material consequences of risk exposure; improves subjective well-being, diminishes the stress related to the future, and motivates individuals to take more risks which could be socially beneficial (Landes 2013: 13).

Historically, welfare state evolved from mutual support systems, however, from the Saeima rostrum the idea of solidarity was articulated clearly only by the president of Federal Republic of Germany, Wolfgang Thierse (24 May 2001). The depoliticization of the parliamentary discourse made elaboration of the *labklājība* notion impossible. The introduction of the depoliticization concept in communication studies in the late 20th century coincided with the decline of the Keynesian welfare state model, which was substituted with other political goals under the influence of post-industrial economy (Jessop 2002: 44). The logic of effective private company management became the foundation of the neoliberal discourse, which is applied to any sphere of social life (Fairclough 2009). Arguing that welfare depends entirely on the effectiveness of economy, politicians shift responsibility to public administration institutions, laws, and the global neoliberal discourse. Assignment of social subsidies to people who cannot sell their labor is perceived as a burden on economic growth because taxation and regulation policies hamper investments and competitiveness. We should keep in mind nevertheless that the distribution of power in capitalist industrial

relations guarantees private investors the rights to define reality of a negative effect on investments and competitiveness, but depoliticization excludes other voices from consideration.

Another tactic of depoliticization is related to the rhetorical use of the word *labklājība* as a good in general. The word charged with such symbolic value makes of any proposition an incontestable argument supporting or discrediting rival opinion. This way, the MPs can blame the opponents, while themselves eschewing discussions on specific policy actions and assuming political responsibility.

The crisis of the welfare state has engendered both political and value crisis, argues Xavier Landes (2016: 51). The depoliticization is a symptom of this crisis inverting cause and effect. As the economic crisis was aggravating, more often the MPs appealed to moralization shedding all responsibility on individuals who miss certain traits of character indispensable for accurate implementation of laws and impeccable operation of institutions (e.g., corrupt politicians, persons who have done nothing for the state). Grammatically, moralization operates in the debitive mood demanding that first citizens change their character and only after that the government welfare policies would bring the intended effects. Instead this research suggests two pragmatic explanations of the welfare problem in Latvia – institutional and conceptual ones. The welfare system is the state administration-managed institution (Public consumption funds in the Soviet Latvia, social budget in the Republic of Latvia), which mandates taxes but neither articulates the principles of mutual support and solidarity nor stipulates for democratic decision-making by those who contribute the resources. This might be the reason for the low reliance on this institution (see Lāce & Rungule 2016) and the unwillingness to pay taxes. Conceptually, politicians lack a clear view about the meaning of welfare which would have enabled building up of a more adequate institution. The depoliticization of the parliamentary discourse, on its turn, prevented discussions of the meaning of *labklājība* and 'welfare' which fostered the uncritical identification of two rather distinct concepts. The current revision of the concept is far from having exhausted the value crisis. Still, the MPs do not discuss welfare in a conceptually consistent framework, instead, there are attempts to break the normality of depoliticizing discourse in order to bring the various connotations of 'welfare' to the political debate.

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10 Undermining Media Pluralism: Impact of Free Municipal Gazettes on Media Market

Anda Rožukalne

10.1 Latvian local media market

The territorial reform of 2011 established 119 municipalities in Latvia. Referring to the law On Local Governments (1994–2015), which demands that a local council publishes binding regulations and explanatory memoranda, almost all local governments founded free official periodical gazettes (the current designation in Latvian is 'free information leaflets'). Some gazettes are entered in the Mass Media Register hereby obtaining the legal status of media outlets. The content, which includes even commercial advertisements, and the form of these official periodicals is analogous to that found in independent mass media. The law, to which local governments refer to legitimize their operation in mass media market, does not in fact list this activity among the autonomous functions of self-government. Explicitly, the law On Local Governments only imposes minimal obligations: "The city or municipality council shall publish the binding regulations and explanatory memorandum thereof in the local newspaper or free publication" (Section 45).

The Union of Latvian Local Governments (*Latvijas Pašvaldību savienība*) interprets the provision too broadly as a duty to establish a media outlet. Guidelines for local council members urge to establish media outlets controlled by local authorities because "the private sector publishes a disproportionally large amount of negative information about local governments and does not offer a proportional amount of positive information. [To prevent this] local governments establish a media outlet in the shape of a commercial unit" (*Latvijas Pašvaldību savienība* 2013: 40). Moreover, regular dissemination of positive information about local government activities is formulated as their duty (p. 68).

Thus, local governments have secured unfair competitive advantage of their outlets, and local newspapers cannot withstand this competition, losing their readers and advertising revenues as a result. In 2011, 41% of the population aged 15–74 read at least one local media outlet; in 2016 their number fell to 33% (TNS Latvia 2014; Kantar TNS 2016).

There are 28 independent local newspapers published in Latvia. The structure of local press reflects the Soviet Latvia division into 26 territory administrations. After the reestablishment of the Republic of Latvia in 1991, most of the local press outlets belonging to former Soviet municipal administrations were privatized by their editorial staff (Rožukalne 2013). During the last decades the local media were operating in a very concentrated market; dominant position, restricted structural diversity and a quasi monopoly over local advertising guaranteed them revenue. Analogous conditions existed in other countries (Nielsen 2015b). Seven local newspapers (mostly in Vidzeme and Kurzeme regions) belong to *SIA Reģionālās preses grupa,* attesting to the concentration of the local press market. Local governments or active politicians are among the owners of some newspapers, such as *Jelgavas Vēstnesis* in Jelgava, and *Latgales laiks* or *Nash Gorod* in Daugavpils. Availability of only one independent media outlet in each municipality (except Liepāja and Daugavpils) makes monopoly position a characteristic of the regional and local press market.

A well-developed online media system exists in Latvia. Local newspapers run their web-pages, many towns have their own news portals, and in all urban municipalities the local Internet portal pilseta24.lv is available. Local radio stations operate in larger cities broadcasting some talk shows, in addition to music; national radio networks include local newscasts in their programming. Eleven small local television studios produce local news and broadcast local events live; local governments own three of these media outlets. The news agenda of the independent television channels Vidzemes televīzija, Latgales reģionālā televīzija, TV Spektrs, TV Kurzeme is closely related to the interests of local governments which acquire air-time for dissemination of information. In fact, subsistence of TV studios depends on this kind of financial investments in production, which opens a way for the political control of the content (Špaks 2016).

Indeed, international research confirms that not in every instance local media are accountable and publish adequate information. More often they react to events, offer a limited range of sources, and write articles in close collaboration with politicians and businesspersons (Nielsen 2015b). On the one hand the quality of local journalism seems *terrible,* but on the other hand, local media are also seen as *terribly important* because they hold local elites at least somewhat accountable, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2015a: 1) summarizes the data of various research papers. Local media fulfil such important functions as delivery of information about local affairs, create and maintain community ties, affect national media agenda, provide a forum for discussion, offer inspiration and good examples, maintain local memories (Costera Meijer 2010; Ofcom 2009; Nielsen 2015a).

In this paper I will assess the role of official gazettes and their interplay with independent local media from the point of view of media pluralism and diversity. Both notions are normative because pluralism of the media structure and the diversity of content are crucial preconditions of democracy. Alternatively, they are designated as external (the structure of media market) and internal (the diversity of media content) pluralism

(Mediamonitor 2009). Data on market concentration are the indicators of external pluralism: media types present in the media structure, variety of content producers and providers as well as of owners of media channels. Heterogeneity of opinions, variety of genres and programs attest to internal pluralism or media diversity (Hitchens 2006).

In this research the owner pluralism refers not only to the number of owners, but to their status as well. An imbalanced media system with a large share of local information outlets belonging to local governments results in content concentration or homogeneity of opinions. In the next sections the external pluralism will be assessed by the market concentration data and the impact of gazettes on media system; the internal pluralism will be measured by means of content analysis.

10.2 Status, functions and content of municipal gazettes

The gazettes have been analyzed according to the categories characteristic of both official and independent media outlets: legal status, size of staff, form of distribution, publication frequency, circulation, form of issue, availability of editorial column, and diversity of content. First, the basic data about the editions was gathered from the homepages of 119 local governments. The second step of the research was content analysis of one issue of each title published in October – November 2016 and uploaded onto homepages. In all, the content of 110 gazettes in a pdf format was analyzed; four local governments (Rīga, Rūjiena, Ventspils, Cibla) do not run their free leaflets, in another five, the print editions are not available online. Finally, the findings were discussed in 15 semi-structured interviews with the editors of gazettes and the chief editors of independent local media.

Most of the gazettes are public relations leaflets aimed at informing local population. The public relation divisions of local governments produce 99 out of 110 editions, two editions are produced by municipal structures (weekly *Jelgavas Vēstnesis* is published by the Jelgava city council institution *Zemgales INFO* employing an editorial staff of nine, *Rēzeknes Vēstnesis* is published by the Rēzekne city council agency *Rēzeknes Kultūras un tūrisma centrs*). Nine editions are produced by purposefully created editorial offices; an editorial council acting according to the editorial office statutes manages three of the mentioned gazettes. Political leadership is represented in the editorial boards and councils of the local municipalities' gazettes, while the chair of the editorial council of *Dundadznieks* is the head of local government.

The Mass Media Register has entries of 48 gazettes, thus legally they are regarded as newspapers. There are no high barriers to enter the mass media market in Latvia. According to the law On the Press and Other Mass Media (1990–2017) any newspaper, magazine, newsletter, and other periodical that is published at least once every three months and has at least 100 copies can be registered as media outlet. The local

government gazettes that are registered in the Mass Media Register acquire the status of media and this status blurs the distinction between the independent media and the voice of political authority.

As a rule, on the front page the gazettes mention the status 'information edition' rendered by the law On Local Governments, but still they strive to identify themselves as media by including in their titles the words like 'news', 'messenger', 'newspaper', 'journal'.

Most of the gazettes (91) are published monthly after the regular session of the local government. Some gazettes are printed bimonthly (5), biweekly (12) or weekly (2). The frequency does not reflect the content diversity, the largest part of the content consists of information provided by the local institutions, e.g., schools, departments of social care or culture. The number of pages varies considerably. A few voluminous gazettes (7%) are printed on 20–24 pages, but more frequent are eight-page (41%) and twelve-page (21%) editions. Color printing is used in 81 gazettes.

Half of all gazettes (51%) are produced by one person; the editorial offices of 15% editions have two or three authors, and four percent have even larger staff of up to nine editors and writers (excluding the layout staff, proof-readers and the like). One third of the outlets (30%) have not provided information about their staff.

Figure 10.1 Circulation of official gazettes (number of copies)

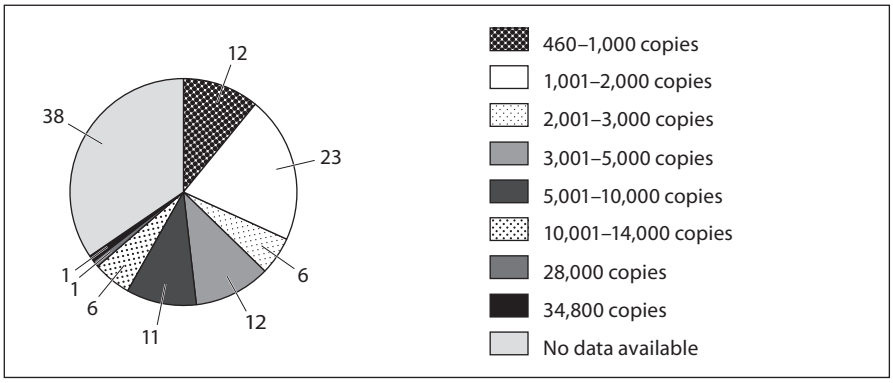
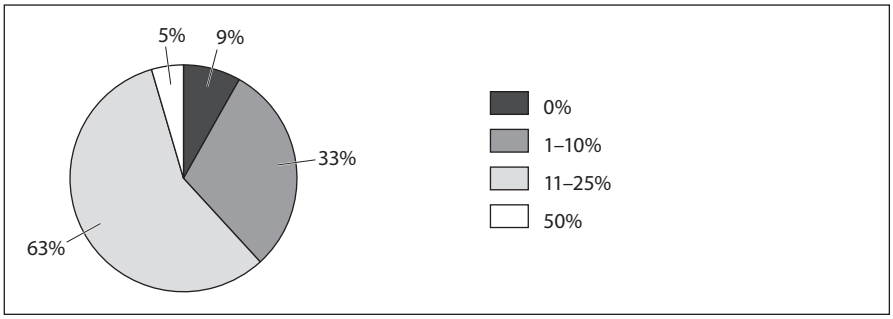


Figure 10.2 Share of official information in a single issue (number of outlets)



The circulation of free editions reflects the number of households in the given municipality (Figure 10.1). In larger municipalities the circulation of the official gazettes leaves the independent media behind. For instance, *Jelgavas Vēstnesis* prints 24,000 copies, *Katram Liepājniekam* 34,800 copies while the circulation of the local independent newspapers in the respective municipalities is 3,000–5,000 copies.

Iecavas Ziņas is the only gazette offering chargeable services according to the price list published on its homepage. Also, this is the only edition that charges money (others are distributed for free): one issue costs EUR 0.21, an annual subscription amounts to EUR 10.24. The distribution form of other gazettes varies: local government finances delivery to post boxes, readers can pick up print editions in libraries, schools, buildings of local administration, shops etc.

None of analyzed editions meets the legal requirement to publish binding regulations and explanatory memoranda. In five editions this kind of information takes up one half of the issue's content, in another 105, even less – 0–25% (Figure 10.2). Therefore, the officially declared purpose is not the main *raison d'être* of the gazettes.

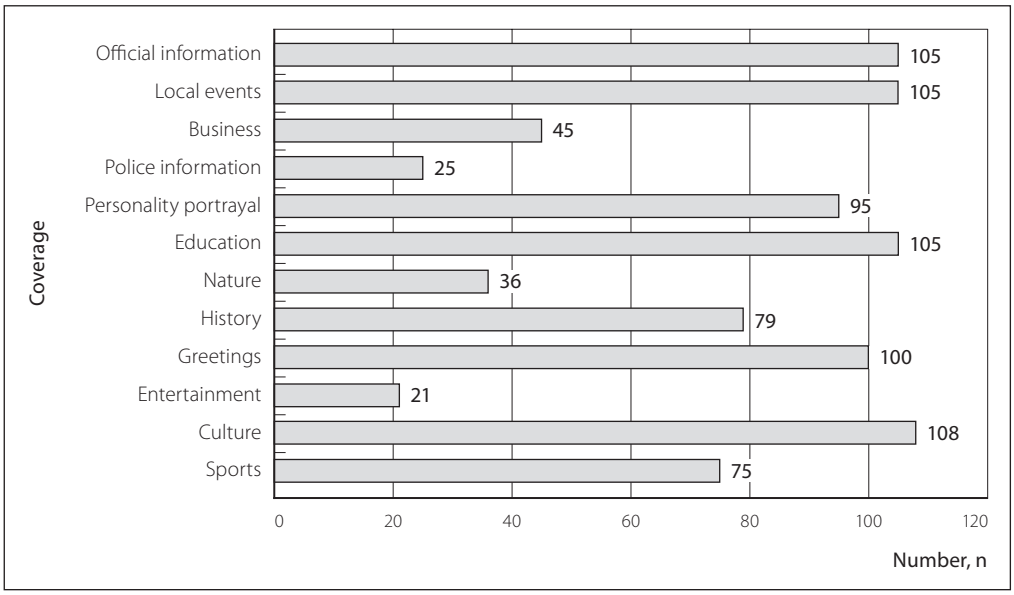
Editorship of the gazettes explains that the official acts are written in a sophisticated language and they should be presented to the readers in a lighter form, while feature articles make gazettes more attractive, drawing the audience's attention to the important official messages.

> Explication of the binding regulations is as dry as dust. We believe that it would be better to substantiate the documents by offering explanations of relevant professionals and cases of good practice. (Kārlis Pozņakovs, PR manager, Rēzekne City Council).

> To meet only the basic duty publishing decisions, regulations, explications? I would have cried in full voice to not allow this. What can be more boring than binding regulations? Feature articles are like carrots [attracting attention]. We have [in this municipality] the only one [newspaper] *Dzirkstele*, they publish their opinion. Should we leave people with only one opinion available? (Jana Igaviņa, PR manager, Gulbene Council)

Striving to make the gazettes more attractive the editorship broadens their functions. The amount and diversity of information irrelevant to self-governance suggests that local authorities strive to play an important role in local media market. Besides the official chronicle the gazettes publish editorials, anniversary greetings to private persons, stories about history, nature, tourism, local personalities; some editions insert school papers and even print poetry by local authors (Figure 10.3). The varied typology of articles suggests imitation of journalism. All the editions published news; features were found in 94 issues, interviews in 64. For instance, the analyzed issue of *Tukuma Laiks* published an editorial and a story by the national news agency while the local government's official information covered two out of 22 pages. The circulation of this gazette is twice the size of the independent *Neatkarīgās Tukuma Ziņas*: 13,285 and 6,200 copies respectively.

Figure 10.3 Topic coverage in official gazettes (number of outlets including a topic)



Despite the diversity of covered topics every single article draws information from only one source. Events are narrated in the first-person. The implementers of municipal institutions – libraries, schools, cultural centers, social welfare facilities – supplement the content with reviews of activities of their institutions. Such reporting turns into the author's self-representation strengthening one's own authority. The everyday routine of these institutions is imposed to the community as the public agenda. Various functions of municipal institutions reflected in the publications leave an impression of thematic diversity thus heading the gazette's structure to that of a mass media.

> I have 70 so-called social journalists among school teachers, personnel of kindergartens, cultural centers, museums, libraries. I send them all e-mails requesting information not longer than 2000 characters because everybody wants to see their articles published in the gazette. There are 57 municipal institutions wishing to tell about their activities… Myself, I like interviewing. Institutions ask me to write a feature about their chiefs celebrating anniversary. Interviews – it is journalism, in no way it is an imitation. We publish life stories, tell about achievements, and disseminate positive opinions. (Jana Igaviņa, PR manager, Gulbene Council)

The form of publications – the layout, headlines, text structure – also imitates journalism.

> The main goal of the publication is informing the population about what happens here, because the interest is not that big. We are blamed for making journalism, but it is not true. We try to put a more interesting title so that readers notice it at all,

> pay attention to the article containing dry information on European Union planning period. It is not interesting, but we attempt to present the text so that people read it. The residents of the municipality do not attend public meetings, they don't take part in polls on important issues. The only thing they are interested about is heating, water supply, plumbing. (Inga Priede, PR division manager until 2017, Talsi Council)

> If we publish very dry information people won't read at all, won't even skim through. We dare do more – the reader is interested in a problem, a businessman, and he thinks the product is more interesting, and so while reading he is going to read the council decisions as well, and the regulations. They believe these articles are more interesting and reading the paper they will read the binding decisions also. This way we can reach the audience better. (Inita Fedko, communications manager, Talsi Council)

Do the official gazettes manage political public relations and promote local politicians? The content analysis reveals that 87 out of 110 publications published articles by or interviews with the chairs or deputy chairs of the local governments, with one or several pictures (in 38 cases) depicting the official. When informing about the official agenda the gazettes tend to promote local politicians who are given an opportunity to offer their comment on the facts.

Editors of the gazettes hold diverging views on the representation of politicians in their publications. The editor of *Jelgavas Vēstnesis*, Kristīne Langenfelde, contends that only practical information (for instance, the schedule of public transportation, the office hours of public institutions, advices on social services etc.) should be published, and politics avoided. The chair of the Valmiera Council addresses the readers of municipal gazette once or twice a year giving his commentaries on local events. Political neutrality and pluralism is an argument in support of the gazette as a fully-fledged source of information for the citizens. Nevertheless, public relations officers in other municipalities stress that the representation of local counsellors is a norm, which cannot be avoided. *Rēzeknes Vēstnesis* is among those gazettes that publish editorials by the head of local government in every issue. He writes on everyday topics, for example, gives advice on how to stand up to noisy neighbors. The PR manager of Rēzekne Council, Kārlis Pozņakovs, holds:

> Yes, a column by the head of local government is necessary. After all he is the chair and people give credence to his words. Since the amount of information permits publication of interviews, the column by the chair is a kind of tradition. I've heard people saying that they read the column first.

Decision-makers tend to define agenda, interpret their activities, give advice pretending to represent the interests of various social groups; in the local chronicle reports they sideline the organizers and the main protagonists of events. The PR manager of Gulbene Council, Jana Igaviņa, denies that the complimentary representation of the ruling politicians augments their chances for reelection.

> The chair of the council is present everywhere. If an important event is taking place, he will be on the front page. This is the local government-controlled channel, a PR tool. Up to now the gazette has not been a political voice… Never was it a tool for helping politicians to be elected to the Council.

The editor-in-chief of Gulbene newspaper *Dzirkstele*, Ginta Alberte, contends that the local counsellors avoid using independent media as a communication platform because they have secured themselves control over the information by means of the local government leaflets. The top-down communication channels reach almost every household, and so the municipal politicians do not feel they need to talk to citizens in person, to debate with those who voice alternative opinions. Financial instruments are used to attenuate expression of divergent opinions in the independent media. One of them is a contract on dissemination of municipal information (advertising), which is an important source of revenue for the local media. One editor of a local newspaper described the relationship with the local authority, of the record: "When negotiating the conditions of a contract I was warned openly: 'We'll monitor the newspaper's conduct, this will affect the amount of allocated advertising funds'."

The editors of the official gazettes seek to attract commercial advertising. Most of them (51%) advertise events organized by the local government. Usually these are free admission culture and sports events financed by taxpayers. Every third gazette (30%) advertises commercial entertainment (concerts, cinema, theatre, balls); commercial notifications by business entities and private persons were found in every fifth outlet (19%). Taking into account the higher circulation figures, the gazettes look more attractive for advertisers than the independent newspapers.

The official gazettes express diverse views on the relevance of commercial information to their primary function. The gazettes of Valmiera and Gulbene councils do not accept commercial advertising; their public relations managers admit their task is not to deform the media market. Advertisements and notifications by municipal and state institutions, as well as ones on cultural events are published free of charge in *Jelgavas Vēstnesis*. The public relations manager of Jelgava City Council, Iveta Šurma, believes that the council should not place its advertisements in the independent media. She stresses that the gazette and the newspaper compete on the media market: "There is nothing wrong with publishing information of municipal institutions, and ads of cultural events. Why should we support a certain businessman, why the municipal budget should be invested in a private business?" The public relations manager of Rēzekne Council, Kārlis Pozņakovs, strongly opposes the publication of commercial advertisements: "The only kind of advertising [in *Rēzeknes Vēstnesis*] is one of the municipal institutions and Concert Hall Gors".

According to the editors, the gazettes fulfil the local government's duty to deliver information to all residents of a given municipality. In practice, the information function is expanded with the functions pertaining to mass media: public agenda

setting, strengthening community bond, and supporting local identity, and even entertaining. To justify this trend, the editors mention a failure of the independent newspapers to supply population with 'adequate' information about the community life. Many newly established local governments founded the free-of-charge gazettes as the economic crisis radically reduced people's disposable income, needed to subscribe a newspaper. "If a citizen cannot buy a subscription should he stay ignorant?", Dace Jase, a former Valmiera Council PR manager says, denying any distortion of the local media market.

The gazettes believe that private media are short of time and resources to report on all the events, their journalists are superficial. The public relations managers criticize the independent newspapers for what they see as 'lazy journalism', because newspapers publish press releases word for word rather than provide original reports. National media's indifference to local issues, and ignorance of the regional variety of voices is another argument voiced in support of the gazettes.

> In national media there is no information about regions. If something is published it is a crime chronicle. Most of the media outlets represent only one point of view advancing their *a priori* judgements. Before we launched our gazette, nobody asked our opinion, because journalists declared their own assertions. For it is important to find a solution to the problem [whereas journalists merely enumerate the defects]… The interest about what is outside Riga is missing. (Iveta Šurma, head of PR division, Jelgava City council)

All drawbacks of journalists are used to devaluate independent media whose commercial targets are judged incompatible with accountability and professionalism. Official gazette therefore embodies 'a positive alternative' to the market-driven journalism. Kristīne Langenfelde, editor-in-chief of *Jelgavas Vēstnesis*, explains:

> Media must sell news, but there is news, which cannot be sold, and they will be published only in a gazette. There was a case in Jelgava when the independent newspaper published non-verified information, later it was not revoked. A gazette is more responsible because we are here, we know our readers. Independent media go the easy way copy-pasting press releases. This is the atrophy of local media editors, their unwillingness to work, to search information. Otherwise we are a media outlet like them… I have a work experience in a local and a national newspaper and I do not see any difference.

The instrumental approach to media convinces the editors of the gazettes that they merely communicate useful information. "What does it mean – we are not independent media? Who is acting independently in this country? Any media outlet is somebody's property, this one is local government's media!", the public relations manager of Jelgava City Council, Iveta Šurma, exclaims rhetorically. The former head of Valmiera Council public relations division, Dace Jase, stresses that gazettes are different. Unlike some of her colleagues, she recognizes the important role of independent media in local

politics and the journalists' right to access information: "We are working hard to meet the needs of our media. Sessions of the council and committees are open. We provide detailed explanations".

The editors of the independent media reveal the negative experience of coexistence with the gazettes. Journalists must compete with the gazettes for the rights to publish information; politicians refuse interviews to 'disloyal' journalists and deny them invitations to special events. Critical reports evoke conflicts with the authorities endangering access to information and contracts on placement of municipal advertising. "After the publication of a critical article we were denied access to information. In some occasions we were warned that our presence was unwelcome at certain events", Mairita Balode, editor of the newspaper *Talsu Vēstis*, recalls. Ginta Alberte of Gulbene newspaper *Dzirkstele* has the same experience: "Our critical opinion is unwelcome. Sometimes it hinders getting information from council members or civil servants".

In the interviews, the communication managers of local governments see an elected body as a representative of general interest *par excellence*, therefore they believe that the independent media running against the interests of municipal councils oppose society at large. "We have surveyed the local people for their attention to the local government newspaper, and they admitted that the information was reliable and responsible, the content differed in comparison with the independent newspaper's predominantly negative treatment of the local government", explains Iveta Šurma from the municipality of Jelgava. Accordingly, the gazettes disregard the agenda set by journalists, their news values and professional quality criteria. The shrinking audience of the independent media seems to attest to the effectiveness of political public relations. Other empirical data attests to this trend, too. According to a representative opinion poll on the use of local media conducted by SKDS in 2014 (N = 1002) majority of respondents seek what Nielsen (2015a: 7) calls 'a diary of local events'. Announcements about recreational events, information about decisions adopted by the local government, notifications about communal facilities are the most important messages for up to 69% of respondents. It should not be a surprise that, according to another SKDS poll commissioned by the Union of Local Governments, every second respondent acquainted with a gazette considers it interesting (51%), while two thirds (64%) accept the provided information as objective (LETA 2016). A critical opinion about top-down communication is expressed by respondents with higher income and those aged 25–34.

A case study of local media use suggests a correlation of reader's attitude to official gazette with its content. The residents of Iecava municipality are involved in creation of their gazette writing their life stories and reports; the readers evaluate such a community-created publication positively. Whereas in Jelgava the readers are aware of the biased self-representation of the local government and they display critical attitude to the official gazettes in general (Gaile 2016). Thus, even if most respondents hold the top-down communication acceptable, one should not ignore the minority's interest

about alternative information enabling citizens' agency in local political affairs. For 11% of respondents, as it was manifested in SKDS 2014 poll, debate on local policies and evaluation of the council's work is very important, and another 38% consider this information important.

10.3 Toward safeguarding pluralism

The local governments do not follow a uniform media policy, however, the overall number of gazettes, their status and content have a negative impact on the media system in Latvia, on external and internal pluralism of the media. The editorship expands the law-assigned function of publishing local legal acts to include variety of issues; this turns the gazettes into hybrid outlets combining the attributes of both power-controlled and independent press. The authors of the gazette content imitate journalism while carrying out political public relations of a local government. Politicians set the public agenda and frame issues, the reports on activities of municipal institutions divert concerns from the issues of public interest to the institutions themselves. The articles are premised on a single-source information representing one-sided view on issues; alternatives are not discussed, and not all gazettes admit the opposition voices. The only critique addresses the shortcomings of community facilities.

The taxpayer-funded gazettes have accumulated a great deal of local information and reach almost all households. In some municipalities the free gazette has become the main or even the sole information source for the population. Publishing advertisements distorts the local media market curtailing revenue of the independent media. The weakened local print and broadcast media opt for survival strategy lessening the watch-dog function in exchange for advertising contracts with municipal institutions. Currently there are no local information outlets able to play the role of political opposition. The gazettes, in turn, have become lap-dogs of local governments habituating citizens to uncritical reporting.

I would suggest that the downturn of political pluralism in the local information market is determined by cultural and institutional factors. Both are closely intertwined, as cultural representations of pluralism shape the political decision-making setting the institutional framework for the operation of the gazettes. Defending the right of the official gazettes to engage in journalism-related activities, the surveyed editors demonstrated a minimal conception of democracy: free elections vest the political majority with the authority to express the will of citizens. The consequence is a top-down model of communication. A widespread argument supporting the gazettes is that they safeguard the right to information for the under-privileged population, which is excluded, due to lack of financial resources, from access to the market-driven mass communication. The public is treated as passive consumers of information not entitled to provide feedback. Neither the formal status of the gazettes accommodates a bottom-up

communication, nor has the content analysis found citizen voices among the sources of information. The satisfaction of most of the respondents with the quality of information revealed in the opinion poll is another argument used to support the top-down model of communication.

The institutional support results from the national government's unwillingness to respect Section 45 of the law On Local Governments, which makes publication of enactments the only binding obligation. The drafting procedure of the first-ever Latvian Media Policy Guidelines 2016–2020 is a case in point. The Guidelines included only one motion of the Latvian Journalists Association: to make amendments in the appropriate regulations banning commercial advertising from the free official publications. The provision was supported by the Competition Council, which ruled that the municipal budget secures an unfair competitive advantage for the gazettes and their presence on the media market impinges on advertising revenue and sustainability of the local independent media (Competition Council 2016). The Supreme Court supported a complaint by an independent local media outlet, *Bauska Dzīve*, deciding that the media outlets published by public bodies can operate on advertising market "only so far as this activity does not have a considerable impact on the private mass media operating on the same market under competitive conditions" (The Supreme Court of Latvia 2017).

As of the end of February 2018 the provision of Guidelines had not been adopted by the Parliament. But, in any case, local governments dispose sufficient amounts of tax money to develop their mass media activities even without commercial revenue. The lobby of local governments advances a too broad an interpretation of Section 45 of the law demanding the eligibility of mass media status to the free publications, which would legitimize the expansion of their communication functions (Rožukalne 2016). The Latvian Journalists Association's motion to prevent entering the free official publications into the national Mass Media Register was dismissed by the Government (Jemberga 2016).

This research suggests that the current operation of the local official gazettes undermines external and internal pluralism of Latvian media. The top-down communication channels of local authorities create new structural barriers to citizens limiting their opportunities to express opinions on community life and discuss the performance of elected representatives. Striving to imitate journalism, the taxpayer-funded gazettes have not created public boards representing the taxpayers. Safeguarding pluralism requires specific institutional solutions closing the loop-holes in law which permit a too broad interpretation of public communication functions of local governments.

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