

# **Political culture in transition: Changing values and consolidation of democratic rule in Slovenia, 1991-2004**

Boštjan BERTALANIČ

Doctoral Program in International Relations  
Department of Advanced Social and International Studies  
University of Tokyo

## **Abstract**

*In the present article I will discuss certain implications of regime change in political culture. The main research question will attempt to address how transition from an authoritarian rule to a democratic model of government affects the structure of political culture. I will demonstrate the empirical implications of my argument taking the case of democratization in Slovenia between 1991 and 2004. In order to do so I will analyze statistical data sets 'Values in Transition' compiled by the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Center at the University of Ljubljana.*

**Keywords:** Slovenia, political culture, communism, democratic transition, values

## 要旨

本論文では、政権交代が政治文化に及ぼす影響を論じる。特に民主化が進行する中での政治文化の構造変化を考察する。具体的には、1991年から2004年までスロベニアでの民主化のケースを取り上げ、リュブリャナ大学の世論マスコミ研究所が集計した統計データを分析し、民主主義や共産主義の政治価値の変化を検討する。

キーワード：スロベニア、政治文化、共産主義、民主化、政治価値

## **1. Introduction**

Values represent an important guiding principle in selecting the course of human action. We often think of them as principles or yardsticks for choosing, or not, specific behaviors. They help us prioritize and judge social conduct as good or bad, lawful or unlawful, desirable or undesirable. Values constitute a key building block of social systems and their institutions.

Political systems are, on the other hand, often based on ideologies and political theories that emphasize the importance of selected social values. Liberal democracy, for example, emphasizes individualism, freedom, reason, equality and tolerance. These categories form the central pillars of liberal thought. Individual freedom (or liberty<sup>1</sup>) is said to be the core value of liberalism and is given priority over equality and justice. This arises naturally from the belief in the individual and the desire to ensure that each person is able to act as he or she chooses (Heywood 2007: 45-47)<sup>2</sup>.

Socialism, on the other hand, stresses the central role of social equality that stems from more basic values of community, fraternity and common ownership. Socialism highlights the importance of an equality of outcome as opposed to an equality of opportunity. Socialists believe that a measure of social equality is the essential guarantee of social stability and cohesion. Sympathy for equality also reflects the social belief that material benefits should be distributed on the basis of need. Liberals do not endorse social equality or an equality of outcome. They rather favor legal (equality before law) and political equality (one person, one vote - one vote, one value) and equality of opportunity (Wright 1987, Heywood 2007: 53-60).

Neoliberal thought takes liberal notions of individualism and liberty to a different level, especially in the relations between the state, the individual and the market. The principal goal of neoliberalism is to further minimize the role of the state in the market in the belief that unregulated market capitalism will deliver efficiency, growth and widespread prosperity. Any kind of state interventionism is viewed with

suspicion and considered damaging. A state with extensive social responsibilities, a 'nanny state', is seen to breed a culture of dependence and to undermine freedom of choice in the marketplace. Instead, faith is placed in self-help, individual responsibility and business initiative. This kind of thinking is often associated with processes surrounding globalization and sometimes identified as neoliberal globalization (Harvey 2007: 1-5, Heywood 2007: 52).

Transition from one type of political rule to another requires substantive reconfiguration of basic procedural and institutional elements that characterize a given type of regime. Among the most common are levels of political participation, centralization or fragmentation of governmental power, distribution of rights and freedoms between government and citizens, patterns of economic organization, stability of political rule and the role of state in society (Share 1987: 525-534). All these elements, however, tend to be embedded in a structured system of political beliefs and values that reinforce or weaken the linking tissues among those elements, which is often termed political culture.

Since democratic transition presupposes an injection of new political values (such as private ownership or market liberalization) and infusion of new meanings into older values, we may wonder what happens to the older authoritarian values and attitudes. Do they disappear from the public psyche or do they remain present? If they remain present, how do they interact with the new value structure? These are the questions that I would like to address in this paper.

I will attempt to argue that regime change does not eradicate older politico-cultural patterns but rather represents a process of augmentation of new political orientations with older ones. More specifically, I will suggest that certain authoritarian values, beliefs, symbols and similar orientations<sup>3</sup> do not disappear but remain present in the public consciousness even after the democratic infrastructure has been consolidated.

Here, I will limit myself to a survey of political culture in Slovenia between 1991 and 2004, an arbitrary transition timeline set between the Slovene Declaration of

Independence and Slovenia's formal acceptance into the European Union (EU). This was also the time when democratic reforms and EU membership criteria were met, signaling a certain level of democratic maturation. Although this fixed timeline is open to discussion, it is not my intention to pursue further argumentation regarding the question of whether transition is still under way or not.

My research will focus on two aspects of political culture in Slovenia. First, I will look into the association between public perceptions of freedom and social equality, the two core values, one representing the former communist system and the other the new democratic system. Second, I will examine the changing perceptions of key roles and responsibilities of the state in society. In the context of the general logic behind democratic transition it would be expected that in the new political order older values would recede and new values strengthen and stabilize. It is my intention to inquire into the validity of such approximation. This will also guide my later focus on the selected variables.

### **1.1 Defining basic concepts: democracy, democratization, communism and political culture**

Before proceeding to the theoretical part of the paper, I would like to clarify some key concepts that appear throughout the text. These include democracy, democratization, communism and political culture.

Democracy is understood here as a liberal democracy which stands for a particular form of democratic rule which balances the principle of limited government against the ideal of popular consent. Democracy is often treated as a homogenous phenomenon - a system of regular and competitive elections based on a universal franchise. There are however rival theories or models of democracy (classical-direct, peoples, developmental and protective democracy), each offering its own version of popular rule. Liberal democracy as a particular model of democracy is nowadays the most common notion and is based on the following features:

- constitutional government based on formal, usually legal rules;
- guarantee of civil liberties and individual rights;
- institutionalized fragmentation of power and a system of check and balances (separation of powers);
- regular elections;
- party competition and political pluralism;
- a private-enterprise economy organized along market lines.

(Ball and Peters 2000: 54-56)

Democratization is closely associated with the concept of democracy and refers to the transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy. The most important features of this process are the granting of basic freedoms and particular political rights, the establishment of popular and competitive elections and (especially in post-communist regimes) the introduction of market reforms.

Democratization represents three, sometimes overlapping, processes. First, the old regime breaks down (usually this involves the loss of legitimacy) and is generally linked to economic failure and faltering loyalty of the police and the military. Second, democratic transition goes through the construction of new liberal-democratic structures and processes. Third, democratic consolidation sees these new structures and processes becoming so embedded in the minds of the elites and the masses that their removal becomes unthinkable and hence democracy becomes 'the only game in town'. In this sense democratic transition denotes a phase in the processes of democratization (Przeworski 1991: 66-88).

Recent democratic transitions in East and South-East Europe have included a shift from communist political rule to democratic rule. Communism in its simplest sense represents the communal organization of social existence on the basis of the collective ownership of property. As a theoretical ideal it is most commonly

associated with the writings of Karl Marx. The main features of 'orthodox' communism as a regime type include:

- Marxism-Leninism as the official ideology;
- The communist party enjoys a monopoly of political power (one-party system);
- The communist party dominates the state machine, creating a fused state-party apparatus;
- The communist party plays the leading role in society, controlling all institutions, including economic, educational, cultural and recreational institutions;
- Economic life is based on state collectivization.

(Ball and Peters 2000: 56-58)

The central theme of this paper is built around the concept of political culture. In its broadest sense culture represents a way of life of a given community of people. In political science, however, the term is used in a narrower sense and refers to the psychological orientation of people towards political structures and processes. More specifically, political culture stands for a pattern of orientation towards political objects, such as state, political parties, government, the constitution, and is expressed in beliefs, symbols and values (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1998: 59).

## **1.2 Methodological aspects of the study**

The empirical data used in this study came from two main sources. Datasets *Values in Transition*, based on the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (SPOS) and collected by the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre (POMCRC) at the University of Ljubljana, formed the base of the survey<sup>4</sup>. The research team of POMCRC has been conducting SPOS regularly since 1968 and it remains the most comprehensive source of empirical data for social scientists in Slovenia. The second source was the World Values Survey (WVS)<sup>5</sup>, a global database for social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life. The WVS has been carried out in close collaboration with the European Values Study (EVS)<sup>6</sup> and

encompasses data of representative national surveys from ninety-seven societies around the globe, containing almost 90 percent of the world's population. These surveys show pervasive changes in what people want out of life and in what they believe. In order to monitor these changes, the EVS/WVS has executed five waves of surveys, from 1981 to 2007.

Next, I would like to address the basic thinking behind the operationalization of political culture. Political culture is constituted of three types of psycho-social orientation: a cognitive orientation (knowledge and beliefs about the political system), an affective orientation (feelings about the political system), and an evaluational orientation (commitment to political values and judgments about the performance of the political system). These components of political culture are normally oriented towards three objective dimensions of politics: structure, process and policy (Diamond 1993: 8).

According to Zver (2002) political culture cannot be measured through everyday expressions of public opinion. He adopts an operational model that emphasizes culture as a sum of values and behaviors that can be empirically measured. Through the application of this approach we can measure political culture on three distinctive levels of expression:

- Declarative level: opinions regarding the political system, structure and processes;
- Implicit value level: choices among (opposite) sets of values;
- Behavioral or participative level: measuring levels of political participation or abstinence.

Since I am interested in the value dimension of political culture, I will concentrate on variables of the first two levels. On the declarative level, I will examine attitudes towards the previous and current political system (socialism and democracy) and levels of trust towards selected political structures. Here I am especially interested in the views regarding the role of state in society. On the implicit level, I will look at choices between specific values such as freedom and equality.

## **2. Political culture in theory**

Knowing the theoretical background can help us understand why political culture is important and how it can help us better understand change in politics of transition. Thinking about political culture can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle who thought that political culture shapes the political system, especially through education (Lukšič 2006: 14).

Modern concerns with political culture originated during WWII when Harold Lasswell, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Erich Fromm theorized on the nature of 'national character'. They based their conclusions on anthropological studies of childrearing patterns in villages and tribal communities, and on clinical (psychiatric) studies. The second period between the 1950s and 1970s was characterized by the adoption of more rigorous quantitative methodological approaches that were firmly founded on statistical analyses of large populations and subcultures, extensive content analysis of media and other procedures. From the 1970s onwards, political culture studies lost vigor due to a large influx of concepts and analytic models from economics. Rational choice models of political behavior dominated and pushed aside the concept of culture until the beginning of the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War public choice theorists realized the limitations of rationalistic assumptions and began to survey the interrelations between rational models and various "softer" factors such as rules, norms, beliefs and values. This reorientation helped to recalibrate the usefulness and reapplication of political culture as a valuable research concept into mainstream political science (Almond 1993: ix-xii).



## **2.1 Three approaches to political culture**

### **2.1.1 Political culture as an independent variable**

This group of scholars echoes Plato and Aristotle and claims that a supportive political culture, sustained across generations, contributes to the stability of political systems. The core assumption of these theorists is that political culture does matter to democracy, independently of other variables, and the development of democratic culture cannot be taken for granted as a natural by-product of democratic practice or institutional design. Almond and Verba (1963), Dahl (1971), Inkeles and Smith (1974) have consistently emphasized the importance of distinctive sets of political values and orientations from citizens (moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, knowledge and participation) for all forms of democratic rule. Also perceptions and beliefs regarding political legitimacy have been recognized as important factors affecting political stability and sustainability of democratic rule. In their studies they addressed patterns of diversity in political beliefs, values and attitudes across various countries (Diamond 1993: 1-7).

Almond and Verba's book *The Civic Culture* (1963) attempted to identify the political culture within which a liberal democracy was most likely to survive and develop. They distinguished three pure types of political culture: parochial, subject and participant. In the parochial political culture, citizens are only indistinctly aware of the existence of a central government. In the subject political culture, citizens see themselves not as participants in the political process but as subjects of the government. In the participant political culture citizens believe both that they can contribute to the system and that they are affected by it. Almond and Verba's core idea was that democracy will prove most stable in societies where subjects and parochial attitudes provide ballast to an essentially participant culture. This mix was termed civic culture (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1998: 59).

In the ideal combination, citizens are sufficiently active in politics to express their preferences to rulers but are not so involved as to refuse to accept decisions with which they disagree. Political culture, however, is not a solid and immutable force and it has a tendency to change. This is what happened in the majority of the established democracies in the West. When Almond and Verba updated their work in the 1980s, they noted that the emergence of various social movements, economic recession, international political events, all affect political culture. For example, public support of government has been weakening in the majority of western democracies. However, not all changes, core beliefs about the general political system remain relatively unaffected (Ibid.: 60).

Putnam (1993) extended Almond and Verba's work and showed how a political culture tends to vary inside a same country, i.e. on a national level political culture tends to be diversified. He observed that a positive political culture, built on a tradition of trust and cooperation, leads to an effective and stable government. Putnam named this tradition of trust and cooperation 'social capital', which he explained as the ability to foster high levels of unity and cooperation which is reflected in stable and effective institutions (Ibid.: 61).

Political culture has been instrumental also in explaining the role of elites during various stages of democratization. While complementing Dahl's contribution, Rustow (1970) developed an influential model explaining how democracy emerges when a relatively small elite decides, either progressively or in a specific historical time, to allow a plurality of opinions while promoting unity and addressing conflicts peacefully through agreed rules and procedures.

Later Lijphart (1977) conducted similar work and addressed the role of elites in fragmented democracies where he observed the predominate role of the elites in the development of a specific culture of rule. Elites operate as a driving force that gradually and incrementally stimulate the emergence of democratic culture, initially or predominantly at the elite level, and at later stages help to propagate it at the general public level (Diamond 1993: 3).

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) developed a model of regime change that explains how a schism among elites jump-starts a series of calculation of risk (and interests) that leads towards liberalization. Here, however, political culture was given a backseat and the authors did not offer any specific explanation as to how changes in values, norms, and beliefs stimulate or advance political transition (Ibid.: 4).

A group of authors (Linz and Stepan 1978, Higley and Burton 1989) applied the concept of elite political culture in explaining stability and change of political rule geared towards democracy. They emphasized the influence of political culture in distinguishing consolidated from nonconsolidated democracies. They all stress that stability of the system depends on the ability of the elites to consolidate and effectively channel mass participation into the mainstream institutions. The ideas of the elites are distinct, though they overlap with the national political culture. They tend to be more liberal on moral and social issues. In post-communist countries leaders defended and argued for a thorough transition to market economy even while the mass culture remained more sympathetic to equality in poverty as practiced under communism (Ibid.: 6-7).

### **2.1.2 Political culture as an intervening variable**

Political culture does not necessarily have to preclude cultural determinism, i.e. political culture does not necessarily predefine political structure and process. We can argue that causality works both ways: attitudes affect structure and behavior, and structure and performance in turn influence attitudes. Political culture can be easily shaped by the performance of a regime, significant historical events and political socialization. Among the more significant determinants we could also cite shifts in the economic system and social structure, international developments, and so on.

In this sense, the second group of scholars explained political culture as an important intervening variable between economic development and democracy. Lipset (1981) demonstrated a positive relationship between democratic development and democracy, and argued that political beliefs are important intervening variables in

this relationship. He argued that for the long-run success of democracy, there is no alternative to economic stability and progress. Economic performance has the power to reshape a given political culture. Post-communist countries had to face a lagging economic situation and this adjustment tested effectiveness and speed of their democratic transition. Furthermore, Inkeles and Diamond (1980) presented more direct evidence of the relationship between level of economic development and prevalence of democratic attributes. Inglehart (1990) has also shown that political culture may be the crucial link between economic development and democracy.

Political culture is subject to change and this can constitute a problem when attempting to measure it. As I mentioned above, when Almond and Verba (1963) re-evaluated their work in the beginning of the 1980s they discovered a considerable change. They found strong evidence that the level of socio-economic development, a general sense of prosperity and the level of education affect the general attitudes towards the political establishment. From their conclusions it has been observed that economic miracles and strong economic growth may assist the emergence of more positive political attitudes towards political institutions (for example the case of West Germany during the 1980s). This may also ignite greater levels of political participation among estranged parts of the population. For example, the democratic transition of Spain, Greece and Portugal was aided by strong economic growth and sustained through their membership in the EU (Ball and Peters 2000: 77-79).

### **2.1.3. The Marxist tradition**

Marx acknowledged the power of ideas, values and beliefs. He wrote with Engels that ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. Ideas and culture are part of the 'superstructure' that is determined by the economic base (the mode of production). Although Marx bestowed a central place to ideas and beliefs of the ruling class (or the elite), in his writings political culture was not conceptualized as an independent variable. It formed an integral part of the economic base (Heywood 2007: 207).

In general, we can say that Marxist literature explains political culture from two theoretical standpoints. The first suggests that political culture is essentially class-specific: members of the same class share the same experiences, have common economic position and interests, they are likely to have broadly similar ideas, values and beliefs. The underlying assumption basically asserts that social existence determines the consciousness of men. The second theoretical view emphasizes the degree to which ideas of the ruling class pervade society and become the ruling ideas of the age. From this point of view Marx describes political culture, or civic culture, as no more than 'bourgeois ideology' which he defines as ideas and theories that serve the interests of the bourgeoisie by disguising the contradictions of capitalist society. This is important because culture, values and beliefs are conceptualized as a form of power (Ibid.: 208).

Modern Marxists, such as Herbert Marcuse or Antonio Gramsci, however, exclude the idea of monopolizing bourgeois ideology and rather accept that cultural, ideological and political competition does exist. Since ideas and values that uphold the capitalist order have an overwhelming advantage over the other ideas and values that question it, they also stress that the competition is unequal. This has been labeled as 'ideological hegemony'. Hegemony of ideas and values is often disguised behind discourse of free speech, open competition and political pluralism. Herbert Marcuse calls this 'repressive tolerance' (Ibid.).

Furthermore, Antonio Gramsci drew attention to the degree to which the class system is upheld not simply by unequal economic and political power but also by bourgeois hegemony. According to him, bourgeois hegemony consists of the spiritual and cultural supremacy of the ruling class brought about through the spread of bourgeois values and beliefs via civil society: media, religious groups, trade unions, social clubs, etc. For Gramsci social change or progress is possible only through a 'battle of ideas' where one set of principles, theories and values displaces the predominant bourgeois ideology (Ibid.).

### **3. Political culture in post-communist societies**

Why should the concept of political culture carry any significance for the study of democratic transition in postcommunist societies? First of all, the process of political and economic reconstruction in former communist states has stimulated, since the 1990s, a renewed interest in the issue of political culture. This is because pervasive state control over a number of generations has destroyed or suppressed the social connections and the sense of civil responsibility that usually sustain democratic politics. The public perceived the need to rebuild civil society in the sense of a space of autonomous groups and associations, including businesses, interest groups, clubs and so on. Second, in order to survive, every society must pass on the skills needed to perform political roles. No matter how much rulers may want to, they find themselves unable to dominate either the process or the content of political socialization. Political socialization is largely an uncontrolled and an uncontrollable process and it serves as a strong stabilizer that safeguards or even replicates status quo. We could say that political culture represents a balancing force that provides a major barrier against planned change (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1998: 64).

In totalitarian regimes there was a greater need to control and shape the basis of the underlying political culture. Communism made a systematic effort to transform political culture. However, these homogenization efforts for a new type of political culture did not materialize and instead evolved into a dual phenomenon: public obedience and support of an individual due to fear of reprisal if otherwise and the true, hidden persona that retained a set of older attitudes towards politics and society. The final collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe in 1989 confirmed the failure of the ruling party to reconstruct political culture. The pre-communist cultural heritage had outlasted official attempts to reconstruct it. Longstanding cultural traditions grew stronger by providing a focus of opposition to communist rule. For example, in many post communist states the Catholic Church reemerged as a major force and a strong counterweight to communist rule. Communism had not managed to extinguish pre-communist political culture. However, democratic transition did not prove straightforward either. Reformed communists retained power in many

countries. One of the problems was that pre-communist national political traditions were themselves non-, or even anti-, democratic. Pre-communist heritage simply offered a weak foundation on which to build a democracy. Moreover, the cultural residue of communism further inhibited democratic consolidation. During communist rule specific behavioral patterns and mind-sets related to political participation had developed which proved to be resilient. As we can see from the post-communist experience, totalitarian regimes can influence a country's political culture, often in unexpected ways (Ibid.: 70-71).

Popular attitudes and public expectations regarding a new political system played an important role in determining the trajectory and speed of political transition. After political reform people expected affluence and comfort overnight. However, these expectations were met with a worsened economic situation and higher rates of unemployment. Lagging economic growth coupled with higher levels of public habituation to economic and social security: inexpensive housing, cheap food, stable employment and income. This can be interpreted as another mark of the communist period on political culture. It created expectations of a welfare safety net, which did not fully survive the transition to market economy. In this sense a given residual of political culture from the previous system slowed down the pace of change. Economic performance proved to be an important determinate for the perception of democratization as both politicians and the political system were mostly judged by their ability to deliver goods (Ibid.: 72).

Political culture has a significant influence during the process of political reconfiguration and integration. For example, the present political culture in Slovenia must be viewed in its larger historical context. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenes have adopted three distinct political subcultures: catholic (clerical), classical liberal and social-democratic. The communist regime put considerable effort into the formation of a new political culture of socialist self-management which was one of the main features of the Yugoslav type of socialism that made it distinct from the Russian type. In the 70s public debate spurred as to the reasons why the new self-management culture was struggling and not yielding enduring effects.

The older tradition was indeed suffocating but was not eradicated. Although the socialist political culture dominated, older attitudes and values remained hidden and persisted through time. Transfer of these older patterns was possible through specific processes of political socialization that in their core remained relatively unaltered. During the communist era Slovenia nurtured two forms of political attitude: (1) the dominant declarative and manifest socialist self-management culture and (2) a mix of older political subcultures from the pre-communist era. These two patterns persisted through the era of democratic transition and can be empirically discerned (Zver 2002: 1001-1002). This leads us now to the empirical part of this paper where I will take a closer look at how the predominant attitudes regarding the role of the state in society and public attitudes toward the value of liberty and equality shifted during democratic transition.

#### **4. The Political culture of Slovenia 1991-2004**

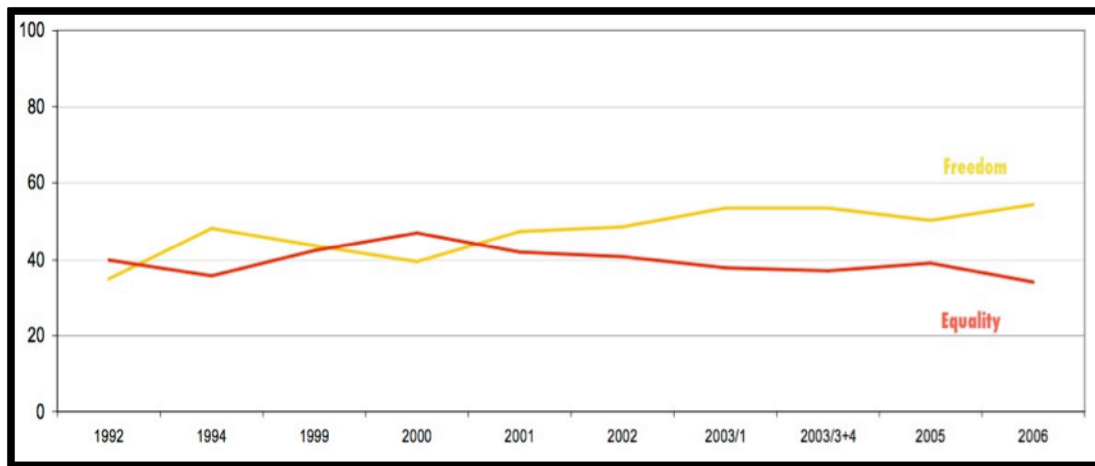
##### **4.1 Measuring changes in public perceptions of freedom and social equality**

Since 1992, the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (SPOS) has been actively measuring the general public's perceptions of freedom and equality by asking which is more important. This measure stems from the theoretical work on the relation between materialists and postmaterialist orientations as developed by Inglehart (1997). The underlying assumption is that as democratic institutionalization progresses, the importance of freedom as a core political value becomes widely accepted and indirectly affects the perception of equality as well. Studies conducted in Slovenia between 1991 and 2004 consistently show a gradual shift away from the egalitarian concept (Fig. 1). From 1992 to 2000 the intensity of attitudes towards both values shows almost equalized values with slight alteration. From 2001 the value of freedom is considerably more emphasized and shows signs of gradual intensification (moving over 50%). This, however, does not lead to a decrease in the importance of equality, which consistently retains the same level of intensity (around 40%) (Toš 2006a: 25).



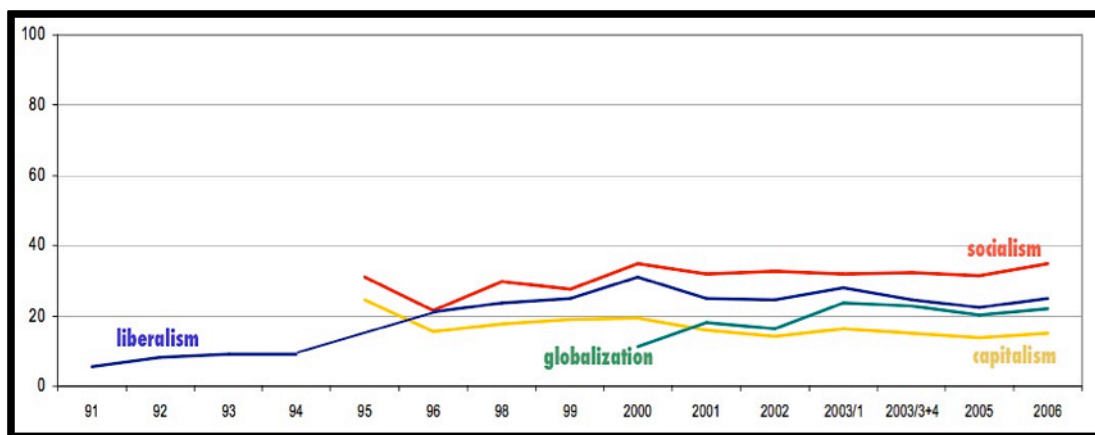
If, however, we attempt to measure both values indirectly, through attitudes towards concepts such as socialism, liberalism, capitalism and globalization, we discover that the egalitarian principle tends to be rated higher than the liberal one, at least on the positive continuum (Fig. 2). The concept of socialism scores a stable positive magnitude (over 30%). Capitalism is rated considerably lower (below 20 %), while liberalism has been gradually gaining in intensity and sustaining values of around 30 % (Ibid.: 23).

**Fig. 1: What is more important: freedom or equality?**



(Toš 2006a: 25)

**Fig. 2: Attitudes towards socialism, liberalism, globalization and capitalism (sum of 'positive' and 'very positive' replies)**



(Toš 2006a: 23)

However, we should not jump to hasty conclusions about people's stronger preferences for socialism over the new political order. The new political system has been enjoying an almost absolute support and is not showing any signs of change. Close to 90 % of respondents consistently describe the democratic system as good. Furthermore, the ratio of those who share neutral feelings towards socialism is substantially higher and between 1999 and 2003 in average scored around 39%. (Table 1) (Toš 2004: 160-163, 182-186, 448-450).

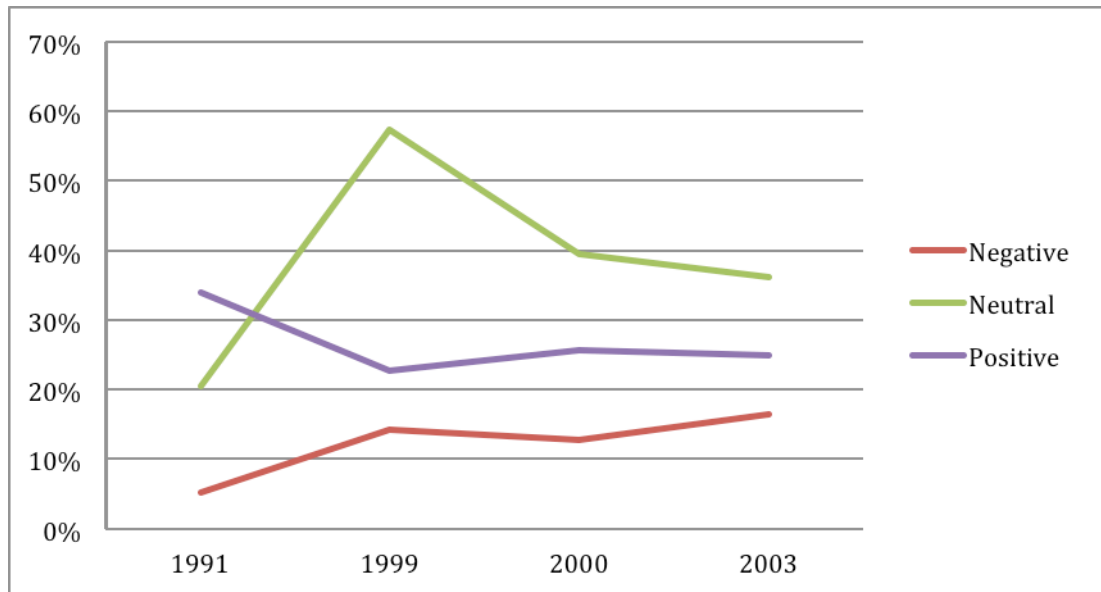
**Table 1: How would you describe your attitudes towards socialism?**

	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	23.7%	31.1%	21%
<b>NEUTRAL</b>	44.7%	35%	37.4%
<b>POSITIVE</b>	23.7%	20.5%	28.3%

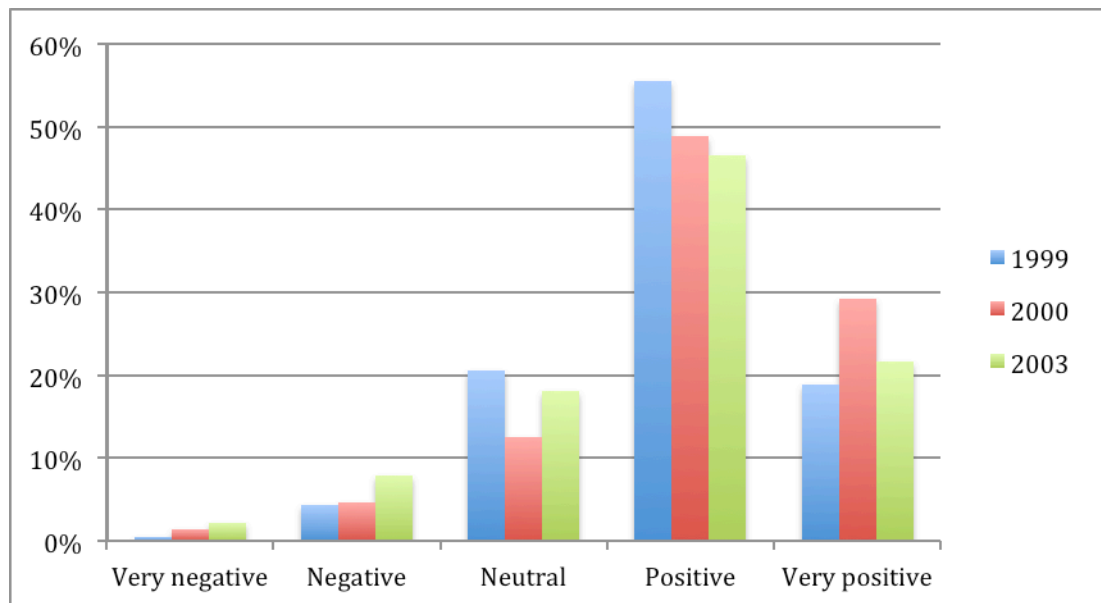
Similarly, there is a higher level of neutrality towards liberalism. On average 38% of respondents answered that they were neutral towards liberal values. Also interesting is a noticeable trend of convergence between positive and negative orientations: the negative trend has been rising while the positive has been declining (Fig. 3) (Toš 1999: 96-107, Toš 2004: 160-163, 182-186, 448-450).

Even though liberal notions of freedom have been gaining acceptance, in general we cannot disqualify the assumption that social equality and egalitarian notions of society retain strong appeal among Slovenes. This remains clearly discernable through attitudes towards socio-economic disparities. On average more than 70% of citizens have consistent positive attitudes towards smaller social disparities. The structure of answers has not changed through the years (Fig. 4) (Toš 1999: 160-164, Toš 2004: 182-186, 448-450).

**Fig. 3: How would you describe your attitudes towards liberalism?**



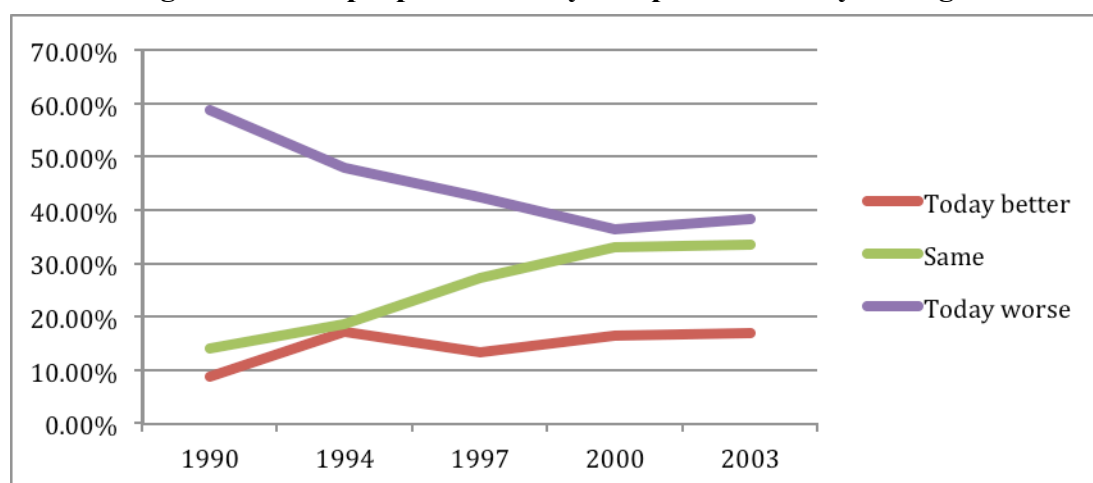
**Fig. 4: How would you describe your attitude towards small social disparities?**



## 4.2. Changing perceptions regarding role and responsibilities of the state in society

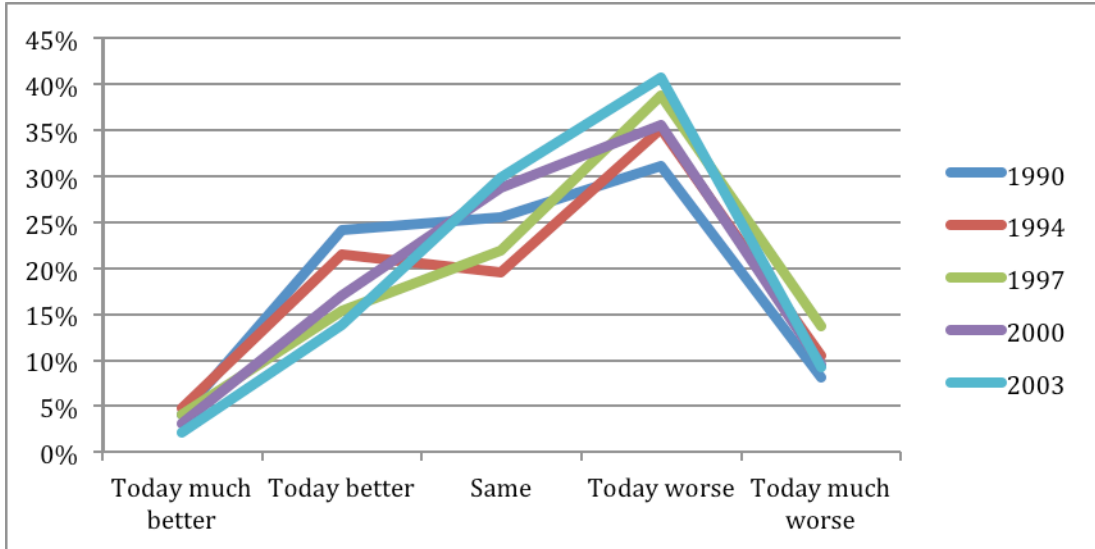
Although from 1991 the quality of life improved considerably, close to 40% of Slovenes still believe that life in the present time is worse compared to the past. A little less than 20% think that life became better (Fig. 5) (Toš 1999: 2-5, 421-424, 782-787, Toš 2004: 182-186, 448-450).

**Fig. 5: How do people live today compared with 5 years ago?**

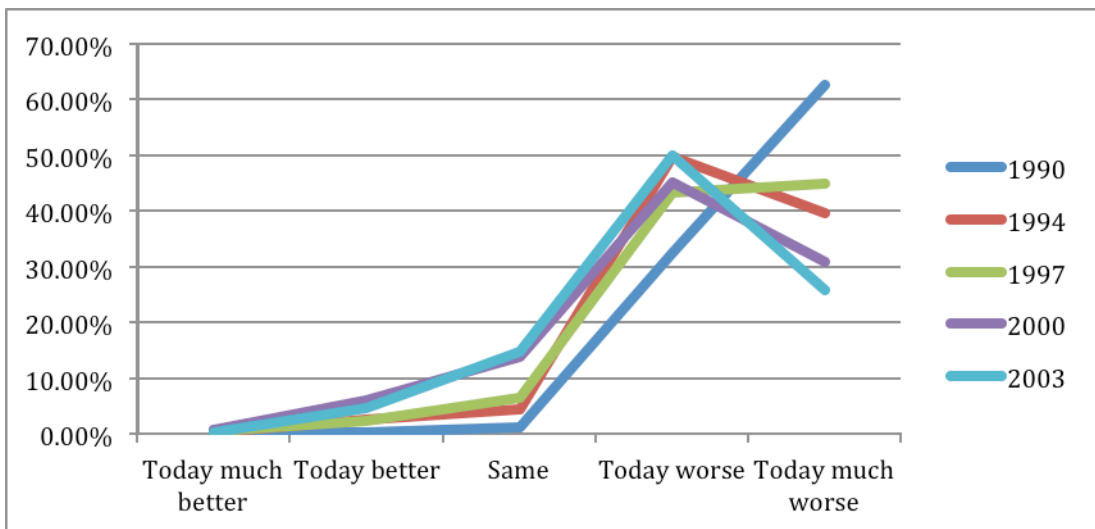


Slovenes think that the state should be doing more, not less in the welfare sector. From their point of view the state should retain a higher standard of social service and actively balance socio-economic disparity. The analysis of available data shows that among Slovenes there is a predominant sentiment expressing deterioration of workers rights and conditions (Fig. 6), worsening employment possibilities (Fig. 7) and reduced accessibility to housing (Fig. 8) (Ibid.).

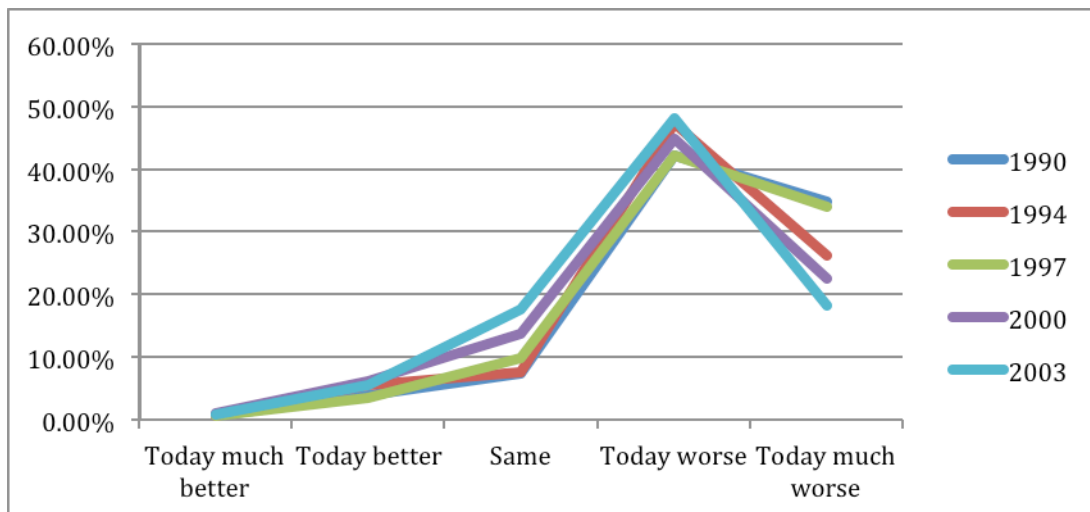
**Fig. 6: Compared with the past how would you describe the current situation of workers and workers rights?**



**Fig. 7: Compared with the past how would you describe the current employment situation?**

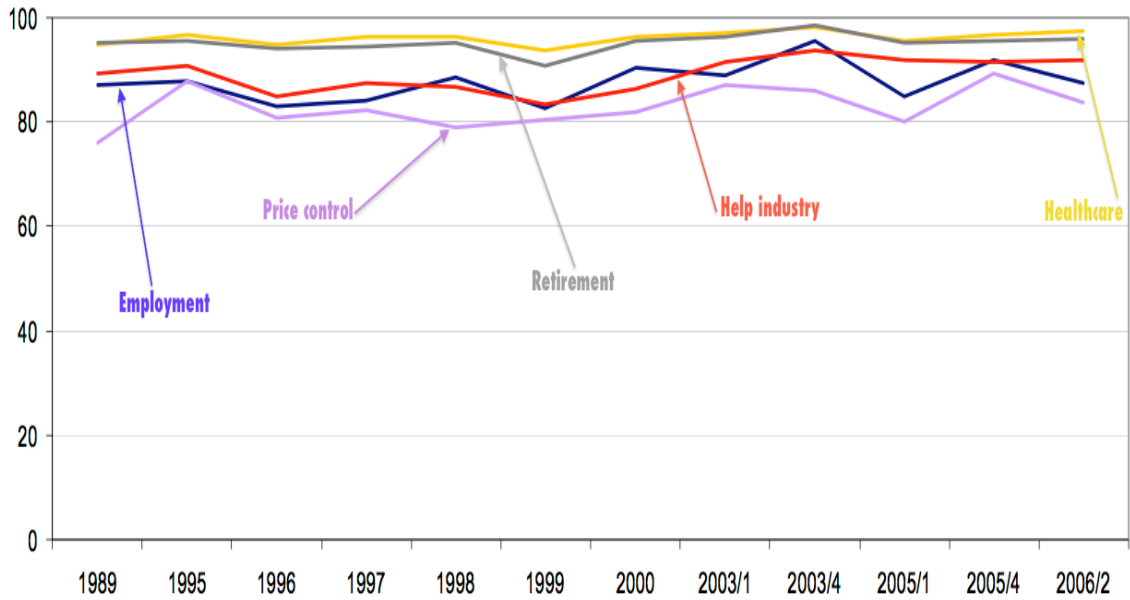


**Fig. 8: Compared with the past how would you describe current housing conditions?**



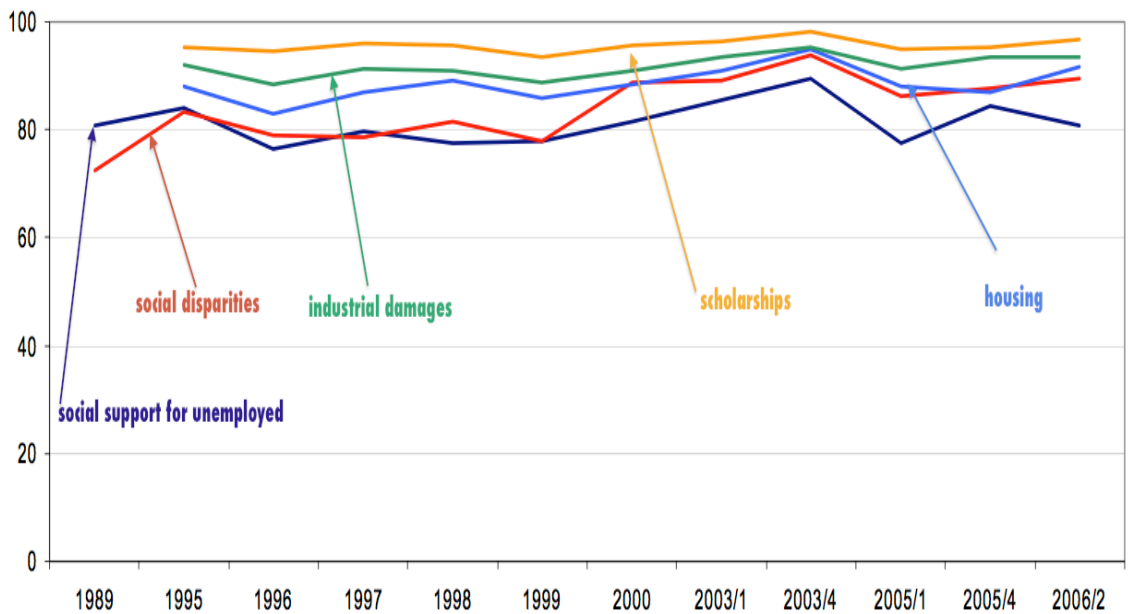
Direct questions regarding the role of the state in society reveals strong public feeling towards a greater and more active role of the state in society. The majority of Slovenes, regardless of their education or socio-economic status, manifest a strong desire to maintain a robust welfare state with clearly defined areas of responsibility. These areas include healthcare, financial support for students, standards of living for the elderly and retired, lessening social-economic disparities between rich and poor, employment and housing. Some even support a higher involvement of the state in stimulating industrial development, prevention of industrial damage and price control (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). From 1989 until now this general trend has not changed and remains a predominant feature of the Slovenian attitude towards the state (Toš 2006b: 9).

**Fig. 9: What should the state be responsible for?**  
**(Percent of answers: absolutely responsible and partly responsible)**



(Toš 2006b: 9)

**Fig. 10: What should the state be responsible for?**  
**(Percent of answers: absolutely responsible and partly responsible)**



(Toš 2006b: 9)

International comparisons based on the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) show that prevailing trends emphasizing a need for maintaining a strong welfare system put Slovenia among other East European states going through democratic transition. Similar scores have been reported in Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary. There is also considerable similarity with some Western European countries where demands for higher state solidarity have been on the rise: Italy, Ireland, France (Ibid.: 10).

## **5. Conclusion**

In the present paper I approached the question of democratic transition through the concept of political culture. I started my argument with a short elaboration of the role of values in society. I showed how two major political ideologies, liberalism and communism, stress the importance of similar values differently. I then emphasized their relation towards two values: liberty and equality. This was later linked to my overall argument regarding democratic transition.

Through the argumentation put forward in this paper I claimed that democratic transition can be thought of as a transition of values. From this I derived the hypothesis that during political transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic system the older values do not disappear. I based my thinking on the empirical characteristics of political culture which is one of the most resilient features of political systems. It works as a stabilizer and in the face of change tends to retain its rigidity. Evidence of this can be located in the ex-communist states, where for example, the pre-communist political values and attitudes have not disappeared and have reemerged after the end of the Cold War.

After explaining the various theories and approaches that apply the concept of political culture to issues of democratization and economic development, I proceeded to the survey of Slovenian democratic transition between the years 1991-



2004. Data concerning Slovenian public perceptions of equality and liberty were filtered and analyzed. The results showed a high level of perseverance of positive attitudes towards the importance of lower levels of socio-economic disparities.

I also looked at how Slovenes perceived the role and responsibilities of the state in society. The public retained high expectations regarding state responsibility in providing a wide palette of social services (employment security, education, housing, health services, economic development, etc.). Findings confirmed that democratization or democratic transition in general does not eradicate older public values, perceptions or attitudes regarding equality or liberty. In Slovenia public expectations regarding the role of the state in providing extensive social services remain high and do not show signs of diminishing.

The replacement of the authoritarian system with a parliamentary free-market system that operates on the basis of free expression of plural (competing) interests ignited considerable controversy that is especially relevant to the topic of the present paper. Similar conclusions have been reached in international comparative studies conducted in Central and Eastern Europe where there is a strong declarative emphasis on a democratic system, private property rights and a free-market. Empirically, however, there is strong opposition to any interference or reform that might weaken or shrink the welfare state and social solidarity in the area of public health and social security (Toš 2004: 16).

Opposition stems from the specific relation between democracy and economic restructuring of post-communist societies experiencing political transition. In this context special concern is expressed regarding social equality and the survival of all in the shifting social environment. After Slovenia entered democratic transition awareness of socio-economic disparities among citizens grew stronger and it has remained high until the present day.

Rus (in Toš 2004: 17), for example, argues that Slovenes do not think of equality as a prerequisite for democracy; they see them as separate concepts which are not interchangeable. This could be interpreted as a sign of civic maturation and waning of the socialist illusion that social equality could lead to political freedom.

Even though social-economic equality might not be crucial for the perception of democracy, it is still a very important factor influencing social equilibrium and stability. In this sense a perception of growing social disparity can affect the fate of democratic consolidation. Slovenes have been strongly and consistently emphasizing the importance of maintaining a vibrant welfare system. Any attempt to diminish levels of social security of the lower social stratum is often interpreted as a sign of growing crisis in social solidarity. Management of social equality/disparity is also important for the maintenance of socio-economic reform and the further development of society in general. Slovenes acknowledge the importance of both the importance of economic freedom and development based on principles of private property and an efficient welfare state. Most public surveys conducted in the 1990s point to the conclusion that maintenance of social stability is largely dependent on the scope and efficiency of the welfare system or the welfare state.

The importance of a welfare state in the process of democratic transition in post-communist states has also been documented in other Eastern European societies, and not just in Slovenia. Major international surveys in this area point to the general expectation that the state will mend socio-economic disparities by supporting an efficient welfare system.

The conflicting demands for a weak presence of the state in the economic sector and strong presence in the social-welfare sector grew further in intensity (Toš 2004: 19). Economic interests demanded further economic liberalization, smaller taxation of corporate profits and less state intervention in the market. On the other hand, the majority, constituted of the working classes, demanded more state responsibility for upholding higher levels of social security and expressed a growing need to secure a

stable social equilibrium through programs to diminish social disparity, promote equal access to public goods and for social services (e.g. schools, healthcare and pension systems, courts, etc.). In this sense the politico-cultural legacy of the former authoritarian system remains present and does not show any sign of disappearing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Here I use both terms interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive introduction to the meaning of liberty in political philosophy refer to Barry (1981).

<sup>3</sup> This is often conceptualized as political contra-culture.

<sup>4</sup> Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja in množičnih komunikacij [Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre]. <[www.cjm.si](http://www.cjm.si)> (2010.11.11).

<sup>5</sup> World Values Survey. <[www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)> (2010.11.11).

<sup>6</sup> European Values Study. <[www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu](http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu)> (2010.11.11).

## **Bibliography**

ALMOND A. Gabriel (1993). Foreword: The Return to Political Culture. In: DIAMOND Larry (ed.). *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*. Boulder: L. Rienner.

ALMOND A. Gabriel and VERBA Sidney (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

BALL R. Alan, PETERS B. Guy (2000). *Modern Politics and Government*. 6th Edition. New York: Palgrave.

BARRY P. Norman (1981). *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*. Hong Kong: Macmillan Press.

DAHL Robert (1971). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

DIAMOND Larry (1993). Introduction: Political Culture and Democracy. In: DIAMOND Larry (ed.). *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*. Boulder: L. Rienner.

HAGUE Rod, HARROP Martin and BRESLIN Shaun (1998). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. 4th Edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

HARVEY David (2007). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press.

- HEYWOOD Andrew (2007). *Politics*. 3rd Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- HIGLEY John and BURTON G. Michael (1989). The Elite Variable in Democratic Transition and Breakdowns. *American Sociological Review* (Washington). vol. 54, no. 1.
- INGLEHART Ronald (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Countries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- INGLEHART Ronald (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- INKELES Alex and SMITH David (1974). *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Nations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- INKELES Alex and DIAMOND Larry (1980). Personal Qualities as a Reflection of Level of National Development. In: ANDREWS Frank and SZALAI Alexander (eds.). *Comparative Studies in the Quality of Life*. London: SAGE.
- LIJPHART Arend (1977). *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- LINZ J. Juan and STEPAN Alfred (1978). *The Breakdown of democratic regimes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- LIPSET Seymour Martin (1981). *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- LUKŠIČ Igor (2006). *Politična kultura: Političnost morale [Political culture: Political aspects of morality]*. Ljubljana: FDV.
- O'DONNELL Guillermo and SCHMITTER Philippe (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- PRZEWORSKI Adam (1991). *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PUTNAM D. Robert (1993). *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- RUSTOW A. Dankwart (1970). Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model. *Comparative Politics* (New York). vol.2, no. 3.
- SHARE Donald (1987). Transition to Democracy and Transition Through Transaction. *Comparative Political Studies* (London). vol. 19, no. 4.
- WRIGHT Anthony (1987). *Socialism: Theories and Practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ZVER Milan (2002). Politična kultura in evropske integracije [Political Culture and European Integrations]. *Teorija in Praksa* (Ljubljana). vol. 39, no. 6.

### **Internet sources**

TOŠ Niko (1999). *Vrednote v prehodu II. Slovensko javno mnenje 1990-1998 [Values in transition II. Slovene public opinion 1990-1998]*. Ljubljana.

<[www.cjm.si/edokumenti](http://www.cjm.si/edokumenti)> (2010.08.29)

TOŠ Niko (2004). *Vrednote v prehodu III. Slovensko javno mnenje 1999-2004 [Values in transition III. Slovene public opinion 1999-2004]*. Ljubljana.

<[www.cjm.si/edokumenti](http://www.cjm.si/edokumenti)> (2010.09.02)

TOŠ Niko (2006a). *Vrednotne orientacije (SJM 2006/2-5. Poročilo) [Value orientations (SJM 2006/2-5. Report)]*. Ljubljana.

<[www.cjm.si/edokumenti](http://www.cjm.si/edokumenti)> (2010.08.28)

TOŠ Niko (2006b). *Razumevanje vloge države, ocene (ne-uspešnosti) njenega delovanja in pogledi na reforme [Understanding the role of state, evaluation of its (nonsuccess) functioning and an overview of reforms]*. Ljubljana.

<[www.cjm.si/edokumenti](http://www.cjm.si/edokumenti)> (2010.11.05)