

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract* The authors present three variants of the statistical analysis of the answers to the open-ended questions "What do you understand by democracy" - an item in the questionnaire "New Democracy and the Local Governance", presented to a sample of 275 Slovene political leaders. These definitions of democracy are compared to other data obtained by this questionnaire in Slovenia and 12 other European countries. The Slovene conception of democracy stands out as conspicuously libertarian, subjectivist, and individualist. This appears to be typical for countries in the phase of transition from the communist to the capitalist system, but neither for the developed capitalist countries, like Sweden and Austria, nor for those on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

democracy, attitudes of political leaders, comparative analysis

### a. The Notion of Democracy as a Projective Test

Today there is hardly anyone, except some neonazis and similar extremists, who would openly assert that they are against democracy. It is fashionable to speak about "democratization" of the former communist countries, but this is a little ironic because communists themselves never asserted that they were undemocratic. On the contrary, they insisted that theirs was the only *true* democracy, while bourgeois democracy was only "formal". The former West Germany was probably more democratic than the East, and yet it was East Germany that bore the proud title of German *Democratic* Republic. On the other hand, such nice things as the killing of Indians, extinction of countless "primitive" tribes, ruthless exploitation of the working class and of colonial peoples were and are all performed in the name of "democracy". Some contemporary political parties are explicitly "democratic" - Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats, simply Democrats, and so on - but it is not clear how far such labels contribute to conceptual clarity because there is practically no political party that would openly admit that it is not democratic.

On the other hand, this general consensus about democracy as something "good" does not mean that everybody understands democracy in the same way. On the contrary, this consensus simply would not be possible if democracy had a clear and generally accepted meaning for everybody. A political theorist may define the essence of democracy very precisely, of course, but if such a precise meaning would be generally accepted, a lot of contemporary "democrats" would be forced to admit that they are *against* democracy. However, our "demo-

crats" probably do not reason in this way at all. They do not start with a definition of democracy, but simply presuppose that democracy is *good* because everybody says so. From this basic premise they *derive* a notion of democracy using a simple, although somewhat flawed, syllogism:

1. Democracy is good, *ergo*:
2. What is good, is democracy.

If this is so, there is little sense in asking people whether they are for democracy, but it might be highly significant to ask them what they *understand* by it. From such a question we would not learn very much about democracy itself, of course. However, one could thus learn a lot about people's *values*. Although we could ask them about their values directly, such questioning would be less effective because of people's natural inhibitions and because of difficulties with abstract formulation of one's own feelings. Here we may learn from the psychologist who, rather than asking his client what he *feels*, presents him Rorschach inkblots and asks what he *sees* in them. In a similar way, the notion of democracy can be used as a kind of Rorschach's inkblot that, because of its blurred contours, permits anybody to "see" in it whatever he wishes, and thus stimulates him to disclose his unconscious strivings, although he himself may be unaware of this.

Naturally, all this must be taken *cum grano salis*. In fact, Rorschach's inkblots are not *entirely* unstructured. It must be admitted that they do to some extent stimulate *specific* kinds of answers. Likewise, the notion of democracy is not *entirely* empty, although its content is more or less blurred. The fact that today the majority of Europeans are pro-democracy, while during the Middle Ages they certainly were not, reflects not only their preference for a *word*, but is also based upon some consensus about the *content* of that word. However, *within* contemporary European society one may measure the differences among values of people on the basis of their definitions of democracy, starting from the premise that they are all pro-democracy and that their preference for democracy does not differentiate between them.

In a way, in contemporary society democracy behaves similarly to Christianity during the Middle Ages, when everybody was supposed to be Christian. Monks and whores, knights and beggars, popes and minstrels, Crusaders and villains, merchants and nobles, the orthodox and the heretics - all were "Christians", although it is obvious that in no way did they all have the same notions about God and Christianity. If an interviewer were to ask those various social groups about their religious opinions, probably a great majority of them would agree about some basic premises of Christianity; but, these commonalities aside, differences between their answers would reveal to us a great deal about their specific values and ways of thinking.

We might obtain similar results if we asked members of contemporary societies about their definition of democracy. If we put such a question to *political leaders*, those representatives and guardians of modern democracy, the answers would be perhaps yet more revealing.

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY

They would indicate the directions in which a society is moving. What democracy "really" is, is only a *theoretical* question, after all; *empirically*, the crucial question is what people *understand* by democracy, while *practically* the understanding of those most *responsible* for the development of society is crucial.

In the research project *New Democracy and Local Governance*, sponsored by the Spark Matsunaga Institute for Peace in Hawaii<sup>2</sup> in which we participate, some thousands of local political leaders in 13 countries that extend continuously from the Adriatic to the Pacific, were asked how they understand democracy. This was an open question: everybody was encouraged to answer with his own words and as exhaustively as he or she wanted. In this paper we will discuss the answers we have obtained in Slovenia.

### b. The Broader Context of Obtained Definitions of Democracy

Our questionnaire has been applied in the following countries: Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan. Not all these countries joined the project at the same time, and not all of them have reached the same phase in the processing of their data. The wealth of our data and the possibilities of international comparisons offer practically unlimited opportunities for processing and interpretation. However, only part of this material has been published. Moreover, new countries are joining the project continuously, so that its end is still not in sight. At any rate, the first exhaustive official report on the results obtained in the first set of countries, including Slovenia, is now in print.

The question about the meaning of democracy was one of some 300 items included in our questionnaire, the majority of which was related to the problem of "new democracy". We supposed that not only in the East, where Western models are now more or less eagerly accepted, but in the West as well, new forms of democracy are developing, for which two main characteristics are essential: (1) a growing awareness of individual and local particularities and (2) a growing connectedness with global issues.

This is not the place to describe these items and the answers obtained in detail. However, a general picture of our results may be offered on the basis of *attitude scales* that were supposed to measure various value orientations important for democracy.

The codes used for designation of these attitude scale and their meanings were as follows:

- CONF: acceptance of differences of opinion and conflicts in political life;
- ECDE: concern for economic development;
- ECEQ: standing for economic equality;
- HONE: standing for honesty in the work of political leaders;
- LOCA: standing for local (as opposed to national) interests;
- PART: standing for participation of people in political decisions;

- CAPT: standing for "capitalist" values of free competition;
- MINR: standing for equal rights of all participants in political decisions.

Our Czech colleagues Mr Jan Reháč and Mrs Irena Bartova have factorized the scores of these scales, together with the countries where they were arrived at, and obtained the elegant two-factorial picture that is presented in *Figure 1*.

Curiously enough, some countries are located on this figure in a similar way as they are located on the geographical map. For instance, all countries belonging to the former Soviet Union are located in the upper right quadrant, while four neighbouring East European countries - Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary - are located in the opposite, lower left quadrant. Exceptions to this rule are no less significant. For instance: Lithuania is very near to Sweden geographically, but on our figure is separated from it by a wide gap that reflects the gap in the political situation of the two countries. At any rate, we have here an interesting political map, reflecting the psychology of the local political elites, in some respects similar to the geographical one, although in some others deviating from it.

No less interesting are the specific political concerns and values characteristic for particular political elites. It may be seen that political leaders in the former Soviet Union, a centralized multinational state, are rather localist and support the rights of minorities. It must be taken into account that after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Russians, who were formerly the dominant nation, have suddenly become minorities in the new states. Thus we can understand why minority rights are such an important issue in Ukraine, a country with an especially strong Russian minority.

On the other hand, it seems that local leaders in the former Soviet Union are more interested in economic than in political issues. However, Lithuanians are relatively more interested in economic development, while others give priority to economic equality. It is obvious that economic concerns will have priority in an economically underdeveloped country. However, Lithuania is economically relatively developed compared with other countries of the former Soviet Union, hence its local leaders are more interested in economic development, while others are more interested in the distribution of the available resources.

Nevertheless, it does not follow that Lithuanians understand economic development in terms of ruthless capitalist competition. This would be too dangerous for an underdeveloped country. On the other hand, local leaders in other Eastern countries, including Slovenia, are expressly pro-capitalist. It is significant that they also are not afraid of conflict.

Ironically, local leaders in these countries are much more pro-capitalist than those in traditionally "capitalist" countries, such as Sweden and Austria. For these, the main value is not capitalism but participation and political equality. It must be taken into account that these are two countries with strong social-democratic traditions. But we think that this is not the whole story and that values that appear here may be typical for the postindustrial and postcapitalist society that is becoming more prominent in the West.

*HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA  
UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY*

One of the present authors tried to compare local leaders in individual countries on the basis of attitude scales in a slightly different way (Makarovič, 1993). We noticed the striking fact that some of the attitude scales correlate strongly with the duration of communist rule in the respective country, while others do not. The scales in question are CONF, ECEQ, HONE, PART, and POEQ. We suspected that these scales could be used as components of a unified measure of democratic attitudes in the Western (non-communist) sense. Later it became apparent that ranks of attitude scales could also be related to the extent to which the respective countries were once included in multinational empires.

We assessed the extent of communist and imperial traditions by one to three + signs. For the communist tradition each + sign stands for a 25-year period under communist rule, while the imperial tradition was assessed in the following way:

- + : nation state with some inclusion in a multinational empire in the past (Sweden);
- ++ : inclusion in a multinational empire (Austro-Hungarian, Russian) in the past, with a strong tradition of the nation state (Poland, Hungary);
- +++ : inclusion in a multinational empire with little or no tradition of a nation state (Slovenia, Austria).

We supposed that the existence of a nation state, where population is nationally homogeneous, is more favourable to the development of democratic attitudes than a multinational empire, where a part of population may claim the right to a privileged status on the basis of its nationality.

On the basis of these presuppositions, we assessed the extent of the communist and imperial tradition for six selected countries, summated the numbers of corresponding + signs and then ranked the sums obtained. Then we ranked the arithmetic means of scores obtained on our five attitude scales in corresponding countries, summated the ranks and ranked their sums (*Table 1*). We obtained a striking similarity between the ranks of communist and imperial tradition on the one side, and our attitude scales on the other. Slovenia, for instance, obtained the same rank (5) on the basis of both criteria. It seems that Marx was right when he wrote that the tradition of dead generations lies like a nightmare in the brains of the living, and that the democracy of attitudes of political leaders may be in fact dependent upon the extent of the communist and the imperial past of the respective country.

Thus we can arrive at the following conclusions:

- that the general level of democratic attitudes may be expressed by the scales CONF, ECEQ, HONE, PART, and POEQ;

- that this level is dependent upon the extent of the imperial and communist past of the respective country.

Admittedly, these conclusions are logically not entirely legitimate, because the first depends upon the second, while the second depends upon the first. They are based upon circular reasoning. However, such reasoning is not uncommon in science. For instance, psychologists validate their intelligence tests by school marks, although they know that the latter are even less valid criteria of intelligence than the tests themselves. They are bound to do so because they simply do not have any direct measure of "real" intelligence. Likewise, we do not have any direct measure of "real" democracy. Therefore we were bound to validate our measures of democracy by the extent of communist and imperial tradition, starting with the presupposition that the latter should correlate with the former. This presupposition is no more and no less plausible than the presupposition of psychologists that school marks should be dependent upon the level of intelligence.

Our "proof" that the level of democracy is dependent upon the extent of the communist and imperial past is therefore no more and no less legitimate than the assertions of psychologists who try to demonstrate, on the basis of their intelligence tests, how far school marks are dependent upon a child's intelligence.

On the other hand, we can add an indirect argument in favour of our hypothesis, that democratic attitudes are dependent upon the extent of imperial tradition. Slovenia and Austria were both once parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and therefore both have an equally strong imperial tradition. However, Slovenia was communist, while Austria was not, and thus we can explain the difference in democratic attitudes between them. As may be seen from *Table 1*, Slovene local leaders lag behind their Austrian colleagues in all six indicators of democracy. Nevertheless, there is an indicator of democratic attitudes that is not listed in our table, and where Slovenes seem to be more democratic than Austrians. This indicator refers to *minority rights*.

It is true that our scale MINR referring to minority rights is not a dependable measure of democracy. We have seen that local leaders in Eastern countries obtained higher averages for MINR than those in Western countries, but this may be a reflection of the single fact that minorities are generally stronger in the East and that respondents may themselves be members of a minority. On the other hand, such "minorities" are in many cases represented by Russians, the once dominant nation, and it is hardly surprising if such a minority claims greater rights for itself. On the other hand, there is no appreciable difference between Austrian and Slovene local leaders as regards their scores on MINR, although the Slovene average is a little higher.

However, there is another item in our questionnaire where we asked explicitly which specific rights our interviewee would grant to specific national minorities. A comparison of Slovene and Austrian answers is shown in *Table 2*. Here we encounter a baffling gap between Slovene local leaders and their Austrian counterparts. Compare the rights which Slovenes are prepared to grant to their Italian and Hungarian minorities with the niggardliness of

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY

Austrians with regard to their corresponding Slovene and Croat minorities, although the latter are no less numerous and no less indigenous than the former!<sup>3</sup> This is still more surprising because we have just observed that Austrian local leaders are in general more democratic than their Slovene colleagues. In spite of all this, it seems that Austrian local leaders cannot rid themselves of the Austro-Hungarian imperial past, where Germans were the dominant nation, while Slovenes and others were subordinated. After World War I, Germans in Austria were humiliated, because they had lost their empire. They were even more humiliated than Germans in Prussia, who did all retain their nation state. The consequence of the resentment that resulted from this humiliation, was World War II. There is nothing more dangerous than a formerly dominant nation that has been humiliated and which cannot rid itself of its complex of superiority. The case of contemporary Serbia is further proof.

Although Slovenia, Austria and other countries gradually recover from the scars of their imperial or communist past, these scars must be not underestimated. At any rate, the democratic attitudes of a nation's political leaders seem to be heavily anchored in the nation's history.

Thus far we have discussed the possibility of determination of "objectively" democratic attitudes. However, we can turn the perspective to the *subjective* side and ask ourselves, how people themselves *perceive* democracy. While earlier we tried to construct an objectively valid concept of democracy, now we abstract from this and leave the task of defining democracy to our interviewees themselves. We will limit our discussion mainly to Slovene data, because detailed data from other countries are still not available.

### c. The Concept of Democracy

The coding of the answers to our question about the meaning of democracy proved to be an extremely difficult methodological problem. In much of the empirical research in sociology coding is a relatively minor issue in comparison to the processing of the data and interpretation of the results obtained. In this case, however, coding was a real ordeal for the authors of the present paper, although neither of us is a beginner in empirical research. In spite of the fact that we used a very sophisticated computer program OKUS (another similar program, TACT, was also available to us but proved even less useful), for text analysis, we could establish again and again that, in this case at least, a computer cannot replace the human mind, cannot do the job of the researcher. Another aspect to this is that the researcher himself cannot perform his job mechanically - mechanical tasks are performed by the computer anyway - but must possess a great deal of perspicacity and a fair share of the ability called *Fingerspitzengefuehl* in German. For instance, he cannot rely on the simple sound of a word, knowing that a word gets its real meaning only in the context of a whole sentence. Each sentence must be studied separately and compared with other similar sentences. On the other hand, he must try several coding systems and find out which of them is the most appropriate in terms of giving justice to the content of the answers, of statistical relevance, and so on. The coding of each element of a definition of democracy is thus complicated

enough; on the other hand, account must be taken of the fact that each definition must be composed of at least two elements - otherwise it would be a mere tautology - and that each interviewee could give more than one definition of democracy.

The fact is that we worked on this coding, although with interruptions, more than two years, starting in 1991, when our field study was performed. For the most part, each of us worked on the problem independently, using his own approach, although we constantly compared and discussed the results obtained. Sometimes our discussions were difficult. It was not always easy to "educate" the computer to serve our specific needs. However, finally we obtained some at least preliminary results that are presented here.

The first of our two approaches could be labelled the *analytical* approach. Here our starting point was that any meaningful definition of democracy must contain more than one element. As Aristotle maintained, any definition must contain a *genus proprium* and to a *differentia specifica*. If it does not contain both, we are refer not concerned with a definition, but with a mere translation, synonymy, or tautology. What should be, then, the *genus proprium* and the *differentia specifica* in a definition of democracy?

We understood democracy as a specific kind of *activity*. In this case, three fundamental questions are:

- *who* performs this activity;
- *what* he does, *i.e.* which activity he performs, and
- *why* he performs this activity.

In other words, here we meet the problem of the *actor*, of his *activity* and of his *goals* or *values*. If democracy is understood as a specific kind of activity, this activity must be additionally specified by its actor as its *causa efficiens* (referring again to Aristotle) and by its goal as its *causa finalis*. All three elements of democracy must be defined if we want to have a "full" definition of democracy.

As we can see, this approach was *analytical* in the Kantian sense. It was *aprioristic*. We wanted to find out not only how our interviewees defined democracy, but also how "full" their definitions were, how far they answered the three basic questions we understood as essential for the definition of democracy.

Our procedure was as follows. First we wrote out *verbatim* a sample of answers that referred to our three basic problems of democracy. On the basis of inspection of these answers we drew up instructions for coding, that was then performed by two experienced students of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY

No more than one answer to each of the three basic questions was taken into account. If more answers were given, only the first was coded. We presumed that the first answer which came to the mind of an interviewee was the most significant for his real opinion. At any rate, the number of answers here is exactly the same as the number of interviewees. All percentages of answers therefore correspond to the percentages of interviewees, and their sums are exactly 100. Coding was not done *verbatim*. However, we tried to distinguish as far as possible words with different meanings, and to group together those with the same meaning.

The results obtained are shown in *Table 3*. The data at the bottom of the table show that 77% of our interviewees understand democracy in terms of specific *values*, while 58% mention specific *activities*. Only 29% are explicit about *actors*.

Specific values, actors and activities are listed on our table according to their rank, while their frequencies are expressed in percentages. Corresponding ranks within the category ( $R_{part}$ ) are listed in the second column, while the last column contains total ranks ( $R_{tot}$ ) that show how frequently any value, actor or activity appears in relation to any other.

Among *values* that are essential to democracy, one quarter of all respondents and one third of all those who gave a specific answer, list *freedom*. We might understand this as a "liberal" conception of democracy, as different from the "socialist" one, for which equality is more important. It is significant that equality is listed almost four times less frequently than freedom. Moreover, equality is usually understood as equality of *opportunity*, i.e. as equality of people in a competitive society, and extremely rarely as absolute equality. On the other hand, the stress on tolerance and pluralism indicates that the majority of our respondents have an individualistic conception of democracy, that implies social differentiation and personal autonomy, while social solidarity is probably less important for them.

The answers concerning actors are in harmony with this. We can see that stress on the *individual* is far the most frequent, while all "collective" terms (the majority, man, people, state) appear all together only half as frequently. Obviously, our respondents do not understand democracy in the etymological sense, as "rule of the *people*", but as something that has to do with individuals only.

This liberal and individualistic conception of democracy is very consistent with what we can observe in *Figure 1*. We have seen that Slovenia and other East-European countries (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, and Hungary) are grouped together in the lower left quadrant, where standing for capitalist competitive values and acceptance of conflict (scales CAPT and CONF) are the most typical. Here we are concerned with the most dynamic countries from the former communist bloc, eager for development of an individualistic, competitive capitalist economy. In other ex-communist countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, there seems to be less willingness to accept the challenge of this adventure, while both traditionally "capitalist" countries, Austria and Sweden, are more social-democratically and post-modernistically, less capitalist oriented.

However, Slovene local leaders are not only *individualistic*; they are also *subjectivistic*. With regard to democratic activities, free expression of *opinions* is more important for them than physical activities and decisions (decisions, political activities, elections). It seems that free expression of one's individuality is more important for them than active participation in social change. Again, democracy here appears as directed to the individual and not to society at large.

On the other hand, it could be conjectured that this "introverted" conception of democracy may be related to the particularities of Slovene history. Slovenes lost their first nation state more than a thousand years ago. Since then they have lived in multinational states that were hierarchically organized and where they held subordinate positions. Therefore they largely lost their interest in politics, and turned to their private affairs. The answers of our respondents may be related to this fact; but verification of this hypothesis would demand a more profound analysis than is possible here.

Our first approach was admittedly rough, because the answers of each interviewee were coded only once on each of the three dimensions, even if there were several different meanings present in the answers. On the other hand, it became obvious that relatively few "full" definitions were given. Actors especially were in the majority of cases not defined at all. Furthermore, we noticed that many answers contained a stereotypical, standard combination of several notions that were different but nevertheless formed a closed whole. They were, properly speaking, not "definitions" at all, but "images", a representation of democracy.

Both circumstances raised the possibility of another, *global* approach. In this case, we simply dropped our three dimensions of democracy and sought only typical "chunks" of notions, without regard for their logical status, that appeared as "images" of democracy. This greatly simplified our problem because we were no longer obliged to work with three dimensions at once, and simply treated specific conceptions of democracy as independent units. On the other hand, this simplification allowed for a more detailed approach elsewhere, because now we could take account of *all* answers obtained, even if a person gave more than one answer to a question. Naturally, this would be difficult to do with standard methods of data processing, but we used the OKUS program, which greatly facilitated our work.

A more detailed description of how this program was adapted to our purposes is given elsewhere (Jug 1993). The final result of our work based on the above premises is presented in *Table 4*. While it is obvious that this table cannot be directly compared to *Table 3*, because it is based on much more complete data, it is nevertheless clear that it is far simpler than the latter. However, from the point of view of logic, it is far from satisfactory. One may notice that the same notion, "freedom", appears here in different categories, combined with different attributes. It is not clear how far we are concerned with only one category, or with several ones.

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY

Therefore, we decided to return partly to the model we used in our first approach. Suppose I can describe democracy with a kind of *statement*. This statement, like any other, must have its *subject* and its *predicate*. If we understand democracy as a kind of activity, the subject of this statement will be something connected with the latter, while its predicate will be the activity itself.

As we have seen before, every activity is connected on the one side with an *actor*, and on the other with *goals and values*. The first is its *causa efficiens*, while the latter are its *causae finales*. In addition, there is yet another difference between the actor and his goals and values in the case of democracy. Actors, individual or collective, are *material* beings, while goals and values are in this case *ideal* principles or abstract states. Activities that are relevant in the case of democracy may be divided in a similar manner. On the one hand we have *material* activities, such as production, decision making, and participation, while on the other we have thoughts, feelings, and their expression.

On the basis of these considerations, we may extenuate our first conception of a "full" definition of democracy, where we demanded three basic elements. According to our revised conception, it is enough that a definition of democracy contains a *predicate* (= activity) and a *subject*, where the subject may be an actor or a value (or goal). Thus, we may represent all possible definitions of democracy in a two-dimensional table, where rows would refer to subjects, while columns would refer to predicates. It is clear that a distinction between the *ideal* and *material* sphere in such a table is not necessary, because an ideal subject may be connected with a material or ideal predicate, a material actor with a material or ideal predicate, and so on. Only the distinction between the subject and predicate, and their connection is essential.

In such a table all full definitions of democracy would be clearly distinguished from incomplete ones. All definitions having a subject and a predicate are "full", while those where the subject row or the predicate column is empty, are incomplete.

The majority of categories with which our reader is familiar from *Tables 3 and 4* fit into our conception of ideal and material subjects and predicates. This shows that the idea of a table such as described above makes sense. However, for the construction of our table a new, complete revision of our coding was necessary.

The authors of the present paper examined again all words contained in our basic material, picked up all those that were semantically relevant for the definition of democracy, and studied systematically all statements in which they were included. We did this work individually and together, in order to reduce subjectivity and avoid misunderstandings as much as possible. Every doubtful case we discussed thoroughly, until we achieved complete agreement between us.

Thus we coded anew all subjects and predicates in our definitions of democracy, and to some extent changed or completed our former codes.

The final list of subjects and predicates we thus obtained is as follows:

1. IDEAL SUBJECTS (goals and values):
  - freedom
  - equality
  - pluralism
  - publicity, public supervision of political authorities
  - rights (of man in general, or other)
2. MATERIAL SUBJECTS (actors):
  - man, men
  - personality, individuality
3. IDEAL PREDICATES (subjective activities):
  - thinking (opinions, ideas...)
  - expression (including speech and press)
4. MATERIAL PREDICATES (objective activities):
  - action (general)
  - decision making
  - participation (in the sense of cooperation in public life)

The frequencies and percentages of these subjects and predicates are shown in *Tables 5a, 5b, and 5c*. Subjects are presented in rows, while predicates are listed in columns. The totals listed on the extreme right and bottom of our tables are not sums of data in the cells, although the latter refer to them. Neither have all our respondents mentioned a determinate subject of a predicate registered in our tables, nor have all of them mentioned only one subject or predicate.

As may be seen from our tables, *subjects* are much more diversified in our obtained definitions of democracy than are their *predicates*. There are 8 subjects and only 5 predicates. On the other hand, among subjects and among predicates alike, *ideal* ones are more frequently represented than *material* ones. One may see that our respondents are for the most part interested in goals and values, rather than in actors of democracy, and that they tend to understand democracy as a matter of thoughts and their expressions, rather than in terms of material action. Here we meet again the typical "*subjective*" conception of democracy that was discussed above.

Among *ideal subjects*, the most important one is *freedom*. The idea of freedom was stressed by almost one third of all respondents. Here we meet the same "*liberal*" conception of democracy which we encountered in our first approach. The value that came next to freedom, *equality*, was encountered only half as frequently. To these basic values follow plurality, rights, publicity, and majority.

## HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY

Among the latter, comparison between *plurality* and *majority* is especially interesting. These values are in a way opposite, because majority means homogenization on the basis of greater numbers, while plurality means preservation of differences. The fact that plurality is almost four times more frequently represented than majority, shows clearly where the sympathies of our respondents lie. In a way, this finding is in agreement with their relatively low stress on equality (in comparison to freedom). Like majority, equality may be understood as a tendency towards *homogeneity*. The only difference is that majority refers to *qualitative* homogeneity, while equality refers to *quantitative* homogeneity.

The case of *rights* is interesting too. Rights may be understood as the *content* aspect of democracy. Human rights refer to *what* is realized in democracy, while other, *formal* aspects refer to *how* it is realized. It can be seen that our respondents are for the most part interested in the formal aspects of democracy, while they find human rights, which constitute its content aspect, to be much less important. In other words, they understand democracy as a special form, rather than as a specific content.

The final item among goals and values of democracy, as it is understood by our respondents, is *publicity*. This is understood mainly as public control of political work, i.e. as supervision of political leaders. Naturally, such supervision is necessary for the effective functioning of democracy. However, it is not one of the central values, but is instrumental only for their realization, and is in this sense subordinate. It seems that this conception is also shared by our respondents, and that it explains the relatively low rank achieved by this value.

As regards the *material subjects* of democracy, the impression we detained in our first approach is confirmed again. Our respondents have a more or less *individualist* conception of democracy. They did not mention any collective actors. Although they spoke relatively frequently about *man* or *men* (in plural), they did not mention *people*. It might even be asserted that the etymological meaning of democracy, that is "rule of the people", is quite alien to them.

In our coding we differentiated between man or men in general (as human beings), and *personality*. This code was used when one's individuality or uniqueness was stressed. It may be seen that this meaning is less frequent than man or men in general. However, its frequency is still substantial and agrees rather well with the stress on *plurality* we met before. In our former coding we identified the multiparty system as a special feature in the definition of democracy, but party as such had a relatively minor place in the value system of our respondents. It seems that the plurality in the conceptions of our respondents is first and foremost plurality of *individuals*.

Among *ideal predicates* of democracy, our respondents stressed two: *thinking* and *expression* (spoken, written or otherwise) of one's own thoughts. Both were mentioned more frequently than any other kind of activity, and show, as we have said already, a specific *subjectivity* in our respondents' conception of democracy. On the other hand, thinking appears more frequently than expression. This is congruent with our respondents' respect of person-

ality and subjectivity. It seems that they do not understand expression of one's opinions as a mere democratic ritual, and see cultivation of human personality as an indispensable pre-supposition for it.

There are three kinds of *material predicates* in our table. Among them only *decision making* is really important. According to our respondents, the possibility of making decisions is one of the crucial features of democracy. The possibility of *action* (in general) is less important, and so is *participation*.

In *Table 5a*, the *correspondences* of subjects and predicates are shown. It may be seen that almost any subject may be connected to almost any predicate, and there are relatively few really salient combinations of a specific subject with a specific predicate. However, after crosstabulation of our subjects and predicates, we obtained some statistically significant phi's, although the majority of them were low and not significant. The values of significant ones were 0.12 and 0.24 as the lower and the upper extreme, while their p's moved between the 0.05 and 0.0001 level. In *Tables 5b* and *5c*, percentages corresponding to connections where statistically significant p's were obtained are registered. These percentages are marked with X's that denote the values of p, in the following manner:

p < 0.05 ..... no X

p < 0.01 ..... one X

p < 0.001 ..... two XX's

p < 0.0001 ..... three XXX's

It is evident that two main clusters are formed by these significant connections:

- *plurality* and *freedom* are associated to *expression* and *action*;
- *equality* and *man* are associated to *decision*.

For the first approximation, we may distinguish here between the *libertarian* and the *equalitarian* cluster. The libertarian cluster is richer. This is congruent with the fact that freedom is much more stressed in the answers of our respondents than equality.

Although our findings are by no means final, we think that we have done in this paper at least two things:

- demonstrated that Slovene local leaders have a typically libertarian, subjectivist, and individualist conception of democracy;
- laid some foundations for future study of conceptions of democracy, and their typology.

#### d. Conclusions

In this paper we analyzed the answers of Slovene local leaders to an open question about the meaning of democracy. The openness of this question caused tremendous methodological difficulties, but was on the other hand an important asset because it made possible a deep analysis of the conceptions of democracy of our respondents. We obtained an insight not only into what they think about democracy, but also recognized which aspects of democracy are really important for them, and which are less so.

We have put our analysis in the broader context of the research project *New Democracy and Local Governance*, that is being carried out in a dozen European and Asian, ex-communist and traditionally capitalist countries. This enabled us to compare the obtained definitions of democracy with other data collected by our questionnaire, and to put them into a broader international context.

The opinions, conceptions, and attitudes of Slovene local leaders simply cannot be understood if they are not put in a broader geographical and historical context. Statistical analysis of the attitudes of local leaders from various countries, performed by Rehak and Bartova, has shown that Slovenia belongs to a specific cluster of ex-communist East European countries that is different from that of the countries of the former Soviet Union as well as from traditional capitalist countries, such as Austria and Sweden. Interestingly enough, it is precisely in these countries that classical "capitalist" values, such as individualism, competition, and private property, are most important, and not in traditionally capitalist ones. Further international comparisons have shown that historical dimensions must also be taken into account. Not only communism, but also the much more distant imperial past has left important traces in the mentalities of present-day political leaders in these countries.

In this connection, we noticed some interesting similarities in the attitudes of Slovene and Austrian local leaders. In both cases we can still observe the consequences of both countries' long inclusion in the Habsburg empire. However, we could observe that Slovene local leaders are much more tolerant towards their national minorities than the Austrian ones are. Here we meet again, although in a quite different context, the value of pluralism that appeared in the Slovene enthusiasm for "capitalist" values.

In definitions of democracy, as formulated by Slovene local leaders, we encounter similar values again. The most important democratic value, stressed by almost one third of our respondents, was freedom. The accent on freedom also correlated with that on the expression of one's opinions. Both variables were part of a common cluster, that included plurality. On the other hand, plurality was relatively frequently present in Slovene local leaders' definitions of democracy.

While we still do not have data about definitions of democracy formulated by local leaders in other countries, we do nevertheless have an impression that Slovene conceptions of democracy are rather specific. Further research will confirm or refute this general impression.

## NOTES

1. This is a revised and enlarged version of the paper that was presented at the congress of Austrian sociologists with the title *Kleine Staaten in grosser Gesellschaft*, University of Klagenfurt, Austria, 25-27 November 1993.
2. We sincerely thank the leaders and participants in the project. Compare Jacob-Ostrowski-Teune (ed.) (1993), and Makarovič 1992.
3. It is true that they are willing to grant them cultural autonomy, but they are very reserved as regards schools and political representation. On the other hand, cultural autonomy is an empty word if there are no national schools.

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*HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA  
UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY*

TABLES

**TABLE 1 Ranks of communist and imperial traditions and attitude scales for six selected countries**

| VARIABLES    | Russia | Poland | Slovenia | Hungary | Austria | Sweden |
|--------------|--------|--------|----------|---------|---------|--------|
| Communist t. | +++    | ++     | ++       | ++      | -       | -      |
| Imperial t   | +++    | ++     | +++      | ++      | +++     | +      |
| Sum of +     | 6      | 4      | 5        | 4       | 3       | 1      |
| Rank of      | 6      | 3.5    | 5        | 3.5     | 2       | 1      |
| S CON        | 6      | 3      | 5        | 2       | 4       | 1      |
| C ECE        | 2      | 6      | 5        | 4       | 3       | 1      |
| A HON        | 4      | 2      | 6        | 5       | 3       | 1      |
| L PAR        | 6      | 5      | 3        | 4       | 2       | 1      |
| E POEQ       | 6      | 3      | 4        | 5       | 2       | 1      |
| S            |        |        |          |         |         |        |
| Sum of ranks | 24     | 19     | 23       | 20      | 14      | 5      |
| Rank of sums | 6      | 3      | 5        | 4       | 2       | 1      |

TABLE 2 Slovene and Austrian local leaders on the rights of minorities %

| Minorities should have their own: | Slovene minorities                     |         |    | Austrian minorities |        |      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------|----|---------------------|--------|------|
|                                   | Ital.& Immigr. <sup>1</sup><br>Hungar. | Gypsies |    | Sloven.             | Croats | Jews |
| .cultural org.                    | 97                                     | 92      | 90 | 92                  | 91     | 90   |
| .churches                         | 73                                     | 59      | 51 | 71                  | 70     | 85   |
| .press                            | 95                                     | 55      | 63 | 70                  | 69     | 65   |
| .offic.language                   | 60                                     | 8       | 13 | 62                  | 60     | 47   |
| .repr.in elected<br>bodies        | 93                                     | 50      | 65 | 54                  | 52     | 49   |
| .schools                          | 83                                     | 32      | 38 | 50                  | 48     | 4    |
| .polit.parties                    | 72                                     | 56      | 52 | 43                  | 43     | 40   |

<sup>1</sup> Immigrants from former Yugoslav republics

*HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA  
UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY*

**TABLE 3 Democratic values, actors, and activities**

| DEFINITIONS |                        | %  | R <sub>part</sub> | R <sub>tot</sub> |
|-------------|------------------------|----|-------------------|------------------|
|             | Freedom                | 27 | 1                 | 2                |
| V           | Tolerance              | 14 | 2                 | 4                |
| A           | Rights                 | 12 | 3                 | 5.6              |
| L           | Pluralism              | 8  | 4                 | 7                |
| U           | Equality of opportunit | 7  | 5                 | 8                |
| E           | Reciprocity            | 4  | 6                 | 11               |
| S           | Justice                | 1  | 7.5               |                  |
|             | Equality               | 1  | 7.5               |                  |
| A           | Individual             | 19 | 1                 | 3                |
| C           | Majority               | 4  | 2                 | 11               |
| T           | Man                    | 3  | 3                 |                  |
| O           | People                 | 2  | 4                 |                  |
| R           | State                  | 1  | 5                 |                  |
| S           |                        |    |                   |                  |
| A           | Expression of opinions | 33 | 1                 | 1                |
| C           | Decisions              | 12 | 2                 | 5.5              |
| T           | Political activities   | 6  | 3                 | 9                |
| I           | Elections              | 4  | 4                 | 11               |
| V           | Respecting contracts   | 2  | 5                 |                  |
| I           | Public supervision     | 1  | 6                 |                  |
| T           |                        |    |                   |                  |
| I           |                        |    |                   |                  |
| E           |                        |    |                   |                  |
| S           |                        |    |                   |                  |
|             | Values defined         | 77 |                   | 1                |
|             | Actors defined         | 29 |                   | 3                |
|             | Activities defined     | 58 |                   | 2                |

TABLE 4 Definitions of democracy - global approach

| DEFINITION              | Frequency | %    |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Freedom of speech       | 82        | 29.8 |
| Freedom of assembly     | 10        | 3.6  |
| Freedom of decisions    | 9         | 3.3  |
| Freedom of the press    | 7         | 2.5  |
| Freedom (not qualified) | 51        | 18.5 |
| Equality                | 49        | 17.8 |
| Dialogue                | 36        | 13.1 |
| Multiparty system       | 35        | 12.7 |
| Participation           | 32        | 11.6 |
| Human rights            | 19        | 6.9  |
| Pluralism               | 18        | 6.5  |
| Respect of law          | 19        | 6.5  |
| Public supervision      | 8         | 2.9  |
| Other, N.A.             | 20        | 7.3  |

*HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA  
UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY*

**TABLE 5a Subjects and predicates of democracy: frequencies**

| Predicates<br>Subjects | Think-<br>ing | Expres-<br>sion | Deci-<br>sion | Action | Partici-<br>pation | Total |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Freedom                | 22            | 32              | 16            | 9      | 2                  | 89    |
| Equality               | 13            | 6               | 14            | 1      | 2                  | 47    |
| Plurality              | 17            | 14              | 7             | 0      | 1                  | 42    |
| Majority               | 2             | 1               | 6             | 0      | 1                  | 11    |
| Publicity              | 5             | 0               | 4             | 0      | 0                  | 13    |
| Rights                 | 4             | 8               | 5             | 1      | 1                  | 31    |
| Man, men               | 5             | 8               | 12            | 1      | 3                  | 37    |
| Personality            | 5             | 5               | 5             | 2      | 0                  | 25    |
| <b>Total</b>           | 65            | 59              | 44            | 11     | 11                 | 275   |

TABLE 5b Significant deviations - row percentages

| Predicates<br>Subjects | Think-<br>ing     | Expres-<br>sion      | Deci-<br>sion     | Action             | Partici-<br>pation | Total |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Freedom                |                   | 35.9 <sup>xxxx</sup> |                   | 10.1 <sup>xx</sup> |                    | 100   |
| Equality               |                   |                      | 29.8 <sup>x</sup> |                    |                    | 100   |
| Plurality              | 40.5 <sup>x</sup> | 33.3                 |                   |                    |                    | 100   |
| Majority               |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 100   |
| Publicity              |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 100   |
| Rights                 |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 100   |
| Man, men               |                   |                      | 32.4 <sup>x</sup> |                    |                    | 100   |
| Personality            |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 100   |
| Total                  | 23.6              | 21.4                 | 16.0              | 4.0                | 4.0                | 100   |

*HOW THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE IN SLOVENIA  
UNDERSTANDS DEMOCRACY*

**TABLE 5c Significant deviations - column percentages**

| Predicates<br>Subjects | Think-<br>ing     | Expres-<br>sion      | Deci-<br>sion     | Action             | Partici-<br>pation | Total      |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Freedom                |                   | 54.2 <sup>xxxx</sup> |                   | 81.8 <sup>xx</sup> |                    | 32.4       |
| Equality               |                   |                      | 31.8 <sup>x</sup> |                    |                    | 17.1       |
| Plurality              | 26.1 <sup>x</sup> | 23.7                 |                   |                    |                    | 15.3       |
| Majority               |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 4.0        |
| Publicity              |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 4.7        |
| Rights                 |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 11.3       |
| Man, men               |                   |                      | 27.3 <sup>x</sup> |                    |                    | 13.4       |
| Personality            |                   |                      |                   |                    |                    | 9.1        |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>        | <b>100</b>           | <b>100</b>        | <b>100</b>         | <b>100</b>         | <b>100</b> |

FIGURE 1 Countries of local leaders and their value orientations in the two-factorial space (Rehak and Bartova)

