

Social evolution of Estonia since the 1990s

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The transformation in Estonian society is in the focus of the book, based on the work in a nearly twenty-year-long collaboration of researchers. The aim of the authors was to theoretically synthesise the rich empirical data through a range of representative population surveys. Primary data was taken from regular surveys conducted by the research group as well as from focus group discussions. The book covers the period after 1991 and is structured in 10 chapters. The chapters take the readers from the methodological and theoretical background through topics that are closely linked to each other while observing the various recent changes in the Estonian society.

Despite of the small size of population, Estonia has attracted the attention of many researchers over the past decades due to its unique and rapid transformation process. Chapter 1 provides detailed introduction of the basis of theoretical and methodological approach. On page 2, one can find a long list of authors dealing with the concept of life-world that served as a basis for the conceptualisation in the book. It proves that the theoretical basis is really strong. The morphogenetic approach, as

a framing concept, provides a valuable methodological toolkit for understanding the emerging differences.

The empirical material is based on unique data series from representative population surveys in five waves (2002, 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014). All surveys covered the evaluation of social changes, trust in institutions, political preferences, lifestyle, social and economic status and other socio-demographic indicators, thus provided a deep sight into Estonian society.

The model proposed by the authors is unique from several perspectives:

- it uses a holistic and historically embedded approach to social changes,
- it explains the relational character of social change processes, and
- it explains simultaneous dynamics of social morphogenesis and morphostasis.

Moreover, the originality of the book is the conceptual synthesis of several approaches to social transformations, observing the interrelated cultural and structural changes in their complexity. One of the most interesting results of the study is related to the fact that morphostasis and morphogenesis can occur alternately or even simultaneously in the transforming Estonian society. The main value in the authors' approach is to reveal the connection between the theories of processes of social changes and to follow their development through real historical time.

Chapter 2 gives an overview on how Estonia managed to overcome the difficulties and develop in the post-Soviet era and highlights the importance of the education, qualification, readiness for innovation, as well as the rapid spread of ICT technologies, making the country one of the forerunners of the digital revolution in Europe. Estonia was very much motivated and able to attract and adopt innovations that boosted the development process. This chapter also links to the fact that is underlined in development policies in general, viz. education, the qualification level of society is inevitable to achieve economic development.

Chapter 3 deals with the analysis of the relationship between the media use and cultural involvement and between socio-cultural interaction and critical realism. It emphasizes the important role of mass media and the media themselves. The analysis shows that they play significant role in double morphogenesis, supporting the

formation of different modes of reflexivity and the creation of new media-centred agencies related to the types of media consumption. The authors' empirical data also support the idea that reflexivity is a catalyst for resources of participation and connectedness.

In the surveys, several approaches to political system have been addresses, thus Chapter 4 focused on the analysis of Estonian society in political participation. The survey provided data for the empirical analysis in the fields of participation in the institutionalised forms of political life, informal political actions, usage of media for political purposes, as well as political attitudes and orientations, assessment of the state and the market, providing a multidimensional approach. Based on the results, it can be stated that the processes taking place in Estonian politics represent deep processes of structuration in society and the development of political agency in various social groups.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the theoretical approaches to how the various lifestyles of people influence social structure and vice versa. Based on the data, five clusters have been created distinguishing the extent of involvement. The most important conclusion based on the analysis is that the involvement in social action was promoted by the social action itself.

In Chapter 6 one can see that Estonia is a good example to show the changes in spatial mobility, since various spatial transformations took place within a relatively short period. The aim of the chapter is to explain the driving mechanisms of such transformations. In the globalised world, mobility issues get increased attention, however one can see that recent and ongoing transformations do not have the same effect on different social groups. In the case of Estonia, there were two significant issues since the 1990s influencing the mobility, viz. the fall of the Iron Curtain as well as the accession to the European Union.

Chapter 7 provides an overview how individuals cope with accelerating time. The chapter was inspired by Hartmut Rosa's conceptualisation of speeding-up and analyses the economic logic of acceleration through three main dimensions, or inner motors (technical acceleration, cultural motor and structural motor). By using the mixed-method approach, authors defined six groups representing the ideal types of

time-use capability and explained the ways of adapting to technological and structural speeding-up. The typology shows that individual movement from one type to another is limited due to education, age, family obligations or personality traits.

Chapter 8 deals with a specific issue that is related to all the segments of the research, since the existence of Russian-speaking population had significant impact on the transformation of Estonia. There were times they were in privileged position but became ethnic minority later, and that resulted a huge change. That change was not simple, i.e. just moving from one system to another, but rather an oscillation between systems. Based on empirical data, the authors described four patterns of the social integration of the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia: multi-active cosmopolitan engagement, dutiful institutional engagement, ethno-cultural engagement and weak engagement. The analysis connects the abovementioned patterns of integration with another source of agency – translocality.

Chapter 9 employs the assumption that social acceleration, by intensifying transformation, has affected different social groups to varying degrees, bringing about emergent patterns of social stratification. The authors' analysis demonstrated that the political and civic agency of all generation groups strengthened over decades, marking development towards demographic participation patterns and increasing morphogenetic potential. It is not a question that the transformative force of today's young generation is massive, at this moment nobody knows, however, whether it will be powerful enough for a strategic and fundamental change in the future.

Chapter 10 deals with the measuring of subjective stratification. When it comes to subjective stratification, the respondents' assessment of their position provides the basis for analysis, when they compare their opportunities and positions with others. Therefore, such a comparison is greatly based on people's circumstances, acquaintances, their concept on "normal" instead of statistical comparisons. Applying such a model can be useful to be as a mirror of society, how people really place themselves in society, therefore it is a good basis for governments to build on when designing policies.

Overall, the book contributes to the latest findings of social sciences and proves that former theories provide solid base and are suitable to be mixed with empirical research to draw a realistic picture about a country's transformation. The English language of the text is of high quality, easy to understand and interpret. After each chapter, an extended list of literature and appendices with additional information can be found that may help those who would like to get more information about the topics. Overall, the book fills the gap in studies on social sciences, especially for the post-Soviet era.

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