

## RURAL-URBAN AND REGIONAL APPROACH COMPARING HUMAN VALUES IN LATVIA

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**Abstract.** Regional development should not be a unified process even for a small country such as Latvia. There is a stereotype that people living in big cities and rural areas differ in their values and behaviour. This study compares the human values of Riga, the Riga district urban area and different rural regions in Latvia. During the last three years - 2007, 2008 and 2009 the survey of 1450 inhabitants showed no substantial difference in peoples' social values; comparing rural and urban locations. Rather, a noticeable difference in human values between people living in different regions of Latvia was observed. It was also observed that the set of values expands in different directions over time, forcing a future increase in fragmentation and segmentation of the population in the country.

**Key words:** human values, Latvia, rural, urban.

### Introduction

Interest in economic, political and academic society regarding how a person's decision making is influenced by human values continues. Human values are "desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of the person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994). Knowledge of peoples' values provides political, social and economic decision makers with guidance to: strategic development of communication with the society and each target group and tactical selection of development alternatives. Fundamental work on values was done by Rokeach (1968, 1973). He defines value as "an enduring belief that specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is potentially and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (Rokeach, 1973). Rokeach argues for the importance of the value construct over the attitude construct since value is a determinant of attitude as well as of behaviour. Additionally, since it is assumed that an individual possesses many fewer values than attitudes, then using the value concept is a more correct way of describing and explaining the similarities and differences among individuals and groups (Rokeach, 1968).

To evaluate direct and indirect relationships between human values and importance in value attributes, Allen and his colleague (Allen, 2000; Allen and Ng, 1999) proposed a complex evolutional model. Four commonly used human value scales are Rokeach Value Survey (1973), the Schwartz Value Survey (1990, 1994), Social Values Inventory (Braithwaite, 1982), List of values or LOV (Kahle, 1983). The Schwartz Value Survey was developed from Rokeach Value Survey and designed to be equally applicable to Western and non-Western cultures. Moreover, in contrast to the Rokeach Value Survey, the value groupings or subscales outlined by Schwartz have strong empirical and theoretical foundation (Allen, 2001). Schwartz determined eight value domains which have been used in the study, slightly rephrased, as a guideline:

- Hedonism (comfortable life, a pleasurable life);

- Achievement (accomplishment, ambitious)
- Self-direction (independence, intellectual, imagination, self-centered)
- Social power (recognition, influence, control)
- Conformity (politeness, empathy, peaceful)
- Security (family and relatives security, national security, domestic)
- Benevolence (forgiving, love, friendship)
- Universality (equality, harmony, social justice, peace, profound)

Value domains (or segments) defined by value systems rather than by a single value have both more reliability and greater interpretability (Kamakura and Novak, 1992).

The general idea of urban areas relates to a town or city that is free-standing, densely occupied and developed with a variety of shops and services. The concept of 'rural' is more complex and multidimensional. One problem lies in capturing the diversity of types of rural areas that exist. These can, for example, range from small settlements on the fringe of large towns and cities to remote villages and from agriculture to areas of extensive arable farming or grazing. The current research considers rural area all the territory of Latvia, except cities with official status (Riga, Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Liepāja, Ventspils, Jelgava, Jūrmala, Valmiera, Jēkabpils) and regional territorial units: towns with population over 5000 dwellers. Rural area is also the rural territory of a town with a rural territory and population over 5000 which is a regional territorial unit. They both have been marked in current research as "out of town". Towns with populations of more than 5,000 inhabitants have been marked in the study as a "town". All rural areas and towns have been grouped by administrative territorial districts of Latvia: Latgale, Vidzeme, Zemgale and Kurzeme, each with approximate population of 300,000 inhabitants. Riga and Riga district have been separated for comparison and considered as "urban" domain (1,100,000 inhabitants).

Over the last 20 years, Latvia has faced dramatic changes in people's political and economical paradigms. This has impacted human values.

The concentration of economic activity, decision making, labour, foreign investment, knowledge, and entertainment within metropolitan regions is substantial. The attractiveness of larger cities is also considerable, while rural areas in general remain in the shadow. Cities and urban areas are without doubt the main engines of economic development in Latvia. Processes related to urbanisation continue to grow and affect even the smallest village. Major current landscape transformations are the result of changing the relationship between an urban and rural way of life and their related forms of land organisation. Most of the driving forces nowadays have also a globalisation component which increasingly influences local changes. In the past different lifestyle habits and values in the countryside and cities were determined by the use of land and adoption to environment. Now more and more people living in the countryside have habits and use values similar to those of urbanites. With development of new informational and commuting technologies between urban and rural areas, the entire society is becoming increasingly urbanized and influenced by urban values and the urban way of life. Due to these changes, it could be supposed that urban-rural difference in human values is diminishing. However, changes in social behaviour do not occur quickly, or at a run of one single generation. Value changes occur with the exchange of generations.

This gives us an opportunity to determine current research objective: to explore how unified are human values comparing rural (the countryside) areas and urban metropolis in Latvia. The aim of this work is to create understanding of differences in values in relatively small geographical area. How do different districts of Latvia (even in close proximity of a few hundreds kilometres) differ or match between each other? Is this trend stable or does it fluctuates giving the shaking political and economical environment of Latvia in recent years?

The hypotheses for the research are the following:  
Hypothesis 1: Human values in rural and urban areas of Latvia are not significantly different.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in priorities of human values among different regions of Latvia

### Materials and Methods

During each of last three years: 2007, 2008, 2009, in September- October, around 1450 inhabitants of Latvia (age from 17 till 74 years) were interviewed. Respondents were selected proportionally to the size of population in the region. The survey was done by 70 trained interviewers. The survey asked respondents to rank the priority of 65 different values, selected from previous research and adapted to Latvia – Schwartz Value Survey, Rokeach Value Survey (English and Soviet versions), VALS (Values and Lifestyles), LOV (List of Values). Subjects were asked to rate sets of instrumental and terminal values on a 9-point scale ranging from ‘of supreme importance’ (7) to ‘opposed to my values’ (-1). One advantage of this inventory is its ability to measure those ‘negative’ values

which individuals might normally avoid expressing (Schwartz, 1992), for example, social power and acceptance of one’s position in life. Examining the impact of values on behaviour based on multiple-item indicators is more reliable than alternatives based on single values. The shared variance of items in a system creates a more valid measure of motivational goals. The survey took an average of 40 min. per respondent as face-to-face interviews.

Using the Schwartz value domains as a guide, scores for each participant were calculated. Eight value domains- segments were established as a reference to dominant values selected: Rational, Traditional, Peaceful, Domestic, Profound, Self-centred, Ambitious, and Maximalist. For example: ‘Domestic’ type of respondents highly ranked such values as: prosperity, safety of their relatives, well-established private life, trustfulness and keeping promises. ‘Profound’ type of respondents most valued: life in harmony with a nature, peace and love in the world, security of the country, kindness, and respect to religion. ‘Self-centred’ respondents ranked highest such values as: professional growth, exploiting full potential, power, creativity, and continuous search for new knowledge. In the comparison study all data is shown as percentage of difference from the sample mean (first two data columns in Table 1 and Table 2), with ‘-’ (minus) sign difference is negative, without the sign- difference is positive.

Limitations of the current research include unclear delineations of the meaning or definition of different values in certain segments. For instance ‘safety of relatives’ can be attributed to both ‘Domestic’ or ‘Traditionalist’, or even ‘Peaceful’ segment of human values. Therefore, there is some fuzziness in such a determination. Another limitation is related to the number of ‘out of town’ respondents (34) in Riga district. Since it is not statistically significant, it is considered mainly as ‘additive’ to Riga city. In fact there is a daily involvement of these people with metropolitan lifestyle, infrastructure and close proximity to the capital. Although research results show few noticeable ‘distortions’ from sample mean, it is suggested to be cautious in drawing conclusions about this set of respondents.

In cross-national and cross-cultural research it is essential that the measurement of the relevant constructs is invariant, meaning that the same scores should have an interpretation independent of differences in Culture and Language. If invariance between countries is not tested, comparisons of countries are problematic (Davidov et al., 2005). For the comparative data analyses European Social Survey 2002-2003 was used in Huismans & Van Schuur research (Huismans and Van Schuur, 2009) and seven European countries: Israel, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Poland, and Greece were selected. This survey incorporated 10 basic Value Domains of Schwartz, using 21 value items. Value Circle was used to assign scores in respect to an overall Value system combining Schwartz’s Value Circle with an

innovative technique for locating people along the circumference of a circle. Since this methodology is different from one used in the current research, there is not possible to take direct comparison, rather observe deviations in values ranking among European countries. Huismans & Van Schuur research shows that among selected seven countries in Poland, Spain and Greece restrictive Conformity was dominant. Historically these countries are characterized by a dominant Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christian tradition. The patterns Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands are strong in respect for Tradition values. The Israeli pattern is similar to the patterns of the West European countries but with more emphasis on Power and Security Values. It appears that Poland and Greece show relatively high preferences for the location of Conformity and Security Values.

In Latvia similar research has not been completed so far. There are few studies done by using Schwartz values. One of them was the research of attitude towards marriage and relationships between parents and children (Sebre et al., 2004). Human values in urban-rural context in Latvia unfortunately were not studied.

### Results and Discussion

Generally, there has been a shift in values in Latvia towards relationship related values (Table 1). More than others, the ‘Domestic’ segment of values tend to represent the ‘average’ Latvian living in the urban and rural areas (19.1% and 20.5% respectively). Both ‘Traditional’ and ‘Peaceful’ segments of values

(12-13%) ranked second. Leading position of these three segments of values has been observed during last three years. This manifests Latvians responsibility towards others, especially the family. Changing external environment also proclaims value of ‘living today’ among top priorities. The least attractive and typical segment is the value of ‘Ambition’ (2.15% respondents average in Latvia). A cross-comparison of rural-urban (Town vs. Out of town) values suggests that there is a quite similar attitude and no big difference between the segments, with few exceptions-in Vidzeme and Zemgale for ‘Profound’ segments of values. The remaining data show moderate to good correlation in similarities between people living out of town and cities. Riga and especially Riga district inhabitants have a more even distribution of all set of values. They tend to have no extreme importance of certain values over others. Another interesting observation is that urban and rural populations in Zemgale and Kurzeme have maximum preference concentration on “Domestic” segment of values, in contrast to Latgale, where the same values are much below the average (-2.6% for Town and -1.6% for Out of town respondents). Latgale inhabitants are much more concerned about ‘Traditionalist’ values (1.3% and 1.2%) - stability, continuity, rituals, religion traditions than are other regions. People in Kurzeme (living in both rural and urban areas) especially tend to ‘Profound’ (3.3% and 1.9% above the sample mean) set of values. They focus more on their private life, home, family and self-controllable space.

Table 1  
Value preferences in rural-urban areas

Value segment	Sample Mean (%), in total)		Riga, Riga District (% to sample Mean)		Latgale (% to sample mean)		Kurzeme (% to sample mean)		Zemgale (% to sample mean)		Vidzeme (% to sample mean)	
	Town	Out of town	Town	Out of town	Town	Out of town	Town	Out of town	Town	Out of town	Town	Out of town
Rationalist	9.1	8.1	0.1	-0.6	0.5	0.6	0.2	-0.1	-0.4	0.7	-0.6	-1.0*
Traditionalist	8.9	8.2	-0.6*	-2.6*	1.3*	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.1	1.4*	0.6	-2.3*
Peaceful	12.1	12.5	-0.6*	-4.1*	-0.8	-1.0	2.8*	0.7	0.3	1.7*	0.9	-0.1
Domestic	19.1	20.5	-0.5*	-4.6*	-2.6*	-1.6*	5.3*	2.5*	2.5*	1.4*	-1.7*	-0.2
Profound	12.6	13.2	-0.4	-1.6*	0.1	-0.8	3.3*	1.9*	1.9*	-1.4*	-3.7*	1.5*
Self-centred	9.3	9.6	0.2	0.0	-0.3	-1.3	0.8	-0.2	-0.9	-0.2	-1.2	1.7*
Ambitious	2.3	2.0	0.2	1.5	-0.5	1.0	-0.5	-0.1	-0.6	-0.7*	0.9	-0.4
Maximalist	7.3	6.8	-0.1	1.9*	0.6	-0.2	-0.7*	0.3	-0.1	-0.7*	0.6	0.4
Sample size n	1074	393	581	34	142	87	127	66	100	114	124	92
	* difference from Sample Mean is significant at p<0.05											

Table 2  
**Dynamics of value preferences in different Latvia regions**

Value segment	Sample Mean (%, in total)			Riga, Riga district (% to sample mean)			Latgale (% to sample mean)			Kurzeme (% to sample mean)		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Rationalist	7.9	8.0	8.9	0.1	0.3	0.2	-0.2	0.4	0.4	-0.4	-1.1*	-0.1
Traditionalist	7.7	8.6	8.7	-0.5*	-0.5	-0.5*	0.6	2.1*	1.2*	-0.4	-2.3*	0.6
Peaceful	11.0	11.8	12.2	-1.5*	-1.6*	-0.9*	0.0	1.2*	-0.8	1.7*	-0.1	2.1*
Domestic	19.3	19.8	19.5	-1.0*	-1.1*	-1.1*	0.4	-1.3*	-2.1*	0.4	3.6*	4.4*
Profound	12.5	12.5	12.7	-0.4	-0.3	-0.5*	1.2*	-1.9*	-0.1	0.3	3.7*	3*
Self-centred	9.0	8.6	9.3	0.0	-0.4	0.2	0.6	0.0	-0.6	1.1*	3.2*	0.5
Ambitious	1.9	2.1	2.3	1.1*	0.7*	0.3	0.3	0.5	-0.1	-1.2*	0.2	-0.4
Maximalist	6.9	6.8	7.2	0.7*	0.7*	0.1	-0.4	-1.1*	0.2	-0.1	0.4	-0.4
Sample size n	1445	1425	1467	610	598	615	231	220	229	221	188	193
	* difference from the Sample Mean is significant at p<0.05											

Observation of the overall trends of preferences over values (Tables 2 and 3) in Latvia leads to a conclusion that the two leading segments ('Domestic', 'Profound') have been fairly stable during the last three years (aprox. 19.5% and 12.5% respectively). For 2009, the largest increase, compared with 2008, in importance of value, was for believers in Rationalists values (+0.9%).

Looking at the dynamics from the point of view of regional differences (Tables 2 and 3) suggests diminishing high ambitions in Riga, Riga district (1.1%, 0.7%, and 0.3%) during 2007, 2008, 2009 compared to the sample mean. Even more diminishing 'Domestic' values in Latgale (0.4%, -1.3%, -2.1%),

and noticeable increase in the same set of values in Kurzeme region (0.4%, 3.6%, 4.4%). Vidzeme is losing their faith for "Traditionalist" and 'Peaceful' values. Riga and Riga district population is becoming less ambitious, more even in their traits.

### Conclusions

1. In answer to the questions from the beginning of the research, it can be said that there is no statistically significant difference in human values between rural and urban areas of population in Latvia (Hypotheses 1 is approved). Still there is disproportion in unemployment, education, income and some other factors, but not in

Table 3  
**Dynamics of value preferences in different Latvia regions**

Value segment	Sample Mean (%, in total)			Riga, Riga district (% to sample mean)			Zemgale (% to sample mean)			Vidzeme (% to sample mean)		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Rationalist	7.9	8.0	8.9	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	-0.9*	-0.1	0.4	0.2	-1.0*
Traditionalist	7.7	8.6	8.7	-0.5*	-0.5	-0.5*	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.2*	0.5	-0.8
Peaceful	11.0	11.8	12.2	-1.5*	-1.6*	-0.9*	1.5*	2.2*	1.1	1.5*	0.9*	0.5
Domestic	19.3	19.8	19.5	-1.0*	-1.1*	-1.1*	1.5*	0.4	2.2	0.5	0.8	-0.8
Profound	12.5	12.5	12.7	-0.4	-0.3	-0.5*	0.4	-0.2	0.4	-1.5*	0.0	-1.3*
Self-centred	9.0	8.6	9.3	0.0	-0.4	0.2	-0.6	-0.9*	-0.4	-1.8*	-0.5	0.2
Ambitious	1.9	2.1	2.3	1.1*	0.7*	0.3	-1.4*	-1.5*	-0.8*	-1.1*	-0.9	0.2
Maximalist	6.9	6.8	7.2	0.7*	0.7*	0.1	-0.9*	-0.7*	-0.6*	-0.7*	-0.3	0.4
Sample size n	1445	1425	1467	610	598	615	206	209	213	168	210	217
	* difference from the Sample Mean is significant at p<0.05											

- general human values. As concerns the regional comparison, it can be concluded that there is a noticeable difference in human values between Latgale, Vidzeme, Zemgale, Kurzeme and Riga, Riga district. Latgale has become more traditional value oriented with diminishing values of family. Vidzeme has some differences between influential towns and rural areas, which should be considered in discussing alternatives of regional policy aimed at reducing inequalities. We should assume that population in Zemgale generally tends to be a bit more relaxed. It seems that they comfortably adjust to the changes of external environment. Kurzeme population is a bit more centred on their daily needs and their own micro-environment (and this trend only increases over time). Although there are no dramatic discrepancies in human values between people living in different Latvia regions, we observed statistically noticeable trends. Therefore, we consider Hypothesis 2 being approved as well.
2. We can state, that the objective of the current research to explore how unified human values are whilst comparing rural (the countryside) areas and urban metropolis in Latvia is met. Obtained results and comparison analysis clearly indicated similarities and differences in both geo-social clusters. There are statistically representative results supported by explanatory notes. The aim of this study is to create understanding of differences in values. In ultimate perspective it is “the way” not a destination, and therefore cannot be achieved by traditional means. On the other hand, we can state that the first cornerstone of more comprehensive human value understanding in Latvia has been set and the goal of this research partially achieved.
  3. Having willingness to establish broader goals, new objectives and values (expansion of segments’ borderlines) have been observed over three years of the research. People are looking for some changes; their ambitions grow. Theoretically, such a trend might result in consumption increase or broad variety in social activities. However, it is doubtful that such outcome is possible, since economic turmoil began in 2009 and is continuing in 2010. The economic crisis is forcing people to reduce their ambitions and expectations. It becomes controversial to the overall ‘value basket’ expansion observed before. People might reconsider part of their newly (in fact formed during 2007-2008) established goals.
  4. Furthermore, we observe three types of beliefs that have been chosen by Latvian population in this current situation, guided by their dominant values by population of different regions of Latvia:
    - Accept reality and rationally consider actions for future;
    - Search for the ultimate truth, but not change by themselves; it is better to search for adaptation;
    - Focus on oneself, not losing self-confidence and not caring about the problems of others.
  5. Since these are a bit different traits, it is suggested looking at these phenomena closer. Further research could be established to continue to exploit particular applications for more unified goals and values of Latvia. Implementation of tools considering the current research findings is suggestible. It is believed that a more unified set of dominant values would be appropriate for the country in order to achieve sustainable development and growth. For managerial (or better to say governmental/ municipal) implication point, we suggest the following strategic and operational actions:
    - Change in the culture of agencies to pursue a common vision for rural areas that all departments in the government nationally and locally can sign up to.
    - Generate improved data about dynamics of human values in rural areas. The idea of a rural monitoring is a key to improving rural intelligence to shape more unified set actions.
    - Recognise the importance of understanding particular regions of Latvia and their interrelationships locally and nationally.
    - Reconfigure municipal and governmental responses reflecting: different scales of influence and people’s needs rather than pre-designed and outdated top-down structures that characterise particular interests.

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