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After Materialism or Before Postmaterialism?

The Materialist–Postmaterialist Value Orientation in Hungary

The value orientation of the Magyar population, as studies suggest, seems to be rather materialist. The picture of course is shaded by different probabilities of groups: elderly people are rather materialist, youngsters are mainly postmaterialist; people with better qualifications are rather postmaterialist and those with lower education are mostly materialist.

What does materialist–postmaterialist value orientation mean in practice? How much are they typical of the examined Central European society? In our report, after a short theoretical summary we will present our research about the materialist–postmaterialist value orientation of the Magyar population.

For this we have used the database of the European Social Survey (ESS), on which we did a second hand research First we examined the differences between generations; then the effect of qualification, satisfaction with the household's income, gender and religious belief.

Previous Research on Values

Value studies can be divided into two main groups: in some qualitative methods are used, and in others quantitative methods. Other studies in which these two are combined can be found as well.¹

The most popular qualitative method is to analyse the values in literature. One of the most significant Magyar studies was done in the Section of Literature Scholarship of the Magyar Academy of Science.

In this research, all the fiction (short stories and novels) written

¹ SASAKI, 1998. 4.

between 1986 and 1990 was examined. According to this research, the Magyar population lives in a constant value-insecurity, which is due to the paternalism of the state.²

On an international level we can find three different kinds of quantitative bases of value studies: the approach of Milton ROKEACH (1918–1988), Ronald INGLEHART (1934–) and Melvin KOHN (1928–).

The basis of most of the research is the method of Milton ROKEACH, who distinguished target and instrument values. The respondents of the survey had to order them in two groups. Both groups contain eighteen elements. Target values are, e.g., a happy life or peace, and instrument values are patience or efficient work.

Ronald INGLEHART worked out four- and twelve-element methods of value research. In the former the respondent has to choose two out of four targets of social politics, while in the latter the person has to do it two more times.

In each group of four values, the first two are the materialist and the second two postmaterialist values.³ This method was used in the *World Value Survey (WVS)* in 1990 for the first time in international comparison.

Melvin KOHN used a distinctly different method. He asked the parents which attributes they find important in raising their children. They had to choose from thirteen attributes (e.g. to obey the parents, to be thoughtful of others, to be honest, etc.).

From the answers of the parents, Melvin KOHN judged the measure of their authoritarian conservatism and their capacity for having independent life and judgements.⁴ Hereafter, since we would like to analyse the materialist–postmaterialist value orientation, we will show the work of Ronald INGLEHART in details and base our own research on his approach.

The Concept of Materialist–Postmaterialist Value Orientation and the Silence Revolution

There are more studies dealing with the changing values in advanced industrial societies. They show a shift from materialist toward postmaterialist values.⁵ The American researcher Ronald INGLEHART is famous for exploring these changes.

He has been engaged in this field since the 1960s. Henceforth we

² VERES, 1992. / ³ INGLEHART, 1990. / ⁴ KOHN, 1969. / ⁵ SCARBROUGH, 1995. 123.



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shall take a closer look at Ronald INGLEHART's *postmaterialist theory* and his *theory of silence revolution*, since these two are in a close relationship.

According to the postmaterialist theory, the postmaterialist value orientation has two bases: the scarcity hypothesis and the socialisation hypothesis.⁶ The *scarcity hypothesis* can be described as follows: in a society struggling with scarcities, goods in a short supply will have a subjectively higher value. As an example, it is enough to think of the fact that during the regime change in Central and Eastern Europe, many people were ready to pay fortunes for barely obtainable goods.

The characteristic of the *socialisation hypothesis* is this: people's basic values reflect the circumstances of their childhood. For example, those children who are taught in their early years to save money will behave similarly later on, in their adult years.

It is worth exploring the idea of the *silence revolution* now. This is what Ronald INGLEHART calls the difference between the values of generations. This is a transformation of the society during which the younger generation takes the older one's place.⁷

At the same time the dominant values of the society are changing too, since the different generations have different values. To prove these theories Ronald INGLEHART uses Abraham MASLOW's concept of the hierarchy of needs.

In his opinion, the needs on the top of the hierarchy become important only if the ones below are already—at least partially—fulfilled. Ronald INGLEHART places the values into the hierarchy of needs and gets the following result:

The *materialist* values are physiological sustenance and security. They are characteristic of people who lived in relative poverty before. The *postmaterialist* values are self-expression, belonging, intellectual and aesthetic needs.⁸

The latter are characteristic of those who live in favourable circumstances and did not need to worry about their basic needs. Thus it can be said that the security experienced in one's life allows caring about the quality side of life instead of ensuring the everyday needs.⁹

Furthermore, Ronald INGLEHART puts an emphasis on the relation between *economic growth* and values, though it can be followed

⁶ INGLEHART, 1990. 56. / ⁷ INGLEHART, 1990. 54. 424. / ⁸ INGLEHART, 1990. 134.

⁹ SCARBROUGH, 1995. 125.



from the previous ideas that postmaterialism is spreading in wealthier societies.¹⁰

It seems that besides the (feeling of) personal security, education has a significant role as well.¹¹ Comparing the generations, it can be seen that those who were born after World War II emphasised materialist values less and postmaterialist values more.¹²

This is probably due to the fact that they had experienced less necessity in other words they have not seen as much need as the previous generations, so they have grown up in a safety society. So it can be demonstrated that in a society where postmaterialist values are dominating, not fear but the feeling of welfare is typical of people's everyday life.

Due to the spreading of state education and more money spent on it, education has become more and more popular, so there are more highly qualified people among young people.

According to the previous studies, the postmaterialists are mostly highly educated people, so consequently they have power over important parts of life, e.g. in the field of state and politics.¹³

¹⁰ INGLEHART, 1990. 57. / ¹¹ INGLEHART, 1977. 21–22. / ¹² INGLEHART, 1990. 56.

¹³ INGLEHART–ABRAMSON, 1992. 227.

Materialist and Postmaterialist Value Orientation in Hungary

In the following, according to the conclusion of Ronald INGLEHART, we will try to confirm the presented hypotheses—firstly, that generations differ in their values. Young people are rather postmaterialist-oriented, whereas older people are rather materialist-oriented.

Secondly, that highly qualified people are rather postmaterialist-oriented, and less qualified people rather materialist-oriented. Thirdly, that people living in better circumstances are rather postmaterialist and those living in worse circumstances are rather materialist.

Fourthly, that the materialist–postmaterialist orientation has nothing to do with gender. And finally, that more religious people are rather postmaterialist and less religious people are rather materialist.

To confirm these hypotheses, we will use the database of the *European Social Survey*¹⁴ (ESS). The European Social Survey is a research done once every two years in twenty countries.

For this report we are going to use the first database recorded in 2002/2003, which means 1655 questionnaires in Hungary. To measure the value orientation, we have chosen four definitely materialist and four postmaterialist variables.

The materialist variables are the following: “it is important to be rich”, “to have money and expensive things”; “it is important to be successful and to achieve recognition”; “it is important that the government is strong and ensures safety”; and “it is important to seek fun and things that give pleasure”.

The postmaterialist variables are the following: “it is important to think about new ideas and to be creative”; “to show abilities and to be admired”; “it is important to try new and different things in life”; “and to seek adventures and have an exciting life”.

For these questions the respondents could give six answers ranging from “not like me at all” to “very much like me.” By these we have created two new variables, which provide the materialist–postmaterialist point of each respondent.

Thus, everyone can have a maximum of 24 points for both orientations. The materialist–postmaterialist index is the

¹⁴ We would like to extend our thanks to the international team of ESS for making the database accessible and to the team of TÁRKI for giving free run of the weighted variables of the Magyar database.

difference of the points: postmaterialist points minus materialist points.

So the positive numbers show the degree of the postmaterialist orientation, and the negative numbers show the degree of the materialist orientation. Examining the index with a statistical method (with the t-test), it can be found that there is a slight structural shift.

In this move, the mean is shifting towards minus one (-1). From this it can be concluded that the Magyar population is rather materialist. The index has been created as the difference of the materialist and postmaterialist points.

For these two points a “paired sampled t-test” has been done. From this it can be seen that the shift may be caused by two factors: everybody tends to valorise materialism; or it is valorised by only a small group of society, but it causes a huge difference when looking at the whole society.

We have divided the materialist–postmaterialist index—which is a scale variable—into three groups: materialists, postmaterialists and those with mixed orientation. We have taken the upper and the lower 25 percent of the population.

Therefore, in the groups of materialists there are those whose index is under minus one (-1), and in the postmaterialist group there are those whose index is above three (3). Those having an index between these numbers are those with mixed orientation.

As a result, we have 466 (28,9 percent) materialist, 543 (33,7 percent) postmaterialist and 604 (37,4 percent) mixed-orientation respondents. According to Ronald INGLEHART’s forecast, in advanced industrial societies materialists should be slightly more numerous for 1990.

He also predicted that by 2000 the rate of the two groups will be roughly balanced.¹⁵ Since he does not explain what he means by “slightly more,” the state of the Magyar society in 2002 can be evaluated in two different ways.

On one hand, it can mean that we are ten to twelve years late in comparison with Western Europe. On the other hand, it can also mean that—if we understood the rate of the orientations above as almost balanced—the orientations in Hungary (and in Central Europe) are changing in the same way as in Western Europe.¹⁶

¹⁵ INGLEHART–ABRAMSON, 1992. 225.

¹⁶ Before concluding anything, it would be worth examining the orientation of other Central European countries with the help of this database and method.

The Differences Between Generations in Hungary

In the following we will try to prove that there is a difference between generations in their materialist–postmaterialist value orientation—specifically, that the older generations are prevailingly materialist.

As a first step, groups have been created according to their ages. First, following the example of Elinor SCARBROUGH, respondents are classified by decades. Since the two oldest groups are quite small, they are counted together. So in the oldest group there are those born before 1920.

Examining the coherence, it can be seen that there is a significant relation between these variables; so it can be said that there is a connection between age and materialist–postmaterialist value orientation. This is true in Magyar society as a whole because of the significance level. Respondents born between 1931 and 1950 and after 1971 had the biggest role in rejecting the hypothesis of independence.

In cross-tabulation it can be seen that in the group of elderly people there are more materialists. Exactly 78,9 percent of the people who were born before 1920 appear as materialists, though the frequency is quite low in this cell, so we should be careful with making conclusions. Of the next group (born between 1921 and 1930), 74,3 percent are classified as materialist. This decreasing tendency can be noted in the following two groups as well.

A change can be seen in the next group (1951–1960): postmaterialism surpasses materialism (57,5 percent). The result is almost the same in the next group (1961–1970) as well.

The big turn is in the group born after 1971. The rate in this group is almost the opposite of the oldest one. There are 75,4 percent postmaterialists here. In the youngest group, the turn is even more striking: 86 percent of them are postmaterialist.

Thus, generally it can be said that people born before 1951 are rather materialist, but as increasingly younger generations are considered, there is a growing probability of them belonging to the postmaterialist group.

People born in 1950–1970 are a sort of border-land. Many of them are postmaterialists, but the biggest change is in those groups whose members were born after 1971. So, three groups can be distinguished:

Firstly those, who were born between 1900 and 1950: they are rather materialist. They were born before or not long after World War II, so they have experienced scarcity.

Secondly, those who were born between 1951 and 1970: they are rather postmaterialist, but the difference between the two groups is relatively small. They are a sort of border group.

Finally, those who were born after 1971: they are clearly postmaterialists. Most of them experienced the regime change as children or teenagers. Though the older ones might remember the times before 1989, which surely had an effect on their socialization, they have spent years of their young ages in capitalism already.

These pieces of information seem to confirm Ronald INGLEHART's silent revolution theory. According to this theory, young people are rather postmaterialist value-oriented. The high rate of postmaterialism in the group born after 1971 can be a result of the fading of socialism. In this decade the privations were lessening in the country.¹⁷

1

Age by Decade	Count	Materialist	
		Count	Percent
1900 1950	10	10	100
1951 1960	12	7	58,3
1961 1970	12	7	58,3
1971 1980	12	9	75,0
1981 1990	12	10	83,3
1991 2000	12	10	83,3
Total	60	43	71,7

¹⁷ ROMSICS, 2000.

According to Ronald INGLEHART, the biggest change happened after World War II. The generations born right after are rather postmaterialist-oriented.¹⁸ That is why we had a look at 1945 as a border line. Is there a difference between the orientations of those who were born before/after 1945?

According to our calculations, the respondents born before the war are rather materialist (70,6 percent), and those born after the war are rather postmaterialist (63,9 percent) value-oriented. It seems Ronald INGLEHART was right when he regarded World War II as a divide in the materialist–postmaterialist value orientation.

The Effect of Education

Are highly qualified people less materialist than less qualified ones? To find the answer for this question, first we have set up four categories regarding the level of education. Then they will be examined in a cross-tabulation.

In the chart it can be seen that postmaterialism is more frequent among those who are better educated. There is a huge difference between those who have finished primary school and those who have not; it must be noted that there are quite a few respondents in the group who did not finish primary school.

Comparing those with finished and those with unfinished primary education, a huge difference can be seen on the score of value orientation. We can see that even a limited amount of education can cause a huge difference in value orientation.

2

		Value Orientation	
		Materialist	Postmaterialist
Before 1945	Did not finish primary school	70.6%	29.4%
	Finished primary school	63.9%	36.1%
After 1945	Did not finish primary school	70.6%	29.4%
	Finished primary school	63.9%	36.1%

¹⁸ INGLEHART, 1990. 56.

But before accepting this statement, it would be worth examining the relation of education and age, since as time goes by, education has become more and more popular.

Of those born before 1950, 17,9 percent did not finish primary school; 51,3 percent of them finished primary school, only 19,7 percent of them finished secondary school, and only 11 percent of them have higher education.

In the next age group, most of the respondents (53,2 percent) have finished primary school, and we can see that more highly educated people (15,4 percent) can be found here as well. As a logical explanation of the low education of the oldest age group, we can suggest the lack of comprehensive state education.

Above this, younger people have experienced a higher level of security, which can question the role of education. Most of the people (58,4 percent) born after 1971 have finished primary school, and 32,2 percent of them have finished secondary school as well. So, there are only a very few of them who have finished higher education, but their age can be an evident cause of it.

3 Analyzing the relationship between the level of education and the materialist–postmaterialist value orientation, it can be seen that in the group of those born before 1950 the

Age Group	Education Level	Materialist		Postmaterialist	
		Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Before 1950	Did not finish primary school	17.9%	10	19.7%	12
	Finished primary school	51.3%	30	36.1%	22
	Finished secondary school	19.7%	12	15.4%	9
	Higher education	11.1%	7	13.8%	8
1950-1971	Did not finish primary school	5.5%	3	10.4%	6
	Finished primary school	53.2%	32	45.2%	28
	Finished secondary school	15.4%	9	20.8%	13
	Higher education	25.9%	16	23.6%	15
After 1971	Did not finish primary school	2.2%	1	3.2%	2
	Finished primary school	58.4%	30	45.2%	28
	Finished secondary school	32.2%	17	48.8%	30
	Higher education	7.2%	4	12.8%	8



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three most significant cells, which cause the real relationship between these variables ¹⁹, are the following:

There are the highly educated materialists, though they are only 5,2 percent of the materialists of their age group. Then, the postmaterialist respondents, who have not finished primary school (7,7 percent). Finally, the highly educated postmaterialists, who are 21,2 percent of the postmaterialists of their age group.

In the group of respondents born between 1951 and 1970, there are four remarkable cells. There are the materialists with less than eight primary classes, who are 7,4 percent of the materialist group. Then, the highly educated materialists, who are 8,7 percent of the materialists. Thirdly, the postmaterialists with less than eight primary classes, though there was only one respondent in this cell! Finally, there are the highly educated postmaterialists, who make up 21,2 percent of all of the postmaterialists.

The result of the respondents who were born after 1971 is not significant according to the Chi-square test, which means whatever relations we got, they are presumably not true in the whole society.

The Role of Financial Circumstances

Does the economic situation have an effect on materialist–postmaterialist value orientation? We will try to find the answer for this question by examining the responses given for the following question: “How do you feel about the income of your household?”

It is obvious from statistics that there is a significant relationship between the feelings about income and materialist–postmaterialist value orientation in Magyar (and Central European) society.

Of the postmaterialists, 63,3 percent live comfortably on their present incomes, and only 41,4 percent of the group feel their life is very difficult with their present net incomes.

It can be stated that if somebody feels that her or his income is not enough, she or he tends to be a materialist very much, irregardless of the real amount of income. As long as the respondent is satisfied with her or his income (“living comfortably” or “coping”), there is much likelihood that she or he will be postmaterialist value-oriented.

¹⁹ It can be seen from the „standard residuals” but they are not shown in this report



A Flock of Doves

We must be careful, however, stating this. It cannot be said for sure that satisfaction with income indicates a postmaterialist value orientation. It is a possibility that if somebody has a postmaterialist value orientation for whatever reasons, she or he will be more satisfied with her or his income even if she or he has less money than somebody else for whom material needs are more important. Though the relationship is evident, according to the calculations above, the direction of the causality cannot be unequivocally stated.

MATERIALIZMUS ÉS POSTMATERIALIZMUS ÉRTÉK-ORIENTÁCIÓK A HÁZTARTÁS JÖVEDELMEIHEZ KAPCSOLATBAN

százalékban

		ÉRTÉK-ORIENTÁCIÓ	
		any.	postmat.
4	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció	
	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet	
	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció
	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet
	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció
	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet
	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció
	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet
	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció	Értékorientáció
	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet	Anyagi helyzet
Összesen		Összesen	Összesen

The Role of Gender

Is it true that materialist–postmaterialist value orientation has nothing to do with the two genders? On the basis of the results of the statistics it can be said that there is absolutely no relationship between gender and value orientation.



5

MATERIALIZMUS ÉS POSTMATERIALIZMUS ÉRTÉKESÍTÉSÉNEK VÁLTOZÁSAI			KORCATEGÓRIÁK	
Gender	Religion	Count	%	total count
Female	Religious	100	41,7%	240
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240
Male	Religious	100	41,7%	240
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240
Total	Religious	200	83,3%	240
	Non-religious	40	16,7%	240

The Effect of Religion

Is it true that more religious people pay less attention to material needs than less religious ones? Is it true that more religious people are rather postmaterialist in their value orientation?

To find out the answers, the responses to the question “How religious are you?” have been examined. The answers could be from zero (0) to ten (10). Zero means “not religious at all,” while ten means “very religious.”

According to TOMKA Miklós, the most prevalent and effective method of examining religious belief is a five-levelled scale which expands from the answer “I am religious, I follow the teachings of the Church,” to “In my opinion, religion is not right.”²⁰

For this report, however, an eleven-level scale will be used, since this is the best opportunity from the database available. As a first step, the most religious and least religious 25 percent of the sample will be separated. Following this, three groups can be defined.

Between the two extremes there is the third group of those who are rather neutral towards religion. That is the reason why they will be left out from the following analysis in order to amplify the effect.

Searching for the relation between religious belief and value orientation, a statistic test has been used. Its significance level shows that there is a relation between them. Surprisingly, as it can be seen in the chart below, more postmaterialist respondents

²⁰ TOMKA, 1973.; ANDORKA, 1997: 558.

can be found in the group of those who find religion less important.

Postmaterialists make up 61,6 percent of the non-religious group. Since many previous researchers have proved that more religious people can be found among elderly people,²¹ it seems right to examine these two variables (religious belief and materialist–postmaterialist value orientation) within age groups.

To avoid too-small cells, the previously used three age groups will be used again. From the chart below it can be seen that age has a real influential role, but religious belief does not.

We need to be careful with this result, because the level of significance is high in every cell, which means the relation is true only in the examined group, but presumably not in the whole Magyar society. According to these results, it cannot be said that religious belief and materialist–postmaterialist value orientation are in relation within age categories.

6

MATERIALIZMUS ÉS POSTMATERIALIZMUS ÉRTÉKESÍTÉSÉNEK VÁLTOZÁSAI KORCATEGÓRIÁK ÉS HITTUDATOK SZERINT

KORCATEGÓRIÁK		HITTUDATOK		COUNT		PERCENTAGE	
Age Group	Religion	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
18-24	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
25-34	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
35-44	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
45-54	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
55-64	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
65-74	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
75-84	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
85-94	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
95-104	Religious	100	41,7%	240	100%	100	41,7%
	Non-religious	140	58,3%	240	100%	140	58,3%
Total	Religious	200	83,3%	240	100%	200	83,3%
	Non-religious	40	16,7%	240	100%	40	16,7%

²¹ ANDORKA, 1997: 556.



Conclusion of the Research

According to the research above, age, education and economic surroundings have a significant coherence with the materialist–postmaterialist value orientation, as Ronald INGLEHART and later on Elinor SCARBROUGH have already proved.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that education and age are in a close relationship, since younger generations have much better opportunities to study. That is why the relation between education and value orientation is not unambiguous.

We have not managed to confirm the other two hypotheses. According to our research, it seems that materialist–postmaterialist value orientation has no relationship with gender, nor with the importance of religion within age groups.

It seems to be obvious why gender has no relation with value orientation. The case of religious belief can seem to signify that in fact there is no relationship. But it is more likely that self-classification is not reliable enough, and it would worth measuring it with other, more objective methods.

A third possible solution would be to have smaller groups. Not the most and least religious 25 percent, but maybe 10 percent. They would be a more homogeneous group, but such a sample may be too small in turn.

Since Central European countries constitute an organic political and cultural area not only in times past, but still today, it would be interesting to see the analysis of them as well and compare them with each other.

Is the future of these countries between Western and Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe organic as well? We can certainly answer this question by examining the value orientation in all the countries of our region.

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Kristin Maria NICKEL

Inequality in Transition Economies:

Sharing the Benefits and Burdens of Post-Communist Change

*The sudden and dramatic changes in inequality and stratification of societies in post-Soviet transition economies have created serious concerns for the fragile political, economic, and social structures undergoing transformation.*¹

The Challenges of Transition: Recession and Inequality

When the Soviet Union collapsed, entire configurations of institutions that shaped the transition countries were expected to change rapidly. Even though this change was desirable in many regards, much hardship has accompanied the radical transformation.

In economic terms, the process of adjusting to a new structure involved the “twin impact” of significant recession and dramatic increases in income inequality in almost all transition economies.²

The stratification of societies in newly-formed democracies and market-based economies has the potential to threaten political stability, create social dissatisfaction with the new system, inspire resistance to essential reforms, and inhibit the functioning of the new economic system.

The establishment of democracy and the collapse of the command economy implied an immediate movement away from

¹ Hereafter, any reference to inequality refers to income inequality, rather than inequality of wealth (which concerns asset distribution) or earnings (which concerns wage distribution).

² MILANOVIC Branko, *Income, Inequality, and Poverty During the Transition from Planned to Market Economy*. Washington DC, 1998. 132. For a comparison of the Great Depression and transitional recessions, see *Ibid.*, 25–26. According to Gini coefficient measures, inequality is believed to have increased in all post-Soviet transition countries, except the Slovak Republic (*ibid.*, 40).

³ As presented in KORNAI János, *Economics of Shortage*. Amsterdam, 1980. Due to shortages and special privileges to managers and elite, equality did not exist to the extent that the formal system suggested.