
Evolution of Value Orientations of Post-communist Economic Elite: Lithuania, 1990–2000

Irmina Matonytė

*Kaunas University of Technology,
Department of Sociology,
K. Donelaičio 20,
LT-3000 Kaunas*

Ten years ago the Soviet regime collapsed in Eastern and Central Europe. From that time on we can reasonably talk about the emergence of post-Soviet economic elite. The economic elite based on entrepreneurship is centrifugal, releasing creative social forces and activating changes within the power elite. An overview of the evolution of its value orientations casts light on its learning experience and on the situation of this elite within the power elite and society in general. In our research area, we observe a changing character of coexistence between masses and elite. The antagonism typical of the Soviet power–society relations becomes less clearly pronounced, since masses and elite more and more diverge as autonomous social groups which share less cultural and political meanings in common. Over the years of transition in Lithuania, most prominent changes are perceived in elite's evaluation of the Lithuanian monetary policy (Litas), fiscal policy (taxes), legal system (public order and security), several modalities of economic policies (inflation, business contracts, economic growth, privatization, unemployment), different social problems (poverty, middle class, corruption) and political attitudes (left–right, ethnic and class conflicts, foreign influence and foreign capital). A considerable shift in priorities towards free market over democracy has occurred and the idea of the “minimal state” has cast the root in the economic elite understanding of the desirable socio-economic tendencies. The Lithuanian economic elite's priorities and interests quite resolutely indicate that one should be very cautious to be optimistic about the development of the participatory, inclusive democracy in the near future in the post-communist region.

Key words: elite, value orientations, non-inclusive democracy, masses, minimal state, social security

INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago the Soviet regime collapsed in Eastern and Central Europe. From that time on we can reasonably talk about the emerging post-Soviet economic elite, since its existence depends on the autonomy of economic sphere (under the Communist rule it was totally subordinated to the political realm). Its development is related to legitimized private property and private initiative, to introduction of free market principles, and opening of economies to the foreign capital and international commerce.

Structurally, the economic elite is composed of leaders in the political-economic, bureaucratic-economic, banking, public and private enterprise segments¹. Ties of the economic elite with the post-Soviet political and administrative elites are complicated: their social recruitment pool overlaps and their actions and interests cross over [9: 23]. However, the

economic elite based on entrepreneurship is centrifugal, releasing creative social forces and activating changes within the power elite. An overview of the evolution of its value orientations casts light on its learning experience and on the situation of this elite within the power elite and society in general.

1. TERMINOLOGICAL ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE AND TO CONCEPTUALIZE *VALUE ORIENTATIONS* OF THE ELITE

We uphold that *value orientations* is the best suited concept to capture opinion formation and value articulation process which goes in the fluid post-Soviet social environment. *Value orientations* is an intermediate concept, indicating that one should distinguish the values, attitudes and opinions. Social pressure or absence of concrete attitude towards an

issue may evoke an attempt to *snap judgements or pseudo-opinions* [12: 48]. This methodological consideration incites to study value articulation, especially among emerging elites, since they to a great extent determine the panorama of socially thinkable themes and possible choices.

According to Price, the process of opinion formation is dependent on three variables: 1) schemata (basic knowledge on a certain issue which directs one's attention to something and helps to classify information), 2) values, 3) group identification. *Group identification* refers to one's self-concept which is based on personal identity (beliefs about one's personal qualities, tastes and traits) and social identity (beliefs about one's participation in different social groups). Social identity is of great importance

¹ Our main empirical information is drawn from two surveys of the Lithuanian economic elite, carried on by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology with Vytautas Magnus University (in 1996) and by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology with Kaunas University of Technology (in 2000). To compose the sample of the post-Soviet economic elite in Lithuania (total number of respondents was 260 in 1996 and 180 in 2000), we use the same principle as Hungarian elitologist György Lengyel: we distinguish five segments of the economic elite (political-economic, bureaucratic-economic, banking, public and private enterprises). Our sample includes people who are in the top positions in the political-economic (members of the Parliamentary commissions on the economic issues, economic consultants of the political parties, members of social-political organizations such as *Privataus kapitalo aljansas* [*Alliance of Private Capital*]), in the bureaucratic-economic (ministers, vice-ministers and heads of departments in the Ministries of Economics, Budget and Finances) as well as in banking (directors/ vice-directors in the central offices and branches in the biggest towns), public (more than 150 employees) and private (more than 20 employees) enterprise segments.

Composition of the Lithuanian economic elite sample in 1996 / in 2000

Elite segment	Percentage	Number
Political-economic	25 / 20	64 / 36
Bureaucratic-economic	15 / 15	40 / 27
Banking	12 / 15	32 / 27
Public enterprise	9 / 10	22 / 18
Private enterprise	35 / 35	92 / 63
Missing	4 / 5	10 / 9
Total	100 / 100	260 / 180

Our other information sources:

- 1) data from 5 surveys of the Lithuanian elite, carried on by the Free Market institute (Vilnius) in 1993–1995,
- 2) the economic leaders' interview data collected in autumn 1999 – spring 2000, and
- 3) opinions expressed in the Lithuanian mass media.

in the formation of opinions concerning different public issues.

Of course, *value orientations* by no means is the only and exclusive term to describe the normative content coming out from expressed opinions, declared values and considered choices. However, we maintain that this concept is much better suited than the straightforward *value* term (which by definition indicates **general** principles, **fundamental** orientations and **collective** preferences and beliefs [see 17: 235–236] and thus omits the fluidity and inherent instability of any normative content observed in social groups experiencing radical and rapid change).

At the analytical level, the concept of *value orientation* enables us to explore the individual and collective past, and the present and perceived future, as they are reflected in human experience. Behavioral, cognitive, motivational and axiological aspects of normative orientations reveal the past socialization training of every individual, and the past conditions and experiences of one's participation in the social system [18]. The mentioned aspects are also rooted in the present conditions and reflect the perception of currently ongoing events and processes, in some cases very spectacular ones, like government decisions about privatization, the rapid growth (and failure) of individual fortunes, media reports on economic "affairs" and corruption, and the growing social problems connected with economic transition (mass unemployment, disproportional wealth and poverty of co-citizens, etc.). These events are at the source of important information for individuals and can influence their previously held beliefs and values².

These observations are valid for all the population taken in general. But even more spectacular they are in the case of elite. It is academically valid not to trust in any automatic existence of "public opinion" as a phenomenon *sui generis* (10): elite is in a very special social position which makes its opinions to be shaped easier and to be more influential. It happens because, first, from the sociological profile it is obvious that elites are much better edu-

²Transitory character of some "norms" is illustrated by several answers where our respondents were honest to acknowledge themselves that some changes occurred in their *Weltanschauung* during the last few years. For example, a Parliament member and private entrepreneur who happened to fill the economic elite questionnaire in 1996, in the 2000 survey commented the questions about the possibility to "go forward without breaking some existing norms" as "unfortunately, it is impossible" (understand, four years ago a person believed in the contrary...). Or evaluating the women's chances to make carrier in business, the comment also was of a similar flavor: "Unfortunately, business belongs to a man's world".

cated that the population in general (their cognitive and receptive capacities are greater, they have more subtle *schematas*). Also, elites, thanks to their important positions in the decision making structures, are more openly exposed to the problems to be solved (direct contact with the information) what makes their orientations more pronounced, better articulated, but at the same time increases their volatility, makes them more changeable, unstable (especially, in the sense of order of priorities). On the level of identities (even though it would not be sound to claim that post-communist elites have already their “elite” identity successfully forged, see 28), self-perception of elite is somewhat better articulated than that of the masses which still ominously look for the points of reference and which up to now constitute the “invisible actor” [21]. As far as the political orientations are concerned, the elite as part of electorate are also more predictable than are the masses. Summing up these arguments, we claim that this feeling of contours of their social identity reasonably facilitates their opinion making, articulation of interests and enunciation of values.

Most popular in political sociology of post-communism are two- structural and political approaches which arrive at practically opposite conclusions what concerns elite and masses co-existence / division. Both approaches start from the presumption that the tensions related to the conflicting requirements of democratic consolidation and economic restructuring will have a central role in the development of the character of the new Eastern European politics, social order and the eventual type of the State.

Structurally, elites because of their better access to resources could have somehow more activated interest in both abstract conception and concrete modalities of the market/State/democracy reform than has the population in general. This supposition is derived from the school of the Soviet studies which hold that the socialist doctrine has never worked in reality [19] and these societies have been very far from homogeneous. Because of these factual differences typical of the Soviet societies, in the post-communist systems persist remarkable differences in the degrees to which various social groups own resources and cultural, economic and political capital which they can use to retain or to improve their positions in the market economy and liberal democracy. Thus we should expect attitudinal diversity derived from structural differences in positions held in the market and the bureaucratic structures. The elite would have much more pronounced a stance vis-a-vis reforms in general, they would also be more pro-market oriented than society in general. (However, they could be also pro-State oriented because of their roots in the regime *establishment*, and be-

cause of the fact that their social status is closely related to the position in the State structures). In relation to democracy, the elite by definition could not be much interested in the development of inclusive participatory democracy, since it does not favor any reproducible elite (elitist) position. Elite’s support for the democratic rules could spread only in proportion to the interest to compete openly for the social accession with other groups which also have a high social status. This competition by some analysts is called intra-elite competition (circulation, 15), by others – elite and contra-elite attacks [6]. If to chose, we align with the first thesis.

The political approach assumes that the result of democratization and economic transformation is not predetermined, and the qualitative difference between new policies, the characteristics of interaction among various social and political actors (especially the characteristics of these actors’ identity, being parts of the Great Transformation), influence the result of transformation policies. According to this approach, division between the elite and masses could be not as sharply cut as it is structurally conceived, also elite’s preferences and values are not linearly predetermined, but depend on conjunctures and on relevant (fashionable) social interpretations of reality.

Each of these two approaches proposes a distinct set of valuable variables to study the ongoing changes. These variables are not mutually exclusive and both sets could add to a better comprehension of post-communist reality.

In the empirical part of the study, for the reasons stated above (research findings available and special interest, based on theoretical considerations about the elite), we concentrate on the value orientations of the leaders of the post-Soviet economy. We explore how (if) they evolved, changed, vacillated, etc. over the ten years of transition. The findings would permit us to indicate some major tendencies in the development of the post-Soviet societies which have been and still are quite paradoxical (if not to say, unpredictable).

2. THE TIME FRAME AND MAIN HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

As for Lithuania, we can establish several layers and phases of value articulation of the economic elite, and we can group the data on numerous axes. However, for the sake of systematization, in the Lithuanian ten- year-long transition we will distinguish three periods, and we will assemble the value orientations on three axes: value orientations related to the role of the State, to the free market and to liberal democracy. We will combine political cycles

(legislative and presidential elections) with some economic reform points which we consider of the utmost importance in Lithuania.

Thus, we establish Period 1 – proclamation of Independence on March 11th, 1990, the Soviet economic blockade, first attempts to liberalize prices, military Soviet invasion in Vilnius (January 1991), introduction of the intermediary money (*Talonas*, initially used along with the Soviet rouble; eventually *Talonas*, turned into the Lithuanian *Litas*, ousted roubles completely), introduction of the land reform (restitution to the prewar owners);

Period 2 – approval of the new Lithuanian constitution (1992), legislative elections (won by the former communists, Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party), introduction of the national currency (*Litas*), the trial process against a famous mafia boss (Dekani-dze) in 1993–1994, establishment of the Lithuanian currency board (fixed exchange rate: 4 Litas-1 US \$), bankruptcy scandals of some biggest Lithuanian banks in spring 1996;

Period 3 – legislative elections (won by the Conservatives and the Christian democrats), victory of the USA resident Valdas Adamkus in the presidential elections in 1997, sale to the Scandinavian investors of the Lithuanian Telekomas (spring 1997) and to the Americans – of the Petrol complex in Malleikiai (autumn 1999), beginning of the official Lithuanian negotiations for the entrance into the EU (December 1999).

The first period (till 1992) covers *shadow economy*, cooperative movement, search for rapid gain, unplugged liberal experimentation. It is a phase of standard thinking, *snap judgments* and *pseudo-opinions*. Of this period characteristic was a sharp dichotomy between declared values and expressed opinions on various issues. The elite declared liberal ideas, but systematically expressed not so liberal opinions when concrete questions had been asked. The elite unanimously claimed market liberty, but severely blamed the State for the insufficiencies and considered democracy as given for granted and unproblematic.

The second period (1993–1996) covers the time of political normalization and economic stabilization, highlighted by bankruptcy of several important investment agencies and banks. Value declarations became more moderate and more adequate to concrete choices and opinions. State intervention starts to be understood as instrumental and necessary, the market – as no so totally beneficial, and democracy starts to be considered as a complex, only relatively independent variable.

The third period, started in 1997, focuses on property restitution, compensation for lost savings and on foreign investment. The Russian crisis (August

1998) and EU integration policies become two additional salient variables in the Lithuanian political and economic life. It is the time of deception with the State action, which anew spurs pro-market orientation, but this time the market is understood as necessarily related to / dependent on democracy. Preferences to the market over democracy are expressed with reservation. The State starts to be conceived as carved by the market and democracy.

Żiolkowski [16] identified four distinct systems of normative order formed by interests and values under transformation. These four systems are also partly chronologically constituting therefore consecutive hypothetical stages of the transformation. The first system characterizes a very specific and usually rather brief period of social revolution arising from the grassroots level of society and the “transformation honeymoon” – the time dominated by political, ethical, and symbolic values shared by the majority of society such as suppression of the *ancien régime*, regaining of independence, civil liberties, and democracy. Elites and masses do not diverge in their excitement, optimism, hope and revolutionary enthusiasm. Then the community of values starts to vanish. Values began to differentiate. The second system is defined by a relative salience of those values which focus on the desirable political order and the construction of new political and legal institutions. This is – as Dahrendorf puts it – the “hour of the lawyer” [2]. While the first two value systems were directly related to the transient and more superficial processes of the beginning of the post-communist transformation, the other two pertain to long-term, much deeper and more universal tendencies. The third system is defined by the predominance of materialist values and interests, the fourth one by the advance of post-materialist values. Interest in and understanding of desirable changes in the material and post-material order among the elite and masses are different and heterogeneous. These issues could be approached from the perspective of R. Inglehart’s theory of growing post-materialism³.

These three phases of the Lithuanian transformation roughly cover four Żiolkowski’s systems. Obviously, we cannot draw any sharp line between the-

³ Żiolkowski’s conclusion about the Polish political scene is “the newly emerging polarization is principally polarization along the cultural, i. e. the value dimension. The domination of materialist concerns and interests in everyday life is accompanied therefore by the decisive role of non-economic values as regulators of political behavior” (p. 38). Meanwhile, we will not thoroughly explore this materialist-post-materialist dimension in the present paper. Obviously, the topic deserves extended attention and some updated reflections on the value dimension in the radically evolving and fluid social circumstances.

se phases or systems, they somehow overlap. For example, the “mafiosi” Dekanidze’s (accused of the ordered murder of famous journalist Lingys and sentenced to death) trial joins the second (the “hour of the lawyer”) and the third (based on materialistic/economic concerns; here, they supreme over the post-materialist discussion about morality of the death penalty) systems. Or the preoccupation with the constitutional system and formal rules of the political game is by no means drained in the second phase: in Lithuania prominent themes on this subject come up even on the eve of the third legislative elections (in summer 2000, the majoritarian two-round electoral system has been replaced by a one-round majoritarian system which elects half of the deputies; the other half remains to be elected by the proportional system).

Despite these methodological hesitations, we find it meaningful to base our presentation of data on Fiolkowski’s four systems model where the first and the second systems are combined and termed 1989–1992, the third (materialistic) system covers 1992 – late 1996, and the debut of the post-materialistic system appears round the corner in 1997.

Our main hypotheses are:

1. The elite differs from masses in their understanding of free market, democracy and the role of the State. On the one hand, according to the classical elitologists’ thesis, these differences could be caused by the objective class structure, social positions. On the other hand, according to the interactionists’ view, the differences result from subjective individual judgment and personal expectations attached to the reforms under way [1].

From a static point of view, according to the first argument, leaders of economy (economic elite) rather than any other social group would prefer the principles of free market. Following the second argument, leaders of economy could favor free market, democracy, or the State depending on their perception of variables beneficial to their social status.

From a dynamic point of view, over time, according to the first argument, leaders of economy (economic elite) would express higher and higher support of the principles of free market as the economic reform goes on (liberalization, privatization, etc.) because it permits to consolidate social positions. However, following the second argument, leaders of economy could favor the principles of either free market or democracy, or the State depending on their perception of concrete factors most beneficial in the given circumstances.

2. Fractions of the economic elite (broadly defined) would differ among themselves in respect of the evolution of expressed socio-economic values and political preferences. These differences also could

be explained by both objective and subjective factors. The third intervening variable would be personal ideological and axiological considerations and a recent experience of being in a given position (belonging to a certain socio-occupational group) in the concrete reform period.

From a static point of view, we could reasonably expect directors of private enterprises than rather private entrepreneurs to be more pro-State and less pro-free market oriented. But in a dynamic perspective, the things could reverse. Also, we could expect civil servants and politicians to be more democratically oriented than bankers or entrepreneurs. However, in a dynamic perspective, the things could reverse, too.

3. Some “transitional” concerns and values could be noticed among the leaders of the post-Soviet economy. For example, in Lithuania, interest in creation of the FEZ (Free Exchange Zones) turned to be “out of topics to think about” when the application to the EU has been submitted. Or a concern about fighting down inflation (hyperinflation) “disappeared” from agenda with introduction of the national currency which replaced the Soviet roubles.

4. Even in the presumed pluralistic and democratic (evolving towards such) systems, elite’s values and preferences are of vital importance in opinion-making, and they can indicate important future tendencies of the socio-economic development. For example, strong support for private pension funds which could replace Welfare State indicates a potential (and danger) of the development of non-inclusive democratic systems if the elite is eager to take a distance from other social groups in the nascent poor-capitalist societies. As an UNDP advisor in Eastern Europe has nicely put it: “The captain should to the very last” leave the sinking boat.

We already [26] have some indicators about the primacy given by the elite to personal initiative, freed in the liberal market and neglecting communal values, social solidarity, open society: in 1995 quite a considerable share of elite thought that it would be good not to finance from the State budget: radio and TV – 16.1%, social security – 9.5%, culture – 2.6%, health care – 0.8%, science, education – 0.5%, or to fully privatize (80% and more) radio and TV – 45%, social security – 16.6%, health care – 15%, culture – 14.6%, science, education – 5.6%.

5. Leaders of economy could also differ in their appreciation of socio-economic realities and political preferences, depending on whether they identify themselves with “elite” or not. Elite researchers claim multi-elite reality and consider the *elite* as a social group with certain common characteristics [11]. Thus, through self-identification with the economic *elite* we can measure the very *elitism* (group consciousness,

closeness, cohesion, and coordination) of the post-Soviet economic leaders. The elite paradigm emphasizes that *elites* are more than statistical aggregates of top position holders: they are social groups, and their groupness is integral to their power. Self-identification with the *elite* is one indicator of these “glue” parameters. A sense of collective self-legitimacy, ruling ethos about the right (or even the duty) to rule is derived from a strong elite groupness. Self-identification with the *elite* stimulates responsibility to society for the domains where leaders feel authorized to take decisions with big social consequences. Those who belong to the *elite* have more rights to act in the public arena, they also have more duties. The *elite* shares some sense of social mission. Thus, we expect that the leaders who identify themselves with the elite will more intensively express their attention and interest in socio-economic problems than those who lack (or decline) the elite identity.

3. ON “MASSES AND ELITE” CONTRAPOSITION

In Lithuania, during the ten years of political and economic reforms, pro-market and anti-State trends have never gained unequivocal and wide social support. Thorough analysis of the distribution of attitudes among the Lithuanian population in general and its political and economic elite [26: 29] showed that none of political or social groupings have had a distinct tendency toward modernization. Most consistent in their reformist views is the Liberal party whose ideas and programs, however, never have reached any considerable electoral or social support. Society displays incoherent views about the State, market and democracy. The disorientation is manifested by the coincidence in citizen’s opinions of a pro-socialist vision of social relations on the one hand, and an aversion to welfare state in the style of the real socialism on the other. In Eastern Europe, favoring liberalism in the economy results not so much from the observation of the current effects of reforms and the conscious acceptance of new principles as from rejection of any centrally-planned economy perceived as Communist and thus considered bad and useless [16: 206]. Thus we see that liberal economic transformations were going on, suspended in a way in a social vacuum without any axiological and customary foundation, but also without clear political support.

Data from the national surveys [25: 6] indicate that even the popular trust in democracy and free market diminishes over the years of transition. Society “wakes up” and begins to perceive that neither democracy nor free market are values *per se*.

Are you satisfied with the development of democracy in Lithuania?				
	1992	1996	1997	2000 ⁴
Yes, absolutely	1.9	0.5	1.9	4
Yes	36	25	33	19
No	45	55	50	35
Not at all	7.7	18	14	30

Are you in favor of free market in Lithuania?			
	1992	1996	1997
Yes	80	79	68
No	7	16	26

This deception could be explained by the “elitist” thesis: first, post-communist populations in general start to perceive that procedural democratic rules and free market principles are not necessarily conducive to any “better” social order, and second, in Lithuania some particularly strong elitist tendencies appear and society feels as to be captured and expropriated by abstract liberal principles instrumentalized by people in power positions.

If people like you have good possibilities to tell their opinion about problems and bad things in society? ⁵				
	Czech Republic	Poland	Lithuania	Hungary
Definitely yes	17	31	16	13
Yes	36	39	24	35
No	26	19	26	31
Definitely no	20	9	25	15
Don’t know	1	2	9	6

According to you, the Parliament orients itself towards...				
	Czech Republic	Poland	Lithuania	Hungary
Interests of almost all population	1	5	2	6
Interests of majority of the population	23	18	8	27
Interests of minority of the population	44	32	26	30
Interests of a small group	24	35	56	33
Don’t know	8	10	8	4

⁴ Data about year 2000 are taken from a survey by Vilmorus company conducted in April, 2000. Data were published in the daily „Lietuvos rytas“, May 12, 2000.

⁵ Data from the international comparative survey, March–April 2000 (Vilmorus company for Lithuania). Data were published in the Lithuanian daily „Lietuvos rytas“, May 12, 2000.

Data of a comparative international survey indicate that although all surveyed societies feel bad about a reduced scope and lack of transparency of the decision-making process (somehow “captured” by the national elites), the Lithuanian population most drastically affirms discontent with these elite-centered tendencies. A question for the further research remains, if the Lithuanian society is in reality much stronger expropriated by a “small group” or this impression simply arises from a purely quantitatively distinct situation (in the country of 3.7 million inhabitants a “small group” could numerically be small and named as such but not as “minority”)... Anyway, in Lithuania the recent development shows a growing elite concentration and increasingly non-participatory character of the regime.

On the contrary, data show that the elite over time becomes more and more confident about both free market and democracy. On 5 point scale (5 – very much in favor, 1 – not in favor at all), the elite’s values attributed to democracy shift from 3.8 to 4.3 and those attributed to free market shift from 4.1 to 4.4. Correlation between the support of democracy and the elite’s segment as well as place of residence (capital city vs. other places) becomes more pronounced: politicians more outspokenly support rather democracy than market, people from the capital city (Vilnius) more vigorously express their preferences attributed to the free market.

Thus, the “masses and elites” contraposition over the years of the post-communist transition accentuates itself. This observation compels us to study how other values, corollary to the axiological “democracy” and “free market” principles, evolve.

4. VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF THE LITHUANIAN ECONOMIC ELITE, 1996–2000 (WITH SOME PREMISES FROM EARLIER TIME)

In this chapter we will focus on several “soft” variables as regards value orientations, attitudes and opinions of the leaders of the post-communist Lithuanian economy. The main locus of our interest is determined by repeatedly described findings that shaping attitudes and values about different socio-economic and political problems are better explained by other socio-economic, cultural and political attitudes than by personal characteristics of the elite [26]. Thus we will only occasionally refer to the relevant “hard variables” (such as segment of elite, place of residence, gender, type of education, etc.)

From the list provided we see that all the issues under consideration gain some attention from the elite (none of the issue is evaluated less than 3 – “more or less important”). Practically we find the

Table 1. **Importance of several problems to be solved. Comparative list 1996–2000 (5 – very important, 1 – very unimportant)**

Issue	1996	2000
To reform social security system	3.9	3.6
To fight down inflation	4.2	3.2
To increase respect for business contracts	4.0	4.1
To increase the economic growth	4.6	4.8
To avoid political dominance from the East	3.9	3.8
To avoid political dominance from the West	3.4	3.5
To reform the taxation system	4.4	4.7
To pay back foreign debt	3.1	3.1

same ranking of the issues over the period of 5 years: the most important problem is the economic growth, then comes the taxation reform and increase of fulfilment of business contracts, etc. The only issue which lost its prominence is inflation. This change can be explained by objective circumstances: Lithuania has stabilized its monetary system (by introducing a fixed US dollar and Litas exchange rate in 1995), and the inflation level is maintained low (about 3% in 1999).

Some quite tangible change is observed in elite’s perception of the social security system. Its attention to it decreases. To our mind, this phenomenon has deep and important implications. A reasonably low moral economic elite’s engagement into the social security system could be firstly explained by the objective arguments. Considering its low level of economic development, Lithuania has very expanded structures of the social security system. The level of GDP redistribution is comparable to the redistribution level of poorer EU economies and is almost three times higher than in fast growing economies. The bulk of social burden of earnings is laid on the shoulders of the employer, most often a private employer. This heavy burden on payments results in escaping into black-market activities, sarcastic views about the social solidarity which in the case of the economic elite translates itself through real losses of income.

On the other hand, in the actual Lithuanian public discourse, “social security” is associated with income distribution unilaterally directed from richer people towards the poor, with poverty alleviation, pensions, maternity leaves, helping marginal groups. As mentioned above, elite’s despise of it illustrates the non-inclusive character of the elite perception of the expected social order, weakness of the community sense with the wide population and a growing gap between masses and elites. From an other research on elite’s attitudes we know that the elite is very much supportive of the idea of private pension funds (5% are for complete replacement of the

State social security by private pension funds and 31% think that private pension funds could partially replace the State social security agencies in some branches of economy, [26: 54] and expresses great willingness to fully privatize the social security system (around 16% are for full State disengagement from the social security finance) (26: Table 13a). The most pro-private social security system advocates are entrepreneurs.

We should interpret this non-inclusive mind of the economic elite (and especially of the entrepreneurs) as their reaction to the typical social behavior in the region which is shaped by egalitarianism and expectations of a generous “welfare state” [7: 115–116] and as their defensive stance vis-a-vis financial burden laid on their shoulders as employers.

As we will see later on, this observation about the growing disinterest in social security reform is seconded by growing elite’s attention to the situation of the “middle class” (at the expense of decreasing attention to “poverty”). So, we can infer that this value is related not only to the information about social problems (level of poverty, consumption standards, living conditions of the population, social differentiation, etc.) behold by the respondents (*schemata*), but also to changes in their perception of their own social identity. The elite with time becomes more and more inclined to identify itself with the “elite” and “(upper)middle class” [27].

We see that elite’s preoccupations to avoid political dominance from the East and from the West, despite ongoing restructuring of the economic ties and political alliances, do not change much over time. This makes us to think that these elite’s orientations and judgements are strongly related rather with the deeply ingrained understanding of the geopolitical and cultural environment, stereotypes about the East and the West than with concrete changing political-economic circumstances as is constantly underlined by the Lithuanian political forces nursing themselves by the fear “of the sleeping bear” (speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament V. Landsbergis, quoted in 22: 182).

On all the issues studied we observe quite important changes in elite’s (dis)satisfaction or feeling of being concerned. Our first remark is related to the evolution of public discourse and a transformed semantic field of different categories, appearance of new meanings of the terms and crystallization of their interpretations. Even if there are no exhaustive studies about these issues, differences in elite’s and masses’ perception and attribution of sense to different terms are observed in Lithuania. However, research data allow us to formulate this strong presupposition about disparities and evolution of social representations. For example, “everyone knows that Lithuania is not a rich country, even though the majority of the population considers their standard of living not poor but average. That was the response of 67% of labor force survey and of 72% of the household budget survey respondents. Even 42% of respondents – benefit recipients whose main source of living is social benefits consider themselves as not poor” [6: 62–63].

We also see that the pertinence of the political division between the “left” and the “right” in the post-communist societies seems to steadily decrease. On the one hand, it is related to the complicated character of the reforms whose direction is difficult to classify as the “left” or the “right” (“recombinant property”, 14). On the other hand, in Lithuania it is related to a recent emergence of the forces in political “center”. In some of our questionnaires we found even comments on missing questions concerning the “center” (in opposition to questions about the “left” and the “right”).

Problems with defining what is “left” and what is “right” are to be traced. The problem here is, firstly, that it is difficult to advocate the leftist state *intervention* in a country where a large part of the national property still belongs to the state. Secondly, a truly liberal program has enjoyed limited support because of the mentioned weakness of the middle class. Thirdly, in a strongly Catholic country, the “merciless” rules of the market have traditionally been opposed in the social teachings of the Church, which favored the “third way” between liberal capitalism and socialism (namely principles of solidarity, social participation, but also paternalism).

Polish researchers claim that in generally the post-communist division between the “left” and the “right” has moved from the sphere of socio-economic options, as is usually the case in Western democracies, to the ideological and axiological sphere [5: 116]. We maintain that the economic elite constitutes a so-

Table 2. Do you agree / disagree with the statements... Comparative list 1996–2000 (1 – completely disagree, 5 – completely agree)

Problem	1996	2000
Poverty is the biggest problem of our society	4.2	3.9
Lamentable situation of the middle class is the biggest problem of our society	3.2	3.7
Corruption is widely spread in our society	3.7	4.2
There is a big potential of social conflicts in our society	1.8	2.1
There is a big potential of ethnic conflicts and military expansion in our region	2.2	1.8
Right wing policies provide good conditions for us	3.1	2.1
Left wing policies provide good conditions for us	3.2	2.1

cial group which is little driven by ideological/axiological motives, but orients itself according to rationally determinable socio-economic indicators. This is why their sensitivity to the normative “left” and “right” decreases over time.

Also, there is a slight decline in elite’s anxiety about the ethnic conflicts and military expansion in the region. It is in opposite correlation with the growth of elite’s anxiety about the social conflicts. This shift is to be interpreted as a sort of return to “classical” (class-based) understanding of social dynamics as opposed to the once fashionable Huntington’s civilization thesis. This observation from a somewhat different angle confirms the Blondel’s description of the a-typical (unfriendly for the development of political democracy) environment in Eastern Europe left by Communism which reduced, if not annihilated, the key social cleavages which had been at the root of stable party systems in liberal democracies. The class cleavage has gone, thus making it impossible for the main conservative and socialist/labor division to be installed or restored. Meanwhile, what remained strong was the markedly more divisive ethnic cleavage; this led to explosions (in a few areas in Western Europe and in parts of what Yugoslavia was).

Moreover, at the time when the political structure was likely to be weak or even very weak, a major social and economic reconstruction had to take place in the area. Social conflicts could therefore be expected to be very strong indeed, with consequential vast pressures on the political system: it seemed unlikely that moderate liberal regimes would easily survive [5: 11–12].

Corruption⁶ likewise seems to change its salience in the elite’s preoccupations. The growing blame of corruption is not so much related to its objective expansion (on the contrary, it could be said that the extent of corruption shrinks, see 5), but to its more articulated legal interpretations. In Lithuania, the Law of Coordination of Public and Private Interests among Public Servants came into force in 1999 and brought some more lucid perception of this social problem. So, we can infer that the growing elite’s worries about corruption are closely related to their worries about the quality and social image of civil

⁶ Any taxonomy of corruption should include various forms of patronage; forging of documents for personal advantage; bribe taking and bribe giving; extortion; smuggling that involves abuse of office and a host of other forms. One that is particularly relevant to a study of the post-communist countries is where former communists have, while still in positions of authority, used their official positions and insider knowledge to take advantage of the privatization process. This form of corruption should be thoroughly explored (Holmes, 1997, p. 134).

service in Lithuania (while in 1996 the issue of corruption fell under broad normative considerations, related to the general understanding of justice, honesty, duties, money, social privileges, etc). Thus, approach to corruption and to its possibly delegitimizing role for the State is based primarily on perception (not on purely legal perspective).

Table 3. Elite’s opinion about privatization. Comparative data 1996– 2000 (%)

	1996	2000
1 should be speeded up	52	47
2 conducted at the present speed	38	27
3 slowed down	5	13
4 stopped	5	13

In Lithuania, in 1996 privatization process was in its first phase (emphasis on the de-etatization of property, redistribution of property with *vouchers* issued for all entitled Lithuanian citizens); in 2000 it is in the second phase (emphasis on the finding the “real” owner, looking for foreign investors). Bearing this in mind, it is quite difficult to compare the data. However, one tendency – the growing elite’s disappointment with privatization, willingness to slow down or to stop it – is quite clearly pronounced. We explain it more by elite’s dissatisfaction with the concrete privatization strategies (or choices) but not by its disaffection of the very idea/objective of privatization. This explanation is supported by findings about the elite’s opinion concerning the property type most appropriate for the growth of the Lithuanian economy.

Table 4. Elite’s opinion about property type best suited for the economic growth (%)

	1996	2000
State property	0	4
Mixed, state property dominating	6	8
Mixed, equal shares of the state and private property	12	6
Mixed, private property dominating	38	29
Private, with fiscal and monetary state control	30	41
Private, without any restrictions	14	12

We can interpret these data in the light of some earlier data about the post-communist economic leaders and their economic values. According to them, the role of the State in the economy had to be central (0.6% in 1993 and 1.2% in 1995), very big or big (5.4% in 1993 and 14.1% in 1995), small (58.2% in 1993 and 68.1% in 1995), diminishing (30.7% in 1993 and 13.4% in 1995) [26: 37–38]. A

tendency towards more moderate anti-State (pro-free-market) orientation is to be underlined.

We do not have any statistical data about the elite's attitude towards the role of the State for Period 1 (up to 1993) in post-communist Lithuania. However, the public discourse and new Lithuanian businessmen were practically unanimous about the need of the State withdrawal from the economy (see texts in the Lithuanian mass-media and by famous entrepreneurs Stasaitis, Konopliovas, etc. published in 1991–1994). The “invisible hand” of the market was believed to be the best tool of social accommodation to producing and consuming activities.

Meanwhile, over Period 2 we see that the elite becomes less sceptical about the possibility of unquestionably positive State intervention. Even if the elite remains purely anti-State, it does not fully deny the social utility of the State. The fact that an increase of State-favorable attitudes is the biggest among economic journalists implies that the most important impetus to reconsider the role of the State in the economy of Lithuania was a judicial process against Lingys's (at the time one of the most active anti-mafia journalists) murderers [27]. The State starts to be seen as a legitimate actor and regulator of social interactions. It is interesting to underline that this evolution happens under the rule of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (formally based on the left-wing, pro-State ideology and action). Nevertheless, the statement about the occasional congruency of the political and economic elite on the role of the State would be void of any analytical sense: as one political leader nicely put it: the LDLP bypassed the right wing parties ... from the right. The State neglect of its banking sector led to some dramatic bankruptcy processes in the spring of 1996.

Thus, it seems adequate that in 1996 (under the Labor government) we record that around 40% of the elite is in favor of the mixed State and private property (equal shares). 10% prefer State property and 10% private property. In 2000 (under Conservative government) 40% of the elite says that the best solution would be private property with only fiscal and monetary State control. Of 40% partisans of the equal State–private ownership in 1996, in 2000 remain only 30%.

Likewise, more clearly pronounced becomes the elite's desvie for the “shrinking state”. However, it seems that elite's claims are based on a very reduced understanding of economy (industry), because the “third” sector (culture, education, mass-media, communications, etc.) by definition needs more diffuse ownership control and leaves a bigger role for the initiatives not automatically attributable to the individual private property.

By the way, some answers (obtained in 2000) to our questionnaire that the state property is the best for the Lithuanian economy (the same as several answers that the privatization “should be stopped”) should not be taken at their face value. These answers are better to interpret as products of the paradoxical thinking. The comments such as “privatization should be stopped, revised and then carried out on completely different grounds”, or “if Lithuania loses its control over strategic objects, perhaps this could be good for the economic growth, but not for the growth of the Lithuanian economy which at the time will not exist as such...” highlight the paradoxical nature of these pretended pro-State (communist) attitudes of some leaders of the Lithuanian economy.

Also, in respect of quite tangible elite's support of the State in the economy, two facts are to be stressed. First, there are political and administrative relations of many entrepreneurs with the state apparatus and the government (corporate mechanisms or lobbies). Secondly, when rules regulating relations between the economy and politics are not clear, a big share by the state in the economy, which is guaranteed by the government, can be a source of profitable contracts and commissions for entrepreneurs connected with influential politicians [24]. On the other hand, the lobbying force of entrepreneurs as a separate interest group is small. They are still learning how to lobby effectively.

Table 5. Opinions about the foreign capital, 1996–2000 (%)

	1996	2000
Foreign capital should be attracted as much as possible	37	31
Foreign capital should be reasonably attracted	60	69
Foreign capital should be avoided	3	–

In the expressed elite's opinions we see a growing perception of the foreign capital as of a genuinely good thing or at least an “inevitable evil” for the national economy in the post-communist situation. It is interesting to note that there are some disparities among the elite's segments in their estimations how much of the foreign capital the Lithuanian economy has at present: the bankers and entrepreneurs think that there is around 5–20%, but politicians and civil servants think that there is about 10–30% of the foreign capital in the Lithuanian economy in year 2000 (general mean is 21%). However, these disparities are much less visible in the elite's opinions how much foreign capital should the Lithuanian economy have: the general mean is 37.5%, variations ranking from 20% to 75% (they

do not correlate with the elite's segment). These data indicate that members of the economic elite have unequal information about the actual situation in the Lithuanian economy, but their understanding of future development tendencies are quite similar. In this sense the elite is united in its friendly attitudes toward foreign capital and understanding of the benefits to have a liberal and open economy. We think that in further research these findings could be interpreted in the light of the process of the Lithuanian integration into the EU.

From the attitudinal data, opinions about the foreign capital most strongly correlate with the economic leaders' identification with the elite⁷. In both surveys, in 1996 and in 2000, the issue of foreign capital appear to be important in the design of the post-Soviet economic elite identity (sig. 0.02). The Lithuanian data from 1996 and 2000 show that people who think that they belong to the economic elite are much more than those who do not identify themselves with the elite in favor of attracting foreign capital.

Table 6. Foreign capital and elite identity 1996/2000 (%)

	Total	Elite identity	No elite identity
To attract	37/31	43/51	32/26
To be prudent	60/69	57/49	65/74
To avoid	3/0	–/–	3/–

In 1996, 3% (in 2000 nobody) of the economic elite were against foreign capital, 60% (around 70%) expressed a more cautious attitude (they did not care about having too much foreign capital in the national economy). By the way, in 1996 this caution was very poorly grounded: by the end of 1995, only 0.8% of the privatized State property belonged to foreign investors. This proportion increased strongly as a result of the privatization program implemented by Conservative government after its electoral victory in autumn 1996.

In late 1999 some signs of complex and not unequivocally positive attitudes towards foreign capital start to reveal themselves in Lithuania. It is related to the sale of the Lithuanian oil complex in Mažeikiai to the American company "Williams". The Lit-

⁷ In 1996 we find that only one third of our sample explicitly identify themselves with the economic elite. From the survey 2000 we find this proportion is remarkably higher (45%). The most pronounced elite identity is among leaders of the banking sector (in 2000 around 65% of them declare that they belong to the elite). The least-pronounced elite identity is among the high rank civil servants (around 25% identify themselves with the elite).

huanian power elite was willing to cooperate with the foreign investors up to the point of opposing the public opinion. This privatization deal caused R. Paksas' resignation from the position of the Prime Minister in October 1999 (he, the most popular politician at the time, left Conservative Party and joined Liberal Party whose ideology is even more oriented to free-market principles, and it puts little value on the Nation-state). Entrepreneurs started to actively express their worries about the competitive edge of national economy. "Tough negotiations" to protect national interests becomes a popular slogan. Thus we can reasonably claim that the issue of foreign capital in post-Soviet Lithuania establishes itself as an important indication of the elite's value orientations.

Also, people who express their elite identity are more interested in and more concerned with other socio-political questions such as poverty, economic growth, State foreign policy, etc.

Table 7. Opinions of elite and non-elite (averages on 5 point scale: 5 – the issue is very important, 1 – the issue is absolutely unimportant), 1996/2000

	Elite identity	No elite identity
To reform social security system	4.0/3.8	3.8/3.6
To fight down inflation	4.3/3.4	4.1/3.0
To increase respect for business contracts	4.2/4.3	3.9/3.8
To increase the economic growth	4.7/4.9	4.5/4.7
To avoid political dominance from the East	4.0/3.8	3.8/3.7
To avoid political dominance from the West	3.5/3.53.	3/3.4
To reform the taxation system	4.3/4.6	4.5/4.8

Over years only the issue of taxation preoccupies more those who do not think that they belong to the economic elite than those who identify themselves with the economic elite. Otherwise, the elite is more socially aware and expresses its willingness to improve society in more firm terms.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Ten years of the post-communist transition witness important changes in structural, political and cultural features. Some real and profound transformation has occurred in the region. In our research area, we observe a changing character of the coexistence between masses and elites. An antagonism typical of the Soviet power-society relations becomes less clearly pronounced: masses and elite more and more deeply diverge as autonomous social groups

which share less cultural and political meanings in common. In this sense we should speak about the development of a “two-track society”. If the popular trust in democracy, free market and the Stat has faded over the years of change, the same cannot be seen in the case of the economic elite. This different normative assessment is related to their different structural situation and experiences as well as to their dissimilar expectations and cultural context.

As regards more thorough research of the economic elite’s value orientations, we should conclude that “hard” variables inside the elite appear to be of little utility in explaining expressed views and changes in the views (“soft” variables). More appropriate are such factors as concrete events occurring in the public sphere, particular conjectures of political, economic and social design, other cultural-political attitudes “practiced” by the individual.

Also, we should underline that a longitudinal value orientation study necessitates to differentiate between “topical” (current, well known) and “temporary” (passing, interim) themes and preoccupations. In other words, political agenda and public discourse influence very strongly elite’s interest and intensity of opinions on several issues.

From the data available we infer that over the years of transition in Lithuania most prominent changes are perceived in the evaluation of the Lithuanian monetary policy (Litas), fiscal policy (taxes), legal system (public order and security), several modalities of economic policies (inflation, business contracts, economic growth, privatization, unemployment), different social problems (poverty, middle class, corruption) and political attitudes (left–right, ethnic and class conflicts, foreign influence and foreign capital). We could conclude that a considerable shift in the priorities towards free market over democracy has had occurred and the idea of the “minimal state” has cast the root in the economic elite understanding of the desirable socio-economic tendencies.

The Lithuanian economic elite’s priorities and interests quite resolutely indicate that one should be hardly optimistic about the development of participatory, inclusive democracy in the near future in the post-communist region. As the elite paradigm underlines, the elite displays certain patterns of its groupness. The growing identification with the elite among economic leaders indicates the presence of such social “glue”. We observe how structurally presupposed closeness, consciousness, coordination and cohesion of the elite more and more strongly reveals itself through a stronger and stronger articulated identification with the elite. Over the years of the

post-Soviet transition, the degree of identification with the elite has been constantly increasing among the economic leaders: elite’s groupness from its latent, hidden forms more and more openly reveals itself as institutionally established and individually understood, accepted (the elite group “in itself” turns into an elite group “for itself”).

Received
25 February 2001

References

1. Bruszt L., Simon J. The Great Transformation in Hungary and Eastern Europe. Theoretical Approaches and public opinion about capitalism and democracy. Szoboszlai Gy. (Ed.). *Flying Blind. Emerging Democracies in East-Central Europe*. Budapest: Hungarian Political Science Association. 1992. P. 176–203.
2. Dahrendorf R. *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1990.
3. Hauser E., Wasilewski J. (Eds.) *Lessons in democracy*. Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, N. Y.: University of Rochester Press; Jackson John E., Marcinkowski Aleksander S. *Entrepreneurial Attitudes of Poles*. P. 171–200; Bukowski A. *Social Assets and Economic Growth. The Case of Poland*. 1999. P. 201–214.
4. Higley J., Pakulski J. Elite Theory and Research in Postcommunist Societies. *Paper presented at the International Workshop The Second Generation of Democratic Elites in Eastern and Central Europe*, Mogilany, Poland. 10–12. December 1999. P. 14.
5. Holmes L. T., Roszkowski W. (Eds.). *Changing Rules. Polish political and economic transformation in comparative perspective*, Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies Polish Academy of Sciences. Kofman Jan, Roszkowski Wojciech. *Post-Communist Parties in East-Central Europe*. 1997. P. 113–122.
6. Krupavičius A. Models of Post-Communist Elites in Central Europe and the Baltics: Comparative Analysis. *Papers on Democratic Transition*. Budapest, 1996.
7. Lazutka R. The standard of living and poverty. *State and Human Development*. Vilnius: UNDP. 1998. P. 57–68.
8. Linz J. J., Stepan A. *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
9. Matonytė I. *Sociological interpretations of elite and their use in the post-soviet area*. Abstract of Doctoral Thesis. Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University, 1999.
10. Meehan E. J., Roche John P., Stedman Murry S. *The Dynamics of Modern Government*. N. Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Company: 1996. P. 87–116.
11. Meisel J. H. *The Myth of the Ruling Class*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.
12. Price V. *Public Opinion*. London: Sage Publications, 1992.
13. Schmitter P. The proto-science of consolidology: can it improve the outcome of contemporary efforts at democratization? *Politikon*. 1994. Vol. 2. No. 2.

14. Stark D. Recombinant property in East European capitalism *American Journal of Sociology*. 1996. Vol. 101. P. 993–1027.
15. Wesotowski W. Theoretical aspects of elite research in post-communist societies. *Paper presented at the International Workshop. The Second Generation of Democratic Elites in Eastern and Central Europe*. Mogilany, Poland. 10–12. December 1999. P. 29.
16. Wnuk-Lipinski E. (Ed.). *Values and radical social change. Comparing Polish and South-African experience*. Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies Polish Academy of Sciences, 1998.
17. Boudon R., Besnard Ph., Cherkaoui M., Lecuyer B.-P. (Eds.). *Dictionnaire de la sociologie*. Paris: France Loisirs, 1996.
18. Bourdieu P. *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Edition de Minuit, 1979.
19. Kende P., Strmiska Z. *Egalité et inégalités en Europe de l'Est*. Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1984.
20. Mink G., Szurek J.-Ch. *Cet étrange post-communisme: rupture et transition en Europe centrale et orientale*. Paris: Presses de CNRS, 1992.
21. Mink G. Les mystères de l'acteur invisible. Remarques sur l'hypothèse du retour des communistes en Europe Centrale et Orientale. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*. 1993. N°. 95. P. 417–433.
22. *Politique internationale*. Entretien de Kachia J. avec V. Landsbergis. 1997. No. 75. P. 181–188.
23. Szelenyi I., Treiman D., Wnuk-Lipinski E. (red.), *Elity w Polsce, w Rosji i na Wzgrzech. Wymiana czy reprodukcja?* Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1995.
24. Wasilewski J. (red.). *Elita polityczna 1998. Raport wstępny z badań „Elita rz'dz'ca i władza elity“*. Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk; 1999. P. 57–74.
25. Ališauskienė R. Prezidento rinkimai '97: rinkėjų nuostatos ir ketinimai. *Politologija*. Vilnius. 1998. P. 3–22.
26. Masiulis K. *Lietuvos elitas. Ekonominės vertybės. Politinės orientacijos. Prognozės*. Vilnius: Pradai, 1998.
27. Matonytė I. Posovietinės visuomenės ekonominis elitas. *Filosofija. Sociologija*. 1996. Nr. P. 27–35.
28. Matonytė I. Elito vertybių ir tapatybės dermė Lietuvos ekonomikos lyderių tarpe. Matulionis A. (red.) *Kultūrologija*. Vilnius: Gervelė, 2000.
29. Novagrockienė J. (red.). *Lietuvos valdžių teisinės sąmonės ir savimonės ypatumai*. Vilnius: Eugrimas, 1998.

Irmina Matonytė

POKOMUNISTINIO EKONOMINIO ELITO VERTYBIŲ EVOLIUCIJA LIETUVOJE, 1996–2000

S a n t r a u k a

Rytų ir Centrinėje Europoje komunizmas žlugo prieš dešimtį metų. Nuo to laiko mes jau galime kalbėti apie besiformuojantį posovietinį ekonominį elitą. Ekonominis elitas, besiremiantis verslininkyste, yra esminė išcentrinė jėga, atpalaiduojanti kūrybines socialines jėgas ir aktyvinanti valdžios elito pokyčius. Ekonominio elito vertybinių orientacijų apžvalga nušviečia mokymosi procesą ir apibūdina šio elito situaciją valdžios elite ir visuomenėje. Savo studijoje pastebėjome kintantį elito ir masių sambūvio pobūdį. Sovietmečiu buvęs būdingas antagonizmas tarp valdžios ir visuomenės mažėja, tačiau elitas ir masės vis labiau išsiskiria kaip autonomiškos socialinės grupės su specifiskai joms būdingais kultūrinių ir politinių reikšmių rinkiniais. Pereinamuoju metu Lietuvoje labiausiai pakito elito vertinimai, susiję su monetarine politika (litu), fiskaline politika (mokesčiais), teisine sistema (viešoji tvarka ir saugumas), kai kuriais ekonominiais reiškiniais (infliacija, verslo kontraktai, ekonomikos augimas, privatizacija, nedarbas), įvairiomis socialinėmis problemomis (skurdas, vidurinė klasė, korupcija) ir politinėmis pažiūromis (kairė–dešinė, etniniai ir klasiniai konfliktai, užsienio įtaka ir užsienio kapitalas). Elito pažiūros ryškiai pasistūmėjo link prioritetų laisvajai rinkai (atiduodamų demokratijos sąskaita), taip pat sustiprėjo pritarimas „minimalios valstybės“ stiprėjimui ir plėtrai kaip pageidaujamai socioekonominiai kryptimams. Lietuvos ekonominio elito prioritetai ir interesai gana aiškiai rodo, kad tik labai rezervuotai galima daryti optimistines prognozes apie efektyvaus visuomenės dalyvavimo politikoje kultūros raidą ir atstovaujamosios demokratijos perspektyvas pokomunistinėje erdvėje.