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# THE VALUE KALEIDOSCOPE OF MONTENEGRIN SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH: YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL HABITUS AND TRANSITIONAL IMPERATIVES

## KALEJDOSKOP WARTOŚCI SPOŁECZEŃSTWA CZARNOGÓRY Z PERSPEKTYWY MŁODZIEŻY: MŁODZI MIĘDZY TRADYCYJNYM HABITUSEM A IMPERATYWAMI TRANSFORMACJI

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the value system of young people in Montenegro amid post-transitional transformations. Drawing on the concept of the value kaleidoscope, it re-examines the relationship between the traditional habitus and contemporary transitional imperatives. The empirical basis consists of data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey (ESS Round 11, 2023), on a subsample of young people aged 15 to 30 (inclusive; N = 192). Value preferences were operationalised through Schwartz's model of basic human values, with scores ipsatised to control for response style. Axiological syncretism, a concept introduced in this paper to denote the simultaneous acceptance of values belonging to opposing value systems, was operationalised at the sample level as a positive association between the relative priorities of openness to change and conservation. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation,



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the t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results show a statistically significant negative correlation between openness to change and conservation ($r = -.69$, $p < .001$), consistent with Schwartz's universal circular structure. This finding, however, does not rule out the coexistence of both orientations within individuals, which would require a person-centred approach in future research. The clearest differentiation is produced by gender: young women show higher preferences for self-transcendence (universalism), while young men favour self-enhancement (power). Level of education and place of residence produce no significant differences in the examined value orientations. The findings suggest that at the level of relative priorities, the value space of young people in Montenegro follows the universal model, with gender as the main axis of differentiation.

**Keywords:** youth, habitus, transitional imperatives, axiological syncretism, Schwartz value model, basic human values, gender differences, European Social Survey (ESS), Montenegro.

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł analizuje system wartości młodzieży w Czarnogórze w kontekście przemian posttransformacyjnych. Opierając się na koncepcji kalejdoskopu wartości, praca ponownie analizuje relację między tradycyjnym habitusem a współczesnymi imperatywami transformacyjnymi. Podstawę empiryczną stanowią dane z jedenastej rundy Europejskiego Sondażu Społecznego (ESS runda 11, 2023), na podpróbie młodych osób w wieku od 15 do 30 lat (włącznie; $N = 192$). Preferencje wartościowe zoperacjonalizowano za pomocą modelu podstawowych wartości ludzkich Schwartza, a wyniki poddano ipsatyzacji w celu kontroli stylu odpowiedzi. Synkretyzm aksjologiczny, pojęcie wprowadzone w niniejszym artykule na określenie jednoczesnej akceptacji wartości należących do przeciwstawnych systemów wartości, został zoperacjonalizowany na poziomie próby jako pozytywny związek między relatywnymi priorytetami otwartości na zmiany i zachowawczości. Hipotezy weryfikowano za pomocą korelacji Pearsona, testu *t* oraz jednoczynnikowej analizy wariancji (ANOVA). Wyniki wskazują na istotną statystycznie ujemną korelację między otwartością na zmiany a zachowawczością ($r = -0{,}69$, $p < 0{,}001$), zgodną z uniwersalną strukturą kołową Schwartza. Wynik ten nie wyklucza jednak współwystępowania obu orientacji u tych samych jednostek, co wymagałoby zastosowania podejścia zorientowanego na osobę w przyszłych badaniach. Najwyraźniejsze zróżnicowanie wprowadza płeć: młode kobiety wykazują silniejsze preferencje wobec przekraczania siebie (uniwersalizm), a młodzi mężczyźni wobec umacniania siebie (władza). Poziom wykształcenia i miejsce zamieszkania nie powodują istotnych różnic w badanych orientacjach wartościowych. Wyniki sugerują, że na poziomie relatywnych priorytetów przestrzeń wartościowa młodzieży w Czarnogórze jest zgodna z modelem uniwersalnym, a główną osią zróżnicowania jest płeć.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młodzież, habitus, imperatywy transformacyjne, synkretyzm aksjologiczny, model wartości Schwartza, podstawowe wartości ludzkie, różnice płciowe, Europejski Sondaż Społeczny (ESS), Czarnogóra.

## Introduction

Following a series of turbulent political and social changes that culminated in 2020, contemporary Montenegrin society represents a complex value space in which traditional patterns of socialisation intertwine with the new imperatives of the global market. Young people in Montenegro face not only economic and political uncertainty but also value dissonance. Theoretically, we identify value dissonance in the gap between the values promoted by the traditional habitus, oriented towards conformity and security, on the one hand, and a global culture which, through the prism of transitional imperatives, imposes high standards of individual achievement and competitiveness, on the other.

In order to analyse the axiological duality of young people in Montenegro, we used data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure [ESS ERIC], 2023), on the basis of which we examine the relationship between traditional value orientations and contemporary social imperatives.

Before turning to the rationale for the focus of the paper as defined in the title, we take the opportunity to define the category of *youth* from a sociological perspective. Sociological literature defines *youth* as a transitional phase into adulthood, during which individuals prepare to respond to social challenges, while society defines the status of young people through both explicit and implicit norms (Čičkarić, 2006, as cited in

Rakonjac & Živković, 2025, p. 32). Drawing on the definition contained in the Montenegrin Law on Youth[1], according to which *youth* covers the period from the age of 15 up to the age of 30, the paper focuses precisely on this age category (Ministarstvo prosvjete, nauke i inovacija, 2019 [Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, 2019]). This range is somewhat broader than Eurostat's reference category (15–29 years; Eurostat, n.d.), but it is aligned with the national legal framework relevant to this study. Accordingly, we seek to operationalise the value preferences of young people through Schwartz's concept of basic human values.

The theoretical and methodological framework thus established serves as the starting point for answering the key research question: to what extent do transitional imperatives succeed in transforming and redefining the traditional habitus in the Montenegrin social context? This research undertaking proceeds from the assumption that Montenegrin society is not undergoing linear modernisation, but rather a process of transformation in which traditional loyalty towards authority and the striving for individualisation, power and achievement constantly confront each other. *In these circumstances of the simultaneous existence of a new normative system that occupies a dominant position and the corresponding new values, which are only beginning to take root more broadly, as well as values that have 'survived' from the previous order, a large number of individuals, and even wider social groups, experience a more or less pronounced discrepancy between the compulsory rules to which their action is subjected (new norms) and the desirable goals and modes of action (old values). We call this discrepancy normative-value dissonance* (Lazić & Pešić, 2013, p. 283). In this regard, the research interest focuses on how young people mediate between the demands for loyalty imposed by the traditional (collectivist) habitus and the imperatives of personal achievement stemming from a fragmented neoliberal environment. This perspective allows us to perceive young people not as passive recipients of change, but as active agents who, through a specific reconfiguration of values, attempt to resolve the tension between structural uncertainty and the need for ontological security (Giddens, 1991).

Karl Mannheim reminds us of the importance of younger generations as bearers of social change, emphasising that young people *live the new values, about which their elders only teach them theoretically. If this is true, the specific role of youth is to bring in fresh energy; they represent a kind of reserve that comes to the fore if such refreshment is needed to adapt to circumstances that are changing rapidly or are entirely different* (Manhajm, 2009, p. 52). Under the conditions of social transformation characteristic of Montenegrin society, the social habitus of youth confronts a new *field* generated by the transitional imperatives of capital accumulation and individual achievement. Rather than a simple replacement of the old with the new, we witness the presence of a hysteresis effect, which we explain as the relationship between the objective structures of the transitional market and subjective dispositions rooted in collectivist and patriarchal patterns (Burdije, 1999). It is precisely in this in-between space that the value kaleidoscope emerges, whose starting point is an assumption that the paper further examines empirically: that young people, as the most vital agents of transformation, are positioned to articulate fragments of the traditional habitus and transitional imperatives through possible hybrid identities, striving for a new social equilibrium that would allow them integrity in a relatively unstable social order. In this relatively unstable social order, young people find refuge in primary social groups as an escape from the uncertainty and risks generated by the transition process (Tomanović, 2010). This is also confirmed by the results of the Youth Study Montenegro (Đukanović, 2019). Young people are most strongly oriented towards primary social groups, such as family and close

[1] https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e1ac770f-706f-4ba9-99e3-790b64ba464f


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friends. However, when turning to the wider social context, the picture becomes fragmented. An extremely low level of trust, particularly towards political leaders and people holding different views, reveals deep social atomisation (Đukanović, 2019). In such a value kaleidoscope, the absence of political tolerance and trust in institutions hinders the development of a modern civic consciousness, leaving young people trapped between traditional family loyalty and a politically polarised reality (Tomanović et al., 2012; Đukanović, 2019).

We identified the next aspect of the value kaleidoscope by taking into account the fact that in Montenegrin society, 28.8% of young people are enrolled in undergraduate studies and 8.2% in postgraduate studies; however, despite the importance young people attach to higher education, corruption and nepotism are often regarded as justified means of achieving goals such as employment (Đukanović, 2019).

A social climate structured in this way points to a possible interaction and intertwining of three fundamental structural elements that constitute the value kaleidoscope: inherited tradition, emancipatory aspirations towards modernisation, and the imperatives of transitional reality.

For the purposes of this paper, we conceptualised the notion of axiological syncretism, by which we mean the simultaneous presence and acceptance of values that, in theoretical terms, belong to opposing value systems, in this case the values of the traditional habitus (tradition, conformity, security) and values associated with transitional imperatives and modernisation, without their mutual exclusion. Unlike normative-value dissonance, which denotes a discrepancy between new norms and old values (Lazić & Pešić, 2013), syncretism refers to the way in which actors resolve this discrepancy by combining elements of both systems into a unified, albeit internally contradictory, value configuration. In the empirical part of the paper, we operationalise axiological syncretism as a positive association between the relative priorities of openness to change and conservation at the sample level (H1).

Building on this theoretical framework, the paper does not treat axiological syncretism in absolute terms, but examines it empirically. In doing so, we distinguish between two levels of this concept: the *structural level*, that is, the question of whether the relative value priorities of young people at the sample level are organised contrary to Schwartz's universal structure, and the *individual level*, which concerns the question of whether the same individuals simultaneously attach importance to traditional and contemporary values. These two levels are not mutually exclusive: the structure may be consistent with the universal model while individuals still simultaneously hold opposing orientations. This paper empirically tests the first, structural level, while the second remains a subject for future research. We note that the concept of transitional imperative is used in this paper in a broader sociological sense (achievement, competitiveness, capital accumulation), whereas for the purposes of precise empirical testing of the hypothesis (H1) it is operationally narrowed to Schwartz's dimension of openness to change, as discussed in the relevant section. The aim and hypotheses that follow were formulated along these lines.

## Research aim

The aim of the research is to empirically examine the structure of the *value kaleidoscope* of young people in Montenegro (aged 15 up to 30), namely to test, at the sample level, whether the relative priorities of opposing value orientations, openness to change and conservation, are positively associated, which would indicate axiological syncretism, or negatively associated, in line with Schwartz's universal structure. Drawing on data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC, 2023), the analysis seeks to establish the relationship between the traditional habitus and contemporary transitional imperatives in the value priorities of young people, as well as the extent to which these priorities differ according


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to key sociodemographic determinants (gender, education and place of residence of respondents).

## Hypotheses

H1: We hypothesise that openness to change and conservation, measured as relative (ipsatised) value priorities, will be positively associated, which would indicate the presence of axiological syncretism at the sample level.

H2: We hypothesise that young women in Montenegro will show a greater affinity for the values of universalism and benevolence, while young men will attach greater importance to the values of power and achievement.

H3: We hypothesise that there are statistically significant differences in self-direction and conformity among young people with different levels of education, with young people with a higher level of education expected to display greater self-direction and a lower level of conformity than young people with a lower level of education.

H4: We hypothesise that young people from rural areas display a statistically significantly higher level of attachment to tradition and conservation than young people from urban areas.

## Research method

The European Social Survey is an academically driven cross-national survey conducted every two years across Europe since 2001 (European Social Survey, n.d.). The primary aim of this survey is to measure the attitudes, beliefs and values of European populations in order to establish stability and change in the social structure of European societies (European Social Survey, n.d.). In this paper, we focused on empirical data relating to Montenegro, namely the part of the questionnaire designated as Section H - the Human Values Scale). The data were collected within the eleventh round (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure [ESS ERIC], 2023).

## Sample

For the purposes of the paper, three key determinants were selected from the broader set of sociodemographic variables available in the ESS questionnaire: gender, education and place of residence of respondents, in accordance with the formulated hypotheses (H2, H3 and H4). Hypothesis H1, which concerns the relationship between openness to change and conservation at the level of relative value priorities, does not require additional sociodemographic differentiation and is tested on the entire subsample of young people from Montenegro. A total of 1,609 respondents from Montenegro took part in the survey conducted in 2023 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure [ESS ERIC], 2023). From this total sample, a subsample of young people aged 15 up to 30 was selected for the purposes of the paper, comprising 192 respondents, or 11.9% of the total sample.

## Instrument

The measuring instrument used in this study is the questionnaire developed within the eleventh round of the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC, 2023). The European Social Survey has been conducted continuously across Europe since 2001 and is characterised by a high degree of standardisation, with data collected in each country separately through face-to-face interviews (fieldwork interviewing) on representative samples. In this paper, we focused on the battery of questions entitled *Human Values* (Section H). This segment of the instrument represents the official operationalisation of Schwartz's model of basic human values through a shortened version (Portrait Values Questionnaire- PVQ) (Schwartz et al., 2001; Schwartz, 2003). According to Schwartz, basic human values are not isolated, but organised into a circular structure based on dynamics of compatibility and conflict (Schwartz, 1992, pp. 13–15). Within this circular model, basic values are grouped along two bipolar higher-order axes that summarise opposing motivations


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(Schwartz, 1994, p. 24). The first dimension is key for the purposes of this paper; it opposes openness to change (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism) and conservation (tradition, conformity and security). Schwartz emphasises that these poles are in basic structural and motivational conflict, which has been empirically verified on cross-cultural samples worldwide, thus establishing a universal circular structure in which opposing value types occupy opposite regions of the model (Schwartz, 1994). At the same time, opposing values appear as negatively associated when measured as value priorities (ipsatised), whereas in raw scores they may, owing to response style, also correlate positively (Schwartz, 2009).

The construction of this instrument is distinctive in that respondents are not asked direct, abstract questions about values, but are instead presented with 21 brief portraits of different people. Each portrait describes the goals, aspirations or wishes of an imaginary person of the same gender as the respondent, implicitly pointing to a particular value type (e.g. "It is important to her/him to think for herself/himself and make her/his own decisions" or "It is important to her/him to live in secure surroundings") (Schwartz, 2003).

Respondents were asked to indicate, on the basis of their own self-assessment, the degree of similarity to the person described in the portrait. The evaluation was carried out using a six-point Likert-type scale (Schwartz, 2003), with the response options graded as follows:

1. Very much like me
2. Like me
3. Somewhat like me
4. A little like me
5. Not like me
6. Not like me at all

## Data analysis

Prior to the analysis, responses were recoded so that a higher value indicates stronger endorsement of the given value orientation (the original ESS scale is reversed: 1 = "very much like me", 6 = "not like me at all"). In line with Schwartz's methodological guidelines (Schwartz, 2009), all value scores were then ipsatised, that is, centred by subtracting the mean of all 21 responses of the given respondent. This procedure is known as MRAT centring (*mean rating*, the respondent's average rating). Centred scores express the relative priority of a given value in relation to the respondent's personal mean, so mean values may be positive (above the personal mean) or negative (below it).

Centring is necessary because raw PVQ scores share common variance stemming from individual differences in scale use (acquiescence). Without centring, all values tend to correlate positively, which may lead to the erroneous conclusion that axiological syncretism exists, although this is in fact a consequence of response style. At the same time, ipsatisation in itself strengthens negative correlations between opposing dimensions, since the sum of each respondent's centred scores is zero, so that an increase in the relative importance of one value is necessarily accompanied by a decrease in the relative importance of others. For this reason, the conditions for confirming H1 on ipsatised scores are unfavourable from the outset: the test examines whether relative priorities at the sample level are organised in line with the expected structure, but it cannot by itself rule out the possibility that the same individuals simultaneously attach importance to both openness to change and conservation.

Higher-order value orientations were constructed as the mean of the corresponding items: openness to change (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism), conservation (security, conformity, tradition), self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence) and self-enhancement (power, achievement). In line with ESS practice, hedonism was assigned to openness to change, although in Schwartz's model it also shares motivational features with self-enhancement (Schwartz, 1992). We note that only Schwartz's value dimensions were directly measured in this study. Axiological syncretism is examined indirectly, through the association between the relative


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priorities of openness to change and conservation (H1), while the concepts of traditional habitus, transitional imperatives and normative-value dissonance constitute the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings and are not the subject of direct measurement. The analysis was conducted on unweighted data, given that the focus of the paper is on the relationships between value orientations within the subsample of young people, rather than on estimating parameters at the level of the general population of Montenegro, for which the application of ESS analysis weights would be necessary. To check the sensitivity of the findings to this choice, the key correlation for H1 was additionally calculated with the application of weights (*dweight*, *pspwght*), with the same direction and a similar strength of association retained ($r = -.74$ with both weights, compared with $r = -.69$ in the unweighted analysis).

## Results and discussion

The findings obtained by testing the hypotheses on the relationships between basic value orientations lead us to the core of the concept of the *value kaleidoscope* of contemporary Montenegrin young people. From the theoretical perspective of the paper, young people in Montenegro are positioned in a social in-between space in which they articulate their value patterns under the influence of the traditional habitus, on the one hand, and modernisation and transitional imperatives, on the other. The empirical test conducted on ipsatised data shows, however, that the relative value priorities of young people at the sample level are structured in line with the universal model, with specific internal differentiations presented below.

### Relationship between openness to change and conservation

The initial hypothesis (H1) assumed a positive association between openness to change and conservation at the level of relative value priorities, which would indicate axiological syncretism, that is, that opposing orientations do not exclude each other but coexist. Within the analytical framework, openness to change was operationalised as an indicator of the transitional imperative (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism), while conservation comprises security, conformity and tradition. As announced in the Introduction, the transitional imperative is here reduced to the dimension of openness to change for the sake of precision in testing H1, while its broader link with self-enhancement (power, achievement) is considered separately within H2. Openness to change was chosen as the primary operationalisation of the transitional imperative for the purposes of H1 because its opposition to conservation represents Schwartz's canonical pair of opposites, in which the tension between preserving tradition and striving for change is most clearly expressed. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient on ipsatised scores, bearing in mind that such a test, as explained in the data analysis section, is a measure of the association between relative priorities at the sample level, rather than a direct test of the coexistence of opposing values at the individual level.

Table 1.

*Pearson correlation between openness to change and conservation among young people in Montenegro (MRAT-centred scores)*

| Variables | Openness | Conservation |
|---|---|---|
| Openness to change | 1 | −.69** |
| Conservation | −.69** | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | — |
| N | 192 | 192 |

*Note*: $r = -.69$, $t(190) = -13.00$, $p < .001$, $N = 192$; the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Scores are MRAT-centred (centred on the respondent's mean rating).


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The results show a strong, negative and statistically significant correlation ($r = -.69$, $p < .001$). This finding primarily confirms that the relative (ipsatised) value priorities of Montenegrin young people follow a pattern consistent with Schwartz's universal structural theory of values (Schwartz, 1992), according to which values at opposite poles of the circular structure, measured as relative priorities, as a rule show negative correlations. When interpreting the strength of this association, ipsatisation in itself strengthens negative correlations between opposing dimensions. Hypothesis H1 is therefore not supported.

However, this finding does not provide sufficient grounds to reject the idea of axiological syncretism at the individual level, since a negative correlation between two ipsatised, opposing dimensions at the sample level is not identical to the absence of simultaneous importance being attached to both orientations by the same individuals. An individual may simultaneously attach great importance to security or tradition and to autonomy or change, and such a profile remains sociologically possible even when the corresponding relative orientations are negatively associated at the sample level. Theoretically speaking, attachment to conservative values could serve young people as a source of ontological security under conditions of transitional uncertainty (Giddens, 1991).

We note that the pattern of negative correlation is retained when ESS weights are included in the analysis ($r = -.74$ with *dweight*, $r = -.74$ with *pspwght*), which further confirms the stability of the structural finding (for the reasons for the unweighted main analysis, see the data analysis section). We therefore conclude that the relative value priorities of young people in Montenegro, measured in this way, follow a pattern consistent with Schwartz's universal model at the structural level, while the question of whether the same individuals simultaneously attach importance to both traditional and contemporary values, that is, the question of axiological syncretism at the individual level, remains empirically open. Answering this question would require a person-centred approach (e.g. cluster analysis) capable of identifying profiles characterised by the simultaneous endorsement of different value orientations, which represents a clear direction for future research. This finding is consistent with the observation that in post-socialist societies too, the basic structure of values remains stable while priorities within it change (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). For a fuller analysis of the *value kaleidoscope*, we shift the focus from the level of structure (which is consistent with the universal model) to the level of internal sociodemographic differentiation.

## Gender differences in value orientations

The second hypothesis (H2) assumed that young women show a greater affinity for the values of self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence), while young men place greater value on the values of self-enhancement (power and achievement). Differences were examined using the independent-samples t-test for four basic values (universalism, benevolence, power, achievement) and two higher-order dimensions (self-transcendence, self-enhancement), with effect size expressed as Cohen's d. Prior to the analysis, Levene's test was used to check the assumption of homogeneity of variances for all the orientations examined; this assumption proved correct ($p > .05$), so the results of the t-test assuming equal variances were interpreted.

The results partially support the second hypothesis (H2). Young women attach a statistically significantly higher priority to universalism than young men ($t(190) = -3.15$, $p = .002$, $d = -0.47$), as well as to self-transcendence as a whole ($t(190) = -2.16$, $p = .032$, $d = -0.32$). By contrast, young men attach significantly greater importance to power ($t(188) = 4.02$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.60$) and to self-enhancement as a whole ($t(190) = 3.04$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.45$).


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Table 2.

*Results of the independent-samples t-test for gender differences in value priorities (ipsatised scores)*

| Value orientation | Mean (M / F) | T | p | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Universalism | M: -0.15 (SD 0.56) / F: 0.10 (SD 0.51) | t(190) = -3.15 | .002 | -0.47 |
| Benevolence | M: 0.32 (SD 0.65) / F: 0.30 (SD 0.67) | t(189) = 0.16 | .877 | 0.02 |
| Power | M: 0.04 (SD 0.68) / F: -0.43 (SD 0.85) | t(188) = 4.02 | <.001 | 0.60 |
| Achievement | M: 0.16 (SD 0.71) / F: 0.14 (SD 0.61) | t(189) = 0.15 | .883 | 0.02 |
| Self-transcendence | M: 0.03 (SD 0.40) / F: 0.17 (SD 0.48) | t(190) = -2.16 | .032 | -0.32 |
| Self-enhancement | M: 0.10 (SD 0.50) / F: -0.14 (SD 0.53) | t(190) = 3.04 | .003 | 0.45 |

*Note*: M = male (n = 73–74); F = female (n = 117–118). Scores are ipsatised (centred), so positive values indicate a priority above the respondent's personal mean, and negative values a priority below it. Levene p > .05 for all orientations. Positive values of *t* and *d* indicate higher scores among young men, and negative values higher scores among young women.

The differences in benevolence and achievement, however, are not statistically significant ($p > .05$), and the effect sizes are negligible ($d = 0.02$ in both cases); the hypothesis is therefore supported at the level of the higher-order dimensions (self-transcendence, self-enhancement) and at the level of universalism and power, but not at the level of benevolence and achievement individually.

This finding largely fits the extensive cross-cultural finding of Schwartz and Rubel (2005), who found that men worldwide attach greater importance to power and achievement, while women outscore men on universalism and benevolence. Montenegrin young people thus partially reproduce the universal gender pattern, although the absence of a difference in benevolence departs from cross-cultural findings, according to which women consistently value benevolence more highly. This does not imply the absence of emancipatory processes; rather, the pronounced universalism of young women points to a stronger orientation towards understanding, tolerance and care for the wider community. Nevertheless, this finding suggests that claims of a radical *reversal* of gender matrices should be treated with caution: at the level of basic value priorities, gender remains a structural axis of differentiation in the expected direction, with the size of these differences varying with the degree of gender equality (Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Since self-enhancement was linked in the Introduction to the broader sociological meaning of transitional imperatives (competitiveness, individual achievement, capital accumulation), this finding suggests that these imperatives are more pronounced among young men at the level of value priorities, primarily through the value of power, while there is no difference in achievement.

## Education and value priorities

The third hypothesis (H3) assumed that young people with a higher level of education display greater self-direction and lower conformity than young people with a lower level of education. Respondents were divided into three groups (no education and primary education, secondary education, and higher education), and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted on ipsatised scores.

The analysis of variance shows that level of education does not produce statistically significant differences in either self-direction ($F(2, 183) = 0.11$, $p = .895$) or conformity ($F(2, 183) = 0.27$, $p = .767$). Effect sizes are negligible ($\eta^2 \leq .003$), and none of the *post-hoc* comparisons reached the threshold of statistical significance. Levene's test does not indicate a significant violation of the homogeneity of



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Table 3.

*Descriptive statistics and ANOVA for self-direction and conformity by level of education*

| Dependent variable / group | N | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-direction** | | | |
| No education and primary education | 11 | 0.13 | 0.62 |
| Secondary | 133 | 0.22 | 0.60 |
| Higher | 42 | 0.22 | 0.76 |
| **Conformity** | | | |
| No education and primary education | 11 | -0.51 | 1.17 |
| Secondary | 132 | -0.42 | 1.03 |
| Higher | 43 | -0.31 | 0.95 |

*Note*: Self-direction: $F(2, 183) = 0.11$, $p = .895$, $\eta^2 = .001$ (Levene $F = 1.95$, $p = .145$); Welch's ANOVA: $F(2, 25.1) = 0.12$, $p = .892$. Conformity: $F(2, 183) = 0.27$, $p = .767$, $\eta^2 = .003$ (Levene $F = 0.35$, $p = .705$). LSD post-hoc comparisons: no difference is significant ($p > .05$).

variances for either variable ($p > .05$ in both cases), and an additional Welch's ANOVA for self-direction, conducted as a robustness check because of the markedly unequal group sizes, confirms the conclusion of the standard analysis of variance ($F(2, 25.1) = 0.12$, $p = .892$). Thus the third hypothesis is not supported. We note that the lowest educational category (no education and primary education) is represented by a very small number of respondents ($n = 11$), so that the statistical power of the analysis is limited, and the absence of significant differences should not be interpreted as evidence that no differences exist. In addition, in the age range from 15 up to 30, level of education is partly related to age, since some of the younger respondents have not yet been able to complete secondary or higher education, so educational differences cannot be fully separated from age differences.

Sociologically, the absence of statistically significant differences due to level of education ($H_3$) provides room for further reconsideration of the function of the educational system in contemporary Montenegrin society, although the finding of no statistically significant differences does not, in itself, demonstrate that the educational system performs a reproductive or disciplining function. One possible interpretation, not directly tested by these data, is that education in the transitional environment partly retains its traditional role, rather than acting primarily as a transformative agent of individual autonomy. This assumption should be treated as a hypothesis for further research rather than as a conclusion following directly from the present results. The absence of differences primarily means that in this sample, no differences in the value priorities of young people due to level of education were found, which does not rule out the possibility that education operates in other ways not covered by this study, such as electoral turnout, civic and political activism, volunteering or patterns of media use. Young people may have similar value priorities and yet behave differently depending on their education.

## Place of residence and value priorities

The fourth hypothesis assumed that young people from rural areas display a higher level of attachment to tradition and conservation than their peers from urban areas. Respondents were divided by type of settlement (urban, suburban, rural), and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted on ipsatised scores. In line with the hypothesis, the key *post-hoc* comparison is between rural and urban areas. Since tradition is


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Table 4.

*Descriptive statistics and ANOVA for tradition and conservation by place of residence*

| Dependent variable / group | N | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tradition** | | | |
| Urban area | 109 | -0.28 | 1.14 |
| Suburban area | 52 | -0.21 | 1.03 |
| Rural area | 25 | 0.13 | 1.15 |
| **Conservation** | | | |
| Urban area | 112 | -0.08 | 0.53 |
| Suburban area | 53 | -0.09 | 0.45 |
| Rural area | 26 | -0.24 | 0.37 |

*Note*: Tradition: $F(2, 183) = 1.41$, $p = .246$, $\eta^2 = .015$ (Levene $F = 0.19$, $p = .827$). Conservation: $F(2, 188) = 1.10$, $p = .336$, $\eta^2 = .012$ (Levene $F = 1.36$, $p = .259$). LSD post-hoc comparisons: no difference is significant ($p > .05$).

a component of conservation, the two dependent variables are not mutually independent and should therefore be regarded as a narrower and a broader indicator of the same orientation.

Contrary to the hypothesis, place of residence does not produce statistically significant differences either in attachment to tradition ($F(2, 183) = 1.41$, $p = .246$) or in conservation as a whole ($F(2, 188) = 1.10$, $p = .336$). The descriptive indicators point in different directions: rural areas are slightly ahead in attachment to tradition ($M = 0.13$ compared with $M = -0.28$ in urban areas), while for the broader conservation dimension they show somewhat lower values than urban areas ($M = -0.24$ compared with $M = -0.08$). None of these differences, however, reaches the threshold of statistical significance, either in the overall F-ratio or in the *post-hoc* comparisons (rural vs. urban: $p = .104$ for tradition, $p = .159$ for conservation). Given the relatively small number of respondents from rural areas ($n = 25–26$), the analysis has limited power to detect differences of small and moderate size, so the absence of significance should be interpreted with caution. The fourth hypothesis is not supported.

This finding raises the possibility that the classic rural–urban value gap among Montenegrin young people is not pronounced at the level of basic value priorities, although these results do not directly demonstrate this. The data point to an uneven picture: for the narrower tradition dimension, a trace of the expected pattern can be discerned, as rural areas show a somewhat higher mean than urban areas, whereas the broader conservation dimension does not show such a pattern, although none of these differences is statistically significant. Such a pattern suggests that separating tradition from broader conservation may be sociologically more informative than an aggregate approach. The absence of statistically significant residential differentiation would be consistent with the observation that contemporary young people, connected through digital and educational flows, increasingly no longer belong to closed local value worlds, but this link should be tested in future research.

## Conclusion

The empirical study of the value orientations of young people in Montenegro, based on data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC, 2023) and analysed in accordance with Schwartz's standard methodological protocol (ipsatisation of scores), provides a coherent picture of the value priorities of young people living in


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a society undergoing transformation. The central theoretical construct of the paper, which we have termed the *value kaleidoscope*, has proved fruitful, but in a different sense from the initial assumption: at the level of relative value priorities, the kaleidoscope is not organised as a syncretic fusion of opposing poles, but as a value space structured in line with the universal model, whose internal diversity stems from sociodemographic differentiation, above all by gender.

The most important structural finding of the paper is that the relative value priorities of Montenegrin young people do not deviate from Schwartz's universal circular model: openness to change and conservation stand in the expected opposing relationship ($r = -.69$), and the pattern remains stable when ESS weights are included. This finding in itself represents a confirmation of the theoretically expected structure, rather than evidence that young people do not simultaneously attach importance to traditional and contemporary values; the question of axiological syncretism at the individual level therefore remains open and requires a person-centred approach. In this sense, the contribution made by this paper lies not primarily in confirming the general, theoretically expected structural oppositions between Schwartz's value poles, but in the country-specific empirical findings on the relative value priorities of young people in Montenegro and the patterns of their sociodemographic differentiation.

With regard to sociodemographic determinants, the study identified the clearest and most consistent differences at the level of gender. Young women show significantly higher universalism and self-transcendence, while young men place greater value on power and self-enhancement, a pattern that largely, but not fully, reproduces the universal cross-cultural finding (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005), since the expected differences in benevolence and achievement are absent. The second hypothesis (H2) is thus partially supported, and claims of a radical reversal of gender value matrices are relativised.

By contrast, level of education (H3) and place of residence (H4) do not produce statistically significant differences in the examined value orientations of young people, bearing in mind that the lowest educational category ($n = 11$) and young people from rural areas ($n = 25–26$) are represented by small numbers of respondents, which limits the statistical power of the analyses; for self-direction, an additional Welch's ANOVA was also conducted, confirming the same conclusion. The absence of educational differentiation provides room for the assumption that the educational system in the transitional context partly retains its traditional role, while the absence of residential differentiation provides room for the assumption of a (partial) homogenisation of the value space of young people, with the descriptive pattern for tradition and for broader conservation not being unambiguous. Both interpretations, however, go beyond what can be directly established on the basis of the absence of statistically significant differences, and should be treated as hypotheses for further research rather than as established conclusions.

Understanding this value space, in which gender emerges as the main internal axis of differentiation while differences due to education and place of residence were not found, remains a key prerequisite for designing future public policies aimed at the emancipation and integration of Montenegrin young people into contemporary civic life.

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