

**Factors of Participatory Urban Policy: Urban Activism through  
the prism of Post-materialistic Theory**

**Levan Khutsishvili**

## Abstract

Article “Factors of Participatory Urban Policy: Urban activism through the prism of Post-materialistic Theory”, through the prism of Post-materialistic theory analyses data’s of Georgia accumulated during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> waves of World Value Survey (WVS) and studies how materialistic values of the societies are changing and becoming post-materialistic. Main focus is on public participation in city government and especially on urban activism. As, in Georgian reality green activism is the main form of activism, article questions either it is the reaction on numbers of ecological and urban problems that appeared in Tbilisi during last 10 years, or still it is a sign of shifting materialistic Georgian society into the side of post-materialistic values.

Modern world is characterized with rapid urbanization processes; according to the data's from 2014 more than half of the world population is living in cities. Georgia also is more and more becoming urbanized. Total population of the country is decreasing (in 2014 there was 4 490, 5 and in 2016 - 3 720, 4) number of urban population is staying same or increasing, especially in capital – Tbilisi and city nearby Rustavi. In all other cities tendency of population diminution is visible. Population of Tbilisi is 1 113, 0 almost 1/3 of the population of the whole country, and mostly people come here from regions. Because of different lifestyle new population brings different values which are unlike to the values of traditional urban population that creates very diverse reality. It is known that rise of the numbers of citizens in the city creates several problems, related with infrastructure, mobility, housing and management of the city and Tbilisi is not exclusion. Additionally, city still doesn't have master plan, so developers have almost no regulations for building blocks of flats. City government is giving permissions to build blocks in recreation zones, they just change the status of the zone, and it is reason why Tbilisi is more and more becoming the jungle of concrete. Tbilisi is among the most polluted cities, high number of cars, industrial dust and noise, destroyed green areas are the results of unplanned development of the city. On the other hand, there is lack of interest from the society for changes. To look at the urban activism cases in Tbilisi, we can name very few of them and average number of participants of demonstrations were around 200 person. Citizens don't care for their city, and it is so much different from European or American cities. More than 30 years ago, European societies came to the idea that they are responsible for their cities and started active movements for participation in decision making processes, on the other hand there was readiness from local governments too, they were open for initiatives from the society, and it created possibility for healthy cooperation between society and government, as a result we have now cities for citizens, matched with the needs and wishes of inhabitants. Cities, that are trying to create save and comfortable space for living, and involvement of citizens in the city governance is vital.

Nowadays, Georgian society still have economic problems, high rate of unemployment, low income, small possibilities for self-expression and development, healthcare are still superior problems for Georgian society, all this causes high rate of migration and nihilism. On the other hand, lack of competence and political will from governments to let people be involved in city governing processes creates the reality in which Georgian cities are living in. And reality is exactly what was described above. If we look the history of modern urban activism in Georgia it doesn't go too far in past, actually most of protest started from 2007 and here are some of the examples:

- Digomi Forest Park in 2009
- Kikvidze Park in 2012
- “The territory of squirrels” in 2013,
- Gudiashvili Square in Tbilisi in 2012,
- “This Affects You” campaign oriented towards protection of human rights since 2012,
- miners’ protest in Chiatura calling for protection of workers’ rights since 2012,
- anti-homophobia rallies since 2013,
- student protests calling for the higher education reform in 2016

As it is visible, most of the activities were connected with the environmental problems, but also there were some attempts to protest gender inequality, homophobia, issues connected with heritage protection. Before 2007, social activism in the country and especially in Tbilisi was related with the social and economic problems. So here comes a question, what was a reason of this kind of conceptual shift in activism. On the other hand environmental issues appeared in election campaigns of political parties and mayor candidates, like in:

- Parliamentary Elections 2012 – Environmental issues in election campaigns of political parties
- Local Government Elections 2014 - Environmental issues in election campaigns of Mayors
- Local Government Elections 2017 - Environmental issues in election campaigns of Mayors

Explanation of these changes can be found in theory offered by Ronald Inglehart “The Silent Revolution”. But before speaking the theoretical frameworks, it will be logical to formulate questions that can help in understanding the subject.

### **Some important questions**

It is important to study how and under which circumstances the need of public participation is becoming the value/standard for society on the one hand and on another for local government in Georgia. What kind of obstacles and opportunities assists the process of this transformation?

In order to go deeper in research topic, and answer the needs of the article, answers on following questions should also be taken into consideration:

- What is the level of post-materialistic political culture in Georgia?

- How ICT's influences value changing processes in Georgian society?
- What were the changes in ICT development in Georgia in 2007 – 2017 periods?

According to this question, article will be built around the hypothesis:

*Utilization of ICT in social and political life encourages changes in values of society and brings importance of public participation in societal and local government's agenda.*

### Georgia through the prism of Post-materialism Theory

As I mentioned above, main theoretical framework article takes is Ronald Ingleharts – The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics (1977). One of the main assumptions that Inglehart had was that individuals pursue various goals in hierarchical order. First, material needs like hunger or thirst have to be satisfied. If this is done, the focus will be gradually shifting to nonmaterial goods. In the value dimension if there is no scarcity of materialist needs like safety, economical prosperity, focus moves to post-materialist values, like self-expression, environmental issues, participation, personal freedom.

Inglehart based his theory on research done in 1970 in 6 countries, and found out that younger generations are more post-materialist than older generations. After that during the 25 years intercountry research were done where the same questions were asked all the time, and cohort analyses of data demonstrated that generations who had post-materialistic values in 1970 had no change in this order that every next generation was sharing more post-materialistic values than materialistic values.

He based his research on two hypotheses of intergenerational value change:

1. **A scarcity hypothesis.** Virtually everyone aspires to freedom and autonomy, but people tend to place the highest value on the most pressing needs. Material sustenance and physical security are immediately linked with survival, and when they are scarce people give top priority to these 'materialistic' goals; but under conditions of prosperity, people become more likely to emphasize 'post-materialist' goals such as belonging, esteem, and aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction.

2. **A socialization hypothesis.** The relationship between material conditions and value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment: to a large extent, one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's pre-adult years and these values change mainly through intergenerational population replacement. (Inglehart, 2008)

Inglehart argues that rise of post-materialism in the post-war period had following reasons:

- People have a hierarchy of needs - survival, security, belonging and then self-actualization (Maslow)
- Good times produce post-materialist attitudes.
- Childhood experience is particularly important because of socialization.
- Post-materialism increases by a process of generational replacement.

Theory argues that the process changes in values has several consequences, like:

- Rise of New Social Movements, e.g. Peace movement, anti-trade.
- Growth of 'post-materialist' parties, e.g. Greens, extreme-right.
- With the reduction of the working class, adaptation of
- left-wing parties to represent post-materialists (new-left).

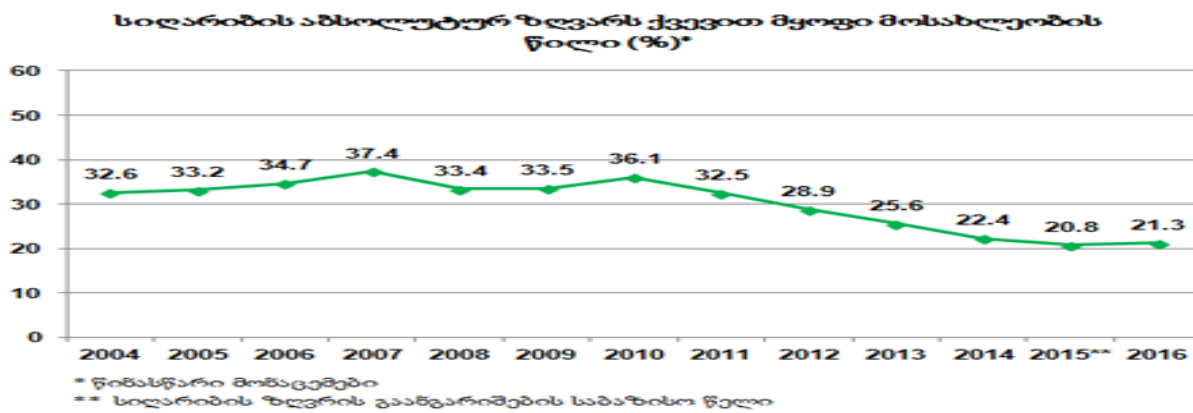
According to the scarcity hypothesis if the country has strong economy and society has a sense of safety and prosperity only then "post-materialist" values can be appeared. And at the same time Inglehart named need of clean environment as a post-materialist value. In this context it will be interesting to analyze reality in Georgia taking 10 year frame - from 2007 to 2017. Based on the World Value Survey, data from Statistic Department of Georgia and other researches done by CRRC in the country, some important information was identified that can contribute in analyzing the changes in Georgia.

From the economical point of view, there was no significant improvement in GDP during 2007 to 2016



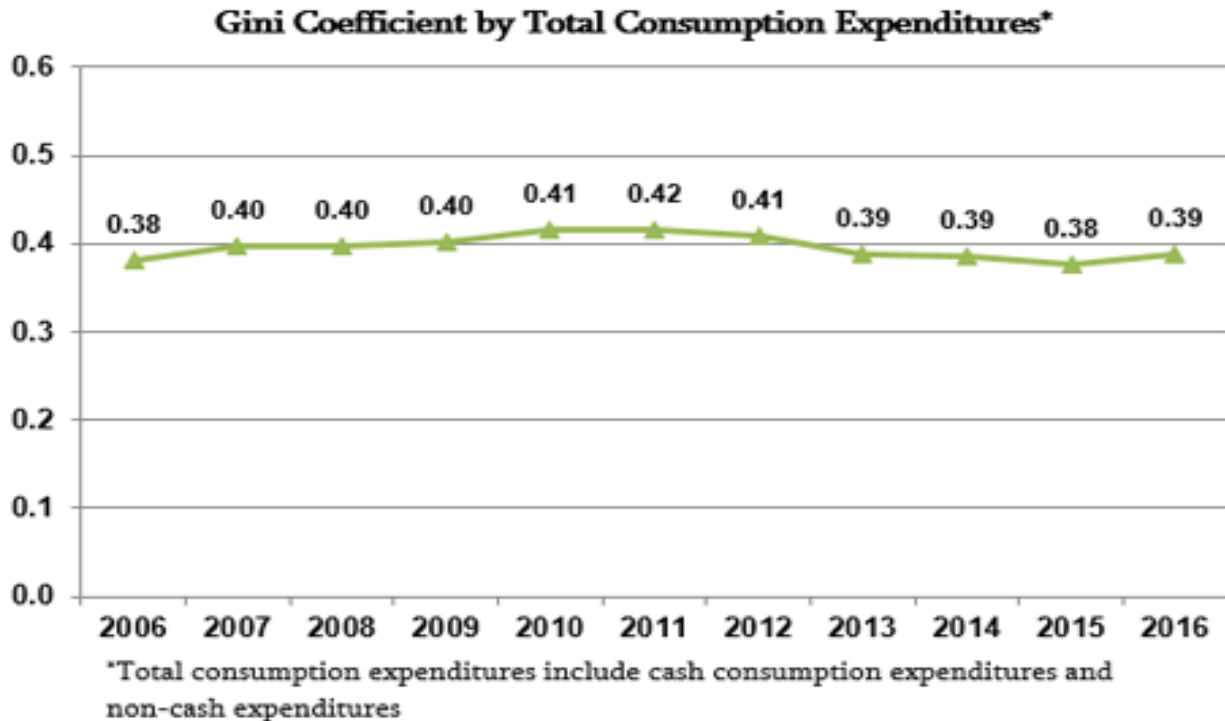
According to this chart there was even decrease<sup>1</sup>.

Thou the situation in the sense of unemployment became bit better from 13.3% - 2007 to 11.8% - 2017 and the statistics of poverty also has improved, as it is seen on a chart



Gini coefficient was not changed dramatically

<sup>1</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/georgia/gdp>



And also number of population from 4 394, 700 – 20017 has decreased to 3 718,200 – 2017, so in fact all this statistical changes in real life doesn't mean dramatic changes, and if we connect this data's with the increased activism in the country, that can be said that Ingleharts scarcity hypothesis has failed in Georgia, because it doesn't explain raised environmental or gender or LGBT activism in the country.

Actually, raised environmentalism in emerging economies is a key point for criticism of the post-materialism theory.

For example, Dunlap and York (2008) analyzed key variables from three waves of the WVS and conclude that "post-materialist values may have been useful for explaining the emergence of modern environmentalism in North America and Europe, but are clearly inadequate for explaining the global spread of environmental activism and concern".

[...] there are also a lot of environmentalists in poor countries, predicts there should be no relation between economic development levels and environmental concern (Brechin and Kempton, 1994; Dunlap and Mertig, 1997; Dunlap and York, 2008).

Post-materialist scholars answer to the critics was that environmentalism in developing countries is caused by the hard ecological reality in the country, so it is rather reaction on problem than the value based action.



“Environmental concern is a consequence of objective environmental conditions rather than of post-materialist value priorities. They demonstrate the prominent environmental concern in countries where economic development has not been achieved and therefore post-materialist orientations are unlikely to be fostered” (Brechin and Kempton 1994; Dunlap and Mertig 1997)

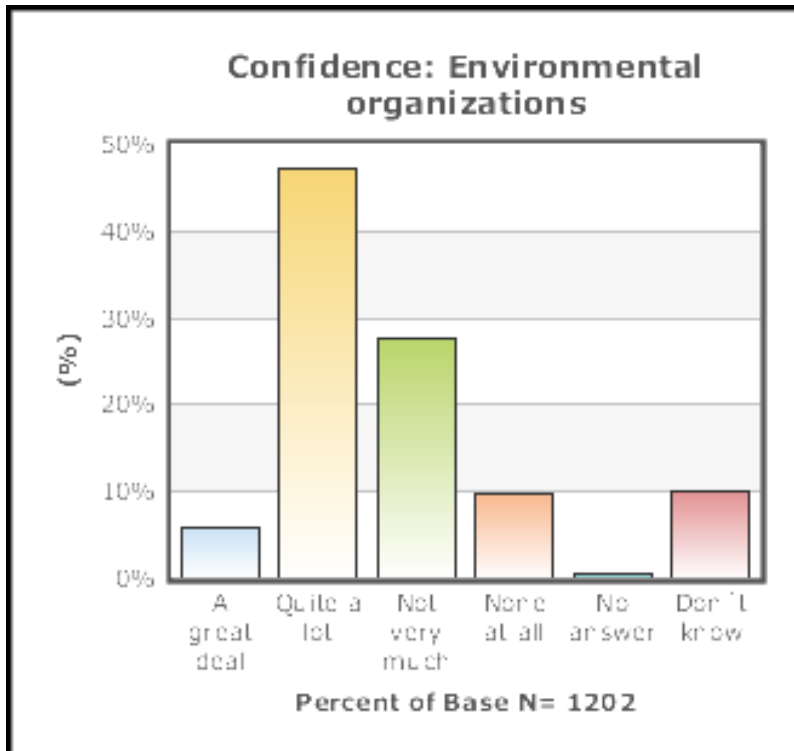
The same position had Franzen saying that “[...] in response, theorists augmented the concept of a post-materialist shift with the idea of objective environmental problems, arguing that citizens of poorer countries became more concerned about the environment because of their direct exposure to pollution and degradation” (Franzen,2003).

And Inglehart, trying to explain environmentalism in countries with emerging economies offered hypothesis of “Objective problems, subjective values”.

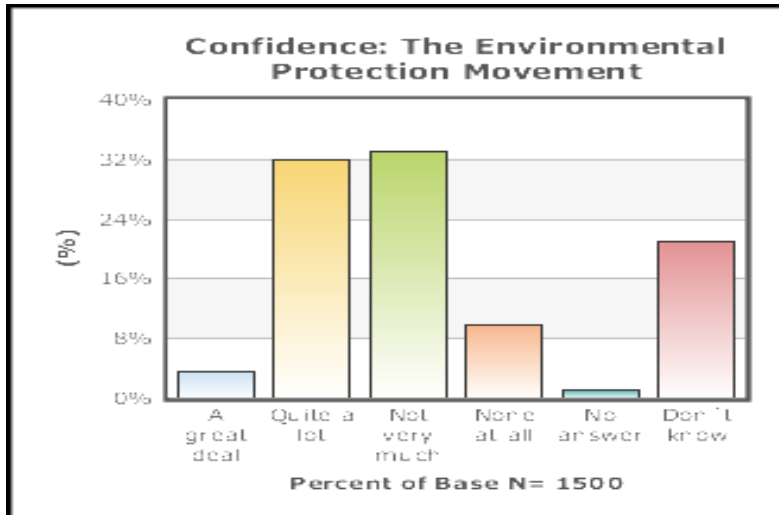
“Objective problems, subjective values” (OPSV ) hypothesis accepts that the extent of environmentalism may not depend on national income levels, but asserts that the determinants of environmental concern vary along the development path (Inglehart,1995).

According to the OPSV hypothesis, concern for the environment in developing economies follows from the necessity to overcome objective local environmental problems, such as lack of access to adequate sanitation or lack of clean drinking water. The advanced economies, on the other hand, with less severe local environmental problems, must be expressing environmental concern for reasons justified by post-materialistic subjective values.

And analyzing Georgian society, OPSV can be supported by the increased number of environmental problems in urban spaces and also partly by datas given by the WVS. Though there was a little bit more confident in environmental organizations in 2014

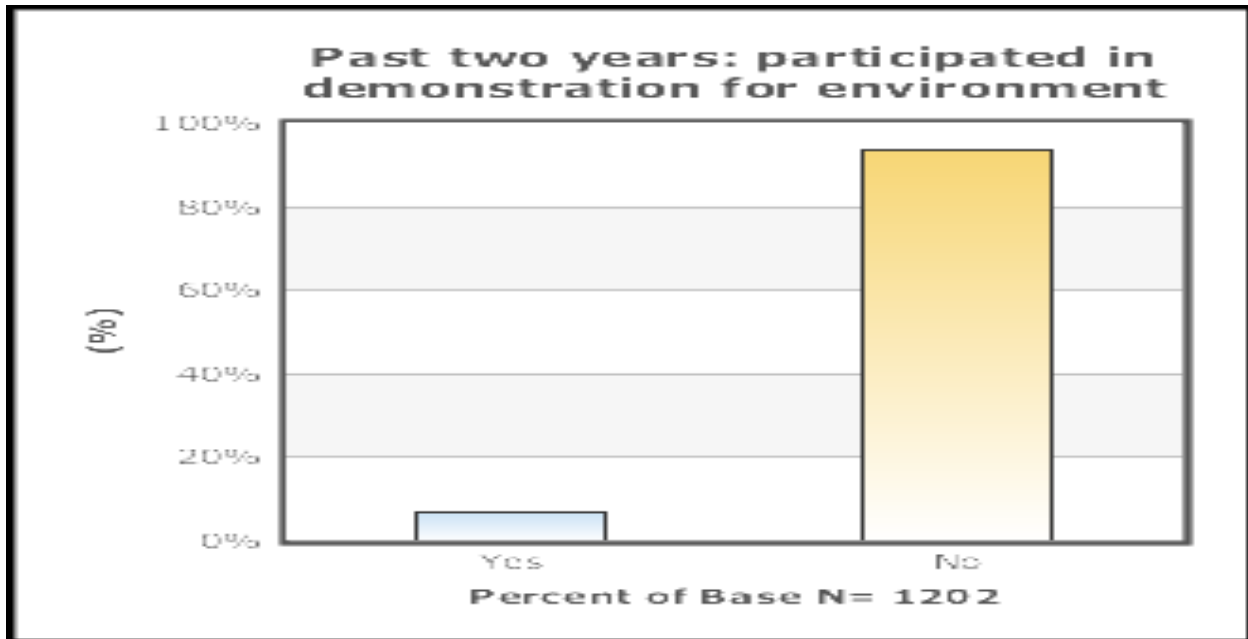


Than it was during the 2008



Still not that much people is participating in demonstrations,<sup>2</sup> as it was already said most of the protests in country are about the environmental or some other post-materialist values based issues.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>



So, OPSV hypothesis can be relevant for Georgian society, but data checking which is more important environmental protection or economic growth are saying the opposite. In 2008 most of the respondents – 48% were saying the environment is more important than economic growth – 32%, and in 2014 – 60% was for environmental growth rather than economic growth – 36%.

Based on all this information, comes a question, if there was not significant economic improvement in country and new social movements based on post-materialist values still appeared and are developing, than what is a reason of this? answer on this question, can be found in second important process, that is going in parallel with value change processes – ICT development. And I argue, that ICT development is strengthening post-materialistic values in society – especially value of public participation in city management processes.

According to the Smith and Marx, “the emergence of postmaterialist value priorities is also related to the development of technologies, since public life is essentially influenced by new technologies, and technology-driven societal changes demand different civic skills (Smith and Marx 1994).

Kim is talking about three important aspects of ICT development:

- *Cognitive Mobilization: Rising Educational Levels*
- *Information Diffusion and Political Deliberation*
- *Evolution of New Social Movements (Kim 2016)*

Gonzalez is speaking about the “internal” and “external” values of the technology, ones that are used while designing them and also “external” values that they bring in to societies (Gonzalez, 2014)

Referring to this Norris argues that, “Internet users are more likely to be concerned about quality of life issues and self-actualization. In contrast to materialists who care more about economic security and physical sustenance, post-materialist values – emphasizing individual freedom, self-expression, and cosmopolitanism — dominate cyberspace (Norris 2001).”

Internet and ICT is named “as tool for disseminating ideas of new social movement” by Zelwietro “Indeed, the objectives of new social movements are far from economic and material concerns but more likely closer to post-material values: the environmentalist movement, the women’s movement, the peace movement and the opposition to nuclear war, and the animal rights movement all reflect concerns for a better quality of life. New social movement activists are more likely to utilize the Internet for their activities because it is a more effective means of disseminating the ideas of new social movements, such as environmentalism, than the traditional media (Zelwietro 1998).”

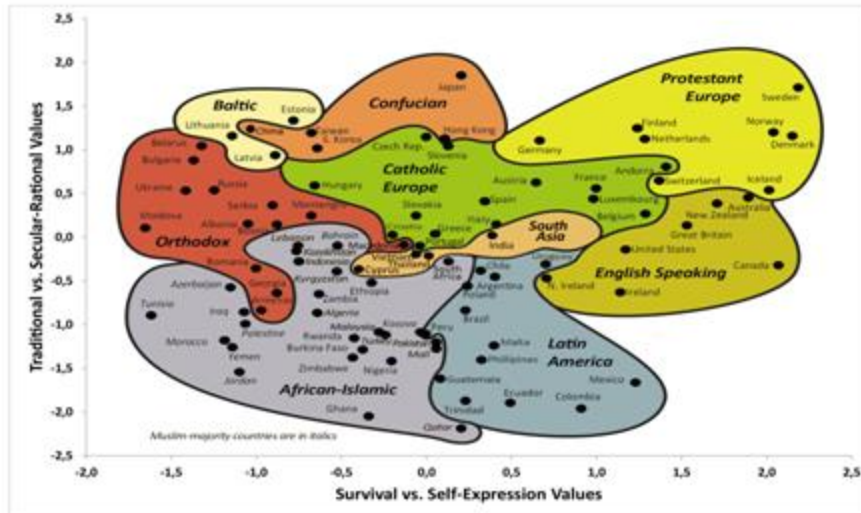
And Norris also agrees with Zelwietro saying “Protest politics rapidly diffused via the web, and alternative modes of political action — cyber-demonstrations, cyber-boycotts, Internet petitions, and so on - dramatically changed the existing political operations. Rallying against the multi-national corporations for their inhumane abuse of workers has become a popular repertoire of political movements in cyberspace (Norris 2001, 2002).”

Coming to the data from Georgia, it will be visible the significant improvement in attitudes toward the ICT in Georgian society, so for example if in 2008 only 17% was using internet every week, in 2014 - 35% was using it daily. Also, in 2014 more people was thinking that science and technologies were making life better than it was 2008.

## **Conclusion**

Analyzing Georgian society through the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> waves of WVS through the theoretical prism of post-materialism, can be concluded that country is too far from the real post-materialistic societies and it is clearly visible on the following chart also.

## Cultural map - WVS wave 6 (2010-2014)



But there are ongoing processes in the country that have post-materialistic bases. Like environmental movement, movements for protecting human rights, LGBT and gender movements, though post-materialism itself is only one aspect of a broader process of cultural change and consequence of this process is reshaped political outlook, religious orientations, gender roles, and understanding of sexual orientation. Georgian society is a traditional society, so the process of culture change is going very slowly, though it is happening and society tries to be involved in decision making processes, to have influence on decision makers, and the importance of ICT in this process is visible and in the reality of lack of political readiness, it happened that environmental issues are in the agenda of politicians.

### Bibliography

Abramson, Paul R., and Ronald Inglehart. 1986. "Generational Replacement and Value Change in Six Western European Societies." *American Journal of Political Science* 30(1): 1-25.

Ahern, Lee.2012. "The Role of Media System Development in the Emergence of Postmaterialist Values and Environmental Concern: A Cross-National Analysis". *SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*, Volume 93, Number 2, June 2012

Barnes, Samuel, and Max Kaase. 1979. *Political Action*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications

Diener, Ed; Inglehart, Ronald and Tay, Louis." Theory and Validity of Life Satisfaction Scales". Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

Hanson, Allan. 2013. "Technology and Cultural Tectonics". Palgrave Macmillian.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1970. "Cognitive Mobilization and European Identity." *Comparative Politics* 3(1): 45-70.

Inglehart, Ronald.1981. "Post-Materialism in an Environment of Insecurity". *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Dec., 1981), pp. 880-900

Inglehart, Ronald.2008. "Changing Values among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006". *West European Politics*, 31:1-2, 130-146

Kim, Ji-Young. 2006. "The Impact of Internet Use Patterns on Political Engagement: A Focus on Online Deliberation and Virtual Social Capital." *Information Polity* 11(1): 35-49.

Mansell, Robin.2010. "The information society and ICT policy: A critique of the mainstream vision and an alternative research framework", *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, Vol. 8 Issue: 1, pp.22-41

Norris, Pippa. 1996. "Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 29:474-80.

Trump, Thomas M. 1991. "Value Formation and Postmaterialism: Inglehart's Theory of Value Change Reconsidered." *Comparative Political Studies* 24:365-90.

Yoon, Kyongwon. 2006. "Local Sociality in Young People's Mobile Communications: A Koran case study". SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol 13(2): 155-174

Zelwietro, J. 1998. "The Politicization of Environmental Organizations through the Internet." *Information Society* 14(1): 45-55

World Value Survey . <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

National Statistic Office of Georgia. <http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=0&lang=eng>

The Caucasus Research Resource Centers . <http://www.crrcenters.org/>