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Using the Circular Model to Analyse Political Values: The Case of the Pirate Parties

Abstract: Political parties that operate in the public space are classified, inter alia, according to the criterion of their ideological convergence (Mair, 2010; Gallagher, Laver, Mair, 2011). If we look at the convergence through the prism of the values declared by the parties, then the adaptation of Shalom H. Schwartz's circular model makes it possible to explain many correlations. Ideological convergence must then be considered a derivative of the rules of compliance and conflict that Schwartz described. These become the starting point, the basis for selecting further axioms and, consequently, a guideline (imperative) in constructing political agendas. The article aims to show that the mentioned rules define party agendas, and the circular model can be used for analytical purposes. The manifestos of the pirate parties selected from 11 countries were used as an example. The method applied in the article is the meta-value matrix. Adapting the Schwartz model, it should be seen as a qualitative content analysis method.

Keywords: political values, centre, circular matrix, right, left, pirate parties

Introduction

This article has the following structure. The first section includes the main hypotheses, justifies the selection of Pirate Parties (PPs) for analytical purposes and contains methodological aspects. The second section takes a closer look at Schwartz's Theory of Values (SVT), as it provides the basis for the model of political values proposed in the article. The third part presents the assumptions of the adaptation of Schwartz's model, described in its full form in the monograph by Maj (2018). The next part is empirical and contains an analysis of the PPs family using the meta-value circular model. The last part is the conclusions.

In the beginning, it should be noted that the article is theoretical. The author's intention was not to examine all the manifestos and demands of PPs, but to provide a different perspective on the formation of party families, the creation of party coalitions, and the rules of forming party programmes. The article is a meta-analysis, where the PPs family is a reference point. The basic assumption is that in the research on political parties, we should descend to the level of values, using what can be derived from psychological theories of values, primarily SVT.

The article aims to show that the adaptation of the Schwartz circular model can be applied to the study of political parties. In particular, it is possible to use it for analysis at the level of party manifestos; to track the evolution of postulates; in research on new party families; to examine the transition from a single-issue party (Mudde, 1999) to a party with a comprehensive programme, or to explain the formation of political alliances. The next research assumption is that the described issues are derived from the circular arrangement of political values and the impact of the rules of compliance and conflict, as presented by Schwartz.

The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1: The circular meta-value model has the potential to explain the basis of party family formation. For this reason, it goes further than the classical approaches (e.g., Gallagher, Laver, Mair, 2011).
- H2: The rules of compliance and conflict that are described in the modified model govern the following issues in politics:
- H2.1 The selection of successive postulates (formed mainly based on values), which is important in the creation of new party families and the transition of single-issue parties into parties with comprehensive political programmes,
- H2.2 The formation of party coalitions due to the proximity of postulates (values) and the identification of political opponents.

The analyses included in the empirical part of the article were conducted to verify hypotheses H1 and H2. The scheme of the study was to identify meta-values in political manifestos. The analysis was manual and qualitative, as the goal was not to determine the frequency of words appearing in the text but to find meta-values based on their meaning according to the presented definition (which always requires an interpretation). For this reason, the analytical part was qualitative, interpretative and manual.

It should be noted that the analysed programmes of the PPs family were selected from among 11 countries of Western civilisation (as specified by Huntington, 2000). The civilisation defined by this researcher includes Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The selection was made taking into account the geographical diversity of this civilisation. The cultural limitation stems from the assumptions made about the modified circular model. It reflects the division of values into right-wing and left-wing, characteristic of the Western cultural circle (based on democracy, human rights and other specific values). In other civilisational circles, meta-values have other references or are absent in the public sphere (Marszałek-Kawa, 2014; Maj, 2018, p. 56).

The choice of the PPs family was deliberate. Firstly, several publications and expert studies are already looking at pirate parties in various countries from different perspectives.

Some of them examined their structure (Bolleyer et al., 2015), the manifestos (Jääsaari & Hildén, 2015), and their creation (Burkart, 2014). The results of these analyses will be helpful for the verification of the formulated hypotheses.

Secondly, in the case of PPs, we have publications indicating their organisational connections with Green parties (Novotný & Šárovec, 2021, p. 31) and, more broadly, their preference towards post-material values (Burkart, 2014, p. 5). It is important in trying to determine their core values.

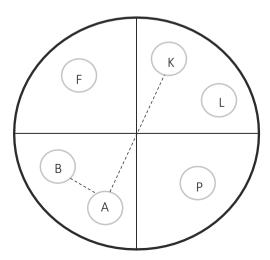
Third, Pirates are one of the youngest party families. Therefore, it is relatively easy to reconstruct their primary values and show the axiological evolution (which is important for verifying hypothesis H2.1 in the context of the transition of single-issue parties into parties with a comprehensive political programme).

Finally, the PPs are an interesting case because researchers and party activists declare problems with their axiological identification. For example, Khutkyy (2019, p. 57) wrote that the "ideological background of PPs is intricate. Some members claim the absence of a distinctive ideology or a pure pragmatism". Others name particular values, not a comprehensive ideology. Therefore, proving the feasibility of such an analysis using a circular model may also help verify hypotheses H1 and H2.

Shalom H. Schwartz Value Theory (SVT)

Schwartz (1992, pp. 1–65) stated that the structure of the system of values is universal and assumes the form of a circular motivational continuum. Graphically, it can be presented as a matrix in which the axioms are selected based on the rules of compliance and conflict. In Figure 1, letters A and K symbolise different types of values and opposite values may be

Figure 1. Rules in Shalom H. Schwartz's model (Cieciuch, 2013, p. 46).



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assigned to each type. Opposites form a continuum – between them, values are less and less similar to one member of the opposite and increasingly similar to the other. Axioms can be arranged side by side so that the value of A is similar to the value of B, which is similar to the value of F, which is also less similar to the value of A. In addition, one can point to more detailed values located between the axioms A, B, and F – in this way, a continuum is formed. The values in a matrix opposite each other are impossible to achieve simultaneously because they lead to conflicting goals.

The distribution of values in the Schwartz model has been improved since the late 1980s. The classic and most widespread version covering the system of ten axioms was modified in 2012 by dividing the basic values into more detailed ones – illustrated in Figure 2.

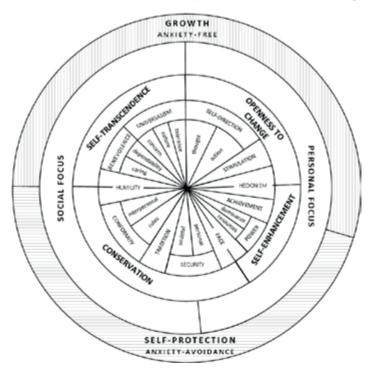


Figure 2. The circular structure of values by Shalom H. Schwartz (2012, p. 669)

The featured values were organised into four main types: 1) 'self-transcendence'; 2) 'selfenhancement'; 3) 'openness to change', and 4) 'conservation'. In the Schwartz model, the hierarchy of values of an individual is circular and results from giving high rank to axioms near the highest rated value (Cieciuch & Schwartz, 2017, pp. 2–3). For example, a person with conservative views may have a hierarchy of tradition>authority>security>conformity. In the example given, tradition is the highest-rated value. The compliance rule makes a person choose values close to the one considered a priority, while the most distant (according to the conflict rule) are rated lower. In the circular model, one may notice that tradition and stimulation are located at a considerable distance from each other, which explains why stimulation, in the case of a conservative, is of low rank. Moreover, there is a conflict between these two values, as the desire to consolidate tradition is at odds with the need for novelty and change (Maj, 2019, pp. 284–287).

The Circular Matrix as a Model for Evaluating Political Values

The circular model of basic values described by Shalom H. Schwartz can be adapted and used in the process of analysing specific values present in politics, as there are fundamental analogies between the basic values in Schwartz's model and those functioning at the state and society level (Maj, 2018, pp. 143–146). Simply put, the meta-values, which are collective axioms objectified and present in public debate at the state level, are derived from the circular structure of basic values and their conflicting structure.

The model proposed in the article can be shortened to eight points (the full version is described in the monograph *Leftism, Centrism, Rightism in Political Science*, Maj, 2018):

- The political values present in public discourse in the democratic states of Western civilisation can be located in a matrix according to the four main types identified by Schwartz ('self-transcendence', 'self-enhancement', 'openness to change' and 'conservation'). Conflicts in politics arise from the antinomies of left-wing meta-values (located within the types 'openness to change' and 'self-transcendence') and right-wing meta-values (encompassing the types 'self-enhancement' and 'conservation').
- 2. As shown in Figure 3, *The circular structure of meta-values*, the north side of the model, is reserved for the leftist axioms. Leftism is determined by the following meta-values: *equality, society, individual liberty, self-governance, plurality of value systems, progressivism and rationalism.* Their simplified meaning (for full meaning, see Maj, 2018, pp. 155–197) is as follows:
 - *equality* is an axiom present in the economic, political and social dimensions, and derived values – social policies, proposals to reduce social privileges, ideas relating to a public sense of justice and others – are built on it;
 - *society* is a concept of equal citizens, individuals who are socially and politically active; membership in the society is subjective (once the formal criteria have been achieved);
 - *individual liberty* is defined as broadly as possible; the well-being of others sets its limits; citizens have a broad catalogue of rights, including personal, decisionmaking powers;
 - *self-governance* is a drive to decentralise power, directing it downwards to the citizens, based on the conviction that the people themselves should also shape the content of decisions;

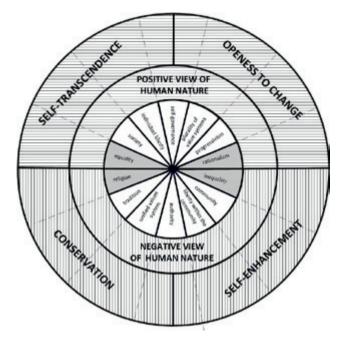


Figure 3. The circular structure of meta-values (Maj, 2018, p. 148)

- *plurality of value systems* is the goal of achieving a state in which many different value systems can function freely in the public sphere; the government, while recognising them as equal, should not favour or discriminate against any of them;
- *rationalism* means that there are no supernatural events or processes, reality can
 only be explained with reference to scientific knowledge; religion is a private matter of citizens and, as such, should not affect the public sphere in any way;
- *progressivism*, the essence of which is the belief in the inevitability of development, civilisational, technological and economic progress, which often requires the change of existing laws, customs and, in general, of a certain part of tradition.
- 3. The southern side of the model includes types: 'self-enhancement' and 'conservation', and in politics, it is dealt with by the right-wing meta-values: *inequality, community, liberty within the community, authority, unified values system, tradition and religion.*

The basic meaning of the highlighted meta-values is as follows:

inequality is the consideration of the differences that exist between people as natural, resulting from the characteristics of individuals, the abilities they possess and their social position;

- community is understood as a historically formed, cultural, ethnic group (nation);
- *liberty within the community* is not absolute, as it is limited by the membership of the individual in the community; the limits are socially recognised norms, traditions, and duties to the community (nation);
- *authority*, in which hierarchy is a natural feature, linked to the traditional division of individuals into those with an aptitude to govern and those without such ability; the subjective scope of power is limited, and the catalogue of powers is concentrated;
- *unified values system* in the public sphere, axioms belonging to the community's hierarchy of values, constructed through historical experience, are highly valued; these values may have a religious background; one specific system of values is indicated, and competing ones are treated as a potential threat to the integrity of the community;
- the value of *religion* is grounded in Christianity and is an element of the natural order, a source of the hierarchy of values, including those in the public sphere;
- *tradition* is understood as a preference for the natural order, heritage, and the community's historical memory.
- 4. The conflict rule of the matrix leads to the distinction of the seven pairs of values and anti-values: *equality-inequality, society-community, individual liberty-liberty within a community, self-governance-authority, plurality of value systems-unified system of values, rationalism-religion and progressivism-tradition.*
- 5. The tangent values are located on the border between the northern and southern parts of the model. They are similar to each other and, at the same time, borrowed by both left and right-wing parties. In the Eastern part, the tangential values are *rationalism* and *inequality*, and in the Western part, *religion* and *equality*.
- 6. Centrist axioms are constructed based on the distinguished seven pairs of metavalues and are, therefore, always derivative. Their purpose is to reduce the antinomy of the value system, which often takes the form of a compromise.
- 7. The matrix anchors the antinomic views of human nature in politics and philosophy and provides a justification (rationalisation) for the individual's choice of northern or southern meta-values. The starting point in the positive view is the belief that the individual is inherently good and that the source of evil is always external to him or her. Human beings are free and equal to each other, while external factors of various kinds are barriers that inhibit their development.
- 8. The right views human nature negatively, regarding it as flawed and unchangeable. This pessimism results from the conviction that part of humanity is also evil, which is endogenous and occurs when a person consciously chooses it. Consequently, certain limitations should be imposed on the individual in advance, which can be reduced in certain situations. The negative concept of human nature is rooted in conservatism and Christianity.

Analysing the Values of the Pirate Party Family

The circular model of meta-values may be applied to analyse political entities demonstrating ideological similarity. As an example, pirate parties can be highlighted. According to the classification introduced by Harmel and Svåsand (1993, pp. 67–88), some are at the stages of identification or organisation (which depends on the party system in the given country). Some entities have achieved electoral success in certain countries and reached a stabilisation stage¹. The pirates were chosen deliberately because, compared to others, this family of political parties is relatively new, and we witnessed their formation and agenda evolution. In particular, a clear indication can be made of how the rules of compliance and conflict have shaped the selection of subsequent meta-values.

The pirate parties can be considered a new ideological family because they met three criteria described by Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair (2011, pp. 236–275; Zulianello, 2018). The first is the genetic origin of the parties, in this case, related to the emergence of the Internet and the three northern meta-values – *individual liberty, self-governance* and *equality*.

With respect to *individual liberty*, cyberspace in its initial period of existence resembled the state of nature – there were no standards regarding the boundaries to freedom of expression, protection of users' privacy or exchange of information. At the beginning of the 21st century, with accruing state legislation, entities appeared that declared the need to defend *individual liberty* in cyberspace – these were the pirate parties. The pirates opposed the idea of state control over electronic communication and criticised the introduction of regulations limiting the freedom of content distribution and reducing the scope of freedom in cyberspace in general.

The second meta-value was *self-governance* – it appeared in connection with the network's technological capabilities, enabling the realisation of various forms of e-democracy. Pirate parties pointed out that despite the emergence of broad possibilities of direct participation of citizens in decision-making processes, politicians continued to treat e-democratic solutions with reserve. The *self-governance* in cyberspace was either not implemented adequately to the existing possibilities, or it was blocked by politicians afraid of losing some of their competencies. One of the reasons for the creation of the pirate parties was the desire to change this state of affairs².

¹ In the Swedish European Parliamentary Election in 2009, the Swedish Pirate Party took 7.1% of the Swedish voters' support (Demker, 2014). Electoral performance was also evident in the 2009 and 2014 EU elections in Germany, Iceland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Novotný & Šárovec, 2021, p. 35).

² As it seems, in the context of *self-governance* Bolleyer et al. (2015, p. 42) wrote, that PPs "tend to emphasize direct influence for members and online participation in decision-making", which indicates the role of values in shaping PPs structure.

It should be noted that the very interpretation of the notion of the *pirate party* indicates a relationship with the highlighted meta-values. The term *pirate* refers to an outlaw going against the state authority and violating existing rules – therefore, it refers to both *self-governance* and *individual liberty* – which can be considered a form of self-identification by meta-values.

Equality, as the third meta-value underlying the origin of this family of political parties, was interpreted interestingly by the pirates. The political thought of these parties includes proposals for the liberalisation of copyright justified by the desire to create an information-based society in which the accessibility of culture will be widespread. *Equality* took the form of a postulate of making intellectual property a common property (a common cultural good), which was justified by the well-being of a knowledge-based society. *Equality* could be seen in the claims to limit the *digital divide*, as this division deprived certain categories of people of access to information disseminated via electronic means. According to pirate parties, the government should be active in this sphere –it should strive to reduce the level of exclusion by means of legal regulations and policies supporting the development of networks.

The second criterion for distinguishing families is the presence of organisational relationships between entities. In the case of pirate parties, it is necessary to indicate a transnational organisation – the Pirate Parties International, which brings together entities at various stages of development from several dozen countries (Pirate Parties International, 2022).

Analysis of the relationship of pirate parties with other party families reveals that the axiological preferences of these entities focus on the northern part of the model. In 2009, in the Swedish elections to the European Parliament, the Piratpartiet won more than 7% of the votes and introduced one representative to this body (Otjes, 2020). Christian Engström became a member of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (European Parliament, 2020). Both the Greens and the pirates referred to the axioms of the northern part of the model – *self-governance, equality*, and *individual liberty* and emphasised the *positive view of human nature*. In turn, the Polish Pirate Party (Polska Partia Piratów), in the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, joined an electoral coalition with the Direct Democracy and the Libertarian Party, which again, through organisational associations, indicated a closer association with *self-governance* and *individual liberty*.

The third determinant of party families is similarities in ideology. It should be noted that the criterion of ideological proximity and the compliance rule of the matrix coincide because party platforms are created based on meta-values. However, the possibilities arising from using the matrix offer a broader analysis than the traditional approach based on recognising the similarity of postulates. Using the circular model, selecting further meta-values may be anticipated, which also applies to newly established parties. The compliance rule gives the meta-values adjacent to the preferred axioms a high rank, and the rule of conflict leads to the stigmatisation of those on the opposite side³.

³ It does not apply to populist parties. In populism, axioms are selected depending on the expected

As mentioned, in the case of pirate parties, *individual liberty, self-governance*, and *equality* were indicated at their genesis. The parties, avoiding the one-issue party formula (Mudde, 1999), broadened the election platform by incorporating other issues. Due to the rule of compliance, *progressivism, rationalism, society* and the *plurality of value systems* were added to the set of declared meta-values, and a *positive view of human nature* was emphasised. Election platforms of pirate parties point to preferences covering all the northern axioms:

- the Pirate Party UK referring to fiscal policy, wrote about *equality*: "We support the implementation of a Land Value Tax (LVT). LVT would raise more from the wealthiest without penalising the poor, whilst at the same time being much harder to dodge than income tax" (Pirate Party UK, 2021);
- the United States Pirate Party, striving for *individual liberty*, stated, "No one should have the power to prevent the free exchange and expression of ideas, tools, or works.
 [...]. Individuals must be free to make personal decisions that do not harm another person" (United States Pirate Party, 2019);
- the Swedish party focused on *progressivism* by writing: "We live in exceptional times in human history. Never before have so many people been able to communicate so easily. Never before have so many had such access to knowledge. Never before has the dissemination of information led to such rapid technological, cultural and financial progress [...]" (Piratpartiet, 2020);
- the Austrian party highlighted *rationalism*: "The Pirate Party in Austria demands a strict separation of the state from religion in all areas. Austria must ensure freedom of conscience and religion for all persons on their territory. Freedom of religion includes the right to free choice of religion as well as the right to freedom from religion" (Piratenpartei, 2021);
- the Polish Pirate Party referred to *self-governance*: "We, Pirates, want to provide citizens, understood as both individuals and a collective, with a greater and more direct influence on the political debate and decision-making process, [...]" (Polska Partia Piratów, 2020);
- Italian Partito Pirata, referring to the *plurality of value systems*, wrote: "Free culture is an important resource for the education and creativity of society. We strive to promote artistic activity and cultural diversity to ensure a rich educational and artistic environment for our and future generations" (Partito Pirata, 2020);
- the Icelandic Piratar emphasised the importance of *society*: "All Pirate Party work depends on the participation of individuals. The party's discussions are spread over in-house meetings, social media and various online groups. Much of the dialogue occurs on Facebook pages, but there are also more focused web discussions at discourse.piratar.is where Icelandic Pirates debate, interact and reach a consensus

electoral benefits, which often lead to a lack of axiological consistency (values are not selected based on the rules of the matrix). More on populism see Lewandowski (2022, pp. 44–64).

on a variety of topics. Meetings are advertised via email and social media, as well as on the Pirate event calendar" (Piratar, 2019);

- the last of the distinguished groups – the Belgian party – described the attitude to reality as follows: "Pirates are tolerant and peace-loving: they oppose the war and reject the death penalty. Moreover, they are committed to the protection of our environment and the dignified treatment of animals. Pirates stand for sustainability and the preservation of the nature" (Pirate Bay, 2020), which was the essence of the *positive view of human nature*. Concluding, the axioms of the pirate party family can be represented graphically (see Fig. 4 *The meta-values of pirate parties*).

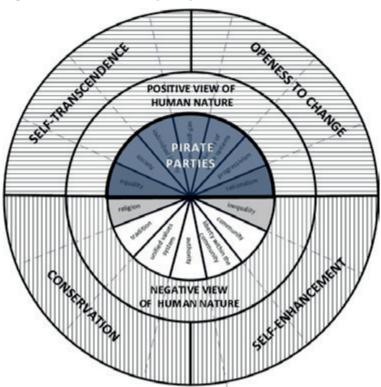


Figure 4. The meta-values of pirate parties

According to the second rule of the circular model, colliding meta-values (the implementation of which would lead to goals opposite to those desired) are stigmatised. In the case of pirate parties, the conflict rule manifested itself in the criticism of solutions based on the southern axioms: *inequality, community, liberty within the community, authority, unified values system, tradition* and *religion*:

- Pirate Party Belgium condemned *inequality* by writing: "Pirates see the world as a whole and help to find solutions to global problems (such as inequality, migration, climate change and resource scarcity)" (Pirate Bay, 2020);
- The Polish Pirate Party criticised *authority*: "No decisions shall be taken at European level on matters that could be better resolved at state, regional or local level" (Polska Partia Piratów, 2020);
- The Slovenian Pirate Party proposed a vision of *society* opposed to the right-wing *community*: "[...] everyone is guaranteed the same human rights and fundamental liberties, regardless of nationality, race, sex, sexual orientation, identity and sexual expression, language, religion, political or other beliefs, material status, birth, education, social status, disability or any other personal circumstances" (Pirati, 2021);
- Young Finnish have criticised *liberty within the community*: "We strive to implement all human rights as provided for in the Constitution in Article 14 and define them more precisely: Everyone must be free to act as they wish, and only those actions that themselves limit the freedom of others must be restricted. The government should not make decisions regarding the lifestyle of individuals" (Piraattinuoret, 2021);
- The Australian party has expressed a negative view of the *unified values system* and *religion*: "The institution of marriage pre-dates all religions, nations, and political parties by tens of thousands of years. As marriage is a collective, shared inheritance and part of the social commons, it is not justified to be co-opted by any modern religious or political agenda. Control of marriage by political parties or religious groups is an appropriation from history and the public, and those claiming a right to control and define marriage have no such right in truth" (Pirate Party Australia, 2019);
- Austrian Pirate Party declared that "[...] equality and equal treatment of different sexes cannot be achieved without changing the socialisation of children. An important issue is the breakup of stereotypical gender roles" (Piratenpartei, 2021)
 colliding meta-value is *tradition*.

It must be pointed out that the selection of political demands (and meta-values on which they were constructed) was made according to the rules of compliance and conflict. High priority was given to axioms of the northern part of the model, located within domains of *self-transcendence* and *openness to change*. While at the stage of family origins, the choice of values included *equality, self-governance* and *individual liberty*, parties of this type formulated subsequent demands based on the remaining four meta-values. At the same time, southern meta-values were perceived as politically hostile.

Conclusions

Conclusions can be reduced to a few points:

- It is important to emphasise that the conclusion is not that the family of pirate parties is uniform in terms of their concepts but that the parties from each country represent identical ideas⁴. However, it can be noted that these concepts are generally converging in terms of the values on which they are based and that the process that led to this resulted from the interaction of the rules that Schwartz wrote about.
- 2. Hypothesis H1 and H2 seem to be confirmed. Pirate parties have added new values to their original demands (based on *equality*, *self-governance* and *individual liberty*) according to the rules of compliance and conflict. Those new values were *society*, *the plurality of value systems*, *progressivism* and *rationalism*.
- 3. Hypothesis H2.2 can be considered confirmed because the proximity of values led the Pirates to form coalitions with the Green parties. In classical concepts, this is explained in terms of diffusion or convergence of postulates, but as can be seen, the source is the circular arrangement of values and the impact of the rule of compliance.
- 4. s an analysis of the manifestos indicates, the values of the southern part of the model were regarded by the Pirates as hostile (which is understandable since they lead to opposite goals). It means that the natural enemy of the PPs is the parties defending Southern values (conservatives, nationalists, Christian Democrats and others), which is the result of the rule of conflict described by Schwartz.
- 5. The article is a meta-analysis, so other conclusions can be deduced. As can be observed, just as in Schwartz's model of basic values, the rules lead to the formation of a hierarchy. In the case of the party families, this observation seems crucial because they are distinguished due to the rank assigned to particular axioms. Leading meta-values can always be pointed out in freely chosen ideological families. For conservative ones, the priority axiom is *tradition*; for liberal ones *individual liberty*; for national ones, it is *community, equality* in a social-democratic family, and *religion* in the case of Christian democracy. In the case of pirates, the leading meta-value was *self-governance*, followed by *individual liberty*. It should be emphasised that new families are created where meta-values perceived as priorities are under threat⁵.
- 6. In the context of the distinction of the proposed meta-value model into northern and southern parts, it should be noted that they correspond with the distinction

⁴ For instance, one can point to different concepts of fiscal policy (Bolleyer et al., 2015), but even concepts of this policy based on southern, neoliberal *inequality* are axiologically coherent, since *inequality* is a tangential meta-value and is located in the area adjacent to the northern part of the model.

⁵ For example, Christian democracy was established to defend *religion* against parties seeking *rationalism* (which concerned mainly socialists and liberals at the time).

between post-material values (northern part) and existential values (traditional and survival values – southern part), which Ronald Inglehart (2007) wrote about. Schwartz, on the other hand, in 2012 grouped the same area, describing it as Growth (in politics, this is the area of left-wing values) and Self-protection (in politics, values of this type are described as right-wing). It is significant because the areas of these values overlap, and the differences are primarily in terms of labels. It may indicate that the circular model of values has probably more explanatory potential.

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