

DISSERTATIONES SOCIOLOGICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

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Structural changes or individual preferences?  
A study of unmarried cohabitation in Estonia



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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on original publications which will be referred to in the dissertation by their respective Roman numbers.

- I **Kasearu, K.**, Kutsar, D. (forthcoming). Patterns behind unmarried cohabitation trends in Europe. *European Societies*.
- II **Kasearu, K.** (2010). Intending to marry ... students' behavioural intention towards family forming. *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 14, 1, 3–20.
- III **Kasearu, K.** (2009). The effect of union type on work-life conflict in five European countries. *Social Indicators Research*, 93, 549–567.

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## **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION**

The author of this dissertation made a major contribution to the three studies listed below:

**Study I:** The author played a major role in formulating the research questions and took a lead in producing a theoretical framework for the study. In addition, the author was fully responsible for the data analysis.

**Study II:** The author took a lead in and was a major contributor to all phases of the study: formulation of research questions, research design, data collection and analysis as well as write-up of the report.

**Study III:** The author took a lead in and was a major contributor to all phases of the study: formulation of research questions, research design, data collection and analysis as well as write-up of the report.

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## **INTRODUCTION: WHY TO STUDY UNMARRIED COHABITATION IN ESTONIA?**

Throughout history, the family unit has played a central role in human society. However, during the last decades in the Western societies the institution of the family has undergone rapid changes. Over the years, the family as the main place of production, consumption and distribution of goods and property, as well as the main unit of care giving and socialization, has lost its dominance. Allied with the declining number of family members and the importance of the family in a person's life, the family has become more fragile in terms of its duration and structure. Furthermore, marriage as an institution is also changing, with its importance in defining and guiding human behaviour and relationships in decline (Cherlin, 2004; Axinn & Thornton, 2000). Marriage as a legal basis for a family formation is steadily losing its importance and, instead, (unmarried) cohabitation has gained strong position in the process of family formation.

There seems to be a general consensus among the authors that during the last forty years most of the Western societies have witnessed a universal trend in the sphere of family formation – an increase in the numbers of cohabiting unions (Nazio, 2008; Thornton, Axinn & Xie, 2007). The majority of scholars agree, that the phenomenon of cohabitation first started in Sweden and then spread to other Scandinavian countries (Goode, 1964; Festy, 1980; Trost, 1978; 1979). By the end of 1970s this process had extended to Central and North-Western Europe (Therborn, 2004; Trost, 1979) and to a lesser extent to Southern European countries (Kiernan, 1999). It is believed that cohabitation spread to Eastern European countries from 1980s onwards (Hoem et al., 2009; Spéder, 2005).

The increase of cohabiting unions in post-socialist countries, particularly in Estonia, has been very rapid, diverse and shaped by various factors. However, tracking the spread of unmarried cohabitation has been a challenging task. At present, there is no official statistics available on cohabiting unions. Hence, the spread of unmarried cohabitation could only be estimated by an increasing rate of extramarital births and decreasing numbers of marriages. According to the official data gathered by Statistics Estonia, the proportion of extramarital births has increased from 23.1 percent in 1988 to 59.2 percent in 2009. Compared to other European countries Estonia has taken a leading position in the numbers of extramarital births, even surpassing Scandinavian countries.

This suggests that the phenomenon of cohabitation in Estonia has spread very rapidly and the timing of this process has been closely related to the larger political and social changes in the society. The collapse of state-socialism in most of the Central and Eastern European countries was followed by rapid demographic changes: fertility and marriage rates decreased while the number of divorces increased (e.g., Aassve et al., 2006; Kantorova, 2004; Katus et al., 2000, 2008; Kohler & Kohler, 2002).

It is important to note that the increase of unmarried cohabitation has been the greatest in Estonia. In the 1970–1980s the unmarried cohabitation was practiced in a hidden way and it constituted a relatively short period before marriage (Katus et al., 2007: 282). This has been demonstrated by Ene-Margit Tiit (2003), who showed that there were a high number of births among couples, who were married less than 9-months. Her findings indicated that in many cases the couple was living together before marriage and that the marriage was initiated by the birth of a child. According to Estonian Population Census in 2000 there were 122 446 cohabiting individuals, or 10.9 per cent of the population in the age group 15 and older (Statistics Estonia). The comparison of increasing numbers of births to cohabiting parents (see Tiit, 2008) and overall proportion of cohabiting individuals in the society clearly shows that the cohabitation has spread very rapidly particularly among the younger population. Recently, the high prevalence of cohabitation has even evoked public discussion initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Justice that focussed on the need for regulating the unmarried cohabiting unions.

To date little is known about the reasons behind the rapid spread of cohabitation in Estonia. Could it be explained by different social context in Estonia or the changes in individuals' family formation behaviour and decision-making process? In the field of sociology, there are various theories that have addressed the changes that have taken place within the family institution in the Western world. These theories could be divided into macro and micro level theories, according to their approach to the question whether the changes that have taken place in the family structure have been initiated by the structural changes at macro level or by individuals' actions at micro level. Notwithstanding extensive literature in the field of family change, little is known about the phenomenon of cohabitation in post-socialist/transition societies. This dissertation addresses the gap in knowledge by focussing on family formation processes in Estonia.

**In particular, the aim of this doctoral dissertation** is to examine the phenomenon of cohabiting unions in Estonia. The thesis focuses on the process of spreading cohabitation, its trends and patterns in comparative European perspective; the factors of individual decisions-making and characteristic features compared to marriage based unions.

For the purpose of this dissertation, cohabitation refers to a co-residential union of two opposite sex partners in an intimate relationship without being legally married and who identify themselves as cohabiting partners. In this dissertation several synonyms are applied: cohabiting unions, unmarried cohabiting couples, unmarried cohabitation, and consensual unions.

The dissertation is based on three interrelated original studies focussing on different dimensions of cohabiting unions.

The objectives and respective research questions of the dissertation are:

I To analyse the trends of cohabitation within European societies.

How spread is cohabitation in European countries? Are the processes more convergent or divergent? Can similar trends be determined in the Eastern European countries? What is characteristic for Estonia? (**Study I**)

II To explore the decision-making processes during the time of family formation with a special focus on cohabitation.

How the spread of cohabitation at the societal level is explained through individual action? What are the factors determining individual decision-making processes that lead to favouring cohabitation instead of the legal marriage? Can the intention to cohabit be explained by individual characteristics (e.g. gender, having a partner, attitudes, etc.)? (**Study II**)

III To compare the family life arrangements of cohabiting and married couples.

How similar or different are the cohabiting and married couples? Considering the family and work reconciliation and conflict, what are the differences between cohabitation and marriage-based family arrangements? (**Study III**)

IV To generate more in-depth understanding of cohabitation-based family formation in Estonia

How the rapid diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia can be explained from different theoretical perspectives?

The structure of the introductory article takes the following format: the first section of the theoretical framework presents the different explanations to the spread of cohabitation across societies. This is followed by discussion about the differences and functions of cohabiting and married unions. Section two focuses on methodological approaches and describes data sets used. Section three introduces the main findings of each study, while section four provides with discussion. The introductory article ends with concluding remarks and with a supplementary summary in Estonian.

# **I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The aim of this section is to present a theoretical framework for exploring interplay between structural change of a society and individual action – a focus of this dissertation. In order to provide a background to the study, the section draws on existing theories and empirical studies on cohabitation.

It is argued in this thesis that the interplay between structural change of a society and individual action may hold a key for enhancing our understanding of changes in family structure as well as variation in cohabitation. Moreover, following, Durkheim's argument: "*...when one undertakes to explain a social phenomenon the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfils must be investigated separately*" (Durkheim, 1982, 2007: 150), two aspects will be discussed. On one hand, relying on different theoretical perspectives the causes of the increase of cohabitating unions will be elaborated and on the other hand, the functioning of cohabitation compared to marriage is taken into consideration.

First, I will discuss the spread of cohabitation in the context of structural changes in structural-functionalist framework. The section also draws on the perspectives of modernity and theories of individualization and transition. Secondly, I will look at the spread of cohabitation as an outcome of individual action, thus focusing on different micro level theories (exchange theory and theory of reasoned action). Finally, I will elaborate on the link between macro and micro level approaches by explaining the spread of unmarried cohabitation in terms of developmental idealism and diffusion approach. In the second part of this chapter I will focus on the functions of cohabiting and marriage unions and on the differences between characteristics of cohabiting and married individuals in framework of selection approach.

## **I.1. Theoretical perspectives explaining the spread of cohabitation**

### **I.1.1. Macro-level theoretical approaches**

In order to gain a better understanding on the spread of cohabitation at macro level I draw on a theory of functionalism. Although this framework has recently been widely criticized by various authors (e.g., see White & Klein 2007), for neglecting human agency in explaining social reality, for decades the ideas of functionalism have played an important role in the creation of theories in the field of family sociology and by shaping our understanding of the changes that have taken place in the family institution.

From the functionalist perspective, the family represents an institution that carries various functions (reproduction, socialisation, etc) in relation to the larger social system. Hill concludes that according to Durkheim, the changes that have occurred in marriage and in the family are the outcomes of societal differentiation process<sup>1</sup> functionally connected to the continually increasing population density and accompanying processes of competition and concurrence between the actors (Hill, 1999: 38). The change in the family institution is seen, first and foremost, as an outcome of the distribution of work. Thus, in Durkheim's view, the differentiation process is carried on by individual action but the action is rarely based on one's direct intentional decision.

Regarding the family institution, the changes have occurred in three domains: the social structure of the families, the change of the family institution itself and its functions in a society and finally the interplay between the state and the family (Wagner, 2001: 20). Durkheim (1978) argues that due to the economic and social developments the kinship-based social networks will lose their members and that these developments also reduce the kinship-based social control over the marriage. At the time of his writing, this meant that higher differentiation in a society lead to higher control of the state over marriage and family. It also meant that stronger regulation of the intimate relations by the state changed the meaning of the marriage as a contract between individuals. Thus, the marriage was not any longer based on solidarity and individual rules established by the spouses, but, rather it was perceived as the contract between an individual and the state. With regard to cohabitation, Durkheim argued that if marriage is accompanied by a particular moral and regulated by particular rights and duties, then cohabitation remains out of these boundaries and is therefore immoral and dysfunctional. Durkheim (1978: 238–239) argues “*Any sexual union which is not contracted in the matrimonial form disturbs the familial duty and the familial bond and, from the day when the state itself has intervened in family life, disturbs the public order*”. Thus, other unions beside the marriage-based family did not fit in the framework of Durkheim's view on functionalism.

Functionalist framework has also been used in the creation of convergence and transition theories (White & Klein, 2007). Parsons stated that the modernization in the form of industrialization and urbanization influenced families by expanding their roles. However, as a consequence, large areas of family activity lost their function (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Thus, the changes outside the family unit have removed the major functions (e.g., education, child care, economic independence, etc.) from the family which, in turn, enabled alternative forms of family to emerge. This statement was the basis for the assumption, that the modernization has influence on the family by increasing

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<sup>1</sup> Here differentiation refers to a process whereby sets of social activities performed by one social institution become split up between different institutions. Differentiation characterizes an increasing specialization of the parts of a society, giving greater heterogeneity within the society.

the specialization of the conjugal roles (Goode, 1963). The idea that the modernization is a uniform process gave rise to the idea of convergence. This approach is based on a developmental paradigm<sup>2</sup>. Thornton (2001) argues that the followers of this paradigm assume that the family formation patterns develop in the same direction as individuals' interests, needs and opportunities, thus the convergence between countries will occur. According to this paradigm the societies move at varying speeds through the same universal and necessary stages of development (Nisbet, 1969; Sanderson, 1990) and that this has been applied also to the changes in family patterns (Thornton, 2001).

Regarding the family, the empirical support for convergence theory was provided by demographers. The first demographic transition theory argues that modernization is uniformly accompanied by declining fertility which is balanced with increased longevity. According to the second demographic transition, the societies are characterized by fertility which is below the replacement level, high divorce rate and low marriage rate, increasing numbers of unmarried cohabitants and extra-marital births (Lesthaeghe, 1995; Lesthaeghe & Neels, 2002; van de Kaa, 1987).

The spread of cohabitation is influenced by a cultural context, where religiosity plays a significant role. As stated by Trost (1978) the spread of cohabitation in Sweden during the 1960s was simplified by the acceptance of non-marital cohabitation. Thus, the change in values and norms framing the family formation contributed significantly to the spread of cohabitation. This is seen as one product of the second demographic transition. According to this framework, the changes in family life are outcomes of changed value system: increased individualisation, need for autonomy, self realisation and fulfilment (Lesthaeghe, 1995; van de Kaa, 1987) which in turn is associated with wider social changes, for instance, secularization, increase of women's economic independence, increased gender equality and so on. These broader changes are likely to affect individuals' cohesion in family and their romantic relationships (Gillies, 2003), which in turn reveals overall demographic trends.

The studies (e.g., Kiernan, 2002; Lesthaeghe, 1995; Prinz, 1995) focussing on the prevalence of cohabitation across countries are mostly based on the above introduced ideas of convergence and developmental paradigm. On the basis of the spread of cohabitation in a society, four stages in the diffusion of cohabitation have been distinguished (see Kiernan, 1999, 2001; Prinz, 1995; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). These phases are seen as a series of successive developmental stages and they form a common pattern of diffusion of cohabitation in a society, whereby suggesting that the countries follow the

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<sup>2</sup> Although the developmental paradigm has been rejected by many scholars, it is introduced here because its fundamental position as a cornerstone in the approach of developmental idealism, which is used later in this dissertation.

universal path and go through all the stages but in different time period<sup>3</sup> (e.g., Heuvelin & Timberlake, 2004; Kiernan, 2002; Perelli-Harris et al., 2009; Prinz, 1995).

The stages are distinguished by the prevalence, permanency, age of cohabiting individuals, and childbearing in cohabitation. In the first stage, cohabitation is rare and practiced by a specific group of people, who prefer cohabitation to marriage for pragmatic reasons or reasons based on values and attitudes. For instance, this is illustrated by Nazio and Blossfeld (2003) who describe the situation in West Germany, where remarriage meant the loss of alimony and the widow's pension thus forming a rational basis for preferring unmarried cohabitation with a new partner. Moreover, according to Prinz (1995) the mean ages of cohabiting and married populations are closer to one another.

The second stage is described by higher spread of cohabitation in a society; it is practiced as a temporary phase preceding marriage. In this case, in younger age groups, the cohabitation rate is quite high but its proportion declines sharply during childbearing age.

In the third stage, cohabitation is used as an alternative for marriage-based unions. It could be seen as an institutionalised union. Although the proportion of consensual unions is still higher among the younger age groups and declines with age, the decline is more gradual.

The final stage is reached, when the majority of population has lived at least once in a consensual union and it is seen as an alternative to marriage, i.e., it is distributed equally between the age groups and it is indistinguishable from marriage by major characteristics, including childbearing and -rearing. In my dissertation the **Study I** deals with these issues and shows that beside the convergence of prevailing phenomenon of cohabitation, there is a noticeable trend towards divergence of cohabitation patterns in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> The time frame should be taken into account; here the spread of cohabitation is described as a phenomenon of last 40-50 years. However, as shown by Therborn in his book *Between sex and power* (2004) in Europe the marriage patterns have been very diverse over centuries and the emergence of cohabitation in the middle of the twentieth century could be seen as a new wave.

### **1.1.2. Micro level theoretical approaches**

The functionalist framework has been criticised by White and Klein (2007) who argue that it offers insufficient explanation for social change and social dynamics and has problems with distinguishing between intentional and functional action at individual level<sup>4</sup>. With regard to the spread of unmarried cohabitation, the functionalist perspective describes this phenomenon as an outcome of the overall societal differentiation. An increase in unmarried cohabitation as an outcome of societal differentiation should be understood as an unintentional consequence of individual decisions and actions. Thus, the idea of structural-functionalism that the differentiation is the basis for social change holds, if it considers Coleman's micro-macro link and the ideas of methodological individualism which defines individual as an actor. Bearing in mind Coleman's theory, according to which the macro level phenomenon should be explained through the action of an individual level (Coleman, 1986), the following section introduces micro level theories.

The economic theory of the family, introduced by Garry Becker (1974) emphasizes that the differentiation of union forms is an outcome of individual desire to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs. According to Becker, individuals would consider marriage if they presuppose that in so doing, they will increase the benefits. These benefits may include the division of labour in the household and diminish costs. Furthermore the marriage produces benefits/commodities that cannot be easily purchased in the market place (Hill & Kopp, 1999).

Similarly, the social exchange theory assumes that individuals have different amounts of individual resources at their disposal and an exchange of these resources between partners will increase the benefits for both parties. Thus, according to Nye (1979), individuals will choose between alternatives on the basis of expected benefits from this exchange act.

Both approaches share the idea that the stability of relationship is secured by the investments made into this relationship. Taking into account these two approaches, the preference for one or another living form is based on the wish to maximize their benefits. Thus, the cohabitation could be preferred over marriage because of the wish to maximize their benefits and lower the costs. Still, the meaning of costs and the benefits is subjectively defined and varies across individuals, time and space; the social context frames the meaning of costs and benefits.

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<sup>4</sup> White and Klein (2007:61) argue that according to the functionalist framework if actors are purposeful then it is correct to assume that the actors are acting also intentionally, but the intentional action is not always identical to a functional action. Functionalism tries to solve this problem by stating that action may have unintended consequences and these are seen as latent functions. If a function can be unintended and latent, then it implies that such latent functions are haphazard or even accidental. If this were possible, then the logic of functional explanation becomes illogical.

The decision-making process or, in other words, considering positive and negative factors of cohabitation could be analyzed using rational action theory. This theory makes difference between the stages and their different aspects in the decision-making process. The behaviour of an individual is influenced by his or her intentions, and these intentions are, in turn, influenced by attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms and perceptions of behavioural control (Ajzen, 2001: 43). Applying this theory on the family formation process indicates that cohabitation, or more precisely, not making a decision to marry is shaped by the intention to do so, which in turn is influenced by normative beliefs consisting of perceived expectations of significant others towards family formation, marriage and unmarried cohabitation. Thus, the person's intention to marry or continue to cohabit is influenced by the level of perceived social pressure. The expectation that significant others will approve or disapprove the behaviour in a certain way is the main distinguishing feature of the subjective norm. In addition, an intention to marry is shaped by the person's overall family-related attitudes as well as attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation. This includes the weighting of costs and benefits of marriage and cohabitation, and is shaped by beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms and behavioural control. These arguments are presented in the theoretical part of the **Study II**.

### **1.1.3. Spread of unmarried cohabitation in the frame of modernity theories**

The micro-level theories discussed above do not link individual behaviour with larger societal developments. In case of unmarried cohabitation, it still remains open, why it is rational, why individuals decide to cohabit instead of getting married. Influenced by methodological individualism Blossfeld (1996) argues that a social phenomenon is more understandable if it is considered as an outcome of attitudes, choices and behaviour of a person. In the other words, it is explained through the reasons, which guide individual action. Therefore, the reason and its influence are related through individual action. However, in order to understand the background mechanism of the spread of unmarried cohabitation, it should be taken into account that at individual level the decision-making process is embedded into a social system (Granovetter, 1985).

More recent sociological approaches have tried to link the structural change and individual action. Beck argues that the changes in the family structure are initiated by the process of individualization. Individualization or "*institutionalized individualism*" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 202) represents the structural modification of social institutions and changing relations between an individual and the society. In order to integrate into the modern differentiated society, the old traditional family ties should be abandoned (Beck & Sopp, 1997). Thus, the structure of the family ties is influenced by individualization and as a result, many new relations and roles have emerged. As an outcome of

the individualization process, the individuals have more options available in order to make their choices while the importance of following the values, rules, beliefs of the institutionalized networks/systems of control has declined (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1994; Zapf, 1994). However, the increased freedom and decreased influence of social and behavioural scripts is likely to cause ambivalence and contradictions. On one hand, the personal scope for actions and opportunities increases, while on the other hand, the feeling of security and social norms framing the individual action declines.

In addition, Giddens (1991) argues that the modernity breaks down the protective framework whereby human behaviour is largely influenced by external factors. The individual self in the context of dissolving of traditional patterns of work, family and other aspects of life has to be in charge of its own development and continuance, including the creation of intimate connection to others (Roberts, 2006: 129). According to Giddens (1991: 33) in the context of modernity the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change. Thus, the self-identity is negotiated in the process of self-exploration and the development of intimacy with others. In order to describe social relationships, Giddens applies the term *pure relationship*. These relationships exist for their own sake and they are formed on the basis of commitment, intimacy and trust between partners. Therefore, relationships are less and less guided by external criteria, rather, they are “*reflexively organized in an open fashion and on a continuous basis*” (Giddens, 1991: 91).

Regarding the intimate relations and family formation, both approaches emphasize the importance of individual action as a reaction to the changing social system. In the process of family formation the individualization is expressed in pluralisation of family forms. Peuckert (1999) and Lewis (2001) argue that the individualization process increases the attractiveness of unmarried cohabitation compared to marriage. In particular, it is based on the assumption, that in cohabiting unions, the women gain more rights and options available to them. Thus, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 108–109) the non-marital cohabitation is one of the objective preventing strategies used for avoiding fall into the ‘trap’ of the traditional family model.

The notion of pure relationship also highlights sexual and emotional equality between partners and, therefore, higher satisfaction in a relationship. According to this theory women are seen to take the lead in fostering ‘democratisation’ of relationships and emotional reorganization. Thus, Giddens (1991: 89) points out that the marital tie nowadays is less anchored through external factors; marriage becomes increasingly a relationship initiated and maintained for as long as it delivers emotional satisfaction based on intimacy. Furthermore, it can be concluded, that the relationship is even more pure, when marriage is replaced by unmarried cohabitation. Without any legal recognition and obligations, unmarried cohabitation could be seen as a complete eradication of pre-existing external involvements. Thus, both scholars advocate the idea that intimate

relationships are less determined by external factors and the terms of living together have to be re-negotiated in each case.

To conclude, following the idea of individualization, the individuals have more options available to them for shaping their life and thus have to make more decisions. Bringing together the theories of individualisation, rational action and differentiation, the differentiation of family forms and spread of cohabitation could be explained as a rational choice of individuals. The actor's idea is to maximize the benefits and by so doing, he or she influences the macro level processes. As stated by Giddens, the structure is both the medium and outcome of a situated action (Roberts, 2006: 126).

#### **1.1.4. Micro-macro link: diffusion and developmental idealism**

Regarding the prevalence of cohabitation, the above introduced theoretical approaches do not take directly into account the fact that individual choices of action depend upon the ways in which other individuals have chosen to act in the same situation. The relationship between a single individual's action and the aggregate outcome on the macro-level is far from straightforward and is, therefore, difficult to predict. If we consider the preference of cohabitation as an outcome of individual action, then one should bear in mind that individuals interact and influence each other's choices (Åberg, 2000). With this in mind, this section discusses ideas of diffusion<sup>5</sup> and developmental idealism. Both approaches explain the macro phenomenon, such as increasing spread of unmarried cohabitation, as a result of the combination of individuals' actions at the micro level.

According to diffusion approach, at the individual level, the way an individual behaves, is altered by the previous adoption of such behaviour by other individuals in the social system. As stated by Montgomery and Casterline (1993: 458) "*diffusion exists when the adoption of innovative ideas and corresponding behaviour by some individuals influences the likelihood of such adoption by others*". Thus, the diffusion approach explains the magnification of a social phenomenon as a result of individual decision-making, which has consequences on other individuals' decisions and behaviour within the social system.

Nazio (2008: 16) in her recent book *Cohabitation, Family and Society* argues that the diffusion of cohabitation is influenced by social structure (norms, legislation, social influence from previous adopters and peers) and by individual strategic and purposive action (preferences and resources). More interestingly, she concludes that the latter depends on the subjective perception about other's experience of cohabitation. The important link between

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<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation diffusion is a term referring to the process how, why and what extent the cohabitation spreads within a country and across Europe.

individual's behaviour and its influence as a diffusion at the societal level is the concept of social influence (Coleman, 1986). According to Nazio (2008) in case of the diffusion of cohabitation the social influence works through the process of social learning (see also Montgomery and Casterline, 1996) and perceived social pressure.

Social learning presupposes that individuals learn by observing another's behaviour, which provides implicit evidence whether in uncertain situation this new emerging behaviour is effective or not. In the case of family formation, individuals can be easily thought to adopt cohabitation as the result of a learning process about its practice, its perceived working and expected consequences (Nazio, 2008: 34).

The second factor of social influence is social pressure. Social pressure is, on one hand, an individual's desire to behave according to the accepted manner in a society and thus the perception about others' attitudes and beliefs towards one's behaviour are important determinants. Thus, as discussed above, the perceived subjective norm alters individuals' decisions regarding the behaviour (see also Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). On the other hand, the social pressure may influence people's perceived advantage in cohabitating as tied to others' previous behaviours through social and legal sanctions, or more specifically, the spread of cohabitation signals its acceptance and lowers the social sanctions against cohabitation (Nazio, 2008: 35).

The social learning process and social pressure are not only based on the interpersonal relations. As stated by Montgomery and Casterline (1996) the social learning process could also be shaped by other factors such as the mass media, markets and other aggregate social structures. Therefore, the public debate about changing family forms, the knowledge and conclusions derived from empirical research and academic theories may have had its own influence on the diffusion of cohabitation. In this respect, the ideas of modernity theories and particularly the convergence perspective that were discussed in previous sections, have been challenged by Thornton (2001). The convergence perspective, which has dominated for decades and permeated the perspectives of family scholars and demographers, could have influenced the social phenomena. According to Thornton and his colleagues (2009, 2001) the explanation given by scholars to the social changes could become the force which further initiates these changes. Thornton proposes that the ideas and theories of development have influenced changes in the family sphere.

For example, the developmental idealism approach suggests that the scholars' ideas of development, progress and modernity have been widely disseminated and these ideas have started to guide individuals' family life and demographic behaviour worldwide during the last few hundred years (Thornton, 2001). Thornton argues that the propositions of developmental

idealism<sup>6</sup> provide normative and motivational system of beliefs that guide people's behaviour and relationships. The argument here is that people believe in these propositions and are motivated to behave accordingly regardless of the reliability of these propositions (Thornton, 2001).

The diffusion is a dynamic process and therefore its influence is fluid and constantly changing. Derived from Granovetter's threshold theory of collective behaviour (Granovetter, 1978) it states that reaching a certain threshold, the cumulative adoption of cohabitation may be adopted even by those individuals whose social background characteristics or the resources are associated with cost-benefit calculations that do not necessitate adoption of new behaviour. This could be seen as a change in the principles of rational action. Depending on the level of the spread of cohabiting unions in a society, the adoption of cohabitation does not occur any longer as a strategic response or adjustment to a realignment of resources associated with one's social position in the social system. Rather, the preference to cohabit is the re-evaluation of one's own choices in the light of other people's behaviour (Palloni, 2001). To conclude, the adoption or rejection of cohabitation is an outcome of a rational decision-making process, which is embedded in a social context and is influenced by social actors' decisions and behaviours. The theoretical considerations introduced above underlie and frame the findings of the **Study I** and the **Study II** and will be elaborated on in the "Discussion" section.

## **1.2. Approaches focusing on the differences between cohabiting and married unions**

The following sections explore, whether cohabitation is taking over the functions fulfilled by marriage, and whether the differences between cohabiting and married individuals are declining. On the basis of a threshold concept in diffusion process of cohabitation, it could be suggested that after a certain threshold has been reached, the major differences between the cohabiting and married individuals disappear and the internal divergence of the unions declines.

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<sup>6</sup> The propositions of developmental idealism could be summed up as follows: (1) modern society is good and attainable, (2) modern family is good and attainable, (3) modern family is a cause and an effect of a modern society, (4) individuals are free and equal, and social relationships are based on consent. (Thornton, 2001: 454-455).

### **1.2.1. Selection approach**

There is an extensive literature on cohabitation, which has explained the difference between cohabiting and married couples using self-selection explanation. The selection approach relays on assumption, that cohabitation is an outcome of individual differences. The individual decision-making process is shaped by structural conditions, whereby for some social groups the cohabitation is more desirable, acceptable or rational. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, couples initially practiced unmarried cohabitation for rational reasons; they were predominantly middle-aged or older, and had dissolved or ended their first marriages (Kiernan, 2001). The reason for cohabiting instead of re-marrying was the fear of losing the alimony or widow's pension (Nazio & Blossfeld, 2003).

The cohabiting and married individuals have been found to differ from one another with regard to educational attainment (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Duvander, 1999; Lewis, 2001; Smock & Manning, 1997; Wu & Pollard, 2000), income and earnings capacity (Brown, 2000; Oppenheimer, 2003; Smock & Manning, 1997; Sweeny, 2002), family background – for instance experience of a parental divorce in the childhood (Amato & Booth, 1997; Seltzer, 1994; Thornton, 1991; Thornton et al., 2007), as well as racial and ethnic background (Smock, 2000).

In addition, the attitudes and values of cohabiting and married individuals have been also found to differ with cohabiting individuals being more liberal, less religious and adding more value to egalitarian gender roles (Brines & Joyner, 1999; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg & Waite, 1995; Cunningham & Thornton, 2005; Rindfuss & VandenHeuvel, 1990). However, regarding the selection approach, it should be noted that the majority of the studies compare the characteristics of married and cohabiting individuals and do not take into account the internal heterogeneity of cohabiting unions. For instance, the study by Lichter and Qian (2008) showed that serial cohabitations were over-represented among the economically disadvantaged groups.

Consequently, for some social groups the preference for cohabitation (compared to marrying) is caused by the lack of resources (Huston & Melz, 2004). However, preference for cohabitation can also rise from a rational consideration, which is embedded in a particular social context. Nevertheless, as stated above, the influence of social contexts on the decision-making process is changing alongside the diffusion of cohabitation; in the long run, the cohabitation would begin to interest individuals who do not share such characteristics because social approval may prevail over individually perceived advantages or disadvantages in adopting cohabitation (see e.g., Nazio, 2008). Thus, one could expect that the selection effect will diminish over time according to the prevalence of cohabitation.

### **I.2.2. The functionalist perspective**

Going back to the functionalist perspective while discussing cohabitation one cannot forget Parsons' approach. In the 1950s and 1960s his works pointed out two basic functions of the family: primary socialization of children and the stabilization of the adult population within the society (Parsons & Bales, 1955: 16–17). According to Parsons, if the family fails to fulfil these obligations, then it is considered dysfunctional. In the framework of functionalism, the rise of cohabitation in the 1960s and 1970s was marked as “deviant”. Being influenced by this perspective, many subsequent studies have investigated whether cohabitation is less likely to fulfil the traditional family functions compared to conventional marriage. Regarding the effect of cohabitation on childbearing and –rearing, the earliest findings suggested that cohabitation was a pre-marital union and childbearing was less common in these unions: however gradually “... *the monopoly once held by marriage over the bearing and rearing of children has been broken*” (Thornton et al., 2007: 71).

The second function of the family – stabilizing social order, could be divided into two research areas: stability of cohabitation and marriage based unions, and the respective individual well-being. Until recently, there was an overall consensus that pre-marital cohabitation was positively associated with marital disruption (DeMaris & Rao, 1992; Lillard, Brien & Waite, 1995; Smock, 2000; Wu, 2000). More recent studies have indicated that pre-marital cohabitation has no direct effect on marital instability (Brown et al., 2006; Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006; Teachman, 2003). Moreover, the study by Hewitt and de Vaus (2009) shows that in recent decades this association is reversed, whereby the pre-marital cohabitation is found to reduce the risk of separation. In addition, the gap between individual subjective well-being of the cohabitants and the married individuals is smaller in the countries where cohabitation is more institutionalized (Soons & Kalmijn, 2009).

To conclude, cohabitation seems to be taking over the functions that have traditionally been attributed only to a conventional marriage. However, it is hard to say whether cohabitation has become more similar to marriage or whether marital unions now resemble cohabiting unions. It remains unclear whether cohabitation creates a better context for the fulfilment of family functions and tasks in the changing social context.

Women's increased participation in the labour market has renewed interest in the work-life balance. Parsons is considered to be the first, who stated that the family in his time contained intensified gendered division of labour (White & Klein, 2007: 58). The division of labour was seen to produce joint dependency, which according to the views of Parsons and Bales (1955) and Becker (1974) formed a basis for a stable marriage and the family. Although this idea has found support by a number of empirical studies which show that women's employment is associated with higher divorce rate (South, 2001) and with lower fertility levels (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000), the more recent studies

support the concept of “functional alternatives”, whereby the negative effect of women’s employment is reduced by the assistance of male partner in the domestic sphere (Cooke, 2004). Thus, the family has to adapt to the changing external conditions and if the gendered divide between instrumental and expressive functions has become an obstacle for the well functioning family, then this divide could be abandoned. Regarding the cohabitation, one could expect that because its weaker institutionalization (Nock, 1995) and thereby less gendered division of labour (Davis et al., 2007; Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitze, 1994), it could be seen as a better basis for performing the functional alternatives<sup>7</sup>. According to the concept of objective preventive strategy introduced by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 109) cohabitation is a strategy to avoid the traditional family model, with its conflicts over the division of labour. In my dissertation **Study III** focuses on this issue by analyzing whether the cohabitation and marriage build a different setting for the reconciliation of work and family life in different social contexts.

Regarding the differences in family life arrangements (separation, childbearing, household allocation, well-being etc.) of cohabiting and married couples, most authors have drawn on the selection perspective by stating that the discrepancy of cohabiting and married unions is related to the different characteristics of individuals.

Another argument is that the phenomenon of cohabitation itself has an effect on the outcome. The social learning approach is different from the selection approach in that life in an unregistered union, which is less institutionalized, may shape the everyday practice and initiate value change (Cunningham & Thornton, 2005), which in turn may have an impact on the future outcomes. The selection and social learning approaches are examined in **Study II** of this thesis.

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<sup>7</sup> Functional alternatives is a concept referring to the idea that there are many possible ways in which a need might be met. For any given function there is also a range of functional alternatives, e.g, the family is seen to meet the function of reproduction, but a social system could also meet this function (reproduction of members) by means of immigration (White & Klein, 2007: 45)

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, first I will clarify the measurement issues of cohabitation in the social surveys. Secondly, I will introduce the data sets, which form the empirical basis for my dissertation.

### 2.1. How to measure cohabitation?

Although, cohabitation has spread in various countries, due to its different legal recognition across European countries, there is limited amount of official statistics available on the numbers of cohabiting couples. The quality of information on cohabitation, its data sources and quality vary across countries. The current knowledge about the prevalence, duration and dynamic of cohabitation is overwhelmingly based on information received from population censuses, social surveys or indirect official statistics. Although the censuses are a good source of information, they are usually infrequent. For instance, in the case of Estonia, the last population census was conducted in 2000 and the next one will be launched in 2011. The alternative to censuses is official statistics of extramarital birth rate, marriage rate and divorce rate which enables indirect estimation of the spread of cohabitation in a society. The increase of the number of births out of wedlock, the declining marriage and divorce rate have been interpreted as the indirect indicators of increasing number of cohabitations (e.g., Trost, 1978). The best availability of data is in Nordic countries like Norway, Denmark and Finland where there are registry data on cohabitation (Noack, 2001). Data availability is closely related to the institutionalization of cohabitation. Statistics on cohabitation is more likely available, if it is a legally registered partnership (Waldijk, 2005). Still, most of the current academic knowledge about different aspects of cohabitation is received from social surveys (Smock, 2000).

This leads us to the question of the validity and reliability of the measurement of cohabitation. As stated by Pollard and Harris (2007) there are no clear normative standards based on which type of cohabitation is defined and measured in different surveys. In social surveys three main approaches are applied: (1) direct questions about the current relationships status; (2) indirect approach whereby the household composition is used to identify non-marital cohabitation and (3) the retrospective approach, whereby a respondent is asked to list all marriages and “marriage-like” relationships. However, it is not clear what makes a union a cohabitation, e.g., is the subjective determination enough or is there a time frame after which the living together becomes cohabitation. Or – are there functions it fulfils as a condition to identify it as a cohabitation. Although, cohabitation is now more widespread across countries than ever before, the question of how to define the concept in the surveys, especially in cross-national comparative research, remains unanswered.

### 2.1.1. Direct measurement of cohabiting unions

Regarding the direct approach, previous studies have indicated that the terms referring to cohabitation (Manning & Smock, 2005) and the wording of questions about the cohabitation affect measurement issues (see Casper & Cohen, 2000; Knab & McLanahan, 2007). As shown by Knab and McLanahan (2007) the meaning of the term varies across time and space and also by different social groups – for instance, it varies depending on whether men or women are interviewed. Because of the fluidity of the concept the operationalization of cohabitation measurement needs special attention.

As stated above, cohabitation as an emerging social phenomenon gained attention of scholars in the 1970-s. A number of studies expressed concern with the definition and measurement of the concept. In the early studies cohabitation was either defined counting the number of nights the partners were spending together (e.g., Macklin, 1972); definition formulated as “*living together under marriage-like conditions but without marriage*” (Trost, 1975); or “*when two cross-sex individuals live together in what is essentially a full-time way and they define themselves as a couple*” (Montgomery, 1972, cited in Gagon & Greenblat, 1978: 180). Thus, the results of the surveys were highly influenced by the way cohabitation was defined (see for overview Gagon & Greenblat, 1978: 180).

The variation of information on the spread of cohabitation captured in social surveys is not random (Baugham, Dickert-Conlin & Houser, 2002; Knab & McLanahan, 2007). Comparing different datasets and questions measuring cohabitation, Knab and McLanahan showed that cohabitation rates tend to be lower when survey questions do not include part-time cohabitation, when they ask about current status, and when women rather than men are the respondents.

Measuring cohabitation could be biased on two different levels: first, on the individual level within a country – some social groups are more likely to declare their relationship as unmarried cohabitation than others. For example, Pollard and Harris (2007) argue that the differences vary according to race, educational levels and age. Secondly, the cultural context may influence the country level differences: in the countries where cohabitation is relatively new, the number of cohabitating unions may be underestimated as it is not yet publicly accepted and people may not report being in cohabitation. Bearing in mind the fact, that cohabitation is heterogeneous phenomenon that varies according to the degree of the commitment from steady relationship to a marriage-like relationship (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Sassler, 2004), the operationalization of direct measures of cohabitation is challenging.

In the European Social Survey (ESS) (applied in the **Study I** and the **Study III**) since the round three, launched in 2006, two measurement approaches were used:

(1) In version A it was asked about the current legal marital status by differentiating between nine statuses: 1) married, 2) in a civil partnership, 3) separated (still legally married), 4) separated (still in a civil partnership), 5) divorced, 6) widowed, 7) formerly in a civil partnership, now dissolved, 8) formerly in a civil partnership, partner died, 9) never married and never in a civil partnership. Additional questions specified, whether the respondents actually lived together with a spouse or civil partner and whether the respondents, despite their formal status (widowed, never married, divorced, married), lived together with a partner without being married or in a civil partnership. Thereby, this approach distinguishes between legal civil partnership and non-legal partnership and is appropriate to use in the countries, where there is a legal option to register cohabitation as a civil partnership.

(2) Version B is more appropriate in the countries, where the legal partnership other than marriage does not exist. In this case, the respondents first determine their legal marital status: married, separated (still legally married), divorced, widowed, and never married. The following question asks about the current situation, whether the respondent him/herself lives together with a spouse or with a partner.

The application of two versions reflects legal aspects of cohabitation across countries. However, it raises several questions for comparative analyses – whether the civil partnership and not legalized partnership within countries could be pooled or should they be treated separately; and whether the legal partnership is more similar to the marriage than to the unregistered cohabitation. In the **Study I**, to form a country-level aggregated data the different types of cohabitations are combined. The **Study III** is based on the ESS 2004 data, and does not make difference between civil partnership and cohabitation.

### **2.1.2. Indirect measurement of cohabiting unions**

Casper and Cohan (2000) have pointed out that within the social surveys applying the indirect approach and identifying the non-marital cohabitation by household composition, the subgroups of cohabiting individuals are, on one hand understated, and on the other hand – overstated. The result depends on how the household and the status of the household members are defined; and whether it is presupposed that the household member is anyone who “ordinarily stays here all the time”, “half the time or more” etc (see Casper & Cohan, 2000). In case of cohabitation, especially in its initial phase, the partners may have separate dwellings, work in different regions and so on. Thus, according to the definition of household used in a survey they may or may not be identified themselves as a cohabiting couple. The differences between indirect and direct measures are also explained by the fact that the direct question – do you live together with someone – is more likely to measure the state of the relationship

and does not necessarily match with the official definition of the household membership (Casper & Cohan, 2000).

### **2.1.3. Retrospective measurement of cohabiting unions**

Several studies that discuss measurement issues of cohabitation have indicated that the retrospective data on cohabitation histories underestimate cohabitation rates (Hayford & Morgan, 2008; Teitler, Reichman & Koball, 2006). The relative weakness of the retrospective approach is related to the problem of the “*vagueness*” of the starting point of cohabiting unions. As stated by Knab and McLanahan (2007: 32) the “*cohabitation starts are too “fuzzy” to pinpoint*”. The retrospective approach tries to identify the main family transitions, whereby respondents had to report the beginning and ending dates of all family related transitions, and, if they ended, then how. The family-related events like contracting a marriage, getting divorced or giving birth to a child are more easily determined than the transition to cohabitation. In most cases the transition to cohabitation is described as a “slide” or a “drift” into co-residence while maintaining multiple residences, rather than a conscious decision to begin living together (Manning & Smock, 2005).

When discussing cohabitation, it is necessary to consider the socio-cultural context. For example, because of different context of the housing market and overall financial situation in Eastern Europe, the moving together could be seen as a more conscious decision and more driven by financial consideration as compared to the Western European countries (Nazio, however, 2008 reports similar situation in Spain and Italy). Still, the relationship at any given time may be vague and therefore the estimations on starting dates of a relationship differ over time (Teitler, Reichman & Koball, 2006) and between partners (Knab & McLanahan, 2007; Manning & Smock, 2005; Seltzer, 2000). Furthermore, Hayford and Morgan (2008: 129) highlighted the importance of time between the event and the survey showing that “*cohabitation histories underestimate cohabitation rates in distant periods relative to rates estimated closer to the date of survey*”. Moreover, as stated in the study by Teitler et al. (2006), the current relationship status is likely to affect the retrospective reports of past relationships.

#### 2.1.4. Sampling issues

In addition to the previously discussed measurement issues relating to definitions, wording of the questions and to different approaches (indirect, direct and retrospective), some studies refer to sampling issues in cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. Although, the measurement and sampling matters are closely linked, they still contribute differently to validity and reliability of measuring cohabitation. Even if all the respondents, regardless of their socio-demographic background, have the same understanding of the term of cohabitation – they understand the meaning of the question and estimate their own status as living in cohabitation – there may still exist some measurement problems regarding the measurement of the duration of the cohabiting unions. Here the question whether the long-term and short-term cohabiting unions are randomly sampled in the social surveys remains an issue. This methodological issue is briefly discussed in the **Study I**.

In the cross-sectional surveys, the individuals are randomly sampled and thus the selection of the individuals who are in short- or long-term cohabitation is random and should be, thus, representative to the population. However, as pointed out by Baughman and co-authors (2002) the cohabitation measured at a single point in time overstates the real cohabitation status if cohabitation is measured as ‘having cohabited at some point during the past year’. According to the event history analysis, the duration of the currently cohabiting unions may exaggerate the expected duration for those only starting cohabitation. In the case of panel analysis, the censoring (right and left-censoring) should be taken into account – however, in this case the duration of cohabitation may be understated because the duration of cohabitation, which started before the study (left-censoring) and the duration of cohabitation which continues after the study (right-censoring) may remain undocumented.

The final methodological issue focuses on the question, whether the diffusion of cohabitation over time has a direct influence on individuals’ labelling their relationship as cohabitation and therefore magnifies the differences in the prevalence of cohabitation across countries. According to Nazio (2008) the diffusion process strongly affects the likelihood of cohabiting and is mostly driven by the peer-group influence. Therefore, one might assume that the readiness to identify the relationship as cohabitation is related to the diffusion of cohabitation in a society. However, Hayford and Morgan (2008) indicated that the empirical data do not support this idea – according to them, the reporting of past cohabiting unions does not increase while the social acceptability of cohabitation in a society increases.

To conclude, by measuring the cohabitation, several methodological limitations should be considered when comparing and interpreting the different surveys and data on spread, duration of cohabiting unions and differences among cohabiting couples.

## 2.2. Data and methods

In order to tackle the methodological questions previously raised, the methodological base of my dissertation is multifaceted. I apply two different datasets and various quantitative methods for analyzing different aspects of cohabitation.

In the **Study I** the data from second (year 2004), third (2006) and fourth round (2008) of the European Social Survey (ESS) were combined to analyze the prevalence of cohabitation across European countries: (Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, France, Slovakia and Slovenia). The survey involved strict random probability sampling with a minimum target response rate of 70 per cent and the survey method was face-to-face interview (for more detail see Jowell et al. 2009; 2007; 2005). After merging the data files of the three rounds, the total sample included 85,894 individuals. The individual level data were aggregated and several cohabitation indicators for each country were constructed to investigate comparatively the spread of cohabitation across European countries under the study.

The **Study II** is based on a survey “Student Ideal”, which I conducted among students studying in the Universities in Tartu during December 2000 – January 2001. This survey is a modified follow-up of the study introduced by Professor Ene-Margit Tiit in the early 1970s and focuses students’ perceptions of family. In the 2001 survey, the sampling unit was the teaching course students attended, thus the courses across different academic terms from various faculties were selected. The questionnaire was carried out during a lecture and all the students participating in this lecture voluntarily participated in the study. This approach enabled to achieve a high response rate. To have gender balance, specific faculties (mathematics, physics) were chosen to increase the proportion of male students in the sample. The final sample consisted of 336 students between ages 17–37 with the mean age 20.5 years (SD=2.83).

In the **Study III** the questions from the rotating module “Family, work and well-being” of the second round of the ESS (year 2004) were used. A comparative analysis of five European countries: Estonia, Slovenia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden were carried out. For the purpose of this study, the subsamples within countries were formed in the following way: (1) the subpopulation of married and cohabiting individuals was selected, with the total sample size comprising 5,943 individuals; and (2) the regression analyzes included only employed respondents, (the total sample size was 3,445 individuals).

A wide range of quantitative data analysis methods (e.g. linear regression, multinomial logistic regression for analyzing categorical data, factor analysis for describing and explaining family related attitudes) were applied. For assessing the spread of cohabitation across European countries (**Study I**) various indicators were constructed.

- (1) The measures of prevalence of cohabitation included the following items:
  - the percentage of cohabiting couples in different age-groups (18–25 years; 26–35 years; 36–45 years, and 46 years and older);
  - the proportion of cohabiting people between ages 26–35 years who had a child or children 12 years or younger;
  - the percentage of post-marital cohabitations (previously married relative to the total proportion of cohabiting individuals for each country);
  - the proportion of individuals who over their lifetime had, at least once, lived together with a partner outside marriage, excluding those currently cohabiting.
- (2) The measures of duration of cohabitation consisted of two indicators:
  - the duration of currently cohabiting unions (how long the currently cohabiting couples have been living together);
  - the duration of premarital cohabitation as a country average (how long on average the couples had been living together before marriage).

The comparison of countries and the estimation of similarities of the cohabitation across countries were based on the descriptive analyses.

In order to analyze the characteristics of the intention to cohabit, multinomial regression analysis (**Study II**) was used. This approach is widely used in social sciences, as it enables the prediction of relationship between data that are inherently categorical; moreover, the effect of both the categorical and continuous variables on the multi-categorical dependent variable can be measured using this approach. In this study, I predicted the status ‘preferring to cohabit’ and status ‘not to have union preference’ against the status to ‘prefer marriage’. The study also used factor analysis in order to explore family related orientations, scores of which, in turn, were added to the regression analyses as a covariant.

In the **Study III** linear regression analyses were performed to measure the work-life conflict. Separate models for women and men were conducted, whereby the independent variables were gradually added to the models. First, the model of perceived work-life conflict was controlled for socio-demographic background of respondents. As a next step, the characteristics of paid employment were added and, finally, the models were controlled for gender and country.

In all studies the quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS program (Version 15.0).

### 3. FINDINGS

The empirical findings are introduced through three aspects of the cohabitation phenomenon, following the aim and the objectives of the dissertation: (1) the prevalence and diffusion of cohabitation at macro level, (2) its status in family formation process at micro level (the decision-making process) and (3) its influence on family life arrangements.

#### 3.1. The prevalence of cohabitation in contemporary Europe

The main aim of the **Study I** was to compare the cohabitation in Eastern and Western Europe and to find out whether the unmarried cohabitation in Eastern European countries has similar characteristics to cohabitation in Western European countries. This expectation was based on the developmental idealism approach introduced by Thornton (Thornton, 2001; see also Thornton & Philipov, 2009).

The results of this study show that cohabitation is a widespread phenomenon across European countries besides Western Europe it is spread also in the Central and Eastern Europe. While the trend is universal then still some differences between countries can be identified. The study indicates that regarding the characteristics of cohabiting unions, there is a high level of internal diversity across countries. By applying concepts of divergence and convergence (see also Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008; Kuijsten, 1996) it can be concluded that beside convergence, there is a noticeable trend towards divergence of the cohabitation patterns in Europe.

Our findings suggest that while cohabitation is acquiring a normative value in a country it starts to exhibit its internal diversity. The Eastern-European countries varied in the prevalence and duration of cohabitation. The aggregated data demonstrated that the prevalence of cohabitation is well reflected by the proportion of cohabiting individuals, who have ever lived together with a partner without marriage. However, it should be noted that historically the spread of cohabitation has had different starting points across countries. By calculating the prevalence of cohabitation on the basis of the proportion of the individuals who have ever lived together with a partner without marriage, also indirectly the effect of historical diffusion of cohabitation is captured. Thus, the prevalence of cohabitation in different age-groups, particularly among younger cohorts, is stronger evidence for a current prevalence of cohabiting unions across countries, principally, in the countries, where the increase of cohabitation has been very rapid. In addition to Sweden and Denmark, the prevalence of cohabitation is relatively high also in Estonia (60%) among the age group 18–45.

The comparison of proportion of the currently cohabiting individuals in age group 26–35 and the overall proportion of individuals with cohabitation experience in a country showed that in some countries (Estonia, Slovenia, Belgium, Spain and Portugal) the proportion of currently cohabiting individuals is higher. This indicates in these countries cohabitation is gaining importance and the diffusion process continues. Although the time span under the study was relatively short – four years, the comparison of the proportion of cohabiting unions between 2004 and 2008 reveals that the growth of cohabiting unions has been particularly high in Eastern and Southern European countries. This result offers strong support to the idea of convergence, by showing that according to the prevalence of cohabiting unions, Eastern and Southern European countries are following the example of Northern European countries. However, taking additional features of cohabiting unions into consideration, divergence across countries emerged.

In those countries, where cohabitation is less spread, the proportion of people for whom the current cohabitation is the second experience of living as a couple, is higher. Thus, the proportion of post-marital cohabitations exemplifies the duration of the phenomenon of cohabitation in the society. That is, in the Northern European countries, where the tradition to cohabit without marriage is historically longer, the extent of post-marital cohabitation is smaller.

The official statistics across Europe show increase in numbers of childbirths outside marriage (Kiernan, 2001). The **Study I** indicated that one should distinguish between the childbearing and childrearing within cohabiting unions. Although, the official statistics refers to high numbers of children born to cohabiting couples in Northern European countries, and also in Estonia, the childrearing is not as widespread here. This means that after the birth of a child many cohabiting couples marry. Comparing the childrearing among cohabiting and married individuals in age group 26–35, the **Study I** revealed that marriage is still a preferable context for childrearing even in the Nordic countries. Regarding the childrearing, the differences between cohabiting and married couples were the lowest in Estonia and France. Thus, it indicates that in the Northern European countries, the order of the transitions in family formation has changed and the marriage is contracted after having children.

In Eastern European countries, particularly in Estonia, the birth of a child does not affect the cohabiting parents' decision to marry as much as could be expected. Nonetheless, the **Study II** showed that in Estonia the birth of a child is seen as a crucial factor for a changeover from a cohabiting union to a conventional marriage. Comparing the findings of **Study I** and **II** we can observe the confrontation of family-related attitudes and actual behaviour.

Finally, the duration of cohabiting unions is found to be related to the prevalence of cohabitation. The main conclusion is that in the countries where cohabitation was most spread, the average duration of premarital cohabitation was also longer. However, the duration of current cohabitation was not directly linked to the diffusion of cohabitation in the country. It should be noted, that in

Eastern European countries (Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia) the premarital cohabitation was relatively short, but the duration of currently cohabiting unions relatively long. As elaborated in the **Study I**, this pattern can be explained as an outcome of the changes in socio-cultural context of these countries. The couples, who started their unions in the 1970s and 1980s married relatively quickly because of more generous state benefits and special rights for married people in the socialist society. For instance, spouses had more chances for suitable work replacements (e.g., in the same town or a district) or a license to buy a car. The access to housing was also determined by the number of children in a family. On the other hand, those who started their unions in a transition society were more likely cohabiting for a longer period, due to uncertain socio-economic situation and also due to weak financial incentives to marry.

To summarize, according to the prevalence of cohabitation, there is a universal trend to convergence; however, considering the different features of cohabitation, the divergence across countries also emerged.

### **3.2. Cohabitation and the decision-making process over the family formation**

The **Study II** focused on the individuals' decision-making processes that gave rise to macro-level patterns. The study analysed young adults' values and intention to start cohabitation as an individual decision, thus the spread of cohabitation among young adults is measured not through their actual behaviour but on the basis of behavioural intention to cohabit or to marry. The theoretical framework of the study draws on the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1985, 2001; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) as well as the selection and social learning approaches (e.g., Cunningham & Thornton, 2005; Nazio, 2008).

Although the cohabitation as firstly experienced union type is widespread in Estonian society, the **Study I** indicated that the conventional marriage is still highly valued among young adults. Half of the students participating in the study clearly demonstrated their preference for marriage (one third had no preference and 18 per cent preferred cohabitation to marriage). The female students had stronger preference for marriage compared to their male counterparts. Male students were more likely to indicate that they do not have clear preference towards union type.

The main conclusion drawn from this study is that preference for unmarried cohabitation depends on family-based values but is not influenced by current living arrangements or individual cohabitation experience. However, the **Study II** showed, that if controlling for gender, then the intention to marry, was not more dominant among those students, who were at the moment of the survey living together with a partner. It implies to a possible weakness of the social learning approach. It should be taken into account, that the process of family formation is embedded in a socio-cultural context. The effect of previous

experiences in the family sphere may shape future family formation plans depending on the diffusion and prevalence of the cohabitation in the society. As shown in the **Study I** prevalence of cohabitation across European countries varies.

Secondly, it was found that the socio-demographic background (living arrangements, regional origin, duration of studies, economic situation) has no influence on the preference to cohabit or to marry. The preference is more likely to be influenced by family related values. The higher value is attached to the belief that children should be born in a conventional marriage and should share a surname with the parents; the greater is the likelihood to prefer marriage to cohabitation. The preference for cohabitation is also associated with lower level of intimacy and security. In other words, those respondents, who prefer marriage, are more likely to comment on mutual care and assistance, having a faithful and devoted friend, having a normal sex life and avoiding loneliness as the reasons for living together. In addition, these individuals value the secure feeling offered by the marriage contract. This demonstrates that in the Estonian society, the choice to cohabit or to marry can be explained, to a certain degree, by family values and not that much by socio-demographic background. The thesis shows that the selection process occurs before the actual union formation and is based on family-related attitudes.

Finally, proceeding from Ajzen's and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action, the association between union formation intention and perceived opinion of significant others were studied. Although the association was not statistically significant, it demonstrated that the students, who assumed that their parents would expect that they will marry, also declared their intention to marry.

To conclude, in the preference hierarchy of union types the marriage still exceeds cohabitation. The majority of Estonian students prefer marriage or they do not favour one to the other. Thus, the cohabitation is not seen as something desirable by itself, rather the wider acceptance of cohabitation and general value change at the societal level has reduced the support for a conventional marriage.

### **3.3. The influence of cohabitation on family life arrangements**

The **Study III** brought together insights from two fields of research – the field of work-life conflict and that of changing types of union formation. On the basis of previous studies, which have shown that the cohabiting and married couples have different household allocation, it was hypothesized that the work-life conflict could also be perceived differently by married and cohabiting individuals. Because of more equal housework division in cohabiting partners' households (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Baxter, 2005; Davis et al. 2007), it was suggested that for women the conflict between work and family commitments may be lower. Contradictory, the higher participation of cohabiting men in

unpaid work was expected to increase their perceived work-life conflict. The cohabiting and married couples from five European countries: Sweden, Estonia, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Germany were compared. The selection of countries was based on the following criteria: (1) the relatively high rates of female labour force participation and (2) the level of distribution of cohabitation across countries.

The findings of the **Study III** demonstrated that there were no uniform differences in the work-life conflict of married and cohabiting couples. In case of women, the cohabitation type did not explain the differences in work-life conflict. Instead, the work-life conflict of women was predicted by higher level of education, higher contribution to household budget, longer working hours and disagreement about housework division. The duration of union, hours spent on household chores, household size and whether couple had children or not had no association with the perceived work-life conflict.

In the case of men, the higher level of education and greater financial responsibilities increased the level of work-life conflict. The union type played a significant role – the cohabiting men had lower probability of perceiving work-life conflict than married men. However, if controlling for gender ideology and country effects, then the association was not statistically significant. Checking the effect of the characteristics of paid work (work hours, unsocial work hours, job pressure, and disagreement with partner about time spent on paid work) the expected associations revealed. In other words, the longer work hours, frequent working on weekends and nights and job pressure are positively related to work-life conflict.

The main finding of the **Study III** shows that the union type itself is not associated with work-life conflict but mediated by different gender ideologies of cohabiting and married individuals, by the spread of cohabitation and of gender ideology across countries. The gender ideology determines the work-life conflict of men but not of women. Men with egalitarian views on gender roles have lower level of work-life conflict.

In the next step of analyses the association between gender ideology, union type and work-life conflict across countries was measured. Generally, cohabiting individuals compared to married ones showed more egalitarian attitudes in all the countries under the study, statistically significant differences in gender ideology of cohabiting and married women emerged in Germany, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In the case of men, only in Sweden, the cohabiting men had more egalitarian views than married men. When the regression models were performed for each country separately, a higher degree of work-life conflict among Swedish cohabiting women emerged, even if controlling for individual characteristics, household composition, working conditions and gender ideology. In other countries, the cohabiting and married couples' perception of work-life conflict did not differ. This outcome was explained by the different level of institutionalization of cohabitation across countries. Thus, in Sweden the preference of cohabitation as a union type is

more related to values and attitudes and less to external circumstances as this is the case in other countries. This is also supported by the fact, that Swedish cohabiting women compared to married ones, displayed more liberal gender ideology.

To conclude, the cohabiting and married couples' everyday practices across European countries are relatively similar. Nevertheless, if comparing the cohabiting and married unions the institutional context should be taken into account.

## DISCUSSION

Previous sections of this thesis outlined the theoretical framework to explain the spread of cohabitation, and introduced the main results of the studies. The discussion is organized around three more general themes contextual pattern of cohabitation; diffusion of cohabitation as a “catching up” process and, finally, a theoretical elaboration of the rapid diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia.

### **Studies on cohabitation in Estonia uncovered its controversial contextual pattern**

The empirical studies underlying this dissertation showed that in Estonia cohabitation is widespread (**Study I**) and the differences between married and cohabiting couples are disappearing (**Study III**). However, the results presented in the earlier sections of the thesis demonstrated that conventional marriage is still preferred (**Study II**). As shown by the **Study I**, compared to other countries, the diffusion of unmarried cohabitation in Estonian society has been very rapid and, unlike to the other Eastern European countries, has moved towards the Nordic pattern of cohabitation. The high number of cohabiting couples with children in Estonia differs from the pattern in the other Eastern European countries, where, as stated by Perelli-Harris et al. (2009), the cohabiting couples more often legalize their union before the birth of a child. It is argued in this thesis that the roots of this divergence are hidden in historical and cultural context of the Estonian society.

The overall spread of cohabitation in Western societies during last four decades was first of all initiated by external cultural and economic changes (Smock & Gupta, 2002): secularization, sexual revolution, the ideology of gender equality on the one hand and increased women’s economic independence related to their increasing participation in the labor force, on the other. In the case of Eastern-European countries different historical contexts and the societal transformation processes should be taken into consideration. Therefore, it is argued in the thesis that the external factors discussed earlier had different influence on the emergence and spread of unmarried cohabitation in the Estonian society.

The cultural context of Estonia is to some extent similar to Swedish context – both countries are predominantly Lutheran. Discussing the situation in Sweden, Trost (1978) noted that, Christianity as a guiding force of behavior and values had relatively weak impact on family formation. As concluded by Therborn (2004: 151) the Christian betrothal rule<sup>8</sup> contributed to almost legitimate coupling before the wedding night. It could be argued that this was

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<sup>8</sup> Historically betrothal was a formal contract, blessed or officiated by a religious authority and betrothed couples were regarded legally as husband and wife.

also the case in the Estonian society. For instance, in Estonian Family Law Act, introduced in 1940 (Tsiviilseadustik, 1992), the engagement was seen as premarital stage with legal consequences. Furthermore, over the decades the Estonian society has been characterized by high levels of women's educational attainment and employment (Tiit, 2003).

In addition, the historical context as the "being part of the Soviet Union" and the subsequent transition period after the collapse of the Soviet Union are specific historical processes, and the structural changes of this period have had strong influence on individual actions related to family life.

The differences in an institutional context can lead to very different outcomes, as demonstrated by Blossfeld (1996: 186): in Federal Republic of Germany and in German Democratic Republic different structural constraints affected the unmarried individuals' choices to marry if a child was expected to be born. From the functionalist perspective, depending on the societal context, the ways to fulfill the family functions vary, which in turn initiate different circumstances and opportunities for individual actions.

Regarding the Soviet society, Gerber and Berman (2010: 28) summarize the context in the following way: high secularization, relative economic security provided by the paternalistic state, state subsidized child care and maternity leave, laid the groundwork for a swift to adopt individualistic values and norms. However, these norms were kept in check by the official collective ideology, strong censorship of alternatives, and inadequate access to contraception. The unmarried cohabitation was still overwhelmingly practiced during a short period before marriage (see also Katus, 2007; Tiit, 2003). Marriage followed as it was heavily supported by the state and made financially beneficial by the institutional context.

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened the way for the ideational changes by initiating the society to move towards western values: rising individualism, self-actualization, autonomy, self-reliance, etc (Lauristin, 1997: 26; Sztompka, 2003: 139). Drawing on Sztompka's (1996: 116–119) idea of the domains of post-socialist transition, it is argued in the thesis, that the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the institutional domain which provided a new framework for family formation, the earlier rewards and penalties for preferring marriage lost their importance. This, in turn, presupposed changes in rules and values in the family sphere.

On the other hand, the Estonian society had to face new social risks: poverty, unemployment etc (Kutsar & Trumm, 1993). The implementation of the principles of market economy lead to a new system of social security whereby personal responsibility, individual efforts and self-help played highly influential roles in creating the welfare resources needed for better coping with everyday life (Kutsar, 1997). In this changing social context reconfiguration of public and private responsibilities occurred and, according to Ferge (2001), the responsibilities of the family increased which in turn influenced family formation behavior, such as decreased fertility rate (see Aassve et al., 2006).

According to Lauristin (1997: 25), the contradictions embedded in the process of societal change can be described as a permanent tension between structures and agencies.

In the case of Estonia, the studies have shown that at the beginning of the 1990s cohabitation was preferred by individuals with lower socio-economic status (Kasearu, 2004, 2005). This suggests that those with lower level of resources at their disposal in an unstable economic situation were more prone to cohabit – the patterns of disadvantage lead to a divergence in family formation strategies. Hence, as stated by Nazio (2008: 168) at the beginning of the diffusion process the initial conditions define and delimit individuals' agency and the cohabitation is more confined to specific subgroups. This explanation supports the self-selection-based division between cohabitation and marriage. However, along with the diffusion process the agency gains importance over the structural factors.

### **Diffusion of cohabitation is a “catching-up” process**

Regarding the spread of cohabitation, it should be considered that the diffusion process in a transition society has a specific character which is different to that of societies with stable developments. It is argued in this thesis, that beside the universal diffusion process of cohabitation introduced by Nazio (2008), the diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia should also be explained by using the concept of developmental idealism. The unmarried cohabitation as an example of a modern family pattern of Western Europe is seen fitting better to a changing and modern society (Thornton & Philipov, 2009). Thus, regarding the Eastern European countries, one factor of rapid diffusion of unmarried cohabitation is the spread of the “*western wisdom*”. This notion represents the idea that cohabitation is a modern union type, which is perceived to be characterized by higher equality between partners (Nock, 1995). Compared to marriage it is less regulated by rules and norms and more likely to be based on consent between individuals (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1994, 2002). Cohabitation could also be seen as a “*pure relationship*” (Giddens, 1991) representing the aspects of modernity in the sphere of intimate relations. Without any legal basis it is grounded on mutual commitment. In this respect, cohabitation is seen as an innovative behavioural option for starting a union and the bigger numbers of cohabiting couples within a national context have increased the social acceptance of cohabitation. In the case of Estonia, only 12 percent of individuals according to IPROSEC study<sup>9</sup> agreed with the statement that the government should encourage people to marry before the birth of a

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<sup>9</sup> Project of EU 5<sup>th</sup> Frame program IPROSEC (Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: Changing Family Structures, Policy and Practice)

child (Pall, 2003). To conclude, the diffusion is seen as a micro level phenomenon, whereby the individual decision-making and behaviour occurs within the social system and has consequences on other individuals' decisions and behaviour.

A belief that the developmental idealism plays an important role in the diffusion process suggests that the diffusion can be seen also as a phenomenon occurring between countries. As demonstrated in comparative studies introduced in the section 1.1 and in the **Study I** European countries have reached to different stages of the diffusion. The developmental stage of cohabitation in a country also depends on the starting point of diffusion at micro level as well as on the speed of diffusion. As stated above, in Eastern European countries the diffusion of cohabitation exploded as a result of societal changes and was impacted by the general wish to catch up with the standards and patterns of Western Europe. Thus, through the mechanism of developmental idealism we can theoretically track the diffusion of cohabitation as a process taking place across Europe and that spreads from country to country. Hence, the diffusion of cohabitation across countries can also be described as a "*contagious process*".

Inferring from the results of the **Study I** it is argued that cohabitation is a phenomenon increasingly spreading in the Eastern European countries. However, some countries are more immune to this process than the others and diversity among the countries is even greater in the Eastern part of Europe compared to Western Europe (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). Even though the increasing numbers of cohabiting unions in the post-socialist countries point towards the process of convergence, it does not make the concept of 'path-dependency' (Reher, 1998), whereby the societies have their own individual historical trajectories which contribute to the specific contours of the present and future family patterns including the unmarried cohabitation, invalid. Consequently, some countries depending on their historical trajectories are more immune to cohabitation than others. For instance, Therborn (2004: 163) states that the marriage rate and age at marriage in Western Europe is more flexible in adapting to the changing conditions in the society: there are fewer and later marriages after experiences of economic decline and pressure, more and earlier ones after the better times. Mostly the fewer and later marriages have been replaced by unmarried cohabitations.

On one hand, the socio-cultural context in Estonia as described in the earlier sections of the thesis and, on the other hand, the geographical closeness and similar cultural background of Estonia with Finland and lesser extent with Sweden could be seen as one of the factors speeding up the diffusion process of cohabitation here. Taking account the family patterns, Estonia has traditionally been more similar to the Nordic countries and the so-called Western European marriage pattern than to the Eastern European pattern (Therborn, 2004).

Furthermore, on the basis of the empirical analyses presented earlier in the thesis it is argued that regarding the spread of cohabitation, the Estonian society

has gone through the phase of a ‘bandwagon effect’<sup>10</sup> (see Granovetter, 1978; Trost, 1978). This threshold was reached relatively quickly because of the rapidly changed external factors. Drawing on Gerber and Berman (2010), the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent removal of social constraints made it possible to behave according to individualistic values. The changed cultural and new institutional setting has provided fertile soil for the diffusion of cohabitation and enabled the cohabitation to move faster through its universal developmental stages. Moreover, high levels of marriage dissolutions in the Soviet society uncover a critical connotation by reducing the relative symbolic value of marriage. Reaching the threshold or, in other words, when cohabitation is adopted as a normative behavioural value it begins to develop towards higher divergence and that makes more difficult tracking the concrete stages in its development. Higher internal divergence is, in turn, a sign of wider and increasing acceptance of cohabitation in a society and the preference to cohabit even for those individuals, who have higher individual threshold. As stated by Nazio (2008: 168) in this later stage of the diffusion process, the adoption of cohabitation is influenced by an acquired abstract knowledge. For example, almost two thirds of individuals agreed with the statement that cohabitation as one form of living together is well accepted – demonstrating that cohabitation is widely recognized in Estonian society (Järviste, Kasearu & Reinomägi, 2008).

### **Rapid diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia: further elaborations**

The spread of cohabitation-based family formation in Estonia can be understood as an interplay of structural changes and individual reaction by taking into account that the individual action is shaped by the behaviour of others acting in the same social space. Thus, the basis of this scheme is the methodological individualism and Coleman’s (1986) approach to macro-micro-macro link, which state that in order to understand the macro level changes or, in other words, while conceptualizing collective social action, one should concentrate on micro level processes and establish the so-called ‘macro-micro-macro model’. Furthermore, in the framework of analytical sociology Hedström and Swedberg (2007: 21–23) differentiate between three types of social mechanisms which are described below.

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<sup>10</sup> The bandwagon effect is a term describing the collective behavior and representing the idea, that beliefs and behavior spread among people and the individual adoption of these beliefs or behaviors depends on the proportion who have already done so. The threshold is the number or proportion of others who must make one decision before a given actor does so (Granovetter, 1978).

*Situational mechanism* uncovers the macro-to-micro link and should give an explanation how and which macro-level situations, events or conditions provide the context for individual behavior and affect the individual choice, for instance, to cohabit. In the functionalist framework, the external factors or, in Blossfeld's (1996) notion, structural strains create a context for an individual action. As stated above, the peculiarity of the Estonian society with its cultural and historical context created the basis for the diffusion process. The roots of the family changes are embedded in the socio-historical context of Estonian society, where the incorporation into the Soviet Union played an important role. Furthermore, I suggest that in order to understand the spread of unmarried cohabitation in Estonia, the transformation of society with its economic, political, cultural changes has to be considered as an additional situational mechanism. The collapse of the state socialism created a new social and political context for the individual action. Also, the ideas of developmental idealism further initiated the family change. Thus, the decision making process is framed by new social norms – the new cultural setting, which forms the context for action-formation mechanisms<sup>11</sup>.

Hence, at micro level the spread of unmarried cohabitation could be seen as a rational choice in an uncertain social context. Considering the economic theory of the family and the exchange theory, in the changing social context, where the shift in norms and values is taking place, the replacement of marriage with unmarried cohabitation could be seen as a rational act, because the cohabitation can serve similar benefits to marriage. At the same time, compared to marriage, it also minimizes the perceived costs at the individual level. Therefore, first the increase of cohabitation in Estonian society could be seen as a process of self-selection, whereby for some social groups the choice to cohabit was more rational than for the others. The individual preferences and family values have also been influenced by the process of developmental idealism, which initiated further diffusion of cohabitation in the society and could be seen as a transformational mechanism<sup>12</sup>. After reaching the threshold, preference of cohabitation as an outcome of the coping strategy and adoption of a new social situation has lost its importance. In a long run, social approval may overcome individually perceived advantages in adopting cohabitation. As concluded by Nazio (2008) if the institutional setting is favourable to cohabitation as a substitute for marriage the cohabitation may even become the norm and it could also appeal those who normally would not have had a strong preference for

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<sup>11</sup> *Action-formation mechanism* is located on the micro level and this type of mechanism concentrates on the issue how a specific combination of individual desires, beliefs, and opportunities to act generate a specific action (Hedström and Swedberg 2007).

<sup>12</sup> *Transformational mechanism* deals with the micro-to-macro transition and the question how individual actions are transformed into some kind of collective intended or unintended outcome.

cohabitation. Individuals do not choose cohabitation according to some concrete criteria, and the heterogeneity of the cohabiting partners increases.

It is also argued in the thesis that the individual values and perceptions of the ideal family form may gain further importance. The **Study II** showed that the intention to marry still exists and the important factors forming this intention are the social tenet that children should be born and raised within a marriage based union and that marriage provides higher level of security and stability compared to cohabitation. This supports the argument put forward by Moors and Bernhardt (2009), who stated that one should not underestimate the impact of 'familistic' values on transition to marriage. Although, the previous studies, mostly carried out in the United States, have shown that the experience of cohabitation itself may influence further plans for family formation (e.g., Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Carlson et al., 2004; Manning & Smock, 2002) and that the individual transitions of union formation initiate the changes in attitudes towards cohabitation and marriage (Cunningham & Thornton, 2005), this was not found to be the case among the Estonian students (**Study II**). This could be explained by the twofold value of marriage (Kasearu, 2009): the overall symbolic value is high but over the last decades the practical value of marriage for individuals has weakened. Therefore, the marriage is preferred over cohabitation, but the association between the intention to marry and the actual behaviour is weak and only slightly supported by external factors, partly because of the high social approval of cohabitation in the Estonian society. As shown in the **Study I**, among the younger age-groups in Estonia, almost two thirds have lived or are currently living in a cohabiting union.

Furthermore, the high numbers of extramarital births and the proportion of cohabiting couples with children – for instance, in the age group 26–35 almost 70 percent of cohabiting couples have children (Kasearu, 2008; also **Study I**) – suggest that in Estonia, cohabitation has taken over the function of childbearing and -rearing, which have traditionally been basically related to marriage. The childrearing propensity in cohabiting unions is even more similar to marriage-based families in Estonia than in other European countries. At the same time, the cohabiting individuals in Estonia do not differ according to their perceptions of gender equality and work-life conflict from married couples (**Study III**). This suggests that starting cohabitation and staying there is not strongly guided by individual norms and values. The link between values, attitudes and behaviour at individual level is relatively weak, demonstrating the importance of the social context of the decision-making process. This, in turn, will further decrease the differences between characteristics of the married and cohabiting couples and their everyday life arrangements. It could be claimed that this is the side effect of the relatively fast process in turning cohabitation into an accepted alternative to marriage. However, whether the diffusion of unmarried cohabitation in Estonian society will continue or it has reached its peak remains uncertain.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the dissertation was to examine the phenomenon of cohabitation in Estonia. A number of theoretical aspects and perspectives have been found to be useful in understanding the spread of cohabitation in the Estonian society. The dissertation is based on three empirical studies utilising different datasets. These studies have discussed various aspects of unmarried cohabitation.

The general conclusions of the dissertation are provided below.

The cohabitation as a new social phenomenon in Estonian society is to be understood as an outcome of the interplay between structural change at societal level and individual action at the micro level. Regarding the diffusion of cohabitation, it is important to highlight its embeddedness in the social context which in turn is shaped by historical and structural changes taking place in the wider society. Thus, the diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia can be considered as progressive development out of its own cultural, historical and institutional roots.

As shown in the **Study I** the unmarried cohabitation has spread across European countries as a universal trend. However, across countries, broad differences in spread, prevalence and duration of cohabiting unions exist. Estonia has diverted from the Eastern European cluster of countries and has moved towards a Western European family formation pattern. Due to a rapid diffusion process, cohabitation in Estonia has come to resemble Scandinavian countries. In Estonia, the cohabiting couples have children more often and the duration of cohabitation is longer. It is advocated in this thesis that the change in structural context initiates the circumstances where an individual action gains more importance. The individual decision-making whether to cohabit or not, can be considered as a rational coping strategy and a response to the lack of resources to contract marriage. However, the decision is also driven by changed social norms. The diffusion and developmental idealism have been important factors in contributing to the spread of cohabitation in Estonia.

Diffusion of cohabitation in Estonia has reached the threshold, and the cohabitation is less confined to specific subgroups. In other words, a so-called ‘bandwagon effect’ has occurred and the decision to cohabit or to get married is not determined so strongly by the individual characteristics, rather the overall social approval induces the process where cohabitation is becoming a norm and it will even appeal those who do not prefer cohabitation over marriage.

The **Study II** showed that an individual decision to prefer cohabitation to marriage is related to the attitudinal factors representing the ‘familistic’ values. The impact of socio-demographic background factors and current living arrangements is not significant – the individuals are not selected into cohabitation by their achieved status or experiences, rather, the preference for marriage is shaped by individual values and attitudes. The link between values

and intentions remains, but with regard to acting upon the preference, the association is weakening. This suggests that the intention to cohabit and actual behaviour is to a large extent shaped by the social context and the change of social norms and behavioural scripts framing the family and the union formation.

The expectation that cohabiting couples have more equal gender ideology compared to married individuals did not find support in Estonia (**Study III**). This suggests that the selection between cohabitation and marriage is weakly related to the differences in individual value settings and the explanation of different “gender ideology” does not apply to cohabitation in the Estonian society to the extent it does in other countries, where the development of cohabitation has started earlier. Relatively rapid diffusion of cohabitation in the Estonian society and its high social approval has obstructed to evolve the clear cut value based divide between cohabitation and marriage as it is the case in Sweden. This is supported also by **Study I**, the difference between married and cohabiting couples’ propensity to have children was smaller in Estonia compared to Sweden.

In Estonia, the cohabitation as predominantly short-term premarital form of living together has transformed into long-term and more stable union, and is considered as a viable alternative to conventional marriage. The findings from the studies (**I, II, III**) show a challenge to revise the analytical focus from the reasons why one prefers to cohabit to the mechanism why one initiates marriage. In the process of the diffusion of cohabitation the threshold has been reached, this explains why the differences between married and cohabiting couples have diminished.

In conclusion, the wide spread of cohabitation in Estonia (**Study I**) is the outcome of the interplay between social changes and individual agency. The cohabitation is described by internal heterogeneity; it is not anymore only a premarital stage. The cohabitation is induced by different reasons by individuals with various backgrounds, this in turn will diminish the differences between married and cohabiting couples, and the frames between marriage and cohabitation get more blur. In this respect, in individual hierarchy of preferences the marriage may still be more appreciated compared to cohabitation (**Study II**) and the marriage has been estimated to have higher symbolic value (Kasearu, 2009), but in everyday actions the cohabitation tends to be quite equal notion with marriage (**Study III**).

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## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### STRUKTURAALSED MUUTUSED VÕI INDIVIDUAALSED EELISTUSED? VABA KOOSELU EESTIS

Alates 1970ndatest lääneühiskondades levima hakanud kooselude mitte-registreerimine (vaba kooselu) on viinud perekonnavormide mitmekesisumisele ja perekonnainstitutsiooni tähenduse muutumisele. Endistes sotsialistlikes riikides hakkas perekonnainstitutsioon kiirelt teisenema paralleelselt poliitilise režiimi kokkukukkumisega ja sellele järgnenud üleminekuperioodil 1980ndate aastate lõpul ja 1990ndate algul. Eestis ilmnes väljaspool abielu sündivate laste osakaalu tõus sündide hulgas enamvähem samal ajal, mõjutatuna abielude sõlmimise harvenemisest ja vabas kooselus elavate paaride arvu suurenemisest (vt nt Tiit 2008). Viimastel aastatel on pooltel Eestis sündivatest lastest vanemad abielus ning pooltel vabas kooselus. Euroopa kontekstis on see suhteliselt ainulaadne. Käesolev doktoriuurimus keskendub vaba kooselu laienemise protsessi analüüsile Eesti ühiskonnas, uurides selle arenguhooni ja mustreid teiste Euroopa riikide taustal, käsitledes vaba kooselu eelistamist kujundavaid tegureid individuaalses valikuprotsessis ning vaba kooselu olemust abieluga võrreldes. **Doktoriuurimuse eesmärgiks on vaba kooselu kui sotsiaalse fenomeni kiire leviku seaduspärasuste seletamine Eesti ühiskonnas teiste Euroopa riikide taustal.** Vaba kooselu käsitletakse käesolevas töös kahe vastassoost inimese ametlikult registreerimata abielusarnase suhtena, mida ka partnerid ise tunnistavad vabaks kooseluks.

Väitekirja koosneb kolmest empiirilise uurimusest (esitatud artiklitena, mis on avaldatud rahvusvahelise levikuga eelretsenseeritavates ajakirjades) ja ülevaateartiklist (sh laiem teoreetiline raamistik; uurimuste tutvustus; tulemuste ülene arutelu). Väitekirja empiiriliseks aluseks on Euroopa Sotsiaaluuringu 2004., 2006. ja 2008. aasta rahvusvahelised andmed ja Tartu üliõpilaste seas läbiviidud uurimuse „Sinu Ideaal?” andmestik. Uurimuses rakendatakse läbivalt kvantitatiivset lähenemisviisi ning rahvusvaheliselt tunnustatud andmeanalüüsi meetodeid (logistiline regressioon-, faktoranalüüs).

Väitekirjaga otsitakse vastust järgmistele uurimisküsimustele:

- 1) Milline on vaba kooselude levik Euroopa riikides ja kas siin on tegemist vaba kooselu muustrite sarnastumise (i.k. *convergence*) või eristumisega (i.k. *divergence*) Euroopas? Mil määral saab vaba kooselu levikus täheldada Ida-Euroopa riikide ühte gruppi koondumist sarnaste arenguhoonte alusel? Milline on Eesti eripära?
- 2) Kuidas toimub vaba kooselu kui ühiskonna makrotasandi nähtuse levik? Millised ühiskonna mikrotasandi tegurid avaldavad mõju individuaalsele vaba kooselu eelistamisele abielu asemel ja kuivõrd kavatsus elada vabas kooselus on seletatav indiviidi sotsiaal-demograafiliste ning isiksuslike karakteristikutega (nt sugu, partneri olemasolu, hoiakud jne)?

- 3) Milline on vabas kooselus elavate inimeste igapäevane pereelu korraldus abielus olevate inimestega võrreldes? Kas ja mil määral tajuvad vabas kooselus ja abielus olevad inimesed erinevalt töö- ja pereeluga kaasnevat konflikti?
- 4) Kuidas seletada vaba kooselu kiiret levikut Eesti ühiskonnas peale taasiseseisvumist erinevatest teoreetilistest seisukohtadest lähtuvalt?

Väitekirja teoreetiline raamistik analüüsib vaba kooselu fenomeni seletamisel rakendatavaid mikro- ja makrotasandi teooriaid. Esiteks, tutvustades struktuur-funktsionalismi (Parsons & Bales, 1955; Wagner, 2001) ja sealt väljakasvanud üleminekuteooriate ning konvergentsuse (nt van de Kaa, 1987) seisukohti, luuakse ülevaateartiklis raam vaba kooselu leviku struktuuriliste tingimuste analüüsiks. Teisalt käsitletakse vaba kooselu kui individuaalset ratsionaalset valikut mikrotasandil, kohandades sotsiaalse vahetuse teooria (Nye, 1979), perekonna majandusteooria (Becker, 1974) ning põhistatud tegevusteooria (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) seisukohti vaba kooselu uurimise analüütilise raami loomiseks. Perekonnainstitutsiooni muutust kui interaktsiooni 'struktuuri' ja 'subjektsuse' (i.k. *agency*) vahel lahatakse lähtudes Giddensi (1991) ja Becki (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) ideedest. Oluline koht on väitekirjas difusiooni teorial (Nazio 2008, Palloni, 2001) kombineerituna arengulise idealismi (i.k. *developmental idealism*, Thornton 2001) lähenemisega. Antud teooriad seletavad individuaalse vaba kooselu eelistuse otsuse kujunemist lähtuvalt teiste indiviidide käitumisest ümbritsevas sotsiaalses kontekstis ning seovad seega individuaalse käitumise perekonnainstitutsiooni laiema muutusega makrotasandil.

Väitekirja ülevaateartikli metodoloogilises osas pööratakse tähelepanu vaba kooselu uurimisega kaasnevatele kitsaskohtadele. Esiteks on raske mõõta vabas kooselus elavate inimeste osakaalu ühiskonnas, kuna sellekohane ametlik statistika puudub. Vaba kooselu arvu hindamise aluseks on niinimetatud kaudne ametlik statistika, mille kohaselt saab vaba kooselu levikut määratleda väljaspool abielu sündivate laste osakaalu järgi kõikidest sündidest.

Sotsiaaluuringutes kaasnevad vaba kooselu uurimisega kaks peamist probleemi: (1) kontseptualiseerimine ehk küsimus vaba kooselu kui kontseptsiooni tähendusest ja selle olemuse määratlemisest ja (2) operatsionaliseerimine ehk küsimus sellest, kuidas vaba kooselu mõõta. Vaba kooselu mõõtmisel eristatakse kolme lähenemist: otsene, kaudne ja retrospektiivne. Otsese mõõtmise puhul on peamine probleem seotud vaba kooselu määratlemisega. Parima lahendusena saab pakkuda välja ametliku ja tegeliku perekonnaseisu eristamist indiviidi enesekohase määratluse alusel, antud lähenemist kasutab Eesti Euroopa Sotsiaaluuringus (Perekonnaseisu mõõtmise B versioon). Kaudse mõõtmise puhul on vabas kooselus elavate indiviidide väljaselgitamise aluseks leibkonnamaatriks, kuid selle meetodiga kaasneb leibkonna definitsioonist tulenevalt oht vaba kooselu esinemissageduse ala- või siis vastupidi, ülehindamiseks (Casper & Cohan 2000). Retrospektiivse lähenemise puhul tuleneb

peamine eksimisvõimalus vaba kooselu alguspunkti määratlemise ebaselgusest (Knab & McLanahan 2007), inimeste mälu valikulisusest ning ebatäpsusest, nt õnnetult lõppenud või lühiajalised kooselud vaikitakse maha (Teitler jt. 2006).

Väitekirja aluseks olevat kolme artiklit käsitletakse kolme eri uurimusena, mis üheskoos moodustavad sisulise terviku ja on sihitud väitekirja eesmärgi saavutamisele.

**I uurimuses** analüüsitakse vaba kooselu levikut Eestis teiste Euroopa riikidega võrreldes, käsitletakse vaba kooselu tunnusjooni erinevates riikides ning hinnatakse vaba kooselu leviku protsessi kui liikumist riikidevahelise sarnastumise või pigem eristumise suunas. Antud uurimuse uudseks aspektiks varasemate uurimustega võrreldes on Ida-Euroopa riikide kaasamine analüüsi ning mitmekülgete agregeeritud vaba kooselu levikut kirjeldavate tunnuste (nt alaealiste lastega vaba kooselu paaride osakaal; vaba kooselu kestus, abieluelse vaba kooselu kestus jne) kasutamine vaba kooselu mustrite välja selgitamisel. Uurimus kinnitab ühelt poolt varasemates uuringutes ilmnenu vaba kooselu astmelist levikut, mille kohaselt on vaba kooselu enam levinud Skandinaavia- maades, kus vabas kooselus elavate inimeste osakaal on suhteliselt kõrge ning vaba kooselu on pigem alternatiiv abielule. Teistes Euroopa riikides on vabas kooselus elavate inimeste osakaal ühiskonnas madalam, kooselud on lühemaajalised ning enamikel juhtudel on tegemist pigem abielu eelperioodi kui alternatiiviga abielul põhinevale kooselule.

Uudse tulemusena selgub, et Ida-Euroopa riikidest eristub selgelt Eesti, mis on vaba kooselu iseloomustavate tunnuste poolest nendega võrreldes sarnasem Skandinaaviamaadele. Võrreldes Euroopa riikidega on Eestis vabal kooselul põhinevates perekondades sagedamini kasvamas alaealised lapsed ning kooselud on oma kestuselt pikemad. Kokkuvõtlikult kinnitas antud uurimus, et vaba kooselu on Euroopa riikides universaalne nähtus, kuid riikidevahelised erinevused vaba kooselu karakteristikutes toetavad pigem sarnastumise kui eristumise printsiipi.

**II uurimuses** võetakse lähtudes vaba kooselu sedavõrd suurest levikust Eestis vaatluse alla kõrgharidust omandavate noorte pereloomelised eelistused ja kavatsused, keskendudes küsimusele, millised tegurid avaldavad mõju pereloomelise kavatsuse kujunemisele ja kuivõrd pereloomelistes eelistustes esineb vaba kooselu eelistamist abielule. Kõrgharidust omandavad noored on aktiivses partnerlussuhete tekke ja pereloomelise eelistamise suhtes, seega esindavad gruppi, kelle jaoks on kooseluvormi valik aktuaalne teema. Antud uurimusega testitakse, kuivõrd ühe või teise kooseluvormi eelistus põhineb nn iseeneslikul loomulikult valikul (i.k. *self-selection*) (Smock & Gupta, 2002) või sotsiaalse õppimise (nt Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002) mehhanismil. Iseenesliku valiku lähenemine eeldab, et vaba kooselu eelistamine põhineb individuaalsetel teguritel, nt teatud sotsiaalsesse gruppi kuuluvad või teatud väärtusi esindavad inimesed kalduvad suurema tõenäosusega eelistama vaba kooselu abielule. Sotsiaalse õppimise lähenemine

aga väidab, et individuaalne eelistus kujuneb välja isikliku kogemuse põhjal. Antud uurimusest ilmneb, et abielu eelistamine vabale kooselule tuleneb pereväärtusi kandvatest hoiakutest (nt veendumus, et lapsed peaksid sündima registreeritud abielus olevatele vanematele; abielu tagab suurema kindlustunde jne) ning ei ole mõjutatud sotsiaaldemograafilistest taustateguritest või partneriga kooselamise kogemusest. Samas eelistavad vaba kooselu need noored, kelle pereväärtusi kandavad hoiakud on vähem avaldunud või puuduvad. Kokkuvõttes toob **II uurimus** esile seisukoha, et selektsioon põhineb pigem hoiakutel ja väärtustel kui teatud gruppi kuulumisel või isiklikul kogemusel.

**III uurimuses** keskendutakse abielu ja vaba kooselu funktsionaalse sarnasuse uurimisele ning analüüsitakse, kuidas vabas kooselus ja abielus olevad inimesed, täites pereelus ettetulevaid rolle, tajuvad töö- ja pereelu konflikti. Uuritakse, mil määral kehtib eeldus, et vabas kooselus inimesed on oma soostereotüüpsete hoiakute (nn soo-ideoloogiate) mõttes liberaalsemad ja võrdsust toetavamad kui abielus inimesed. Oletatakse, et vaba kooseluga koos levivad uued töö- ja pereelu ühitamise konflikti tajumise ja lahendamise praktikad. Selgub, et traditsioonilisi soorolle toetavad naised tajuvad töö- ja pereelu ühitamisega kaasnevat topeltkoormat vähem ebaõiglase ja problemaatilise kui naised, kes kannavad võrdsemat „soo-ideoloogiat“. Siiski ei ole antud seos taandatav vaid kooselutüübile, nagu ilmneb Eesti, Saksamaa, Sloveenia ja Ühendkuningriikide andmetest – abielus ja vabas kooselus inimeste soo-ideoloogia on sarnane. Vastandina eristub Rootsi, kus võrreldes abielus naistega väljendavad vabas kooselus naised võrdsemaid hoiakuid ja sellega seoses tajuvad sagedamini vastuolusid töö- ja pereelu ühitamisel. Postsotsialistlikes ühiskondades on meeste suurem toetus võrdsemale „soo-ideoloogiale“ seotud madalama konfliktitasemega töö ja pereelu ühitamisel, kuid sooliselt võrdsema (egalitaarsema) vaate esindamine ei ole kooseluvormiga seotud. Siinkohal tuleb võtta arvesse, et vaba kooselu tähendus ja olemus on riigiti erinev (**I uurimus**), mis omakorda mõjutab abielu ja vaba kooselu iseärasusi (nt laste olemasolu, kooselu kestus).

Viimaks, põhinedes ülevaateartiklis esitatud makro- ja mikrotasandi teooriate sünteesile ning töö aluseks olevale kolmele uurimusele, jõutakse seisukohani, et vaba kooselu kui viimastel kümnenditel kiiresti levinud sotsiaalset nähtust Eesti ühiskonnas saab käsitleda kui ühiskonna tasandi struktuurse muutuse ja indiviidi tasandi individuaalse tegevuse omavahelise interaktsiooni tulemit. Vaba kooselu kiirel muutumisel abielule eelnevast lühiajalisest perioodist abielu alternatiiviks on oluline antud protsessi kinnistatus ühiskonna sotsiaalsesse konteksti, mis omakorda on kujundatud ajalooliste ja struktuuriliste muutuste pikaajalise ja püsiva mõju poolt.

Rakendades Hedströmi ja Swedbergi (2007: 21–23) analüütilist lähenemist, selgitatakse vaba kooselu levikut erinevate sotsiaalsete mehhanismide (*situatsiooniline, tegevuse formeerumise ning transformatsiooni mehhanism*) kirjel-

damise kaudu. Vaba kooselu leviku situatsioonilise mehhanismi moodustavad Nõukogude Liidu kokkuvarisemise ning Eesti Vabariigi taasiseseisvumisega kaasnevad muutused ühiskonna sotsiaalses ja institutsionaalses (sotsialistlikus ühiskonnas abiellumisega kaasnevate eeliste – töökohtadele suunamine, elamispinna eraldamine jne, kadumine) kontekstis. Sotsiaalse konteksti muutumisega kaasnesid ühelt poolt uued sotsiaalsed riskid (nt töötus, vaesus) ja teiselt poolt sotsiaalsete normide teisenemine ning läänelike väärtuste omaksvõtt. Muutuv sotsiaalne kontekst lõi vajaduse ja tingimused sellega kohanemiseks, andes individuaalsetele valikutele varasemast suurema jõu.

Seega võis vaba kooselu eelistamine perekonnasfääris tähendada nii ratsionaalset materiaalsete ressursside piiratud kasutamise strateegiat (1990. aastate alguses iseloomustas vaba kooselu paare võrreldes abielupaaridega madalam sotsiaalmajanduslik staatus; Kasearu 2004, 2005) kui ka sotsiaalsete normide muutumist individuaalse käitumise kujundamisel. Mõlemad on käsitletavad tegevuse kujundamise mehhanismidena.

Edasist vaba kooselu laienemist erinevatesse sotsiaalsetesse gruppidesse saab iseloomustada difusiooniprotsessi kaudu (*transformatsiooni mehhanism*). Indiviidi valmidus aktsepteerida vaba kooselu ja eelistada kooselu abielule on mõjutatud nii teiste indiviidide suhtumisest antud koosellu kui ka sellest, kui paljud on eelnevalt antud kooseluvormi kasuks otsustanud. Lähtudes Thorntoni (2001) arengulise idealismi kontseptsioonist, kujundas endistes sotsialistlikes riikides indiviidide pereloomelist käitumist paljuski arusaam, mille kohaselt vaba kooselu võimaldab paremini perekonnasfääris rakendada läänelikke väärtusi, nagu näiteks võrdsust, õiglust, vabadust, eneseteostust jne. Sellise arusaama omaksvõtt kiirendab vaba kooselu laienemist erinevatesse sotsiaalsetesse gruppidesse, mille tulemusena muutub vaba kooselu kui sotsiaalne nähtus ise sisemiselt üha heterogeensemaks.

Kokkuvõttes leitakse käesolevas väitekirjas, et vaba kooselu ulatuslik levik Eestis (**I uurimus**) on sotsiaalsete arengute ja individuaalsete mõtestatud valikute omavahelise mõjustatuse seaduspärane tulem. Vaba kooselu kasuks otsustavad erineva taustaga indiviidid väga erinevatel põhjustel, mille tulemusena erinevused abielu ja vaba kooselu vahel kahanevad ning nende vahelised piirid hägustuvad. Nii võib individuaalses eelistuste hierarhias abielu küll edestada vaba kooselu (**II uurimus**) ning abielule võidakse omistada vaba kooseluga võrreldes sümboliline ehk tähenduslikult kõrgem väärtus (Kasearu, 2009), kuid igapäevaelu käitumuslikul tasandil on vaba kooselu ja abielu samaväärsed (**III uurimus**).

## **PUBLICATIONS**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Professional employment

2008–present Assistant Lecturer at the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Tartu  
2007–2008 Extraordinary Researcher at the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Tartu  
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### Special courses

September 2006 EQUALSOC Summer School: *Inequality and social cohesion*, University of Trento, Italy.  
December 2006 An Introductory Course in *NVivo 7 – Qualitative Text Analysis Software*, University of Lodz, Poland.  
Spring 2007 Visiting graduate studies (Doctoral level), University of Konstanz, Germany.

- August 2007 1<sup>st</sup> ESS Training Course for Young Researchers on *Designing and Implementing Questionnaires for Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Context*, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- March 2008 Graduate Spring Seminar in Methodology, University of Bremen, Germany.
- July 2008 ESRC Oxford Spring School in Quantitative Methods for Social Research: *Crash course in Stata and selection bias modeling*, University of Oxford, The Department of Politics and International Relations, UK.
- July 2009 ESRC Oxford Spring School in Quantitative Methods for Social Research: *Applied Panel Data Analysis*, University of Oxford, The Department of Politics and International Relations, UK.
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Kevad 2007 Enesetäiendus doktoriõpingute raames, Konstanzi Ülikool, Saksamaa.  
August 2007 ESS-i koolitus noorteadlastele *Designing and Implementing Questionnaires for Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Context*, Ljubljana Ülikool, Sloveenia.  
Märts 2008 Metodoloogia kevadkool, Bremeni Ülikool, Saksamaa.

Juuli 2008	ESRC Oxfordi kevadkool sotsiaalteadustes rakendatavatest kvantitatiivsetest meetoditest: <i>Crash course in Stata and selection bias modeling</i> , Oxfordi Ülikool, Suurbritannia.
Juuli 2009	ESRC Oxfordi kevadkool sotsiaalteadustes rakendatavatest kvantitatiivsetest meetoditest: <i>Applied Panel Data Analysis</i> , Oxfordi Ülikool, Suurbritannia.
Aprill 2010	8 <sup>th</sup> ESS-i koolitus noorteadlastele <i>Paradata in Social Survey Research</i> , Mannheim, Saksamaa.

### **Teadustöö põhisuunad**

Muutuvad perevormid ja -struktuurid; mitteabieluline kooselu; väärtuste ja sotsiaalse ebavõrdsuse edasikandumine põlvkonnalt põlvkonnale; isadus ja vanemaks olemine; etniline kuuluvus ja sotsiaalne sidusus.

### **Erialaorganisatsioonid**

Põhjamaade Perekonnauurijate Võrgustik; Euroopa Sotsioloogia Assotsiatsioon; EQUALSOC (EL 6RP)

**DISSERTATIONES SOCIOLOGICAE  
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS**

1. **Veronika Kalmus.** School textbooks in the field of socialisation. Tartu, 2003, 206 p.
2. **Kairi Kõlves.** Estonians' and Russian minority's suicides and suicide risk factors: studies on aggregate and individual level. Tartu, 2004, 111 p.