1989 – Young people and social change after the fall of the Berlin Wall

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(eds)

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Some 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the overall condition of young people in eastern Europe, now integrated into the European Union, has undergone radical change. Today, there are no longer substantial differences separating the young people of western and eastern Europe; the two groups are now to a considerable degree similar – in their vision of themselves and of the world, in their preferred leisure time activities, in the central role in their lives of mobility, in the ways in which their identities are constructed and in the problematic relationship they have with an uncertain future. Generally speaking, the so-called forms of transition towards adulthood seem homogenous – by now more de-standardised than structured – as much in the east as in the west. For young Europeans today, both in the east and in the west, the pertinence of the canonical, tripartite division of the life path identified years back by Martin Kohli – preparation for work, work and retirement – seems long gone (Kohli, 1985). Nevertheless, there still do exist important differences in terms of the resources, in particular, economic resources, that young people in the west and young people in the east dispose of. As is well known, in these terms the latter are significantly more disadvantaged than the former.

Moreover, as has been demonstrated by a large number of studies, young people in the east are also to be distinguished from those in the west in terms of a characteristic that plays a highly important strategic role in the definition of what constitutes being young today: the prolonged (and obligatory) cohabitation in the family of origin. This is actually a characteristic that distinguishes young people in southern Europe as well as those in eastern Europe. Both in southern Europe and in eastern Europe, young people tend to marry later and have children later. At the same time, very few of them have the chance to experience that period of freedom from family ties that young Europeans in northern and central Europe generally enjoy: life as a single person and cohabitation with friends or with a partner. As a consequence of this, they are compelled to deal with a conflict between a by-now fully realised interior autonomy and an objective lack of independence. But – and this needs to be always kept in mind – the reasons that lead young people in eastern Europe to continue to cohabit with their parents are the consequence of an economic situation that is much more problematic than that of their counterparts in southern Europe. Indeed, in eastern Europe quite often leaving one's parents' home can mean condemning them to a life of poverty.

The question of the prolonged cohabitation of young people with their parents is tied to another important question, namely the memory of the past. Thus, although eastern European teenagers in particular were born, have grown up and have been socialised in a social context that can be defined as post-communist, nonetheless, still today, these young people have to come to grips on a daily basis with the legacy of the former Soviet-style socialism. What is involved here is something that comes into being via young people's relationship with the adult world and, in particular, through their emotional ties with their family. A strategic role is played here by collective memory, that "remembering together", through the mediation of a group, analysed by Maurice Halbwachs (1994) in the first half of the 20th century. Of the three forms of collective memory studied by Halbwachs – the memory of the family, the memory of religious groups and the memory of social classes – it is the first that appears to be particularly significant in the experience of young people

today. With the loss or at any rate the marked weakening in this historical epoch of collective forms of belonging, it seems that the family has actually reinforced its capacity to transmit memory. Notwithstanding the growing instability that characterises it – a trend that is common to the various European countries – family memory does not appear to have suffered any setback. It multiplies, it fragments but it remains an indispensable point of reference for the personal identity of each of the family components. In fact, in line with Halbwachs' view, it is only with extreme difficulty that our personal memory and our identity can be separated from the collective memory of which the family is bearer. Thus, it is thanks to this memory, for example, that the family group can survive as a unit over time and, despite the changes it faces, retain the feeling of its own uniqueness. This ability to remember provides the family with, to use the expression Halbwachs coined, its own "traditional armature". From this point of view, family memory seems to be completely uninfluenced by changes: nothing within it seems relative or changeable. And this is despite the present, all pervading processes of radical social, economic and political change.

What influence does this memory have, we might ask, in prolonging the past into the present – in placing the generations of young people today in contact with a political regime, the communist regime, that they themselves never experienced directly but which they are able to relive daily through the memory of the other components of the family with whom they cohabit? Might we hypothesise, from this point of view, that the force of the family as a community of memory contributes to making it practically impossible in eastern Europe to deploy the so-called "politics of forgetting" (Misztal, 2010), those forms of politics that respond to a need to eliminate those parts of social memory that lie on a collision course with the requirements of the present? To what extent in other words is the force of this "living history", mediated at an affective level, able to influence the biographical constructions of young people themselves? Can we affirm that this memory helps to keep culturally open, even for young people, the possibility of an indirect comparison with the recent past? We have in mind, for example, two apparently contradictory features of everyday existence in the post-communist regimes: on the one hand, the new levels of autonomy of action and liberty enjoyed by the individual and rendered even more vital by way of the comparison with the previous, highly regulated path of socialisation that family memory makes available; and, on the other, the markedly uncertain character of the neo-liberal future, the exact opposite to the all-encompassing certainties of the experience of communism. In the construction of biographical time each young person – individually – has to endeavour to elaborate this contradiction and to define forms of relating to the future capable of appeasing his/her anxiety about the future (Leccardi, 2005).

In the context of the social co-ordinates that prevail today, with the spread of a "global memory" tied in no small part to the role in social life of ICT, the weight of family memory in the projection of the future as underlined by Halbwachs may well have diminished. Quite probably the past as reconstructed in and by the group is less and less able to be transformed into a base suitable for the construction of the future; nor, for that matter, can a life project still be thought to take form amidst the turns of memory, as Halbwachs, in this respect clearly a child of the first half of the 20th century, seemed to suggest. Nonetheless, it is perhaps possible to hypothesise that, thanks to the highly affective character of this memory, the relationship between past, present and future may manage to maintain, in the context of eastern Europe, a plausibility that by contrast it has all but lost in the experience of other young Europeans. The "biographical uncertainty" that today characterises young people in western countries – that sense of being lost in the face of the

future that is tied both to the weakening of the role of institutions in guaranteeing a sense of biographical continuity and, more generally, to the contraction of the horizons of social time (the contraction of temporal horizons) – may turn out to be less oppressive for the young people of eastern Europe. It is more than legitimate, in other words, to ask ourselves whether young eastern Europeans today, albeit within an overall European context that in many respects is uniform, experience the same condition of the centrality of the present that characterises the lives of their counterparts in the west.

This consideration draws attention to yet another important question, it too tied to the dimension of time. As has been brought to light in recent years, in particular, for example, with regard to the ex-German Democratic Republic, it is not uncommon for the adult generations in the east, especially the elderly, to harbour a feeling of nostalgia towards the communist past – "rose-tinted memories", as they have been defined – cultivated in particular by people who lived under the communist regimes and who now find themselves hurled into the nebulous global social context of the new century. This feeling, moreover, is often tied to the slowness with which human beings transform their own cultural codes and their own vision of the world, that is at a rhythm decidedly more contained than the speed, for example, of the processes of legislative change. Having been born in the post-socialist epoch, young eastern Europeans clearly do not experience this nostalgia directly but the question remains as to how they re-elaborate this form of "nostalgia for the certain", for the foreseeable, to the extent that they experience it indirectly via their relationship with the generations that preceded them (Leccardi and Feixa, 2010)? In what ways, and in what mediated forms does this nostalgia enter into their existences, even by way of the loss of that fundamental resource for social integration and for the continuity of social life constituted by trust – a theme that has been analysed in relation to post-communist societies in a masterly manner by Piotr Sztompka (1999)? Trust, as Sztompka insists, is an indispensable ingredient for the construction of a vital community. And the community in its turn, in order to be reinforced, requires shared social forms of responsibility and solidarity – as has, for example, been underlined by Alexander (2006) – forms of identification on the part of citizens with public institutions. For young people in particular, then, this generalised crisis of trust in institutions represents a particularly delicate issue, given that democracy is intimately tied to the dimension of trust.

Another important point: today, young men and young women are aligned in their expectations of and aspirations for the future, the two categories rendered largely uniform by radical processes of individualisation. But do the daughters of the generations of women that lived under communism really construct their vision of their future in a way that is homogenous with that of their counterparts in the west? What role does, for example, the formally egalitarian (that is, in principle non-sexist, even though often contradicted by facts) socialisation that their mothers experienced during the communist era play in the biographical constructions of their daughters – daughters who continue to have to confront a universe characterised by substantial gender inequalities in respect of work, the search for a work-life balance and so on?

As these brief thoughts on the question of the transmission of memory between generations have sought to bring out, this is an issue that has profound implications for the existence, and the experience, of young people. Yet it is not at all common for this to be taken into consideration when attention is directed, for example, to the prolonged cohabitation of parents and children (ever-more frequently young adults) under the same roof. Our suggestion then is that attention be dedicated

to this issue not just from a theoretical point of view – we are thinking here of the masterly analyses that Simmel (1950) has conducted on the question of the continuity of social life, to which memory is strongly related – but also from an empirical point of view. Yet another extremely important question arises out of the consideration of the relationship between young people and the future: that of otherness and the recognition of it as an essential component of democratic life. To what extent are young people in the east and young people in the west aligned in terms of their vision of inter-ethnic relations? Is it still the case today that there are differences between the two groups, as was reported in the Eurobarometer studies of the 1990s, according to which young people in the east were more likely to have a more negative attitude towards foreigners? Today, as Peter Andreas has recently written, "roughly 500 000 unauthorised migrants enter the European Union annually. The 'immigration wall' (the new wall that has replaced the Berlin wall) pushes migrants into the shadows and criminal under world" (Andreas, 2009). From this point of view, it would seem vitally important to educate young generations not only for a culture of legality but also for a culture of recognition of and respect for "other" foreigners.

This book is a selection of the papers presented in the international Seminar on Young People and Social Change after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, Anniversary Seminar of Youth Research, Policy and Practice. The seminar, which took place at the Central European University in Budapest on 20 November 2009, was organised by the International Sociological Association, Research Committee 34, Sociology of Youth, whose vice-presidents for Europe at that moment are the authors of this introduction. It was conducted in co-operation with the following bodies: the Directorate for Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe; the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth; the Centre for the Study of Imperfections in Democracies (DISC), the Central European University; the Italian Sociological Association (AIS); the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan-Bicocca; and the University of Lleida. This academic body integrates pan-European institutions, sociological networks and universities in the east and in two Mediterranean countries that have lived, in the past century, through other transitions and other struggles between capitalism and communism and between dictatorship and democracy: Italy and Spain. This demonstrates that the 1989 transitions are not just an eastern issue, but have a European dimension that prefigured the globalisation of youth culture. Nevertheless, the book does not intend to be comprehensive and cover all the countries, regions and aspects: for instance, central Russia, Poland and the Baltic countries are missing, of course not for their lack of importance but because they were not included in the selected papers. The chapters combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, longitudinal and present studies, using diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Most of the authors were born in eastern countries, but we also have representatives of western countries interested in youth transitions in the east. Most of the authors are young and educated after 1989, but we also have persons who grew up before.

The first part of the volume includes four general approaches to the historical and social context of 1989 and its effects on youth. The opening chapter by Ken Roberts, "1989: so hard to remember and so easy to forget", introduces the scenario, the drama and its key actors. The author was one of the first western researchers to cross the Iron Curtain to investigate the situation of youth after 1989, from an empirical and not from an aprioristic point of view; after 20 years he has revisited the theatre and makes a clear historical synthesis (Roberts, 2009). His argument starts from three key points: we know little about young people in east-central Europe in 1989 (because the events of that year were unanticipated); young people today

in east-central Europe include the first post-socialist generation in history, that is, young people born after 1989; and all subsequent cohorts of young people have experienced a youth life stage that would have been very different had the events of 1989 not occurred (because political transitions created new forms of biographical transitions). These points are empirically illustrated in the rest of the volume.

The second chapter by Mirjana Ule, "Reconstruction of youth in post-socialism: expectations and dilemmas", focuses on the political aspects of the transition, comparing the advantages and disadvantages in the everyday life of a younger generation educated in a regime that suddenly collapsed. Survey data in Yugoslavia demonstrate that the pre-1989 generations refused the classical forms of political "domestication" and prefigured the "end of utopias" (or the end of "realtopias") that prepared the field for transition.

The third chapter by Siyka Kovacheva, "Changing times, changing lives: the social construction of youth and its public images in Bulgaria before and after 1989", focuses on the ideological and symbolic aspects of transition, confronting the youthful public rhetoric of socialism with the new marketing images of youth in deregulated capitalism: in the case of post-communist Bulgaria, some juvenile icons like the blue hooligan, the jumping kids and the adolescent with the knuckle duster can be seen as condensed images of transition and sometimes of (non)transitions (or failed transitions).

The fourth chapter by Herwig Reiter and Matthias Wingens, "'Whenever worlds are laid on, underlives develop': structure and agency in transformation research", focuses on education and labour aspects of transition, confronting the frozen state structures with emerging forms of youth agency in a context of crisis. The authors criticise the "structural fallacy" that postulates the impossibility of self-autonomy for those young people educated according to the "Homo sovieticus" model and demonstrate that this was more an issue of institutional "ways of seeing" that post-1989 research in Germany denied. They also argue that in fact the "culture of informality" (that is, individual agency) was one of the heritages of state socialism in the youth field.

The second part of the volume includes six case studies about the effects of post-1989 transitions on daily life in four regions/countries of central and eastern Europe: the Caucasus, the Czech Republic, East Germany and the Balkans. The fifth chapter by Metka Kuhar and Herwig Reiter, "Frozen transitions? Young people in the former Yugoslavia", analyses the effects of political transition in biographical transitions. Rather than a replacement of standardised by de-standardised models of life course, empirical research shows a more complex panorama: "cold" (mechanical) and "hot" (dynamic) transitions are not static poles but moments in a continuum.

The sixth chapter by Letterio Pantò and Tatjana Sekulić, "Born in 1989. European youngsters look to the future and the past: Milan and Sarajevo compared", focuses on similar aspects of transitions, pointing out the crucial issue of how political and collective memory affects social and personal transitions. The comparison of two very different cities (Milan and Sarajevo) illustrates to what degree some "value" transitions experienced by 20-year-old boys and girls are specific to eastern transitions into liberal capitalism or to more global transitions into post-modern and information societies.

The seventh chapter by Gohar Khachatryan, Gary Pollock, Ken Roberts, Jochen Tholen and Rusudan Velidze, "Transitions to adulthood in rural villages during

the transition from communism in the South Caucasus", analyses the effects of transition on one forgotten subject: rural youth. Qualitative and quantitative data about daily life of young adults elucidates that in areas such as family life and politics we can find more continuities than discontinuities between pre-1989 and post-1989 generations.

The eighth chapter by Smiljka Tomanović, "Young people in Serbia: a review of two decades", analyses the changing lifestyles of young people in the former Yugoslavia. Survey data demonstrate that young people in Serbia have lived two kinds of parallel transitions: biographical transitions to adulthood in transitional societies (like their counterparts in central and eastern Europe) and contextual transitions to new states (due to the devastating effects of war).

The ninth chapter by Michaela Pyšňáková, "The 'post-revolutionary' Czech consumer generation: 'mainstream' youth in the context of individualised society", analyses similar cultural effects of transition in the emergence of a consumer society in another divided country but without war. Mainstream youth have been one of the missing subjects of youth research, even if they are crucial for the success of transitions; the qualitative data based on focus groups demonstrate that they are "nonconformist" conformists: through consumption they can be seen as the pioneers of the cosmopolitisation process, that can be considered the terminal station of the transition process.

The tenth chapter by Christine Steiner, "Radically modern? East German youth after the German-German unification", analyses the ideological effects of transition in the place where this process started: Germany. The German-German unification created ties and fractures in the young lives of both sides of the Berlin Wall.

The eleventh and last chapter by Rory Archer, "Western, eastern and modern: Balkan pop-folk music and (trans)nationalism", analyses the effects of transition in one of the less material topics that constitutes the "deep" sound of transitions: music. In the case of the Balkans, traditional folk songs and modern pop music evolve to a syncretic "cosmopolitan vernacular" that symbolises the different sides of transition: globalisation and glocalisation.

In all the chapters of the book youth is considered, following implicitly the Birmingham school postulates, as a condensed image for economic, social, political and cultural changes in the entire society. In other words: as a metaphor for social change (Hall and Jefferson, 1983; see Passerini, 1996; Feixa, 2003). Through the eyes of the younger generations in every country – before, during and after 1989 – the authors paint the visible and the invisible walls that are falling and how the bricks are used to rebuild new social fabrics. The key issue to be investigated is the theoretical and empirical relationships between collective transitions (from "real socialism" to "democratic capitalism") and individual transitions (from a standardised youth period to diverse and deregulated adulthoods). In this sense, political and economic transitions can provide the framework (the scenario), but youth subjects (the actors) have to adapt their roles to new "dramas" that are played sometimes as a comedy and sometimes as a tragedy.

In today's world, youth movements have often acted as "reading key" and "gateway" to the great processes of socio-political transformation and, more specifically, for the transition from authoritarian regimes to more or less democratic states. This happened at the dawn of the industrial and bourgeois revolutions, when movements such as those created by the Giovane Italia at the time of Mazzini or the

Young Turks at the time of Atatürk (Gillis, 1981; Levi and Schmitt, 1996) promoted a sense of national unity and independence. Then they paved the way for many anti-colonial movements in Latin America (where intellectuals like Vasconcelos in Mexico or Rodó in Argentina had rolled under the banner of youth) and Africa (where many leaders had been trained in European campuses) (Caccia-Bava, Feixa and González, 2004). These movements consolidated in 1968 when they acted as a fire that ignited the campuses of Berkeley and Paris and spread throughout the world, placing the Prague Spring in the central stage (Kurlansky, 2005). Anticipating what would happen 21 years later, those movements characterised the transitions from military dictatorships to liberal democracies in the last three western European dictatorships (Portugal, Spain and Greece) (Machado Pais, 2002; Feixa, 2003). In the 1970s and 1980s they returned to play a central role in the Latin American transitions post-Pinochet and post-Videla, as proclaimed in an anthology about youth movements in Latin America, equivalent to the present one: *El pasado en el futuro: los movimientos juveniles* (Jelin and Sempol, 2006; see also Medina, 2002). They succeeded in eastern Europe in 1989 through an alliance between the intelligentsia and post-socialist young adults (although in Tiananmen they were defeated by the tanks of another "real socialism") (Walker and Stephenson, 2010). And, finally, they were reborn in early 2011, when we finish this introduction, in another scenario that seemed unchangeable: the Arab-Muslim world, thanks to the unusual role of the network generation, educated more on Facebook than in the Koranic or Baathist schools (Sánchez, 2011).

In all these democratic revolutions or riots, youth movements have had a major role as a "safety valve" of social unrest, as a "spark" of the uprising, as the "face" of the necessary economic and cultural modernisation, or as passive and frustrated "audiences" when the challenges are not met. In any case, all these examples show that the comparative study of the relationship between youth transitions and political transitions is one of the nodal points of contemporary social sciences. We believe that this book provides good questions and some data to begin addressing them.

We would like to conclude these notes by reflecting on something that today unites young people in the east and the west. In particular, we refer to the already mentioned processes of the individualisation of biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2003), which today have enormous importance for all young people (European or otherwise). In the first instance, these processes involve a strong emphasis on the dimension of choice, autonomy, openness and possibility. But at the same time they also involve an out-and-out ideology of personal responsibility. This latter feature has assumed a range of unprecedented characteristics. It has been transformed into a kind of new duty, which the individual has towards himself as much as in relation to the collectivity, to identify ever new biographical solutions for contradictions that are of an essentially systemic nature. This new duty needs to be seen in conjunction with another obligation: the interiorisation of forms of social inequality, if not marginality and outright social exclusion, as "natural" givens, on the basis of a social philosophy that theorises individuals as absolute arbiters of their own destiny, uncontaminated by the social. In this framework, individual human beings are always and everywhere required to feel personally responsible for what happens to them – refusing to identify social causes for any personal shortcomings. It is important to recognise that this call to personal responsibility appears very different to the one that was formulated at the outset of modernity. In that case, the appeal to responsibility assigned to the individual an important role in the realisation of the democratic project and, through that, in economic growth and the governability of the future. Today, instead, in a social climate that is very different, the universalisation of the call to responsibility brings with it the

mark of a fictitious equality between individuals, no longer founded on general principles of social cohesion, but more than anything else geared towards undermining existing forms of social protection. But if this new "ideology of personal responsibility" (Martuccelli, 2001) constitutes a unifying trait in the biographies of young people, compared to their counterparts in the east, young Europeans in the west nonetheless possess far more substantial economic and social resources to confront its negative fallout on the plane of action.

In this respect policies on youth can play an important role not just in evening out the inequalities between east and west but also in helping young people to free themselves from new forms of common sense (in relation to, for example, the supposed supremacy of the individual over the social) that prevent them from valorising as they should the potential for innovation of which they themselves are the bearers – and in this regard we are thinking particularly of young east Europeans. Some 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, today's first entirely post-communist generation is in fact the custodian of precious cultural resources. It is vitally important for these to be used so as to render the community and democracy more solid and vital, working to reconstruct a widespread network of social trust.

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Ken Roberts

1989: so hard to remember and so easy to forget[1]

➜ 1. So hard to remember

On 9 November 2009, Europe's political elites converged on Berlin, the capital of the reunited Germany, to celebrate what has become the iconic event of 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall. Exactly what were they celebrating? The celebrations were about the subsequent course of events – the integration of former communist countries into the global market economy, their conversion into western-type multiparty democratic political systems, their transitions into European Union (EU) and NATO membership, thereby making them part of the west's international community. Thus the Iron Curtain was shredded, the Cold War became history, the west enjoyed a peace dividend, then the unchallenged ability to intervene militarily anywhere on earth (Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan).

History was made on 9 November 1989 and also on 9 November 2009. History is always created in the present, in the light of subsequent events, and in particular the present. Similarly personal biographies are constantly reconstructed so that our pasts become coherent life

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1. Credit and apologies to Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

stories that help us to understand and explain our present circumstances, and where we are heading. President Sarkozy of France falsely remembered (he was corrected) being present in Berlin on the night when the wall fell. This was a historical event with which he, and the other western leaders who accompanied him on 9 November 2009, wished to be personally associated. Celebrating subsequent developments can obliterate other memories, and save everyone the time and trouble of recollecting what actually happened. Big history making events are nearly always contingent, rarely inevitable: they can be explained afterwards but not predicted with confidence in advance. Selective memory also avoids having to acknowledge that the course of events after 1989 was not inevitable, that history in central and eastern Europe could have taken alternative courses. We therefore avoid needing to calculate the opportunity costs incurred as a result of how history has actually unfolded. A proper understanding of what happened next, after the events of 1989, depends on realising that these events were unexpected: neither social researchers, nor the international community, nor even the leaders of the change movements in central and eastern Europe, anticipated the enormity of the changes that were to occur between June and December 1989.

The events of that year suddenly transformed the futures ahead of the youth of 1989. All subsequent cohorts of young people have experienced a youth life stage that would have been very different had the events of 1989 not occurred. Young people today in east-central Europe include children of the youth of 1989. For today's youth, the conditions in which they live are simply normal: 1989 and what their countries were like before then are history, learnt about from elders, teachers, books and other media. They have no need to enquire more deeply, but it is incumbent on youth researchers to take stock of exactly how the youth life stage has changed in former communist countries, and also how the events of 1989 and their sequels in east-central Europe have sent ripples throughout all parts of Europe and, indeed, the rest of the world. We also need to assess what youth research has achieved since 1989, including what might have been done differently, and current challenges. We can now look back on the events of 1989 with the advantage of some historical distance, and in doing so we must raise questions that were not part of the official celebrations in November 2009.

➜ 2. Chronology

The televised fall of the Berlin Wall amid street partying (on the western side) was the iconic event of 1989. The wall had been built in 1961, officially to obstruct western spies. Since then officially 98 persons had been killed while trying to cross the wall, but unofficial estimates put the figure at over 200. The fall of the wall was iconic, especially for those who remembered it being built, but it was neither the beginning nor the end of the history-making events of 1989. It was not decisive, and it was certainly not among the trigger events. These had occurred months before, to the east of the German Democratic Republic, in Poland.

Why Poland? The country had always been ill at ease under communism. Huge concessions had to be made after the Second World War before a version of the Soviet system was reluctantly accepted. Peasants kept their farms. There were few state or collective farms in Poland except on territory reallocated to Poland from Germany. Also, the Roman Catholic Church was allowed to continue its activities openly. Despite these concessions, there were challenges, public demonstrations, against communist rule in 1953, 1956, 1968 and throughout the 1970s. Maybe the resistance of the Poles was due to how the Second World War ended – the actions of the Soviet army during the Warsaw Rising in 1944, then the treatment of

the Poles who had been involved in the rising following the victory over Germany in 1945. Maybe it was due to how the Second World War began when an agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union allowed the latter to seize swathes of territory in eastern Poland. Maybe Polish resistance to the Russian (and any other foreign) presence can be traced further back to the partition of the country (between Prussia, Austria and Russia) at the end of the 18th century.

Whatever the historical roots, episodic resistance to communism led to the formation of an independent trade union, Solidarity, in 1980. This movement began in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, then spread rapidly throughout Poland. Organised opposition was simply not tolerated under communism, and before long the leaders of the movement were interned, and Poland was under martial law from December 1981 until July 1983. The jury is still out on whether General Jaruzelski, the head of the Polish army at that time, was a hero or villain: villain for acting against his compatriots, or hero because the alternative would have been the suppression of resistance by Soviet forces, in which case there may have been no events of 1989.

During the early 1980s there were several changes of leadership in the Soviet Union following the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982. He was succeeded by Yuri Andropov, who died in 1984 and then by Konstantin Chernenko who died in 1985. At that time the mortality rate among Soviet leaders was spectacular. A younger leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, assumed office in 1985. He was evidently a different kind of communist from any leader previously encountered. Gorbachev believed that he was reforming communism with his policies of glasnost (freedom of expression) and perestroika (restructuring). He believed that facing real competition in elections would pressure communist elites to become more effective, and hence more popular. Gorbachev let it be known that in the event of the regimes in Soviet satellite countries losing popular support, the Soviet army would not sustain them. This message was supposed to re-energise the regimes, and communism. It certainly created a new context in Poland. All the leaders of Solidarity were released from internment in 1986. The movement became overground, and in February 1989 Solidarity was involved in round table discussions with the Polish communists. The outcome was agreement that there would be free elections later that year. These elections were held on 4 June. There were no trustworthy opinion polls ahead of these elections whose outcome surprised everyone: Solidarity won all but one of the seats in the Sejm that were up for election. Thereafter, the Polish communists abdicated, and during Autumn 1989 they reconstituted themselves as social democrats. By the end of June, Poland had a Solidarity government and was no longer communist. This demonstrated that change was possible. June 4 was the key date in Europe in 1989. After then the "dominoes" started to tumble. At the time, events in Poland were overshadowed in international news because 4 June was also the date when tanks rolled into Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Hungary's communist regime had already begun market reforms, and small profit-seeking businesses were operating openly and legally in the late 1980s. On 23 August 1989, Hungary opened its western border, meaning that it allowed citizens of communist countries to pass through without exit visas. This led to the Trabant exodus. East Germans began loading as many possessions as the cars would carry, then motoring through Czechoslovakia into Hungary then into Austria and from there into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). 23 August 1989 is the date when the Berlin Wall, and the physical barrier along the entire border between the Federal and Democratic German republics, was decisively breached. On 4 September there was a massive street demonstration against the communist regime in Leipzig. This was followed by similar demonstrations in other East

German cities, culminating on 9 November when East Germany began to permit free movement through the wall itself. The partying on and around the wall, and the wall's partial destruction, were from the western side. By then Hungary was officially post-communist. Soon afterwards Civic Forum was organising sustained street demonstrations in Prague and before Christmas a dissident playwright, Václav Havel, had become Czechoslovakia's first post-communist president. These were true revolutions, instigated from below, by the people, which led to total transformations of the countries, and remarkably they were all accomplished peacefully. The year ended with the only violent revolution of 1989 when the Ceausescus were summarily tried and executed in Bucharest on the western Christmas Day.

The tide of change continued, but at a slower pace. The first free elections in East Germany were in March 1990, a unification treaty was signed in May, and unification was accomplished in October. In June 1990 there were free elections in Bulgaria.

Over a year later, on 26 December 1991, the Soviet Union was formally disbanded. The Baltic states and Georgia (and Armenia and Azerbaijan more equivocally) were already claiming independence. Other Soviet republics had independence thrust upon them when Russia quit the USSR. This followed an attempted coup against Gorbachev by Soviet generals who were seeking to prevent the further collapse of the system that they had been trained to defend. The attempted coup failed when Boris Yeltsin, then president of the Russian Federation, led a mass street demonstration and confronted the tanks in Moscow. Yeltsin subsequently denounced Gorbachev as an ineffective reformer, brought an end to the Soviet Union and thereby eliminated Gorbachev's position and power base in the Soviet Communist Party.

In March 1992, Albania's communists were defeated in elections. On 1 January 1993 the Czech Republic and Slovakia completed their "velvet divorce".

Change proved most protracted, and bloody, in Yugoslavia, which was surprising in so far as pre-1989 Yugoslavia was the communist state that was most open to and involved in western systems, but underlines the extent to which nationalism rather than enthusiasm for market reforms was the driving force both in 1989 and subsequently. Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in June 1991, followed by Macedonia in September, then Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. There was prolonged fighting between Croatians and Serbs in Croatia, and between Croatians, Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia. By the time that military action ceased in these republics (following international intervention in Bosnia), Kosovo had become an issue. A Kosovo Liberation Army, which won the support of the west, was pressing for independence, and was under attack from Yugoslavia (Serb) forces. In 1999 NATO was bombing Serbia, and Kosovo became a de facto NATO protectorate. September 2000 brought the sole classic revolutionary scene in the entire chain of events since 1989 with the storming of the parliament building in Belgrade during the ousting of Milošević. In June 2006, Montenegro declared independence following a referendum. In the same month, Serbia declared itself independent and the state of Yugoslavia became history. In February 2008 Kosovo claimed independence.

End of story? Almost certainly not. There are sometimes frozen, but always liable to become hot, conflicts in the North and South Caucasus. Russophile Transnistria remains de facto separate from the rest of Moldova. The destinies of Belarus and Ukraine remain unclear. Nation-building is still tentative in all the new (post-1991) multi-ethnic independent states in Central Asia. Market reforms and multiparty political systems have probably become secure in countries that have now joined

the EU, but Ukraine remains the only ex-Soviet republic (apart from the Baltic states, which are now EU members, and Moldova where the president is elected by the parliament) where a president has lost office as a result of an election.

→ 3. Caught unprepared

We know little about young people in east-central Europe in 1989. This is because the events of that year were unanticipated. Had they been forecast with confidence, we can be sure that young people's attitudes and involvement would have been monitored before, during and after. There were few studies of young people in the years immediately following 1989. Youth research institutes in eastern Europe at that time were crippled by shrunken budgets, and some simply disappeared along with other communist state and party apparatuses. We know that there were plenty of young people on the streets, taking part in demonstrations, partying around the wall in West Berlin on 9 November, supporting independence in the Baltic states and Georgia, and calling for a change of leadership in Armenia in order to prosecute the war with Azerbaijan more effectively (the Soviet-era leaders were eventually replaced by a Karabakh Committee) (see Fischer and Grigorian, 1993). However, these were not youth revolutions. The leaders were from the class of 1968 rather than the class of 1989, and before long nearly all the young activists had become inactive: they had gone back to their schools or their jobs (if they had jobs) and to their homes, preoccupied by coping with the new rigours of everyday life, and simply survival in some cases.

Western governments were not expecting the events of 1989. There was no pre-prepared strategy. Germany acted quickly in deciding to absorb the eastern states into the federal republic. The EU was much slower in developing a comparable plan for the rest of ex-communist Europe. In 1993 it was decided in principle that the countries should be offered a route to EU membership, but this was four years on from 1989, and a long transition period was envisaged: the first ex-communist countries to do so became full EU member states in 2004. In 1989 a "Washington consensus" had been formed on the terms and conditions to be attached to aid pack-ages to developing countries. A European Bank of Reconstruction and Development was created in 1991, and in 1994 it adopted the Washington consensus, neo-liberal principles in dealing with the transition countries, as they had become known. All this was years after the history-breaking events of 1989.

The leaders of the 1989 change movements were as surprised as anyone by the speed and comprehensiveness of their success. Solidarity had hoped that, at best, the outcome of the election on 4 June 1989 would be a power-sharing arrangement with the Polish communists. In the event Solidarity became the government. This happened all over east-central Europe. It was different in most ex-Soviet republics where the existing politicians remained in power having rebranded themselves as nationalists or democrats. However, they all faced "the Monday after" without strategies let alone detailed policies for the new circumstances in which they found themselves governing. Soon they found that, rather than conduits, they had become the targets for people's grievances. Hence, in several countries, ex-communist parties (usually retitled as social democrats) were returned to power in elections in the early or mid-1990s.

Most research communities, not just youth researchers, were unprepared. The orthodox view among western specialists on communism was that they were experts on a "second world", an alternative way of developing and organising modern industrial societies, which was likely to endure for as long as capitalism. Experts

on communism faced a sudden and unexpected choice of remaining experts on a period in history or studying post-communism: most social scientists (economists, political scientists and sociologists) chose the latter. In a book published in 1988, George Kolankiewicz and Paul Lewis described a post-Solidarity Poland that was likely to remain a bastion of socialism for years to come. This was the academic orthodoxy in the west. Dissenters were often Russian or other émigrés whose views were liable to be dismissed as expressions of personal embitterment.

Alain Touraine and his co-investigators (1983) were the sociologists who were proved right. Their early-1980s research portrayed Solidarity as developing from a trade union pursuing a wage claim into a total social movement seeking a total change of system. Such was Solidarity's popular support that these investigators forecast that martial law in Poland would destroy not Solidarity but communism itself. They were proved right, but possibly only thanks to Gorbachev whose emergence and policies could not have been, and were not, predicted by these investigators.

➜ 4. Youth in eastern Europe in the 1990s

For two or three years following 1989 visiting eastern Europe remained an adventure for westerners. Parts of the old system continued to operate. Entry visas were still required. The communist systems still operated in airports and hotels (retaining passports throughout a stay). The economies were the part of the old system that had stalled. The catalyst was the end of the planning system that had linked enterprises throughout the Soviet bloc (Gros, 1997). Plants lost various combinations of supplies and customers. Governments lost much of their former revenues. Employees were often laid off on indefinite leave. At that time outright dismissals were rare unless a plant closed for good. Salaries fell into arrears. The end of controls sent consumer prices rocketing. Most of the countries went through a bout of hyper-inflation which eliminated people's savings. There was still only limited retail banking. Employees who were being paid drew salaries in cash at the end of each month. In Poland they became zloty multimillionaires and left their workplaces with pockets and bags stuffed with banknotes. This was the period of wild and free "bandit" capitalism. There was no commercial law. Taxis charged whatever passengers would pay. Businesses needed to arrange their own protection. Of course, there were other businesses offering protection services, sometimes staffed by moonlighting police officers whose official salaries had shrunk or were always in arrears. These were also the years when the new rich, new capitalist classes, began to be created as a result of "honest robbery" privatisations and the management of state assets and offices for personal gain. Proper jobs, with a contract and paying full regular salaries, were scarce. Beginning workers felt the full force of these conditions, but were less distressed than elders who lost their jobs, saw their savings disappear, the value of pensions and other benefits shrink, and the system in which they had spent their lives, and helped to build and maintain in some cases, cast into the dustbin of history. Very likely they had supported change, but not the changes that they were experiencing. They had wanted their countries to be run by and for the countries' own citizens, and businesses likewise. They wanted to be rid of secret police, secret files, and the harassment of actual and suspected dissidents. Solidarity had always been basically a trade union, the ideals of which were true socialism. It was never a campaign for market reforms, the privatisation of state assets, and the running down of state welfare and other services.

Young people experienced the changes rather differently than their elders. They had their futures before them and time was on their side. They had lost the futures that communism had offered. Nothing was certain any more, but so much more was

possible, and it would be down to each individual. If proper jobs were currently scarce they could continue in education, practising qualification accumulation, believing that the market economy would demand higher standards and that before too long their perseverance and patience would be rewarded. Business was an attractive new career option. Large numbers of young people, especially males, attempted to start businesses, if only street trading, usually in cigarettes. The more enterprising were travelling east where goods were even cheaper, then to the west to sell (see Roberts et al., 1998; Roberts and Jung, 1995). As soon as communism ended it was possible to leave one's country without an exit visa. When countries became candidates for EU membership, entry visas for EU countries ceased to be necessary. Young (and older) people could travel west by boarding a bus with their passports. This is how the flow of pendulum worker-migrants commenced, and it has continued to the present day. Those who travelled to the west liked what they saw, and looked forward to the day when at least the material aspects of the western way of life would flow into their own countries. They became the continent's most committed Europeans (see Niznik and Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, 1992). Forgetting Russian and learning English was smart.

Consumer cultures flooded into eastern Europe as soon as communism ended. So did the full range of consumer goods for those (the few) who could afford them. The ex-communist countries were perfectly capable of producing basic commodities such as soap and headache pills, but domestic products could not compete with the consumer marketing of Persil and Panadol. This made it difficult for local enterprises to stay in business, but western-based firms were soon becoming inward investors in the new market economies, attracted by low labour costs and large potential new markets. Western capital was soon replacing the old city centre shops with supermarkets and retail centres. The receiving countries did not need to pay upfront. Global capital provided the wherewithal. It also began creating new, decently paid jobs for a minority of young people. Those who could afford little else could at least window shop and plan what they would buy in the future. The young people were, and still are, optimists who believe that the future will be better. In this respect young people in eastern Europe have remained different from their western counterparts who lack any vision of a more attractive future for their countries.

Labour market conditions for beginning workers remained difficult throughout the 1990s (see Roberts et al., 2000). When assistance arrived from the west it was with Washington consensus conditions attached; rapid privatisation, price liberalisation, reduced government spending in order to balance state budgets, and inflation squeezed out of the economies. The package was called "shock therapy". The shock was sharp and quick; the therapy was delayed then slow to spread (see Gerber and Hout, 1998). Some unemployed young adults grew frustrated and depressed, but they were a minority (see Jung, 1997). It was always possible to enrol as a part-time student. The private sector economies were opening shops, bars and restaurants, and inward tourism was developing. These businesses created casual, temporary and part-time jobs that young people could fill. Some became officially unemployed during breaks between spells of working in the west. Some began developing micro-businesses. Some young women seized the new opportunity to "live normally" as housewives. Others claimed their right to sell their bodies. Sex worker became a status role in some quarters. All young people could retain confidence in their futures because they knew (they were being told constantly by their own and western governments) that their countries were still in transition. Throughout their twenties, young adults could continue to regard themselves as still in life-stage transition. Under communism the Komsomol had defined youth as lasting until age 28.

At some point during the mid-to-late-1990s all the countries' economies began to recover, but by then fateful events had occurred and decisions had been taken on which future developments were path dependent (see Stark, 1996). The first post-communist cohorts of beginning workers had been divided into those who obtained then held onto regular full-time jobs, others who were under-employed (somewhere between continuous full-time employment and prolonged unemployment), and the long-term unemployed (Roberts, 2006). These have been the labour market segments awaiting subsequent cohorts of beginning workers. Second, the socially owned housing stocks were privatised into the hands of occupants in the initial stages of reforms. This instantly created frozen housing markets. There was no affordable social housing into which young people could move. Few earned enough to be able to purchase. So it remained normal, as under communism, for young people to remain living with their parents until after they themselves married and became parents. They remained dependent on their families for their housing prospects. The only way in which they could envisage becoming senior occupants was by waiting for a family property to become vacant, or pooling family resources in order to purchase. Prolonged dependence on elders has helped to perpetuate traditional gender roles and divisions under post–communism (see Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006).

➜ 5. Youth in eastern Europe today

There were different versions of communism in different countries of east-central and South-East Europe, and to a lesser extent in different Soviet republics, but they all shared the basic features of communism: state ownership of productive assets, central economic planning, political power monopolised by the communist parties, and a common system of public administration which included social security, health services, housing and education. Also, communism industrialised all its territories. There were factories everywhere. Culture was also taken to all regions. Thus, it was possible to speak of a socialist way of life.

By the end of the 1990s ex-communist countries were much more different from one another. National cultures – histories, literatures, etc. – had been revived and were being transmitted in education. In some cases national histories that had been interrupted by communism had been resumed. There were huge differences in the extent to which countries' economies had recovered. Generally, it proved an advantage to be preparing for membership of the EU, and preferably to be located next to the border of the pre-2004 EU. East-central European countries have now regained their pre-Second World War position as middle Europe, at the very heart of Europe. Slovenia, with a population of under two million, nestling next to Italy and Austria, has been an exceptional success story. Countries with natural resources, especially oil and gas, for which global demand has been strong and rising, have been able to benefit. Resources that could have benefited the entire Soviet popula-tion have benefited mainly Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. Oil and gas are the reasons why salaries are now four times higher in Kazakhstan than in its Central Asian neighbours, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Differences within countries have widened. Capital cities are always exceptional in the opportunities in their labour markets. They are always the main centres of government employment, entertainment and retailing, the most likely bases for the headquarters of major businesses of all kinds, and where international NGOs and foreign delegations are based. Outside the capitals the countries have new economic wastelands – rural regions where agriculture has been privatised and all the factories that communism opened have closed, and single industry towns where the single industry stopped or downscaled dramatically as soon as communism ended (for

examples, see Tarkhnishvili et al., 2005). Other towns have boomed following inward investment that has revived a car or domestic appliances plant, for example. Young people's job prospects now depend greatly on exactly where they happen to live.

However, wherever they live young people now share one dominant aspiration, which is to join their countries' new middle classes. Becoming a worker has lost its appeal. The manufacturing-based working classes have shrunk in size and have become invisible culturally, ideologically and politically (see Simonchuk, 2004; Stenning, 2005a, 2005b). Very few young people wish to spend their lives in villages, working on family farms. All the countries have created new middle classes who are in continuous full-time employment (though they may change jobs) in professional, management and administrative positions in the public and private sectors. Economic growth since the mid-1990s has increased the size of these new middle classes, but more of the proceeds have expanded the salaries of those in the relevant jobs (see Roberts and Pollock, 2009). The better-off members of the new middle classes can now afford to eat out at least occasionally in the new restaurants that have opened, to attend places of entertainment, to purchase (nearly) new motor cars and go on holiday to resorts (rather than "dachas"). The countries offer no other careers that can compete, and the middle class is where most young people now seek to head. They know that the best route, in fact an almost essential condition for entry, is higher education. Hence the enlarged numbers now completing general secondary education then progressing into universities. Except in countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan where the governments have kept strict caps on student numbers, there have been explosions in (mainly paid-for) places at state universities, and a growth of private higher education institutions, some linked to western universities. Higher education guarantees nothing, but it admits graduates to the pools in which they can compete for entry to middle-class careers.

Those who fail to make it into the middle classes are at risk of prolonged under-employment. There are still some jobs in manufacturing and extractive industries, and construction has boomed everywhere. Some young people succeed in business and develop enterprises from micro to small then medium-sized. However, it is only middle-class jobs that offer reasonably secure, long-term and decently paid careers. Migration is an option, and a constant topic of conversation among young people in most places. The movements are usually the pendulum variety rather than with an initial intention to settle long term. The west is not migrants' most common destination. From Central Asia the most likely destinations are Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Middle-East states (see Thieme, 2007). From the Caucasus migrants' most likely destinations are Russia and Turkey. In Russia most migration is internal. From the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus, migrants typically head for central or South-East Europe. From South-East Europe they head for central or southern Europe. From central Europe they move into western Europe (see Bagatelas and Kubicova, 2004).

Young people benefit greatly if generous and continuing support is available from their families. They need to negotiate routes through education, then into employment, and while doing this they are likely to begin planning their family and housing life stage transitions. If families are unable to provide support throughout the youth life stage, young people are seriously handicapped.

There has not been the upsurge in political activity that was widely predicted in 1989. When communism ended all citizens gained the right to think and say anything that they liked. There was also a choice of political parties. It seemed reasonable to expect civil societies to blossom. Another new option was usually

overlooked, which was not to care. This is an instance where we have an excess of sufficient causes (see Ule, 2005). The individualisation of biographies had left young people unlikely to identify with any wider social group and its interests (see Roberts, Clark and Wallace, 1994). Rather, they concentrate on private goals, with resources earned by themselves or provided by their families, and additional support from relatives and friends. Also, and perhaps most fundamentally, there are no seriously competing futures for the countries except to become successful market economies. Nationalist and religious ideologies attract some, but not very many, young people. Politicians of all parties are typically dismissed as a self-interested career group. Young people lack confidence that any party will address the problems faced by themselves, their families and friends. They are confident that politicians themselves will prosper. Frustration may boil over and bring young people onto the streets. They were there during the fall of Milošević in Belgrade in 2000, and in the colour revolutions in Tbilisi 2003, Kiev 2004 and Bishkek 2005 (see Collin, 2007), then again in Bishkek in 2010, but in none of these cases was the young people's activism sustained.

➜ 6. Implications for youth in the west

Germany excepted, in 1989 the youth of western Europe may or may not have been aware of the dramatic events that were taking place on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It is unlikely that they felt either threatened or elated even if they knew what was happening. Today, communism and 1989 are history that young people in the west may or may not know about. They may be aware of some consequences of the events of 1989, without knowing what these are consequences of.

Young people in the west are affected if investment and jobs go to the EU's new member states. Salaries in the east are still much lower: in east-central Europe they are less than 40% of salaries in western Europe, though at purchasing power parity, average earnings in east-central Europe are now 70% of western averages (Galgoczi, Leschke and Watt, 2009). Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2009) have observed that if today's youth are denied material aspects of the western way of life at home, they will travel in search of them. This applies to young people in non-EU countries, but those in the new member states already have full access to jobs in some, and soon they will have access to all jobs in all EU countries.

University students in today's west will be aware of students from eastern Europe who are tasting the (student) western way of life under the EU Erasmus programme. Large numbers of east Europeans now travel to earn, and have been doing so since 1989. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009) claim that in doing so they are spreading insecurity via competition for jobs and downward pressure on salaries in western countries. We should note, however, that the migrants from the new EU member states tend to be employed at levels beneath their qualifications, and are paid less than locals in similar jobs (Anderson et al., 2006). In the more highly regulated European labour markets, such as in Germany and Spain, migrants are concentrated in the unregulated sectors. "Insiders" are protected from this competition (see Bernadi and Garrido, 2008; Buchholz et al., 2009).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009) also claim that travelling, living and working in a place other than one's home country has become just normal, nothing out of the ordinary, for today's young people in all parts of Europe, but is this really the case? Prior to enlargement, Luxembourg apart, over 90% of the workforce in every EU member state was composed of nationals (European Commission, 2006). Western young people travel during gap years and for holidays. The disappearance

of the Iron Curtain has widened their possible destinations. This travel is not the equivalent of the migration of east Europeans who take low-paid jobs in the west and live frugally so that they can send or return home with savings.

A cosmopolitan European generation could form with English as its common language. This may be happening among Europe's business and political elites, and higher education students and graduates. If so, in eastern Europe, and in west European countries also, the trend will separate the cosmopolitans from the rest of the populations. Europe is a continent of nation states, and most of the nations are older than the states. Nationalism was arguably the main impulse that undermined communism. Throughout western Europe there are political parties, often described as "far right" but basically nationalist, anti-immigration, and seeking to defend and privilege the cultures of nationals. This kind of consciousness and the related politics is certainly not confined to the pre-2004 EU. Caucasians and Central Asians face not just discrimination but physical violence when they try to live and work in today's Russia (see Avanisian, Ahmedbeili and Bukia, 2006; Thieme, 2007).

➜ 7. European youth research since 1989: achievements and challenges

Youth migration in post-1989 Europe has conformed with one of the so-called laws of migration: the main flow has been and continues to be from poorer to richer countries. This is one of the continuing differences between young people in eastern and western Europe. Youth in the west have more money, spend more money, and have more spent on them by their families and governments. Are there other differences, and are these differences sufficient for east and west to remain useful sociological categories in the study of youth? The west used to mean economically developed and democratic (in the western sense) and therefore not communist. There is no longer a communist "other" in Europe, so what can "western" mean today? Do post-socialist and post-communist retain analytical value apart from signalling legacies from history?

The conditions of young people in east and west Europe have certainly converged since 1989. In some ways, not least in living standards, the east is still catching up, but in other ways the east now appears to be ahead. The economies of western Europe have deindustrialised in terms of employment. Their working classes have declined numerically and as social, cultural and political formations. Joining their countries' middle classes has become the meaning of "getting on" for western youth. As in ex-communist countries, western higher education has expanded. Youth has become a longer life stage in the west, extending throughout and beyond the age group once covered by the Komsomol (16-28). During this life stage, western youth have become more dependent on their families for housing and income. Typical ages of first marriages and parenthood have risen in western and eastern Europe.

As indicated above, the differences among ex-communist countries today are greater than was the case in 1989. Since then, social researchers have become more sensitive to differences among western, and more specifically west European countries. The ways in which older differences have weakened, while other differences may have become more significant, is a set of issues on which youth research is well placed to contribute to a broader sociology of contemporary Europe. The justification for spotlighting youth in research into the effects of the post-1989 changes in eastern Europe was that they would be the age group most immediately affected by the change of system, that they were the future adults, and young people's responses to their new circumstances would offer insights into the kinds of post-communist societies that were emerging. It is equally the case in western Europe and, indeed,

all over the world, that young people's experiences during their life stage transitions open exceptionally wide windows through which to view historical changes in family patterns and practices, housing regimes, education, labour market conditions, and levels and patterns of civic and political engagement.

The social research community was unprepared for 1989, but this is not the sole reason why the accomplishments of subsequent youth research have fallen short of their potential. There have been lots of ad hoc snapshot studies in ad hoc selections of countries into young people's attitudes and values (support for the market and democracy, for example), experiences in the labour market, and engagement and non-engagement in the public sphere. Projects have been ad hoc partly because there was no European social research community in 1989. The opening conference of the European Sociological Association was in 1992. We now know that the best way to explore the micro-effects (on the daily lives of different population sections) of macro-changes is the household panel survey, but the first study of this type, the British Household Panel Survey, which subsequently became part of the European Household Panel Survey, commenced only in 1991. Also, it was only in 1990 that Gosta Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* was first published; following which there has been much further work, some directly addressing the youth life stage, distinguishing different types of European societies (see, for example, Gangl, 2001; Szdlik, 2002). However, whether there are a limited number of "types" of European societies remains unclear. In respect of young people's experiences, countries can be distinguished in several ways:

• education systems: the ages to which young people normally continue in education, and whether they are divided into different tracks;
• degrees of labour market regulation;
• housing regimes: the sizes of the social housing sectors which may be used by young people during their transitions out of their parents' homes;
• welfare regimes: universal, conservative (employment-based), liberal (safety-net), and minimal (relying on the family as the normal support system, which will be related to family as well as welfare ideologies).

A problem is that whereas on some criteria there has been a clear north-south gradient in western Europe (in the ages to which young people continue to reside with their parents, for example) (see Ivacovou and Berthoud, 2001), on other criteria such as labour market regulation there are differences among the southern countries (Spain and Portugal, for example) and also among the central-west countries (UK and Germany, for instance). So are there a limited number of types of European societies, or does each country possess a unique and distinctive combination of features? Are the ex-communist countries becoming a single additional type, or are they becoming a further set of European societies each with its own distinctive mix of characteristics? Or are different ex-communist countries developing into different types of (originally) west European societies? Youth research could have begun addressing these questions in the early 1990s, but the opportunity has not been lost forever – it is still there, and the research community now has the organisation, the methods, and the concepts and theories to tackle these questions.

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Mirjana Ule **Reconstruction of youth in post-socialism: expectations and dilemmas**

→ 1. Introduction

During the past 50 years, youth studies have proved to be a good indicator of the relevance of new societal trends. Not only is the social, cultural and political process of attaining independence by youth in the 20th century a direct consequence of political modernisation, it is also its mirror. While science offers theoretical proof of the changes in the social order, it has been youth that has provided empirical proof of these changes in past decades (Parsons, 1963; Mannheim, 1952; Coleman, 1961; Musgrove, 1964). Creators of social elites, public opinion and mass culture have all carefully observed the undertakings of youth, in search of legitimisation of their ideas or to try to make young people enthusiastic about these ideas. They have searched for signs of future changes among youth and have regarded them as initiators and originators of these changes (Habermas, 1994; Keniston, 1971, 1972).

This symbolic role of youth has been exhausted in the past two decades. At least for Slovenia we can assert that young people, who were once a privileged societal group in the socialist period, are now the "weakest link" of the transition. Our thesis is that youth

has changed in recent decades from being a symbolic representative of societal change in times of socialism to an ordinary age group in contemporary times, which has no particular or significant social/societal importance. It could even be said that youth has been reduced to a marginal group.

→ 2. Youth as the embodiment of progress

The ideal of growth and progress was one of the fundamental underlying conceptual links in socialism, particularly in the ideological structures of youth. In this way, ideologies of progress and radical social change were a crucial factor in the social construction of youth in socialism; they homogenised youth in a virtual embodiment of a societal future. This kind of positioning of young people was especially characteristic of the socialist systems of eastern Europe after the Second World War.

The story of youth in Slovenia was part of the common frame of Yugoslavia until the 1990s. Yugoslavia was writing a story which was meant to be socialist, but nevertheless different from other real-socialist stories (Ule and Rener, 1998). This diversity can be seen in a relative openness to the world and in a greater autonomy of the individual in the system. The role of youth in post-war Yugoslav society was clearly integrative. Young people were motivated to identify with the system by the argument that it is precisely through their intensive co-operation in the rebuilding of the socialist society that they would create a better future for themselves. Since Yugoslav society was very rapidly developing economically, and young people were participating in this swift advancement (regarding the possibilities of education, employment and an improved material standard), the great majority of youth identified themselves with the social system, its values and aims (Ule, 1988). The political public was fascinated by young people, who were compared with the negative image and perception of the young in the west. This is why the image of young people in this period was clearly and undoubtedly positive.

This process was under particular pressure from ideological and political structures that had taken control of all spheres of work and behaviour of youth. In their speeches, politicians emphasised the importance of learning, studying and collective work. The positive effects of sports, military education and discipline in general were honoured, as opposed to the bourgeois influence, which was thought to promote a lack of ideas, aimlessness and political passivity. A typically patronising style of speech and writing about youth fits perfectly into the ideological treatment of young people and into the goal of the social and ideological homogenisation of youth. In this "environment of perfection" there were few incidences of deviance among young people.

However, from the 1960s onward, speeches of politicians as well as texts and comments in media began to appear that warned against the various "non-socialist", "bourgeois" habits of some young people in Slovenia and in other Yugoslav republics. Students were particularly suspect, as they had always been the most resistant to the seduction of the authorities and ideologies. This is why political speeches often approached university students separately from the other parts of the younger generations, especially from the exemplary working class youth. The authorities reacted with warnings to the general public that students were becoming alienated from the society and from the Communist Party in Yugoslavia, that they were beginning to accept negative influences from the west, and that criminal immorality was appearing among them. Young people for the first time became a source of worries.

Conflict between youth (university students) and society in Slovenia and other urban centres in Yugoslavia had intensified by the end of the 1960s, and culminated in the student movements. These movements appeared at approximately the same time as in other parts of the world and were the first mass expression of the crisis of Yugoslav socialist society. Students demanded greater liberalisation of the system, freedom of speech and media, and greater decentralisation of economic and political power. Student movements mainly took place in major urban centres such as Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. For the first time, they warned about differences between the ideological image of youth and their real lives, about the differences between urban centres and rural areas, and especially about the differences among republics in Yugoslavia.

The extensive survey on young people carried out in 1986[2] on a sample of 6 849 young people indicates how very different young people were on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Vrcan, 1986). The results of the survey revealed significant differences among Yugoslav youth that did not originate in social differences, as we had been expecting, but which were linked primarily to the republic affiliation of the respondents. The more advantageous the economic situation in a republic (GDP per capita, employment rate, education rate), the more critical were young people towards the system and its institutions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Attitude of youth towards the Communist Party with regard to republican citizenship (in %)
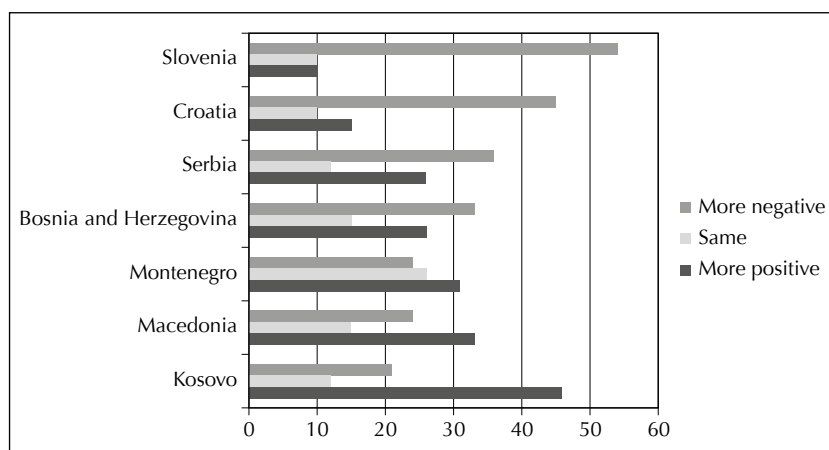
Source: Vrcan, 1986.

We could discern a clear parallel: the stronger the political ideological pressure in a republic of former Yugoslavia, the more young people identified themselves with the system. The research showed not only differences in positions towards the system, but also differences in value and cultural orientations across Yugoslav

2. In 1986 we carried out an all-Yugoslav youth survey called "The Situation, Consciousness and Behaviour of the Young Generation in Yugoslavia" (N=6 840 young people). The idea originated from the leadership of the Yugoslav youth organisation. The research team was constituted from researchers from the whole of Yugoslavia; the head of the research team was Professor Srdjan Vrcan from the University of Zagreb, Croatia. The research was also supported by some leading (more liberal) politicians in the Yugoslav political leadership. Without their support, this research would have not been possible.

republics and provinces. Factor analysis of value orientations on the scales of individualism, collectivism and traditionalism has shown that in Slovenia and Croatia the prevailing values were those of individualism, while in Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina the prevailing values were those of collectivism and traditionalism (Vrcan, 1986: 72).

Results of the Yugoslav survey of youth in the 1980s indicated and warned that many differences and contradictions existed in the social and political system of Yugoslavia. While on the one hand there were young people in less developed areas of Yugoslavia and outside major urban centres that still rather blindly trusted the traditional patterns of development, on the other, in Slovenia and in developed urban centres of Yugoslavia, there was already a developing model of reflexive modernisation that is based on civil society and new social movements (Ule, 1987; Vrcan, 1988; Pavlović, 1988; Kreft, 1988). The research drew attention to how these differences were generated in the young generation and how they actually indicated the later collapse of the system. In the 1980s in Slovenia, it was precisely youth that was the bearer of the societal changes and also the most distinctive representative of these changes. Perhaps this role was even more significant for the break with the communist one-party system than the actual political power of young people.

➜ 3. The challenge of change

The post-socialist transition in Slovenia has rendered empty the fundamental ideological concept through which youth was linked with the idea of modernisation, namely the concept of progress. The new system does not require particular symbolic representation for its own legitimacy, nor does it require social movements which would represent the political will of the people. And above all, there exists no such need which would require these ideologies to express themselves through young people. Therefore, the hypothetical inherent link between youth and progress in Slovenia and in other east European countries has been replaced with another, equally hypothetical inherent link, this time between youth and individualisation of life. And this link is initiating young people into a new privacy of the globalised consumer society.

Young people in Slovenia are now confronted with a competitive educational system, a demanding and restrictive labour market, as well as with a prolonged period of dependence on parents. The risky transition to adulthood compels them to search for flexible strategies that are able to lead them to their (uncertain) goals through the maze of the education system, work, entertainment, family and peer relations (Ule et al., 2000; Ule, 2008). Young people are marginalised in the labour market, excluded from the essential flows of the adult society and, consequently, deprived of the origins of power. Without economic or political representatives, young people have few rights and privileges and, accordingly, a lower social status.

The hypothetical link between youth and progress has also weakened in the western world, not only in transition countries. It has weakened in parallel with the growing crisis of the connection between planning and the future and the waning of the ideology of progress (Leccardi, 2006). This crisis is closely connected with the growth of "risk society" (Beck, 1992). When attempting to describe the younger generation in transition times, researchers now find themselves in a predicament. The younger generation again appears to be undefined socially, culturally and in terms of lifestyle; youth subcultures seem to replay old tunes or else opt for

regressions. This position has been indirectly reinforced by everyday lay discourse on young people that tends to generalise their particular problems. Youth in modern societies is no longer a crucial voice or an important representative of society, but an ordinary age group with no particular or clear social role. It seems that all that generational and cultural modernisation has left behind is consumer emancipation and an autonomous position of individuals on the uncounted markets of consumer styles, fashion, images and the shaping of the body.

3.1. Problems of youth

Youth studies in Slovenia from the 1990s onward have shown that the scope and weight of the problems young people are facing are increasing, as are the risks associated with attempts to solve these problems.[3] If young people in the research in 1986 were still exposing problems related to civil rights and liberties, such as "moral crises and lack of ideals" (16% of respondents thought this was very important), "insufficient concern by society for youth" (14% of respondents strongly agreed), "lack of freedom of speech and thought" (11% of respondents strongly agreed); young people in the earliest studies in the 1990s began to expose predominantly social and economic problems. For example, for 72% of respondents in the study of middle-school youth in 1993, the biggest problem they face is fear of unemployment (Ule and Miheljak, 1995).

Research on the social and economic situation of students in Slovenia in 2008[4] has shown similar trends: 69.4% of respondents stated that they expect to face problems when entering employment. Another finding is also indicative: a gender comparison shows that female students expect significantly more problems than male students. One third more female students expect problems with employment because they are educated for a profession for which there is no (or insufficient) demand. Also, almost twice as many female students think that it will be more difficult to get a job due to the economic crisis. Moreover, 50% more female students believe it will be more difficult to gain employment because they lack the right connections. On the other hand, almost twice as many male students believe they will easily find employment since their profession is in demand; also, more male students believe they have the right connections and acquaintances.

Likewise, female students are more worried than male students in all situations under the question "What are your worries for the future?". And again, they are most concerned about being unemployed (Ule et al., 2008). All these results indicate how the economic situation of young people in the post-transition period is worsening and how subtle pressures on them are increasing.

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3. Studies on youth have been carried out systematically by the Centre for Social Psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences since 1993. The first major empirical research study on young people in Slovenia was conducted in 1993. The survey, which included secondary school students (the sample included 2 354 pupils) (Ule and Miheljak, 1995) was followed by the next empirical research programme in 1995, which included 1 829 students from universities in Slovenia (Ule et al., 1996). In 1998 we conducted a study on a population of 15 year olds (the sample included 1 687 primary school pupils) (Ule et al., 2000). In 2000 we surveyed a sample of 1 800 young people between the ages of 15 and 29 (Miheljak, 2002).

4. The research project Socialno-ekonomski položaj študentov (Social and Economic Status of Students) was carried out by the Centre for Social Psychology in 2008 on a sample of 3 006 students from all four universities in Slovenia.

The list of problems in post-socialist countries in the last 20 years has thus changed considerably (Ilišin and Radin, 2007; Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006; Kovatcheva, 2001; Roberts, 2003). The fundamental contradiction that young people have to resolve is the contrast between an increasing range of options for individual managing and planning of life, on the one hand, and the lesser predictability of and control over life courses, on the other. Social and economic statuses continue to determine life courses, but their influence is less visible and less direct because collective traditions have been weakening and individualistic strategies are becoming dominant (Miheljak, 2002; Ule, 2008; France, 2007; Clark, 2008). On the other hand, the individual is compelled to take steps to avoid shouldering the burden of consequences.

These difficulties additionally increase the social and psychological vulnerability of young people. They also escalate difficulties and accumulate unresolved problems that tend to feed one another. Youth studies all across Europe indicate that the structural characteristics of social vulnerability (for example, a disadvantaged starting position) as a rule become intertwined with cultural and interactive aspects (Du Bois-Reymond and Chisholm, 2006; Chisholm et al., 1995). Due to mostly structural sources of problems and difficulties during youth, young people often experience them as an irresolvable vicious circle and sometimes try to resolve them by means of various unreflective short cuts (for example, consumerism, addictions and escapism in pop youth lifestyles). These short cuts at best only temporarily drive the problems out of the mind, while in reality making them even worse.

3.2. Domestification and "normalisation" of youth

Changes in social status and positions provoke different reactions among young people; among these adaptations, we can also clearly observe changes of life and value orientations. The results of diverse youth studies after 1990 in Slovenia show that for young people, the shaping of everyday life and value systems has been a part of their daily search for a balance amid their personal wishes and expectations, on the one hand, and social demands and options, on the other (Ule and Rener, 1998). Yet the balance between expectations and demands, on the one hand, and individuals' competences or capacities for action, on the other, is conditional and exposed to a great many risks. For many, the conventional signs of success (for example, income, career, status) fall short of their hunger for a "fulfilling life" and an increasing need to "find their own way" and to freely shape their personality.

An overview of the value orientations (Figure 2) indicates that the most important values for young people in Slovenia are expressive values, such as true friendship, family life, a peaceful world without wars, freedom of acting and thinking, protection of nature, world of beauty, nature and art. Less important are material and career values: material goods, money, power and influence. It is very interesting that values which we typically assign to youth are also less important, for example an exciting life, creativity, originality and imagination.

Figure 2: How important are the following things for you?
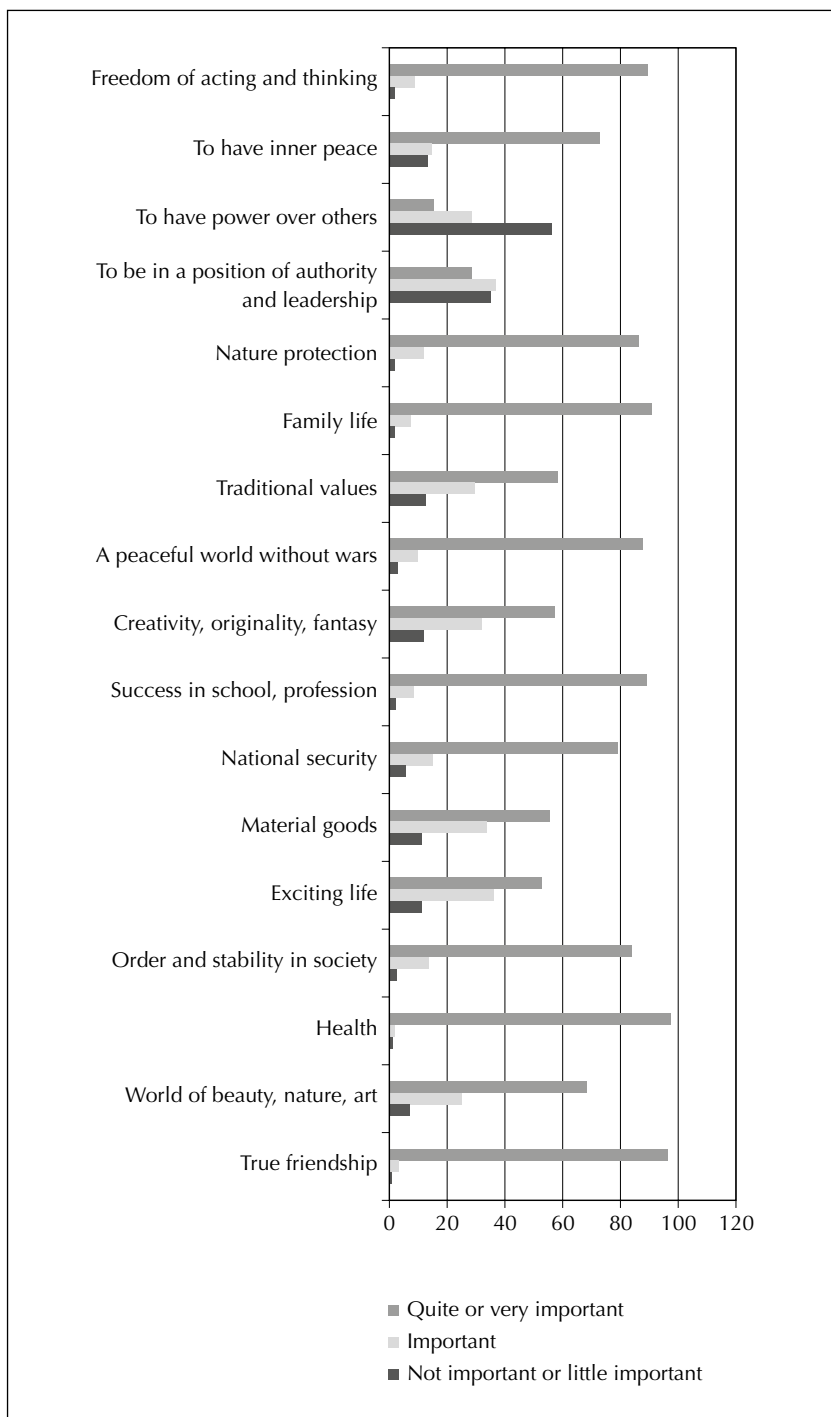
Source: Miheljak, 2002.

Findings from studies of youth in Slovenia have indicated the following four patterns of value changes:

- change of values related to work: finding an appropriate career, competitive, individualised patterns of relationships towards jobs and work;
- change of family values: shifting to a focus on privacy and intimacy of private life, prolonging the period of residence in the family of origin, postponing parenthood, differentiation of family formations;
- individualisation of choices and life courses: self-representation, forming and cultivating one's image, body shape;
- quick appropriation of consumer values, mediated through mass media, rapid formation of youth consumer culture.

Some researchers have characterised change in the value orientations of eastern European youth as a westernisation of their lives and value orientations (Watts, 1994; Chisholm et al., 1995). And this is supposed to be only the introduction to the westernisation of everyday life of all age groups and generations. Youth should be the quickest to appropriate consumer values and to master information culture. With regard to the fact that western values were available to youth from Slovenia and also other areas of ex-Yugoslavia already prior to the transition, it would be inappropriate to label and interpret these changes as "westernisation". In fact, these changes of value orientations are more a reaction to the economic, political and cultural changes that have occurred in the time of transition.

Young people are constantly facing new contradictions; as a result, attaining independence and personal growth are becoming more difficult than ever. It is true that young people are liberating themselves of traditional ties and dependencies, but they are becoming more and more dependent on the pressures of other social institutions upon which they have no or very little influence. These institutions are mostly the labour market, the education system, systems of social care and protection, systems of social security and health (Beck, 1997; France, 2007). Older generations can still obtain power for adjusting to the new societal trends from the "socialisation reserves" of the past, and combine traditional and new patterns of individualisation. Young people, on the other hand, will have to spend their entire lives in these new conditions of modern society.

An analysis of fundamental dimensions of life and value orientations in the years after 1990 indicates some important changes. The most conspicuous of these changes is the shifting of young people's attention to everyday life and privacy, and their return to the family. This occurrence could be called the "domestification" of youth, and it has a twofold significance: one is the return of young people from the public sphere to the private, and the other is the obstruction of the critical and alternative tendencies of young people under the auspices of the "home".

The "return" of youth from autonomous scenes to their parents and family is tantamount to the transition of the modern middle-class nuclear family to the "supportive" family in late 20th century in Europe. In the supportive family, all members try to be individuals in their own right (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The supportive family gives strong emotional support to its members, including support to children so they can assert themselves in society. Its central objective is to further the development of children as individuals. Children became "a family project" and parents see themselves as friends, comrades or counsellors to their children (Mørch and Andersen, 2006).

The late 1960s and 1970s witnessed the "breakthrough" of new, socially highly significant value and life orientations and a value shift among young people in Slovenia. The values of youth cultures and subcultures (for example, sexual liberation, individual freedom of speech, thought, action, lifestyle) became a part of the public consciousness. Even though this took on the form of a conflict between adults and post-adolescent youth, what was happening then had more to do with the breaking of the last taboos and limitations that represented obstacles for all generations in their departure from the old values of traditional industrialism. In the 1980s there occurred a further shift within the system of values, namely a shift from the global value systems produced by different ideologies to particular, seemingly fragmentary and concrete values among which the higher sensibility of interpersonal relationships and the quality of everyday life prevailed.

In the last two decades, we have also observed an increase in the significance of "socially desirable/conformist" values (health, order and stability, family life). Research results thus show that when working on their life projects, young people are not really innovative. On the contrary, they are defensive and, rather than opting for experiments or innovations, they tend to settle for the simulation of various stereotypes of normality, despite the fact that their starting positions differ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1994). We have also observed that young people desire to present themselves as entirely ordinary and normal. This rhetoric of normality enables them to constitute an apparently clear position; however, it does not enable youth to discursively articulate their own position. We are talking more about a kind of simulation of normality. And this simulation is for young people a sort of armour.

In contemporary times, when all that is normal and ordinary has been turned around and there is nothing firm and binding, we see another question raised. This is the question of a norm of normality, about which structures and which discourses are dictating this norm (Beck, Giddens and Lasch, 1994). The simulation of normality tends towards a de-temporalised view of social and individual histories and futures, where only the immediate present becomes relevant. It seems that "presentification" is more the fruit of a privileged strategy of biographical construction in the individualised society than one of the aspects of a "syndrome of de-temporalisation" characteristic of the second modernity (Leccardi, 2006). A well-known "diagnosis" of a postmodern condition, according to which there are increasing life possibilities and individual freedoms, and young people are their own architects or "identity managers", is therefore valid only under those frames of possibilities that are set by the social and political structures.

3.3. Political profile of young people

To the new circumstances of contemporary society most young people respond with increased effort and a continued search for opportunities and investigation of risks; and not with protests or by showing rejection of existing society. The extensive resistance of young people to the intrusions of society into their individual lives is manifested in their negative or passive attitude towards politics (Figure 3).

Figure 3: How would you evaluate your interest in politics (Slovenia, 2000)?
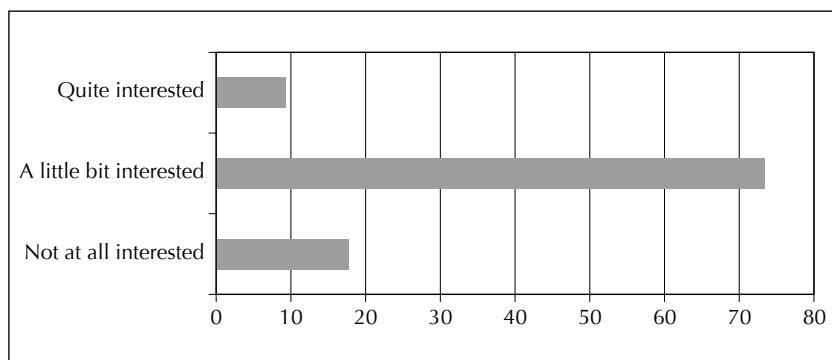
Source: Miheljak, 2002.

Yugoslav research on youth in the 1980s had already indicated a sceptical attitude of youth towards the public, and this was especially true for Slovenia. And in those times, a sceptical attitude was accompanied by a readiness to engage in informal, alternative forms of political action, civil initiatives, etc. Contrary to this attitude, in a transition period young people have turned away from any kind of politics as a collective activity. They have been simply trying to stay "out". It is interesting that researchers of youth in Germany, in a study entitled "Jugend 2006", found that youth minorities of the radical left and right still exist, but they are marked, more than by ideology, by the expression of positive or negative emotions, prejudices and by the tendency of young people to belong to "powerful" groups that know how to withstand institutions of the state (Hurrelmann and Albert, 2006). Thomas Gensicke observes: "Otherwise youth is interested in politics mostly only as much as can be reached by a click-on-computer" (2006: 139). It is in this manner, Gensicke believes, that we have to understand the sympathising of a considerable portion of youth with anti-globalisation movements. Namely, taking part in these movements is an exceptional opportunity for connecting with young people around the world with the help of the Internet.

Young people in Europe generally, and especially in the transition countries, are diverting themselves from traditional political activity. Political parties barely attract new members. Contemporary civil-societal initiatives and movements are facing similar problems. Some researchers explain this trend by the effects of a particular media and Internet culture in which the young are growing up (France, 2007; Mizen, 2004). But this is hardly a sufficient explanation for such a change. And yet young people show interest in at least some topics, such as social justice, environmental protection and the problems of marginal groups. At the same time, politicians are dependent and count on the votes of older generations, and this leads to an even deeper rupture between young people and formal politics. Nonetheless, this kind of attitude of young people is in itself very politically significant; young people are resisting nonsense and obligations, which is what adults often exhaust themselves in without any critical evaluation of their commitments.

➔ 4. The end of utopias in the era of transitions

Processes over the last two decades seemingly ultimately diverted young people from the "grand themes" that formed the foundations of the social movements in the 1980s, such as human rights, social justice, gender equality and autonomy of

civil society as opposed to the state, although it is also true that these topics disappeared from the public discourse in general. Neoconservatism and neo-liberalism are destroying institutions that are based on solidarity and not on the clear and strict logic of profit; and hence they are destroying the "support network" of youth cultures and social movements as well.

It seems that the young generations in Slovenia in the last two decades have forfeited utopian ideals – or perhaps we should say that they are not willing to look for them any more. This also means that social criticism and protests no longer take the form of generational or age-determined social movements, but of a dispersed, fragmented socio-political scene in which young people play the roles of extras rather than being active subjects who know how to clearly formulate their demands and wishes. Young people as a social group did not melt away in a transgenerational, trans-ideological and plural society of many differences as initially appeared to be the case. Instead, they transformed them into an age group without its own distinctive features. Consequently, the majority of society takes notice of young people only when it feels threatened by them or when it recognises them as potential consumers.

The thesis concerning the deconstruction/disappearance of youth as an intermediate or transitional stage was first introduced in the 1980s. The change of youth was brought about by the structural reorganisation of socialisation, which eliminated the need for a unique intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood (Walther, 2006). Viewed from the perspective of the 1980s, the deconstruction of youth appeared as a process of young people's liberation from social infantilisation, and as the emancipation process of youth as opposed to the adult world. And for this reason, the thesis about deconstruction of youth sounded so optimistic, and that is why many theoreticians and researchers of youth had been developing it (Trotha, 1982; Zinnecker, 1987). The same was true for Slovenia, where we had been discovering that the inferior status of youth as a generational group was being aborted and that young people were becoming initiators and subjects of new social movements that were no longer segmented by age (Ule, 1988: 126).

Today, the same thesis about the deconstruction of youth no longer sounds so optimistic. It displays itself as acceptance of prolonging the social childhood of youth, as placing young people into particular "ghettos", where they are pushed into prolonged education with no clear and definite strategies and prospects for the future (Coté, 2007). In Slovenia we are dealing with an always "thinner" segment of young people who are literally from birth onwards accompanied by a mix of worries for the future and every kind of investment from their parents. Differences among young people are increasing; class, gender, ethnic differences. Particular ways in which the redistribution of property has been occurring over the past two decades have also considerably increased differences in the starting positions of young people, who are becoming ever more dependent on family capital, support and familial social networks.

Yet, it is not solely demographic trends that are responsible for the reduced share and value of young people in comparison to other population groups (Blossfeld et al., 2005). Another important factor in the social exclusion of youth is the narrowing of the "space for youth", which has come to be limited to the spheres of privacy and leisure time. The private world of young people along with the help and support of their parents offers them a shelter and place of withdrawal from the pressures of the increasingly complicated and unclear everyday world of adults. However, it was precisely young people who have most obviously and faster than any other societal group replaced their interest in social justice, gender equality, autonomy

of civil society, human rights, and democratic public opinion with conspicuously private conceptions of the social world characterised by social anomy and loss of collective/historical memory. This tendency is in accord with similar changes of youth in late-modern societies, with individualisation of youth, increased emphasis of everyday pragmaticism and disinterest in any of the ideological "big stories".

The passage from socialism to neo-liberalism has revived social differences, such as class, gender and ethnic differences. For a minority of young people in Slovenia, these changes have opened up possibilities for success, a career and material standards that were simply unimaginable before. A limited number of young people from the privileged class have access to promising educational degrees, successful careers and good employment. But, on the other hand, more and more young people are facing increasingly uncertain and unpredictable working conditions with short-term employment, prolonged economic dependency on families of origin, and the practical institutionalising of lower incomes.

Prolonged economic dependence also has another price: young people have to face various conflicts with their parents, which are arising precisely and only because of these prolonged cohabitations. And in these cohabitations, parents are prevailing since they have more economic and political power. If we also take into consideration that after they finish education young people rarely get a job suitable for their qualifications and that they are usually given the lowest wages when they start, then we can also see that the price of youth in Slovenia has become exceedingly high. The low price of youth work is rewarding employers, not young people. Employers definitely profit since they have access to a low paid workforce with the most up-to-date education. In this way, young people are marginalised in the labour market, excluded from the essential flows of the adult society and, consequently, deprived of the origins of power.

This is the framework in which the social and political reconstruction of youth in Slovenia and elsewhere in the transition countries has taken place. The autonomy of young people has been considerably reduced after the process of contracting the welfare state transferred the majority of costs for the social reproduction of youth from the state back to the family. Without economic or political representatives, young people have only a few rights, privileges and, accordingly, a lower social status. They conceive the social world as unclear and unpredictable.

New information technologies and media offer elements of multiculturalism and global internationalism; they constantly inform young people of new cultures and lifestyles. All this results in a widening of young people's world and liberates them from traditional conservative cultural ties and patterns. But, on the other hand, this same world is particularising and individualising their common problems and offers only substitutes and not solutions to real-life dilemmas and problems. Youth itself is defined exactly by the ability to rise above the psychological and physical process of growing up, and in that way becomes a socially, culturally and politically significant social group. If there is no future for these members of society, or if roads to those futures are closed, inaccessible, then we can no longer speak about "youth" in the true sense of the word. It is interesting that policy makers are not disturbed by the lack of young people in public life. Moreover, today's adult society, due to its developmental irresponsibility, is literally and with no hesitation parasitising the future of later generations. The irresponsibility of contemporary society for the future goes directly hand in hand with society's indifference towards young people, and occurs regardless of the cult of youth that otherwise reigns in contemporary mass culture.

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Changing times, changing lives: the social construction of youth and its public images in Bulgaria before and after 1989[5]

Siyka Kovacheva

➜ Introduction

Youth has always been a focus of public debates in Bulgaria for my generation, for whom history taught at school was nothing but a string of wars and revolutions and, as might be expected, youth "has always been in the front rows of the fight", as claimed by the *Otechestven Front* newspaper (Issue 10, 18 September 1944) – the official "voice" from the first days of the communist revolution in Bulgaria. Throughout the 20th century, youth has been a highly ideological concept over which the fight for the future has been staged.

This chapter addresses the question of how the interplay of public images and academic theories of youth both reflect and influence (through youth policy) the youth condition. It explores how the

changing public perceptions of young people arise from the changing situation of youth in the pre-industrial, communist and post-communist societies, after which I investigate what could be the winning pattern of interaction between youth theories and youth policies for empowering young people as active agents in social change. The first part of the paper gives a short overview of the changing images and theories of youth in Bulgaria in the 20th century. The second part examines the shifting public images of youth in the course of the social transformation since the "gentle" revolution in 1989 and the development of youth studies in the 21st century. The third part focuses on the interactions between academic and popular debate, and public policies as situated in the social context of the transforming society.

➔ 1. Changing images of youth

1.1. Youth in the traditional pre-industrial society

I will start my story with the image of a beautiful and healthy young woman, as youth was portrayed in the pre-industrial society. Youth was associated with health and happiness and was very brief, as there was little change in values and practices between generations and therefore not much need of formal education. There also was no focused state intervention to construct youth in pre-industrial society and it was the folklore – songs and stories – that created the public image of youth. In Bulgarian folklore the woman is tall and upright as a poplar, with a face as white as cheese, eyes as black as cherries and cheeks as red as roses. Ivan Khadzijski (1943: 47), who used this image in his writings on life in Bulgarian villages in the early 20th century, commented that it sounded like "gastronomised aesthetics". In practice, it reflected the position of the young woman in the traditional society, who was married (partners being chosen by the parents) on the basis of her beauty, which stood for the health and strength needed for hard agricultural labour.

Khadzijski, who published in the 1930s and 1940s, was the first to create a more or less concise theory of youth in Bulgaria. He was a researcher working from a multidisciplinary perspective (sociology, psychology and ethnography) using qualitative methods of in-depth interviews, participant observation and personal documents. For him, youth was a culturally constructed life stage and how the individual experienced it depended on the wider social construction of time and space, as well as on the class position of the individual. He studied pre-industrial Bulgarian society from a Marxist viewpoint, and distinguished between the "short-term" youth in the village – those involved in agricultural production (around the age of 16) – and the "longer term" youth (between 8 and 16 years of age), namely those sent away from the family home to learn a craft in other people's households.

The life of the peasant was structured in a cyclical pattern of time, in which youth was "a sip of happiness", a brief period of festivities in the village square, when the individuals enjoyed a (short) moratorium before settling down in a traditional extended family and resuming adult responsibilities for their own livelihood and parenthood. Young peasants (men) lived in their father's house and continued to do so after they married and had their own children. The youth of a craftsman was very different, following a different pattern of time and space. It was much longer, taking at least eight years of training – a time of hard labour ("from dark till dark"), while learning the craft at a master's shop before being accepted in the craft guild (Khadzijski, 1943: 196). Spatially, this type of youth transition was enclosed between the "crying stone" at the end of the village, at which the child and his mother separated on the child's route to his master's shop, and the foundation stone of the craftsman' own home and shop. Moving away from orthodox Marxist

visions at the time, which neglected gender divisions, Khadzijski perceived youth transitions in the traditional society as also organised in gendered models, so that while men could follow the two above paths to adulthood, for women there was only one very brief youth route – from the parents' home to the husband's home. Both young men and women were subjected to patriarchal authority, although there was a clear hierarchy of age and gender. The man could expect to gain independence with adulthood and break away from the subordination of youth. Women seemed to never fully grow up and had to be protected all the time by first their fathers and then by their husbands, and show proper obedience and modesty. As Khadzijski (1943: 207) beautifully summed it up: "It was impossible on a working day to see someone strolling in the street – it was impossible for a young man, more impossible for a woman and the most impossible for a girl".

These images of "normal" youth transitions continued to dominate the public scene in Bulgaria until the mid-20th century when society as a whole experienced a radical change – the communist revolution in 1944. It paved the way for wide-scale industrialisation of the economy, the spread of universal education, and the development of the welfare state and youth organisations – the new constructors of youth.

1.2. Youth in communist modernisation

The second image in my story is that of a young coal miner smiling in front of the camera. In contrast to the white and red colours of the previous portrait, this image is painted in grey – grey clothes and face covered with big drops of sweat. It suits the aspirations of the one-party regime to unify youth transitions better than the red colour of the communist flag. The movie director has put even more soot on the young face to convey the image of hard labour. Instead of the folk song, this image is taken from a newsreel – a documentary which was obligatorily broadcast in cinemas before the movie all over the country in the 1960s and 1970s. While I could have taken any of the young heroes in the newsreels – steel workers, loom weavers, tractor drivers, etc. – what the image of the miner shows is that youth under communism was already a target of deliberate state intervention and was interpreted as a collective agent of the radical social transformation carrying the main responsibility for realisation of the communist ideal – the unified classless society (Kitanov, 1981). Youth was constructed systematically through many channels – ideological education, participation in the centrally planned economy, obligatory military service and generous welfare provision, and was defined as those aged between 14 and 28 – the ages of participation in the official youth organisation, the Communist Youth League (Komsomol). Bulgaria had one of the highest rates of Komsomol membership among the socialist countries – over 80% (Peneva, 1982).

In the changed situation of the industrial society, youth studies were faced with the need to specify youth as a social group. This was a big challenge as under the conditions of the dominant ideology – official Marxism – social groups had to be defined by their relations to the means of production. Bulgarian sociologists solved the problem by defining youth as a sociobiological category (Mitev, 1988; Semov, 1972). Another specific of youth studies in the country was that instead of accepting the dominant functionalist perspective in sociology at the time with the corresponding concept about the social integration of youth in society through socialisation, Bulgarian youth sociologists Mitev (1982) and Gospodinov (1981), together with their Romanian colleague Mahler (1983) created the theory of "juventisation".

Juventisation was among the most influential theories in communist east Europe, where the establishment of youth studies as a legitimate academic discipline and

the setting up of its research agenda came about with the rising political concerns of the 1960s and 1970s and the mounting economic difficulties in the Soviet camp (Kovacheva, 2005). Unlike the classic notions of youth participation as a passive process of integration into societal structures, the concept of "juventisation" (Mitev, 1988, 1982) offered an understanding of youth as an active and committed group and described participation as a two-way process – an interaction rather than integration, a development of both young people and society. From this perspective, young people were seen as the group who produced new values and who, through their active participation in social life, changed and "rejuvenated" society. The effect of youth participation was societal innovation. Whereas in the political context of societies with one-party regimes, this concept was soon blended into the dominant constructs of the official ideology, leaving aside and subduing its critical dimension towards the status quo, it still provided an innovative perspective to sociologists for the study of the youth situation (Kovacheva, 2005). More importantly, it produced some of the best examples of empirical research in the eastern part of the continent during the communist regimes, while most other fields of sociology were abstractly theoretical and under the influence of the official Marxist ideology.

In his empirical research, Mitev (1985) applied a generational approach which did not arise so much out of Mannheim's concept about political generations, but rather distinguished the three generations within the family – grandparents, parents and young people. Large-scale surveys were conducted to map the progressive change of values – from the grandparents through the parents to the young, and the empirical data showed that young people were the carriers of the value change – in the working ethics, in love and family values, in leisure and politics. Youth research gathered much empirical information about the varying experiences and expectations of different groups of young people despite the fact that research designs followed the main stratification scheme – working class youth, agricultural youth, intelligentsia youth. Gender differences were never a focus of targeted research as young women "proudly" comprised half of the industrial force (Semov, 1972). Women were also half of all members of the Komsomol but in the hierarchy of the "autonomous" youth organisation they were concentrated at the lower levels and rarely seen among the top positions (Kitanov, 1981).

Youth research was generously funded in the 1970s largely because young people were the most optimistic, future oriented and hence it was the least dangerous to study their experiences and aspirations. When, however, in the 1980s non-formal groups (Mitev, 1984) started to form among young people outside the formal structure of the Komsomol and these became research subjects that were interpreted as attempts at autonomous cultural expressions of youth, state funding was withdrawn. In the same way as the cultural practices of young people had to be determined by the official ideology of the party-state apparatus, so too had the empirical studies and theoretical interpretations of sociologists. Thus, when research detected the trend towards individualisation of youth, it was conceptualised as a strife towards "the self-realisation of the personality" while the mounting problems and discontent among youth were defined as a mismatch between their growing aspirations and the "still" limited job opportunities – concepts that seemed to be more in line with the communist ideology.

➜ 2. Youth under post-communism

The "gentle" revolution of 1989 was again a sharp break with the previous course of societal development and the corresponding patterns of typical youth transitions. The centrally planned economy collapsed, the private sector developed

slowly, higher education experienced a boom while the welfare state gradually contracted, withdrawing from control and support of young people. When Bulgaria joined the European Union in January 2007, tribute was paid to the political elite in the country for carrying out the negotiations and implementing the most urgent reforms. The role of young people in the process of European integration – both in the past and in the future – was not discussed at all, which is in stark contrast to the current focus of the European Commission on youth participation and active citizenship (European Commission, 2001, 2005, 2009). Nevertheless, in the course of the social transformation of Bulgarian society since 1989, young people have been the focus of public attention on at least three occasions: at the beginning of the reforms when occupations of university buildings contributed to the radicalisation of institutional change; then again in 1997 when mass demonstrations toppled the government; and 10 years later when mass media were overwhelmed with spectacular cases of teenage violence. The public debates featured three dominant images: "the young blue democrat", who was privileged by the opening up of the new institutional opportunities created by the market and multiparty politics; "the jumping kid", resisting the push to emigrate and protesting against the course the reforms took in Bulgaria; and "the adolescent with the knuckle duster" alienated from society and causing havoc and destruction. These three images correspond to three consecutive ideological constructions of youth: as the group expected to profit the most from the liberalisation of society, then as the group most vulnerable in market reforms, and, finally, as a threatening group, imposing risks on society.

Youth policies under post-communism both reflected and influenced the three upheavals in public discourse on youth, changing its strategy from contracting state intervention, through addressing specific groups at risk, to controlling the young in an attempt to save them and society from deviant youth behaviour. In a similar way, we can distinguish between three stages of youth research after the regime change (Kovacheva, 2005), which correspond to the three upheavals in youth discourse: the early 1990s when the notion of deconstruction of youth was dominant in youth studies, the late 1990s when unemployment, emigration and postponement of marriage and parenthood formed the agenda of youth research, and the first decade of the 21st century when attempts were made for collaboration among research, policy and practice on issues of youth violence and drug abuse.

2.1. The young blue hooligan

The first post-communist representation of youth was born in the strong gender and age stereotyping during the initial years of reforms when waves of occupations of university buildings by protesting students contributed to the radicalisation of institutional change. "The young blue hooligan" and "the old red woman" were negative cultural emblems mutually attributed by the competing sides in an over-politicised reality (Kovacheva, 2000). The two colours had explicit political meaning, the red depicting the former Communist Party which renamed itself as "socialist", and the blue was taken up by the new aspiring elite. The reformist elite framed young people as "the true democrats" – the most active political force insisting upon the radical democratisation of society – while the adults were "naturally" assigned the role of defenders of the lost cause.

The image of the young was male while the old generation was symbolically depicted as female with the connotation that women had been privileged by the old regime due to the ideological goal of gender equality. On their part, the old communist elite spoke about the young blue hooligan (male again) who did not

value the achievements of his parents' sacrificial labour in the communist construction and wanted to destroy not only the old political order but everything else too.

Negative or positive, the symbolic representations of youth implied that if only the young were liberated from state control, they would use the abundant opportunities offered by the market society and pluralistic politics. The public debate started with the assumption that the market economy privileged the young who would become the new successful entrepreneurs and legitimate party leaders. There was a historical irony in the fact that the "new" elite portrayed young people as having a great mission to build the "New World" (this time a world of the free market), while the "old" communist leaders immediately threw away their previous proclamation in the "abilities" of the young generation to rejuvenate society. The overarching objective of the student movement itself was "to change the system", a shift from the grey concrete in houses, streets and people's minds to a multicoloured world of choices (Kovacheva, 1995). The main slogan of the student occupations was "Equal opportunities for all, no more privileges", alluding to the system of privileged access to university for various categories of applicants such as "children of fighters against fascism"; "children of heroes of the socialist labour"; etc.

The youth situation was very fluid – inflation made study grants symbolic but each year new educational institutes appeared and the number of university students doubled during the first five years of market reforms. The developing labour market brought about unemployment but also many new opportunities for private initiatives which were unthinkable under the previous regime. A new housing market developed and the consumer markets put an end to the shortages of goods and services typical of the state economy – although most of these were not "yet" affordable for the young.

The triumph of the young hooligan/democrat as the dominant image in the politicised debate of the first years of social transformation corresponded to the new orientation of youth policy, stressing the values of individual liberty, equal treatment for all irrespective of age, and minimum state intervention. Youth policy was in disarray – it faced not only the financial challenge of contracting budgets and rising numbers of people in need, but also the breakdown of its main institutional channels. These channels – the mass youth organisation with its considerable property and dense network of youth workers and leisure facilities, the system of state allocation of graduates to jobs in state-owned enterprises, the low interest loans for young families by national banks – were being dissolved, privatised or going bankrupt.

The trend toward state withdrawal from active interference in the youth field was accompanied by the disappearance of youth studies from the public scene. The deconstruction of youth research was fostered not so much by the deconstruction of youth as a specific age group (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998) but by the closure of the Youth Institute that was perceived to have been associated with the previous regime and the venture of individual researchers in the blossoming spheres of political and business marketing, advertising and others. Those researchers who persisted in the youth field had to rely upon foreign funding and small-scale projects, as the sources for financing large nationwide surveys had disappeared. Youth studies had to orient themselves to new scientific paradigms, research design and methods, as well as to new research problems: for example, young people's political values (Mitev, 1996) and forms of political participation (Kovacheva, 1995), the youth labour market and entrepreneurship (Manolov, 1995).

2.2. The "jumping kid"

Towards the end of the decade there was a public representation of youth similar in many ways to that of the early 1990s but with contrasting connotations. The image of the "jumping kid" was created in the cold winter months of 1997 when Bulgaria experienced a deep financial and economic crisis, and young people marched along the streets jumping and protesting against the socialist prime minister. An opinion poll in 1997 (Mitev, 2001) showed overwhelming public sympathy with the youth protests. The positive evaluation of youth discontent had much to do with concerns regarding youth unemployment and the falling birth rate, as well as the fear of mass (youth) emigration abroad.

Young protestors themselves insisted on change, as their predecessors had done in 1990, with a demand for greater morality in politics. Instead of the former privileges, this time the protest was against "connections" – the unfair informal channels used for getting into university and more importantly for access to the labour market – for the first job and career success. The young seemed to have also appropriated the other main issue in public debates – the alleged push towards emigration abroad: "We don't want to emigrate" and "We want to succeed at home" were the slogans of this wave of youth demonstrations.

While at first glance, "the jumping kid" seemed an extension of the previous image of the young blue democrat, in practice this cultural emblem was that of the disillusioned democrat. The 1997 ideologisation of youth reflected the recognition of the fact that the newly created labour market was unfavourable to the young and their access to the economic and political institutions of society was blocked. This time the colouring of the youth image was not so unanimously blue, although the main opponent seemed to be the "red" socialist government, since the clear polarisation of political life in the initial years of the regime change was already gone. The site of protests shifted from university buildings to the streets. The disillusioned protestor used "street" pressure to instigate change, this time against the democratic institutions. At the height of youth unemployment (reaching 40% of the relevant age group of the workforce), the young were left with the choice of protesting against the institutions or leaving the country altogether and searching for better opportunities abroad in the classical dilemma of "voice" or "exit" (Hirschman, 1970).

Youth policy dropped the previous strategy of non-interference and adopted a more active approach, whilst remaining rather disoriented and with limited resources. The reformist governments were searching for quick-fix solutions to the high unemployment rate and early school leaving, offering short-lived programmes with a very thin spread and insufficient appeal for their target groups. The development of policy initiatives was stimulated by integration into European programmes for youth, although in Bulgaria these were used predominantly by activists of youth political organisations and did not reach the vast majority of young people. Nevertheless, numerous new associations sprang up to replace the old formal youth organisation, tackling ecological, cultural and charitable activities. Such organisations had a very limited membership among young people – recruiting about 8% of the relevant age group. Just 1% higher was the percentage of those in Bulgaria who could name a youth organisation in the country (Kovacheva, 2000). A dislike of forced participation in formal organisations, as well as the growing individualisation among young people were the principal reasons for the slow development of youth associative life.

Within the field of youth studies the second half of the 1990s was a period of overcoming the initial crisis in youth research. Addressing the increasing individualisation

and differentiation among young people, the focus was placed on the specific problems of specific groups among youth: the young unemployed (Kovacheva, 1999), the young homeless (Dandolova and Nikolaev, 1995), the religious youth movements (Asenov, 1998), etc. This was accompanied by a proliferation of agencies and state departments dealing with youth: educational, health, labour, police and the army, each of them with differing definitions and diverging approaches to finding solutions. The institutional pluralisation was accompanied with high inflow and outflow of researchers in the field. With the generational change, youth research experienced a conceptual opening up for new themes and ideas, new approaches and methodologies. National and international surveys were matched with case-study approaches, life history and focus group interviewing.

Economic pressures account for a lot of these changes. The new centres found themselves competing for scarce sources of funding. These came either directly from foreign agencies, such as the programmes of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, national governments, such as the German, Austrian, American and Dutch, private foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, the Open Society and Friedrich Ebert, or from local voluntary organisations, which had the resources and skills to use research data. Again, in most cases this meant NGOs with foreign affiliations. This structure of funding sources had two important consequences. The national research agenda was largely formed by the visions and perceptions of outside bodies with the risk of missing problems specific to the youth of the region. Second, there was a lot of interest in comparative studies, in western concepts and methodologies. The east-west collaboration succeeded largely due to the personal devotion of researchers on both sides, strong enough to overcome travel difficulties, loss of mail, the collapse of banks, road blockades, missed flights, to mention just a few impediments.

2.3. The adolescent with the knuckle duster

The most recent image of youth in the public debates in Bulgaria is that of the "aggressive teenager armed with a knuckle duster". In the place of the previously dominant political and economic colouring came the psychological discourse, representing young people as retreating in the private domain and feeling a strong sense of "normlessness". Young Bulgarians are described as being in a state of psychological anomy (Aadnanes, 2007) and prone to drug abuse (Vasilev, 2005) and physical violence (Stoilova, 2001). They are seen as alienated from education as their main activity and disengaged from politics, not interested in participating and apathetic about home and European affairs. Family and children are no longer of great value to them and cohabitation is on the rise while parenthood is postponed.

There is widespread moral panic about young people acting destructively against themselves and their peers. The mass media, particularly the electronic ones, often expound spectacular cases of high school students, both male and female, killing their classmates out of inexplicable envy or hatred. While in the protests of 1997, young people declared themselves against the blocked institutions and tried to influence them from the outside, at present it seems that the young are ignoring the institutions and withdrawing into their private worlds. Teachers can no longer rely on strict discipline at school and themselves stage protests, including school closures, with claims for higher salaries and greater investment in education. The young are more independent financially from their parents due to the growth of flexible and informal employment in the service sector. The higher incomes allow them to pursue individualised lifestyles and many engage in demonstrative consumerism. Youth subcultures around musical and sports styles are spreading, often involving various forms of risk-taking.

In reality there is no evidence that violence among youth has experienced such a sharp increase in the past few years. Rather, it represents the institutional weakness of youth studies vis-à-vis the state departments and other disciplines and the invisibility of youth voices vis-à-vis expert medical and criminological "knowledge" and "discourse". This is also a reflection of the new strategy of the country's youth policy trying to establish greater control over youth and to prevent deviant behaviour which threatens the already established social order. The narrow psychological (and often psychiatric) discourse about the problems of youth is an expression of the tendency among the political elite in the country to individualise and privatise social problems – a trend well known in other transforming countries in central Europe (See for example Ferge, 1997).

The attempt to establish a regular forum for co-operation between the youth section of the state agency and youth researchers in 2005 did not work, as the state representative decided to use official statistics instead of research data for writing the yearly youth reports. Whenever other state departments, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy or Ministry of Education, decide they need empirical evidence, they directly order the study to be performed by their preferred marketing agency without any tender or transparency of choice. The weakness of civil society in the country is strongly reflected in youth research, which is more successful in applying for international rather than national funds. An advantage of the situation is that the youth research agenda is becoming increasingly diversified and research methodologies pluralised. Well covered are global and local concerns such as young people's attitudes to European integration (Topalova, 2000), multi-ethnic tolerance (Doncheva, 2004), flexibility of work (Kovacheva 2002) and gendered employment (Stoilova, 2007). International co-operation in the field of youth studies has moved from the stage of foreign support for local research to the point of true "multidimensionality" and "interrelatedness", as Chisholm (1995) defines the essence of comparative research.

➜ Discussion

This short overview of the changing images of youth in Bulgaria before and after 1989 demonstrates that notions of generational relations and age categories are social constructs – their forms depend upon the social, economic and political order in a society (Feixa, 2006; Leccardi, 2006). If we look upon youth images and youth theories not only as narratives about the condition of youth and the problems of youth in different historical periods but also as means by which society and the current power elites construct youth, we can then attempt to examine how modern theories and media images intermingle with policy concerns in the public debates in order to impose their own vision of what youth and society should be.

Globally, youth emerged contemporaneously with modernity or, in the words of Musgrove (1964), youth in Europe appeared about the same time as the internal combustion engine. The factors that brought about the construction of this new life stage were universal education, wage labour and the youth labour market, the universal franchise linking citizenship to age, consumer markets and independent lifestyles, social protection and welfare states (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998).

Locally, this process had its own specifics and developments followed diverging directions. In the advanced western societies, the evolution of youth concepts moved from the understanding of youth as a period of "storm and stress" (Hall, 1904) through various functionalist, critical and post-modern theories to the

current understanding of youth as an active agent in social change as defined in the European Youth Pact and many current research projects (Helve and Wallace, 2001; Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002). The analysis of the dominant discourses in the first 20 years of post-communist Bulgaria shows quite the opposite trend – from attributing a great mission to the young at the beginning of the market reforms to a moral panic about the new young, and calling for a policy to put the destructive instincts under control. This paradoxical development can be explained by the changing concerns of the political elites in the country. Similarly in the post-Soviet countries the public images of youth differ considerably depending on the ways the authorities see the pressing "needs of the political regime" (Titarenko, 2009: 111). Where youth is needed as a resource in political disruptions such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2003 or the 2008 elections in Moldova, the dominant image is positive as an active and progressive force. Where or when the regimes experience economic and political difficulties, such as Ukraine at present or Russia under Yeltsin, the image of youth is constructed as negative – a source of extremism and social problems. In Belarus or Russia under Putin the official youth discourse is patriotic, nationalistic and Orthodox, aiming at controlling young people and steering them towards integration into existing structures while limiting their chances to influence this process (Titarenko, 2009).

→ Conclusion

In pre-industrial Bulgaria, youth was constructed as a brief period of relaxation and freedom from hard labour and other adult responsibilities. During the communist industrialisation young people were imbued with the important mission of building a new society. The ideological and symbolic representations of youth in Bulgaria after 1989 experienced a significant evolution – from constructing youth as politically active democrats, embracing the mission of the country's liberalisation, through perceiving them as a vulnerable group in the course of the transition, to the moral panic about the demonstrative aggressiveness and physical violence attributed to the young.

While grand theories about youth and visions about their great role in society are suited for periods of revolutionary change, the present situation of normalisation after joining the EU brought disorder in youth policies and youth theories in the country. Policy makers are in a quandary – on the one hand, they want to break with the communist policy whereby youth were targeted most explicitly through mass youth organisation and the youth research institute, whilst on the other, youth violence and newly emergent youth subcultures engender great public concern and calls for action. They demonstrate unwillingness to use proper research data in presenting youth voices and rely on evidence from the "objective" figures of official statistics. Youth research has also not found its proper place in the wider civil society, although young people, their views and practices, as well as their organisations, have a permanent place within Bulgarian youth research and this co-operation should be strengthened.

A positive impetus to the development of youth research in Bulgaria is the formation of a recognisable socio-political European public sphere of discourse and the growth of institutional policy action by supranational organisations (Chisholm, 2006). Bulgarian researchers still need to re-conceptualise youth in the new social situation of more fragmented, diversified and individualised youth transitions and to engage in more participatory research with youth. In line with Holm, Daspit and Young (2006), we have to admit that we still need to learn how to theorise youth without colonising them and denying their agency.

Siyka Kovacheva

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"Whenever worlds are laid on, underlives develop": structure and agency in transformation research

*Herwig Reiter
and Matthias Wingens*

➜ Introduction

Transformation research tends to claim that communist societies' institutional modernisation lag produced a biographical modernisation lag among their populations. We argue that this claim rests in a structural fallacy (individuals' lack of biographical autonomy is deduced from structural properties of their societies) which is due to a problematic structure–agency view inherent in the concept of transformation. Our analyses of young people's transitions from education to work and within employment in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) produce no empirical evidence for a trained incapacity. The empirical results for the structure–agency relationship reveal the state-socialist institutions' insufficiency of control, the significance of agency in a culture of informality, and the status of the communist ideology in everyday life and in transformation research.

➜ 1. Structure and agency in the concept of transformation

Since the collapse of communism, a lot of research has been conducted under the label of transformation research. "Transformation" represents a special type of social change where both the

destination and direction of the process is predetermined: in a normative process of catching up and by copying the basic institutions of their advanced western peers, transformation societies strive for democracy, market economic growth and social welfare. According to the transformation concept, former state-socialist countries follow, belatedly as it were, the preset institutional course of western modernisation. Compared to processes of gradual (and open-ended) institutional reconstructions indicative of standard social change, institutional transformation occurs here at a much greater pace.

In this regard, within the variants of post-communist transformation (Offe, 1996), East Germany is of particular interest as it represents an example of extremely accelerated institutional change. Legally, German reunification took place by way of an accession agreement of the eastern federal states after the GDR's self-dissolution: the GDR's institutions were abolished and the FRG's institutional system was put into force in one fell swoop. This radical institutional transfer implied a momentous problem of fit between institutions and individuals. Institutions generally are defined as relatively stable and enduring patterns of behaviour and meaning which, solidified by internalisation, have a regulating and orientating function. Hence, the integrative performance of institutions is based on a correspondence between the rationality criteria embedded in them and individuals' routine behaviour, settled experiences, internalised values and orientations. Therefore, if institutions and individuals do not fit, when they are not attuned to one another, friction and disruption arise. This problem of fit is particularly evident with regard to East German transformation because of the abruptly imposed institutional structures which were "alien" to the former GDR citizens. It is, however, unavoidably implied in all cases of accelerated institutional change because they do not give the time necessary to mutually fine-tune institutional structures and individuals' habits and orientations. Compared to the transformation of political and economic institutions the whole of people's complex set of culturally engrained and socially anticipated and sanctioned ways of thinking and acting shows a considerable inertia (Ogburn, 1922). The transformation of individuals' habits, norms and practices lag behind institutional changes as it occurs at a slower pace. Thus, inherent in the transformation concept is a crucial tension concerning the interplay of institutional structure and individual agency.

Inherent in the transformation concept is a second implication concerning the structure–agency relation which, again, rests in the idea of "postponed catching-up modernisation". Given that the direction of societal change is predetermined, the transformation concept necessarily adopts a one-sided perspective in explaining transformation problems. Whenever friction comes up, it inevitably tends to exclude the preset institutional "destination" itself from possibly being the actual cause of the problem. Instead, problems are, by default it seems, located within the agency dimension and attributed to individuals facing institutional conversions. Thus, by turning the dialectical problem of fit into a one-sided issue of adaptation the transformation concept is essentially biased. It implies a lack of biographical competency due to the individuals' socialisation in and through communist society in the course of which they acquired a dysfunctional socialist mentality of being externally controlled and lacking individual autonomy. In this way, an institutional modernisation lag is equated with a biographical modernisation lag.

There are many examples in the post-communist academic literature that continue to derive a "Homo sovieticus" (Zinoviev, 1985) from communist societies' institutional structures (Swader, 2010). For instance, Sztompka argues, very much in line with the transformation concept's claim of a biographical modernisation lag,

that the communist "bloc culture leaves a lasting heritage of 'trained incapacity', the inability to make proper use of the new institutional and personal opportunities" (1996: 125); he perceives this "trap of post-communist societies" as a legacy of "civilisational incompetence" (1993). Or Mayntz identifies a lack of autonomy among post-communist citizens that is impeding modernisation: "People who grew up in a perfectly integrated society and who were subject to firm external control were at the same time expected to act and feel only as members of a collective. Thus, they have not learned to act autonomously, to take responsibility on one's own free will, and to rely on inner directives instead of being guided by the threat of external sanctions – all of them factors which hamper adaptation to the new situation of freedom" (1992: 23). Widely spread in the pertinent transformation literature is an implicit understanding of the relationship between structure and agency that largely blends out the dimension of agency (micro-level) and over-emphasises the formative power of structural properties of communist societies (macro-level). However, already half a century ago Goffman reminded us with regard to the behaviour of participants in total institutions that even in circumstances of utmost constraint, people are not just externally controlled but also find ways of "'working' the system" (1968: 189). "Whenever worlds are laid on, underlives develop" (ibid.: 266), he writes programmatically against structural fallacies like the above examples. However, despite the increasingly enlightened discourse about the inappropriateness of structural determinism within social science, the challenge of addressing the issue of (post-)communist personalities empirically remains. Only an empirically substantiated response could contribute to bringing an end to a highly controversial debate nourished by speculation (and ideology) rather than evidence.

Do former communist citizens suffer from biographical deficiencies in the sense of lacking individual autonomy? Is there any indication that their personalities were determined by the institutional make-up of their societies? If not, what are the consequences for an assessment and reorientation of transformation research? These are the main questions that the present chapter addresses in the perspective of youth transition research. In general, the analysis of status passages in the life course is particularly suitable to answer questions like these through studying the macro–micro link between institutional programming and biographical experience (Heinz, 1991; George, 1993; Weymann and Heinz, 1996). In particular, the investigation of transitions of young people from education to employment is able to inform about the interplay of structure and agency in the above sense (Heinz, 1999). Thus, in order to find empirically substantiated answers to these questions we take a look into school to work transitions in the former GDR. In the following, we first discuss the institutional arrangement of the socialist model of steering young people into employment and complement this general macro-sociological picture with micro-sociological evidence from a mixed-methods study of East German careers. The confrontation of these two sources of evidence clearly shows that structural determinism is indeed untenable. Transformation research is (still) plagued by some fundamental misconceptions of the relationship between the structural determination that the institutional frameworks of communist societies seem to suggest and individuals' actual agency. To overcome this situation, we finally plead for responsible social research that is both able to grasp embedded micro-level life experiences and sensitive to ideological bias.

➔ 2. Transitions from education to work and mobility in the GDR

The GDR's steering of young people into employment shared the features of the system of the Soviet Union that was the base model for other European

state-socialist countries. Within the logic of this model the main challenge was the adjustment of the societal qualification structure (produced by the education system) to politically *ex ante* established qualification requirements in the employment system instead of an *ex post* market matching. Educational steering, vocational guidance, job placement and direct intervention in job allocations as well as organised labour mobility were the four main institutions of labour sociali-sation and management in the Soviet Union. However, despite the comprehensive institutional framework there is evidence from secondary analyses that the Soviet system left considerable space for unplanned mobility and job matching at all four levels (Reiter, 2006): the education system was plagued by a mismatch between institutionally designed destinations and educational aspirations. The attempt to manipulate preferences towards manual work through incentives, indoctrination and vocational guidance hardly changed young people's orientation towards further and higher education. The correlation between the "pyramid of desires" and the "pyramid of demand" remained problematic (Zajda, 1980). Though the institutional placement of graduates from vocational, general, specialised and higher education had a certain impact on the distribution of young people within the employment system, the matching was altogether flawed. Many graduates discontinued their first profession, access to higher education could only be prevented by restrictions, and many graduates from higher education ended up working in blue collar positions or refused to follow assignments. Finally, despite the fact that people were not supposed to leave without official consent once they had started working in unsatisfactory jobs, millions of workers changed job each year on their own initiative. Altogether, the restrictive institutional mecha-nisms steering young people from education to employment in the Soviet Union were incomplete. They left room for individual strategies and in principle even invited initiative. Yet, this assessment of basic flaws in the communist system of school to work transitions is only preliminary as it has to rely on the analysis of secondary data for the Soviet Union only. Original data for the GDR are finally able to provide complementary evidence for the micro-level of people's actual transitions and strategies of "underliving" the rigid institutional surface.

Similar to the Soviet Union, embodied in the GDR's constitution was the right to education. It was specified as the right and obligation, firstly, to attend the 10-year polytechnical high school which provided general education and, secondly, to complete an apprenticeship. Also embodied in the constitution was the right (and obligation) to work which people used to read as being entitled to get a job adequate to one's qualification. To realise these political goals and constitution-ally guaranteed rights, the GDR had to rigidly couple the educational system to the employment system in such a way that education was directly subject to politico-economic demand planning in general and in particular to planning the demand for workers. The societal qualification structure which was produced by the educational system had to be adjusted to the politically prescribed qualifica-tion requirements of the employment system in advance.

This overall coupling of the systems of education and employment was even tighter in the GDR than in the Soviet Union (Autorenkollektiv, 1987). On the basis of an assessment of the economic performance, the State Commission for Economic Planning and Control at first projected the country's labour force demand and established regional and sector-specific benchmarks for the development of the qualification structure. Correspondingly, quotas for access to apprenticeship training and universities and technical colleges were introduced and instructed the local recruitment of students. Similar to the system of vocational guidance in the Soviet Union, a comprehensive and centrally supervised system of occupational

counselling accompanied the transitions from education to employment. Its aim was the facilitation of the matching of the students' aspirations with available positions provided by the quota system. This policy of orientation, manipulation and guidance was implemented by local district planning committees that also controlled the transition of graduates from 10 years of polytechnical high school education into a vocational apprenticeship. This route at the first threshold that accommodated about two thirds of an age cohort constituted the main path to employment as it largely predetermined the transitions of apprenticeship graduates to work at the second threshold. A tightly woven network of local firms was implicated in this procedure: at the first threshold, firms had to provide apprenticeship vacancies according to the quota established by the local committees; and at the second threshold they either had to keep the young people they had trained, or they had to transfer them to another company offering adequate employment. Although it was in principle possible to change the employer after apprenticeship training had been completed, more than 80% of the graduates remained in their training firms.

The regional character of educational opportunities and decisions is typical also for the transition to further and higher education, which, unlike apprenticeship, was highly restricted. Contingent upon the agreement of committees chaired by the districts' school supervisors that also decided upon admission to vocational training with the *Abitur*, only one out of 10 graduates of an age cohort was able to attend extended secondary schools. Differently from the Soviet Union, access to university was then unproblematic because all these admissions to further education were already part of the central planning of human resource development. In this way, bottlenecks were avoided. The transitions of graduates from universities were controlled by special agencies for the placement of university graduates, the so-called *Absolventenvermittlung*. In practice, students applied well in advance to vacant positions listed by the agency according to planning targets and the labour force needs of firms (ZfH, 1984). Company students that were sent to university by their firms were not affected by this procedure as they had to return to their workplace.

In line with the GDR's strict labour force management according to the logic of planning, mobility within employment was not encouraged and institutions that could have managed it did not exist. Controlled matching was considered more efficient and superior to market matching. While changing jobs was not prohibited by law it was politically taboo and hampered by informal ways. For instance, information about possibilities for reallocation was hardly ever available and required official approval. In principle, companies also had to report mobility activities to the official labour offices, which operated under the auspices of the State Secretariat for Labour and Wages.

On the surface and according to its institutional make-up and self-description, the GDR system of transitions from education to work confirms the communist ideology of planning and comprehensive control. Individuals appeared to be passive and directed by external structures involving job placement, allocation and the restrictive manipulation of preferences. However, in order to verify this general impression we need to take a look at actual transitions, what motivated them and how they were realised. The *Berufsverlaufsstudie Ostdeutschland* (East German Career Study), a panel study of a representative random sample of 3 776 East German apprenticeship and university graduates graduating in 1985, 1990 and 1995, is able to provide data for such an endeavour. It is a retrospective longitudinal survey that collected information regarding occupational careers

between the year of graduation and the year 2000. The overall purpose of the study was the analysis of inter- and intra-generational changes in the framework of the transformation of East German labour markets and occupational as well as vocational opportunities. On a monthly basis, detailed information for each life-course episode (for example, employment, unemployment, retraining, motherhood, etc.) was registered. In addition, 67 biographical interviews were conducted with graduates of the 1985 and the 1990 cohorts about three years after German reunification; 47 of them were interviewed a second time five years later. The biographical interviews investigated first of all coping strategies regarding vocational and biographical continuity, institutional control, and gate-keeping mechanisms. For the purpose of this chapter, the study can be consulted with regard to the degree of heteronomy or autonomy of former GDR citizens by analysing in particular the members of the 1985 cohort who received their education, entered employment and spent their first years of employment under state-socialist conditions.

In the GDR the transition from education to work was a safe status passage in the sense that employment was guaranteed by the state. The only problem was to get the job one really wanted. The percentage of initial entry job applications, that is applications for one's entry-job preference, which could be realised increased from about 50% in the 1970s to 85% in the mid-1980s (BMB, 1990: 304). This high number of successful initial applications seems to indicate that it was rather unproblematic to put into practice one's own vocational preference. However, according to GDR evaluation studies conducted in the 1980s, only about 50% of young people's entry-job preferences were put into practice (Bertram and Kasek, 1991: 66). Thus, the high number of successful initial applications does not indicate that young people's true entry-job preferences were realised. Rather, it points to the fact that individuals' orientations were less towards vocations they truly wanted to pursue but more realistically attuned to the restricted job opportunities provided by the state's demand planning. In our interviews with the apprentice-ship and university graduates of the 1985 cohort (N=30) this tension becomes obvious. Balancing their preferences against the state-planned manpower demand, they tried to evaluate entry-job chances (second threshold) and anticipated these occupational chances already in their decision for a particular vocational training (first threshold). A chemical worker's statement made the constraint to rethink one's true entry-job preference particularly apparent: "I had always wanted to learn something different. First, I wanted to learn horse breeding, but they didn't have a vacancy for an apprentice. And then I wanted to learn a technical job …, and they didn't take girls in that apprenticeship year. And, well, my mother … she said I should apply for a chemical laboratory assistant … And then I applied there and they accepted me." But even in this case there was no institutionally induced "redirection" (*Umlenkung* was the GDR's official term) for the young woman: the final decision for a chemical laboratory apprenticeship was not imposed on her and not even suggested by one of the official counselling and control agencies – rather, it resulted from using a private source of information and may be characterised as self-imposed. We may generally question whether the above-mentioned large increase in the percentage of realised initial entry-job applications during the 1980s was due to an efficient functioning of the state's counselling and control agencies.

Our surveys indicate that only for 10.6% of the apprenticeship graduates were official placement agencies the most relevant information source for career entry (Table 1). This share is only slightly above that of unsolicited applications directly to a company. Personal networks, especially parents and close relatives,

constituted the most significant private information sources (35.7%). The fact that most graduates refer to the companies themselves (41.4%) indicates that the majority of graduates indeed remained in their training companies; this underlines the predetermination of entering into employment at the second threshold through the particular apprenticeship at the first threshold. The crucial information for the later career entry is thus the one referring to the training company itself. Our interviews as well as all studies on the subject indicate that close relatives, especially parents, play a crucial role in this process – that is, the most important career-entry information was not officially provided but originated rather from relatives and other private sources.

Table 1: Information sources regarded as crucial for …

	… entry job (%)		… reallocation (%)	
	Apprenticeship graduates (N=408)	*University graduates (N=551)*	*Apprenticeship graduates (N=181)*	*University graduates (N=180)*
Official placement agencies	10.6	60.4	8.8	23.9
Labour offices	*0.7*	*0.5*	*2.2*	*2.8*
Personal networks	35.7	17.3	64.1	50.0
Family members, relatives	*23.8*	*8.4*	*18.2*	*8.9*
Acquaintances	*9.4*	*4.7*	*35.4*	*26.1*
Former colleagues	*2.5*	*4.2*	*10.5*	*15.0*
Company itself	41.4	18.2	26.0	21.1
Vacancies (newspaper ads)	3.0	0.4	2.8	0
Unsolicited application	8.4	5.6	20.4	17.2
Self-employed	0.3	0.2	2.2	1.7

NB: figures may exceed 100% since respondents sometimes named more than one crucial information source (due to the fact that some apprenticeship graduates did not answer the respective question their overall figure is lower than 100%).

In line with a large-scale evaluation by the responsible GDR research institute (ZfH, 1989: 25), university graduates designated to fill leadership and cadre positions were affected by stricter institutional control as most refer to official placement agencies (60.4%). Compared to apprenticeship graduates, personal networks and companies, the other two main sources of information for career entry, are clearly less relevant at this educational level. Most references to firms come from workers delegated to university by their companies to which they returned after graduation. Company delegation and placement by the *Absolventenvermittlung* together account for nearly four fifths of all references suggesting an effective institutional steering of the transition into employment.

A closer look at these placement mechanisms on the basis of the qualitative part of our study is able to reveal some of the dynamics in the background. The interviews indicate that company-delegated workers often initiated their allocation themselves by essentially instrumentalising the placement mechanism for their own purposes:

"I told … my company that I wanted to learn this vocation and that afterwards I wanted to study at the university … And thereupon I got my delegation contract." Another respondent successfully prepared his career entry by an unsolicited application already during his studies and used the delegation mechanism as a mere camouflage by motivating his company to delegate him retroactively: "You cared about it a bit already while studying and didn't want to get into this placement agency. … Well, one just looked for a company … and then they just drafted a delegation – two years before I graduated." Contrary to what one might expect from the underlying logic of control, company delegation is not described as undermining one's initiative but rather as a vehicle for accomplishing one's interests by "getting oneself delegated". The original directive mechanism is basically transformed into a self-motivated placement process. In fact, most respondents reported that it was easy for them to instrumentalise company delegation: "You just had to tell them that you wanted to study and then matters took their course."

Similarly, the references to the *Absolventenvermittlung* alone do not prove the effectiveness of institutional control. For example, one of the respondents managed to get a certain vacancy of his choice reserved by the *Absolventenvermittlung* after he had contacted the company in advance. Others managed to circumvent all state control institutions completely and themselves took care of their career entries. One of the respondents said referring to the role of the *Absolventenvermittlung*: "We did it ourselves – well, there was … a list at the university, yes, but we, well, in fact we added [the company he wanted to and later actually did join] to that list. So, yes, we selected that on our own." Another interviewee's statement indicates how easy it was to supplement the placement agencies' lists on one's own initiative: "One could look for a company, get in touch with them and ask them if they have any vacancies and sign the labour contract. That was it, that's all. And then you handed it to the university." While the appearance of an institutionally controlled transition was maintained, the *Absolventenvermittlung* often served as an institution legitimising individually initiated and monitored allocation rather than one driving the process. In fact, many respondents perceived the *Absolventenvermittlung* as a kind of second-rate placement agency for those unable to find an entry job on their own: "And if one didn't do it that way (that is, self-initiated) you were placed." The frequent use of the terms "we", "you" or "one" instead of "I" indicates that avoiding the official procedure was common practice, or even an informal norm, as a statement of a party activist suggests: "The others, well, they went to the district and asked 'Don't you need someone, I want to work here' … and they said … 'we need someone'. And then matters took their course … They made a request for you there. And then everything was fine." Despite the frequent instrumentalisation of official placement agencies by graduates from apprenticeship and university which undermined state planning, no conflicts with, or even sanctions by, authorities were reported by the respondents in the sample.

Also with regard to employment mobility there was a lack of correspondence between the planning ideology and its institutions on the one side and individuals' behaviour on the other. The reported rate of only 7% of self-initiated inter-firm mobility of the total workforce suggested that the system had succeeded in controlling and suppressing workers' fluctuation. Yet, mobility of younger cohorts was much higher (Table 2). For instance, in the cohort of 1985 graduates one third of the academics and more than 40% of the skilled workers changed their workplace at least once before German reunification in October 1990. Some 14% of the skilled workers changed companies more than once, and about 18% changed their occupations together with their workplace.

Table 2: Job mobility (until German reunification)

	Apprenticeship graduates (N=408)		University graduates (N=551)	
Type of mobility (%):				
– at least a single change of company	44.9		32.7	
Two or more changes of companies		*14.0*		*4.0*
Change of company and of occupation		*18.1*		*5.8*
– no inter-firm mobility	55.1		67.3	

Due to the official ban on self-initiated mobility, placement agencies were even less important for job mobility than for career entry (Table 1). While regarding skilled workers the shares were low for both reallocation and career entry (8.8% and 10.6%), academics benefited relatively much less from placement agencies concerning their mobility than concerning their career entry (23.9% versus 60.4%). In contrast, the relevance of personal networks concerning reallocations as compared to career entries was nearly twice as high for skilled workers (64.1% versus 35.7%), and almost three times higher for academics (50% versus 17.3%). For both groups personal networks were the most important sources of information regarding inter-firm mobility. Unsolicited applications are even more important: compared to career entries the percentage of references to unsolicited applications concerning reallocations more than doubled among skilled workers (8.4% versus 20.4%) and tripled among academics (5.6% versus 17.2%). The figures indicate that people compensated for the general lack of information by informal information sources and by unsolicited applications; all of these are actions which underline individuals' resourcefulness and their self-dependent behaviour.

This is also confirmed by our biographical interviews which furthermore show that individuals could put their inter-firm mobility intentions into action without much difficulty.[6] A skilled worker described the process as follows: "You just go there. I went to the company and said 'So and so, I want a job here, I've learned this and that, well, now assign me somewhere you think you need someone.' Well, and then …, they got me a placement then." Or a university graduate said: "And then, um, on my way home … there was, um, a notice 'Institute for Fertilisation Research' … Yeah, and then I thought 'Just go there.' And then that worked out, yeah? So, actually a lucky chance, there was nothing more." Not one interviewee reported any sanctions concerning his/her inter-firm mobility which is surprising at least with regard to the university graduates who were obliged to stay with the company they were assigned to after their graduation for three years.

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6. Only once did an interviewee report having problems. To avoid unwanted fluctuation especially for companies of high politico-economic relevance, other companies were not allowed to hire people from them. The interviewee had worked in such a particularly relevant company. But also he managed – even with the aid of an authority – to put his individually initiated change of company into practice: "I went there and then they told me, yeah, they were not allowed to hire someone coming from Y. Well, there were two of us who wanted to leave Y and go to the DHW. And then we went to the labour office … and well, there they, um, exchanged us. You can call it like that, really. They said 'Yes; I have here two people from the DHW who want to go to L.' … And then there was something I've never seen before – I surely still have it somewhere in my private archive – a kind of exchange card. Written on that card was 'Worker X is assigned to work at company X with immediate effect – and in exchange someone is placed there.' We always used to scoff at that, I said 'You see, now even we are exchanged, too'."

So far we have analysed the 1985 cohort's transitions into and within the GDR's employment system. For both kinds of status passages, no empirical evidence supporting the supposition of externally controlled individuals who lack biographical autonomy could be found. One might object that such biographical deficiencies simply did not become evident under the structural circumstances of the GDR society itself. Rather, a communist population's lack of biographical competency and autonomy would only come to light and take effect under the institutional structures of market economy based and democratic welfare states. According to this objection, GDR society itself was not the appropriate frame of reference to claim empirical evidence for contradicting the supposition of a lack of individual autonomy. Rather, one had to evaluate these (alleged) biographical deficiencies within, or against, the very institutional structures for which people's mentality and habitus were supposed to be dysfunctional. The appropriate frame of reference, then, was the German society after reunification. We therefore now look at people's labour market transitions after the shock implementation of the West German institutional structures. If the supposition of externally controlled individuals lacking biographical autonomy was the case we should observe cohort differences after German reunification. In particular, we should expect the 1985 cohort and also the 1990 cohort to rely more on state authorities and labour offices instead of taking the initiative themselves and to behave rather risk-averse compared to the younger 1995 cohort who were already educated to a large extent under market economy based and democratic welfare state institutional structures. The following analyses (Table 3) are based upon information on the total number of allocations between 1 June 1990 when the *Wirtschafts-, Währungs- und Sozialunion* (Economic, Monetary and Social Union) was established and the last wave of the survey in 2000.

Table 3: Allocation strategies (1990 to 2000)

	Cohort 1985 (N=1 070)	Cohort 1990 (N=1 326)	Cohort 1995 (N=1 843)	Total	N
Type of allocation (%):					
– official agencies (especially, labour offices)	13.7 *(3.4)*	10.8 *(0.4)*	8.2 *(−2.9)*	10.4	*441*
– initiative (vacancies, applications)	29.4 *(−3.6)*	36.3 *(0.3)*	39.3 *(2.5)*	35.9	*1 520*
– personal networks	45.9 *(−1.2)*	47.4 *(−0.6)*	50.8 *(1.4)*	48.5	*2 057*
– self-employed	11.0 *(8.3)*	5.5 *(0.5)*	1.6 *(−6.7)*	5.2	*221*

NB: in brackets the standardised residuals are included. Standardised residuals allow comparison of the share of a cell in the Chi^2 value with the shares of other cells (5%-level significance is given with a figure of 2.0). The formula is SR=$(f_b - f_e) / \sqrt{f_e}$ (in which f_b refers to the noticed frequency and f_e refers to the expected frequency in a cell).

The overall percentage of allocations by official agencies is very small (10.4%), especially when bearing in mind the enormous number of lay-offs since June 1990. For none of the three cohorts did they function as a crucial information source for realising allocations. Rather, the use of personal networks and individuals' own initiative (searching vacancies in the newspaper or unsolicited applications) represent the dominant allocation forms for each cohort. It is true that, over the

succession of cohorts, allocations based on official agencies have decreased while at the same time self-initiated allocations – as allocation paths typical of market economies – have increased. But this does not indicate that the older cohorts tend to passively rely on state authorities, thus deferring the designing of their careers to official agencies instead of pursuing their own biographical plans. First, the respective cohort differences are not very pronounced. Second, official agencies did not even account for a third of the 1990 cohort's self-initiated allocations (10.8% versus 36.3%) and even the 1985 cohort relied on state agencies not half as much as on their own activities (13.7% versus 29.3%). Concerning the 1985 cohort, it is interesting to note that the percentage of people who started up their own business (11%) is nearly the same as the percentage of references to official agencies. Compared to the other cohorts, the 1985 cohort even shows the greatest percentage of business start-ups. The standardised residual is highest (and positive) in this cell while the second highest (and negative) figure refers to the 1995 cohort's start-ups. That is, the percentage of people who went for the risky path of setting up one's own business is significantly higher for the 1985 cohort and significantly lower for the 1995 cohort than would have been expected. Thus, the most important difference among the cohorts consists in the 1985 cohort's readiness to assume the risk of setting up on one's own while the 1995 cohort, although educated and socialised to a large extent under the west/reunified German market economy based and democratic welfare state, showed more risk-averse behaviour. Even if we take into account that it is usually middle-aged people who, after some years of occupational experience, set up their own business, this finding clearly contradicts the supposition of a risk-averse mentality and behaviour which was assumed to result from people's socialisation in, and by, the GDR's comprehensive institutional control system. The step to set up one's own business always means taking initiative and shows a certain willingness to assume risks. Even if those start-ups were to a large degree "push start-ups" or "fictitious self-employments", this would not indicate lacking biographical competency to shape and control one's life but rather individuals' ability for functional rationality, for strategically dealing with and using the FRG's economic and social policy structures and regulations. Thus, although having been socialised and educated in the GDR, the older cohorts prove to be rational and self-monitored biographical actors also within a market economy based and democratic welfare state society.

Our review of transitions from education to employment and within employment in the GDR produced no empirical evidence of comprehensive institutional control of individual transitions or a prevalence of passive mindsets. Instead, it became obvious that restrictive institutional structures left considerable space for and likely even provoked agency. In particular the communist system's notorious lack of transparency and information invited initiative and self-organised inter-firm mobility that was possible due to a silent coalition of employers and employees. Altogether, the empirical results show that young GDR citizens proved to be self-confident individuals actively pursuing their biographical goals as self-determined and self-monitored agents. They did not and do not lack individual autonomy. What do these empirical results mean conceptually with regard to transformation research?

➜ 3. Conclusion: towards "transformation research 2.0"

The transformation concept implicitly claims that individuals who were socialised in, and by, a state-socialist society lack individual autonomy (Wingens, 1999). We have argued that this conception – which is widely spread in transformation research probably due to a lack of appropriate individual-level data – rests on a structural fallacy. Yet, to simply deduce biographical competencies and deficiencies from the societies'

institutional structures is not only theoretically and methodologically dubious but also problematic on empirical grounds. The prevalence of underlives under circumstances of repression, which Goffman's classical study on total institutions suggests, is confirmed by our study: the transformation concept's micro-level assumption of a lack of individual autonomy among communist citizens is simply false in empirical terms. We can therefore reformulate the empirical result that state-socialist citizens do not lack individual autonomy (micro-level) with regard to the structural side of the transformation concept (macro-level): while comprehensive institutional control was crucial for the planned-economy ideology, it turned out to be fictitious rather than factual. The GDR's institutions were actually unable to put some of the main claims of communist ideology into practice, thus leaving considerable space for individuals to take initiative and pursue their own biographical plans. Interviewees did not report state sanctions concerning their self-determined and self-monitored actions for realising their individual interests. This absence of institutional sanctions and the fact that people could pursue their biographical goals with ease by evading or even exploiting official control agencies for their own purposes proves communist societies' comprehensive institutional control to be fiction rather than factual societal practice.

Yet, communist societies' institutions not only failed to exert their ideologically claimed comprehensive control function, but, exactly because of their failure, necessarily provoked agency. This structurally induced individual agency under communism is not recognised by the transformation concept which thus fails to understand its twofold role. On the one hand, agents were able to pursue their own goals by "using holes" in the system. This kind of individual agency was always at risk of undermining the institutional structure and ideology of communist societies. On the other hand, as a kind of remedial agency, it had the effect of "filling gaps" in the system by compensating for insufficiencies and shortcomings of the institutional structure. This second effect of system maintenance may explain why individualistic and self-determined behaviour was widely tolerated by the state and its agents; in any case, it contravenes the communist claim of comprehensive institutional control and structural guidance.

To be sure, we do not want to suggest that the long-standing sociological truism that a society's institutional structure imprints on the individuals' ways of thinking and acting had not applied to communist societies. But our empirical results suggest that transformation research tends to propose a certain communist mentality, which had actually never distinguished state-socialist citizens. In other words, the lasting heritage of the communist institutional imprinting is not the "bloc culture of trained incapacity" invoked by Sztompka but consists, if at all, in a culture of informality, a culture of relying on informal contacts rather than on institutions, which survived the institutional changes in the transformation process.[7] The fact that we could empirically substantiate this for East Germany, where a rather reliable institutional system had been implemented with German reunification, may imply that people in other post-communist countries that had to build up new institutional structures from scratch rely even more on such a culture of informality.

Finally, we get back to the question of conceptual consequences of our findings for transformation research. In short, the ideology underlying the notion of a planned economy was misleading as much as it was crucial for the self-image of communist societies (and their perception by others). Despite the obviously rather fictional

7. That people of former communist societies had learned not to rely on institutions and remain reluctant to change their attitudes towards them is a fact which policy surveys keep finding with concern (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007).

character of the communist ideology of comprehensive institutional control, there was a counterfactual adherence to it as the reference point for all societal praxis and individual action. The political ruling class stuck to this ideology against their better judgment and knowledge (Pirker et al., 1995). For instance, the already mentioned party activist provides a telling example for such "double talk". As her above citation shows, she knew that it was common praxis among university graduates to evade the official placement agencies and even conceded the failure of this planned-economy institution. Nevertheless, she went on praising job placement by state agencies (more generally: the planned economy): "That was not like that in that … after unification, that every yokel who could drive a tractor then somehow played LPG manager. And when the whole thing went down the drain? Well, I mean, in principle the placement has been, um, very, very useful, No?" Institutionally controlled job placement is here not presented as an idea that is approved but rather – and despite the counterfactual knowledge – as if it had taken place as a rule, as if this ideology had actually been GDR reality.

This paradox is in principle confirmed by other respondents without party affiliation: irrespective of their contrary experiences they reinforce and reproduce the GDR ideology and its systematic disregard of agency. Considering oneself as an exception to the rule is a common way of expressing the contradiction: "We were assigned, at that time; well, we were, in the former GDR every university graduate was placed in a certain institution or in a certain company. With me, yeah, it was somewhat different, though … I got this, I looked for this job myself." Another interviewee, too, first repeats the planned-economy ideology and describes institutionally controlled placements as a rule ("One didn't really … search for a job oneself, then, but there were vacancies which were allotted … and then you got one or you didn't"), but on the interviewer's inquiry whether he also had been assigned to his job by official placement agencies, he answered: "No, I wrote them [the company] a letter, said 'Hello, my name is G., I want to work for you, do you have a job for me?' And that worked." Statements like these go hand in hand with stylised distinctions between communism and capitalism that are in line with the stereotypes inherent in the transformation concept. For instance: "Well, in the GDR it was like: you studied, and then you worked in a company. And that's that. Yes, now it is like: now you have to take care for your future yourself."

Unlike individuals simplifying idiosyncratic contradictions of everyday life, transformation research cannot afford such a reduction of complexity, at least not if it wants to establish valid knowledge claims concerning communist and post-communist realities. Research that contents itself with a dubious deduction of state-socialist citizens' (alleged) biographical deficiencies from structural properties of their societies is unable to uncover the fictional character of the communist ideology of comprehensive institutional control. At least, it exaggerates the actual control and steering function exerted by communist societies' institutional structures.[8] At

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8. Gerber, for example, in his analysis of the impact of institutional changes on school to work transitions and stratification in Russia since the 1970s finds unexpected continuity in stratification patterns. Puzzled by his "null results" despite dramatic institutional changes he correctly concludes, relativising the role of institutions: "In sum, institutions may matter for stratification processes, but we should also examine possible other sources of stratification mechanisms, especially when it comes to the analysis of how they are influenced by a massive social chance such as a market transition" (2003: 270). If there was no expectation or supposition of a straightforward institutional impact – in other words, of a deductive one-way relationship of institutional structure and individual agency – there would be no puzzle.

worst, such research is at risk of immunising itself to empirical findings regarding people's agency (micro-level) and is blind to the fact that already its conceptual starting point is grounded on false structural premises (macro-level). In the latter case a biased and unreflected transformation concept that subscribes to the fiction of a comprehensive institutional control may steer research into simply reproducing the communist ideology itself. Ultimately, such research fails to reveal the "constitutive inconsistencies" (Pollack, 1998) of state-socialist societies as well as the many niches it left open for individuals to challenge the system.[9]

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9. For examples see also Engler (1995); Huinink et al. (1995); Bessel and Jessen (1996); Wolle (1998); and Fulbrook (2005, 1995: 129 ff.).

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Frozen transitions? Young people in the former Yugoslavia

Metka Kuhar and Herwig Reiter

➜ Introduction

Youth transitions constitute a well-established field of youth research in western Europe for at least two reasons. First, due to their indicative status regarding life course arrangements, (youth) transitions are able to give information about the overall make-up of a society including institutional arrangements and cultural preferences of dealing with them. Second, and related, the study of youth transitions and status passages allows investigation of the interplay of moments of structure and agency in the process of growing up in different societies (Heinz, 1996). For these reasons, youth transition research is also a very useful approach to studying social change. For instance, processes of societal transformation will redefine links between education and employment; between levels of education; between childhood, youth and parenthood; between economic and residential dependence and independence, etc.

Assumptions about the regularity and linear one-way character of such transitions have long been contested. For instance, some 35 years ago, Modell, Furstenberg and Hershberg (1976: 22) investigated the question of whether the

process of decision making in youth transitions had become "more helter-skelter or more orderly". The quest for answers to questions like these addressing the possible de-standardisation of youth transitions still plays an important role in contemporary European youth research. The findings, however, are contradictory; and metaphors of chaos like "zig-zagging" or 'yo-yoing' (EGRIS, 2001) compete with conservative positions defending the persistence of actual patterns of transition or at least the inertia of their change (for example, Elchardus and Smits, 2006; Vickerstaff, 2003). The truth is probably in between and in the end, there may well have never been "a golden age when everything was mapped out and all school leavers made smooth and rapid transitions into employment" as Ken Roberts (2009: 80) writes.

While the historical scope of (de-)standardisation of transitions and life courses is still a matter of empirical clarification, there is broad agreement that, considering only the period after the Second World War, youth transitions in all European countries have changed. The transition patterns established during and after the few decades of post-war economic growth and full employment in Europe are eroding. Youth transitions become prolonged, less predictable in their timing and sequencing and more uncertain and diversified than in the near past (for example, Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998; EGRIS, 2001; IARD, 2001; Ule and Kuhar, 2003; Leccardi, 2005; Du Bois-Reymond and Chisholm, 2006).

The debate about the possible de-standardisation of youth transitions is accompanied by various labels trying to capture the novelty of the contemporary status of youth, for example: "young adults" (Walther, 1996), "emergent adults" (Arnett, 2000) or "arrested adults" (Cote, 2000); or young people are said to be located in a so-called "post-childhood waiting room" (Kuhar, 2010) or "container" (Walther, 1996) or "limbo" (Roberts, 2009). The reasons put forward by these authors for the change of youth transitions are similar: global trends of expansion and prolongation of education, the normalisation of youth underemployment and over-qualification, housing shortage, more contingent partnerships, etc. Resources and opportunities remain unequally distributed while both the autonomy and responsibilisation of individuals regarding every aspect of their lives are increasing.

The progression of "structured individualisation" (Rudd and Evans, 1998; Roberts, 2009) in western European and North American societies is embedded in a comprehensive process of modernisation, socio-economic development and cultural change that, as Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 2) argue, "make individual autonomy, gender equality, and democracy increasingly likely"; but not independent of structure, one should add. Rather than a necessarily expectable experience, individualisation should thus be understood as a phenomenon of various shades that unfolds differently depending on the context (Roberts, 2009: 75). Altogether, as Kohli (2007: 265) summarises the reservations concerning the exaggeration of individual action, it remains to be clarified "to what extent the pluralization of life forms creates freely available options or rather externally shaped patterns and constrained reactions to changing opportunity structures".

An alternative perspective on changing youth transitions in western societies that, for the time being, is less commonly referred to in youth research is that of the second demographic transition (SDT) (Van de Kaa, 1987). Mainly preoccupied with demographic change and reproductive behaviour, this approach analyses transitions mainly in the developmental perspective of value change. In this view, phenomena contributing to postponing transitions like single living, cohabitation,

delayed fertility, union disruption, etc., are due to ideational and cultural changes. It is assumed that the empirically observable persistence of patterns, or the resistance to new forms of reproductive behaviour, is related to the prevalence of certain values (Billari et al., 2005). Aspects of classical modernisation theory, including economic growth, technological development, democratisation, secularisation and increasing individual autonomy, are recognised by this approach as triggers for the transformation of values.

In general, the post-socialist context is especially useful for the reflection of available approaches to youth transitions as well as for further developing them. The change from relatively smooth, yet unfulfilling and ineffective transitions under state socialism (for example, Reiter, 2006) towards conditions of unpredictability characterising the life of "deconstructed youth" after 1989 (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998) was extraordinary. In particular, reforms in the economic sphere shattered and radically modified youth transitions. The decline of the industrial sector led to a loss of stability and opportunities in the key transition from education and employment (Ule et al., 1998; Kovacheva, 2001, 2006; Roberts, 2009). The new market economies were not able to consolidate this development; it was rather perpetuated due to the more recent economic crisis. There is no doubt about the political and cultural benefits of the end of socialist authoritarianism in Europe for the constitution of the "value" of the individual. Yet with the loss of institutional predictability and the taken-for-grantedness of biographies, youth transitions in post-socialism are plagued by novel dimensions of uncertainty (Reiter, 2010).

Similarly to this perspective of forced de-standardisation in the institutional sphere, demographic research concedes a certain deviation of post-socialist countries from the western "norm": researchers claim that the pathway of the second demographic transition process in these countries is "non-original" (Sobotka, 2008; Frejka et al., 2008). Along the "original" pathway, as already described, cultural and value changes facilitated by economic growth and affluence are characterised by secular individualism and by an orientation towards personal self-fulfilment as a precondition of large-scale change in family behaviour (Frejka et al., 2008). In the central and eastern European (CEE) countries, on the other hand, patterns of family formation and reproduction labelled as SDT firstly emerged in disadvantaged societal strata. There, it was a response to societal structural conditions that had changed for the worse and the uncertainty it had introduced. Subsequently, the pluralisation of family forms and the de-standardisation of the transition to parenthood, and especially the trend towards postponing it, became gradually accepted and adopted by other social groups. Only then, it was assumed, did wider changes in attitudes towards family and parenthood start to take place; in other words, value change did not, like in the original version of SDT, precede a modification of reproductive behaviour (Frejka et al., 2008). While the SDT approach has its weaknesses and has been put into question (Kuhar and Reiter, 2010; Bobić, 2006), it can still point to useful and relevant dimensions of post-socialist youth transitions.

Against this background of various interpretations of changes in youth transitions in Europe, which could only be outlined here, this chapter will provide a preliminary descriptive account of youth transitions in the former Yugoslav countries of the Balkan area (and, in particular, the transition to parenthood). The main question is: how did youth transitions to adulthood in former Yugoslav republics develop after 1989/1990 (in comparison to the period before transition) in terms of institutional-materialist and ideational dimensions?

Until now, only a few former Yugoslav countries were investigated individually in terms of youth transitions and the empirical evidence is scarce.[10] Furthermore, due to their common Yugoslav past, these countries provide especially interesting case studies. On the one hand, they used to be the most liberal socialist societies due to their distinct regime of self-management.[11] Yugoslavia was also the most diverse and colourful socialist regime of central and eastern Europe. Its republics were economically and culturally differentiated already before the foundation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1943. And, located at the very intersection between the Christian European west and the Islamic Ottoman east for hundreds of years, it united a variety of religious and ethnic areas: Catholic Slovenia and Croatia; Orthodox Serbia and Montenegro; and the mixed Catholic-Orthodox-Islamic areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (for short "Macedonia").[12] On the other hand, however, once the old (liberal) system had ceased to provide unity in heterogeneity some of the former Yugoslav republics experienced the most painful transformations in post-socialist Europe: they were openly confronted with ethnic and religious tensions, violent conflicts and war.

Our starting assumption is that it should actually be possible to observe some of the "symptoms" expressed in the above quoted youth transition metaphors in a context that was without doubt affected by "forces of de-standardisation" of the severest kind. How are disorganisation and chaos, system breakdown, wars and ethnic violence, and political turmoil reflected in youth transitions? In view of the findings especially regarding the key transition to parenthood, we will suggest adding another term to the youth research vocabulary – that of "frozen transitions". Its main indicators are identified in the course of the argument. The term is able to embrace some of the contradictions of the post-socialist state of youth in former Yugoslav countries, in particular the somewhat surprising prolongation of youth transitions apparently without de-standardisation/pluralisation.

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10. In 2006 two decades had passed from the last all-embracing youth study in the former Yugoslav republics. The research "State, Consciousness and Behaviour of Young Yugoslav Generation" was conducted by a Yugoslav youth research programme on a sample of 6 840 14 to 27 year olds from all Yugoslav republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina, Kosovo) (see Vrcan et al., 1986). In Slovenia and Croatia, youth surveys have been developing further as an independent research field (Ule, 1988; Ule and Miheljak, 1995; Ule et al., 1996; Ule et al., 1998; Ule et al., 2000; Miheljak, 2002; Ule and Kuhar, 2003; Ilišin and Radin, 2002; Ilišin, 2006; Ilišin and Radin, 2007). In other republics of the former Yugoslavia youth research has stagnated but there is a multidimensional comprehensive survey of a national representative sample of young people in Serbia (see Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006). In Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP, 2003; CCYI BiH, 2006, 2008) and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Macedonian Agency of Youth and Sport, 2004) youth studies were conducted only in the youth policy field, often with the support of international organisations (such as the United Nations Development Programme).

11. For example, unlike the citizens from the countries of the Warsaw Pact, from 1964 on Yugoslav citizens were free to travel to the west. Emigration to western countries was thus possible and considerable especially from Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and also from Croatia. Open borders between Austria, Italy and Slovenia facilitated commercial exchange including "shopping tourism" as well as tourism on the Croatian coast. An important distinctive characteristic was also a relatively high level of economic liberalisation: small private businesses and private farms were allowed and promoted already during socialism.

12. The use in the text of the term "Macedonia" is for descriptive purposes and the convenience of the reader; it does not reflect the official position of the Council of Europe.

In the following part we first take a brief look at some general indicators of social transformation in the region. Then we reflect the struggle in values between traditionalism and (post-)modernity by presenting relevant value orientations of young people. This is followed by a descriptive review of youth transitions to employment, to independent housing, and to parenthood. Due to the general lack of comparative data the focus is on the third aspect of the transition of young people to parenthood; it is simply the best documented. We discuss changes in reproductive behaviour as well as family and partnership formation. The discussion of the findings provides a tentative synthesis of the current situation and the possible reasons for the inhibited diversification and de-standardisation of transitions in these countries. Empirically, the text is based on the only existing comparative data, that is: the statistical indicators from international data sets (for example, UNICEF, Council of Europe, WHO)[13] and the last available comparative questionnaire survey data for the region (the World/European Values Survey (WVS/EVS) 1999-2001[14] and EVS 2008, national samples of 18-34 olds).[15]

➜ 1. Transformation of societies and values

The societal transformation of former socialist countries also profoundly disturbed the youth transition patterns in the former Yugoslav countries. Yet in these countries the global, institutional "root cause" (Frejka, 2008) of this change in transition and fertility patterns – that is, the replacement of state socialist economies by market economies and related institutions – was aggravated by state collapse (of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and civil wars.[16] Like in other countries, the socio-economic change was rapid and radical; yet individual country trajectories were very different. While Slovenia remained largely unaffected by the Yugoslav

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13. During the two years or so of collecting and screening comparative information for the region, we observed many inconsistencies in the data, which likely still persist. Several times data series were changed retrospectively, which completely modified the original picture of the situation. Also there are differences in sources. Our choice was the source covering most of the countries, ruling out, for instance, the OECD and EUROSTAT data. However, we cannot but assume that altogether the reliability of the data increased over time.

14. The EVS/WVS 1999-2000 covering altogether 33 countries is the last one of its kind that includes this region and can be used for our purposes. In each case, a single questionnaire was used and rigorous procedures and checks were applied to secure the equivalence of questions after translation. In each country a probabilistic sample of the 18+ population was polled, and all country samples consisted of at least 1 000 respondents. The data stem from the following years: Slovenia (1999), Croatia (1999) (European Values Study 1999-2000), Serbia (2001), Montenegro (2001), Macedonia (2001), Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2001), Republic of Srpska (2001) (World Values Survey 1999-2000). The national samples of 18-34 year olds for the 1999/2001 wave are as follows: Slovenia (352), Croatia (369), Bosnia and Herzegovina (410), Serbia (304), Montenegro (291), Macedonia (356). And the youth samples for 2008 are: Slovenia (362), Croatia (521), Bosnia and Herzegovina (631), Serbia (468), Montenegro (562), Macedonia (550), Kosovo (796).

15. We restricted ourselves to the age group 18-34 in order to meet the target group as well as minimum sampling criteria.

16. The dissolution of the SFRY was accompanied by the wars in Croatia (1991-95) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-95), and by systematic violence in Kosovo (1998). The impact of wars is hardly quantifiable in a comparative way. There is no agreement over war casualties and the discussion is characterised by alternative views (for example, MacDonald, 2003). Estimations are rare. For instance, Leitenberg (2006) estimates 300 000 deaths during the 1991-96 civil war on the territory of former Yugoslavia involving Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 1: Real gross domestic product, Purchasing power parity in US$ per capita, 1995-2008[17]

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Slovenia	13 004	13 742	14 752	15 588	16 591	17 452	18 347	19 702	20 460	22 212	23 454	24 866	26 742	27 814
Croatia	6 835	7 741	8 411	8 775	10 189	10 773	11 577	12 566	13 378	14 452	15 201	16 560	18 308	19 104
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1 425	2 546	3 579	4 033	4 218	4 063	4 311	4 611	5 266	5 750	6 234	6 915	7 795	8 417
Serbia			4 569	4 758	4 054	4 304	4 675	4 895	5 228	5 865	6 448	7 040	7 753	8 559
Montenegro						6 022	6 262	6 566	6 979	7 606	8 266	10 022	12 477	13 942
Macedonia	4 842	4 967	5 069	5 300	5 554	5 935	5 837	6 039	6 270	6 849	7 664	8 354	9 389	10 021

Source: WHO, European Health for All database (HFA-DB, 2010).

Table 2: Unemployment rate (%), 1980-2008

	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Yugoslavia	11.9	13.8	16.4																		
Slovenia	1.1	1.5	4.7	8.2	11.5	14.4	14.4	13.9	13.9	14.4	14.5	13.6	12.2	11.6	11.6	11.2	10.6	10.1	9.4	7.7	6.7
Croatia	4.4	6.5	8.2	14.9	15.3	14.8	14.5	14.5	16.4	17.5	17.2	19.1	21.1	22.0	22.3	19.2	18.0	17.9	16.6	14.8	

17. The order of the countries in the tables reproduces their geographical location along the north-south axis.

Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.2	10.1	11.4	11.9														31.1	29.0	23.4
Serbia												13.3	13.4	14.5	16.0	18.5	20.8	20.9	18.1	13.6
Serbia and Montenegro												21.1	21.2	22.3	24.7	27.6				
Montenegro	4.0	6.5	8.3	10.0	10.3	9.7	9.0	10.6	10.0	12.2	12.3	12.1						30.3		
Kosovo														57.0	55.0	49.7	39.7	41.4	44.9	46.3
Macedonia	21.6	23.6	24.5	26.3	27.7	30.0	35.6	38.8	40.6	46.6	51.5	53.7	30.5	31.9	36.7	37.2	37.3	36.0	34.9	33.8

Source: ILO Laborsta database (mainly employment office records); complemented by: WHO, European Health for All database (HFA-DB, 2010).

Table 3: Youth unemployment rate (15-24 olds, %), 1993-2008

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Slovenia	24.0	22.9	18.9	19.2	17.5	18.1	17.9	16.4	15.4	15.2	14.7	15.4	13.4	14.0	8.7	9.5
Croatia				26.7	28.5	31.0	39.2	43.1	41.7	34.4	35.8	33.8	32.0	29.0	24.0	22.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina														62.4	58.6	47.3
Serbia												48.1	47.7	47.8	43.7	35.2
Montenegro													58.1	59.5	38.3	-
Macedonia				69.5	74.2	70.9	62.9	59.9	56.1	58.4	65.7	64.8	62.6	59.8	57.7	56.4

Source: UNICEF, 2010.

wars and its path to EU membership was even, most of the other former Yugoslav countries went through a painful process of "nation-building" of more than one decade characterised by chaos, violence and uncertainty. The standard indicator of development, that is, GDP (Table 1), is able to illustrate the heterogeneity of the former Yugoslav countries already in the mid-1990s. Slovenia, which was only marginally affected by the Yugoslav wars[18] and which became an EU member in 2004, clearly took the lead in terms of economic development.

The unemployment rate is another indicator for life chances in socialist and post-socialist work societies. And, as Yugoslavia was the only European state-socialist economy allowing for, and registering, unemployment (Woodward, 1995) the data go back to the 1980s indicating that unemployment used to be considerable even during the 1980s. In particular, Macedonia was plagued by persistently high unemployment for at least more than two decades.

Clearly, the scope of overall and youth unemployment as well as its impact on individual lives is incomparably more problematic in the post state-socialist period (Tables 2 and 3). Apart from Slovenia, about one to two out of three young people ready and willing to work could not find a job, not even in 2008. In Macedonia, youth unemployment rates even skyrocketed to a maximum of 74% in the year 1997. With the most recent data still missing we can only guess what the impact of the economic crisis may have been.

These few figures cannot but indicate the severity of institutional change that people were exposed to, although, an extensive discussion is not possible here.

A second perspective on youth transitions, and especially the family formation patterns they involve, suggests that the institutional change was accompanied by a significant shift in values and norms towards post-materialism and individualism. The above discussed concept of SDT emphasises value change as the most important determinant for partnership and fertility changes (Van de Kaa, 1987, 2002). This claim overlaps with Inglehart's (1977, 1997) notion of the "Silent Revolution" in the mid-1960s with value orientations transforming from modern to post-modern ones. To be precise, this argument does not claim that other determinants, such as economic ones, are not important. However, it suggests that people's behaviour is mainly determined by their individual value orientations, which constitute the rather stable normative backbone of behavioural articulations.

Now, which differences regarding values usually associated with this development can we find in the former Yugoslav countries? Which differences and communalities exist in the general value climate of the former Yugoslav countries? In the following, we briefly present some indicators of the value orientations of young people (18-34 year olds)[19] in the former Yugoslav countries on the basis of the EVS/WVS 1999/2001 and EVS 2008, which allows us at least to approximate the value change in the region over the last 10 years or so. Often, value orientations are presented along the so-called two dimensions of cultural variation found by Inglehart and Baker (2000), known as "traditional versus secular-rational" and "survival versus self-expression". The first value dimension, traditional versus

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18. Direct military operations in Slovenia lasted "only" 10 days.

19. We restricted ourselves to the age group of 18-34 olds in order to meet the target group as well as minimum sampling criteria.

secular-rational, differentiates between societies in which religion is very important and those in which it is not. Besides, the label "rational" refers to Weber's idea of a comprehensive "rationalisation of all spheres of society" (Weber 1974). A wide range of other orientations are closely linked with this dimension.[20] The second value dimension, survival versus self-expression, reflects the priority shift away from an emphasis on economic and physical security towards subjective well-being, self-expression and quality of life once survival can be taken for granted.[21]

As not all indicators associated with these two dimensions were included in these surveys for all or most of the former Yugoslav countries, we restrict ourselves here to the few available indicators from each of the two dimensions. The "traditional versus secular-rational" dimension is represented by the subjective importance of God and the attitude towards homosexuality (Tables 4 and 6). The dimension of "survival versus self-expression" is represented by the materialism/post-materialism index and the respondent's attitude towards abortion (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4: Importance of God and attitude towards abortion

	Importance of God non at all (1) to very important (10)		Abortion can never (1) to can always (10) be justified	
	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008
Slovenia	4.52	4.45	6.68	6.28
Croatia	6.97	7.01	4.34	3.76
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7.80	8.06	3.91	3.29
Serbia	6.17	7.02	4.97	4.12
Montenegro	5.98	7.16	4.34	4.29
Kosovo	No data	8.99	No data	1.86
Macedonia	8.22	7.53	3.59	4.90

20. This dimension is measured by the following variables: 1. God is very important in respondent's life; 2. It is more important for a child to learn obedience and religious faith than independence and determination; 3. Abortion is never justifiable; 4. Respondent has strong sense of national pride; 5. Respondent favours more respect for authority.

21. The indicators of this dimension are: 1. Respondent gives priority to economic and physical security over self-expression and quality of life (= materialism/post-materialism index); 2. Respondent describes self as not very happy; 3. Respondent has not signed and would not sign a petition; 4. Homosexuality is never justifiable; 5. You have to be very careful about trusting people.

Table 5: (Post)-materialism index (%)

	Materialist	Materialist	Post-materialist	Post-materialist	Mixed	Mixed
	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008
Slovenia	11.0	17.7	21.1	15.7	67.9	66.6
Croatia	8.7	20.2	26.9	9.5	64.5	70.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	29.5	40.3	4.3	3.2	66.2	56.5
Serbia	46.0	35.3	6.0	6.0	48.0	58.7
Montenegro	43.2	28.5	9.9	7.1	46.9	64.4
Kosovo	No data	27.3	No data	7.3	No data	65.4
Macedonia	32.2	31.8	7.5	7.9	60.3	60.3

Table 6: Attitude towards homosexuality

	Attitude to homosexuality can never (1) to can always (10) be justified	
	WVS/EVS 1999/2001	EVS 2008
Slovenia	6.02	5.53
Croatia	3.36	3.08
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2.25	2.02
Serbia	2.34	2.00
Montenegro	1.70	2.09
Kosovo	No data	1.33
Macedonia	2.10	2.69

In most general terms, Slovenia is characterised by rather secularised-rationalised values while the other countries, especially Kosovo, score lower on these indicators reflecting increasingly traditional orientations towards religion and abortion (Table 4). Regarding the second dimension, the (post)-materialism index shows only Slovenia and Croatia having a trend towards self-expressiveness, while in the other countries the emphasis is still on survival (Table 5). This underlines the above-indicated difference in economic development and the very likely related material uncertainty in these countries. This difference is corroborated by the attitudes towards homosexuality, where no country except Slovenia tends towards self-expressiveness.

The comparison between the data from 1999/2001 and 2008 points to a comprehensive persistence or even deepening of traditional, non-self-expressive values over time. In general, there seems to be no significant shift in terms of values towards post-materialism, with the exception of Slovenia and to a certain extent Croatia. Since progressive attitudes are a precondition of the development of family and fertility patterns predicted by SDT, only Slovenia should fully qualify for this trend. What is more, also before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the most economically developed republic with a per capita GNP of more than one third above the Yugoslav average. Slovenia was also the most western oriented of the former Yugoslavian countries (Štiblar, 2007), partially due to its history – unlike the other former Yugoslav republics, Slovenia (and Croatia) were under Habsburg and not Ottoman rule – and partially due to its economic development and geographical proximity to the west. As an all-Yugoslav survey among young people in the 1980s indicates (Vrcan et al., 1986), the other Yugoslav republics tended to more traditional values even before the regime change.

According to the findings from this survey the Yugoslav youth population was already characterised by large differences and gaps. Most importantly, these differences could not be explained by the usual variables such as social status, class, political or religious affiliation, or the social activities of the respondents. Instead, differences largely correlated with national, that is, Yugoslav republican, affiliation. Slovenian youth turned out to be ideologically, politically and culturally most individualistic, open and libertarian and the least traditional (Radin, 1986). Individualist orientations could be found also in Croatia (but not in all cities), and in selected Serbian cities (Belgrade, Novi Sad). The rest of Yugoslav youth scored high on the traditionalism and authoritarianism indices. Ule's (1988) interpretation was that these differences resulted from the varying levels and qualities of modernisation across the main nationalities (republics) in Yugoslavia.

➔ 2. Youth transitions

Against the background of this snapshot of a rather heterogeneous situation in the former Yugoslav countries, we now take a look at the little comparable data available concerning youth transitions. In general, extending education is a global phenomenon. In this way young people often manage to postpone confrontation with unemployment and poor-quality jobs in the hope of improving their chances of obtaining full-time, permanent, and well-paid employment. The prolongation of youth transitions from education to employment and an increase of youth underemployment and unemployment are also characteristic of other European countries, but in the post-socialist and especially post-war countries, these trends are more problematic. Former Yugoslav countries are no exception to the phenomenon of difficult entries into the labour market (European Youth Forum Report, 2002; UNICEF and World Bank, 2002; La Cava et al., 2004).

In view of the high levels of (youth) unemployment (see Tables 2 and 3 above), the general trend of increasing secondary education enrolment is not surprising, with Bosnia and Herzegovina being the exception (Table 7). In Slovenia and Croatia, the rates were already high in the first years following transition; and in Slovenia further education has become standard among all teenagers. With the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, the levels of participation are equal to or even higher than the European average of 85% of 15-19 year olds enrolled in education that the OECD (2010: 296) finds for the EU19.

Table 7: Total upper secondary education enrolment (gross ratios, % of population aged 15-18), 1989-2008

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Slovenia					80.5	82.3	84.2	87.2	91.1	93.3	95.4	97.1	98.3	99.2	99.6	100.5	100.9	101.0	101.5	100.9
Croatia				78.1	79.1	75.7	77.5	81.1	79.4	80.9	78.1	80.9	81.3	83.1	84.3	85.1	86.1	87.2	87.9	87.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina													81.9	83.4	77.0	71.1	70.2	71.2	70.5	66.3
Serbia												80.3	79.1	79.2	79.0	79.7	80.5	81.5	83.2	84.2
Montenegro												75.8	77.7	80.6	80.2	81.8	83.6	83.8	85.0	85.5
Macedonia	58.4	56.5	55.1	54.4	54.1	55.3	57.0	58.7	60.2	62.6	65.5	69.9	70.2	72.2	72.4	73.0	73.4	74.7	75.1	75.8

Source: UNICEF, 2010.

Table 8: Higher education enrolment (gross ratios, % of population aged 19-23/24), 1989-2005

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Slovenia	23.1	22.9	26.5	27.5	29.5	30.1	32.6	36.2	45.9	53.0	55.7	61.0	67.2	70.1	73.7	80.7	83.2
Croatia	17.4	18.1	18.1	20.1	21.2	21.2	22.2	23.5	24.2	25.1	26.1	28.2	29.5	31.5	32.7	34.9	36.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8.6	8.5	8.4	9.0					13.4	15.0	16.6	19.5	19.7	21.0	22.3	24.1	25.2
Serbia and Montenegro	22.2	20.6	17.6	18.7	18.4	18.4	20.2	21.6	23.6	23.6	27.1	25.3	23.9				
Macedonia	19.3	17.6	16.0	16.2	15.7	16.3	17.1	17.0	17.5	17.9	19.7	18.6	20.2	22.9	22.6	21.2	21.2

Source: UNICEF, 2007.

Higher education participation increased in all countries (Table 8). This could be a first indicator for the fact that instead of completing the transition out of education and into employment many young people seem to be "frozen" in their usual environment: employment is not sufficiently available and education is a familiar and recognised alternative.

With enrolment rates climbing well above 80%, higher education is becoming the norm in Slovenia. However, Bevc (2000) demonstrated that many of the students never complete their studies. She analysed the generation of students newly enrolled in higher education in 1991/92 and found that until the end of 1999 only 54% of students enrolled regularly (and only 32% of those who pay for their studies since they could not enrol regularly, in the first round) finished their studies. In the whole sample, by the end of 1999, 44% stopped studying, and 6% were still studying. In spite of the high dropout rate, the yearly inflow into the labour market of students with completed tertiary education exceeds the number of available workplaces by approximately a factor of two. Already, the yearly inflow of people with secondary education is one and a half times higher then the number of available workplaces (Kramberger, 2007: 98).

In the other countries the percentage of tertiary students is lower; but also there it is constantly increasing at around one quarter of the young population. In Croatia, the ratio is more than one third (Table 8). In these countries, in particular, the educational outcome polarises the youth population: on the one hand, there is a growing proportion of young people without education or with incomplete education and training, who are susceptible to unemployment, informal employment, illegal activities and emigration. On the other hand, there is an equally growing share of young people remaining in education as long as possible in order to avoid the tough conditions in the employment system without, however, afterwards having a clear professional perspective within the national labour markets.

The solid base for an educated youth labour force in the employment system is eroding everywhere; the transition out of education and into employment remains largely uncertain and the troubled entry into the world of work has serious welfare repercussions on young people. Large proportions of jobless youth in the region are discouraged and no longer looking for employment; their inclusion into the group of the officially unemployed would considerably raise unemployment rates. Early unemployment in a person's life may have a scarring effect and permanently impair his/her future employability in decent jobs. Besides marginalisation and alienation of youth from the economic development process, above-average youth unemployment rates increase the likelihood of engaging in risky health behaviour (La Cava et al., 2004).

Among those young people who successfully entered the labour market, a large number are working in contexts where they are deprived of basic employment rights and entitlements. Low-quality employment includes jobs that may provide higher salaries, but do not offer any of the following: job security, health, retirement benefits, unemployment insurance, and access to training and career development opportunities (La Cava et al., 2004). In some countries, one of the main issues is widespread unregistered work in the grey economy with no written contracts. The difficulties faced by young people in the region over the last two decades have led to a situation where highly educated and skilled young people leave their country of origin in pursuit of better opportunities abroad ("brain drain"). For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 73% of young people wish to leave the country for better opportunities abroad (CCYI BiH, 2008). The mass emigration of young people has caused a tremendous loss of human capital and sometimes involves exploitative criminal activities such as human trafficking.

The lack of dependable employment prospects forces young people into long-term material dependence on parental families. One of the consequences is prolonged cohabitation of young people with parents, which is an important second indicator of the phenomenon that we want to call "frozen transitions" (see below).

Unfortunately, there is no historical (comparative) data on the transition of young people towards independent housing. The EVS/WVS 1999/2001 and the EVS 2008 data (Table 10) show that in both periods among the 18-34 year olds, around 60% live with parents (in Kosovo in 2008 even more than 80%). Some 10-20% of those living in the same household as parents actually live in extended multigenerational households, since they live at the same time together with their spouses (and sometimes also children). In the EU15 only slightly more than one third of young adults aged between 18 and 34 lived with parents in 2008, and in the remaining post-socialist member states of the European Union (EU post-soc) the percentage is also far below that of former Yugoslav countries.[22]

Table 10: Percentage of young people living with their parents (answers of 18-34 year olds)

	WVS/EVS 1999/2001 With parents, including those with partner/spouse/children	WVS/EVS 1999/2001 With parents only	EVS 2008 With parents, including those with partner/spouse/children	EVS 2008 With parents only
Slovenia	64.6%	(56.8%)*	63.8%	53.6%
Croatia	57.8%	(54.5%)*	61.3%	45.4%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	60.7%	52.7%	59.9%	43.4%
Serbia	68.3%	52.3%	61.3%	37.6%
Montenegro	62.4%	55.9%	57.6%	47.5%
Kosovo	No data	No data	80.3%	62.4%
Macedonia	61.5%	42%	79.0%	58.1%
Former Yugoslav countries together	62.3%	52.1%	69.8%	57.4%
EU15	37.6%	36.1%	34.0%	31.1%
EU post-soc	47.0%	38.0%	51.8%	42.1%

*For Slovenia and Croatia (1999/2001 data) the percentage of those living with "parents only" excludes only those who are married but not those living in cohabitation (no data on it for these countries) in extended family households (to be exact: except for Slovenia and Croatia, the second column shows percentages of those who live with parents – without partner/spouse/children).

The prolongation of staying in the family of origin is also a response to the severe housing shortage (Petrović, 2004; Mandič, 2010). After the breakdown of Yugoslavia,

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22. To be sure, the EU is of course equally heterogeneous.

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the socialist housing policy system collapsed: there is no elaborate housing policy and while public sector housing was privatised and acquired by the previous tenants, the construction and distribution of dwelling places was underdeveloped. This led to an enormously high proportion of private housing. Young people are among the victims of the resulting housing shortage: young individuals and even young couples in regular employment are often still unable to buy or rent a dwelling place. Instead, they have to rely on resources from their families of origin (inheritance, exchange, trade, etc.) to provide for independent housing (ibid.). In the end, the family responsibility of housing grown-up children that was typical under socialism is essentially perpetuated.

The delay of marriage and the postponement of parenthood are but two consequences of these housing problems; they constitute the third and fourth indicators of the phenomenon discussed here.

According to the latest data (EVS, 2008) only between 12.2% (Slovenia: 28% in 1999) of the population aged between 18 and 34 are actually married.[23] With the exception of Slovenia, cohabitation is very uncommon in the region: the EVS 2008 finds that in Slovenia practically all married young people lived in premarital cohabitation (and very likely in one of their parents' households, by the way); this percentage is low in the other countries (from 14.2% in Montenegro to 25.1% in Serbia). This generally low level of cohabitation is puzzling since cohabitation used to be legally equal to marriage even during socialism (for example, in Slovenia since 1 January 1977 with the adoption of the Law on Conjugal Union and Family Relationships).[24] On the other hand, it seems overall, fewer and fewer people marry (Table 11). With the exception of Macedonia, this development is considerable in all countries. As can be seen from these figures, the post-socialist transformation appears to have somewhat slowed down the decline in marriages in Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro; or, to put it differently, the major changes towards fewer marriages had already taken place.

Table 11: Crude marriage rate (per 1 000 population), 1960-2008

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Slovenia	8.8	9.2	8.3	8.5	6.5	5.4	4.3	4.1	3.6	2.9	3.3
Croatia	8.9	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.2	6.6	6.0	5.1	4.8	5.0	5.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	10.1	9.3	9.3	9.0	8.5	8.1	6.7		5.8	4.9	5.8
Serbia[1]	9.0	8.7	9.2	8.2	7.6	6.9	6.3	5.7	5.5	5.2	5.2
Montenegro									5.9	5.3	6.5
Macedonia	8.6	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.5	8.1	8.3	8.0	7.0	7.1	7.2

Source: Council of Europe, 2005. Figure for Montenegro 2000: UNICEF, 2010. Figures for 2005 and 2008: UNICEF, 2010.

23. The percentages of divorced and widowed in the 18-34 age group were negligible.

24. Also in the other former Yugoslav countries, cohabitation has been considered to have the same stature as marriage as a result of the family law that has been introduced over the last couple of decades (see Šarčević and Wolken, 2005).

The share of extramarital births is altogether increasing in all former Yugoslav countries (see Table 12). Yet with the exception of Slovenia it seems, births out of wedlock likely result in a formalisation of the union.

Table 12: Extramarital births (per 100 births), 1960-2008

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Slovenia	9.1	9.2	8.5	9.9	13.1	19.1	24.5	29.8	37.1	46.7	52.9
Croatia	7.4	6.0	5.4	4.9	5.1	5.9	7.0	7.5	9.0	10.5	12.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.2	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.4	6.0	7.4		10.3	11.2	10.9
Serbia	11.7	11.6	11.7	9.9	10.1	10.7	12.7	16.4	20.4	22.2	22.8
Montenegro									13.0	16.8	17.4
Macedonia	5.1	5.7	6.2	6.6	6.1	6.6	7.1	8.2	9.8	12.4	12.2

Sources: Council of Europe, 2005. Figure for Montenegro 2000: UNICEF, 2010. Figures for 2005 and 2008: UNICEF, 2010.

While the trend towards later marriages started well before 1990, it has further increased considerably since (Table 13). Interestingly, in all countries the mean ages of women at first marriage and at first birth are very close together, implying that the combination of marriage and parenthood continues to be the norm at least for the decreasing number of people who decide to marry (Tables 13 and 14).

Table 13: Mean age of women at first marriage (below age 50), 1960-2008

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Slovenia			23.1	22.5	22.5	22.8	23.7	25.1	26.7	28.2	28.4
Croatia	22.4	22	21.4	21.7	22.1	22.5	23.1	24.1	25.3	26.3	26.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina					22	22.4	23.3		24.3	24.6	24.9
Serbia	22	22.2	22	22.1	22.5	22.8	23.4	24	25.0	25.8	26.6
Montenegro									24.9	26.2	25.9
Macedonia	22.1	22.3	22.2	22	22.2	22.6	22.6	23.0	23.6	24.5	24.7

Source: Council of Europe, 2005. Figure for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro 2000: UNICEF, 2010. Figures for 2005 and 2008: UNICEF, 2010.

Giving birth to the first child is postponed well into the mid-20s and beyond. Here, the rate of change was in all countries higher in the years after 1990 compared to those before; it was most pronounced in Slovenia, which had the lowest mean age at first birth in 1980 (but the highest one in 1960) (Table 14).

Table 14: Mean age of women at first birth, 1960-2008

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Slovenia	24.8	24.2	23.7	23.0	22.9	23.1	23.7	24.9	26.5	27.8	28.2
Croatia	23.4	23.4	23.1	23.1	23.4	23.6	24.1	24.8	25.5	26.5	27.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	23.2	23.2	23.0	23.0	23.3	23.6	23.6		24.4	24.4	24.9
Serbia	22.7	22.9	22.7	22.8	23.3	23.6	23.9	24.5	25.0	26.0	26.5
Montenegro									25.6	25.5	25.5
Macedonia	23.2	23.4	23.0	22.9	23.2	23.3	23.4	23.7	24.3	25.0	25.6

Sources: Council of Europe, 2005. Figures for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro 2000: UNICEF, 2010. 2005 and 2008: UNICEF (2010).

From 1960 to 2000 fertility declined in all former Yugoslav countries below replacement level. With a more than 50% decline in the total fertility rate it was most dramatic in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Macedonia (Table 15).[25]

Table 15: Total fertility rate, 1960-2008

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Slovenia	2.18	2.46	2.12	2.17	2.10	1.71	1.46	1.29	1.26	1.26	1.53
Croatia	2.20	2.21	1.83	1.92	1.92	1.81	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.42	1.47
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.95	3.50	2.71	2.38	1.93	1.89	1.71		1.28	1.20	1.19
Serbia	2.57	2.53	2.30	2.33	2.29	2.22	2.10	1.89	1.66	1.38	1.41
Montenegro									1.85	1.60	1.77
Macedonia	4.11	3.71	2.98	2.71	2.47	2.31	2.06	2.13	1.88	1.46	1.47

Sources: Council of Europe, 2005. Figure for Montenegro 2000: UNICEF, 2010. Figures for 2005 and 2008: UNICEF, 2010.

However, change was very uneven in these countries and the impact of, for instance, the first 10 years of transformation was anything but equal. While the major part of fertility decline in Slovenia took place already well earlier and especially during the last 10 years before the collapse of socialism, this is very different for Serbia and Montenegro. The latter, where decline was altogether least pronounced, was particularly affected by the transformation and disintegration of Yugoslavia. Interestingly, the trajectories of decline are most dissimilar in Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, both starting from a high fertility rate of 4 in 1960. The

25. It is important to emphasise that this trend towards lower fertility and postponed childbearing does not imply that young people do not want children. On the contrary, according to the WVS 1999/2001 and EVS 2008 the vast majority considers two or three children ideal.

latter witnessed a steep decline, the steepest of all former Yugoslav countries, during the 10 years of transformation, while in the former the recent decline was least pronounced and rather consolidated even before the year 1990.

→ 3. Discussion: frozen transitions?

There is no doubt that the change in transition patterns, both before and after the critical year of 1990, is considerable, even dramatic in some indicators; and so is between-country variation. Yet making sense of these indicators and the diversity of national developments they suggest is not an easy task and can be done here only in a preliminary way. We want to use the metaphor of "frozen transitions" for synthesising the contradiction between the obvious speed of societal change in terms of both institutional transformation and the density of experiences within a few years (that is, system collapse, nation-building, wars and chaos, economic crisis), on the one hand, and the stagnating development of youth towards independence and self-sustainability, on the other.

First, it is obvious that young people remain in education for longer periods than ever before. In this way they are postponing the confrontation with unemployment and poor-quality jobs hoping that they will maximise their chances of obtaining full-time, permanent, well-paid employment. They also manage to preserve a status that is familiar to them. But educational outcomes do not offer any clear professional perspective within the national labour markets – the basis for the masses of educated youth labour force simply does not exist or has been eroded. Young people remain in a position of long-term financial and general material dependence on their families (see also the chapters of Ule and of Tomanović in this book). Parents have to fill the gap caused by the dismantling of the previously universal welfare state while themselves being affected by its consequences. In other words, in this respect youth transitions are frozen due to a combination of insufficient opportunities and the ease with which familiar alternatives are available and can be perpetuated. Obviously, while lingering in the waiting room of education, the solution to the problem is just postponed.

Thus, secondly, for large proportions of the youth population the safety net and economic support available through family relations involves prolonged cohabitation with parents. Affordable housing is scarce and moving out simply not an option. Instead, families have to stick together also in terms of sharing space, and the extended family household is appreciated as a key unit of coping with the aftermath of the transformation. Families of origin, one could say continuing with the metaphor, turn into "cosy refrigerators" that preserve, domesticate and immobilise the offspring. Yet this ambiguous dependence on the family is also a source of intergenerational transmission of socio-economic advantages or disadvantages; it ultimately contributes to freezing and preserving, perhaps even promoting, the status quo of the societies' landscape of social stratification. Underprivileged families, often those with minority status, will continue to have difficulties providing material and educational resources and necessarily draw their (grown-up) children into the family economy. In particular, family structures in post-war regions tend to be fragile, unable to address post-traumatic stress disorder, and are coming under greater stress due to decreased access to resources; domestic violence has increased, often coupled with alcohol abuse (La Cava et al., 2004). On the other hand, the (most) privileged families are able to invest in their children's education (instead of their housing) and further consolidate their prolonged transition. Thus, the gap between young people in the region likely mirrors the gap between those who are equipped with family support and those who are not. Besides, the strengthening of very personal networks of family members and relatives, the contraction of family

ties as a source of coping strategies, and the overall re-privatisation of life may further decrease the already low interest in the public sphere.

Third, the transition to union formation through marriage, which decreased even during the decades preceding the 1990s, is further slowing down. The closeness of the women's ages at first marriage and at first child birth (in most of the former Yugoslav countries) suggests, on the one hand, that marriage often follows the conception or birth of a child out of wedlock, or it may simply reflect, on the other hand, the strong and traditional cultures of decency that are preserved in a modified way. In any case, the available data do not imply a pluralisation of patterns of living together but rather a conservation of conventional solutions.

Fourth, the more recent decrease in fertility also has its historical roots in the era well before the collapse of socialism. The fact that this trend has actually slowed down during the last two decades or so, compared to the development before, could mean that it was either already exhausted, and that from now on only the timing of the first child is postponed with the significance of motherhood remaining intact; or, in the case it is not consolidated on this already low level but will fall further, it may indicate that the current "cultures of postponement" (Reiter, 2009) are complemented by cultures of childlessness. In either case, in terms of family formation, transitions to adulthood are not likely to be accelerated.

Finally, coming back to the initial claim that the analysis of youth transitions is able to give information about the condition of society as a whole we can ask: how does this tentative diagnosis of frozen transitions feed back into the evaluation of the societal transformation? And, could the metaphor be applied at the level of society? We think it could. Considering Claude Levi-Strauss' (1968: 270) intriguing distinction between "hot" (that is, changing, dynamic) and "cold" (that is, static, mechanical) societies and cultures, the metaphor seems to be appropriate for characterising changing societies. In an analogy we could talk of frozen transitions in the context of "cold transformations" when changes in the mechanical, institutional make-up of societies require immediate responses at the level of individual action within very limited opportunity structures. Ultimately, this restriction leaves little space for innovation and, in the end, for individualisation in the sense of autonomy and independence. In the perspective of value researchers one could add that the material base and level of economic development for post-materialist values to emerge are not yet available. Most countries in the world, among them post-socialist ones, are not (yet?) post-materialist, either in their institutions or in the hearts and minds of the people (Inglehart and Norris, 2002: 5; brackets and question mark added by the present authors of this chapter).

"Hot transformations", on the other hand, would accelerate transitions and catapult young people into otherwise unavailable, favourable positions. Perhaps this was the case during the early years of other post-socialist countries in Europe (where, first of all, no war took place) where for a certain time windows of opportunity also open up for one or two cohorts of young people. (Things certainly cooled down in the meantime and for the younger cohorts chances are much fewer.) Perhaps young people in the former Yugoslav countries did not share this experience of constructive openness and the opportunities it entails, temporary as they may have been, due to the more problematic – or very orderly, in the case of Slovenia – transformations of their societies. In any case, what research may identify as the helter-skelter, zigzagging or yo-yoing of youth transitions in the post-socialist transformation may actually refer to the extension and contraction, the heating up and cooling down of opportunity structures in different post-socialist contexts. Obviously, this is a daring analogy, and we will need to elaborate it elsewhere.

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Born in 1989. European youngsters look to the future and the past: Milan and Sarajevo compared

Letterio Pantò and Tatjana Sekulić

➜ Introduction

Our analysis is based on pilot research dealing with historical and biographical memory, self-perception and attitudes of young people born in 1989, and was inspired by the following question: is there a truly transnational and European set of experiences of growing up in terms of chances and uncertainties, as well as lifestyles and inequalities?[26]

In effect, memory, as a social construction, constitutes a strategic dimension of the definition of identities and, at the same time, direct expression of the continuity/change dialectic. The relationship that youngsters entertain with memory refers, as a consequence, both to the connection with historical time and, implicitly, with a certain vision of the future. In this framework, we tried to shed light on how young people address biographical time in the new century in a context characterised by greater and greater fragmentation. Young people live their youth in a social climate where the right to decide what one wishes to

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26. This question was one of the most significant "provocations" proposed by the organisational committee of the conference.

become is accompanied by the difficulty of finding points of reference in biographical construction that are able to avoid indetermination. Generally, it can be stated that the imperative to choose does not go hand in hand with the certainty that personal decisions will be able to sufficiently influence future biographical outcomes.

We chose to organise our field work in two European cities with quite different historical, political and social backgrounds – Milan and Sarajevo: the former a cosmopolitan European city with a central position when it comes to EU institutions; the latter not only situated on the European periphery, but representing a symbolic paradigm of violent conflict-ridden post-communist transition, characterised by an extremely difficult process of consolidation of peace and democracy in the post-war period. Young people born in 1989, living in the city today, are supposed to have an infant memory of war from April 1992 to January 1996 in the besieged city (either as its youngest pre-war citizens or as internally displaced persons), or as war migrants outside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina who then returned, but not always to their homes.

Parents of the youngsters born in 1989 belong to different cohorts born over a lengthy period, probably from 1946 to 1968. However, it could be expected that most of them witnessed decades of an intensive process of modernisation in both Europes, western and eastern, capitalist and socialist, as it concerns indus-trialisation, urbanisation and secularisation. Societies of the first group were and are supported by liberal democracy; those of the second were founded on the totalitarian legacy of Stalinism and have been approaching in the last 20 years a painful process of capitalisation and democratisation. However, in both circum-stances the period since the end of the Second World War has been characterised by an acceleration of social mobility, a growing level of mass education and the recognition of a series of fundamental human rights, especially in the sphere of social rights (development of welfare systems). A certain similarity of structural social conditions during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in European spaces divided by the Iron Curtain could be found, especially regarding the Yugoslav model of socialism, notwithstanding its structural lack/absence of political freedom, a benchmark of post-totalitarian regimes (Hobsbawm, 1994; Therborn, 1995, 2009; Elster, Offe and Preuss, 1998).

From 1989 onwards, an accelerated process of democratic transition in east European societies has been experienced (Habermas, 1990, 1998; Dahrendorf, 1990; Hobsbawm, 1994; Offe, 1996; Tismaneanu, 1999), based, first of all, on the claim for recognition of separate collective identities (Sekulić, 2002, 2008). The case of the former Yugoslavia is a paradigm in that sense. "Getting close to Europe" meant not only democracy and human rights, but especially a redefini-tion and reconstruction of strong ethnonational identities. The reconsideration of national identities also regards west European societies as the process of transition to European Union membership presupposes a renegotiation of national sovereignty at the supra-national level of EU institutions. Both dynamics are to be explored in a new globalised complexity.

The Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989. We are now trying to understand what the impact of that event was on the actual distance of the "other" Europe from the centre represented by Strasbourg's and Brussel's institutions. Starting with an analysis of self-perception and attitudes of youngsters from both sides of the wall could be an initial element of reflection. In this sense, youngsters of this specific cohort might be considered privileged witnesses in understanding cultural tenden-cies and value systems of an emerging European identity.

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We will first introduce the conceptual map of our analysis, based mainly on western literature on youth studies, and key information on our fieldwork.[27] Then, we explore the way in which the youngsters from Milan (the second section) and from Sarajevo (the third section) relate themselves to their future and to their past. An attempt to answer the initial question (on an eventual transnational and European set of experiences shared by young people notwithstanding their contextual differences) is proposed in the conclusions.

➜ 1. 20-year-old youngsters between biographical and social time

In the following pages we will explain how young boys and girls in their 20s represent their biographical time. This expression refers to a process whereby people relate to their past, live their present and project themselves into the future (Cavalli, 1985). In this context, the link between biographical time and identity is particularly strong; personal identity in fact is constructed with reference to both the historical-social and existential time (Luckmann, 1993). The construction of one's biography is necessarily projected into the future; nonetheless the past, with its burden of memory, remains decisive for identity and, above all, for young identity to become an adult one.

The youngsters' biographical time, therefore, stands in a direct relationship with the present social time, in the context in which collective behaviours and institutional references lose their normative and predictable nature. The youngsters' biographical constructions, tuned as they are to these social conditions, are characterised by a general "de-temporalisation" (Kohli, 1985; Rosa 2003); an individual's life, in our age, can hardly be planned in connection with the past and the future. Therefore, both the span and the stability of the "good life" (Habermas, 1983) come to be questioned. Accordingly, the youngsters define the biographical project in a rather reversible way.[28] Individuals' sense of the duration and their progress in the life course can only be situated within the tight boundaries of the present. At the same time, unedited forms of planning can emerge from young people themselves who can derive new meanings and potential from the indetermination of the context in which they find themselves.

The survey was based on in-depth interviews with youngsters from Milan (6) and Sarajevo (5). The first part of the analysis focuses on the interviews with three young girls and three young boys; all of them are in their 20s and live in the Milan area. The group of interviewees included three female university students, one male university student and two high school students; they belong to several social classes (middle class, working class), all with a strong urban identity. The second part is based on the interviews with three girls and two boys from Sarajevo; all of them are university students apart from a boy who has a part-time job, but who is, at the same time, preparing for a university course. Two of them took a gap year between secondary school and university. As for their social background, it

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27. We chose to base our interpretation on the same conceptual framework, avoiding the creation of a comparison between two groups of youngsters on different theoretical structures. However, for a deeper analysis of the literature on youth research during the socialist period, we recommend Chapters 2 and 3 of this book, written by Mirjana Ule and Siyka Kovacheva.

28. As phenomenological sociology highlighted, the construction of identities, in the modern sense, is strictly connected with life's projects: "An individual's biography is apprehended by him/her as a project" (Berger, Berger and Kellner, 1974: 71).

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is still quite difficult to determine their class in the transitional context of the post-socialist and post-conflict environment, characterised by the impoverishment of all middle-class categories.

The decision to interview students was taken because, with respect to their peers who have already had their first contact with the job market, this social category is right at the centre of the transition process which leads to adulthood. We started with the hypothesis that those who are undertaking an education path could be faced with specific problems at the end of adolescence in relation to their biographical time. All interviewees were selected through a "snow ball" technique, while considering the distribution criteria indicated above. At the same time, the nature of the phenomenon we were going to explore suggested we should opt for qualitative methodologies and techniques. Clearly, if we consider the limited number of interviews and the complexity of the topic under analysis, our data can only be characterised as explorative.

On the basis of our empirical findings, we will focus our attention on the responses and strategies which the interviewees enacted. We will examine the relationship between youngsters and their plans for and visions of the future. This will in turn help us investigate their relationship with the past.[29]

➔ 2. Living in Milan

The future

I think about my future very often, but it is so far ahead in time that I can hardly imagine it … conceive it … it's as if I obliged myself to live in my present without formulating any hypothesis. It is far ahead! I feel it is something very far away in time. I often think about my job, what I could be in the future; however, it is something I feel is very far away in time. I can hardly imagine it. For the time being, I am still in the world of education and I am focused on this and work is hardly on my mind. Maybe, this is because I do not really know what I will do … maybe it depends on this, too (Anna, 20, student of medical biotechnologies, University of Milan).

My future? It is a good question … I do not know, in the sense that I have many ideas … but, you see, there are many things I would like to do. In part I do not want to say it out loud because I am afraid they will not come true, in part I am afraid these might be my dreams now, now that I am twenty years old … you know, life takes its own directions, maybe you want to do something but then … I don't know, … indeed, maybe I'd like to finish university in two years' time and then spend a year abroad, but who knows what can happen in the meantime, anything can happen! I would like to put all my efforts in doing that, but at this very moment I am not capable of making my plans come true. I have always been like this, um … maybe in a month's time I won't know what it will be like, what I will do … then, I have my own ideas … To start with, I always think I need to manage thousands of things and I do them, but I am aware that I might bump into unexpected events along the way and I might eventually not be able to do so. Having said this, in two years' time I would like to be there and in ten years' time I hope I can work for an NGO, even though I am not sure I can do it … maybe in two years' time I'll fall madly in love and I won't be ready to go abroad any more … (Bianca, 20, student of political science, Catholic University, Milan).

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29. The present, as we shall see, is defined as time experienced par excellence. In fact, it is in the present that both past and future take shape. Philosophy demonstrated it well, until Descartes. In addition, in contemporary societies, the present has come to be characterised by simultaneity and speed. In turn, the dynamic dimension of time has been lost.

These narratives shed light on a prospective vision of the future characterised by distance and immateriality: "I often think about my job, what I could be in the future; however, it is something I feel is very far away in time," says Anna.[30] It recalls a context in which choices and plans are flexible and unpredictable, "you know, life takes its own directions, maybe you want to do something but then … I don't know," reflects Bianca. All this highlights a short-term form of planning that responds to the need for a substantial progress, that is to say the need to control one's own biographical time against a background of uncertainty (Leccardi, 2005; Reiter, 2003). Youngsters' focus on a limited time span is useful in the construction of a more unified and contiguous biographical time; the latter can be controlled by individuals themselves. In this case, planning for the present is preferred over planning for the future, to the detriment of the latter that will ultimately be very weak. "It's as if I obliged myself to live in my present without formulating any hypothesis," stresses Anna.

While they are constrained within the narrow borders of the present, in which the impetus and flights typical of youngsters in their 20s need to confront continuously with a society rich in ligatures (Dahrendorf, 1981), some of these students find, in the environment that surrounds them, some vital resources to imagine themselves on their life paths. In fact, significant spaces can open up for them, alongside attitudes of fatalism and renunciation. Hence, they will be in the position of searching for their personal and social identity through an explorative model. A similar orientation recalls an experimental configuration of both the condition of adolescents and youth. Thanks to the psychosocial moratorium (Erikson, 1950), which is more and more extended, youngsters have access to a life course whereby they can test themselves and their own choices without being subjected to excessive social constraints. In this regard, another interviewee stated: "I like to fulfil my wishes and I have lots of them … I mean, a lot of things … I believe the same applies to every girl in her 20s who wants to do this, this and that! Too many things to do, if one only thinks about it" (Cecilia, 20, student of cultural heritage, Catholic University, Milan). Furthermore, student lifestyles adapt well to this type of research, which, in the past, was well comprised within precise phases of youth, with nuances relating to social class characteristics (Ariès, 1960; Levi and Schmitt, 1994; Mitterauer, 1986).[31] At the same time, the university can be experienced as the place from which youngsters can observe themselves, their own time span and the world. It can be considered as a privileged observatory, a protected place where they can mature reflexive strategies for their self while opening up to new horizons. The closed space of the university, however, can also be experienced as a kind of "shelter", a sort of muffled perimeter where a sense of protection prevails over the opportunity of any experimentation. In this sense, Anna says: "For the time being, I am still in the world of education and I am focused on this and work is something very remote in my head. Maybe this is because I do not really know what I will do …".[32] In this case, she is unsure

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30. Names are all invented, so as to respect the privacy of interviewees.

31. This is true in spite of the fact that nowadays the psychosocial moratorium is still directly linked to the socio-economic status of families, as well as to their sociocultural capital, which is in turn influenced by the different territorial contexts of the Italian peninsula (for the Italian case see, for example, Buzzi, Cavalli and de Lillo, 2007).

32. On the other hand, if we consider the young age of the interviewees, the indetermination associated with their future and biographical trajectory becomes easier to understand ("my dreams now, now that I am twenty years old," Bianca reminds us). Nonetheless, it is hard for the interviewees to project themselves into the future even though many

about the evolution of her own path. Such uncertainty, constrained as it is by a variety of other problems (the absence of guidelines in her own life, uncertain job opportunities, discontinuity of temporary steps to adulthood), apparently contributes to postponing the moment in which she needs to make choices, because her vision of the future is dominated by uncertainty.

Let us now move to the analysis of how the interviewees imagine their professional career.

For sure, I do not expect to do the job for which I am studying now, I am a realist. I mean, of course I will do some job hunting at the beginning, but I do know perfectly well that it is not easy. I know a lot of young girls that now work and that attended the liceo linguistico,[33] *they speak three languages, "si sono fatte un mazzo così"[34] and they did not manage to get a job! Therefore, I won't be so relaxed once I complete my degree and I won't say "now I have a degree that's it, I'm sorted!" No it's not like this! I will start looking for occasional temporary jobs and all these things … then, as far as my professional career is concerned, I would hope to do something somehow related to my degree … (Cecilia, 20, student of cultural heritage, Catholic University, Milan).*

I do not think I will go to university after high school. I think it is useless from the professional point of view! Many people after having completed their degree have not managed to get the job they were looking for, or, if they found it, they had a job for two months … I think I will start working immediately after completing my diploma, or maybe I will enrol in a postgraduate course; even though I do not have so many expectations at all! This is also because, after talking to other students that were enrolled in my school, I found that few of them got a job. However, I do think this is a general situation, which does not relate to the actual school, nor to any specific individual … it is only that unfortunately things are like this in Italy at the moment (Ferdinando, 20, high school student, Technical College, Milan).

As the above extracts show well, interviewees seem to be very much aware of the difficulties they will have to face in the job market once they complete their education. In fact, the employment situation in Italy is not very encouraging, particularly for the most educated youngsters. Various authors have highlighted that young graduates are more disadvantaged than undergraduates and that they see their condition as getting worse over time (Checchi and Flabbi, 2006; Cobalti, 2006; Istat, 2009). Besides, in many European countries, precarious jobs and unemployment are connected to the educational qualifications obtained over time; the less education one has, the more easily it will be for him/her to be unemployed or to occupy a non-permanent job position without any alternative prospects. On the contrary, in Italy, the most educated youngsters are vulnerable in terms of access to the job market much in the same way as the least educated (Ballarino et al., 2009; Rossi, 2007). "Many people after having completed their degree have not managed to get the job they were looking for, or if they found it, they had a job for two months …" reaffirms Ferdinando. The comparison with the peer group and ambivalent and multi-vocal cultural models makes it even harder for young people to take any decision. In addition, the comparison with

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of them are already enrolling in an undergraduate degree. All this should be perceived as an element that portends the way ahead. Yet, it is reasonable to say that contextual factors make it hardly possible for these youngsters to project themselves into the future.

33. A secondary school focusing on language modules.

34. This is a popular Italian expression. It means that they have really worked hard.

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their parents' career seems to highlight the paradox that emerges from their situation, thus reinforcing the reasons for their disenchantment.

It is true, now you need to be content with what you achieve! Things are different now. Children are no longer better off than their parents. My father always tells me: "Now you even need to get a degree to end up with a worse job than you would have had with a diploma alone and you are not even sure to get it! On the contrary, I have only a diploma and I found a good well-paid job, I have a wife and children!" It is also true that young people now try and enjoy life, while trying to forget about their future … they try and live their youth to the full … probably they waste a lot of opportunities because in the meantime they think "well, even if I do it, it will not be helpful at all … therefore why should I do it!" (Federico, 20, student of engineering, University of Milan).

In fact, new generations do not benefit from the upward mobility that developed throughout the so-called "Thirty Glorious Years"; now, as the interviewees suggest, children need to face more risks and insecurities than their parents did (Castel, 2009; Chauvel, 2006; Facchini and Rampazi, 2009). In general, what emerges from interviewees is a pragmatic and flexible attitude as far as their professional career is concerned. This tends to reinforce their perception of the situation they are in and also contributes positively to the rational management of their expectations. Professional projects, therefore, are not entirely swept away by a considerable disengagement and by a diffused form of nihilism, to which Federico refers when he speaks about his fellow students. On the contrary, as recent surveys on the condition of youth in Italy confirm,[35] many youngsters try to be the architects of their own life even by undertaking thorny and unpredictable paths that no longer seem to be as "normal" as those in the past. Despite the background of general biographical de-structuration, this process of individualisation of one's own life path (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) could lead to a renewed form of awareness, based on the capacity to disentangle oneself in a complex world, whereby individuals can still take a series of choices that define the sense of their own biography (Pantò, 2005).

The past

Nowadays society is characterised by an evident acceleration of the time that affects the rhythm of the life course: it tends to erode actors' perceptions of their biography and its cumulative nature (Sennett, 1998). In this context, the relationship that youngsters develop with their past is particularly relevant. A pluralisation of youth's biographical paths has been observed in association with the weakening of strong collective identities. This could have made the notion of (life)span problematic. The universe of youth seems to be very much a contraction of the present, that is to say short of any depth and value. A vacuum emerges that derives from the inability of youngsters to project themselves into the future, but also to connect to their past and present (Cavalli and Galland, 1996).

Nonetheless, the past is an aspect of their lifespan which can be hardly underestimated as far as the construction of youth's identity is concerned. The past, intended as the knowledge of historical events, is insufficient in itself for the majority of interviewees,[36] whether girls or boys. Memory seems to be constructed in other

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35. In this respect, research by Besozzi (2009), Cesareo (2005), Crespi (2005), and Garelli, Palmonari and Sciolla (2008) is very interesting.

36. In fact, few of the interviewees knew anything about the fall of the Berlin Wall and the

directions. The majority of them, in fact, demonstrate an attention to the past which is more than episodic.

I think that all that is not to be remembered is exactly what we should remember … because if a serious, overwhelming fact happens, we need to remember it; because it is only when we grow aware of our mistakes that we can manage not to make them again. The biggest mistake resides in the fact that we do not remember the biggest mistakes! (Filippo, 20, high school student, Liceo delle Scienze Sociali).[37]

In my opinion, to be honest, things that have a worldwide, international relevance … are all to be remembered! I am not happy about my limited knowledge of history and of contemporary events (Bianca, 20, student of political sciences, Catholic University, Milan).

Well, for sure, the past has an impact on the present and future … therefore, I think, everything needs to be remembered, both good and bad. So, the bad can maybe help, it can help us understand that a given thing should not be done again (Anna, 20, student of medical biotechnologies, University of Milan).

In practice, it is worth remembering everything. It is worth remembering positive things because they make you understand how things can go well, and negative ones because they make you understand why they did not work out. Now, many people forget … we are forgetting a lot of things (Federico, 20, student of engineering, University of Milan).

From the extracts above, one understands that the sense of "what has been" is crucial for the biographical experience of these young people. Their historical memory has a fundamental role both for individuals and the social system. They interiorise, as a strong value orientation, everything that history teaches them and they draw on this for the organisation of their own biography. The heritage of the history makes everyday life intrinsically valuable, youngsters can anchor themselves onto it in order to act in the present and project themselves into the future (Rampazi, 1991). Meaningful symbols and images from the past, evoked through historical memory, thus contrast with a context which is rather characterised by its provisional nature and a progressive rooting out.

I want to remember, in particular, the French Revolution, but the first phase of it … from 1789 to 1791 … as for the Reign of Terror, let's forget it … in my opinion, what is important is not the war, but rather what happened afterwards. This helps us understand what it meant. No one likes remembering about wars, but if you remember what happened afterwards, you can understand what war is about. I don't know, everyone tells me "you will go to war yourself" … well, touch wood! [laughing] What happened afterwards and in general all the struggle for freedom against colonialism and its consequences. The war over tea between England and America; as for Russia, let's leave it … in Italy in 1861 and the achievement of independence. And maybe, the second Italian post-war period, the technological era, feminism … this is surely all very important for contemporary Italy (Cecilia, 20, student of cultural heritage, Catholic University, Milan).

Iron Curtain; this might be related more to a shortage of information, which is shared by the so-called Italian "civil society", than to the direct failing of school institutions. However, these first interviewees have shown an authentic wish to study and learn about history, in particular those who were born, as in this case, at such a symbolic date/time.

37. A secondary school focusing on social science modules.

No, everything needs to be remembered! In fact, I am one of those people who say: "Why don't we learn also about Tangentopoli[38] at school and about the end of the First Republic!" (Ferdinando, 20, high school student, Technical College).

Interviewees stressed their will to remember events. This can be a premonition of their fear that historical events can be forgotten. Besides, in the present which seems to be devoted to sudden mutation, in which spatial-temporal compression exists together with the massive diffusion of new technologies, forgetting is almost inevitable. In fact, the contraction of temporal horizons accentuates the elusiveness of past and future, intended as references for action (Leccardi, 2005). In short, the interviewees perceive a palpable danger that the processes of acceleration, which are in line with the actual uncertainty they experience, will erase historical time which is considered a fundamental asset for the construction of collective identity.

Yes, yes, the past is surely crucial for the future. And it's not necessarily because you'll have to do again what you did in the past. You come to realise that if at a certain stage of your life you feel really down inside … it may well happen that you suddenly want to change things. But, what do you need to do in order to change them? I need to remember what I did wrong, what I need to do now to avoid making the same mistakes. Any change requires something before it can take place … (Federico, 20, student of engineering, University of Milan).

A lot of experiences have helped me grow up … I mean, I want to remember the experiences I had in the past. They helped me grow up, they helped me change! As I have told you, I was shy, very reserved, … I was afraid of raising my hand and speaking, I was even afraid of speaking! I was another person! All these things have also helped me open up, they have taught me not to bother about what others might think, they have taught me to say to myself "Who cares!" (Bianca, 20, student of political sciences, Catholic University, Milan).

Well, yes, I want to remember even the bad moments, the very bad ones! My first years at the liceo, my first years there I felt really bad … really bad! I felt maladjusted, I didn't feel well at all and I feel even worse now when I remember how I felt then. Maybe it's just because I was in a bad situation, but I could do nothing about it. Hence, my attitude was rather passive. I had no strength to react! (Filippo, 20, high school student, Liceo delle Scienze Sociali).

As it emerges from the above narratives, interviewees' confrontation with their biographical memory constitutes a test-bed to try and understand the deep sense of their own path and the coherence underlying their choices. The biographical past seems to be a dimension they very much appreciate as it allows them to give a deeper sense to the present and to look at the future with a renewed sense of awareness. These youngsters seem to be well aware of the importance that connects, inseparably, past, present and future. Retracing, in-between the threads of memory, their own path and recognising themselves and their choices in it becomes a crucial experience for the development of their identity. The feeling of "having been", alongside the capacity to identify their own history by looking at the steps that have characterised their path, becomes a privileged source for their life course.

Ultimately, the past represents a stable reference in what is a present characterised by uncertainty; looking back, therefore, means setting precise boundaries to delimit

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38. This is the name used to refer to the corruption-based system in politics that emerged in Italy in the 1980s and early 1990s. Specific investigations were undertaken in 1992, such as the so-called "*Mani pulite*" investigation.

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the path that has been undertaken. Hence, this process of revision of the self and its surrounding world returns a sense of continuity to a biographical time that is threatened with discontinuity and caesura.

→ 3. Living in Sarajevo

The future

Lana said about her future: "Every time I see it differently". Nevertheless, she proposed her idea of a good life:

How do I see myself in 10 years? [she laughs] I see myself … I would like to have a house near my parents because I saw how much it meant to my mother to have a home near her mum … Then that we are all still alive, I don't know how I could bear the death of my parents, I'm so close to them … With a degree, my own family, we all work and live happily … a child is running nearby … I think it's possible (Lana, 20, student at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology).

Vladan put his future job at the focus of his considerations:

Well, I don't really have an idea [about the future], until you have a job you can't create any kind of idea … but I would like … well … to have a wife, two children, a steady job for both of us, that would be good … that would be really great … I could not leave Sarajevo, there were some job adverts, my sister told me … there was an advert for Germany, Hamburg, they needed a medical technician … but I could never go away for good, not for anything (Vladan, 20, diploma in nursing, part-time job unrelated to his degree).

It seems that both of them link the idea of their future to their present situation: for Lana it is a desire to extend and recreate the nest of her actual family in which she feels safe and protected, but also free to experience the life outside. Vladan would like to continue his education but his family is not able to support him – he has to find a good job to support himself at university. He has a strong sense of reality: "Here I am and that's it!" For both of them the ideal of a future life seems to be linked to the need for "normality" that should be preserved for her or improved for him, but always as a mirror of the present.

10 years from now … wow … plenty of time to think about it … 10 years … to be thirty … I don't know … So, I could probably see myself 10 years from now with my friends in some kind of business that should suit us completely … If everything is okay, maybe with some girl, it doesn't have to be marriage immediately, I'm in no hurry … Two people do not have to be married to live together, for me it's great, you can see if the relationship will work out. I do not think you have to be married to live together (Pavle, 20, first-year student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

I don't think about it … it is such a long time … 10 years … anything could happen, I really don't know, I haven't thought about it, it is so far away … it is really far away, sometimes we joke that we won't have children until we are in our thirties … (Nermina, 20, student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

… 10 years from now … [silence] … Nothing … no marriage, no children, it would be nice to have a job, though nothing … I imagine something completely normal … [living] in a loft … nothing … I only hope to have a chance to travel all around the world, that in fact is my great desire, I hope to be able to realise it … never to be in the same place with the same people (Tamara, 20, student at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo).

What is striking in the assertions of Pavle, and especially Nermina and Tamara, is their great difficulty to contemplate any kind of a life project or future commitment when asked directly. Their peers from Milan share the same perception of future prospects as distant and immaterial, where choices and plans are flexible and unpredictable, but they still take it into consideration as a challenge (Anna: "I think about my future very often") and as an open space full of opportunities (Bianca: "My future? It is a good question … I do not know, in the sense that I have many ideas … but, you see, there are many things I would like to do"). 10 years seems to be an empty space for Tamara, who continues to repeat "nothing", or Nermina who says twice: "I don't think about it". They have their desires, to travel or to organise a creative job with friends, but it seems that between these desires and their present situation there is no functional connection, no concrete elements of their life prospects, expectations, but a sort of divide. Their Sarajevo peers who were mentioned before seem to have the same difficulty to think of an alternative way, out of the conservative middle-class model of "normality".

Notwithstanding this inability to invent themselves in "10 years' time", a period of transition to adulthood, or in spite of it, our interlocutors demonstrate an unexpected maturity and capacity for self-reflection in relation to their own position in such a specific local context and also in a global perspective. They all consider a university degree as a powerful instrument of both personal and social achievement and mobility. As Tamara says: "I think a university degree is very important … without it you can't apply anywhere … to do something greater in your life; everything you might do without it would be something "standard", but if you want more … I think you need it." Almost all of them consider English as their second "mother tongue"; all of them are open to the possibility of studying or having work experience abroad, as the [existential] choice "to leave or to remain" is a kind of everyday question among youngsters in Sarajevo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[39] Still they feel strong ties to their city: "I define myself as a 'Sarajevan', that's my nationality," stressed again Tamara.

Lana has a rather clear idea of her future job, related to her life path expressed before:

My father has a company, I've always meant to … I thought I'd take it over, that I would continue to work with him, my sister already works there, I always saw myself there after him, if I can survive this recession and all, and I wanted … I don't think about a career too much, I'm more family oriented, I would like a big family … but you never know … (Lana, 20, student in the second year at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology).

Vladan is quite determined to build his professional future by himself, based on his vocation for medicine, in spite of material difficulties:

I have a nursing diploma, and I volunteered in hospital for six months, I passed the state exam, I did all that to get a job in my profession, but there are no jobs; so at the moment I work as a waiter in a cafe … I am happy, it's better than nothing … what can I do … I thought of enrolling at the university if I get a job, before it was called higher nursing diploma, now it's called a degree in nursing studies, take the course for a radiologist … That is what I wanted, but since I don't have a job yet, it will have to wait (Vladan, 20, diploma in nursing, part-time job unrelated to his degree).

39. The UNDP Early Warning System report on Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that, in 2009, more than 40% of Bosnian citizens answered "yes" to the question "Would you leave BiH to live in another country if the opportunity arose?". The data is even more dramatic in the age group 18-35: 66.5% of interviewed youngsters answered positively (UNDP, 2010: 12, 122).

Pavle and Tamara decided to take a break between secondary school and university, for different reasons, but in both cases it was their personal choice. For Pavle it was the need to understand his own desires:

I looked at all of it from the point of view … Generally I don't like a lifestyle which is too fast. I think that, especially in Sarajevo, there is a lack of space that would allow us, as youngsters, as individuals, to find ourselves, to think about what we want in life, because everything is going on in a robotic way – elementary school, secondary school, university, job, wife, children, end of your life … there is no time to … well … no space for a man to find himself as an individual … That's why nowadays in our city many people of my age, even older – and I find that really surprising – do not have formed views, their vision of life and of society. I was simply … that year … I made a sort of a mistake, but if I hadn't made it I would not have learnt from it; so I literally took a break for a year … I enrolled in university, I attended for a month, after that I realised that all of that was too fast for me, when I saw things happening too fast I told myself … If I have to pay the cost for this year let's do it, but let's draw a "lesson" from it; and I've done it. This year I'll demonstrate what I learned, I'll prove it … You just need some time to find peace in yourself, [to find] a point of view about the world, something … then … everything goes more smoothly (Pavle, 20, first-year student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

Tamara wanted to prove to herself and to her family that she was fully self-reliant and able to make her own choices of life path and profession.

I decided that I wanted to study at the Academy of Fine Arts, in spite of everything, I didn't want to give it up … Actually I'm in my first year because I took a gap year. I didn't enrol last year and I didn't want to give it up and study something else. I worked for a year, then I took the entry exam again, I passed and I'm in now. … My mum didn't want me to attend the academy, but she reconciled herself with it when she saw how determined I was … that I can do it by myself … that I've got a job by myself … that I worked hard … that I didn't ask anyone for anything … [The gap year] meant a lot … it affected me a lot both in good and bad ways; in a bad way because I worked in a cafe, a very good one, but that type of work, waitressing, is quite hard psychologically, especially for a young woman. From the physical point of view you get used to it, eight-hour shifts, but you have to deal with so much from people without manners, primitive people who talk nonsense; also a lot of other stupid things. Anyhow, I realised that I'm able to do it myself, that I don't need anybody's support … While I was working I also went to freehand drawing lessons, three times a week at first and than five times a week for more than three hours (Tamara, 20, student at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo).

Nermina pointed to the value of autonomy in adulthood, in relation to one's career: "The most important thing for me is to have a job, my own wage; it allows you to organise your life, to travel, to visit other places, you don't have to ask your parents for anything." She is also quite aware of the uncertainty of the labour market: "At the moment the situation is such that there are no guarantees you'll get a job even with a university degree. So many people have been waiting at the Employment Bureau; some of them have two graduate degrees."

Even more than their Italian peers, these young people manifest a complete disenchantment with the society of which they have no expectations. The awareness of solitude and of the individualisation of their life condition that they demonstrate is unexpected for their age. The only support they found existentially reliable is that of the family and even more of a group of friends. Anyhow, they show a great vital force and a determination to pursue their aims; not dreams, but quite a structured idea of their desires. Maybe they are not able to project into the future, but it seems

that they grasp the importance of "being architect of one's own life" in the very present, convinced they have enough time to do their best. As Pavle said:

In the best scenario I see myself in an … I've always liked that kind of creativity … something like that … in a creative company; maybe I could invest in it as an entrepreneur … as I have a group of friends who … all of them are creative in their own way: one with the computer, the other one draws, the third one and I are into this "urban culture" … So we have ideas … We have to come up with some creative idea where we could all participate (Pavle, 20, first-year student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

The past

The narratives of the Sarajevo youngsters, related to their perception and under-standing of historical and biographical past, could be defined as more complex and multilayered compared to their Milan peers. Firstly, they experienced war as very little children, as Lana reminds us: "I was only two and a half when it all started." War as an exclusive historical event crashes violently into everyday life, breaking its horizon of sense and significance. In particular, a specific type of conflict that happened in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, generally defined as an identity conflict of low intensity, in effect resists an "objective" definition shared among principal internal and external collective actors, crystallising the uncertainty of any new horizon (Kaldor, 2006; Sekulić, 2008). Secondly, it is not only that we deal here, in the case of Bosnia, with the fragmentation of a society that characterises the second modernity, or with a specific context of post-socialist transition; it is the *cadres sociaux* of the collective memory that is broken here. In that sense the past, both recent and historical, is continuously manipulated and reinvented by the political and intellectual elites, especially by the actors of the real revolutionary force of the Yugoslav "democratic" transi-tion – ethnonationalism. Our youngsters evidently have to face quite a complex framework of experience while constructing their communicative and generational memory. They are almost constrained to break through their own recollections, the interpretation of the recent and historical past proposed inside their intimate world of family and friends, and the plurality of public narrations produced by educational system(s), politics, media, religious representatives and other social agencies (Halbwachs, 1925; Assmann, 1992). Thirdly, if the memory, as Assmann said, not only reconstructs the past but organises the present and future experi-ence of individuals as such and as members of different groups, the difficulty of the youngsters to project into the future, in the case where there is a profound lack of continuity, becomes a real burden, resulting in declared disillusionment and pessimism related to their social environment.

a. How do they recall the war?

I was born in Sarajevo … I hardly remember the war at all, mostly from the stories … We were here throughout the war, we didn't go anywhere; no one in the family got killed, that's the most important thing … We lived in our house throughout, in the old town, on the Kovačići hill … We could see all the places from which they were shelling. That was terrible, I can see from the stories … For example my mum was so worried because my father had gone out … Didn't know if he would come back … it was really tough … In the cellar there were many children so I hadn't felt it so much, my elder sister, three cousins, we played all the time … Our parents tried to prepare us for school in different ways … Computers entered my life as soon as I started walking … Sometimes we had electricity … Maybe we tried hard to forget it a little bit, to cover it up with other things, maybe we were protected by our parents … (Lana, 20, student at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology).

I don't remember the events from the war, but my sisters told me what was happening, especially Zita, although she was very young as well. Once, the shelling started and my sister dragged me, she couldn't carry me so I came to the cellar with my clothes torn … but if you ask me if I remember … I really don't remember anything … I don't have any recollection … it is difficult … most of it is erased … It hasn't happened yet that I go back there in my mind … thanks … I wouldn't like it to happen (Vladan, 20, diploma in nursing, part-time job unrelated to his degree).

I was too young but I remember some things … Of course, as I was a child everything was funny … mostly we were at the entrance to our block of flats, in the cellar, mostly it was play … fear? … at that age I didn't know what fear was. I remember one scene, I was at the middle level of Ciglane and a shell fell on the lower level. Everybody started running, a friend grabbed me and started to run … We got inside the first house door … "you are so pale, you are so pale, get some sugar and water!" … It was instinctive fear … Now I know that I hadn't experienced any fear, I didn't know what fear was (Tamara, 20, student at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo).

Two of them experienced both war and exile:

I remember only the period … of exile … that I left with my mum, my dad stayed here because he had to work, he was a doctor … My mum told me … We were refugees, the hotel was called "Mina" and it was set up for refugees, there were my two aunts, many people from Sarajevo and other cities … I remember that I played with children. We couldn't leave the hotel, it was a kind of a prison, I don't know why, maybe something to do with administration, something like that … We came back here at the end of 1994 and have been here since. My brother was born in 1995 … A month before [his birth] my father was badly wounded here near Vogosca … (Nermina, student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

I remember quite a few things … disgusting things, I cannot even describe them … Simply, that period of war … I don't have any trauma, I don't like to think back to that time, talk about it, I simply think: It's happened, it's finished, what could we, children, do, we survived … I think that we shouldn't go back to the past (Pavle, 20, first-year student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

Remembering the war was difficult for our interviewees, both from the psychological point of view – it was clear that they did not speak about it voluntarily – and because of their infant war experience that influenced their capacity to have personal recollections, not "filtered" through the narratives of others, their parents, other family members and friends. In part their memory was constructed a posteriori, mostly as an unpleasant episode of their lives to which they are quite reluctant to return. On the other hand, every time some authentically personal recollections emerged, they were related to the normality of the play with their group of peers in spite of the abnormal circumstances. In the innocence and in the impotence of childhood, as Vladan wanted to point out, it was possible to grow up as "normal" people. Any temptation to (psycho)analyse these interviews is completely outside the intention of this work. Still we argue that the way in which these youngsters present "what has been" in their recent past could shed light on the way in which they try to re-appropriate their sense of continuity regarding their biographical time.

b. How do they understand historical time?

As for historical time, the breaking point for most of them was not so much the year 1989 – as Tamara says: "1989 was still a normal year … There were still no signs of anything … It was still a normal year." What happened later was seen as a

real crash: "The main events in this region began to roll. Things began to boil over mostly in 1989 … All those political parties … All those splits started … The fall of the Berlin Wall, reunification of Germany, that was positive … all the other things in this region were negative," said Vladan. It seems then that from the narratives of their families and elders in general, the past before 1989 is partially idealised:

I imagine flags in the streets … [she laughs] … I think that the city was more beautiful, with regular people, that it was completely acceptable, as they say, to sleep on a bench in the park, that people were not so preoccupied with others' lives, that parks were so beautiful, that everyone was happy somehow, more content with themselves … That they stood a chance, that whoever wanted to work had the opportunity, everybody could realise himself eventually, whatever their origin … That you could achieve everything with your work, build yourself, buy an apartment … everything was achievable through your work (Tamara, 20, student at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo).

My father and my mother told me that, when Yugoslavia was at its peak in Tito's time, everything was different. … There was law and order which couldn't be violated … You could work … My father got a job immediately after university. There was no fear, you could let your child play outside without worrying. Now, everything has slipped out of control and the police don't have the mandate to confront things … Look at what is happening now … (Nermina, 20, student in the Economics Faculty, University Sarajevo).

They keep saying "if only Tito could come back". He was great in their opinion, "great Tito and his state". My parents keep telling me times were hard but everything was much better, nobody was without money, everybody had some money. They keep saying: "If only we could go back to that state" … (Vladan, 20, diploma in nursing, part-time job unrelated to his degree).

From these extracts emerges the same preoccupation with the uncertain condition of the present as in the case of their Milan peers – with the lack of job opportunities, general sense of insecurity, the collapse of the welfare state that acted in the past as a guarantee of major meritocracy, easing the burden of social origin. All of these are made even worse in this case by the post-conflict context and instability of state institutions.

For these young boys and girls, it is possible and even necessary to draw lessons from history, which, according to them, has not been happening at all:

I learned very little about it, and I haven't spoken with my parents much about it either. Generally speaking, I find this part of history difficult, especially what happened to the Jews … when I think about it now the first thing that comes to mind is Srebrenica because we went there with my school, we visited all those boiler-rooms … that was … When I entered the compound and felt how cold it was in the middle of August, I thought: "How must it have felt to them" … I know that there were many things like that, everywhere … I suppose that Berlin was also … anyhow it was … a kind of line between two sides which were so opposed to each other … It must have been so hard not to be able to see your relatives because they were on the other side … It was a kind of a border, a boundary, a line, I mean, and if you crossed the line that was it … one step forward and there was a point of no return (Lana, 20, student at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology).

So, historical memory should be an instrument of building peace and the future:

Certainly we should not forget what happened, the war, everything that happened, the genocides that had taken place … Why? I don't know how to explain it, simply so that things don't fall into oblivion … So many people died, it is not easy to forget … It should not be

forgiven and we should seek justice. No way should it be forgiven. It should remain in the collective memory so that it does not happen to anyone else (Vladan, 20, diploma in nursing, part-time job unrelated to his degree).

Sarajevo youngsters also stressed the importance of the biographical memory built in their own life experience: "If you didn't experience something that you wanted to, it could have great consequences in your future life," said Lana. For Vladan there is almost nothing that he would like to forget: "It is hard to find something that I would say needs to be forgotten". Then Pavle turns the discourse back to the future, recomposing the life cycle:

I'm not in the habit of looking at photos. It's because I simply think that … the less you go back to the past the better it is for the future. We should not ignore it, of course, but we should not base everything on it and linger there … Learn to appreciate what you already have and move on, instead of remaining in the same … I want to repeat, quote a man who said: "Good morning, I have so many plans, life is better than they claim" (Pavle, 20, first-year student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

Just as Cecilia said before: "I have so many things to do!"

c. How do they perceive the present?

The lack of continuity in their social time seems to produce a paradoxical and contrasting perception of their very present in relation to their orientations, behaviours and desires. For Tamara it is a kind of nihilism and self-destruction, for Nermina a form of resignation.

You literally muddle through … You live for the day, from one day to another … I don't look at … Many people are just like me … We don't look to see what will happen tomorrow … That's maybe a bad thing, maybe today we shall do something that will be harmful to our health because we are not interested if we would live to be 30 … (Tamara, 20, student at the Academy of Fine Arts).

It's good that we don't ask for too much, it's not as if we fantasise about things … We have some places where we can go out, although it's not like abroad – clubs, a lot more people – this is a small town compared to Milan, but we have places to go out … But as for the rest, our situation … We don't have any opportunity to get work … Nothing is organised for young people. For the most part people want to leave and go abroad, after the third year (at university) everyone is looking for an opportunity to study the second level somewhere abroad and then to get a job there. They don't see any prospects here … (Nermina, 20, student in the Economics Faculty, University of Sarajevo).

The generational gap is even more pronounced as the social and political heritage of the older generation(s) is seen as destructive and responsible for provoking a serious lack of trust, even more than in other post-communist societies in transition (Sztompka, 1996, 1999). As Lana pointed out:

Everything that has been happening, the divisions, all our wrangling … Young people don't care about these things, elections, politics, I don't follow it nor do I like it. It is destroying us and our relationships. Our generation doesn't care about it. We could sit together much more easily than our parents … (Lana, 20, student at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology).

Contrary to what we see in Milan, the past does not appear to Sarajevo youngsters as a stable reference for their life path; it could be argued that they perceive both historical and social time as a slippery terrain of uncertain and unreliable

experience. The only anchor seems to be a strengthened life space of personal relations, with their families and friends whom they trust, and also a premature need to create their own system of "true" values and attitudes with which they can face up to the hazy reality, characterised by a specific model of the "transition without emancipation" (Azmanova, 2009).

The experience of war, lived directly or indirectly by these young people, and its long-term consequences that they have to face day-by-day, made a context of their lives the main engraving factor of their complex relation to the time, whether it is past, present or future time or historical, biographical or social time.

➜ Conclusion

"There is no utopia …" said Tamara resignedly. If we ask ourselves about the answer to the initial question of this paper – if there is a truly transnational and European set of experiences of growing up in terms of chances and uncertainties as well as lifestyles and inequalities – this assertion and the way it was said could be the starting point.

It seems that both interviewed groups share the same, quite realistic, perception of present time, although in different ways. For Sarajevo youngsters, anchored in the present, the future is seen in a vague way, the possibilities remain but their colours are dull. The present is a kind of place for elaboration, not so much of the future or of the past, but of day-to-day goings-on. Milanese youngsters still build some castles in the air, as a multitude of projects yet to be faced; some of them manifest a sort of rebellion supposed to be typical for their age. But Milanese boys and girls declare also more disillusion regarding the value of their degree than their Sarajevo peers. The uncertainty regarding their future job opportunities is shared although more pronounced in the case of Sarajevo, due, probably, to the political and economic instability of the country.[40]

Although these outcomes confirm the statement that the youth universe is strongly linked to the present, it does not mean that the way in which that has been happening is short of depth or value. On the contrary, almost all of the youngsters from both cities look at the historical and biographical past as a "world of values" that should not be lost; in fact, many of them stressed that it should be preserved in the memory as a fundamental of their orientations and lifestyles. For Sarajevo youngsters the meaning of the fall of the Berlin Wall is different, the change has been perceived as a collapse of the life world of the past, with just a few remnants from before, but this is no reason to turn away from it; on the contrary.

However, our interviewees manifested many similarities in their answers[41] regarding the organisation of their time, ways and means of communication, lack of confidence in adults outside the circle of family and friends, consideration of the future and uncertainty, and a lack of trust in social institutions and the political elite, although at diverse levels and with different perceptions of their prospects. Most differences could be attributed to the specificity of the social context of their everyday life experience, which is a kind of contradiction: context

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40. For the main indicators of the political, social and economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina see UNDP, 2009, 2010.

41. The outcomes presented in this paper regard only one part of the arguments that were examined in our research. More results will be published at a later date.

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as a space for difference but not a place that generates different lifestyles. In that sense the assertion of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim that "the sphere of experience of the global generations may be globalized – but it is simultaneously characterized by sharp dividing lines and conflicts" could be partially confirmed in this case, although the dividing line is more about economic than cultural aspects (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2009: 26).

If these young people have not demonstrated much or any trust towards society, they feel themselves rather self-confident, looking for their individualised idea of "normality". A certain similarity among the socialisation patterns of their parents was mentioned before, as the "Thirty Glorious Years" were, in part, shared between these two specific contexts – the Italian as representative of a western model of the welfare state, and the Yugoslav as a specific model of socialist welfare. The western middle-class model – job, family, children, some certainty – was also a typical way of life of the socialist middle class in Yugoslavia, which was more liberal than in other communist countries. Nowadays, both welfare state models are in crisis; in that sense it is not so surprising that the outcomes are similar to a certain degree, notwithstanding the historical, social, cultural and economic differences.

So, the "normality" they seek could be found in the set of values of the "middle class" model (Roberts, 2009), but just as one among a number of others that are equally valid. It seems that for these youngsters the concept of "normal" is by definition plural. Maybe the desire to turn back to the certainty of the past regards more us as adults; they communicate with the past and create their future facing their present day after day. In that sense we consider labels of "loser" and "winner" as no longer appropriate: they could work only if we wanted to consider the lives of the youngsters as measured by the middle-class western model of life.

As Hannah Arendt continues to remind us:

This small non-time space in the very heart of time, unlike the world and the culture into which we are born, can only be indicated, but cannot be inherited and handed down from the past; each new generation, indeed every new human being as he inserts himself between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave it anew (Arendt, 1961: 13).

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Transitions to adulthood in rural villages during the transition from communism in the South Caucasus[43]

➜ Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to add to our currently limited knowledge about what is happening to young people in rural villages in the post-communist countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (see "Introduction", section 1).

It presents evidence from interviews with 31-37 year olds during 2007-08 in rural villages in Aran-Mugan (Azerbaijan), Kotayk (Armenia), and Shida Kartli (Georgia) (section 2).

The core evidence is from 10 unstructured, in-depth interviews that were designed to reveal the processes, the mixtures of choice and constraint, that had shaped different life histories = qualitative survey (see the three case studies in section 2.1).

These in-depth interviews are embedded into profiles of transitions to adulthood during the regions' transitions from communism and are sketched from quantitative surveys of representative samples of around 200 respondents per region = quantitative survey (see section 2.2).

The main findings could be summarised as following (for details see "Discussion and conclusions", section 3).

The evidence shows that despite the shortages of formal employment in all the regions, most of the young adults had been working continuously since leaving education. Men worked for money, or worked at finding work. Women's work was usually a combination of housework, child and elder care, and farm work.

Second, the paper gives evidence that the majority of the villagers are city-based, though living in rural areas. Farming is very often the third choice (after getting a job in industry or in trade). This is partly explainable by the education in schools and in universities, which had prepared the young people for any job except farming. But these jobs are gone now because of the fractures caused by the transformation.

Third, the paper explains how and why traditional family practices and patterns are surviving under post-communism in rural villages – despite the insecure political, economic and social conditions of the transition process. This is valid not only for the South Caucasus, but for the other former Soviet Union countries and probably eastern Europe. This means for young women that the majority have married shortly after finishing education and vocational qualifications, moving to the home of their parents-in-law, producing children and carrying out work for the household, including farming, trading and side jobs in the villages.

Fourth, the difficulties that must be overcome to move to cities in search of better jobs are revealed. These difficulties, and the lives that are available in the countryside, explain why there have not been mass exoduses of young people from all villages.

Fifth, the paper reveals not only the lifestyle of young people in rural areas, but explains the main character of the current economy in the rural areas: it is – with rare exceptions – a subsistence economy, which means that no surplus can be produced so as to substantially improve individual and social life.

Sixth, the paper comments on the disjuncture between curricula in education and the real working lives that have been, and still are, available for village youth. Currently, any vocational education, and of course higher education of young people, has turned out to be vocationally useless.

Finally, there are similarities today between youth in transformation societies and in the west: using the traditional meaning of the word, the majority of young people are politically passive.

→ 1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This paper has a simple aim: to add to our currently limited knowledge about what is happening to young people in rural villages in the post-communist countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Most of the countries have substantial rural populations who have either been invisible in large-scale surveys or bypassed in research that has focused on cities and major towns. Our core evidence is from 10 in-depth interviews conducted in 2008 in villages in selected regions of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. A larger-scale quantitative survey conducted in the same regions in 2007

enables us to say exactly which and how many individuals our interviewees represent. Here, the quantitative evidence is used as background, to help to contextualise our primary, qualitative evidence.

We know that there have been some broadly similar developments in the countryside in all the countries that are still in post-communist transformation. Agriculture has been privatised, though exactly how varies from place to place, as we shall illustrate. Nearly all the factories that communism dotted throughout the countryside closed in the initial stages of market reforms. These factories were located so as to diversify employment opportunities in the countryside, and to raise cultural as well as material standards of life in rural regions, but market forces would never have selected the same locations for the enterprises.

We know that post-communist life has been hard for many people in rural areas. They are typically "money poor", in regions where there are huge deficits of proper jobs, sometimes living in homes without piped gas or water, and who are now working harder than under the old system despite lacking regular employment (see Bridger and Pine, 1998; Gvozdeva, 1999). Despite this, poverty (which is difficult to measure in standardised ways so as to make objective comparisons) is generally considered to be a more serious problem among the urban poor. In the country-side, people have food and homes, and most seem to have been resourceful in implementing survival strategies (see Abbaszade, 2003; Pickup and White, 2003).

Yet we also know that rural life holds few attractions for most village youth. Very few aspire to become farmers (see Predborska, Ivaschenko and Roberts, 2004). They are lured by city lights and lifestyles, seen daily on television. Emigration (ideally to the west) is the dream of many. There have been mass exoduses of young people from some villages, leaving mainly the old and sometimes the young children of "pendulum migrant" parents (see Tarkhnishvili et al., 2005). At the same time, in many countries there has been a countermovement, re-ruralisation, as impover-ished city dwellers have returned to families in the countryside where they know that they will be housed and fed. The proportions of the workforces in agriculture have risen in some countries (Khmelko, 2002; Kuznetsova, 2003; Vincze, 2003). Following marriage and parenthood young people can be, and can feel, trapped in their home villages. They can live as families only in the countryside where they have suitable housing and assistance in child care (Tarkhnishvili et al., 2005). Price differences between houses in urban and rural areas, and the limited number of dwellings available at affordable rents, inhibit labour mobility from depressed to more buoyant regions (see Bornhorst and Commander, 2006).

We know that in many villages very high proportions of the young people who remain do not have any formal employment (which is not to say that they are totally workless). However, we also know that villages have become bases from which some young (and older) persons have forged new careers, usually as traders. The prospering examples in the existing literature are not traders in local agricultural produce, but those who trade internationally, buying and selling goods in different countries so as to profit from price differences. Such trading is easiest when people live close to international borders through which they can pass, maybe having made informal payments to customs officials. In the early 1990s, Lithuania, Poland and Germany, and more recently Moldova, Ukraine, the Balkans, central Europe, Turkey and Georgia have been lucrative trade routes (see Predborska, Ivaschenko and Roberts, 2004; Roberts and Jung, 1995; Schriek, 2003). Trading may be on a bus accompanied by canvas bags or, for the more successful, in vans and lorries. Villages can be excellent bases with space to store goods and vehicles safely, and away from daily surveillance

by city authorities. The new houses with expensive cars parked outside signal that some villagers have prospered in the new market economies.

The following passages present evidence from specimen villages in specimen countries to clarify the life choices that have been available for village youth. What choices have they been able to make? What holds or attracts those who remain in the villages? What are the contributions of employment opportunities (or their absence), housing opportunities and family relationships? What work can village youth access? How hard are their lives and exactly what are the hardships that they face?

1.2. The research

Aran is a "zone" in Azerbaijan, within which Mugan is a set of regions, six in all, each with a regional city and scores of villages. Aran's total population is 1.7 million. Sabirabad, one of the regions in Mugan, named after its principal town, has a population of 145 000. As well as the titular town, there are around 70 villages. All the other regions are similar. The northern edge of Mugan is two hours drive south of Baku, along the main highway. Then reaching the interior of Mugan, along minor roads, can take another one to two hours. The land is flat, arid, bush, semi-desert, but it can be farmed. Mugan has been stripped of most of the industrial jobs that communism created. It was never provided any higher education institutions. Young people from Mugan who apply and are admitted to university usually go to Baku. What is available in Mugan? Basically, just villages, then public services and shops, etc., which are concentrated in the main regional towns.

Shida Kartli is Georgia's central region. The regional city, Gori, is just an hour's drive along the newly constructed highway from Tbilisi. The region has a few other small towns, then scores of villages. Gori used to be best known worldwide as the birthplace of Stalin. His statue still stands in the town centre, and the Stalin Museum is at the end of the main boulevard. However, since 2008 Gori has also been known internationally for being bombed and visited by Russian forces following the brief war over South Ossetia which is adjacent, to the north of Shida Kartli. The in-depth interviews had been done just three weeks before the official outbreak of the war between Georgia and Russia/South Ossetia in August 2008. During the interviews some occasional shootings as a kind of "preparation process" for the war could be heard. Since Georgia became independent in 1991, Shida Kartli has been known in Georgia as a conflict zone, which influenced the answers of our respondents. Formerly, the region was known simply as Georgia's orchard. The land is undulating rather then hilly. The main Caucasus range lies to the north, across South Ossetia. Unlike Aran-Mugan, Shida Kartli has its own higher education institutions, all based in Gori. Like Aran-Mugan, farming is the region's main source of livelihoods, followed by the public sector.

Kotayk in Armenia is a rather different kind of region. Its southern edge is just 30 minutes drive from the centre of Yerevan, but its northern edge is another two hours drive away. Unlike the other regions, Kotayk is mostly urban. In 2001, 54% of the population lived in the region's seven towns, and 46% in villages. Under communism, Kotayk was an industrial region, but all its main factories closed when communism ended, and in terms of its economy it has become primarily agrarian. Young people from Kotayk who progress to higher education usually go to Yerevan.

Each of these three regions contained towns, always at least a regional centre of public administration, which also contained shops, cafes, taxis, etc., and all other

kinds of regional facilities. Rural regions in modern countries always offer some modern jobs – at a minimum in health care, education, policing, etc., as well as government administration. However, in this paper we concentrate on the young people who had become adults in villages where agriculture was the sole major source of livelihoods. Our respondents are all villagers rather than drawn from the entire age group who were resident in the regions.

During 2008 we conducted 10 follow-up interviews with selected cases drawn from the quantitative surveys (see below in section 2.2), all living in villages in Aran-Mugan, Kotayk and Shida Kartli. The cases followed up were meant to represent the range of biographies and current circumstances evident in the regions from the preceding surveys. The cases are in no sense representative samples except that in each region we interviewed equal numbers of males and females. The basic format of the interviews was to start in 1991, the year when the countries had become independent, and to invite the interviewees to explain how their lives had developed since then.

These interviews were conducted by cross-national pairs of interviewers, one English speaking, who asked the questions, and the other a local researcher who spoke the national language and English also, and who was able to translate, interpret, and clear up misunderstandings. Cross-national pairs of interviewers can be extremely effective. Respondents can be asked to explain matters which a local fieldworker would be expected to understand without asking.

→ 2. Findings

2.1. Youth transitions in South Caucasus: three regional case studies as the qualitative survey

Case studies (i) Aran-Mugan, Azerbaijan

Mirmehti was aged 37 when interviewed in 2008. He lived with his wife, three children, and his mother and father in a farmhouse in Gudajuhur, a village in Aran-Mugan. The farmhouse was in excellent condition and stocked with good quality furniture. Mirmehti's father had been the village doctor and had cultivated a small plot as a sideline. However, when the local collective farm was broken-up, the family had been able to claim additional land, three hectares in all, which had enabled Mirmehti to become a full-time farmer. They grew wheat and other crops, and kept a small herd of cows. Mirmehti was an exceptionally successful farmer, and he would have been exceptional in any of our regions.

Mirmehti had left school aged 17 in 1991 and had been a full-time farmer ever since then: "I was absolutely happy, because of the independence of my country I got the opportunity to be given my own land". Mirmehti had been able to avoid military service. He had married in 1997, aged 22, and by 2008 had three children. All the family worked on the farm, but Mirmehti was the main farmer.

By 2007 Mirmehti felt that he had fulfilled all his hopes and ambitions. He had a family, a home, an income that was growing year by year, and the entire family was able to work together. He identified three classes of people in Azerbaijan – the rich, a medium group and the poor, and placed his own family in the lower-rich or upper-middle class. "It's the same structure as in cities but the sources of income are different, and in the villages it's produce that really counts rather than how much money you have."

Mirmehti had not been affected by the war that Azerbaijan was fighting when he left school at age 17. He had known about it, because close to Gudajuhur there were around 400 families from Nagorno-Karabakh living in a "tent city". They lived in miserable conditions but were entirely separate from the village where, in Mirmehti's view, most households were faring rather well. He regarded Azerbaijan as a successful country, with conditions better than its neighbours in the South Caucasus. "This country has great potential. People now work for themselves. We're doing it ourselves." Mirmehti was not thinking about, and did not mention, Azerbaijan's oil and gas, which were far away beneath the Caspian, and were having little obvious impact in Gudajuhur.

Sakina had been born in Gudajuhur, but had moved to her present home and village, Akhtachi, when she married at age 18 in 1990. She had been born in 1971, finished school in 1988, and married two years afterwards. This was a typical female biography in all three regions: leave school, no job found or expected, marry within a few years, then become a full-time permanent housewife and mother. Before and after marriage, these young women were usually kept busy in first their parents', then their parents-in-law's households.

By 2008 Sakina and her husband had four children. They had their own house (it had become their own when the husband's parents died). The main job of Sakina's husband was with a consortium of local men who traded the region's agricultural produce, but together they were also running a farm on which they grew vegetables and fruits, mainly for their own needs, and kept around 50 sheep.

Sakina, just like Mirmehti, felt that all her lifetime hopes had already been fulfilled. She was happy to be able to continue to live as at present. She was also happy about the independence of her country: "Azerbaijan now is on the top. Now there is more freedom, more independence. Life is getting more modern". Here she was referring, among other things, to how, in Azerbaijan's countryside, arranged marriages had become rare, and, "Nothing will now be done against the wishes of a girl". Sakina's main wish for the future was that her children should do well. She believed that educational opportunities in her village had improved. "Now we have primary and secondary schools here. Children are no longer forced to go into the main towns."

Remarks:

We must avoid any impression that all young adults in Aran-Mugan's villages were as content, and had led similar lives to Mirmehti and Sakina. We know from our main survey that many households had insufficient land to create work for all their adult members. Young males who were victims of this situation defined themselves as "unemployed" or, in as many cases, completely "inactive" (in the labour market). The near universal self-description of young women with children was "housewife". The point is that if young adults had access to land and homes that they could consider their own (even if the main occupiers were currently their own parents), and if they could succeed in farming, then they could feel that they were succeeding in their lives in general.

We should bear in mind that in our larger survey (see below section 2.2) only 12 out of the 181 respondents in Aran-Mugan who answered all the relevant questions were farmers, and among the 11 farmers who supplied details about

their incomes, eight were earning less that US$150 a month.[43] The other three were earning over $500 (a substantial income in Aran-Mugan in 2007). It was possible, but exceptional, for young people in Aran-Mugan to succeed economically as farmers.

The two respondents who were interviewed in depth in Aran-Mugan did not feel that their own lives had been affected by the war that was in process while they were leaving education, starting careers in the workforce and starting families. This also applied in Kotayk, in Armenia. Only one of the 10 interviewees across all three regions had felt at all involved in the turbulent (to put it mildly) politics of their countries around the time when the countries became independent (when all our respondents were aged 15-21). Everyone, everywhere, claimed to have been pleased about independence, but for most this had been something that just happened, and happened through events that took place elsewhere. Young people en masse had clearly not been politicised and mobilised (except when males were conscripted into army service) by the events surrounding the end of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has been typical in rural areas throughout eastern Europe. The rural populations were not involved in changing the systems in 1989 or 1991. The changes were events in which they had played no part – either instigating or opposing: they simply had to adjust, if they could (see Bridger and Pine, 1998).

Case studies (ii) Kotayk, Armenia

As explained earlier, Kotayk is very different from Aran-Mugan. The latter is flat. The Caucasus mountains are far to the north. Most of Armenia is mountainous. All of Kotayk is mountainous. It is far from ideal farming country. Apart from this, none of the young adults who we interviewed had been prepared for or had wanted to become farmers. When they were trying to survive from agriculture, this was always through the lack of an alternative. Under communism, Armenia had become heavily industrialised and urbanised. In Kotayk there were seven major towns, once industrial towns, but all the main industries had closed when communism ended. There are many villages in Kotayk, and under communism the region had collective farms. Many villagers had worked on these farms, but not necessarily doing fieldwork. The collective farms employed managers, office staff, technologists, etc. Families, including village families, might have had one member working on a collective farm, but the chances were that someone else would be employed in one of the

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43. All our data on earnings are being cited, and should be treated, with caution. Respondents in our larger, quantitative survey were given showcards listing possible sources of income, then further showcards listing bands, and were asked to say into which band their total incomes from each source fell. The majority answered these questions, but the sums stated were unrealistically low. Respondents may have cited official (declared for tax purposes) rather than actual incomes, or just their main, regular incomes. However, they were also asked to estimate their households' total incomes from different possible sources (listed on showcards), and then their total household spending, all per month, again on different items, listed on showcards. Reported total household spending nearly always exceeded total reported income by a massive margin. Spending was usually reported to be between two and four times as high as reported income. We have used this ratio to adjust reported personal incomes. These are the figures cited in this paper. The amounts look realistic at an aggregate level, and show the expected differences between regions, males and females, and types of employment. While it would be unsafe to attach any significance to small differences (for example, US$150 and US$200 a month), we are confident that those with adjusted personal incomes of over US$500 a month were earning much more than those with adjusted earnings of under US$150.

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region's factories or in public services. Under communism, Armenia became a well-educated republic. According to our quantitative survey (section 2.2), around 40% of Kotayk's young people were becoming higher education graduates around the time when communism ended. Under post-communism, its nuclear physicists and their would-be young adult successors have not appreciated being advised to learn to live from subsistence farming.

Karen, age 35 in 2008, was living in a farmhouse with his two parents, his wife and their three children. He had been born in the village, Lernanist, and reared in the same farmhouse where he still lived, Lernanist is 70 kilometres from Yerevan, the country capital. Karen had left secondary school in 1990 and progressed to a technical college in Hrazdan, the nearest town, from where he graduated as a technician. Afterwards, up to 1996, he served in the army for two years, then spent three years working as a prison guard, but in 2000 he had married and returned to the family home. This was necessary in order to accommodate his wife and children-to-be. Karen had never held a permanent job since then.

The farmhouse in which the family lived was poorly furnished. The building had been damaged by the earthquake in 1988 and remained structurally unstable. They had two hectares of land (fruit trees and vegetables) but in 2008 a thunderstorm had destroyed part of the harvest. Karen explained that it was impossible for the household to live from agriculture. Their only additional regular income was his two parents' (small) pensions. Occasionally, Karen did "handy jobs" in the village: "In 1990 I failed to pass the entry exam of the Pedagogical University in Yerevan. So I had to visit the Technical College in a nearby provincial town. This was negative for my further life" – it was the critical event in his life, which, in Karen's view, had blighted his entire life. If he had trained to teach he would have had a steady job, not a well-paid job, but a proper regular job. The big challenge that Karen hoped to take on in the future was building a new house, but in 2008 the family could not afford to embark on this. Karen could see no way out, ever, from his current employment, housing and impoverished predicaments: "I have many plans but no hope".

Eva, age 35, was living with her husband and four children on the edge of Kamaris, another village in Kotayk, in a really awful house – a metal container with electricity but no piped gas or water, just a well. They had moved there from Eva's mother-in-law's house 10 years previously. They had left a better, stone-built house because it was overcrowded with Eva's own and her brother-in-law's family. Their current container house had a garden, sufficient land to grow vegetables, and to keep a cow and five chickens. Eva's husband was away, working in construction in Russia. "We try, but it is really impossible to live properly on the money that he is able to bring back."

Eva had been born in a different village, closer to the capital, and had attended a secondary school in Yerevan from which she had graduated in 1989. She had married that same year and moved to Kamaris to live with her husband's family. Eva could recall Armenia gaining its independence in 1991. "I was hoping for a better future, better jobs, a better life. None of my hopes have been fulfilled. Things have gone from bad to worse." Currently Eva's priority in life was to ensure that her children were fed. Her dream was to move to a better house. But how? Despite these circumstances, Eva said that her family belonged to Armenia's middle class, certainly not rich, but not very poor either.

Kamaris, only 30 kilometres from Yerevan, was also the home of Karine, aged 32. She had been born in the nearby town of Abovian, finished school in 1992, then attended and graduated from the local technical college in 1995 as an electrician.

She had never worked as an electrician. In 1997 she had married and moved to her parents-in-law's house in Kamaris – a two-storey stone house with electricity, gas and water pipelines, in the centre of the village. The house was surrounded by a vegetable garden. The household comprised Karine, her husband, their two children, her brother-in-law and his wife, and Karine's mother-in-law. Since marrying, Karine had simply been a housewife, also caring for the garden. When interviewed, Karine's husband had a job at a nearby factory.

"My dream is to move to another house – just myself, my husband and my two children. I don't feel comfortable living together with parents, parents-in-law, and the brother-in-law's family." Karine wanted better jobs in Armenia but not for herself because she was satisfied with her role as a housewife.

Elmira, like Karen, was born in Lernanist, where she had lived for most of her life. She was born in 1971, but on leaving school in 1990 she had entered the Art College in Yerevan, 70 kilometres away. Her specialty at college was embroidery, but Elmira had never done this for a living. She still embroidered in 2008, but not for the market. While still at college she had married, and on graduating had moved to live continuously with her husband's family (she had remained in Yerevan for most of the time while completing her course). Until 1996 they had lived in what Elmira described as a "one-room house", which accommodated a large family. At that time, Elmira was cooking for 15 people.

Until 2006 her husband had been able to work in his own specialty – he was a metallurgist – and in 1996 they were able to buy their own house in the same village: "I was so happy to move into another house, in which I was not forced to care for the greater family. My greatest wish was fulfilled". This house had formerly been an office building on a former Soviet collective farm and was part of a complex of buildings which the family used, though they owned just the former office. They had been able to convert this office into a comfortable home stocked with good furniture including a piano (which was not being used in 2008 because it was damaged). They had a small plot of land which Elmira and her husband farmed. When interviewed they had some chickens, five sheep, had just sold a cow, and complained that it was impossible to obtain credit to restock with cattle.

Since 2006, Elmira's husband had been unemployed except for occasional jobs in construction. His career as a metallurgist had ended, temporarily at least. Elmira explained that the household's total income was no longer sufficient to live on.

Up until 2008, moving into their current house had been the highlight in Elmira's life. Her main hope for the future was that there would be more jobs and better jobs, for Elmira's husband and also for herself, but most of all for the couple's two sons who were approaching the age when they would leave secondary school.

Remarks:

Although Kotayk was not ideal farming land, it was possible to farm successfully, but no one who we interviewed had ever tried to acquire enough land to make a good living from farming. All the respondents had been prepared at school, and then at college in some cases, for careers that would have been open to them under communism – as electricians, technicians, etc. On finishing their education, apart from the metallurgist, all the young adults in the households where our interviewees lived found that the working lives for which they had been preparing while in education no longer existed.

Only Elmira was a higher education graduate. As we have acknowledged, in this and other ways our interviewees were not statistically representative samples. Participation in higher education was only slightly lower in Kotayk than in Yerevan. Among the samples in our quantitative survey (section 2.2), 35% of the males in Yerevan and 29% in Kotayk, and 58% and 50% of the females, had become higher education graduates. However, as had been normal under communism, most of the young women had married soon after finishing their education. All the women who were interviewed in Kotayk had done just this. They had then gone to live with their husband's families. If they were to marry and provide homes for their wives and children, young men, whatever their education, had no real alternative but to return (if they had left) to Kotayk to live in their parents' dwellings. In the past, under communism, they would have been able to remain at home while obtaining jobs in the factories, and in public administration and services. Some would have worked on the collective farms. In Kotayk, outside the main towns, households under communism usually possessed private plots of land. In the villages they usually had such plots in 2008, which in some cases had become their sole sources of livelihoods.

Moving to Yerevan in search of better jobs was not a realistic proposition. Young adults from Kotayk could not have afforded to rent or buy houses or flats in the capital city. In any case, if they were not higher education graduates it is unlikely that they would have been able to obtain attractive jobs. Some of the husbands in this research were working away, always in Russia, but this was not proving to be the treasure trove that is sometimes imagined. Other males were doing occasional jobs in the local towns and villages. However, the staple economic activity was sub-subsistence farming.

Case studies (iii) Shida Kartli, Georgia

Shida Kartli is not a mirror image of either Kotayk or Aran-Mugan. Of course, every region in every country has distinctive features. The pertinent features of Shida Kartli for our purposes are that, unlike Kotayk, the territory is not mountainous, the land is good for farming – better than in Aran-Mugan in terms of the quality of the soil and the climate – and last but not least, Shida Kartli lies adjacent to South Ossetia, and since 1991 it has been officially designated as a conflict zone. Unlike in our other two regions, every interviewee in Shida Kartli had felt affected, directly or indirectly, by the conflict between Georgians and Ossetians that began at the end of the 1980s. Refugees (officially, in Georgia, internally displaced persons) had flooded into and sometimes through Shida Kartli. One of our interviewees had spent her childhood in South Ossetia.

Eka had been born in 1972 in a Georgian village in the south of South Ossetia. She and her family had remained after South Ossetia became de facto independent, and Eka had attended the university in Tskhinvali (the "capital" of South Ossetia), graduating in languages in 1995. Eka's family had moved temporarily into Shida Kartli during a period of heavy fighting in the early 1990s, but they soon returned to their home village.

Eka herself had moved permanently into Shida Kartli in 1996 when she married a Georgian from the village of Tiniskhidi, and they had lived there ever since with just his parents initially, and subsequently their own two children also. Eka had never used her languages. She had been simply a housewife from 1996-2002, since when she had worked part-time at a kindergarten in Gori (the regional centre in Shida Kartli). This job was paying her around US$40 a month in 2008.

The farm adjoining the family house was the household's main source of income, "But it is not enough". Eka described her family as "poor, but not among the poorest". For two years Eka's husband had been working (illegally) in Turkey. "Because he is illegal he can be exploited by the Turks. He earns some money, but only enough for him to live on. He will return home later this month. Life is very hard here without a man." Both of Eka's parents-in-law were officially retired, and Eka herself was doing much of the farm work in addition to her job at the kindergarten and being a mother to her two sons.

Her life had not developed in the way that Eka had intended in 1991, when she left secondary school. "I expected that by now I would have a good husband, good children and a decent salary, not to be rich, but to live a decent life. I never expected that after independence in 1991 there would be so much hardship – war, refugees and economic disaster." Eka's main hope for the future was that her family's income would rise and they would be able to afford a good higher education for their children.

In Shida Kartli we interviewed two respondents who were in their mid-30s and still unmarried. There were such individuals everywhere: 7% of the respondents in our quantitative survey in Kotayk, and 27% in Aran-Mugan and 26% in Shida Kartli had never been married or cohabiting at age 30.

Lia, age 36 when interviewed, was unmarried and was living with her two parents, a divorced brother and his two children. She had neither planned nor expected to still be single at 36. "When I was at university I expected that by now I would be a teacher, with a regular and decent salary. I expected to be married, with children, and a home of our own. I did not expect to be rich, just average." As things had turned out, Lia had no job, no family of her own, and no home of her own. "A home is a great luxury for a single person. In any case, in the Georgia countryside there is a tendency to believe that a woman should stay in her family's home until she marries."

Lia felt that the critical event in her life had been the death of her father, soon after she left university. Her father had held a good job, and in addition the family had land on which they grew vegetables and kept cattle. When Lia's father died (from natural causes), "We were depending entirely on my mother's income. It wasn't enough. We had to sell all our land and cattle. I didn't have a job as a teacher and I felt that I just had to do something. So I started trading." Lia's trading, which had remained her main source of income, meant travelling by bus to Baku and returning with goods to sell in her village, Tiniskhidi, and elsewhere in her home region.

Lia had graduated in 1996 from the Pedagogical University in Gori, but had never worked as a teacher. Instead she had become a petty trader. Her earnings were enough for Lia herself to live on, but left nothing for luxuries. She had given up hope of ever having a proper job. She was unsure, but she assumed that she had become disqualified from teaching by the passage of time. Lia described her life as monotonous and hard, and she did not expect anything to change. She always knew, and her own experience had confirmed, that a woman in Shida Kartli needed a husband to achieve a good standard of living and, of course, to have children.

Lia's family had not been affected directly by the region's conflicts, but Lia had been fully aware of these events. "The conflict began in 1989 – the fighting between Georgians and Ossetians. There were killings in Tbilisi. The graduation ceremony at my school was cancelled. Then the situation calmed down and there

were hopes for the better. We all felt that Georgia had won its independence and would become a strong country."

Lia was one of two traders who we either interviewed, or was part of an interviewee's household (the other was Sakina's husband in Aran-Mugan). Trading can mean a variety of things. At the top end it can mean using lorries to transport goods across national borders. At the bottom end, it means selling in the street. Sakina's husband was towards the top end, and Lia was further down, but not right at the bottom.

The second singleton in Shida Kartli was a man, Goderdze, also 36 but living in Rekha, some distance from Lia's village. Goderdze saw his situation differently than Lia: he had remained single by choice, he still intended to marry and have a family, but only when he felt that he could afford to do so.

Goderdze lived with his parents who were farmers, but Goderdze had his own land which was separate, not part of his parents' farm. Unlike in Aran-Mugan where land had been privatised to entire households, in plots that were economically viable, in Shida Kartli the land had been privatised to individuals as small smallholdings (if they wished), which in cases such as Goderdze's plot had given him sufficient land to be a useful secondary source of income, but insufficient to provide for an entire household's livelihood. Goderdze had not wanted to become a farmer. He had attended an agricultural college in Gori after secondary school, but had subsequently enrolled on a course in health management at a private university in Tbilisi. On completing this course, Goderdze had found that there was no chance of employment in health management, so he had taken a series of low-paid jobs in Tbilisi, then returned to his home village, Rekha. Goderdze had actually built a house for himself (and his future family) on his own land. He was able to live from the sale of his own farm produce, but was not earning enough to run a household and support a family, and therefore was continuing to live with his parents.

According to our evidence, in Shida Kartli there were a lot of struggling farmers. Farming was the occupation of 49% of all respondents in the quantitative survey who had jobs when interviewed (58 persons in total). Of these, only five reported monthly incomes in excess of US$150, and none were earning over US$500 a month. Aran-Mugan had a higher proportion of its farmers who were earning over US$500: three out of the 11 who supplied full income details. In Kotayk it was just one out of eight. Farming as a main occupation was more likely to have been enabling villagers to survive than to prosper.

Goderdze was the most politically engaged of all the people we interviewed. He had not been a combatant at any time or a member of any political organisation, but he had felt involved, and he named the loss of Abkhazia as the critical event in his life that had affected him most deeply. "The process of independence started in 1988. There were meetings in Gori in which students like myself took part. The main topics that we discussed were how to avoid service in the Soviet military, and how to deal with the fighting in Ossetia. In 1991, I was in Tbilisi and at that time I had high expectations that Georgia would become a modern European country. I now think that another war may be needed to regain our possessions." Goderdze's wish was fulfilled in so far as within a month of our interview there was another war in South Ossetia, but the outcome – bombing in Gori and Russian tanks rolling through Shida Kartli – would have dashed Goderdze's hopes once again.

Levan, age 34, had been brought up in the city of Gori, and on leaving school in 1990 he had gone to work at a cotton factory in the city, but the factory went

bankrupt in 1994. By that time Levan was married and was starting a family (two sons eventually). There was insufficient room in his parents' home, but fortunately a family neighbour who was living permanently in Moscow had allowed Levan to use a house that he owned in the village of Khidistavi. The house had no farmland, not even a garden, and was very poorly furnished.

Since 1994 Levan had not held a regular job except for a short period when he had worked at a small factory in his village that manufactured wood products (mainly furniture), but this business had soon folded. "Then, in 1996, my leg was damaged by a car accident. This does not allow me to do hard labour" – for villagers very often the only chance to earn some money. Levan had tried working in Azerbaijan, "but in vain", and also in Turkey, "But I was given no money; it was a bad experience". Even so, Levan had decided to try Turkey again, though he was reluctant to leave his family.

Remarks:

Trading was the second most common occupation (after farming) in the villages in our research regions. In the quantitative survey (section 2.2) there were four traders in Kotayk, nine in Shida Kartli and 17 in Aran-Mugan. In Shida Kartli all nine traders gave information about their earnings and they split 4:5 between those earning less than US$150, and those earning between US$150 and US$500 a month. In Kotayk only two out of the four traders answered our money questions, and they both said that their monthly earnings were in excess of US$500. In Aran-Mugan the 13 out of the 17 traders who answered the money questions split 5:4:4 into those earning under US$150, between US$150 and US$500, and over US$500. In Aran-Mugan there were "survival traders" (under US$150), then those like Lia who were getting by, and successful traders with proper and substantial businesses. In Shida Kartli none of the traders who gave information about their incomes were succeeding in financial terms (using US$500 as the threshold), whereas both traders who gave details about money in Kotayk were succeeding in these terms.

The findings from our in-depth interviews are embedded in our quantitative survey. Because of this, we are able to contextualise these primary findings, and beyond this, give them a "phenomenological" representativeness (see section 3, "Discussion and conclusions").

2.2. Youth transition in the three regions: the quantitative survey

In 2005 the Caucasus Research Resource Centres (2005) mounted the second in what has become an annual series of data initiative surveys. These are household surveys, gathering information about all members of the sampled households, and are based on representative samples. The first survey in 2004 was conducted only in the capital cities of the three South Caucasus countries – Yerevan in Armenia, Baku in Azerbaijan, and Tbilisi in Georgia. Then in 2005 comparator regions were added – Kotayk in Armenia, Aran-Mugan in Azerbaijan, and Shida Kartli in Georgia. Subsequently, the data initiative surveys have been based on nationally representative samples, but for the research reported here we used the 2005 investigation to identify all household members who had been born between 1970 and 1976, who therefore became 16 between 1986 and 1992, and whose transitions to adulthood had roughly coincided with their countries' post-communist transitions. Our achieved samples of roughly 200 per region were from the 2005 survey households who were still at the same addresses in 2007, or who had moved locally and could be traced, and who were able and willing to take part. The interview schedule was

fully structured: all questions were closed. The schedule was developed initially in English, using instruments from the British Household Panel Survey as models, then translated into the national languages, piloted and amended. The schedule gathered full information from age 16 about each respondent's career in education, the labour market, family relationships, housing, and a selection of free time activities. Thus, we obtained biographical information from everyone at least up to age 30. The research covered the capital cities also, but here we consider only the findings from the non-capital regions, Aran-Mugan, Kotayk and Shida Kartli.

This quantitative survey was used as a framework for the above-presented qualitative survey (section 2.1).

The best way of profiling the regions, and beginning to portray what life is like for their young people, is to present some findings from our quantitative survey. In Kotayk around 40% (and 50% of the females) had become higher education graduates (see Table 1).[44] The higher education participation rates for males were similar in Kotayk and Shida Kartli (29% and 26%), but just 34% of the young women in Shida Kartli against 50% in Kotayk had become graduates. These regions' young people had become as highly educated as their contemporaries in most west European countries. Aran-Mugan was different. Just 11% of the males and 10% of the females were higher education graduates. Higher education was further away from the region's young people, and the number of places relative to the size of the age group was much smaller in Azerbaijan than in Armenia and Georgia.

A big problem for young people in all three regions was the acute shortages of jobs. Table 2 gives the situations of the respondents in each region at the time of our survey in 2007. The maximum proportion in full-time jobs was 27% in Kotayk. It was 17% in Aran-Mugan and 10% in Shida Kartli. As many as 40% in Shida Kartli described themselves as self-employed. They were nearly all working (in so far as they worked at all) on family farms. Some reported that they received no regular incomes whatsoever. Their counterparts in Kotayk were more likely to describe themselves as unemployed, and as inactive in Aran-Mugan. These self-descriptions had to be "negotiated" with the fieldworkers. Western categories do not map neatly onto the realities of working life in many parts of the South Caucasus (and likewise in most other post-communist countries). In Aran-Mugan, 15% of the respondents were classified (by themselves, in negotiation with the interviewers) as doing "something else", which usually meant that they were working unofficially. Similar cases in Shida Kartli and Kotayk were "negotiated" into one of the employment categories. The key point is that in all three regions it was statistically exceptional for young people and young adults to have proper, regular, official jobs.

The situations in the villages were more dire even than the figures in Table 2 portray. Most of the jobs in the three regions were urban jobs. In Kotayk, just 21% of all jobs were farm jobs (including the occupations of the self-employed), and in Aran-Mugan only 13% were farm jobs. Most farms were family farms and did not employ additional labour. In Shida Kartli, 49% of the jobs reported were on (family) farms, and most of these individuals self-described as self-employed. Yet as our case studies have shown, the absence of formal jobs in the villages did not mean that young people left school or college then became totally workless. We noted above that previous researchers have found that life in rural areas in post-communist countries has generally become harder, and workloads heavier than in the past.

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44. All tables can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

In other respects transitions to adulthood had progressed in normal, traditional ways. Table 3 lists the family career histories of the samples up to age 30. There had been just one normal sequence of family relationships which was from being single to married, then a couple with children. The differences between regions were in how rapidly these transitions had been made. In Kotayk just 7% of the respondents were still single at age 30 compared with 27% in Aran-Mugan and 26% in Shida Kartli. The "other" category in Table 3 includes all cases where a relationship (married or cohabiting, and the latter was very rare) had been terminated, and when parenthood had preceded marriage. The small proportions of such cases will be related, in part, to the typical housing careers of young people in the South Caucasus. Between 72% and 84% in the different regions were still living with their parents or parents-in-law at age 30 (see Table 4). The multigenerational household was traditional in all three regions. On marriage the woman joined the man's family. It was very rare for single young people to have homes of their own. They could not afford to buy or rent. They had to wait for deaths in the older generation in order to become main occupants, or for family resources to be pooled to enable a new house to be built or bought, which would most likely be because there were simply too many people in the family home.

Levels of participation in the leisure activities about which respondents were questioned were very low, except in some cases in Kotayk which, as explained earlier, was more urbanised than the other regions. Schools in Kotayk appear to have enabled 16 year olds to play sport and experience high culture. Village youth in Kotayk could access the region's towns, so visits to bars and cafes had been common throughout the youth life stage.

In Aran-Mugan and Shida Kartli, in contrast, throughout their youth many respondents appeared to have done nothing. The threshold for inclusion as a participant in Tables 5-7 is at least once a year. Of course, young people had to do something with their time. All homes had electricity and television. When most of the leisure provisions offered by Communist Party organisations and the state vanished in the early 1990s, there was a trend towards the mediatisation of leisure across eastern Europe (Jung, 1994). The new commercial facilities were inaccessible for people with little if any spare money. Previous studies in rural areas have portrayed all age groups doing little with any spare time except watch TV and otherwise just "hang about" (see Ferenz, 1998; Gvozdeva, 1999).

Regular religious participation was rare in Aran-Mugan – just 2% were attending at least once a month when aged 30 (see Table 8). Such regular attendance was more common in Shida Kartli (but still only 14%) and in Kotayk (26%). Throughout most of eastern Europe the religious revival has been confined to minorities (see Need and Evans, 2001), which applied in all our research regions, and in Aran-Mugan the minority was tiny.

→ 3. Discussion and conclusions

We stated at the outset that our aim has been simply to add to knowledge rather than test hypotheses. So precisely what have we added?

First, we can, of course, confirm the shortages of employment in rural areas. Villages are homes to lots of non-employed young people and young adults, but they are certainly not workless. From our 10 interviews we have information about 18 persons (the interviewees and their wives or husbands, if any). All the men were working. The largest group (three out of nine) were working away, abroad, when they were actually earning. Those who were working away will be underestimated

in our quantitative surveys. Long-term emigrants would have been absent, and pendulum migrants would sometimes have been abroad at the time of our field-work in 2007. "Away" in the villages that we visited and in the households where we interviewed, always meant working in another country. The countries to which people went seemed to depend on the countries where they lived. From Armenia all the temporarily absent men from our interviewees' households were working in the Russian Federation. From Georgia they were going to Azerbaijan or Turkey. We have no examples of working away from our interviews in Aran-Mugan, but we know independently that typical destinations from Azerbaijan have been other near-east countries – Turkey, Dubai and Egypt, for example (see International Organization for Migration – Azerbaijan, 2002). In all our examples, earnings from abroad were enabling households to survive, to just manage rather than to prosper.

All the women in the households where we interviewed were also working, and had worked continuously since they left school or university. Only three out of the nine female interviewees and wives of male interviewees had paid jobs outside their homes at the time when we visited. Lia was trading from Shida Kartli. Eka, also in Shida Kartli, had a part-time job in a kindergarten. Sakina in Aran-Mugan was the main (but not the only) worker on the family farm. However, all the women were doing other kinds of work that were keeping them fully occupied. Whether single and living with their parents, or married and living with their in-laws, they had been involved in housework, child care and farm tasks. They were doing this work every day, often all day. Some described their lives as monotonous, but never as easy. They were not suffering from idleness.

Second, our case studies, combined with our quantitative evidence, enable us to better understand why traditional family patterns and practices have remained so stable in the South Caucasus (and the South Caucasus are probably typical of many other rural regions in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in this respect). Young people continue to depend on their families for housing, in many cases until they are well into adulthood. Young women need to marry, and they know that they need husbands, if they are ever to leave their parents' homes, to become the senior residents in their dwellings and to enjoy a decent standard of living. It may be different in cities, but this is the reality in the villages. Men need wives because it is impossible to run a household single-handed when farming is involved. This applies if the man has any paid job outside the home, and most of all if the job is in another country. Without wives men must continue living with their parents, then maybe with a brother or brothers and their families.

Families are part of the explanation as to why the severe reductions in paid employment outside the home have not led to social collapse in the countryside. Some of our interviewees were poor, and described themselves as poor, but in the countryside everyone belonged to a family, and would be fed and housed. We did not encounter examples of abject destitution.

Third, we must assume that some individuals who were born and raised in villages in Aran-Mugan, Kotayk and Shida Kartli had left and settled in cities. We know that there had been in-migration to the cities from our surveys in Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan. Such migration is likely when young people move to the cities initially for higher education. However, our interviews in villages provide insights as to the conditions that must be fulfilled if migrant young people are to remain city-based. They need jobs that pay salaries to make them self-sufficient, and they probably need relatives who will accommodate them. Otherwise, like Goderdze in Shida Kartli, they must return to their home villages.

Where women settled depended on who they married. So among our interviewees there were cases of women who had exited cities when they married village males. If they are to remain city-based, migrant women must either earn enough to be self-sufficient (very difficult) or marry a man from a city family. This also applies to city-bred women who marry.

We also have an example from Shida Kartli of a family, Levan's, who had moved from Gori to a village because that was where a house was available. Thus, we can identify several good reasons why the shortages of proper jobs have not led to a mass exodus from rural villages.

Finally, a contradiction: the main ways in which villagers were earning livelihoods were by farming, trading and working away. Now it was only in Aran-Mugan that we encountered anyone who could be described as an enthusiastic farmer. In Shida Kartli and Kotayk, farming was always a second or third choice, or a "no alternative" career. It was only in Aran-Mugan that we interviewed anyone who had a farm of sufficient size to earn a decent livelihood – to produce for the market as well as a household's own needs. Aran-Mugan was further from a major city than Kotayk or Shida Kartli. Rural youth are known to be attracted by the city lifestyles that they see daily on television, but in Aran-Mugan it appeared that few were being encouraged to believe that Baku was a possible destination for them. Only around 10% could expect to go to university. The rest were expected to continue to live and work locally, and the farmers who we interviewed in Aran-Mugan saw farming as their vocation, their destiny. In Shida Kartli and Kotayk all the farm plots of the households that we visited were incapable of yielding more than secondary incomes. Also, succeeding in these regions' secondary schools seemed to have meant escaping from farm and village life – an attractive prospect to young people – but in practice the schools and higher education institutions had been preparing young people for non-existent careers.

Farming and trading were the occupations from which village youth were most likely to earn decent incomes. For the first post-communist generations the arts of trading, and doing other kinds of business, have needed to be learnt through practice and tips from peers. There were no tailored school or college courses in the places that we visited. If and when the economies and labour markets of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia become more regulated, the kinds of trading in which young people have engaged might well disappear. However, working abroad is likely to remain common for as long as there are substantial pay differentials between nearby countries. Our interviewees' experiences suggested that this was a venture for which they had been ill-prepared.

What we are arguing is that any vocational education, and of course higher education, that our respondents had received had turned out to be vocationally useless. There are huge gaps in provision, but we doubt whether any governments will be prepared to base provisions on the assumption that their home economies will be unable to provide their youth with decent, regular employment. We were told time and again on visiting regional and central government education departments while conducting this research, that they wanted to gear education to preparing young people for high-tech jobs in the global knowledge economy in which the countries would thereby become prominent players.

Despite all these constraints, difficulties and individual disappointments (not experienced by all, but by a high number), the young people remain politically passive. It could be argued that this comes as no surprise, as our focus in this paper

is on remote villages in the South Caucasus. But the same attitude you can find – according to our other empirical surveys – in urban areas not only in former Soviet countries, but in central European countries as well. And considering studies of young people in the west, you can say, that today's youth "are not going to change the world" (Roberts, 2009: 211). This means that young people are – taking the traditional meaning of the term used mainly by the older generations – politically passive. For this there are three explanations (Roberts, 2009: 208-209):

1. The individualisation of youth life courses.
2. The delayed entry into adult occupations.
3. Today's absence of powerful juxtaposed ideologies.

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➜ Appendix

Table 1: Percentages of males and females with higher education by region

	Males	Females
Armenia		
Kotayk	29%	50%
Azerbaijan		
Aran-Mugan	11%	10%
Georgia		
Shida Kartli	26%	34%

Table 2: Positions of the respondents at the time of the interviews, 2007 (in percentages)

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Full-time education	-	-	-
Full-time job	27	17	10
Part-time job	2	3	5
Self-employed	14	14	40
Unemployed	47	20	31
Not in the labour market	11	43	16
Something else (working unofficially)	-	15	-
N=	199	181	196

Table 3: Family biographies up to age 30 by region (in percentages)

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Single	7	27	26
Single-married	3	11	2
Single-married-parent	85	59	61
Other	6	3	12
N=	200	214	199

Table 4: Percentages of those who were still living in parental home at age 30

Place	
Kotayk	78
Aran-Mugan	72
Shida Kartli	84

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Table 5: Sport: percentages who participated (at 16, 23 and 30 years of age)

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Played sport			
16	65	3	20
23	24	3	4
30	12	3	3
Watched sport (not on TV)			
16	33	1	12
23	12	-	9
30	11	-	6

Table 6: Going out: percentages who participated (at 16, 23 and 30 years of age)

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Pubs, cafes, etc.			
16	58	2	18
23	47	4	25
30	43	6	19
Discos, nightclubs			
16	13	-	1
23	9	-	1
30	5	-	1
Cinema			
16	72	3	10
23	15	1	10
30	9	-	5
Rock, pop concerts			
16	25	-	7
23	14	-	4
30	11	-	9

Table 7: High culture: percentages who participated (at 16, 23 and 30 years of age)

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Theatre			
16	57	1	7
23	16	-	5
30	15	-	4
Museums, art galleries			
16	65	2	2
23	16	1	2
30	16	-	2
Opera, ballet, classical concerts			
16	11	-	1
23	5	-	1
30	5	-	1

Table 8: Frequencies of attending religious services at age 30: in percentages

	Kotayk	Aran-Mugan	Shida Kartli
Attended religious services			
Never	16	91	56
Less than once a month	59	5	31
1-3 times a month	21	1	10
1-2 times a week	4	1	3
3-6 times a week	1	-	1
Every day	-	2	-
N=	200	214	199

Young people in Serbia: a review of two decades

Smiljka Tomanović

➔ A personal history

*L*ooking back, it seems that 1989 has had a symbolic meaning for me personally. I spent the spring of 1989 as a young scholar of 25 attached to Ruskin College in Oxford, together with some other scholars from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Since I had never travelled to other socialist countries before, that was the year when, at the very evening of socialism, I had my first contact with people from those countries. I remember realising at that moment how different was everyday life of people from my country – Yugoslavia – as compared to others: I used to travel abroad since I was 17, and, due to the relatively high standard we had then, by that time I had visited several countries in west and south Europe, had contact with many foreign people, culture and music, etc. I remember that the animosity expressed by my Polish and Czech friends after a glance at the Soviet flag on someone's wall seemed rather strange to me. I also remember a couple of remarks from that spring that turned out to be prophetic. While explaining to me the round table talks between Solidarity and the Polish Government, Sergiusz Kowalski commented: "It is easy for us to debate cool headed, we are all Poles". A couple of weeks later, George Schopflin stated during our conversation at the LSE that if Slovenia and Croatia declared a common market, it would be the end of Yugoslavia. I remember that both

of the remarks made me shiver, although rationally I could not accept the gloomy picture of the future. Unfortunately, the scenario we were about to take part in was much worse than anyone could have imagined …

The aim of this paper is to outline the state of young people in Serbia today. It starts with a description of the social context of the prolonged post-socialist transformation. The status of young people is then portrayed as their lifestyle through resources, orientations and behaviours (practices), by using data from official statistics, documents and relevant studies. The role of young people's agency in their transition to adulthood is further discussed. In the concluding part, I discuss young people's transitions by contesting the main aspects of the individualisation thesis: de-standardisation, de-traditionalisation and self-determination (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), and through alternative concepts of structured individualisation (Roberts, Clark and Wallace, 1994) and bounded agency (Evans, 2002).

→ 1. The social context: two phases of social transformation

The status of young people and their transition to adulthood are profoundly marked by the particular social context of anomic post-socialist transformation in Serbia during the last two decades. Based on comprehensive analyses, Serbian sociologists distinguish the two phases: blocked transformation in the 1990s and prolonged transformation since the political changes in 2000. Both phases of the transformation are "path dependent" and deviate from the model of ''successful post-socialist transition" (Lazić and Cvejić, 2005: 35).

The period of blocked transformation in the 1990s was marked by several processes that have devastated the society. The breakdown of the socialist federal state of Yugoslavia that began in mid-1991 was not a normal political break-up, but caused wide and profound ethnic conflict, which took part in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995. The state of Federal Yugoslavia, followed by Serbia and Montenegro, was ruled by a totalitarian nationalistic political regime, from 1989 to 2000, within a multiparty system, but the party monopoly was replaced by "… interlocked positions of economic and political dominance in order to postpone the development of a market economy and political competition" (ibid.: 38).

During the first half of the 1990s, Serbia was simultaneously faced with a post-socialist transformation, ethnic conflicts, international isolation and sanctions, which all had devastating effects on the country's economy and society. The economic system was dominated by political interests, which had produced its collapse with an enormous drop of GDP and hyperinflation, an unemployment rate as high as 40% and an informal economy which accounted for more than half of GDP by the mid-1990s (Cvejić, 2006a). The huge economic crises led to the pauperisation of the vast majority of the population, which went in parallel with the "… enrichment of a small stratum of people who (while controlling the state apparatuses: the police, army and bureaucracy) engaged in economic activities connected with the war and violation of international sanctions (import of arms, oil, etc.)" (Lazić and Cvejić, 2005: 38).

The society's tissue was destroyed due to the collapse of the institutions and whole social systems: economic, financial, legal, educational, health, social security, etc. – systems worked at a formal level but as "empty institutions" – banks with no money, stores with no goods, courts with no cases, etc. The end of the period was marked by NATO armed intervention in 1999, which has further destroyed the economic capacities of the country.

Normative and value transformation was marked by re-traditionalisation: national homogenisation, de-secularisation, with collective and authoritarian values dominating individual freedoms. One type of collectivism (socialist "brotherhood and unity") was replaced by another ("national identity"), while the shift towards acceptance of values stemming from modernity appears to be very slow (Pešić, 2006: 305). The micro social level was marked by "domestication" (Ule and Kuhar, 2008) – withdrawal of social life to the private domain of family, household, neighbourhood and primary groups of friends (Tomanović, 2008a).

While the dominant ideology was nationalistic within the nationalist movement, there was on the other hand a strong democratic movement with constant civil protests from 1991 (in 1991, 1992, 1996/97, 1999 and 2000).

The period of prolonged transformation has started with major political change – the end of the Milošević political regime, in October 2000. The social transformation has been prolonged due to some of the unsolved problems from the previous period, which led to partly successful privatisation, with low productivity and slow economic growth, still high unemployment, and still a significant informal economy. The political system has not been transformed: it is non-transparent and corrupt. It also, together with slow and unfinished reforms of social systems and institutions (for example, the legal system, education, etc.), has produced low levels of trust in institutions among people in Serbia. Everyday family and public life has been burdened by conflicts, violence and criminalisation (Tomanović, 2008a).

Although there are still many unsolved political issues, there are also evident recent trends towards social integration based on the growing consensus on the importance of integration into the European cultural, economic and political space (Cvejić, 2010). They are accompanied by growth in GDP, investments and export, and slowly decreasing unemployment and a shrinking informal economy (before the world economic crisis in 2008) (ibid.).

Macro-demographic trends point at an ageing society: due to a negative population growth rate since 1991, Serbia is considered to have the fourth oldest population in the world. There are 1.5 million people aged from 15 to 30, which makes up 20% of the population. Family formation patterns in Serbia resemble, according to their demographic features, trends in other (both western and post-socialist) countries: a decline in the number of marriages (a decrease in the nuptiality rate from 0.82 in 1980 to 0.68 in 2000), and the birth rate (on average, 1.4), postponement of marriage (average age at first marriage: 26.3 for women, 29.6 for men – in 2007), and birth (average age at first childbirth 26.2 for women – in 2007), and a rise in the proportion of non-marital births (from 13.5% in 1991 to 20.2% in 2002).[45] On the other hand, these trends are not accompanied by diversification and pluralisation of family forms indicated by still low levels of cohabitation[46] and divorce (divorce rate: 0.8).

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45. Source: official statistics of the Republic of Serbia: http://webrzs.statserb.sr.gov.yu/axd/en/index.php.

46. In the general population, 1.4% according to a national survey from 2003 (Bobić, 2006). Independent single life is neither practised nor valued by young people in Serbia, while cohabitation is highly accepted (by 78% of respondents) as a legitimate practice, but it is considerably less practised (by only 3%, including those who live together in their parents home, and it is mainly considered as "an introduction to marriage" (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a: 280).

Structural trends point at social differentiation: polarisation of social structures in small groups at the top and a large proportion of the population at the bottom of the social scale. Prolonged transformation leads to increases in social inequality in terms of pauperisation of the lower social strata and the risk of pauperisation among the middle strata – for example, educated young people but who are unemployed for longer periods of time (Cvejić, 2006b: 31). There is also evident reproduction of social positions particularly within elite and middle social strata. The process of "closing" of social structure through self-reproduction of social strata, which started in the late 1970s, has been perpetuated by structural polarisation. This tendency is based on the general process of privatising the key mechanisms of social reproduction, encompassing not only the economic, but also other forms of capital (in this case primarily cultural, through the education system).

➜ 2. Status and lifestyles of young people in Serbia today

Young people in Serbia are facing a double transition – the transition to adulthood in transitional societies, as are their counterparts in central and eastern Europe. Young people are faced with various risks that are in fact common to all post-socialist countries: high unemployment, a precarious labour market, scarce housing, a collapse in social security systems that leaves them with no institutional "safety net", etc. (Kovacheva, 2001; Walther, Stauber and Pohl, 2009). On the other hand, the particularities of the status and transitions of young people in Serbia come from the complex social context outlined above.

Some of the indicators of their marginalised social position within Serbian society are discontinuity and lack of substantial youth studies, as well as a lag in youth policy. Following the student protests in 1968, there was a period of intense youth studies in Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s. The last comprehensive study was carried out in 1985-86 by a Yugoslav youth research programme on a sample of 6 840 14 to 27 year olds from all Yugoslav republics (Vrcan et al., 1986). During the 1980s, young people were mainly the subject of studies on values and attitudes, while in the 1990s they were studied as actors in civil protests (Lazić, 1999; Kuzmanović et al., 2003). The first comprehensive study that was expected to give the empirical basis for the national youth policy was a multidimensional survey carried out by an interdisciplinary team of experts in 2003 (CPA/CPS, 2004). It marked the revival of research, but there is no substantial and institutionalised revitalisation of youth studies. Within EU integration processes, the first government body dedicated to youth was established in 2007, and a major policy document on a national youth strategy was launched in 2008.

In order to outline the current status of young people in Serbia, I have decided to use the operationalisation of lifestyle suggested by Hendry and associates encompassing three dimensions: resources, orientations and behaviours (Hendry, Kloep and Olsson, 1998). Within resources, I will look at education, employment and the material status of young people, while orientations refer to values and perceptions. Behaviours are practices related to leisure, participation, family formation and transition to adulthood. I will also focus on young people's agency in their transitions to adulthood.

Resources

Education is one of the basic resources for young people. Their educational status is improving, but still not satisfactory – among people aged between 15 and 30: 5% have no education, 33% primary, 54% secondary, while 5% have finished higher

education (Census 2002). Secondary education enrolment in the 2004/05 school year was 77% with a drop-out rate of 2%. One third of young people were attending three-year vocational schools, while the others were attending four-year schools (22% of them high schools – gymnasiums, and 78% vocational schools).[47] When considering the transfer from secondary to higher education, enrolment rates are very high (in the 2006/07 school year the rate was 64.7%).[48] The number of students is continuously growing (it almost doubled between 1990/91 and 2004/05), while the number of university staff is decreasing. Although a significant number of young people get accepted at universities, the length of study is prolonged and only a small number graduate on time (in 2006 only 21.7%). However, it should be emphasised that the average length of studying shows a declining trend,[49] due to joining the Bologna Process. The main problem in transition from school to work is that education at all levels is not in accordance with the needs and requirements of the labour market.

Several sociological studies gave evidence that higher education is still the signifi-cant mechanism for social promotion, but it is becoming exclusive (Cvejić, 2006a). Within the social differentiation, higher education is the main mechanism for reproduction of the middle strata, and the channel for upper mobility for young people from working class families (Tomanović, 2008b).

Employment of young people is one of the key problems in Serbia. According to the report *Serbia: Labor Market Assessment* carried out by the World Bank in 2006, 47.7% of young people aged from 15 to 24 were unemployed in 2005, while the rate for the population over 25 was 18.3%.[50] When compared with some post-socialist countries in the region that have recently joined the EU – such as Bulgaria with a youth unemployment rate of 25.8%, or Romania with a youth unemployment rate of 23.2% – it is evident that young people in Serbia are particularly vulnerable. The high inactivity rate of people aged between 15 and 30 (51.5%) is due to the postponement of finishing education, which 87% of young people state as the main reason for not looking for a job.[51] While part-time jobs and volunteering as a means of gaining work practice are not part of the experience of young people who are studying, the share of unemployed who work in the informal economy is hard to estimate.[52]

The material status of young people in Serbia is marked by high and prolonged dependence on family resources due to unemployment and housing problems. Our research findings from 2003 revealed the immense financial dependence of

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47. Source: Centre for Education Policy, www.cep.edu.rs.

48. The data refer to the percentage of young people who graduated from secondary schools and enrolled at universities. On the other hand, the Gross Enrolment Ratio – the ratio of the number of students in higher education to the number of the population of the relevant age – was 43% for the whole higher education sector and 26.6% for universities in 2002 (source: Centre for Education Policy, www.cep.edu.rs).

49. Source: National Youth Strategy, www.mos.gov.rs/upload/dl/ENGLISH/nys.pdf.

50. Over 200 000 young people aged between 15 and 29 were unemployed in June 2010: 20 750 aged 15-19; 82 456 aged 20-24; and 99 795 aged 25-29, which makes 27% of the age group under 30. In each age group, young women make up over 50% of unemployed young people (source: *Unemployment and Employment in Serbia. Monthly Statistics Bulletin*, No. 94, Republic of Serbia National Employment Service, June 2010).

51. Source: *Serbia: Labor Market Assessment*, www.worldbank.org.rs.

52. The share of the informal economy ("grey economy") is estimated to account for 30-40% of economic activities (Cvejić, 2006a).

young people on their parents, since 63% of our respondents cited maintenance from their parents as their basic source of income, while 32% have personal income and 15% get financial support from their parents (in addition to some other source). In the oldest age group (31-35) 9%, and in the middle one (25-30) 56%, young people describe their only financial source as their parents (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a: 277).

The socialist model of housing policy in the former Yugoslavia was oriented towards state provision of housing (flats) for employees (usually families with children) in socially owned firms. The unequal distribution of housing resources was one of the main sources of social inequality in socialist Yugoslavia: for example, newly built flats were given mostly to the elite and middle social strata – managers and professionals – while working-class people were mostly oriented towards illegal construction (Petrović, 2002). After the breakdown of the country, the socialist housing policy system collapsed: there was almost no construction and distribution, while public sector housing was purchased by the previous tenants as a result of privatisation. Moreover, since there is no developed housing policy (for example, only very unfavourable commercial mortgages are available), this has resulted in an extreme housing shortage and people rely mostly on family resources (Petrović, 2004).

The data point at the extremely bad housing situation as a constraint to young people's independence.[53] Our study from 2003 has revealed that 77% of younger (17-24), 64% of middle (25-30) and 41% of older (31-35) respondents live in their parents' home (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a: 278). As is evident from the data, half of newly formed families live in joint households with their parents, while the majority of unmarried young people live with their parents (even 85% in the oldest age group). Among the young people who acquired housing independence, over one third achieved this with family resources: either inherited or received as a gift from parents or relatives. Approximately one quarter of the respondents rent an apartment. Only 9% purchased an apartment by themselves or together with their partner. Housing market conditions and non-existent state policy (the lack of favourable mortgages in particular) make the purchase of housing space almost impossible at the present time. In what way and to what extent the introduction of partly subsidised mortgages by the state has improved the housing status of young people in Serbia is yet to be explored. Since these mortgages are still not favourable and therefore available to the majority of young people, it seems reasonable to assume that they mainly improved the living conditions of young couples that belong to middle and upper-middle strata, who are employed and with substantial incomes.

Orientations

Studies that compared the values of the Serbian population in the periods of late socialism and post-socialist transformation found that collectivism (nationalistic instead of socialist "brotherhood and unity"), authoritarianism and patriarchal views on the gender-based division of labour persist at the present time, slowing the acceptance of values stemming from modernity (Pešić, 2006: 305). As regards

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53. The trend of staying longer in the parental household, due to prolonged education, uncertain employment and housing market disturbances, has been detected in Europe: in EU countries, on average 65% of young people aged between 18 and 24 live with their parents (from 46% in Sweden to 95% in Italy). But there is a drastic drop in numbers in the next age group (25-29), especially in Great Britain, Germany and Scandinavian countries (Brannen et al., 2002: 5).

young people, not only is the transformation of values and value orientations among them not, generally speaking, following a trend towards post-materialist values (Pavlović, 2008), but their value orientations present a peculiar mixture of materialistic, hedonistic and nationalistic values (Sram, 2004: 83). The increase in ethnocentrism among 20-23 olds, which is no longer related to low education and socially marginalised professions, but is spreading among young people from different social strata, is significantly connected with authoritarianism and religiousness, which are still very significant (Popadić, 2004: 115). The development of ethnocentrism is related to family relations: it was lower among young people who grew up in more stable and open families, where the child's independence, as opposed to obedience, was stimulated. On the other hand, ethnocentrism was higher among young people who come from families that stress the importance of nationality (ibid.: 116).

Serbia belongs to collectivistic familistic cultures, where patriarchal distribution of authority has been replaced with paternalistic parental attitudes and educational styles. Our study gave evidence that the re-traditionalisation in value orientations is also manifested in the high level of acceptance of paternalism and gender inequality in the division of domestic labour among the young people (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a).

Behaviour (practice)

The leisure of young people in Serbia is more passive than active, and more oriented towards primary groups than public culture institutions. The favourite ways of spending free time are socialising with friends (26%), and watching TV and listening to music (24%), followed by going out to cafes and clubs (14%) (Mrdja, 2004: 162). There is increasing significance attached to fun and entertainment, while new media of entertainment (Internet, mobile phones) and new modes of sociability (Internet social networks) have been introduced (National Youth Strategy). Active ways of spending leisure time, such as sports or creation (writing, painting, acting, etc.), as well cultural consumption related to public institutions, such as visits to cinemas, theatres, museums, concerts, etc., are much less favoured among young people in Serbia.

Several studies have detected a low level of participation, which has decreased since the socialist period, and political apathy – a kind of political (self)marginalisation of young people (Gredelj, 2004; Jarić, 2005; CESID, 2007). According to one study, there are only 13% of young people active in sport associations and another 6% active in cultural associations, while only from 2-4% are active in political parties, NGOs, civic interest groups and youth organisations (Gredelj, 2004). Another study documented that, although a majority of young people see themselves as interested in (70%) and capable of (76%) solving problems, only a third of young people (32%) have taken part in some action that has led to solving some local problem, while just 9% were initiators of those actions (Civic Initiatives, 2005). On the other hand, young people have demonstrated their action potential in the recent past – they were key actors in the protests of 1991 and 1992, or the student protests of 1992 and 1998 (Kuzmanović et al., 2003). They were also very active in huge protests in 1996/97 that lasted almost three months (Lazić, 1999) and in the massive protest in September 2000, when the youth movement Resistance played a key role in ending the totalitarian regime of Milošević. Since young people's lifestyles today are characterised by violent and risky behaviour – peer and fan violence is increasing, as is the consumption of alcohol (Jugović, 2004) – there is a risk that their non-channelled energy could be mobilised by radical (political) groups.

→ 3. Transitions to adulthood

The 2003 comprehensive survey of young people's transitions in Serbia showed that gaining independence from parents is a fairly slow process compared to the north European model of transition (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a, 2006b). By way of example, young people in Serbia achieve the same level of independence as young Danes of 25 when they reach the age group 31-35, which signifies a 10-year lag in transition to adulthood. Financial and residential statuses are still determined by family resources. The survey confirmed that most young people lived in the parental home until their early 30s, and most of them were completely or partly dependent on family financial assistance. At the same time, the dominant strategy for most young people is postponement (delaying) of key life events: finishing education, employment, leaving the parental household, marriage and childbirth – postponing transition to adulthood.[54] At the same time, obstacles to gaining autonomy are internalised in the sense that young people undervalue its importance (by "making virtue of necessity") (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a, 2006b).

Family formation practice patterns in Serbia resemble, by their demographic features, the trends in western countries. On the other hand, these trends are not accompanied by diversification and pluralisation of family forms indicated by still low levels of cohabitation and divorce.[55] The findings from our study indicate an extremely traditional pattern of family formation, which is marked by merged and inseparable categories of partnership and parenthood. Furthermore, there is no discrepancy between normative and practical levels in transition to adulthood among young people in Serbia – there is time synchronisation between marriage and childbirth (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a). Getting married (marriage is a traditional substitute for partnership which is not recognised as a relationship per se) and becoming a parent are key manifestations of adulthood. All other dimensions of transition, such as educational and career transformation, are usually perceived as prerequisites for transition in family life, which is seen as the central point of transition in general (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006b). Therefore, family formation could be considered as a kind of "strategy" in the transition to adulthood. This pattern is opposite to the European trend, where independence from family of origin does not immediately imply starting one's own family.

The transitional trajectories of young people from our study reveal a highly standardised form of transition to adulthood, both in terms of the timing and the order of life events: the biographies of young people who have experienced key life events have a standard form, while those events take place over a short period of time (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a). As opposed to de-standardisation, the order of events is almost the same for different categories of respondents, which points to a standard biography irrespective of social status. The significance of education, gender and other stratification determinants has been reduced, which points to a certain kind of homogenisation of young people in terms of their transition to adulthood. But more profound insight, through qualitative research, points to inequality in life chances among young people from different social strata (Tomanović, 2008b).

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54. See Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a on the pace of gaining independence: young people in Serbia become independent much later than young Europeans, for cultural, social and psychological reasons.

55. See demographic data above in the section on social context.

➜ 4. Agency

The destruction of society was accompanied by a pronounced and constant feeling of insecurity and existential risk. The data from our study portray a rather gloomy picture concerning the dominant feelings towards the life of the individual and family life in the 1990s: 27% of young people admitted to a "feeling of deprivation", 25% to a "feeling of fear and worry" and 21% to a "feeling of helplessness and uncertainty". These were followed by a "do not know" response (20%), while only 5.5% of young people choose the option "feeling of security and pleasure" (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2004: 47). The only positive option, "feeling of security and pleasure", decreases with the increase of the respondent's age.

As regards personal fulfilment, 42% said that they were mostly satisfied with their personal life, whilst 26% said that they were not satisfied at all. Only 7% of respondents are completely satisfied. Older respondents are more satisfied with their personal life. Changing one's family status usually corresponds to age, so we could assume that starting a family or changing the family status (including cohabitation) has the strongest influence on someone's personal fulfilment: those who have started their own families are more satisfied in comparison to those who have not (18% versus 4%). Parenthood is also related to satisfaction in the private domain. There are some striking differences between parents and those without children: the former are more likely to be completely satisfied with their personal life (17%) and the latter are more likely to be completely dissatisfied (29%). It is evident that parenthood is usually the focal point in the life projects of young people (regardless of age) and therefore it is an important factor in personal fulfilment (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006b: 67).

Respondents are more critical and demanding in their professional life (and consequently far more unsatisfied in comparison with the private domain). The structure of answers is as follows: 38% "mostly", 31% "not at all", 25% "fairly" and 25% "completely" satisfied. The middle generation (25-30) seems to be the most dissatisfied with their professional development (almost 38% of them are not satisfied at all). Being in the life stage called "from education to work", they face a variety of problems: unemployment, changing a career path, etc. Therefore, they might be under a great deal of pressure to fulfil their plans and expectations.

An analysis of respondents' perception of their own present life and prospects for the future (both personal and the future of the society) reveals differences among cohorts (Tables 1 and Table 2). As regards respondents' attitudes to their own future, there is a marginal (but statistically significant) diversity across the sample. On the contrary, there is no variation as regards their opinion on the future trajectory of Serbian society.

Table 1: Expectations about respondents' own futures, by age (%)

	Pessimistic	Neutral	Optimistic	Total
17-24	3.9	15.7	80.4	100
25-30	4.3	20.3	75.3	100
31-35	5.4	26.7	68.0	100
Average	4.3	19.1	76.6	100

Table 2: Expectations regarding the future of society, by age (%)

	Pessimistic	Neutral	Optimistic	Total
17-24	12.6	29.7	57.6	100
25-30	13.0	33.5	53.6	100
31-35	13.1	31.1	55.9	100
Average	12.8	30.9	56.3	100

Source: Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006b: 68.

Several studies have found that young people express more satisfaction with their own lives than with the state of society (for example, CESID, 2007). But relative pessimism in perceiving the future and dissatisfaction with the context they live in are not incentives for more proactive orientations (CESID, 2007; Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006b).

Other studies also reveal, as related to young people's agency, the discrepancy between normative level and actual activism. The study on work strategies based on a sub-sample of 291 respondents aged 18-29, 175 of whom are from urban and 116 from rural settlements, from a national representative sample of households,[56] has shown that at the normative level, the urban as well as rural young people see good education as the single most important factor (about a third of each) for advancement in society (Mojić, 2004). When ranking the different aspects of specific types of capital (cultural – education; economic – wealthy family; and social – knowing the right people) and personal characteristics (ambition, hard work, readiness to take risks), young people, although aware of the channels of social ascent in the country (importance of economic and social capital) still give priority to education (that is, cultural capital) and personal characteristics, and thereby indirectly manifest the belief that after all they themselves still have the largest influence on their own lives (ibid.: 145). At the level of aspirations and plans, education is again the most frequent option:

Table 3: What do you personally intend to do in the next year or two in order to improve your life (answers over 3% only)?

	Become employed, find a job	Find a better job	Advance in his/ her job	Work more	Start own business	Acquire education, get a degree	Go abroad	Nothing	Other
Urban youth	15.2	10.4	3.0	4.9	3.0	35.4	11.6	3.7	3.7
Rural youth	31.1	7.8	-	7.8	1.0	16.5	11.7	7.8	6.8

Source: Mojić, 2004: 146.

56. The survey was carried out using the national representative sample of 1 638 households from Serbia by the Institute for Sociological Research in November 2003.

It is interesting to note that, although almost half of young people were thinking of leaving the country (ibid.: 149), less than 12% were actually planning to do so. In our study from 2003, we also explored if there was a discrepancy between normative level and practice in the so-called "exit strategy" – as an indicator of an extreme form of proactive orientation (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006b: 68).[57] The data indicate that between 42% (CPA/CPS, 2004) and almost 50% (Mojić, 2004) of young people thought of emigrating at some point in the future. Of course, only a small minority of them are willing to undertake such an endeavour (10% on average are working on it). As expected, respondents are more likely to choose the "I don't want to leave Serbia" option when they are satisfied with their achievements. However, dissatisfaction does not turn people into active agents.

In sum, the above findings indicate that, although there are indicators of young people's agency, there are also significant structural and cultural constraints on it.

Structural constraints on agency are related to the fact that young people are to a great extent dependent on their parental family resources: financial, housing, social etc. In these terms, the postponement of the transition to adulthood that is documented in the youth study could be understood as one of those atomised but not individualised strategies[58] of young people coping in their everyday life (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a). It is to a greater extent oriented towards the private realm and informal networks (with strong "bonding" social capital) than it is to public life and civic participation (Tomanović, 2008a). The "shifting of attention to everyday life and privacy, and their return to the family" is also noticed among Slovenian youth by Ule (Ule and Kuhar, 2008), and referred to as the domestication of youth.

Cultural constraints to agency are related to the high level of acceptance of paternalism that we have documented in our study (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a, 2006b). Structural constraints are perceived as objective obstacles to personal and family realisation. By internalising structural constraints and "making a virtue of necessity", some young people give up on independence and individualised lifestyles. This internalisation is backed up by the cultural pattern of growing-up. The study has shown that young people are exposed to paternalistic control that is manifested through the limitation of autonomy and by overprotection within families of origin (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2006a). Since there is also relative pessimism in perceiving the future, young people in Serbia resemble their counterparts in Croatia (Ilišin and Radin, 2002). Nevertheless, as our findings indicate, dissatisfaction is not an incentive for a more proactive orientation. Generally, by perceiving structural constraints as inhibitors at the individual level (as they do not feel able to take charge of their own lives), most young people in Serbia express little self-determination in creating their biographies.

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57. Emigration and "brain drain" are big problems in Serbian society – it is estimated that 21.9% of the population has emigrated, a high proportion of which had completed tertiary education. The first massive wave of emigration was at the beginning of the 1990s, in order to avoid military drafting, when mostly young highly educated people left the country.

58. "Atomised" means that strategies are based on individual and small-group efforts (referred to as social atoms), while "individualised" means that strategies are based on an individual's personal choices for improving his or her life.

➜ 5. Discussion

When we look at the picture of lifestyles and transitions of young people in Serbia that has been portrayed through findings from various studies, we find that it is significantly different from the features assumed by the individualisation thesis. The individualisation thesis is based on the assumption that three major processes mark an individual's life courses in late modernity, notably the transition to adulthood: de-traditionalisation, namely the diminishing significance of structural factors as determinants in an individual's biography (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 26); de-standardisation of earlier standard life-course sequences, which makes the individual's life less predictable; and self-determination – individual biographies become "self-reflexive" and the self becomes a "do-it-yourself" project (ibid.: 26).

De-standardisation of young people's biographies in the transition to adulthood has been contested in both developing (Grant and Furstenberg, 2007) and developed countries (Bruckner and Mayer, 2005). The data on transitional trajectories also reveal, on average, the highly standardised paths of young people in Serbia. As in other post-socialist countries (Roberts, 2003), there is the primacy of education-to-work and notably family transitions (Tomanović and Ignjatović, 2010). Nevertheless, there is an assumption that more detailed and profound qualitative research would reveal different biographical patterns in young people's lives.

The consequence of deviant and prolonged social transformation in Serbia has produced structural features working as constraints to young people, particularly unemployment, an inadequate educational system, and no institutional mechanisms that would facilitate the transitions (for example, educational grants, loans, available mortgages or social housing schemes, employment schemes, social security measures for the underprivileged, etc.). The data also documented high dependence on family resources, in which Serbia resembles other countries in the region (for example, Bulgaria and Croatia). It is reasonable to conclude that high dependence on family resources cannot be associated with individualisation, since it is opposed to de-traditionalisation and limits young people's chances for making choices and developing independent lifestyles. Furthermore, the findings from relevant studies in Serbia show that high dependency on family resources (capitals) and their uneven distribution is related to stratification differences. Thereby, besides limiting young people's chances for individualisation, the dependence of young people on their family resources also reproduces social inequality.[59]

Young people's agency in creating their biographies, their self-determination and reflexiveness in shaping their lifestyles and identities is the most difficult to discover by the usual methods used on large samples. The data analysis from the studies in Serbia shows a rather ambivalent situation, particularly when comparing the normative level of young people's aspirations and perceptions, and the practice level of their actual behaviour and actions. They are partly satisfied with their lives, pessimistic about the future of society and optimistic about their own future, but all these perceptions and aspirations are not accompanied by proactive behaviour. A more profound approach is needed to reveal the socially bounded agency (Evans, 2002) of young people in Serbia that is emerging in spite of the significant structural and cultural constraints they are facing.

59. Several studies have contested the presence of de-traditionalisation as diminishing the significance of structural features (class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) in creating young people's biographies; see, for instance: Jones and Wallace, 1990; Roberts, Clark and Wallace, 1994; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Evans, 2002; Brannen and Nilsen, 2005.

The assumption that young people in Serbia as social agents are shaping their lifestyles and biographies as social biographies in relation to social context and its structural and cultural variations, both restricting and enabling, as suggested by the concept of structured individualisation (Roberts, Clark and Wallace, 1994), has still to be tested and evidenced by further research.

Having in mind the particular social context of prolonged and deviant social transformation, as well as the specific features of young people's status, lifestyles and transitions in Serbia, it is apparent that they do not fit into any of the existing ideal types of European youth transition regimes, nor into the post-communist type of youth transition, as suggested by Roberts (2009). This calls for a more contextually sensitive approach that would treat young people's transitions as path dependent on their countries post-socialist transformations.

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The "post-revolutionary" Czech consumer generation: "mainstream" youth in the context of individualised society[61]

Michaela Pyšňáková

➜ Introduction

Youth individualisation, its sources and consequences have become a key issue of the current youth research in the Czech Republic. Most of the researchers agree that contradictions between opportunities and new forms of risks and constraints resulting from the processes of individualisation and diversification in late modernity are particularly important for understanding young people's reaction to social change in the Czech Republic after 1989. Although many of the key characteristics of late modernity identified by Beck (1992, 1998) and Giddens (1991) are centred on consumption and lifestyles, social scientific research on the "post-revolutionary Czech generation" focuses predominantly on unemployment, education, generational conflict, gender, ethnicity, demographic behaviour and changing values (Rabušic, 2001; Sak, 2000; Sak and Saková, 2003, 2004; Marada, 2004; Macháček, 2004; Fialová, 2005; Tomášek, 2006; Macek, 2007; Bartošová, 2006; Lukášová, Malinowska and Kita, 2008). Unfortunately, young

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people's experience with consumption as a response to social transformation has not been given sufficient attention and it tends to be confined to the domains of media representation and marketing. As such, any conception of the "young consumer generation" leads to a deep scepticism and frustration that an increasing interest of young people in consumption will cause their moral corruption. The comment made by Sak and Saková (2004) illustrates this scepticism:

This generation of youth more than any other previous generation passes through many crossroads. It makes a choice between drugs and normal life, … it decides between hedonism and parenthood, between the authentic life and the consumer life of the mass society (Sak and Saková, 2004: 7-8).

In this paper it is argued that a tendency to associate young consumers with merely materialistic, hedonistic, egocentric and conformist values represents a grossly normative misunderstanding of young people's relationship with consumption that is devoid of empirical foundation. Drawing on a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with young people aged between 15 and 30, this paper proposes a sociological perspective on young people's consumption as a means by which contemporary post-socialist youth actively navigate their way through a life experience in the context which appears to be increasingly individualised. The notion of the "mainstream youth" offers a particularly useful framework for understanding the conflicting nature of young people's choices in a risk society. It also provides an alternative approach which challenges many of the assumptions underpinning the sociology of youth's conception of consumption.

➜ 1. Mainstream youth

Youth consumption has been framed either as an expression of rebellion and resistance against the dominant culture (Hebdige, 1979, 1988) or as a manifestation of young people's manipulation and exploitation by leisure and media industries (Côté and Allahar, 1994). These framings of "disadvantaged" youth and "spectacular" or "rebellious" subcultures reflect a conceptual polarisation between a cultural and structural approach in youth studies in general (Miles, 2000, 2002b, 2003). At the same time it demonstrates that social scientific research has traditionally focused on "melodramatic expressions of youth", rather than on ordinary mainstream young people (Miles, 2002a: 131; see also Miles, 2000; Pyšňáková, 2007).

The first point is that only a minority of young people are being involved in youth subcultures or social movements and in reality a majority of young people have been incorporated into the cultural mainstream (Wyn and White, 1997; Miles, Cliff and Burr, 1998; Miles, 2000; Pyšňáková, 2007; France, 2007). The second point is that overemphasising the extreme forms of young people's experience has led to neglect for the experiences of mainstream youth who cannot be pigeon-holed in the above categories. Young people in general do not rebel against the dominant order and want to be included into the mainstream society. But does that imply that they are automatically passive conformists? This question is important as it seems that the common practice is relating mainstream youth to passivity and conformity, rather than to normality and ordinariness. The State Youth Policy Conception (2007) provides a good example of a public discourse on the general characteristics of mainstream youth in the Czech Republic:

The development of young people's value orientation points to hedonism and pragmatism accompanied by the diminishing importance of global and social values. The mainstream within the young generation is adapted to society and identifies with it. Mainstream media are

an important instrument of social conformity …. The mainstream of the young generation is to a large extent manipulated by the media and accepts the opinions and positions generated by them (State Youth Policy Conception for the Years 2007-13, 2007: 5).

The picture that emerges from the above discourse is of a generation of young people incapable of reflexive thinking, which is easily manipulated by marketing and media industries. But there is something strange with the logic presented in this discourse. In other words, if young people rebel and refuse to adapt to society they are labelled as a problematic social group. But according to State Youth Policy even if young people identify with the society it is wrong as well. The question that needs to be answered is "What is going on?" In order to answer this question, it is useful to start with a critical perspective on youth research itself. France argues that "youth research was historically shaped out of concerns over 'youth as a social problem' and this focus remained throughout the twentieth century" (France, 2007: 154). Consequently, youth has been constructed (by sociologists themselves) as a social group of "passive victims" of "either their biology or their social circumstances" (France, 2007: 154). In this context, it seems that the above extract[61] is an example of creating a stereo-type of young people as a "problem group" in society, rather than what should be understood by mainstream youth. In other words, the conception is an example of labelling the post-revolutionary generation in the Czech Republic as a problem. As such, here mainstream stands for a synonym for "problematic youth", rather than for normality and ordinariness. Unfortunately, normality and ordinariness is something that is generally missing in youth research (Miles, 2000) and the tendency to focus upon particular, extreme or marginal groups reinforces thinking about mainstream youth not in terms of normality and ordinariness but in terms of another extreme – a manipulated passive and conformist herd.

➜ 2. Data

This study draws from a series of focus groups and small group semi-structured interviews with a total of 65 young people, 39 women and 26 men.[62] The research focused on the role of consumer lifestyles in the context of social and cultural exclusion and inclusion. Special attention was paid to the meanings young people attached to their individualised consumption and how they perceived consumer patterns of other people. Three key points emerged from the data collection. First, consumption clearly plays a significant role in these young people's lives; not in the sense of consumption being their most important daily activity, but in so far as it is a ubiquitous element of their everyday lives and plays a particularly significant role in how they relate to their peers. Second, consumption was understood as a means rather than as a source for facilitating who it is they are. Most importantly, these young people neither fulfilled the role of the passive victim of the consumer society nor did they rebel against consumerism. Rather, they actively used consumption as a means of establishing, maintaining and negotiating their place in the social world. Third, their perception of the mainstream was ambivalent. On the one hand, they considered themselves to stick out from the monolithic mass, which they described in terms of "herd-like" or "sheep-like" behaviour, and on the other hand they did not consider themselves to be rebels or radicals. In general, they considered themselves to be normal, yet not in any way "average".

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61. The subtitle of the State Youth Policy Conception is "Some Problems Identified in Recent Research Concerned with the Young Generation".

62. All names have been changed.

Given Bourdieu's notion that "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies" (Bourdieu, 1990: 132), I was dealing with a double meaning of the "mainstream" emerging from data analysis. The first "mainstream" was what young people defined themselves in opposition to (conformist consumers or the passive herd). The second "mainstream" was young people participating in my project. The main indicator leading me to think about these young people as part of the contemporary mainstream was their attitude towards consumption. For example, the way my participants actively managed the opposition to the passive herd-like behaviour was through individualised consumption. However, according to Beck's individualisation thesis it can be argued that this attitude might reflect an acceptance of mainstream values and behaviour in contemporary increasingly individualised society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). In this sense, the concept of mainstream youth which emerged from data questions the binary oppositions between total conformity and total rejection and it allows the location of the majority of young people between these two extremes. In order to discuss the above data in more depth, the following section focuses on two major characteristics of mainstream youth that emerged from data analysis: conformist-nonconformity and negotiation. These two characteristics challenge the stereotype of contemporary mainstream youth as passive, conformist, unreflexive and apolitical consumers.

Although consumption appears to be an arena of self-expression that was previously unavailable to young people in communist countries, its role in contemporary youth's lives is more complex and "cannot be simplified as a mere mode of self-expression or escape" from the reality (Miles, 2003: 170). Young people are active consumers and as such individualised consumption based on personal choices opens a debate whether or not individualised consumption in the context of individualised society can be understood as a political statement in its own right. This article tackles this question in its concluding discussion. Drawing on Beck's notion that the emerging globalised consumer generation of young people "is at heart unpolitical, because it breaks down into different fractions in a conflictual relationship with each other" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2009: 34), this article follows Beck proposition to look at a political action from a different perspective, as a shift from collective action to individualist reaction. Thus, individualised consumption paradoxically seems to offer young people a ground for sharing values, attitudes and interests. In this article it is argued that highlighting individualised consumption as a means of self-expression points towards a development of a cosmopolitan attitude – openness towards diversity and self-expression of others as much as sensitivity to global problems. In this sense, individualised consumption, such as wearing a T-shirt with an anti-xenophobic or anti-racist sign, or buying environmental-friendly products can be interpreted as a political statement. It is apolitical in its own right, based not as much on organised collective action as on individualist reaction (Beck, 1998).

➜ 3. Conformist nonconformists

In arguing that notions of conformity in discussions around youth consumption do not account sufficiently for the reflexivity of young people, this section introduces an alternative take on the issue through a discussion of "conformist nonconformity".

Yeah, I think that these people [brand conscious consumers] are sufficient evidence of material-istic values in contemporary western society. So the emphasis is for example on individualism, performance, fame, power and prestige. And there is increasing pressure on being yourself. Sometimes I think that this kind of people is not very self-confident. And some of them use brands as a sort of compensation. Well, not everybody who wears designer togs must neces-sarily use it as compensation to strengthen his personality. But I believe that for those who

are togged out from A to Z in brands it is a means of strengthening their ego. It is narcissism. And I think that their core values are position, power, prestige, money, performance and success (Zdena, 27 years, focus group).

Many of the young people participating in the project were well aware of the pressures on them to conform and their perspective on the role of consumption in their lives was undoubtedly a sophisticated one. Zdena exemplifies many contradictions I found during data analysis. First of all she claims to be a critic of consumer society, yet she is also an active consumer and somebody who appears, like many of those I interviewed, to actively use elements of a consumer lifestyle to reinforce aspects of her identity. Zdena seems to suggest that despite the fact consumerist values in general are devoid of deeper meaning, it does not mean that the strategies she and other young people deploy in their own consumer activities are necessarily superficial. The following quotations reinforce such logic:

I have a friend. He's got rich parents who dressed him in designer and branded clothes since he was a little boy. And he keeps dressing that way. He picks the shops. But even though he is rich, he is quite normal. He does not show off he is rich. And he is friendly. He is into brands, especially if he goes out or to school. But if he goes running or biking he wears ordinary sweatpants from Vietnamese market (Beáta, 16 years, focus group).

When asked what values her friend considered to be important the same respondent replied:

Well, to graduate from a good college, so he can get a great job allowing him to earn his own living in order to become independent (Beáta, 16 years, focus group).

At first glance Beáta's comment seems to contradict Zdena's critique of values in a consumer society, yet careful reading indicates otherwise. Both of these extracts demonstrate not only an awareness of norms and dominant values in contemporary society, but also their acceptance. In order to explain this argument it is necessarily to embed our participant's view on consumption in a broader context of late modernity. From this perspective, according to writers such as Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), Beck et al. (1994), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) or Bauman (2001), identity has become increasingly reflexive and is now actively constructed through privatised patterns of consumption. Hence, in reflexive modernity, identity is perceived as increasingly ambiguous. But even most importantly, it must be achieved and worked at individually in the context of chosen possibilities. My argument is that what seems to be nonconformity is actually conformism. As choice is actually a task, a means of social integration and a demonstration of acceptance of dominant values in contemporary society, individualism is not an option but a norm. The point is that in the context of what appears to be an increasingly individualised society, conformity to the values in such a society does not imply passivity. Integration requires an active attitude. In this context, conformity should be understood as active negotiation between the structural conditions and the individual (Giddens, 1984). This argument is demonstrated in the following extract:

What came to my mind is foolishness and ignorance. Because a certain group of people sets some trends and indoctrinates and infects with their ideas the rest of society. And this part of society takes it. Because they fear that they won't be "in". And they wanna fit in (Jan, 18 years, focus group).

The conformists, labelled as "sheeple", were characterised as people with no personal taste and individuality. In other words, according to Jan, the "sheeple"

are conformist, because they are not acting or thinking on the basis of their own desires or consideration, but rather according to ideas that have effectively been forced upon them.

A brand-devotee is a person without fantasy and individuality. He consumes whatever there has been set out for him. He consumes prefabricated stuff and he takes it. He does not need any fantasy or his own inventiveness. Therefore, he cannot be himself without these brands. Brands are the means on which he builds his identity (Karolína, 25 years, focus group).

The image of a brand and a fashion conformist invoked many negative connotations during the interviews. Fellow consumers were portrayed as being manipulated, lacking personality, or being a follower, and as uncreative, superficial and shallow people. Despite such a critique, the reoccurring priority for the individual was a personal desire to be self-directed. As such, post-revolutionary young people in the Czech Republic associated conformity not so much with absence of rebelliousness but with lack of individuality. In other words, young people did not equate nonconformity to rebelliousness or antagonism against consumerism, but they related it to notions of individual choice.

Well, he definitely must be cool and in. This is a general expression, but I would suggest that it means that he needs to fit in and he accepts and approves of only that which has been given on a silver platter right under his very nose. Media, for example MTV. And so he goes to Palace Cinemas. And basically he just terribly consumes what he considers to be attractive and trendy. Consequently, everybody wants to be a hip hopper. I know a couple of people, who look like that, and they like this style, but they are reflexive, and don't think like the majority, that herd of people who are wearing this. But such individuals are rare, so I speak about the majority (Šárka, 17 years, focus group).

In the above comment, two types of consumer conformity are highlighted. First, Šárka describes conformity through an internalisation of norms. In her view, in order to be popular, many young people are influenced by images which are used by advertisers to construct imaginary and heavily idealised worlds or "lifestyles" which seduced young consumers consequently crave. On the other hand, she describes conformity through compliance. She claims that despite the fact her friends appear to outwardly act in accordance with the norms of a particular group and lifestyle (for example, hip hoppers), in doing so they do not lose their individuality. In this sense, such a conception of consumption is founded upon the notion that nonconformity is above all constituted through an acceptance of dominant values and norms. The paradox is that highly individualistic consumer experiences nonetheless reinforce the core individualistic values of contemporary society. It is also important to recognise the degree to which young people are reflexive in the above context. Many of the young people I interviewed were critical about the influence of the media and about the impact of marketing strategies. The predominant attitude, certainly amongst respondents, was "I know what is going on". As Miles (2000) argues elsewhere, young people do not appear to be "consumer dupes". Young people in the post-revolutionary Czech Republic can thus be said to be relatively strategic in how they experience the paradoxes of an individualised society. In this respect the notion of negotiation is particularly important.

➜ 4. Negotiation

The strategies through which young people were able to achieve different levels of independence were not articulated in terms of rebelliousness or resistance but they appear to be constituted as a form of negotiation.

If I am going to a dance party, which I really like, I would not be wearing this T-shirt, because between five and ten people would have the same T- shirt. And this is a lot. But I would take it to school. Because I would be the only one who is wearing it. And I do the same thing when I go partying. I would go for a compromise. On the other hand, I would not wear a Kenvelo T-shirt. It would be a too extreme way of differentiation (Zdena, 27 years, focus group).

The above extract demonstrates that young people in general tend to aspire to the sense of stability offered by group membership whilst relishing a sense of authentic individuality (Miles, 2000; Croghan et al., 2006). They simultaneously situate themselves as members of a particular group or lifestyle (in Zdena's case techno culture) and as individuals who stand out from the group. As such, the practice of playing with the meaning of images is not a superficial practice but one that lies at the heart of self-determination.

I do the same thing twice a month. Among my friends I have two groups of friends, the hoppers and the scouts. The scouts wear shabby clothes; the hoppers are the total opposite, handsome, big-sized jeans, everything clean. So, when I go out with the hoppers, I mix a shabby no-name T-shirt and camouflage trousers, and they make jokes. But I don't care and take it easy. If I go out with the scouts I am dressed up as a hopper. Clean, flexa cap, stylish. I do it on purpose. It is a kind of sabotage, but it is just for fun (Pavel, 15 years, focus group).

From this perspective, neither Zdena nor Pavel perceived their playing with image as a shallow form of subcultural stylisation. A key issue here is that while Zdena claimed to be a member of a techno subculture, Pavel refuses any notion of subcultural membership. Yet, both of them perceive their use of style as non-superficial in nature. For both of them it constitutes a statement of who and what it is they are. Sweetman argues that such examples provide more support for Giddens' interpretation of the reflexive project of the self as an attempt to provide stability and coherence to the individual's chosen narrative, as opposed to a notion of inconsistent subcultural playfulness (Sweetman, 2004). Yet such behaviour can be risky in a sense of being labelled as a poseur. Many of the respondents mentioned that consumption, and brands in particular, offer young people a degree of compensation that counterbalances some of the less desirable elements of young people's life experience in the Czech Republic.

Some young people use the brands in order to present themselves in a particular way. In a way they want. Or in a way they hope will impress the others. I do not know, it's like you meet somebody in a Lacoste T-shirt, you would think he is rich, rather than poor. I have a friend; he is a professional second-hand shop hunter. He is exclusively looking for Lacoste togs, so the girls would think that he is rich and that he has got a car. It looks more convincing that he lives this particular lifestyle when he is wearing Lacoste (Věra, 21 years, focus group).

Such an approach reflects Giddens' (1991) contention that "living in the risk society means living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive or negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence" (Giddens, 1991: 28). It is in this sense that a young person's experience of consumption is founded upon the uncertainties of risk.

If somebody wears a particular brand which is associated with a particular lifestyle, but does not live like that, it can be difficult, because people will expect something from him. And if that person fails, for example because he will behave inappropriately, he will look like a total idiot (Jan, 18 years, focus group).

This argument was discussed in more depth in a small group semi-structured interview with two street dancers.

Today anybody can be a hopper. Whereas a street dancer … that is different. It is about lifestyle. Some young people are like a weathercock. They buy XXL trousers, put on wide chains, and suddenly they change from a shampoo[63] to a hopper. Street dancing is a lifestyle; it is about music, about friends and about the group, it is about you (Lenka, 21 years, semi-structured interview).

This extract shows that despite the brand serving as a visible, but not always a reliable, marker of one's personality, it is the broader context of a consumer lifestyle that indicates what a person is actually like. According to my respondents, to be authentic, wearing stylish clothes was not enough. And again, this extract shows that what my participants valued as the most important aspect was one's personality. This argument leads me to a discussion about how individualised consumption can indicate a cosmopolitan attitude.

➔ 5. Consumption and emergence of a cosmopolitan attitude

Life in contemporary consumer society is likely to represent an extremely disorientating experience for many young people in the post-revolutionary Czech Republic, particularly given the fact that young people's experiences are so different to that of their own parents when they were young. More generally, young Czech consumers experience a world of contradiction: one in which consumption plays a key role, because it offers a means of expressing one's individuality based on choices and at the same time young people experience that their choices do not have to be automatically accepted.

I don't like that general mentality in this country. It is like if somebody is sticking out from the "row", he is perceived as something worse. For example, the police. They control us all the time, just because we are skaters. So my impression is that people think we are deviants and threatening, and that we are automatically into drugs, I reckon (Petr, 22 years, semi-structured interview).

Yeah, this society is quite intolerant towards diversity. Older people put young people into one bag. Taggers, skaters, hip hoppers, and they think that they are dangerous (Martin, 19 years, semi-structured interview).

I was in Barcelona and there is a totally different attitude. It is like more open society, and friendlier. I was skating in the street and people wished me good luck. Unlike here in the Czech Republic, people shout at me, what I am doing, and why I am making so much noise (Petr, 22 years, semi-structured interview).

This short conversation points at adolescents' frustration expressed in negative public opinion and conflicting intergenerational relationships. Interestingly, this extract shows that despite the widely held belief that it is in young people's nature to rebel against the society, these young people wanted to be included in it. Furthermore, the fact that my respondents criticised a rejection of diversity and individuality indicates that they did not eschew contemporary dominant social norms. The following

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63. "Shampoo" is an expression frequently used by the young people participating in my research project. This expression is ambiguous and its meaning depends on the context. The participants associated this expression mostly with "poseur-like manners", "superficiality" and "lack of authenticity". In other contexts, this expression referred to specific youth groups and their consumer lifestyles.

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extract shows that openness to diversity and individuality based on individualised consumption demonstrates an acceptance of dominant values.

I think our society is changing. What I like about it is extravagance. People have started to experiment more with their looks and image, finally. In the past, it was greyer, dull and plain. I love experimenting, for example I am able to combine yellow trousers with red T-shirt, green shoes and a pink hat. When people experiment with their clothes, the world is more colourful and diverse. And I love diversity (Nika, 20 years, semi-structured interview).

In this sense, emphasising individual consumption can be interpreted as emergence of a cosmopolitan attitude. What I mean is that openness to individual expression of oneself as an independent consumer nurtures openness towards diversity and self-expression of others. In this sense, the concept of an independent consumer helps us to understand young people's broader relationship with aspects of structural change.

I met lots of different people. I had lots of prejudices but now I know that people cannot be easily pigeon-holed into boxes. I started to be open to metrosexuals, militarists, and rappers and even communists. I go to a disco and I have no problem chatting with people who are different. This experience opened my mind; people can be good and interesting no matter what they are wearing (Jeremiáš, 18 years, focus group).

This extract challenges the assumption that young consumers are just egocentric hedonists with no political interests. Jeremiáš is an excellent example of a teenager with a cosmopolitan attitude indicating a political statement at a personal level. As Beck points out, young people today challenge the traditional understanding of political action: "Ultimately, one can spare oneself the detour through membership meetings, and enjoy the blessings of political action by going straight to the disco" (Beck, 1998: 18). Following Beck's individualisation thesis according to which living in a risk society impels people to deal with their individual biographies as with a solution to socially produced problems, the last issue I would like to discuss is young people's perception of their individualised consumption in relation to broader environmental problems. These extracts come from a discussion focusing on what my participants did not like about contemporary society.

It seems to me that today people are terrible wasters. They waste with food, with clothes, with propellants, with everything. Contemporary society, especially people who have money, consume too much. Our society is indeed a consumer society. Yes, this is the right word. People have everything and they appreciate nothing. They take everything for granted, and they have high demands. Our society is more and more demanding (Nika, 20 years, semi-structured interview).

This extract shows again that the experience of young people as consumers is full of contradictions. They live in a world where consumption plays a key role, but they live also in a world in which the environment should be a priority as one of our respondents, Nika, noted:

I think I fit into this society. But I am older now, so I think more about what I am doing. Well, yes, I love to be dressed according to the latest trends, and I am more indolent. But if I tell myself that this is unnecessary, I do not drive a car for example and use public transportation instead (Nika 20 years, semi-structured interview).

Nika is a typically reflexive young person who admits to being a consumer par excellence despite such broader ideological constraints. What is important, Nika

chooses not to protest about the excesses of consumption but prefers to act as a responsible consumer by engaging in less visible but in her eyes more effective actions such as making the right transportation choices for instance. Her decision to make a difference through her individual choices corresponds to Beck's perception of a new political action based on individual reactions to global problems, rather than on collective action. One explanation could be that in the society that Giddens describes as "increasingly preoccupied with the future" (Giddens, 1991: 3), young people begin to appreciate the feeling of security. However, most of the young people I interviewed simply do not believe in collective action as a way of promoting genuine social change. For them such a rebellious approach simply jeopardises their own sense of belonging to a society that in many ways fails to make them feel that they fit in. This should not imply that young Czech people simply accept the nature of the consumer society in which they are apparently complicit. Rather, they use consumption as an arena within which they can express a degree of choice and autonomy that is not otherwise available to them.

But in many respects I think I fit into the group of consumer people. Well, I spend an awful amount of money on clothes, brands and cosmetics. But you know, it is a matter of heart. Actually, I hadn't realised how much I am dependent on shopping until this year. Shopping comforts me. It is my relaxation, my addiction, and I like it (Lenka, 21 years, semi-structured interview).

In contemporary society, consumption is an arena within which emotions and rationality are combined. As Lenka also pointed out, however short-lived the experience of pleasure in a consumer society might be, for young people in that moment such a pleasure is not illusory, it feels real and as such it is real. However much young people feel the need to differentiate themselves they are united through the common biographies made available to them through consumption and in this sense they are emotionally connected to others through consumption. This connection provides an invaluable means by which young people in the post-revolutionary Czech Republic can negotiate what is a period of rapid social change.

➜ Conclusion

Consumption provides an important means by which young people face the challenges inherent in the emergence of an increasingly individualised culture. The circumstances under which Czech young people live have in recent years become increasingly tenuous and the uncertainties of that existence are played out through young people's consumer experiences. Yet, the tendency to write off a whole generation of Czech young people as a materialistic, hedonistic, egocentric and conformist generation still prevails. One of the reasons is that the critique of consumer society becomes an implicit critique of consumers, and in particular young consumers. In this article I argued that labelling mainstream youth as passive, conformist and ignorant consumers stems from the lack of knowledge, presumptions and prejudices of the researchers. The aim here has therefore been to demonstrate the need to prioritise efforts to understand the experiences of mainstream post-revolutionary youth in the above context. Consumption seems to provide young people with a space where they can, at least up to a point, successfully deal with the normative demands of individualisation whilst maintaining a sense of their own autonomy. They are active consumers, but they are neither sheep, nor radicals, nor passive victims of consumer society. They are individuals, who are able to enjoy and appreciate diversity. The core value of the "mainstreamers" is their individuality. Their feeling of nonconformity is based on the ability of individual choice. Consequently, they associate conformity not so much with a lack of rebelliousness but with an

absence of individuality and personal choice. In this sense, these young people who refuse to be labelled as the "mainstreamers" constitute in fact the contemporary mainstream, not only because they are active consumers but because their highly individualistic consumer choices actually demonstrate their acceptance of dominant values and norms. The point that needs to be highlighted is that they are by no means passive conformists.

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Radically modern? Eastern German youth after the German-German unification

Christine Steiner

➜ Introduction

Although the former East Germany (GDR) played a big role in the fall of the Berlin Wall, as a rule, eastern Germany is not included as one of the "typical" post-socialist transformation regions. The unification of both German states has made it appear as though the social reorganisation of eastern Germany has been unique and privileged (Wiesenthal, 1999: 9). In addition to the common history and the continuity of traditions in both Germanys, despite the Iron Curtain, eastern Germany also owes this privileged categorisation to its almost complete adoption of West Germany's institutions; and in this connection, to the huge transfers of personal resources and, especially, transfers of financial resources.

For this reason most people thought that the expected catching-up with modernisation (Zapf, 1991) in eastern transformation societies would take place very quickly in the regions of the former East Germany. Certainly not without social difficulties, but to help with this there was already a welfare net that could catch people and get them through challenging periods. The goal was clear and although not everyone

wanted it, many eastern and western Germans did. The new Germany should become an enlarged old West Germany as fast as possible (Reißig, 2005: 296).

However, for almost a decade now, the effects of the unification, rather than its starting conditions, have been the central point of public interest. Although the judgments about the success or failure of the unification process differ widely in the regularly appearing analyses of the situation, there seems to be general agreement that the situation in eastern Germany has not met the expectations for a rash and complete catching-up with the norm in western Germany.

But even professional sceptics did not expect that within the unification process above all young people would have to deal with serious integration problems. Rather, both the supporters and the opponents of the idea of a catching-up assumed that the following generations would be on the winning side of the social changes.

In the meantime, research results concerning the transition from school to regular employment of eastern German youth reveal that the institutional setting of this passage conforms to the market to a much higher degree than it did in the "old" West Germany before 1989. As a result, the transition from school to work has become far riskier for young people.

That seems to turn the idea of a catching-up with modernisation on its head: instead of a successive adjustment to western German ways, young eastern Germans face a reality shaped by moments that one connects with the new, neo-liberal global capitalism: flexibility and mobility (Sennett, 1999), precariousness and dispensability (Bauman, 2008). Admittedly, these tendencies have also been turning up in the educational and work biographies of western Germans, that is, western youth (among others Blossfeld, 2006 and Warner and Weil, 2005). Blossfeld, among others, even says that young people must be counted as the losers of globalisation (Mills and Blossfeld, 2003). Market risks and demands for flexibility are passed on from the stronger negotiating groups to the weaker participants in the market, as youth per se are. Seen in this way, the adaptation to the West German norm was always an illusion, simply because exactly this reality does not stay still.

In eastern Germany the results of the certainly not-yet-finished transformation combine with the tendencies towards globalisation and liberalisation that have increasingly established themselves over the past few years. That means that youth have been confronted with economically difficult conditions for more than 20 years; conditions that, precisely because both processes flow together, turn out to be considerably more radical. But 20 years is also a long time for changing social relationships permanently, the connections to family and friends as much as the relations at work or identification with the hometown. They all stand for forms of social integration that, when one follows the current diagnosis discussed above, are becoming more elusive as a result of globalisation. Where, when not among east German youth, might one go in search of Sennett's "flexible women and men", people who not only live in (market) radical, modern conditions, but are themselves radically modern?

→ 1. The restructuring of the institutional framework

Arguably, the expectation that modernisation could be caught up with seemed more plausible for the eastern youth than for almost any other social group. After all, youth have been regarded as the determinative power behind social change since Karl Mannheim's analysis of the generation problem (Mannheim, 1927 [1970]).

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Every new birth year of young eastern Germans orients itself increasingly on the institutional order and everyday life of the old West Germany.

However, the postulated cultural lag turned out to be not as large as expected. Contemporary research has not shown "the ones over there" as much different. East German research in the 1970s had already registered a deep change among its youth in their orientation to western values such as individual pursuit of material wealth, cultural diversity and freedom of thought. There was a high acceptance of the West German model (Schubarth and Speck, 2006: 226 ff.; Lindner, 2003: 38).

What eastern Germans were missing in the markedly constructivist character of the conversion process in eastern Germany were practical everyday experiences, knowledge and an understanding of how to do things in their new situation (Müller, 1999).

This was not as bad for youth as it was for adults, especially older adults. Additionally, the traditional way of completing the process of economic structural adaptation in both German nations, but especially in western Germany, is through an exchange of generations. New job possibilities and opportunities for advancement are usually snapped up by young people. Furthermore, the generational exchange is embedded in a close-knit, secure institutional setting.

One of the German-German traditions is the foreseeable integration of young people into the workforce. Those who are not going on to college or university, but who have finished school, get job training. This is almost always within companies. Though the western German companies are mostly private, this is still somehow a secure option. The selection process for a training position is challenging, but successful participation very often leads to permanent employment within the company. In addition, such certification is highly regarded by other employers.

All in all, those were not the worst conditions for the young eastern Germans to successfully find their own way, especially considering they were confronted with a great deal more market than was typical in western Germany with regard to training and employment.

Figure 1: Demand and new training contracts in eastern Germany
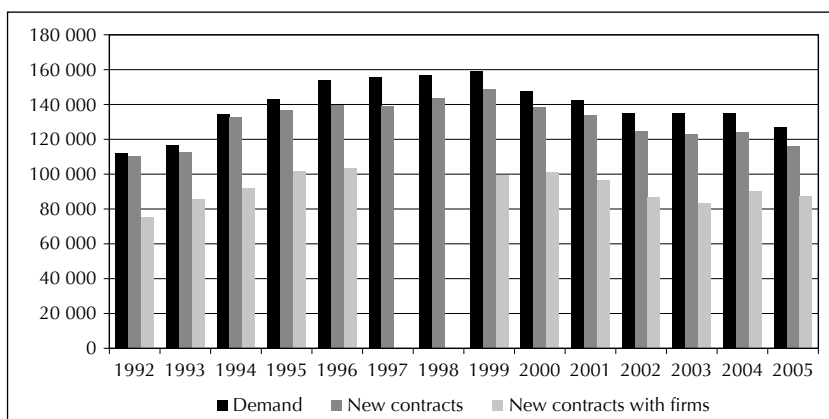
Source: BMBF, 1995: 4, 1997: 4, 2006: 51 (Nationwide Vocational Training Reports), Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, 2009: 15, 18. Information about new contracts with firms for 1997/98 is not available. Graphic: Christine Steiner.

Nevertheless, it was clear to everyone, including the politically responsible, that as a result of the structural changes in the economy both training opportunities and jobs were going to disappear. However, young people were hit particularly hard by the loss of employment opportunities.[64] Young people, who were already employed, as a rule, lost their jobs because they were considered to have the best chance of finding a new one quickly. The immediate disappearance of company training opportunities in the early 1990s led to intervention by the social state. In order to give those no longer in schools some kind of chance, the state financed a huge number of training positions. One of the most important goals was to keep youth involved, trusting that the companies, following their successful restructuring, would need these specialised young people (see Figure 1).

In a number of eastern German regions more than 85% of the training contracts were state supported. Those who finished such training were almost completely dependent on what the market had to offer. The turbulent beginning was some time ago, yet in 2006 every fourth training place was still state financed. In comparison, in western Germany it was only 5%.

In addition to this, immediately following the training, the percentage of unemployed eastern Germans was very high – between 30% and 40% from 1997 to 2001. In other words, eastern German youth were and still are dependent on forms of integration that conform more to the market. From these few details it can already be seen that this arrangement has not been working in present-day eastern Germany (more about this in Konietzka, 2001:71).

I would like to note that recently the old states have begun to discuss integration deficits more. That has a certain tradition, because the German system is understood to be vulnerable in times of economic crisis. However, now reasons are given such as the strong pressure to save as a result of global economic demands. Such reasons speak for an inherent weakness in a once successful system. Given this, it seems that the chances for going back to normal are not good.

➜ 2. Growing biographical risks

What is the outcome of the increased market dependency with respect to training and work? Karl Ulrich Mayer and Eva Schulze compared the lives of East and West German youth born in 1971. Those are the young eastern German unification optimists of 1989/90 (Mayer and Schulze, 2009). Their results show that biographic risks are not only characteristic for the beginning of adult life. Eastern Germans have experienced unemployment more often; they show a higher degree of regional and professional mobility. In both parts of the country additional training took place, although in the new states it was less often connected with promotion. As a rule, eastern Germans earn less and are less often found in higher-status jobs. What is shared is a feeling of uncertainty concerning the stability of employment, and a delay in starting a family. Both of these are regarded as indicators of a weakening of social ties in the more recent discussions about the effects of globalisation. The authors both interpret their results as indicating a slow coming together of life patterns. It remains open as to who is moving in which direction. If one looks at the integration patterns of young people who were born 10 to 15 years after 1971, there are few signs of the east catching up with the west (ibid.: 235 ff.).

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64. Between 1990 and 1992, in eastern German companies between 60% and 90% of the personnel were let go (Behr, 2000: 92).

In a large survey, my former colleagues and I at the Centre for Social Research in Halle retrospectively asked eastern German youth born between 1980 and 1985 about the course of their training and employment. It was characteristic that most managed to find a training position quickly when we see the transition probability based on those born between 1980 and 1982 (Figure 2). Almost 80% of the young people with a junior high school degree found a position within six months of finishing school. This quick transition can be traced to the additional offers provided by the state, which not only filled a hole, but also contributed to a reduction in social inequality (Steiner and Prein, 2004: 527 ff.).

Figure 2: Transition into vocational training, (junior high school graduates, born in 1980, 1981 and 1982)
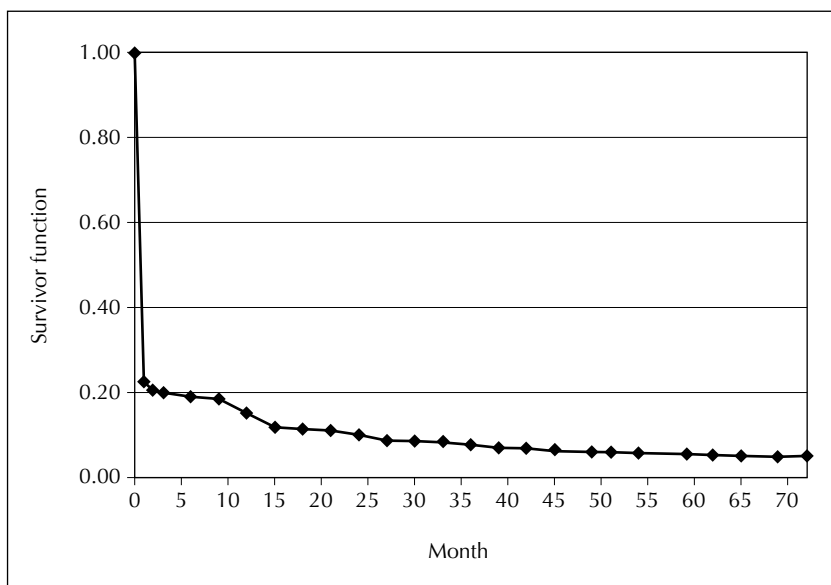
Source: Steiner, 2007: 171: ostmobil-Youth Panel of the Centre for Social Research, Halle (Saale), Wave 1-3, Kaplan-Meier Estimation.

We need to ask if this positive balance has continued through the transition into employment. If the companies only wanted to save on training costs, then those who completed training should be welcome employees. In Figure 3 we see the transition probabilities for those who successfully completed a training programme. It is quite clear that serious integration problems show themselves in the transition into employment. Two years later, almost one fifth of those born between 1980 and 1981 still did not have access to any kind of employment whatsoever. In particular those who completed a publicly financed training programme were affected.

This discrepancy between "regular" and "subsidised" remains, even when we control for the different composition of both groups and for structural differences in the kinds of work. What we have is a labelling effect (Prein, 2005). To be more direct, enterprises are looking for the high potentials that have been trained in someone else's company. Nothing much has changed concerning their personnel strategies, except that it is rarer that they themselves want to or can take an active part in the young people's training.

Figure 3: Transition into the job market (first job) (vocational training graduates, born in 1980 and 1981, "regulars" versus "subsidised 1" and "subsidised 2")
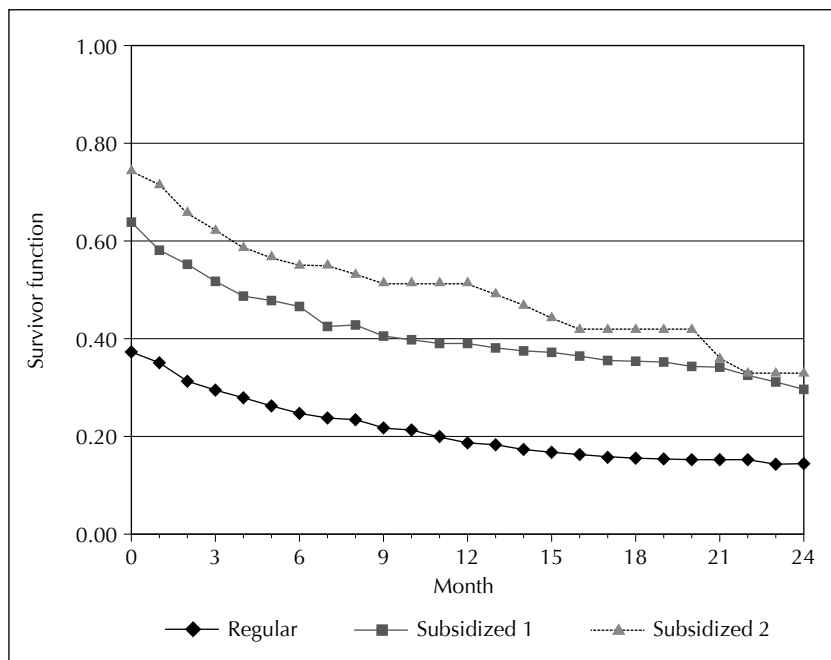
Source: Steiner and Prein 2004: 529, ostmobil-Youth Panel of the Centre for Social Research, Halle (Saale), Wave 1-3, Kaplan-Meier Estimation.

Young people and their families remain puzzled by the selection criteria. What they do understand is that their individual and family resources do not suffice. In eastern German families, one often observes attempts to gain capital. A typical example is the targeted search for social networks, especially in families with a school graduate (Steiner, 2005).

Since the late 1990s another path has been taken, that of an emigration from the eastern German regions.

Already in the mid-1990s, after the turbulent early years of the unification process, the number of those leaving eastern Germany started to increase again, and at a very high rate. This new migration wave peaked in 2001. Since then, migration numbers have gone down, but the balance is still to the disadvantage of the new states (Speck and Schubarth, 2009: 22; Granato and Niebuhr, 2009: 3).

In contrast to the beginning of the 1990s, however, the new east-west migrants are young eastern Germans, especially the 18 to 25 year olds. It is undeniable that as a rule we are dealing with well-qualified young people. What is unusual – also when international comparisons are made – is the high mobility of women (Figure 4). Almost 65% of the 18 to 25 year olds who migrated between 1991 and 2005 were women. As a result, the female-male balance in the eastern German regions has changed noticeably. The eight eastern German NUTS 2 regions, that is the European mapping of eastern Germany, show the largest "woman deficit" of all European regions for the birth years from 1972 to 1981 (Kröhnert, 2009: 93).

At least a part of this new mobility wave can be traced to a change in political strategy concerning the job market and society. As explained above, it was expected of young people, especially those who had completed a training programme, that they would become regionally mobile. The motive for public investment in job training was, however, to secure human capital in the region.

Figure 4: Migration balance, eastern States versus western States, 18-25 year olds (absolute)
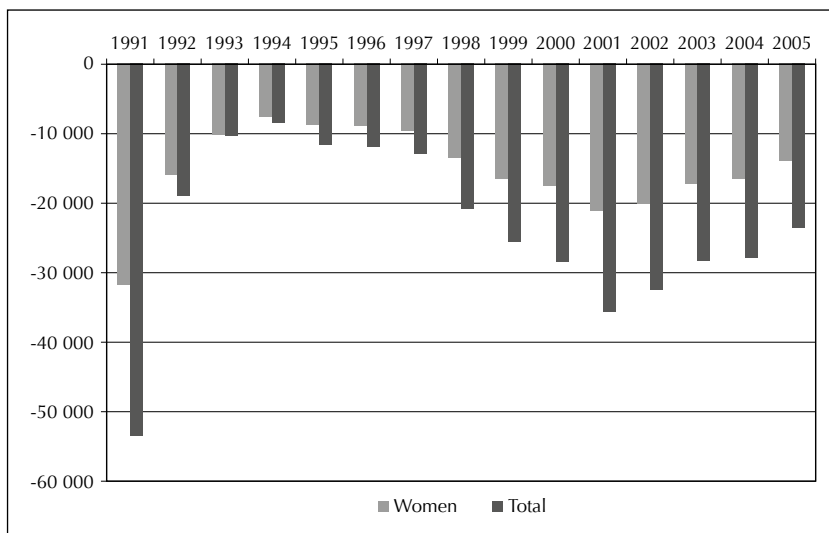
Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2004, 2005, graphic: Christine Steiner.

Regional mobility has been expected of young eastern Germans in particular, in order to alleviate the consequences of the structural changes in the economy. At the same time, however, young people should be offered some perspective for remaining where they already are. This should be the main goal for public invest-ment in their training. However, such opportunities for young people remain rare.

In view of the grave deficit in employment opportunities, even more regional mobility has been demanded of youth in eastern Germany since the mid-1990s. This, too, has been supported with public funds (Dietrich, 2003: 19 ff.). The newest welfare reforms in Germany clearly underscore the demands for mobility and flexibility yet again, especially for young jobseekers.

It is no wonder then that the degree of regional mobility, especially among young people, has increased noticeably. However, a noticeable change in the perception of work and the outlook for life in the region must be taken into account.

In describing the eastern Germans, often attention is drawn to the special role that work and performance plays in their lives (for an overview Meulemann, 1996: 177 ff., 272 ff.). In addition to the material security that work makes possible, aspects of social integration are also associated with work, especially for the parent genera-tion. Work is regarded more as a moral duty and source of community, than as a possibility for self-fulfilment (ibid.). This approach endures in the internal social relations of eastern German enterprises, which have continued to build upon this social morality into the 21st century (Behr, 2004)

Over the years, youth were and are more ambivalent concerning their attitude towards work and performance (Oehme and Liebscher-Schebiella, 2005: 293ff.). They stress the classical virtues of a willingness to work and perform well, which is not surprising given the lack of opportunities; but they also stress flexibility, which is required in order to get into a training programme and keep a job. Already among secondary students, there is a higher degree of flexibility with respect to learning a job and the readiness for regional mobility than is typically found in the western part of the country (BMBF, 1998: 38 ff., 1996: 33 ff.).

Notwithstanding this, aspects of self-actualisation (for example, individual earnings and career opportunities) play an important role for them. Precisely the examination of the young people's motives for migrating show that it is not only about avoiding unemployment and precarious employment, but is also about self-actualisation and social advancement (Speck et al., 2009: 155 ff.). And, since the end of the 1990s, the self-actualisation motive is shared by the parent generation, too. The parents put more weight on their children's personal development than on their social integration (Beetz, 2009: 141; Kroh, 2008: 482). It is, nevertheless, noticeable that precisely the young people draw a sharp contrast between the possibilities at home and somewhere else. The other place becomes a location one yearns for, where perhaps not everything, but certainly plenty is possible.

Looked at in this way, the increased regional mobility is an expression of the (renewed) establishment of the process of social differentiation, in which age and the choice of regional identification play important roles. This regional mobility is also changing the collective perception of eastern Germans about eastern Germany. Even in the 1990s, eastern Germany was regarded mainly as a transitional society from the perspective of the post-socialist eastern Germans. Now, it is becoming a region that is permanently structurally weak. And that, too, has consequences.

The fact that above all young people are leaving the new states has attracted a lot of media attention. In national reports the east seems to be a German Mezzogiorno. Even more, occasionally the horror scenario of the "social death" of entire regions is conjured up. This strengthens both a fear of marginalisation and the danger of being stigmatised. The young people, who (want to) "stay", find that they have to explain themselves. If the good and fit have already left, why am I still here? Regional mobility in this way loses its character as an option and becomes more and more a necessity, in order to avoid the threat of downward mobility (Beetz, 2009: 149ff.). Additionally, it is very easy to see this debate through the lens of the experiences of older people with the German-German post-war migration. Although the departure or escape from the GDR was interpreted as an expression of political protest against the socialist regime, it was always also a way out of a life seen as unsatisfactory (Niethammer, 2004: 99 ff.).

➜ 3. Growing risks for regions

It is not surprising that young people living in structurally weak regions like eastern Germany, who do not have many chances and do not see much of a future, are on the lookout for possibilities in other places. In addition, studies show that the ones who are leaving are mostly those who in fact do not find many employment possibilities in eastern Germany (Steiner, 2007: 185). With regard to economic politics and the job market, this migration is even desirable. It promises above all some clear job market relief.

However, since the beginning of this decade, migration has been regarded by politicians in the new states less as a relief than as a social problem. The regions in eastern Germany have been trying through various activities to motivate the young eastern Germans to stay or come back. They start with two assumptions. First, youngsters are pushed to leave. Second, young people feel a connection with their hometown. These assumptions are reflected in the various initiatives and projects. There is an attempt to stay in touch with the migrants through websites, and to inform them about training and job opportunities in their birthplace. Packages with products specific to the region have been sent, in an attempt to strengthen their connection with their hometown (among others Corbett, 2006). The appeal to the hometown loyalties of the young eastern Germans makes it easy to see that the politically responsible are worried about the social cohesion in the regions. And it is striking that it is almost always politicians who express such concerns, and rarely business people.

This is easier to understand when one knows that in addition to the loss through migration, the natural population development is in decline. In the early 1990s the birth rate collapsed to an unprecedented two thirds of its 1989 value, and has only stabilised at a low level. The population in eastern Germany is shrinking. And a shrinking population needs fewer businesses, sports fields, schools – in brief, public infrastructure. With this, the local and regional infrastructure becomes a cost problem. In the state Saxony-Anhalt two thirds of all high schools have been closed over the last few years (Meister, 2009: 110). When young people, particularly young women, leave, then future families leave as well. That is one side. When no more schools are there, then families will not go there either. That is the dilemma that many regions in eastern Germany are stuck with.

At the same time, considering the admittedly very specific demographic situation in eastern Germany, it is clear that in addition to demands for flexibility and mobility, there is a necessity for social stability, namely, continuity and the trust relationships that follow from this.

That loyalty is through and through a resource for companies, too, is understood in eastern Germany all too well. Here, the existence of a company was in many cases dependent on the engagement of its workers.

The reference to stability might be surprising in combination with young people. They are usually connected above all with social changes, owing to their status as social newcomers. In other words, the status as newcomer, as described above, is put in service to social changes.

However, the entrance of each new generation is regulated for reasons of social control as well as social security. Such predictable transitions produce relatively reliable expectations on both sides, on the side of youth and on the side of adults with whom they have to act in various social arenas.

In the case of eastern Germany, it has not only become clear that the social security on the way from school to work is weaker, but the expectation of expectations (Luhmann, 2001) has become more contradictory. However, the appeal to loyalty does not get very far when, in order to maintain participation in the workforce, above all flexibility is demanded. Here, it is quite evident that an increased individualisation of the employment problem can quickly lead to structural problems for the regions and companies as well.

Externalising costs does not automatically mean that the costs disappear, particularly in a region with a shrinking population. They turn up again at the latest when specialists are needed, who can no longer be found locally. It will be interesting to see how employment relationships develop in eastern Germany.

➜ Conclusion

In various ways the condition of the German-German unification process does not match the widespread hopefulness of the early 1990s, in which a quick and all-in-all problem-free expansion of West Germany across the eastern German regions was anticipated. Without doubt, there are many impressive successes. But these cannot hide the fact that an economic and social-cultural restructuring never got off the ground in many regions. To describe the transformation's consequences, terms like regionalisation, flexibilisation, uncertainty of status and situative logic of action are usually used.

Youth are particularly affected by this, and have been since the beginning of the social restructuring in eastern Germany. To cope with the economic upheavals, there was a reliance on more mobility, particularly of the young. Germany's typical safe passage into employment became more market dependent. Given the relatively strong liberal economic tendencies worldwide, it seems to me that this will remain so, and not only in eastern Germany.

It is not surprising that the stronger conformity to the market shows up in the biographies of the following generations. What is very surprising, though, are the lower chances for a return on investments in education and training.

Since the turn of the new century, there has been an intense discussion concerning the results of more mobility, especially more regional mobility nationwide. Interestingly, the improvement in the job market is not the only topic, but even more so the topic of the resulting social costs.

In my opinion, eastern Germany is an interesting case, because it shows that when a population is shrinking, typical methods of coping with a crisis and tendencies towards liberalisation can quickly become a problem for regions and regional stakeholders. I see this to be the result not only of the necessity on both sides for flexibility, but also for a certain amount of stability. The latter seems to have become unhinged in the new states.

The biographies of youth in eastern Germany are indeed heavily marked by moments that are regarded in the sociological discussion as expressions of modern global capitalism. In many ways, they are the result of continuing structural deficits in eastern Germany, the contemporary economic dynamics and diverse reforms of the welfare state. And, without a doubt, these have led to an increase in social inequality among youth in eastern Germany, but also between the eastern German generations. This becomes especially clear when analysing and discussing migration. At least some members of the younger generation have given more priority to their individual goals than to involvement in the family and the region, the latter being traditionally quite strong in eastern Germany. The strong reaction to this shows just how important this involvement is for the social life in the new states.

Nevertheless, this hardly goes beyond classic and expected forms of social differentiation. In the German context, only the frequent occurrence of inter-regional and international mobility is exceptional. New are not only the widespread feelings of

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uncertainty and incomprehension, feelings which have been described in many studies and which do not seem to be limited to eastern German youth, but also that the mobility that in fact takes place does not as much follow a calculated plan as it does an imaginary hope.

Happiness, opportunity, is always to be found somewhere else and is, as a consequence, always without a location. In this way, eastern German youth are definitely to be counted among the new flexible people.

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Western, eastern and modern: Balkan pop-folk music and (trans)nationalism

Rory Archer

➔ 1. Introduction

Since 1989 in the former Yugoslavia and the wider Balkan region, pop-folk musical styles have emerged as extremely dominant (yet controversial and often contested) cultural forms. Known as *turbofolk* in the former Yugoslavia,[65] *chalga* in Bulgaria, *muzică orientală* or *manela* in Romania and *muzika popullore* in Albania the enduring moral panics that such styles provoke can be interpreted as evidence of their social relevance (Vidić Rasmussen, 1995: 255). A great deal of discourse provoked by such music hinges upon the binaries of "rural–urban", "culture–kitsch", "east–west" and "Europe–Orient". Central is the notion that cultural sources from the east remain of lower value than those regarded as nationally autochthonous or

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65. Pop-folk styles are also referred to in post-Yugoslav cultural space as *narodnjaci* (folksies), *cajke*, *ćirilica* (Cyrillic), *neofolk*, *džigara* (liver), (*novo-komponovana) narodna muzika* ((newly composed) folk music) or simply "folk". References to pop-folk variants are so dominant that in everyday speech "folk" has come to denote pop-folk rather than "authentic" folk music (*izvorna muzika*) or *ethno* and thus these terms are identified and delineated as such.

from "western" or more securely "other" (and implicitly better) locales. Turbofolk is associated with the Milošević regime's apparatus and nationalist mobilisation in Serbia giving it further symbolic potency.

This paper focuses on Yugoslav turbofolk with reference to comparable styles in Bulgaria, Romania and Albanian inhabited lands.[66] I seek to demonstrate that these Balkan musical styles exhibit transnational features; in particular, their intercultural development and capacity to violate nationally framed conceptions of culture by relying on regional and oriental (post-Ottoman) motifs. Negotiation of the Balkan stereotype on the part of audiences and performers accompanies these processes feeding into the wider discourse of Balkanism. The concluding section considers the extent to which the commonalities of these musical forms lead to an embrace of a regional belonging and represent a Balkan or post-Yugoslav "vernacular cosmo-politanism" (Werbner, 2006). While very little research has examined the audiences in question, it is evident that pop-folk styles are extremely popular musical forms amongst young people in all Balkan states (see Buchanan, 2008) putting Balkan pop-folk at the forefront of post-socialist mass culture in the region.

Turbofolk, perhaps the most (in)famous of these styles, is usually considered to be a musical genre that emerged in 1990s Serbia which represents a mixture of elec-tronic dance sounds, kitsch folk music and an oriental tone (Nikolić, 2005). This developed from Yugoslav *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (newly composed folk music; henceforth NCFM) the market history of which began in the early 1960s (see Vidić Rasmussen, 1995, 2002). NCFM is commonly considered within the context of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in Yugoslavia in the post Second World War period, having emerged to meet the cultural needs of the "transitional majority seeking to rid itself of the baggage of rural origin while psychologically unequipped to accept models of urban culture" (Vidić Rasmussen, 2002: xix). Since the development of NCFM it provoked debate about rural/urban and internal eastern/western divisions within Yugoslavia. Turbofolk, frequently viewed as a 1990s digression of NCFM reflecting the socio-political circumstances of the Milošević era, is often considered by commentators to represent war, nationalism and isola-tion (Hudson, 2003: 172). Turbofolk has been accused by numerous Serbian and foreign authors of being a medium for the promotion of the lowest cultural habits, a key lever in the promotion of chauvinism, violence, criminal acquisition of wealth, a patriarchal social order and other aspects of the "cultural and moral downfall" of 1990s Serbia (Dimitrijević, 2002).

I suggest, however, that turbofolk coheres with similar cultural trends in the Balkan region (including areas which did not directly experience war and isolation in the 1990s). The period of political transformation in the early 1990s was accompanied by the grass-roots expansion of pan-Balkan musical styles which combined folk elements, oriental sounds, modern dance rhythms and sexualised consumerist imagery. This occurred within a sudden vacuum in state-directed cultural policy with the demise of socialism. Approaching turbofolk more holistically in its regional context shows it to be representative of wider post-socialist pan-Balkan cultural trends and renders it more than the garish by-product of the Milošević apparatus to which much literature relegates it.

Rather than thinking of turbofolk as a distinct musical genre it may be more analytically helpful to consider it as a conceptual category which, according to

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66. This includes not only Albania but also Kosovo, western Macedonia and parts of Montenegro and southern Serbia.

Grujić (2006: 3-5), carries certain cultural inclusions and exclusions, surpassing "pure musicological or technical demarcation". Cohering with this view, Baker (2007: 139) considers turbofolk to act less as a concrete definition of musical directions and "more as a conceptual category which aggregates connotations of banality, foreignness, violence and kitsch in order to provide a critical apparatus with a ready-made strategy of distancing". Turbofolk (and "newly composed") as a metaphor has been extended to refer to various aspects of public life in the 1990s leading to neologisms like "turbo-architecture", "newly composed politicians", and "turbofascism" (Norris, 2009: 173; Gordy n.d.; Papić, 2002).

No research to date has seriously examined turbofolk audiences in Serbia, nor young people as a specific subsection of these audiences. Many studies adhere to a mass-culture critique focusing on purely aesthetic or political aspects of the phenomenon (Grujić, 2006: 2), relegating the audience to "an undifferentiated, unthinking, or brainwashed mass" (Volčič and Erjavec, 2010: 190). As much field research undertaken in Serbia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia gravitates towards cosmopolitan intellectuals and students resident in capital cities, it has frequently prioritised narratives of the "educated, urban crowd who generally opposed war" (Vučetić, 2004: 187) leaving other social groups with differing political orientations "unproblematised".

Associated with youthful audiences, NCFM and turbofolk nevertheless have an intergenerational character associated with socially important events for the family and wider community (holidays, baptisms, weddings, graduations, funerals, military service, etc.). Belgrade cultural theorist Milena Dragićević-Šešić maintains that the ascendancy of NCFM stars like Lepa Brena[67] saw the youth market, in particular the under 18s, greatly influence the music market for the first time in Yugoslavia by the 1980s (B92, 2004).[68] She stresses the commodification of Lepa Brena in a trilogy of films suitable for young audiences (*Hajde da se volimo* (Let's love each other) I, II and III) and a "Brena" Barbie doll as evidence of this (Dragićević-Šešić, 1994: 157). According to Dragićević-Šešić (ibid.: 146), Lepa Brena was adored by children, parents and grandparents alike – "Every generation saw a different side of her, a different style, identity and appearance. Common to all was humour, joy, fun, the emanation of vitality and strength …". Though appealing to the "whole family", children were her biggest fans (Stanić, 2001: 104).

The ascendancy of turbofolk in the early 1990s saw a continuation of this intergenerational character. NCFM performers like Brena remained popular amongst a wide audience on the "turbo" circuit while newly popular performers gained a more exclusively youthful public. This was particularly the case for musical acts which relied heavily on techno and other subcultural trends which were sweeping across western Europe at the time and subsequently entered the Serbian turbofolk scene (for example, Ivan Gavrilović, Đogani Fantastico). The post-2000 pop-folk scene in Serbia has continued to incorporate trends from western Europe. The most prominent performers emulate MTV styled production and imagery leading to specific "glocalisms", which combine local idioms with western pop music tropes.

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67. Lepa Brena is a Bosnian born pop-folk singer who began her career in the early 1980s and became an enduring symbol of pan-Yugoslav pop-folk. Her pro-Yugoslav orientations were expressed in songs like *Jugoslovenka* (Yugoslav woman) and *Živela Jugoslavija* (Long live Yugoslavia).

68. Pop (*zabavna*) music from Croatia during the same era (Tajči, Novi Fosili) also generated mass popularity with audiences under the age of 18.

For example, one flawlessly produced music video features Afro-American basket-ball players in a Balkan *kafana*[69] dancing with the female singer Funky G.[70] Such production targets young audiences capturing the consumerism and body cult(ure) of western cultural models yet maintains local, often archaic, idioms. References to the *kafana* (tavern) *dušmani* (enemy), *inat* (stubbornness/spite), *kućni prag* (door step) help sustain intimate trans-local, intergenerational appeal.

➔ 2. Intercultural development and transmission of Balkan pop-folk

While NCFM began to develop in socialist Yugoslavia by the 1960s and peaked during the 1980s during a period of *hiperprodukcija* (hyper-production), pop-folk styles in surrounding states were restricted to varying degrees by the harsh assimi-lationist cultural policies of the respective communist regimes. As a result, outside of Yugoslavia the musical styles have "illicit" origins – as taboo forms in the latter years of socialism and as widely pirated products in the first years of political transformation. In the Romanian Banat (a region trisected by Serbian, Hungarian and Romanian state borders with a strong intercultural tradition), Serbian musicians performed at weddings and NCFM audio cassettes began to circulate in the 1970s and 1980s despite a ban on official recordings or transmission on state media (Beissinger, 2008: 106). From the south, Bulgarian *svatbarska muzika*, (wedding music performed mainly by Roma bands) made its way into Romania (ibid.). Rice (2002: 27) writes that "[i]n the politicised context of the late 1980s, this musical style became an icon of the possibilities of personal freedom and expression within a totalitarian regime and a harbinger of the political changes to come". In Timişoara, capital of Banat, and Southern Romania, *muzică orientală* became a popular underground form despite government initiated measures to eradicate the music in the 1980s. This was due to its Serbian qualities (and thus "foreign" nature, which violated the model of national culture) and the presence of Roma performers in this scene who were at that time subjected to harsh assimilationist practices under the Ceaşescu regime (Beissinger, 2008: 107).

In Bulgaria, Yugoslav NCFM influenced domestic performers, becoming well known primarily with the dissemination of pirated cassettes (Kurkela, 2008: 146). When the genre emerged it lacked a single label but commentators insisted it derived from "Serbian ethnopop prototypes" (Buchanan, 2008: 233). Adhering to the articulations of internalised orientalisms (patterns of perceived gradations of "westerness" locally remapping external discourse of the Balkans) (Bakić-Hayden, 1995), it has been suggested that Yugoslav NCFM was considered "more western" than anything produced in Bulgaria and yet "closer to home" than state produced folkloric products (Buchanan, 2008: 233). The comparatively more liberal nature of Yugoslav socialism with its western trappings and glamorous *estrada* (show business scene) made it an attractive product of consumption for Bulgarians.

In the Albanian inhabited lands of the Balkans, cultural transmission which led to the emergence of *muzika popullore* occurred on a number of fronts. NCFM (and later turbofolk) was present since the music's inception in parts of Albanian inhab-ited regions of Yugoslavia. Cultural exchange with Turkey occurred via Albanian migrants, tens of thousands who had left Yugoslavia since the Second World War

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69. *Kafana* is a tavern, a quintessential site for the performance of (newly composed) folk music and a metaphor for traditionally male in-group social space (Vidić Rasmussen, 2002: 70).

70. Funky G *Kafana na Balkanu* (Tavern in the Balkans) (2008).

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but had maintained links with Yugoslavia (Malcolm, 1998: 322-323). Albanian musicians in Macedonia purchased Turkish synthesisers which came equipped with pre-programmed rhythmic patterns based on various Turkish styles and audio cassette recordings of *arabesk*[71] stars were sent as gifts to family members in Yugoslavia during the 1980s (Sugarman, 2008: 287). Commercial links between Slav Muslims from Sandžak[72] and Turkey functioned as another source of *arabesk*. In the 1990s with the opening of Albania's borders these influences began to take root across the entire Albanian community in tandem with influences from Greece, to which many Albanians had begun emigrating.

In Croatia where Serbian cultural products were under a de facto embargo in the early 1990s during a cultural nationalisation, resemblances to turbofolk and the "eastern melos" of NCFM was a recurring criticism in the domestic music scene (see Baker, 2010). Nevertheless the common Yugoslav musical market which lasted until 1991 already provided Croatia with enough NCFM raw materials to repackage elements of it. Conversely, it has been suggested that the proliferation of Croatian dance music in the early 1990s which facilitated the creation of a Belgrade dance club scene provided turbofolk with the source of its techno sound (Vidić Rasmussen, 2008: 88). Despite official embargoes, piracy flourished in both directions allowing Serbo-Croatian cultural exchange to continue (albeit at low levels and in marginal spaces).

The enduring popularity of Serbian performers across Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina seems to indicate that it is not merely a Serbian but a (post)Yugoslav phenomenon which can thrive in the face of official hostility on the part of political and cultural elites. In Croatia in particular the underground popularity of *narodnjački* clubs and live venues has been frequently described as youthful rebellion – teenagers and young people who consume what older generations forbid during the nationalisation of the domestic music scene in the 1990s (Lazarin, 2006; Šimičević, 2008). Cuculić (2010) considers that while in Serbia youth resistance towards turbofolk exists, the very opposite has occurred amongst "urban youth" in Croatia "specifically due to censorship", which has rendered turbofolk "a form for the expression of revolt against propagated social values". Croatian newspaper columns have sought to "explain" the phenomenon which is commonly portrayed in panicked media discourses as a deviant youth activity prompting newspaper headlines like "Teenagers drunk on turbofolk" (Gaura, 2008).

In wartime Sarajevo a market seller asked why he sold the music of Ceca (wife of notorious Serb paramilitary Željko Ražnatović "Arkan") retorted, "Art knows no borders" (Dimitrijević, 2002). In 1996 a Serbian journalist found himself an unlikely conduit for Serbian turbofolk albums requested by soldiers of the Bosnian army – "Turbofolk was the only Serb product that the suffering and almost ethnically clean post-war Sarajevo yearned for" (Ćirjaković, 2004). Research conducted by Volčič and Erjavec (2010) on Ceca fans in Croatia and Slovenia addresses the problem as to how Ceca's music is consumed outside the bounds of Serbian nationalism.

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71. *Arabesk* is an Arabic-style of music popular in Turkey since the 1960s (see Stokes, 1992).

72. Sandžak is a region straddling the Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin borders with a Slav Muslim plurality. The region, in particular the region's largest city, Novi Pazar (Serbia), has a long tradition of trade with Sarajevo, Istanbul and the western European based Sandžak diaspora.

They find that the music is consumed by young women in depoliticised parameters where Ceca's national character is superseded by the implicit promise of self-empowerment.

Although the often cited criticism that turbofolk was "forced" upon the Serbian populace by the Milošević regime apparatus has some empirical weight considering the links between certain turbofolk producers and performers and the regime (see Gordy, 1999), the general perspective of Balkan pop-folk music shows a tendency towards grass-roots popularity. By the 1980s NCFM accounted for 58% of the total Yugoslav music market (Vidić Rasmussen, 1995: 246). The break-up of Yugoslavia saw the formation of more nationally homogenous music markets which greatly reduced the presence of Croatian pop in the Serbian music market thus strengthening the hegemony of Serbian pop-folk.

Audio cassettes were initially the most important mode of transmission of pop-folk in all states though production and sales figures are extremely unreliable due to widespread piracy (Kurkela, 2007). The Internet has opened up even wider opportunities for piracy rendering official sales figures a largely redundant means to gauge popularity. Nevertheless, estimated figures provide an indication of the popularity of folk hybrid music. In Kosovo, for example, where the most successful pop or traditionally folkloric recording may sell up to 20 000 copies, a top *muzika popullore* recording could exceed 70 000 copies (Sugarman, 2008: 279). In Slovenia, Serbian folk star Ceca was reported to be the best-selling female singer in 2002 (*Nacional*, 2002). Pop-folk has thrived in Croatia and Romania despite official state media hostility hindering transmission on radio or television (Beissinger, 2008: 128; Gaura, 2008). Media reports suggest that almost half of Croatian young people listen to turbofolk to the surprise and horror of many Zagreb columnists (Lazarin, 2006).

➜ 3. Challenging nationally bounded culture: turbofolk as the internal orient

Though associated with nationalist mobilisation in the early 1990s, Serbian turbofolk poses a problem for adherents to a Gellnerian conception which holds cultural similarity as the basic social bond and contingent for the political principle of nationalism (Gellner, 1997: 2-4). The dynamism and cultural heterogeneity that turbofolk engenders by fusing disparate musical traditions with old and modern styles makes it a problematic instrument of dissemination for nationalist agitators. For most Balkan nationalisms, a hostile view of the Ottoman Empire and its legacy is a prerequisite (Todorova, 1997: 183). The oriental tone of turbofolk is usually understood as part of this legacy. According to Simić (2007: 108) in Balkan musical discourses there is a careful delineation of that which is "authentically national" and what is "oriental". Turbofolk is often described as "an unclean mix of authentic Serbian and oriental music" (ibid.).

Turbofolk has encountered conservative resistance which seeks to "erase" the phenomenon as a part of an undesirable "Turkish" aspect of Serb identity which should be uprooted (Dimitrijević, 2002). Dimitrijević believes this discourse to be "based on a cultural-racist resistance to cultural influences that are in general recognised as malignant tissue in the healthy body of the true Serb" (ibid.). Čolović opines that:

Nationalists strive to split the continuous spectrum of various hues and varieties of a single cultural model into two or more radically different cultures. For example, their goal is to split shared cultural heritage of Serbs, Croats and Muslims into separate systems of national cultures, with different languages, different cultural traditions and separate social and cultural histories (Čolović, 2002: 25-40).

By meshing various components of different cultures (for example, Turkish vocal traditions with western European techno), turbofolk violates bounded national culture models. According to Živković (1998) when it comes to "deep self-recrimination … nothing in the Serbian repository of themes could be as powerful as the entangled complex of the Turkish Taint". For traditionalists, cultural conservatives and self-declared nationalists such as composer Zoran Hristić, Pavle Aksentijević, singer Miroslav Ilić and media figures such as Nena Kunijević, turbofolk is seen as an attack on the Serbian spiritual tradition (Đurković, 2002: 280). Đurković (ibid.: 280-281) adds that holders of this view commonly consider communism to have intentionally imposed "Asiatic rhythms" and oriental elements upon Serbs while what he terms "an incorrect historical perception of Serbian identity" wishes to see this identity derived exclusively from central Serbia (Šumadija).

During a July 1994 session of the Serbian Parliament, a member of the opposition coalition DEPOS (and choral singer) Pavle Aksentijević played a song by Serbian turbofolk performer Dragana Mirković, a popular female performer of the era who conveyed a public image of a modest Serbian girl from the provincial heartland. He juxtaposed Mirković with a nearly identical sounding contemporary Iranian pop song, accusing the establishment of deliberately polluting "Serbdom" with an oriental melos (Živkovic, 1998). This incident demonstrates both the inherent nationalism and impotence of sections of opposition to Milošević during the 1990s – despite the ongoing war in Bosnia and socio-economic crises in Serbia, debating the musical repertoire of a folk singer was deemed a legitimate parlia-mentary activity.

Conservative resistance is but one side of the coin of anti-turbofolk orientations. Pro-European elites in Serbia and neighbouring states also vehemently oppose turbofolk as a soundtrack to the Milošević regime; a symbol of "all that was wrong with 1990s Serbia" (Simić, 2007: 108). Nevertheless, the notion of the "orient" as a problematic aspect of turbofolk consistently surfaces in anti-turbofolk narratives (for example see Kronja, 2001; Gordy, 1999; Jansen, 2005). For pro-European elites "who put forward their programmes for national emancipation, modernisation and democratisation as a flight from the Balkans" (Čolović, 2007), turbofolk threatens ideas of European cultural belonging. Research conducted in Serbia shows that young people of a self-proclaimed non-nationalist orientation considered turbofolk to be "xenophobic", "violent", "cheap", "kitsch", "tasteless" and "vulgar" (Jansen, 2002: 42), "garbage", "*gastarbeiter*-like", "primitive" and "Balkan" (Gordy, 1999: 140-164), "the worst kitsch of the lowest taste" and "more imitations of Greek or Turkish tunes" (Malešević, 2003: 186). These criticisms give turbofolk more symbolic potency than its nationalist credentials alone. Indeed, such discourse predates and has outlived the national co-option of pop-folk music in Serbia (see Vidić Rasmussen, 2002, 2008).

A Serbian liberal aversion to turbofolk appears to be a specific manifestation of a more generally pervasive orientalism on the part of pro-European political opinion. The lauded anti-Milošević resistance group Otpor incorporated such orientalist imagery and rhetoric into their memorandum in dichotomised and ahistorical terms.

In the Balkans and in Serbia we find two fundamentally opposed tendencies. Two trees stemming from two completely disparate historical and cultural roots. We will term the first root Asiatic not because of the continent it originated from but because of the mentality it inherited from the Ottoman sultanate and the Islamic Jamahiriya. In Serbia this root originated in almost 500 years of Ottoman occupation and in the prevailing ideology of pseudo social-ism (cited in Marković, 2001: 4).

Ćirjaković (2004) interprets such views as an ongoing problem in contemporary Serbia whereby a pro-western elite is incapable of communicating with large parts of the populace it wishes to lead. He writes:

The true problem is not (as they claim) that turbofolk is bad (it frequently is) or that it is nationalist (it usually isn't) but that turbofolk as far as they are concerned is too "Asian" and "Oriental". The majority of these cultural racists are convinced that most of Serbia, Asia and the "Orient" are actually ugly, dirty, primitive and incurably non-European places (ibid.).

In Romania and Bulgaria the cognitive association of Balkan pop-folk music and authoritarian regimes did not exist. Rather, Yugoslav pop-folk was understood to represent cultural freedom of choice under Tito's regime which was considered decidedly liberal from the perspective of communist Romania and Bulgaria (Rice, 2003). Pop-folk music flourished in the period of democratisation, post-socialist political and economic transformation. Yet negative discourses quickly emerged in the public sphere which was remarkably similar to articulations which had begun in the former Yugoslavia since at least the early 1980s. Heated public debates of *chalga* in 1990s Bulgaria were based on certain understandings of national identity which were perceived to be threatened by *chalga* due to its supposed oriental primitivism and backwardness. This type of discourse can be considered as excluding, or at least pushing to the margins, the "local other" represented in *chalga* by Bulgaria's largest minorities, Turks and Roma (Levy, 2002: 199). A petition to the Bulgarian Parliament, initiated in December 1999 by various prominent cultural figures, requested the "cleansing" of the national soundscape of what were deemed to be "bad", "vulgar", and "strange" sounds coming from the "uncivilised" experiences of local Roma and Turks (ibid.: 208). Ironically, amongst those "loudly crying against *chalga* and calling for new institutional control to limit its access in media space" were many established cultural figures who had protested against censorship during the communist regime (ibid.).

In Romania, *Muzică orientală* can be seen as an expressive form that both attracts and repulses segments of society by "challenging deeply held assumptions about culture and aesthetics" – threatening beliefs about both where Romania lies in relation to the Europe/Balkan construct as well as where national minorities (chiefly Roma) find their place within contemporary post-socialist Romania (Beissinger, 2008: 97). Beissinger (ibid.: 131) notes the paradox that some of the most:

outspoken critics of the "foreign" nature of muzică orientală*, comes from those who relish Western European and American popular music without seeing the irony within their own perceptions of what "foreign" means. Foes of* muzică orientală *hear its "alien sounds", "contaminated" culture, and "banal" lyrics; some also hear the death throes of the traditional genres with which they identify. Many view "Gypsy" musicians as altering the direction of Romanian popular culture, a trend they loath. This phenomenon is not unique to Romania. It was and is happening elsewhere in Eastern Europe.*

A video director in Kosovo implicates Serbs in the "orientalisation" of Albanian culture in a 2002 interview. "Albanians are a Western people, but this music [*muzika popullore*] had orientalised Albanians a great deal. The Serbs have imposed this music on us so as to associate the Albanians with the Orient, fundamentalism, and the like. This isn't our culture" (cited in Sugarman, 2008: 296).

➜ 4. *Ma kakva Evropa!* (Who cares about Europe!)

Having gained a host of extra-musical attributes, turbofolk and similar styles can be understood as being instrumentalised as explicitly Balkanist constructs due to their geographically Balkan origins and associations of violence, eroticism, barbarity and "otherness" that the music promises to its critics. The national other (Serbs for Croatians and Kosovo Albanians, Roma for Bulgarians and Romanians) are represented in pop-folk scenes as is the stigmatised Ottoman/Turkish legacy. Turbofolk is identified with the concepts of "Balkan", "rurality" and "anti-culture" as opposed to various "western music" styles which are connected to "Europeanness", "urbanity" and "civilisation" (Simić, 2007: 98; see also Gordy, 1999). Just as "Balkan" has a liminal position within Europe, as its internal other, turbofolk has a liminal and peripheral position within former Yugoslav cultural space as a cultural other which is often instrumentalised as a discursive means of marginalisation, disparagement or exclusion. For many, turbofolk is interpreted as a cultural frame with uncivilised eastern and rural roots which poses a danger to autochthonous national culture and/ or the possibility of a "European" and cosmopolitan future. According to Dimitrijević (2002), both regional and international authors make one fundamental assumption when addressing turbofolk; "turbo-culture" as a medium for the promotion of the lowest cultural and civilisational habits specific to Serbia and opposed to global culture. He views turbofolk, however, as an indication that Serbia is increasingly adopting western values and global culture. This parallels the view of Todorova (1997: 13) that the homogenising national forces and their violent manifestations at work in Balkan Europe today, wrongly attributed to some Balkan essence, are actually the ultimate Europeanisation of the Balkans.

In unofficial cultural spheres of Balkan states, arenas not dominated by national elites or self-declared cosmopolitans, the Balkan stereotype has been inverted, negotiated and undermined. This manifests clearly in the case of turbofolk and comparable pop-folk styles. Of the examples of resistance to negative stereotypes of the Balkans which found expression in the 1990s, the new music folklore (turbofolk, *chalga*, etc.) is at the forefront. "This culture arrogantly glorifies the Balkans as they actually are: backward, oriental, but own and close" (Čolović, 2007: 9). The hybrid nature of turbofolk and comparable styles appears to celebrate supposed heterogeneous and hedonistic aspects of the Balkans. The Balkans is frequently affirmed with positive attributes reflected in song lyrics. Significantly, such songs do not appeal to national but rather to regional (pan-Balkan) sentiment targeting a predominantly young audience.

Seka Aleksić's *Balkan* (2003) appeals, "this life is not bad … let everybody hear how we enjoy ourselves in the Balkans".[73] Stoja's (2001) *Evropa* (Europe) similarly makes favourable reference to Balkan hedonism and intimacy by juxtaposing it against a cold, abstract Europe. "You should know nobody has the life that we do, what's a dream for them [Europe] is every day for us. Once again, Opa! Everyone up on the table, who cares about Europe? Nowhere in the world do you have this!"[74] Funky G (2008) represents a Balkan *kafana* (*Kafana na Balkanu*) as simultaneously modern and stylish yet close and familiar, the location for romance and above all fun, absent beyond the Balkans – "you don't have this anywhere else in the wide world".[75]

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73. "Ovaj život nije loš …/Baš svi, nek čuju svi/kako se veseli na Balkanu."

74. "Nema niko, to da znaš/ovaj život kao naš/što je njima pusti san/to je nama svaki dan/ hej još jednom pa opa/zajedno svi na sto/ma, kakva Evropa/na svetu nema to!"

75. "Ma ovo nema na ovom belom svetu."

Rather than considering these musical texts as evidence of deep-seated occidentalism it may be more appropriate to interpret them within the context of ambiguous attitudes to European integration occurring in the context of structural inequality in which the onus is almost entirely on the junior (Balkan) partner to conform to particular standards of "European" values and behaviour. The asymmetrical relationship between Balkan states and the European core is reflected and perpetuated in national political discourses. Turbofolk thus becomes a strategy to convey dissent and positively mark local or regional identities generating cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 1997) embarrassing to both European ideals and the narrow conception of the nation state. Alexander Kiossev (2002: 184) writes of pop-folk in these terms:

It turns the lowermost picture of the Balkans upside down and converts the stigma into a joyful consumption of pleasures forbidden by European norms and taste. Contrary to the traditional dark image, this popular culture arrogantly celebrates the Balkans as they are: backward and Oriental, corporeal and semi-rural, rude, funny, but intimate … It is a kind of willing regression into a great, scandalous, Balkan "neighbourhood" away from both Europe and the annoying official homelands.

Performers like Stoja, Seka Aleksić and Funky G by appealing to an intimate and fun-loving interpretation of the Balkan construct avoid nationalistic discourses (a prominent strategy by which to symbolically reject pro-European discourses). Rather a focus is made on stressing the intimate and hedonistic aspects of "Balkan" which are presented to audiences in sexualised and stylised terms mimicking western musical production standards and pop-imagery but simultaneously challenging their hegemony.

These types of representations in musical texts help to define "Balkaners" as irrational, proud, passionate, loving and destructive – more so than the average western European. This pro-Balkan cultural rebellion is implicitly positioned as a collective solution to stigma – the instrumentalisation of culture against a prevailing hegemony (Brake, 1980: 3-4). This can be considered as a strategy stressing difference as a necessary emancipation from the west or alternatively, as a bold form of resistance to both western hegemonic practices and local vehemently pro-European elites (Volčič, 2005: 162). Self-exoticism has become a commodity according to critiques of globalisation emerging from South-East Europe which stress the conversion of marginality into a commercially viable product for western consumption (Volčič, 2005; Iordanova, 2001). By this logic, "exoticised" western constructions are borrowed and reproduced by Balkan cultural producers and subsequently mirrored or sold back to the west (Volčič, 2005: 168). Self-exoticism in turbofolk, however, suggests that a domestic demand for such constructions also exists; a point noted by Baker (2008: 177) who has observed commodified stereotypes in Hungarian and Ukrainian domestic music scenes.

Another important factor of stereotype inversion and commodification is the significance of the post-Yugoslav diaspora(s) in the turbofolk scene. Most turbofolk performers work frequently in the diaspora (mainly in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden) as a means of compensating for lacklustre sales in a saturated and piracy ridden domestic music market. The diaspora clubs of western Europe have formed a key audience segment since the inception of NCFM. A number of NCFM songs engaged in the themes of emigration, homesickness, dislocation and affirmation of the Balkan in-group.[76] An affirmation of self within the

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76. For example *Prokleta je Amerika* (America is cursed) (Šaban Bajramović) and *Moje selo lepše od Pariza* (My village more beautiful than Paris) (Rader Jorić).

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gastarbajter[77] paradigm thus appears to be a calculated economic choice; a legitimation of homesick sentiment for an abstract Balkan homeland and ambiguous attitudes towards the state of residence (represented by an abstract "Europe").

Mile Kitić and Đogani affirm the Balkan stereotype with regard to the *gastarbajter* theme, long a source for NCFM. In the 2008 *Nema više cile Mile* ("No more messing around", a pun on the name Mile), Kitić is working abroad in Europe and his lover (Vesna Đogani) wants to join him. Alluding to the problems that many Balkan citizens have obtaining visas she sings – "I will search through the embassy, I don't care how such things work, I'll get a visa, it's urgent that I go to you, what women in love wouldn't?"[78] Kitić affirms that his heart is in the Balkans, and throughout the songs confirms that "Balkan is better" – "No Swedish or German woman can compare to you, there is no chance I would ever cross the border with them my love. France or Sweden is not your destiny, no chance my love, a Balkan soul is calling."[79]

Although much literature which addresses Yugoslav diasporas focuses on deterritorialised nationalism (Hockenos, 2003; Sullivan, 2004) as I argue in the following section there also exists a less nationally minded "imagined community" in which a post-Yugoslav consciousness exists and is sustained in part by the *estrada* and tabloid media. Liminal categories like "Balkan", "Yugo" or perhaps most commonly the Serbo-Croatian *naš, naši ljudi* and *naš jezik* ("ours", "our people", and "our language") are invoked as a way of deflecting ethnonational categories and to focus attention on solidarity rather than sources of difference or conflict.

➜ 5. Conclusion: towards a pop-folk cosmopolitanism?

In the former Yugoslavia, turbofolk can no longer be posited as an instrument of nationalist agitation. On the contrary, folk stars have been at the forefront of renewed post-war, post-Yugoslav transnational cultural exchange conceptualised by Judah (2009) as the *Yugosphere*. Though it has been demonstrated that certain neofolk performers are interpreted as ethno-political symbols (for example, Ceca as the Serbian cultural "other" and Marko Perković Thompson as her Croatian counterpart) and are therefore more controversial than performers of other styles (see Baker, 2006) the overall trend is one of a sustained supra-national post-Yugoslav folk scene. Production is centred in Belgrade (and to a lesser extent Sarajevo and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). Concerts take place throughout the former Yugoslavia and in cities across Europe where the post-Yugoslav diasporas reside.

Surveying concerts advertised on the websites of the largest diaspora-based clubs (for example, *Nachtwerk* and *Club Ex Yu* in Vienna, *Diskoteka Hollywood* in Berlin)[80]

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77. *Gastarbajter*, originating from the German *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker), refers to manual labourers and their families from Yugoslavia who moved to industrial areas of western Europe from the 1960s onwards. It is a value-laden term which (from the perspective of urban elites in post-Yugoslav republics) commonly implies kitsch, rurality and unsuccessful urbanisation rather like the "newly composed" metaphor.

78. "Tražicu te preko ambasade/baš me briga da li takve stvari rade/hoću vizu, hitno idem tebe/koja žena kada voli ne bi."

79. "Ni Svedjanke, ni Nemice/ti nisu ni do kolena/da s njima predjem granice/ma, nema sanse, voljena/Ni Francuska, ni Švajcarska/nisu tvoja sudbina/zove duša balkanska."

80. www.diskoteka-hollywood.de, www.nachtwerk.at, www.exyuinwien.at.

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demonstrates the multi-ethnic origins of performers. Performers who identify as Bosnian, Bosniac, Croatian, Serbian, Yugoslav and/or Roma (such terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive) are represented in significant numbers. Such disco clubs are far more prominent (suggesting they are more economically viable) than nationally orientated diaspora venues which are marginal in comparison to the pan-Yugoslav variant. Multiculturalism can be represented as a social fact in the "imagined turbofolk community". For example, the diaspora edition of the Serbian weekly tabloid *Svet* covers the concert in Vienna of Bosnian singer Selma Bajrami in these terms: "Last Friday the whole world of Muslim believers celebrated *Bajram*. This big holiday was celebrated in the Viennese *folkoteka* 'Estrada' and with her performance Selma Bajrami made it even bigger … the last guests left for their houses at dawn" (Nenadović, 2009).

Magazines such as *Svijet* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Svet* (Serbia), Свет (Macedonia), and *Skandal* (Serbia) sustain a pan-Yugoslav "imagined community" where state borders are transgressed and banal activities of the *estrada* (namely, sex scandals, celebrity rivalries, consumption and fashion) take place across the entire area of former Yugoslavia[81] and extend into the diaspora resident in western Europe. Private television stations like DM Sat[82] broadcast to a transnational multi-ethnic audience furthering the notion of a supranational imagined post-Yugoslav community through the use of an on-screen interactive text messaging service and advertising which simultaneously link locations as geographically and ethnically diverse as Klagenfurt, Banja Luka, Gelsenkirchen, Rovinj, Osijek, Mostar, Požarevac and Celje.[83]

The ethno-political discourse that characterises Serbian and Bosnian political life is generally absent from media like *Svet* and DM Sat and the rhetoric of most turbofolk performers. Some performers go to pains to distance their music from politics, particularly in the context of working in a neighbouring state. Seka Aleksić declared in the Croatian daily *Slobodna Dalmacija*, "At my concerts there is no politics – just good music" (Šimundža, 2009). Lepa Brena, the "mother of turbofolk" (Dragićević-Šešić, 1994) completed her first post-war tour of the former Yugoslavia in 2009 consistently appealing for a "Yugoslav" identity which she compares to a European identity. She told a Croatian web portal:

If someone has the right to declare themselves as a Serb or a Croat then I have the right to declare myself Yugoslav …. Then we had open borders, a passport and nobody looked for visas from us. I know it was a much more peaceful country. Just like Yugoslavia then, Europe lives as a civilised society (S.C., 2009).

I suggest that it may be analytically helpful to consider turbofolk performers and publics as participating in a kind of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" defined by Werbner (2006), an ambiguous conjunctural term which captures the coexistence of the local, patriarchal and culturally specific with the transnational, enlightened and elitist. The turbofolk scene in the former Yugoslavia is broader than national space; in fact it overlaps with a number of the national spaces which have clamoured to enforce mutual cultural difference in the last two decades. Incorporating regional specificity and global musical trends does not decidedly reject national(ist) frames

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81. Kosovo is notably absent in the post-Yugoslav *estrada* perhaps due to the linguistic difference of Albanian and the politically sensitive nature of its contested independence.

82. A pop-folk music satellite channel owned by folk performer Dragana Mirković.

83. These towns are located respectively in: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Croatia, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia.

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from a normative standpoint. Rather it circumvents such discourse. Volčič and Erjavec (2010: 117) consider that avoidance of addressing the nationalist co-option of turbo-folk and its murky legacy during the Milošević regime is "potentially progressive" in that it might "serve as the basis for reconciliation based on the regional appeal of consumer culture: the creation of new forms of postsocialist unity in diversity." The authors doubt the stability, however, of such a basis for reconciliation in which young people fail to address the pathologies of a shared past.

[T]he version of "reconciliation" provided by the marketplace leaves untouched the vastly different understandings of the legacy of the Balkan wars. It leaves all groups free to retain their often one-sided and partial understandings of the atrocities of the wars even while they may all flock to the same concerts (ibid.: 118).

The potential for the turbofolk scene to foster liberal, cosmopolitan sentiment is demonstrated by turbofolk performers like Jelena Karleuša, Indira Radić and Seka Aleksić who have publicly supported gay rights, women's rights and have critiqued aspects of the patriarchal nature of post-Yugoslav society (Stojanović, 2006; Queeria, 2008; Ginović, 2009). Karleuša, writing for the Serbian tabloid *Kurir* in the wake of violence in Belgrade following the October 2010 Gay Pride Parade produced a scathing article about the state of contemporary Serbian society – "in Serbia it's normal that a child sees its dad slap its mother but its not normal that two grown-up people [of the same sex] love each other" (Karleuša, 2010). This article was republished in numerous highbrow media outlets[84] and garnered vocal support from noted liberals like Biljana Srbljanović and Čedomir Jovanović.[85] The first turbofolk singer to appear on the influential B92 talk show *Utisak Nedelje* (Impression of the week), Karleuša stressed the importance of mainstream (celebrity) figures in communicating liberal stances to a mass audience. She argued that the articulation of liberal views should not only be the preserve of intellectual elites in Serbia. By doing so Karleuša has challenged the long-standing view of turbofolk performers as inert, conservative and depoliticised.

Serbian turbofolk and its sister variants in neighbouring states have been a soundtrack to the last 20 years of post-socialist transformation in the Balkans and remain popular amongst young people across the region. The perennial polemics they generate are a testament to their continuing social relevance. They have proved to be extremely durable and flexible, encompassing elements of the local, the national and the global; iconography ranging from queer to the hyper-militarist. I have argued that a key role of these musical styles is the mediation of the liminal position of the Balkans vis-à-vis the European core and domestic sources of hyper pro-European discourses. Pop-folk highlights tensions between processes of European integra-tion and the affirmation of self. Local traditions, home-grown intimacy and global trends are all incorporated. Thus I believe it is possible to consider pop-folk musical styles as simultaneously western, eastern and modern – forming both a means to mediate and poke fun at these concepts which are often represented as zero-sum. While the musical styles may be promoted (as in Milošević's Serbia) or disparaged (as in Croatia and Romania) they remain consistently popular, representative of the post-1990 epoch of "leather jacket capitalism" and the misery, joy, opportunities and dislocation this era has brought.

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84. For example, www.e-novine.com, www.6yka.com.

85. www.pescanik.net/content/view/5839/61.

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