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# Contents

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# Guest Editor's Foreword

The current issue of the *Acta Univiersitatis Sapientiae – Social Analysis* is dedicated to offer a better understanding of some social processes that used to be characteristic of the transitional period in Central and Eastern Europe. The transition gives a special context to the social processes, as each society carries the burden of the past, leaving its mark on the future as well.

Therefore, independently form the fact that the aspirations of the different segments of the society are either to be convergent or divergent with the Western European values, lifestyles, consumption models, carrier plans, etc., the past experiences forge the common scaffolding for these new aspirations.

One of the major challenges of the transitional period was the limited capacity of the state to offer a strong social security for those who could not participate – for various reasons – in the labour market. As a consequence, a large amount of citizens came to experience a scenario that used to be unimaginable during the socialist times – unemployment, lack or inefficiency of social security revenues, the general disappearance of that semblance of social security particular to all socialist regimes.

The study of Bogdan Voicu and Balázs Telegdy offers a general overview of the past twenty-five years, presenting the main characteristics of the transitional period from the perspective of social change. The analysed four domains are the welfare state attitudes, gender values, civic participation, and attitudes towards democracy, giving a synthetic basis for a better understanding of the analysed period in Romania, and generally in Central and Eastern Europe.

The changes brought by the transition marked a new possibility for the youth in the former communist states: to pursue values and carrier choices which were not given to their parents. In the current number, three studies deal with the youth – two research-based works and one meta-analysis of the literature regarding the situation of the youth. From the research-based paper, written by Irina Gewinner, we can find out the gender-biased stereotypes regarding the labour market, carrier aspirations, and value orientation of the youth in Sankt Petersburg (Russian Federation) in the shadow of the former communist legacy. The author focuses especially on the girls' aspirations answering the question: "Path dependency or transition?"

The paper signed by Erzsébet Takács analyses the situation of youth in Hungary from a late modernist theoretical perspective, giving the reader a synthetic literature review of the researches regarding the situation of youth in Hungary,

embedded in other European researches contextualizing the findings even more, and offering a better understanding of the situation of the youth.

The paper of Eszter Papp and Andrea Rácz focuses on the professionals in the field of social work in one of Hungary's regions (Hajdú-Bihar County). The research brings an interesting view of the professionals who are themselves constrained by the institutional frames and economic possibilities. Their analysis of social workers reveals a particular side of the transitional period: the way how old institutions were reformed during the analysed period, simultaneously offering a better understanding of the social security system and childcare in CEE countries.

The field of Non-Governmental Organizations is another key issue in the analysis of the transitional period in the former socialist states, as these institutions were basically inexistent in these (even if there were some formal civic institutions, these were entirely controlled by the ruling party). As a consequence, volunteering can be perceived as an innovative social role in the former socialist states, and Ágota Silló describes the evolution of volunteering in CEE countries, also seeking to identify those social groups and strata which can be the cradle of this new type of value orientation and social behaviour.

Returning to the youth's situation as a main concern in the former socialist states, the reader can find out from the paper written by Ibolya Czibere and Éva Molnár the differences in the aspirations of the youth in Hungary, mainly concerning the labour market perspectives – analysed by the settlement type, habitation, and previous scholar achievements. What is more, the authors reveal, through their analysis, the most common fears among the Hungarian youth.

The paper of Lilla Szabó, based on a rather anthropological approach, reveals the effects of the transition on the interethnic relations in a well-defined area of Covasna County (Transylvania, Romania), where three nations – Hungarians, Romanians, and Roma – have lived together for a longer period. The author argues that the contextual changes brought on by the transitions – mainly economic and societal – have significantly influenced the interethnic relations among the members of the analysed nations.

Finally, Bakó Rozália Klára presents a research review on the case of digital transition in Romania. By exploring the ways in which young children relate to digital technology and adopt different ways of digital technology use, the author explores the complex issue of this specific form of transition.

As a conclusion, the readers of the current issue of *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae – Social Analysis* can get a synthetic overview of a few social dimensions of the transitional process and its effect in Central and Eastern Europe, which can lead to a better understanding of the current behaviour of the analysed societies.

Bogdan Voicu, Balázs Telegdy

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# Dynamics of Social Values: 1990–2012

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**Abstract**. Our paper starts by portraying our views on social change and on the role that value change plays in the mix of social change. Then, we explain the selection of the four domains – attitudes towards welfare state, attitudes towards democracy, the participative culture, and gender beliefs – and what we expect to see in a post-communist society. We do not intend to explore the four domains in-depth. However, the findings are important *per se* and provide a unique standpoint in the existing literature as they reveal some new aspects of the transitional period in Romania and generally in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Keywords:** welfare state attitudes, gender values, civic participation, attitudes towards democracy

## Introduction

Sociology came into existence as an independent conceptual body and delimited from the broad philosophical root as a reflective conception about social change (Rusu 2016, Sztompka 2004). More precisely, it started as an explanation of modernization and modernity (Vlăsceanu 2007, Voicu 2010). It has remained up to nowadays the task of sociologists, and social scientists in a broader perspective, to take account of transformations in the human societies. In the age of normativism, there was even a surge in searching for a way to engineer change (Wright Mills 1959). A milder version of such attempt was latter embraced by the debate upon public sociology (Agger 2000).

Societies are always on the move. For instance, in the field of redistribution and welfare production, one may observe, in the recent decades, how generous welfare states were more or less changed under the influence of neoliberalism and how neoliberalism was replaced by social investment as core idea (Deeming

and Smyth 2015). When it comes to education, one may notice the expansion of higher education, with its transformation of vertical inequalities into horizontal ones: nowadays, it is less of a problem to access university, but the social structure reproduces through segmented access to better universities and to more prestigious departments within universities (Lucas 2001, Voicu and Vasile 2010).

Such visible changes do not come out of the blue. They are said to be at least accompanied, if not triggered, by transformations of public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1983), particularly in initial stages of institutionalization (Raven et al. 2011). Even more subtle, more intimate changes in social values are underlying the changes in attitudes, through which they are expressed (Jagodzinski 2004). 'Silent revolutions' (Inglehart 1971) are likely to occur, and change may surprise an uninformed public. Another side of the truth is that even the sociologists can be surprised by the evolution of the societies. A good example, within the sociology of transition, is the incapacity of social sciences, or at least of its practitioners, to predict sudden changes in the former socialist states in Europe, as it was debated in the conference entitled „Láttuk-e, hogy jön?" [original title in Hungarian; in English: Did we see it coming?] (1990, Budapest). However, it is the task of social science to anticipate such transformations, or at least to document them.

This is the task that this material undertakes. We consider changes in Romania, in the quarter of a century past from communist fall-down, and we document it from the viewpoint of selected social values and attitudes. We do not look for comprehensiveness but for illustrating a potentially tremendous change in society that goes beyond political organization and economic output.

We choose a simple, almost obsolete, but yet very familiar framework of reference, which any social scientist would easily recognize. We take Parson's (1957) AGIL as an organizing structure. It helps us to select attitudes towards welfare state, attitudes towards democracy, the participative culture, and gender beliefs as the four domains that we address as exemplification.

The paper starts by portraying our views on social change and on the role that value change plays in the mix of social change. Then, we explain the selection of the four domains and what we expect to see, in a post-communist society. For each domain, we document change by using survey data and discuss the observed transformations. In the end, we discuss the implications and the trends that we expect in the near future.

We do not intend to explore the four domains in-depth. However, the findings are important *per se* and provide a unique standpoint in the existing literature as they reveals some new aspects of the transitional period in Central and Eastern Europe. The analysis of the countries which have experienced the communist rule can reveal the common communist heritage by showing similarities in different parts of the social institutions or value orientation despite the fact that they have quite significant differences in other contextual aspects.

## Social change and value change

Change is inherent in human societies, but one needs careful thinking to discover what triggers it: social Darwinism looked at mere evolution (Niedenzu et al. [eds] 2015); economists devised it as a predetermined cyclical growth (Rostow 1990); it has been seen as a by-product of power-ordered relationships between nations involved in trading commodities and symbols (Cardoso 1977, Wallerstein 2011); as a common evolution of all segments of social life (Lipset 1981); as triggered by economic development (Inglehart 1997), by particular cultural patterns (Weber 2002), or by a mixture of factors of economic, social, and cultural nature (Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

The consensus about the causal relations to trigger change at macrosocial level is far from being reached. However, one may indicate that change is related to a certain action of social agents. They may change in a way or another the conditions in which society evolves, either of natural, social, economic, political, or cultural nature. And action and agency are related to patterns that lead to action.

The dual processual model claims that action depends on two types of processes (Evans 2011, Miles 2015, Vaissey 2009). One is automatic, based on quick cognitive processes. The second is slower, being consciously driven. Morals, values, or cultures stand behind action as core constituents of the invisible drivers to trigger individual attitudes and behaviours (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013, Jagodzinski 2004, Parsons and Shils 1951). This leads us to values as core elements for social change. A change in values may change society, providing it with a new 'software' to run it. We also have to mention the cultural lag phenomenon within societies where a sudden change occurs (Brinkman and Binkman 1997, Ogburn 1957). In our particular case, the societies of the socialist Europe need(ed) some time to form their responses – in reforming the old or creating new social institutions –, which would offer a proper way to satisfy its inhabitants' needs in the new socio-economic and political context.

However, what are values? There is enough consensus that values are latent constructs to manifest through behaviours and attitudes (Jagodzinski 2004, Voicu 2010) that are social since they depend on the influence of social environment which instils core cognitive patterns in individuals (Parsons & Shils 1951), in particular during early socialization (Inglehart 1997). The idea that early socialization is decisive in shaping values led to a view that society changes mainly if generations change (Mannheim 1952), and values are stable over one's life (Arts 2011, Jagodzinski 2004). However, this is contradicted by evidences that people may adopt rational/modern values at contact with the working environment (Inkeles 1969), that culture is adaptive to environment (Welzel 2007), in particular to negative economic fluctuations (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Another view discusses diffusion of values due to social networks, with a focus

on their topology and level of consolidation (Centola 2015). A newer body of literature discusses about institutionalization effects (Arts 2011, Gundelach 1994, Voicu 2014). Exposed to the influences of existing institutions, adults tend to change in the sense that they internalize the corresponding norms, and transform them into personal values. The explanation is consistent with the other above-mentioned explanations of value change as dependent on the influence of the environment. According to the dual processual model, this leads to changes in action. By extension, if institutional changes are in place, one may expect a change in values to be more important when the institutions become stable (Raven et al. 2011).

Such perspective makes even more interesting to consider the dynamic of values in a society in transition. This is a field where institutional change and negotiations around new societal organizations create the space in which existing values may influence the organizational set-up, while adoption of new institutions may lead to value change.

Regarding the topic of the paper, the transition in Eastern Europe means, in general terms, two major shifts. Generally speaking, one is in regard to the political system – from totalitarianism to democracy, i.e. the multi-party system, competing at regular intervals for power – and the other one is the shift from centrally planned economy to market-based economy. Modelling the transition process within these coordinates, as McIntosh et al. (1994) stated, there are four possible attitudes towards the change in the post-socialist Europe (*Table 1*).

**Table 1.** *The four possible types of reaction towards changes in Eastern Europe*

| | | **Liberal Democracy** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Enthusiasts | Sceptics |
| **Free Market** | Enthusiasts | Reform enthusiasts | Democratic sceptics/ market enthusiasts |
| | Sceptics | Democratic enthusiasts/ market sceptics | Reform sceptics |

Source: McIntosh et al. (1994: 488)

## AGIL & domains to be considered

Family, religion, the redistribution system provides consistent patterns that people tend to internalize as personal values (Beck and Beck-Gernshein 2001). They add to various large domains where values determine behaviours, including gender cultures, cultures of participation, norms of sociability, tolerance, orientations towards environment protection, etc. The aim of this paper is to simply exemplify value change in several domains in which it matters. Therefore, we do not cover

the whole range of potential value changes. Such task would be impossible in a journal paper. Instead, we decided to focus on a very short selection of domains.

We use the Parsonsian AGIL framework to guide the selection. In his functional theory of action, Parsons proposed a fourfold tableau to explain the major subsystems that shape society. Without necessarily agreeing with the Parsonsian explanation, we use the same framework to select the domains that we are looking for. Adaptation, Goal-Attainment, Integration, and Latency are the four broad fields in the scheme devised by Parsons to depict the social system through its core functions.

*Adaptation* involves the capacity of society to interact with environment. It is mainly related to the whole activity to produce commodities and to redistribute them in order to ensure the fulfilment of various needs of the individuals and collectivities. This paper chooses to refer to the redistributive side of the Adaptation, and we will refer values related to this dimension, which are reflected in the attitudes towards redistribution. They are an important topic for change, particularly in the transition societies, but also in established welfare regimes that underwent in recent decades through a shift from the affluent welfare provision to influence of neoliberalism, and then to priority for social investment (Deeming and Smyth 2015).

*Goal-Attainment* refers to the ability to set goals for future evolutions, and to develop corresponding policy. It involves dealing with major decisions related to societal organization, and we addressed it through the attitudes towards democracy, again a topic of interest for transition societies, but also one under attack in the Western World, considering the past 15 years of war-like attacks from non-democratic regimes that come together with a rise of extreme right and anti-establishment movements.

*Integration* has to do with the consistent value patterns within society, including agreement upon commonly accepted lifestyles and ways of doing. Since frequent relationships reflect a culture of integration, we consider participation as exemplification for this subsystem. In particular, we refer to the orientation to involve in voluntary organizations, which is a way to ensure a common basis for producing integration.

*Latency* refers to stability of society over time, in particular to institutions to boost consistency in norms and values between older and newer generations. Family and school are in particular important to this dimension. We refer to family, but we do it indirectly, through gender values. They are essential for setting up roles within society and family, and are also subject to continuous transformations over the past decades, and even during the entire past century.

## Method and data

We employ survey data and we describe the dynamics of the indicators for each of our four domains. The main source is given by the Values Survey, provided by the World Values Survey Association and the European Values Study Foundation. Both groups provide full information about their aims and their surveys on their websites.[1] They have run comprehensive value surveys in some 100 societies (but not all in the same wave), in 1981–1984, 1990–1993, 1999–2002, 2005–2009, and 2009–2012. Some countries participated in all surveys, others just in some. For instance, Romania was part of the studies in 1993, 1999, 2005, and 2012. According to the current advice from the Romanian Group for Studying Social Values,[2] another instance of being part of WVS, in 1998, should be disregarded or used with much caution (Voicu and Voicu 2002b, 2007).

For *attitudes towards welfare state* that we use as indicator, following Voicu's operationalization, we argue that the general attitude towards the welfare state consists in the people's general attitude or value orientation towards a paternal state versus individual freedom. This attitude was measured in consecutive waves of EVS/WVS with the question: "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for." vs. "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves." The answers are coded on a 10-point scale, where 1 means the total acceptance of government responsibility and 10 stands for the people's responsibility to provide for themselves.

For *gender beliefs,* we employ four 4-point scales, stating agreement with: on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do; a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl; a pre-school child suffers with a working mother; being a housewife is just as fulfilling as having a paid job.

For *membership in associations*, we use the typical EVS/WVS question, asking whether or not one participates in various types of voluntary organizations. Over time, the list of types changes, with only six of them to be unchanged in all the EVS waves (church or religious organization; art, music, or educational organization; labour union; political party; professional association; sports or recreational organization). We have analysed the data in two scenarios: first, we included only the six types, and computed an index to inform if the respondent is member in at least one such association. Secondly, we included all types of associations, ignoring the changes in the list. At least with respect to country-level aggregates, the conclusions remained unchanged. Therefore, in the following, we will present only the results using the full list of types of associations.

Our analysis is rather descriptive, to illustrate how society changes. We focus on aggregate data, which we split sometimes by socio-demographic categories.

1 www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu and www.worldvaluessurvey.org.
2 www.RomanianValues.ro.

We also look at Romania in comparative perspective, to have a feeling about how other societies changed in the same period.

## Findings

### Attitudes towards the welfare state

Most of the analyses dealing with the characteristics, the evolution, and the attitudes toward the welfare state in Europe are based mainly on the typology elaborated by Esping-Andersen (1990), which designates three types of welfare state: the Liberal, the Conservative, and the Social Democratic. To this list, two other types were added later: the Southern (Ferrera 1996) and the East-European welfare regimes (Jakobsen 2011).

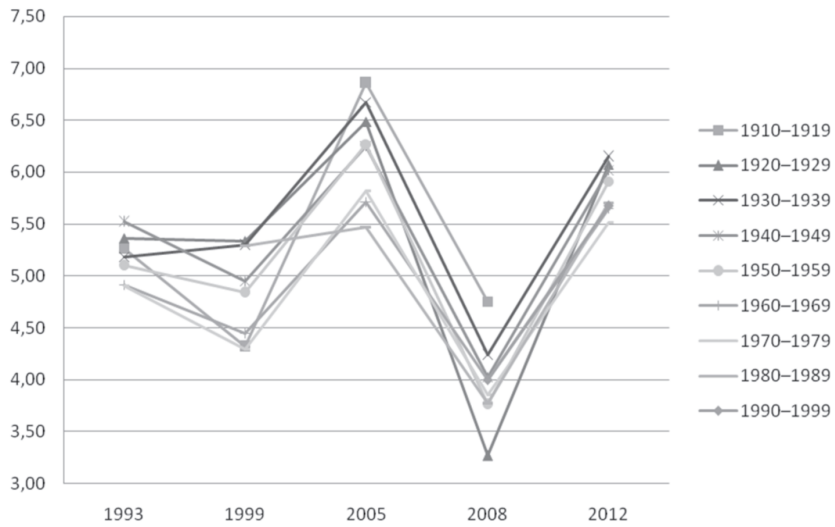
Without creating a new category, the particularities of the former socialist countries, beginning with the low level of trust (Uslaner 2003), the high level of corruption (Uslaner 2003), and also the high acceptance of state intervention in providing (Voicu and Voicu 2011, Vučković Juroš 2012), we argue that the selected countries are an interesting field of research in their own right. The above described situation is partially rooted in the socialist heritage as the roots of the socialist system are not grounded in the legitimacy of its institutions, but in repression. As a consequence, the lack of confidence in the institutions is a common characteristic of the transitional societies (Tufiş 2008). Also, in a transitional society, the roles of the new or renewed institutions are not always clear to the citizens and – above all – the corruption and unprofessionalism hinder their confidence even more in these institutions.

The citizen's attitudes towards the institutions have different layers. First, we should differentiate between the theoretic legitimacy and illegitimacy of the welfare state institutions in the sense that the people individually accept or not the role of these institutions. The second layer, the actual experience regarding the function and functionality of these institutions, has also two dimensions: the first one refers to the actual experience of the people with one employee of a particular institution and the second one to that the citizens usually generalize these experiences in forming an attitude towards the whole system. This approach is marked by Sztompka (1999) as primary and secondary targets of trust or by Tufiş (2008) as primary or secondary contact.

Briefly describing the macro-level context in the Eastern European countries during the transitional period, it can be stated that the welfare state institutions, along with the political and economic institutions, should have had a key role in the post-socialist transition period. As the social and economic costs became increasingly visible and experienced by the citizens of the states that had undergone

the transitional process, the economic cost of the transition became a burden for the welfare state, forcing it into a trap: to ease the situation of those who had been marginalized during the economic transition, the welfare services encountered an increased demand, and, on the other hand, the economic restructuration led to a decreasing income of the states. In this situation, the governments have two ways to deal with this situation: a. to decrease the volume and the area of the welfare services or b. to keep all welfare state services to the detriment of their efficiency. As Romania followed this second alternative, the satisfaction and the trust in the welfare state institutions, it has been recording low levels during the past 25 years. This approach can be considered an extension of previous results, which evidence the interconnection between the types of the welfare states and attitudes towards them (Edlund 2006, Voicu and Voicu 2011, Svallfors 2013).

We presumed this orientation to be influenced by the individual's socialization, and, as such, the generation-based approach seems suitable to analyse the differences among the different cohorts in the surveys.




**Graph 1.** *Dynamics by cohort: "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everybody is provided for." versus "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves." Average point by cohorts – Romania, 1993–2012.*

The general attitude towards the state providing, which can be interpreted as a general attitude towards the welfare state (Voicu and Voicu 2011, Vučković Juroš 2012) shows a general fluctuation in time. First, it must be mentioned that the fluctuation in time is not the result of an ecological fallacy as the average value increases and decreases do not match with the differences in the years associated

with the two surveying networks (WVS 2005, 2012, EVS 2008, and EVS/WVS 1993, 1999). As a consequence, the general attitude towards the welfare state, at least in Romania, shows a relative high level of fluctuation. If we take into account the generational differences, it can be stated that the general attitude towards the welfare state follows a uniform pattern, without significant differences between the pre-cold war, cold war, and post-cold war generations, as it could be expected based on Neudorf's results. On the other hand, according to Neudorf (2010) and Voicu (2010), the general economic situation significantly influences the attitudes towards democracy. Looking at the fluctuation in the graph, it can be stated that this indicator is very sensitive to the macro-level context such as the dominant political discourse or the economic situation of the country.

## Attitudes towards democracy

The attitudes towards democracy, market-based economy, and welfare state are influenced by the past experiences of the citizens. The exposure of the citizens to communism in the Central and Easter European countries influences their attitude towards the political, social, and economic changes undergone in the past quarter of a century in the mentioned part of Europe. It has been proven that the cohorts whose early political socialization happened during the socialist period are more reluctant to accept the new political and economic system, and, as a consequence, they are less satisfied with democracy than those whose socialization happened after 1990 (Neundorf 2010, Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2014). Also, previous researches show that even though the type of socialism was different in each country, the socialist socialization has a relatively homogenous effect, and as a consequence these results are valid for Romania as well (Neundorf 2010).

From a scholarly perspective, the struggle aimed at the reconceptualization of democracy in the social sciences, after the collapse of totalitarian regimes in the former socialist states in Europe, was imminent. Wallerstein (1991) stated that democracy did not automatically mean liberalism but benefits and inclusion in power, to which liberalism is often associated.

According to Easton (1965), the support towards democracy can be diffuse or specific, and in Romania the attitudes towards democracy fall under the first category (Tufiş 2008). Another approach is based on Lipset (1960), according to whom the support for a specific institution is based on the recent actual experience. As in Romania the introduction of democratic institutions and market economy started at the same time – being different from Latin America's experience –, the evaluation of economic performances directly influences the attitudes towards democracy (Tufiş 2008, Voicu 2010).

The integration of the former socialist states in the European Union has just complicated the democratic decision-making process as the citizens of these

countries feel particularly left out from this point of view (Zielonka 2007). This can be explained by the lack of knowledge and experience regarding the newly formed institutions (Tufiş 2008). But what is particular in Romania is that the general pattern – according to which people tend to trust less in the unknown – did not hold as the confidence towards the foreign, international institutions (EU, NATO, and UN) recorded the highest level of institutional trust. This phenomenon can be explained by the so-called "honeymoon effect", which captures a mixt of confidence and positive expectation toward a political institution (Catterberg and Moreno 2005). This situation is in contradiction with the general pattern in Eastern Europe, where the disillusionment with democracy was a common trend, called "post-honeymoon" period effect by Ingelhart and Catterberg (2002).

In the case of Romania, Voicu (2010) proves that the general support for democracy decreases along a West and East Europe continuum. The role of economic performance plays an important role in the evaluation of the quality of democracy, meaning that a successful economic restructuration in the 1990s led to a higher level of support for democracy (Voicu 2010). As in Romania the economic restructuration takes more than a decade, we expect democracy to take a supportive turn, following the general satisfaction with the economic situation.

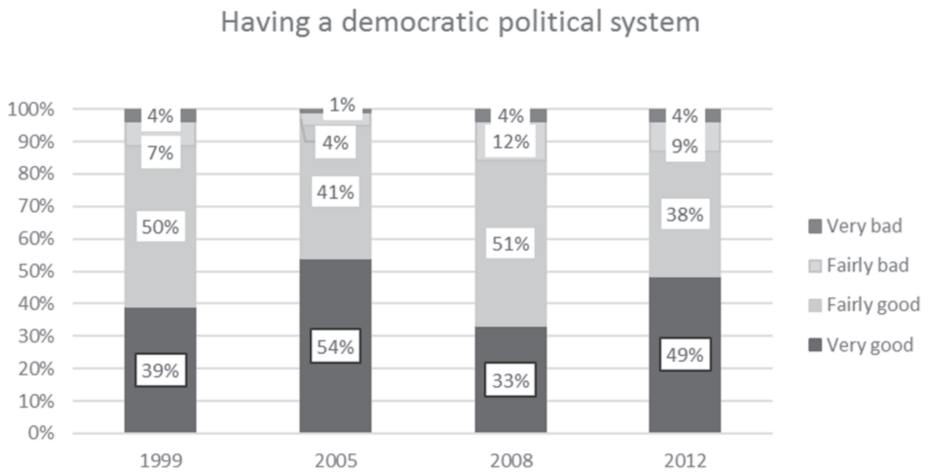
From a historical perspective, the past experience of the citizens with communism influences the attitudes towards the democratic regimes and the attitudes towards them (Neundorf 2010, Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2014).

As our main scope is to give an illustrative image of the past 25 years of transition in Romania, in this study, we focus mainly on descriptive and general data as the limits of an article do not permit to enter in details.

Regarding the acceptance of the democratic political system, the first result is the level of acceptance of democracy in Romania, in the sense of how good the democratic political system is considered.

Generally speaking, the acceptance of a democratic political system is high in Romania, so it can be considered a legitimate and consolidated democracy.

The aggregate acceptance of the democratic political system, where we sum up the percentage of 'Very good' and 'Fairly good' answers, presented in *Table 2*, suggests the enthusiastic characteristics of the Romanians towards the democratic system. This affirmation is based on the comparison of the results: the positive appreciation in Romania reaches the level of the well-consolidated democratic countries from Western Europe, while, among the former socialist countries, we register a lower level of acceptance of the democratic system. These high values cannot be explained by the everyday practices in the Romanian society nor with the 'honeymoon effect', as we speak about a much longer period. A hypothesis of a future research could be to explain this long-term, consolidated support for the existing political system among the citizens of Romania.




**Graph 2.** *The evaluation of the democratic political system in Romania, 1999–2012*

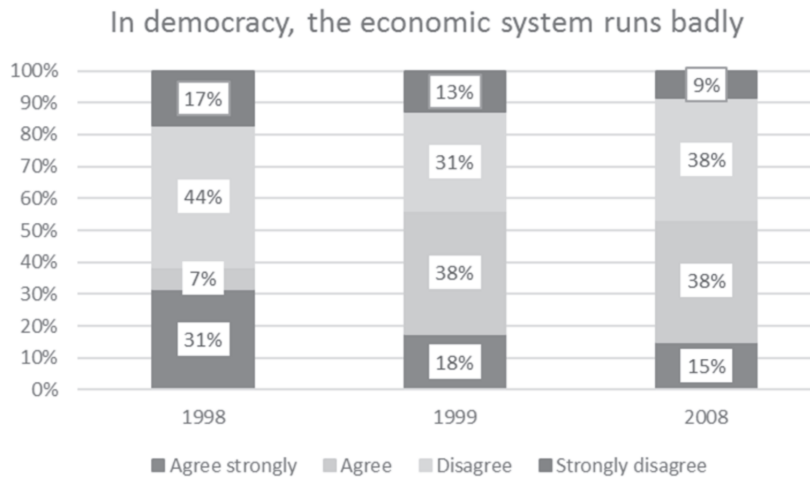
**Table 2.** *Percentages of agreement of having a democratic political system, 1990–2014*

| **Wave** | **1994–1998** | **2005–2009** | **2010–2014** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **RO survey** | **1998** | **2005** | **2012** |
| **Italy** | - | 94% | - |
| **Sweden** | 96% | 98% | 96% |
| **Great Britain** | - | 91% | - |
| **Germany** | 96% | 95% | 95% |
| **Bulgaria** | 86% | 87% | - |
| **Hungary** | 91% | 92% | - |
| **Poland** | - | 84% | 83% |
| **Russia** | 58% | 79% | 80% |
| **Romania** | **91%** | **95%** | **87%** |

*In the first row, it is indicated when the EVS/WVS wave took place. In the second row, there is the year when the Romanian survey took place.

On the other hand, let us also note the relative decrease during the economic crisis, followed by quick recovery, possibly related to the positive experience of the society relatively easy getting through from the economic distress.

From our initial theoretical approach, we were interested in the reflection on the economic performance in the democracy. It is well known that the economic restructuration period was a harsh one in the former socialist states which succeed in dealing with the socialist economic burden with more or less success.




**Graph 3.** *Representations of the economic performance of democracies: Romania, 1998–2008 (Question: "Does democracy perform better than other systems?")*

According to the results depicted in *Graph 3*, the appreciation of the economic system in the democratic political context seems to be a negative one in Romania, as in the past two waves – when this question was recorded –, the aggregate level of the agreement according to which the economy runs badly in democracy exceeded 50%. This can be the result of a general experience of the citizens due to a long-lasting reform period (Voicu 2010), where these experiences influence the general appreciation of the performances of democracy. But these results can also be the consequences of a diffuse support for the new political and economic system (Tufiş 2008), meaning in the terms of McIntosh et al. (1994) that the democratic political system is supported by the majority of the population in Romania, while the market-based economy does not have the support of the majority.

## Gender values

Gender values are likely to change when society changes towards modernity, equalitarian beliefs related to gender roles were boosted by industrialization and are part of the democratization process (Cotter, Hermsen, Vanneman 2011; Inglehart and Noriss 2003; Wilensky 2002). Such processes put an entire self-reproduction mechanism on the move, for which participation in public life is the key feature. It exposes men and women to different gender role models, it enables them to control the social agenda, and provides chances to see more equal setups in action (Welzel and Alexander 2011).

In communist societies, the gender roles were more equalitarian as compared to the Western world (True 2012). Men and women were supposed to be equal by law, and women's participation in public life was encouraged (Freize et al. 2003, Voicu and Voicu 2002a). State policies are actually consistent with gender attitudes (Gal and Kligman 2000) and are reflected in the work–life balance as well (Crompton and Lyonette 2006). They are shaping Europe into a series of gender regimes (Hantrais 2000, Voicu 2004).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Romania followed the Eastern model (Voicu 2004), with high support for women's presence on the labour market, but with much lower support for equality in the family life. This followed a long history of 45 years during which women were sent to factories by the need of post-war reconstruction and as part of visible echelons of political decision makers as a consequence of communist ideology.

The immediate impact was a relatively high support for the presence of women on the labour market. At the beginning of the 1990s, half of the adults considered that "Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as having a paid job". This was much lower than in the seven countries selected for comparison in *Table 3*. This means that half of the sample supported the presence of women on the labour market, which was substantially higher even when compared to other post-communist societies.

**Table 3.** *Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as having a paid job (% of those to agree with the affirmation)*

| **Wave** | **1989–1993** | **1994–1999** | **1999–2004** | **2005–2007** | **2008–2010** | **2010–2014** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RO survey** | **1993** | **1995** | **1999** | **2005** | **2008** | **2012** |
| **Italy** | 56% | | 55% | 54% | 52% | - |
| **Sweden** | 62% | 66% | 51% | 48% | 47% | 42% |
| **Great Britain** | 60% | | 61% | 68% | 68% | - |
| **Germany West** | 54% | 47% | 46% | 51% | 52% | 58% |
| **Bulgaria** | 87% | 75% | 49% | 62% | 42% | - |
| **Hungary** | 76% | 80% | 61% | | 56% | - |
| **Poland** | 63% | 56% | 60% | 61% | 63% | 44% |
| **Romania** | **48%** | | **48%** | **35%** | **54%** | **34%** |

* In the first row, it is indicated when the EVS/WVS wave took place. In the second row, there is the year when the Romanian survey took place.

With few exceptions, the support for the presence of women on the labour market followed in the past 25 years an ascending trend all over Europe. This can be easily explained through post-modernization processes (Inglehart 1997) and the spread of emancipative values (Welzel 2013). Romania kept pace with this trend, as data show, and decreased the percentage of those to consider women as

being fulfilled as housewives. As expected, there is, however, a decrease in such attitudes during the economic recession. As Inglehart and Baker (2000) showed, in times of economic deterrence, culture tends to retreat to more traditional stances. After crisis, the support for women's participation on the labour market increased to the level reached before recession.

**Table 4.** *A pre-school child suffers with a working mother (% of those to agree with the affirmation)*

| **Wave** | **1989–1993** | **1999–2004** | **2008–2010** | **2010–2014** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RO survey** | **1993** | **1999** | **2008** | **2012** |
| **Italy** | 78% | 81% | 76% | - |
| **Sweden** | 74% | 38% | 19% | 30% |
| **Great Britain** | 55% | 46% | 36% | - |
| **Germany West** | 84% | 73% | 63% | 32% |
| **Bulgaria** | 76% | 61% | 43% | - |
| **Hungary** | 70% | 63% | 55% | - |
| **Poland** | 94% | 77% | 62% | 61% |
| **Romania** | **58%** | **47%** | **53%** | **35%** |

* In the first row, it is indicated when the EVS/WVS wave took place. In the second row, there is the year when the Romanian survey took place.

The support for women's presence on the labour market slightly changes when it comes to the relationship with children (*Table 4*). As compared to other countries, in the early 1990s, Romanians were more in favour of the idea that children can develop when the mother is working. The figure had not changed much over the years, prior to the 2010s. It was probably the shock of experiencing unemployment to maintain a more non-egalitarian division of labour with respect to childcare (this is not the case for housework – see Voicu et al. 2007). In the meanwhile, Europe changed more and more in favour of the idea that children can grow up without preventing mothers from working. In 2008, Romania was also under the impact of the economic crisis, but also under the influence of a new generation that was more conservative than expected (Voicu & Voicu 2002a). However, post-crisis Romanians re-engaged in the egalitarian trend in this respect as well.

**Table 5.** *Inequality beyond participation (% of those to agree with the affirmations)*

| | **On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do** | | | **A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wave** | 1999–2004 | 2005–2007 | 2010–2014 | 1999–2004 | 2005–2007 | 2010–2014 |
| **RO survey** | **1999** | **2008** | **2012** | **1999** | **2008** | **2012** |
| **Italy** | - | 19% | - | - | 8% | - |
| **Sweden** | 18% | 8% | 11% | 9% | 1% | 3% |
| **Great Britain** | - | 20% | - | - | 7% | - |
| **Germany West** | 13% | 20% | 16% | 10% | 17% | 12% |
| **Bulgaria** | 61% | 48% | - | 19% | 11% | - |
| **Hungary** | 52% | - | - | 20% | - | - |
| **Poland** | 61% | 43% | 36% | 35% | 15% | 12% |
| **Romania** | **-** | **55%** | **44%** | **-** | **19%** | **21%** |

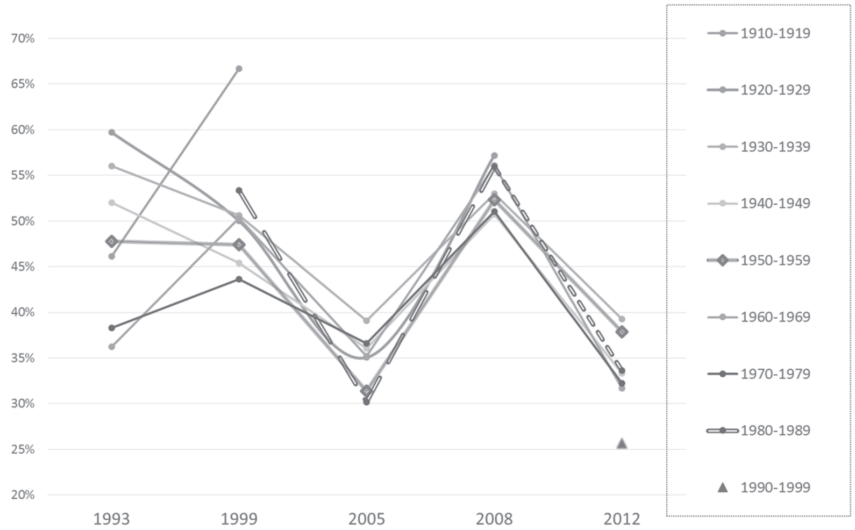
* In the second row, it is indicated when the EVS/WVS wave took place. In the third row, there is the year when the Romanian survey took place.

Participation in public space is only one side of the story. The EVS/WVS data lead to opposite findings when it comes to supporting equality. Most Western Europeans claimed that men and women make similarly good political leaders (*Table 5*, first columns). Examples of Queen Elisabeth or Margaret Thatcher were salient in the early nineties. In more recent times, Angela Merkel symbolically marked the strong position as equal to men in their capacity to lead the political world. Eastern Europeans, despite their communist heritage, were less convinced of such egalitarian principles. Maybe particularly due to enforcing women to become leaders during communism, as an adversity reaction, they rejected the idea that women may lead the world. Romania made no difference, and even in 2008 the majoritarian support was for inequality. In 2012 (the only time when they asked the question), among the countries we considered, Romania was the most conservative. The same happens when asking if "men make better business executives than women do". The agreement levels were in 2012: 8% in Sweden, 22% in Germany, 27% in Poland, and 37% in Romania. It is also in Eastern Europe that a slightly higher percentage of the population thinks that rather boys should go to the university (the last columns in *Table 5*).

The findings depict a clear trend towards equality to manifest across Europe, and in Romania as well. Romanians are among the top supporters of gender equality with respect to participation, but between the last ones when it comes to equality between genders. In other words, it is a must that women are present in the public space, but they are not as often seen as equal participants in the

political, business, and education environment. There are signs of lower equality in the household as well.

A refined view over the dynamics of gender beliefs in Romania is depicted in *Graph 4*. The figure considers differences between cohorts. The important position is the one of newer generations, partially or completely socialized in post-communism: those born in 1980–1989 and those born after 1990. The first ones have oscillations that make them no different from older cohorts. This shades doubts over the hypothesis that change may come from cohort replacement. In fact, those born in 1980–1989 prove to be more conservative than one may have expected. The socialization in the context of the shortage of communism was actually completed by years of economic distress and uncertainty in the 90s. This makes their values more traditional than expected, given a natural change from one generation to another. Only in 2012 we have enough cases to draw conclusions about those born after 1990. Data indicate they are the most modern with respect to gender beliefs. This might be the case of the experiences of prosperity during most of the 2000s.




**Graph 4.** *Dynamics by cohort: Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as having a paid job (% of those to agree with the affirmation; Romania, 1993–2012)*

## Participation in associations

One of the main differences between communism and other types of societal organizing modes resides in total control over the civic society. People did not participate in voluntary associations, irrespective of their nature. Even when such organizations existed, they were at least partially controlled by the state (Voicu & Voicu 2009). Moreover, it was the participative culture to suffer. Existing literature

systematically reported lower levels of social capital in Eastern Europe (Bădescu and Uslaner 2002, Raiser et al. 2001). They are part of consistent regimes of social capital (Pitchler and Wallace 2007) or cultures of participation (Voicu 2014).

Such cultures tend to be rather powerless against political changes. Despite formal freedom to associate, one may lack the habits to do so. The mere presence of the structure of opportunity is therefore not enough to boost increases in participation.

On the other hand, joining associations may be a sign of non-traditional societies, where families are less important in providing socialization. Friends tend to become salient in such situations (Pahl 2000). And friends are to be present in associations as well, where they develop activities for the sake of their common interests.

One may easily visualize the facts when considering the situation in the early 1990s (second column in *Table 6*). The levels of participation in associations was lower in Eastern Europe than it was ten years before in Western European societies (first column of the same table). Romanians were among the least predisposed to join associations. However, please also note that for 1993 the figure also includes participation in labour unions. At that time, most of the companies in Eastern Europe were still in public property and membership in unions was somehow mandatory (Voicu & Voicu 2003). This results in exaggerated figures regarding participation in associations, and explains the apparent decline toward 1999.

**Table 6.** *Percentages of members in at least one association, in the selected countries, 1990–2014*

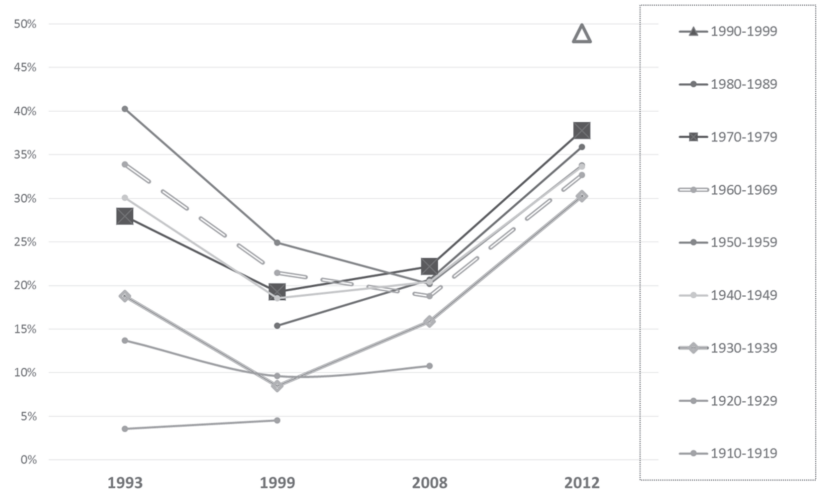
| **Wave** | **1981–1984** | **1989–1993** | **1999–2004** | **2008–2010** | **2010–2014** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RO survey** | **1981** | **1993** | **1999** | **2008** | **2012** |
| **Italy** | 26% | 32% | 42% | 38% | - |
| **Sweden** | 67% | 85% | 96% | 62% | 90% |
| **Great Britain** | 52% | 53% | 34% | 46% | - |
| **Germany West** | 50% | 67% | 52% | 50% | 79% |
| **Bulgaria** | - | 41% | 20% | 19% | - |
| **Hungary** | 0% | 50% | 29% | 20% | - |
| **Poland** | - | 21% | 26% | 17% | 43% |
| **Romania** | **-** | **30%** | **21%** | **24%** | **35%** |

* In the first row, it is indicated when the EVS/WVS wave took place. In the second row, there is the year when the Romanian survey took place.

If cleaning the 1990–1993 figures from the impact of labour unions, the figures for Western Europe do not change much, but it is almost half in the case of Eastern European countries. Then we have the increasing trends described for Romania by the figures for 1999–2012. Paradoxically, such increase seems to oppose the

tendencies in other post-communist societies. They also have an economic reasoning. There were many incentives for associations to start functioning, and they also used such incentives to fill in a niche given by the absence of small and medium enterprises. In time, associations started to function as associations, and anecdotic evidences may indicate their increased presence in Romania.

If comparing cohorts of age (*Graph 5*), there is no surprise to be noticed. Younger generations are more likely to join associations, in particular after they reach their 30s, and thus have more resources to share. The main exception is the generation born after 1990, which displays a much higher propensity to join voluntary associations even at very young adult ages.




**Graph 5.** *Dynamics by cohort: Percentages of members in at least one association (Romania, 1993–2012)*

The figures provide a clear pattern of change, which seems even more pronounced than in other European countries. It might be one of the fields in which Romanian development is stronger and which may push the rest of social life towards changing.

## Discussion

This paper has reviewed several trends of the Romanian society over the past 25 years. Data show a mixed picture with quite a lot of dynamics in the past decades. On the one hand, one may notice a society rather undecided to give credit to a maximal or to a minimal state. Welfare provision seems to be part of experimenting, with important fluctuations from leftist to rightist and from rightist

to leftist stances from one EVS/WVS wave to another. More important, there is no obvious cohort-related pattern to be noticed with respect to welfare attitudes.

Democracy, on the other hand, proved to have a solid backing, gathering support from a large majority of Romanian citizens. Fluctuations are related mainly to economic performance, which may come to questioning when it comes to support for market economy.

Changes with respect to gender attitudes are more complex. Romania started the post-communist era by being more equalitarian-prone than many European societies and ended up with stances that are not in the "avant-garde" of Europe anymore. Moreover, the generation born in the 1980s and socialized under powerful economic distress seems more traditional than one would expect and marks a sort of a disruption in the pattern of transformations from one cohort to another.

Civic participation followed a decline after the initially combined honeymoon effect and persistence of rather formal organizations such as labour unions. However, after a short while, a boost in association membership became noticeable, in particular after 2008. Newer generations seem from this point of view more participative and create the premises of critical communities. The exception seems to be again the cohort born in the 1980s.

With such a complex view on change, one should find a lot of excitement in studying the post-transition societies such as the Romanian one. This was, in a way, the purpose of this introductory study. One may find more in-depth understanding of the dynamic Eastern European life by exploring the remaining papers of the current issue of *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae – Social Analysis*.

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# School-Leavers and Their Career Choices – Transition or Path Dependency in Russia?

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**Abstract.** A remarkable number of field-specific as well as interdisciplinary studies broach the issue of gender inequality and its relative persistence in economy (labour market and employment) and politics (government and society). Additionally, scholars often reveal deep-rooted gender-specific stereotypes that give an underpinning to certain decisions and gender-related behaviour irrespective of a country. According to these studies, women have frequently been underrepresented in the labour market and meet gender-specific career decisions that impede them to reach the highest positions in the economy. Whereas the majority of academic debates focus on established patterns of inequality going back to behaviour and institutions, far less are addressing the process of genesis of inequalities as well as the reasons for gender-specific decisions. This paper takes in consideration young people in Russia and their career choices at the end of the high school with respect to old (Soviet) ideals and stereotypes. Did a real transition of values and decision-making take place or do young generations hold an old pathway of dependency? I examine labour market intentions of young high-school-leavers in Russia. Firstly, I investigate how their occupational projects have undergone changes since 1990 till the present time. Secondly, it is of my interest to explain the mechanisms of this situation. For my investigation, I apply the concept of the 'gender culture' posed by Pfau-Effinger (1999).

**Keywords:** transition, path dependency, career choices, USSR, Russia

## Introduction

Occupational advancement of women in such important spheres of public life as economy (labour market and employment) and politics (government and society) in the countries of the former socialist block and Russia in particular is traditionally regarded as more complex than in Europe or North America due to deep-rooted economic risks and the societal changes of the last two decades (e.g. Bridger and Pine 1998, Pollert 2003, etc.). Thus, socially considered breadwinners

are more ready to assume risk, men pursue their careers in a more aggressive way than women. By doing so, they often displace women from their jobs or succeed in promotions in those spheres of economy that are regarded lucrative. Occupational chances of women are far from equal as compared to those of men, whereas gender discrimination and sensitivity are the derivatives of the gender dimension that had been developing during centuries in Russia. Actually, not only in post-socialist countries but also all over the world responsibilities of women have been till the nearest past concentrated in such spheres of life that were hardly favoured by men – housekeeping, childbearing, and maybe care (see for instance Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006).

In the former USSR, all individuals of full age were obliged to work if they were not studying or caring for others. This obligation has been abolished by the breakdown of the Soviet regime, thus giving citizens a freedom of choice. Accordingly, younger cohorts can perform differently – regarding employment rate as well as occupational choices – as they can choose whether to work or not. Moreover, representatives of young cohorts may have different career choices as the generation of their parents had. The central question of this paper is therefore whether occupational choices of the youth changed in the transition period or remained the same as in socialist times, thus demonstrating a certain path dependency.

Whereas a solid body of research is tangent to mismatch between education and occupation in Russia, far less is known about aspirations of young people regarding their further education and employment (Avraamova 2004, Razumnikova 2004, Gimpelson et al. 2009). These young individuals are usually school-leavers who have no or very scarce labour market experience and demonstrate partly ideal cases of career choices including gendered strategies and ideas pertinent to future occupation. Moreover, adolescents as a respondent group itself is still not well-studied (de Leeuw et al. 2004). Thus, this paper investigates notions of school-leavers concerning their future labour market decisions and careers and as a consequence their educational aspirations since the latter ones can give a valuable explanation of whether and how cultural traditions relevant to labour market participation of women and men in the post-Soviet space change.

The purpose of this study is to reduce the gap in the empirical literature on gendered career choices in post-Soviet Russia by using the data collected in 2007 in one of the major cities of Russia. In this paper, I examine career choices of young school-leavers pertinent to the labour market and associated with the educational system in Russia. First, I investigate whether the orientations of girls in relation to career have changed, since decisions of females are more significant for this case. Secondly, I try to explain the case of Russia.

I deliberately use the concept of aspirations while examining career choices since they represent one of the key explanatory concepts of further educational and

occupational career developments of young people. Indeed, aspirations precede the early educational decisions and young adult educational and occupational aspirations precede adult occupational outcomes (Sewell et al. 1969). Therefore, it seems appropriate to apply the framework of aspirations since they are more informative regarding the impact of social context and institutional constraints on further educational and occupational decisions of youth. Besides, analysing very early career decisions of upper secondary school-leavers may help shedding more light onto the discussion of gender segregation on the labour market in Russia than attempts that study career trajectories already shaped long before (Ivanchenko 2005, Maltseva 2005, etc.).

In order to study changes in the intentions and orientations of young women in the labour market, I use the concept of the 'gender culture' posed by Pfau-Effinger (1999). The concept of 'gender culture' (gender way of life) is defined as a 'historically set pattern of imperious attitudes between men and women and as definitions of female and male in a given society' (Connell 1987: 98–99), and it elucidates whether and under what conditions career choices of women change in the Soviet and post-Soviet stages of development.

## (Young) women during and after socialism

### Before the collapse of the USSR

There exists a substantial body of research that represents diverse ideological perspectives regarding women and their predestination (e.g. Ecklein 1984). This paper undertakes an attempt to go beyond these traditions, thus regarding the roots of women's gender roles and the most recent trends of post-socialist times.

The Soviet state raised and expected (young) people to take a quite subordinated position concerning their decisions: since the five-year plans of economic development suggested concrete growth rates as well as a certain number of education/work places and many steps in state institutions were thus predestined, it led to a discrepancy between desires and opportunities of especially young people. In other words, they had to be satisfied with the available resources that often restricted their social mobility chances. Additionally, entrepreneurship, and hence a sound competition, were prohibited by the state, which recognized morbid symptoms of capitalism in it. Furthermore, the youth was guided by senior peers who always knew a better way to handle problems or life circumstances.[1]

1 The bounds of youth and being young in the Soviet Union were considerably expanded and reached the age of 40, whereas senior peers were habitually represented by aged persons that held their positions until their late 70s. As a consequence, a very tense situation dominated in life domains.

Such states of affair led to the fact that, over time, youth grew up weak-willed and dependent on the decisions and attitudes of others. Indeed, previous studies show that dependence was considered a typical feature of the greatest part of the Soviet youth until the end of the Soviet period (Serikova 2004 etc.). It is implicit that young people of Russia and primarily of the USSR had already possessed this quality for a long period of time: sociological studies came to similar conclusions (e.g. Bykova and Chuprov 1991). Moreover, researchers argue that '…for both men and women, qualities associated with individual motivation such as achievement, personal responsibilities, ambition and initiative, were traditionally treated with suspicion' (Lange 2008: 332). At the beginning of the 1990s, sociologists revealed that in the situation of economic shortcomings and instability the youth hopes for the aid of relatives and – most important – does not wish to change anything due to their own poverty. Additionally, young people consider the latter one to be a natural, habitual condition. This is especially acutely represented among girls and young women (Bykova and Chuprov 1991).

By the end of the Soviet era, the youth had possessed an extremely low self-esteem and lacked the sense of entrepreneurship in all of its manifestations (Bykova and Chuprov 1991). Supremacy in issues of entrepreneurship was considered a 'man's business', success continued to be a status attribute of men (Pfau-Effinger 2000), and men were still considered breadwinners despite the establishment of the dual breadwinner model in the USSR (Çermaková 1999). Given that men had always had more advantageous wages (in comparison with those of women) and incommensurably privileged positions on the 'labour' market, the status of the head of the family – at least nominally – much more frequently belonged to them. Additionally, the image, a stereotype of a man who is earning more than his wife has been deeply rooted in the consciousness and is considered a categorical imperative up to the present days.

It is obvious that such state of affairs is a consequence of a certain 'gender culture' that was built and institutionalized by the Soviet state. As S. Ajvazova reasonably mentions, in the USSR, '… two social roles were assigned to a woman – "a toiler" and "a mother"' (Ajvazova 2001: 43), i.e. the political arrangement has actually attributed two mandatory functions to women: a role of working full time (as a rule on positions either not demanding special education or requiring a low qualification) and women obligated to simultaneously carry out the role of 'the family keeper'. Nevertheless – according to the conclusions of S. Ashwin (1999) – the combination of the active participation of women in public (working) life while taking care of a family was an ideal and a desirable purpose and by no means an oppression or enthrallment for numerous Soviet women.

As a result, the institutionalized gender culture has improved the position of women to some extent, having them 'included' into employment relationship and at the same time having obliged them to carry out several social roles simultaneously.

Thus, for example, for years to come, the proportion of employed women was equal with men: 51% vs. 49% (Ajvazova 2001; Rosstat 2005, 2013). Such pattern of behaviour – roles overlapping – could not disappear overnight but remained habitual throughout an extensive period of time, representing a desirable image of a successful woman. From these, I derive my first hypothesis that Russian female school-leavers of the post-transition period are more likely to consider both public and private lives, being less inclined to choose a typically female profession.

## After the year 1990

The second half of the 1990s is mainly characterized by the fact that the proportion of women in the labour market had substantially decreased by virtue of various reasons (Sillaste 2000, Roudenko and Murtozaev 2004). Principally, these were those least economically protected and overrepresented in risky or socially stigmatized occupations/work places (individuals of either pre-pension or of retirement age as well as young girls) or women who deliberately decided to drop out from employment. Young girls have streamed into education and training, thus having chosen education either as an alternative to unemployment or as a source of human capital in the labour market. As a consequence, educational expansion took its next, so far the largest round in the recent post-socialist history (young women persistently exceeded the level of educational enrolment and qualification of men during the Soviet period) (see *Table 1*).

**Table 1**. *Number of employed women, by age-groups and by educational level, in percentage*

| Year | Age, years | | With tertiary education |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Till 20 | 20–24 | |
| 1992 | 3.4 | 9.3 | 17.4 |
| 1995 | 2.6 | 10.2 | 20.1 |
| 1998 | 1.4 | 9.0 | 22.6 |
| 2000 | 2.8 | 8.9 | 22.6 |
| 2005 | 2.0 | 9.5 | 26.1 |
| 2008 | 1.7 | 10.1 | 29.7 |
| 2010 | 1.2 | 9.6 | 31.2 |

Source: The Russian Statistical Yearbook, 2005, 2013

According to *Table 1*, it is evident that the proportion of economically active females at the age of 20 and less has reduced more than twice in the labour market. At the same time, the educational level of employed women has significantly grown. The similar tendency will obviously remain as long as the economic uncertainty exceeds the normal rate of growth and political system

along with the social one undergoes substantial alterations. Mills & Blossfeld (2005) explain such situation by arguing that "young adults opt (…) for the role as a student instead of becoming unemployed in the process of transition from youth to adulthood. The educational system then serves as a reservoir for otherwise unemployed youth (…)" (Mills and Blossfeld 2005: 11).

The number of school-leavers entering universities in order to obtain a diploma in economic specialities, management, etc. increases from year to year. For example, the proportion of girls studying economics and law had virtually exceeded twice those of men by 2010 (Rosstat 2015). The same picture can be observed in education and pedagogy (Rosstat 2015). However, enrolment rates in these traditional female fields of study did not diminish throughout the transition period. In contrast, admissions in typically female occupations increased also in the course of educational expansion in Russia: the amount of enrolments in education and training almost tripled during the 15 years of Russian transformation.

The gender asymmetry was one of the significant features of the labour market in the middle and the second half of the 1990s, or, better to say, it did not diminish as compared to the Soviet period. Despite formally better qualifications, women much more rarely manage to obtain considerable promotions and to equalize the wage level with that of the men during this period of time (see Rimashevskaya 2006, Roschin and Solntsev 2006). Some researchers argue that this state of affairs might be caused by the inherited complicacy of combining the roles of worker and wife/mother simultaneously, a routine as well as an explicit shortcoming of the social policy: the latter ones hardly ever took into account the employment interests and orientations of women and scarcely cared for providing female workers with advancements in the labour sphere (Ajvazova 2001). Other scholars are inclined to believe that under severe economic conditions, women who feel themselves responsible for the future of their family are more liable to take any job or stay at the old one in order to have earnings, thus even losing their social status (Ashwin 2000). Both hypotheses seem to reflect the reality although the first one contravenes with the fact that women – despite the Soviet legacy – are actively engaged in entrepreneurship regardless both of a legislative base that is far from being perfect and of an obvious lack of state support. This is striking since 'an extraordinary obstacle for women are legal aspects of starting own business and a constant struggle with extortion' (Babaeva and Chirikova 1996: 77). Nevertheless, it does not seem to be an obstacle for Russian women and for persons wishing to run their own business: studies indicate that employment plays an extremely important role in the life of a modern woman (see Leitzel 1995, Turetskaya 2001, Chirikova 2003, Roschin and Solntsev 2005, etc.).

In the mid-1990s, an American researcher, F. Markowitz conducted a large-scale sociological study devoted to problems and life plans of the Russian youth. A set of interviews had shown that girls preferred purely female and 'caring' jobs (work at school, kindergarten, teaching as an alternative), i.e. they were going to obtain

traditionally 'female' occupations allowing them to take care of the family, and believed their future partners could protect them and their children from market uncertainties (Markowitz 2000). At the same time, youth considers that the most popular occupations are IT-specialist, lawyer, and entrepreneur (Bogoslovskaya 2006). Those who have already made their future career choice report to having obtained information about it from TV (67%) or parents (50%) (Timchenko and Sokolova 2011). This circumstance implies that school-leavers rely on general beliefs and the parents' resources of choosing a profession. Other investigations demonstrate that adult Russian women are more familiar with traditional spheres of employment and education than with business since they tend to see themselves more as helpers than as independent leaders at work and in society (Petrenko and Mitina 2001). Moreover, Russian women have negative attitudes towards employment in traditionally male professions: the latter ones do not require qualifications, are of no prestige and low-paid (construction workers, porters). 'Male' occupations are associated with heavy physical labour, risk, liability, and technical work, whereas 'female' ones are linked with care, children, and office work (Kozina 2002, Shelekhov et al. 2011). Most strikingly, scholars do not find significant differences between the opinions of males and females (Kozina 2002).

As shown, different studies result in different descriptions and explanations of the school-leavers' gendered career choices. What is true beyond these findings? Is this dichotomy a Soviet legacy, a dependency on the established gender culture, or is it an indicator of Russian transition? The second hypothesis states that the Soviet gender culture is less likely to have a direct impact on school-leavers' career choices and is mediated through their parents.

## Data and sample selection procedures

The primary data used in this investigation were collected in one of the largest cities of Russia, St. Petersburg, in 2007. Since the overwhelming majority of datasets deal with adults (i.e. the earliest age of participation in a survey is 18) and the focus of this study is upper secondary school-leavers, who in Russia are aged 16–17 on average, a method of personal interview was chosen in order to address the issue, thus giving the study a qualitative character. Moreover, even if some datasets contain questions to young adults, they usually deal with success at school, relations within families and their interdependency with parental background (see for instance GGS).

The main question of the analysis tackled the beliefs and preferences of young people concerning the role of a woman in the labour market. From this starting point, I intended to observe and explain how the shift from dependence and obedience to individual motivation and activity had occurred.

The investigation consisted of two steps: first, respondents answered open-ended questions resulting in a total of 149 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire aimed to reveal a general background of school-leavers: what occupations they consider popular and lucrative; whether or not they want to study after school; what professions they regard as desirable for them. Six upper secondary schools with a wide range of profiles – the graduation of which entitles students to proceed to the institutions of tertiary level – were taken into account. Each class was made up of about 25 students. The selection of schools was based on the principle of randomization, although the city districts were specified: representatives of both central and peripheral districts were included into the study. As a second step, 20 boys and girls have been selected randomly to conduct deeper semi-structured interviews. A corresponding guide consisted of three main sections: educational aspirations and career prospects of the school-leavers (decisions on institutions of tertiary level, career choices, parental background), beliefs and notions concerning the labour market (popular occupations, state of the labour market), and the role of women on the labour market and in family (ideals, future prospects, own wishes).

All interviews, each lasting about 20 minutes, were supplemented with notes. In this paper, every interview is designated with three symbols: the first one indicates the school number, the second one the respondent's number, and the third one the respondent's gender.

## Aspirations and career choices

As outlined above, studies show diverse notions of young girls regarding career choices in Russia. These are significantly split into two opposite directions, thus following traditional stereotypes, on the one hand, and new opportunities of obtaining self-esteem and female market power, on the other hand. My investigation results turn out likewise.

Results of the answers in the background survey revealed that an overwhelming majority of school-leavers had been seeking to study further – i.e. to get enrolled into tertiary education. This outcome can be interpreted as an indirect signal of the economic advancement of families the respondents came from. Indeed, most of them seemed to be able to afford a non-working student. Moreover, the answers indicated the growing prestige and demand of tertiary education. Furthermore, based on the questionnaire, I could distinguish occupations that were popular among school-leavers. These were as follows: engineer, sharing its popularity with economist/accountant, manager, IT-specialist, lawyer, designer, etc. Remarkably, female respondents pointed out such occupations as lawyer, manager, and designer as often as their male counterparts did.

Against the general background of the questionnaire feedback, interviews with selected school-leavers delivered deeper insight into aspirations and preferences pertinent to the problematic of transition. First, while trying to figure out which occupations school-leavers choose and whether these are associated with the socialist legacy, I observed that young girls often mentioned professions that enjoyed popularity in the moment of investigation. This is an indicator speaking against typical female career choices. However, teenagers considered entrance exams into tertiary institutions as very challenging – an obstacle for many to study a desired speciality. Therefore, career choices were frequently adjusted to institutional settings such as limited study places at universities:

> "Finance would be a great subject to study – but it is out of question for me… I would never pass the exams… I thought of submitting my documents to three different universities in order to safeguard myself against failure" (2-8-f).
> "To tell the truth, I do not care much what to study. The main thing is to study something I can master… like pedagogy or social work, I am not sure yet. I hope my parents would help me to enter the university" (116-19-f).
> "I thought of studying architecture since it is not that wild as engineering but still allows a woman to advance in work… Difficult is that I do not have any contacts to the academy I want to enter, but I study hard to pass the entrance exams. And I will submit my documents to two different institutions…" (29-7-f).
> "Designer is my dream – it would be nice to work in an office but at home as well if my family needs me" (105-18-f).

As I could observe, career choices differed in the sense which domain girls consider more important – family, job, or both. For that reason, I can state that the Soviet legacy still exists, but the way it influences the decision-making process of the respondents is different.

> "Well, for me, it is obvious, of course – my two biggest wishes are family and a great job! You may perceive it as an adolescent's romantic dreams, but I guess each person wishes him- or herself a cosy corner with the love of the nearest relatives and financial stability. After all, my mama managed it, why should I fail there?" (2-8-f).
> "You know, my mama didn't work since papa was earning good and she spent all her life with me and my brother and family affairs. Although it might be life without much stress, I don't think I want to repeat it, not in the least because I see how mothers of my classmates work and are pretty good in both job and family" (116-4-f).

> "For me, my future job is on the first place. I see myself as a successful business woman who can advance without any help of men" (29-5-f).

Interestingly, girls act or wish to act either from the point of view of contradiction (mothers as housekeepers, daughters – both job and family; mothers – traditional, daughters – innovative) or proceeding from conformity (if mothers have managed, daughters should also). Thus, it became apparent that the double burden seems to be nothing special for the interviewed girls, but it was mediated through the prism of socialization:

> "I know it's difficult to work and to take care of family, but I guess nowadays women have better opportunities than our mothers and grannies had. They had only kindergartens and … yes, everyone could work, but still I think private services could also be a help for me in the future" (105-12-f).
> "Surely, men have it better, but that's why I study – in order to get a good job! Qualification is the only instrument one can use in order to get to the top" (344-14-f).

Remarkably, young men adhere to the similar opinion as girls by considering the double burden not an insuperable obstacle but a normal life circumstance:

> "I think, everyone has to make it through one day. Otherwise, how have we all achieved what we have now?" (157-9-m).

I could detect an alteration in career choices: if girls chose typically female occupations earlier (in the Soviet times), now these were gradually male domains as well: entrepreneurship, economics, and management are some of the typical fields young women indicated they wanted to study after school graduation. At the same time, young girls who unconsciously reflected the socialist constellation of double burden indeed aspired to balance private and public lives. However, the occupations they chose were typical of women. Besides, school-leavers relied on parents' help in form of economic or social capital. This finding implies that "classic" female occupations mainly result from parents' wish to maintain social status inside the family. Furthermore, girls often anticipated financial independence in future as they did not see themselves as suppressed or the subordinates of men on the labour market:

> "Well, my mama worked as a cook at one enterprise and never had any promotions, whereas papa – an engineer – enjoyed advancements, good salary and sometimes even international trips" (105-2-f).

> "You know, my mama defended her doctoral thesis when I was 3. So, why should I shy away from this competition?" (2-3-f).

In contrast, those who either have not decided yet what to study or relied on the parents' help did not seem to think much over the consequences of their decisions. Instead, they counted on the further assistance of parents or of a future partner. Female school-leavers who were not interested in occupation related to lucrative sectors of economy intended to enter those universities and colleges where they expected to benefit from so-called connections or supports. In contrast, those school-leavers who have chosen law or economics as a field of study have done it independently since they were at least interested in the subject or relied on future returns of education in terms of a stable income. Interestingly, regarding the choice of occupation, the overwhelming majority of the girls mentioned at first interest (75%), secondly, a decent income after studies (25%), and only then connections or support (20%) (Serikova 2004).[2]

All in all, my sample illustrates the ambivalence of the career choices young girls meet: the concept of a working man and a female housekeeper is supported by 61.4% of the girls. At the same time, 73% of the surveyed young women reported that the best way of being independent for a woman is to have a paid job. Girls often aspire to (financial) independence and see their self-realization in the future work instead of hoping to make a good match for successful men. In other words, representatives of the young generation who act on the premise of the available information connect restrictions with a demographic and economic situation and opportunities. This finding has been indirectly confirmed by Sillaste: 'the overwhelming majority of Russian women (66%) consider that the best way to become independent is to have a job' (Sillaste 2000). Moreover, it is consistent with other studies: Ashwin (2006) confirms that women associate paid work with aspiration to provide themselves financial and psychological independence from men. Balabanova also shows that women are dependent on their husbands only in the case when they either do not have their own income (i.e. a paid job) or in the case of a low level of income (Balabanova 2006).

## Discussion and conclusion

Social shock going hand in hand with uncertainty and instability during and after the reforms in Russia has not only dramatically changed the very context of gender relations but it has also influenced the educational and occupational choices of the youth. Whereas a great body of research has focused on adults, far less has been documented on adolescents and their views of their own future in

2 The answer options aggregately exceed 100% due to the several answer options possible.

such important life domains as (further) education and employment. By analysing and explaining the career choices of young people in Russia, it is possible to predict further developments in the educational system and labour market in the country that is still exposed to transformation reverberations. Moreover, it can give fruitful impulses to social policy and let it intervene in the most acute problems of social life in Russia.

In order to reduce the existing gap in examining the intentions of school-leavers in Russia, I have screened the most important notions of youth pertinent to education and employment in St. Petersburg, one of the biggest cities in Russia. Indeed, the career choices of adolescents in Russia are still scarcely explored, whilst they represent a very illustrative, ambiguous picture of social changes in gender relations and life courses.

My study has revealed a clear ambivalence of values and career choices of the Russian school-leavers of the mid-2000s, which is not surprising: apart from having inherited some typical features of the Soviet 'gender culture', especially young girls witness the process of the establishment of female entrepreneurship and feminist movement in Russia, which may address them and their own career choices. On the one hand, a part of the respondents follow the path of dependency in their occupational decisions by choosing typically female professions or hoping for the parents' help. On the other hand, girls are eager to balance work and private life in the future and to choose fields of study that used to be untypical of women in socialist times. A certain change of career choices can be explained by the growth of the group of highly educated women in leading positions, the increase of women's self-esteem, and a spread of "new" values by the mass media. However, deep-rooted stereotypes are not likely to be modified overnight as they need generations in order to change.

All in all, my analysis has shown that the aspirations of school-leavers would satisfy almost any social or economic situation; their occupational preferences would suit any stage of business cycle, thus leaving future employees enough space for a job choice with an average salary. The career choices of interviewed school-leavers have become productive, thus indicating that both males and females have at least partly turned towards pragmatism and goal-orientation. However, while males clearly indicated an interesting job as a desired goal for the future, the opinions of females divided into such categories as job or family or both. Furthermore, the career choices of school-leavers are mediated by their parents: the interviewed females could describe the activities their mothers had performed in their job and derived their future job content and occupational aspirations based on those experiences.

Thus, this study cannot claim an end of the post-socialist transition for the disparities young girls incorporate regarding 'double burden' and work–life balance – a challenge to be investigated by conducting a follow-up study in the nearest future.

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# Empirical Results of Hungarian Youth and Family Sociology from a Late Modernist Theoretical Point of View

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**Abstract.** The present paper is an attempt at describing the drastic changes in schooling and employment searching practices of young people in Hungary, relying on works on post-transitional Hungarian youth sociology. It also aims at describing the underlying driving forces of their attitude and behaviour based on representative value surveys. The empirical researches of the past 25 years were conducted along the lines of the main interests of contemporary academic literature such as identity construction, multi-level socialization, autonomy, project capitalism, and decline of institutions, conflict of roles, anomy and fragilization of the individual. The question is: What do the young rely on? Using and combining their skills of various areas of socialization, are they able to come up to the expectations of a changing world that are hard to understand? Or do they resort to the ingrained habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support? As international value surveys show, there is a tendency of conservativization among the youngest, which is even stronger than in the rest of the society. That is why the underlying aim of the examination was how the increasing drive for autonomy characteristic of late modernity is present in the lives of young Hungarian people. The aim of the paper is an introduction of the Hungarian characteristics of the phenomenon. The analysis is carried out in terms of the various aspects of socialization such as family, school, workplace, and friends.

**Keywords:** youth sociology, socialization, post-transition, Hungary

## Introduction

This present article describes the drastic changes in schooling and employment searching practices of youth and young adults in Hungary, following the change to a democratic regime in the post-1989 period. It relies on works that focus on post-transitional Hungarian youth sociology and based on representative surveys it intends also to portray the underlying driving forces of the attitude of youth

and their behaviour. The contemporary academic literature of the past twenty-five years has attempted significant empirical researches along the lines of identity construction, multi-level socialization, autonomy, project capitalism, the decline of institutions, the conflict of role, anomy, and the fragility of the individual.[1] Therefore, my depiction of the problem of the young is somewhat different from the usual approaches that take political transformation as a basis (and often underlying reason). On the one hand, I wanted to approach the problem from a new perspective, while, on the other hand, I tried to apply the concepts of the Western welfare societies to the Hungarian situation and the data concerned, which is a methodological challenge. One question that I intend to answer is what youth and young adults rely on if the frameworks that used to construct society (institutions serving as means of socialization, the world of work, traditions, norms) disintegrate and become fluid.[2] Are they able to use and combine their skills of various areas of socialization, and meet the expectations of a changing world that are hard to understand? Or do they resort to the ingrained habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support?

In Hungary, the political transition has fundamentally changed the situation of the young, which resulted in a change in the conceptualization of the young.[3]

1 See more in Takács (2012), Rényi, Sik, and Takács (2014). The present paper is part of the OTKA research *Modernization in Hungary after the Regime Change*. The Western theories used (Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello 1999; François Dubet 2002; Anthony Giddens 1990, 1992, 1994; Alain Ehrenberg 1995; Jean-Claude Kaufmann 2001; Bernard Lahire 2002; Danilo Martuccelli 2010; François de Singly 2006) cannot be discussed here in detail for reasons of space. The present paper is an attempt to compare Hungarian and international results; however, it does not aim at being a comparative study of Central European youth and family sociology. I resorted to comparing data in the region, where Hungarian figures especially stand out and they are different from the tendencies of the regions. [I thank my anonym revisers for their critical comments of high value.]

2 Individualization of contemporary societies has been a highly studied and problematic area of social sciences since the 1980s. The basic ideas of Ulrich Beck's 'risk society', Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquid society', Anthony Giddens's notion of society focusing on reflexivity, Axel Honneth's focusing on recognition and Bruno Schulze's notion based on experience, German researches on social milieu, and French individual sociologies and criticisms of modernity (Jürgen Habermas, Alain Touraine, Charles Taylor, Bruno Latour) are all acknowledged and accepted; their justification and discussion are not aimed at in this paper.

3 The most disadvantaged strata as a result of the transition to market economy were children and young people due to extreme poverty among children as well as permanent and relatively high proportion of unemployment among young people. Hungary's overall performance on the Social Justice Index has fluctuated since 2008, but in terms of social justice the country has remained among the worst performers: the country is the 23rd in the EU (the Czech Republic 5th, Poland 15th, Slovakia 17th, Croatia 22nd, Bulgaria 26th, and Romania 27th). With focus on children and youth, Hungary ranks on the 26th position. 31% of the total Hungarian population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, the hardest hit are those under 18 years of age at risk (41%). The gap between generations is growing (SJI 2015: 110–111). Actually, the percentage of the 20- to 24-year-olds who are neither in employment nor participating in education or training exceeds 17%. "About half of all Roma children in Hungary still live in segregated communities and receive substandard education. In many cases, court rulings against segregation are not enforced" (SJI 1015: 111).

Young people appear as "carriers of the social crisis", and not as "independent social-political participants" (Bauer et al. 2011: 302), and the discipline has become more polarized – more colourful if you will – while researching more and more polarizing, stratifying young people. The most defining topics of the youth sociology of the 1990s were education, educational mobilization, segregation, and social mobility, and since the 2000s lifestyle and free time have got more attention along with the earlier research on systems of norms and values.[4] At the moment, the most favoured research topics are immigration of young people, political socialization, and radicalization. An area of Hungarian family sociology and youth sociology is the research of socialization that can be characterized by a strong tradition, but this type of youth sociology has been overshadowed by family sociology because the young were approached mostly from the demographic perspective (family formation, having children, etc.). It can be argued that the central problem of Hungarian family sociology focusing on the nuclear family is fertility (or the lack of it), which brings along the examination of changing forms of relationships and becoming an adult as well as the integrative function of the family from the perspective of having children.[5]

In the first part of the paper, I briefly discuss the results of the Hungarian youth and family sociology along the lines of various frameworks of socialization such as family, school, workplace, and friends.[6] Then I attempt to revisit Hungarian empirical data by applying approaches of Western late modernist theories. I intend to do so in order to re-examine the changes that are normally traced back to the political transition from a different point of view such as identity construction, multilevel socialization, and a need for autonomy.

4 E.g. in the case of the age-group 15–29, researches on a sample of 8,000 individuals approach subjects like school and life course, family background, financial situation, social atmosphere and subjective well-being, lifestyle and political socialization (Ifjúság 2000; Ifjúság 2004, 2008; Magyar Ifjúság 2012).

5 It is important to note that the research culture of both sub-disciplines is strongly characterized by the survey methods.

6 Clearly, this review of the research accomplished along the lines of the three sub-disciplines over the past 25 years has to be limited in its comprehensiveness (e.g. a number of related areas – deviances, religion, free time, and sociology of health – are either not mentioned or merely touched upon).

## About some changes in the family as a socialization medium

After the regime change, mass unemployment shocked the society.[7] Before the regime change, the life-course model was to finish studies at the age of 18, take a job, have a family sooner or later, and live an independent 'adult' life (i.e. get married, found a family, and manage independently a household). The generations reaching adulthood by the 1990s could be characterized by an especially strong eagerness to find employment. As such, families were not at all prepared to support their children who completed schooling but were unable to find long-term employment. In fact, children were often encouraged to find employment as soon as possible and put off further education, particularly because of the mass unemployment that affected parents as well. This was not an easy task: in the age-group of 25–29, half of the surveyed young adults stated that they had already looked for a job in vain (Laki 2006).[8] The widespread practice that used to be working well was no longer without difficulty, and having to house young adults with earning capability took most families by surprise both psychologically and financially. They did not have either the experiences or the models to solve or endure the situation, and these externally rooted generational differences led to conflicts of role, frustration, and limited autonomous acting and decision-making situations in families. Not only the young but generations of middle-aged parents were also forced to construct new life-course models; not only young people themselves but also their parents had to question the idea of adulthood that used to be taken for granted. It would be of no use reaching the legal age if one was unable to ensure financial independence for a household of their own or see oneself as an adult and make decisions alone (Vaskovics 2000). Today, in comparison with the 15–29-year-old Europeans, Hungarians outrank them in conceiving that the reason for their inability to move away from home is that they cannot afford it financially (Eurostat 2009: 32, Flash Eurobarometer 2007: 202, Király and Paksi 2012): 71 per cent of young adults live with their parents, and the possibility of an independent household has only decreased since 2008; in the middle of the 2000s, twenty per cent of young people could make an independent living and were in possession of

7 Neither the state nor the local governments were prepared for the problem; for example, the institutions dedicated to handle unemployment were established only after the problem had already been reaching massive levels.

8 According to the survey *Ifjúság 2012*, 42% of the young adults are currently not participating in the education system and they have already experienced unemployment (Gazsó 2013), and a considerable part of those in employment can only succeed temporarily on the labour market (Laki 2011). According to a survey of Eurostat 2009, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, and Slovakian young people are inactive to a similar extent to Hungarians, but if we consider the 29-year-olds (oldest age-group among the young), then the Hungarians are the leaders in the region.

an independent household (Máder 2009). Therefore, the criteria of adulthood have been more and more difficult to determine, and the various stages of life that used to be taken for granted are divergent or convergent – let us just think of the more and more irregular, accidental realization of studies, employment, and having a family. This is especially true for the criterion of responsibility in terms of starting a family. Marriage and having children have been doubted as an essential element of adulthood in the Western literature from the eighties. In Hungary, more than 70% of the population thinks that becoming a parent is *not* an essential aspect of becoming an adult (as opposed to the general opinion of people in most other post-socialist countries: for example, in Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, becoming a parent is considered to be important to become an adult among more than 70% of the population (Paksi and Szalma 2009)). The literature covers the opinion that having children early is the choice of women with poor economic resources and uncertain work prospects as opposed to the tendency of more educated women to postpone family life (for example, Róbert and Bukodi 2005).

Using the latest large sample survey from *Ifjúság*, Ádám Nagy (Nagy 2013) introduced the categories of biological, psychological, and social maturity based on various criteria (see *Table 1*). Biological maturity is marked by the beginning of sexual life, while psychological maturity is indicated by the following: one's ability to makes decisions independently in regard to the important questions in one's life; the existence of specific plans for the future; the consideration of the possible consequences of one's actions, and feeling oneself adult. In terms of social maturity, family status is considered (whether one is independent or lives together with a wife/husband/partner) as well as children (the presence or absence of them) and the condition of the own household (whether one lives together with their parents/step-parents/grandparents). The data are as follows:

**Table 1**. *Types of maturity in Hungary*

| | **Biological maturity** | **Psychological maturity** | **Social maturity** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age-group 15–19** | 50% | 30% | 9% |
| **Age-group 20–24** | 93% | 59% | 28% |
| **Age-group 25–29** | 97% | 69% | 63% |

Source: Nagy (2013: 46)

It is clear that the definitions used in Vaskovics's paper (Vaskovics 2000), particularly those in connection with the meaning of maturity/adulthood contain more (psychological) criteria that can be interpreted subjectively.[9] But what

9 Definitions based on biological and psychological characteristics and social influences are more and more approached from the aspect of (taking) responsibility for oneself and others, which involves the act of making decisions as well as considering the responsibilities of the decisions.

does it mean to make decisions independently? What do specific plans involve today?[10] Many studies suggest that young adults in Hungary make their own important decisions (career choices, migration) due to a healthy sense of self-awareness or necessity (Máder 2009; Jancsák and Polgár 2010; Takács, Vicsek, and Pál 2013). At the same time, the need for independent decisions – and the need for autonomy – is not common among the youth in Hungary – as we will see from the researches.

## About some changes in school as a medium for socialization

"Assigning a special role to schools in one's upbringing can be considered a Hungarian characteristic", says Ildikó Szabó in one of her papers (Szabó 1999). Society tends to overrate the role of school in forming students' personalities, which notion is usually averted by teachers. Other researches point out that the correction of insufficient home socialization is (or could be) the school's responsibility (Balázs, Kocsis, and Vágó 2011). However, the rules of dividing the tasks between the school and the family are not clear in Hungary. Further examination would be necessary to explore exaggerated expectations towards the school, according to the many fields of the socialization and the development of abilities (Szabó 1999), as it can only be assumed that this phenomenon was induced by the changing of families – that are overloaded due to financial pressures and struggles with lack of free time – as well as by the unprocessed value changes after the regime change.[11]

The increased expectations from the public towards the schools involve not only the socialization of the students[12] but also the foundations of higher degrees and of a successful and competitive life. In this respect, there is a striking clash between reality and expectations in terms of vocational training: certain school

10 Further questions arise about the criteria: for instance, are those living apart together socially mature or not? In Hungary, about half a million people are in a LAT (living apart together) relationship, two-thirds of whom live with their parents (see Kapitány 2012). This paper does not aim at evaluating any attempts for definition as we are all aware of the difficulties of any attempts to create categories in our world of constantly changing and flowing modernity.

11 The list can be extended with the general mood of anomy that is revealed by specific researches (e.g. Spéder et al. 1998, Tóth 2009, Székely et al. 2012, Ságvári 2012). According to economic indices and to the Human Development Index that conveys information about the general mood, there is a decline or stagnation since 2005 and a decline since 2009 (Lannert 2012). The HDI value has (mildly) declined in Romania as well, while it has stagnated in the Czech Republic and has picked up in Slovakia (HDI 2015: 2012).

12 School has clearly withdrawn from political and civic education as well as from sexual education (Csákó 2009, Csákó et al. 2010, Lannert 2012: 28–29).

certificates and skills (e.g. training skilled workers) that used to concern masses have been depreciated. Yet, a significant part of young people still find themselves in such type of school which provides them with a certificate that is impossible or almost impossible to sell on the labour market. These – mainly vocational schools – are unable to meet their own expectations: "they mainly train students to be unemployed". This also results in the school "socializing the young for a sort of 'hopelessness'" (Laki 2006: 194).[13]

In the hope of successful career choices, the parents of students (and an increasing number of students) make more and more efforts to make up for the deficiencies of school education. They do so with private lessons, in a 'second school' so to speak. As a severe malfunction of ordinary schools, about 60% of students take private lessons. The commercialization of education also results in parents with more financial resources placing their children with less knowledge than expected into fee-based higher education (Gazsó 2006).

Many studies note that career choices are made independently by the young to an increasing extent (Máder 2009, Jancsák and Polgár 2010, Takács et al. 2013). On the one hand, this has to do with the fact that autonomy becomes a norm in the Hungarian society (Ehrenberg 1995), while, on the other hand, the reason is that parents (and especially teachers) cannot help students in choosing career paths or majors because they have outdated knowledge of the topic or they find it hard to keep up with the constantly changing educational policies. There are also data which assess that parents with lower education participate in the students' decision-making processes concerning secondary school education to a lesser extent since they cannot recommend a safe career for their children (Török 2008, Bauer and Szabó 2009, de Singly 2006).

More and more academics think that the role of the so-called 'conscious consumer' is increasingly present in young people's career choices (Jancsák and Polgár 2010, Somlai et al. 2007). While one of the studies concludes that "the distribution of answers indicates that the value drive of 'it does not matter what,

13 I intend to only touch upon the complex problems of failure in school. Predestined school failure that concerns 10% of students is an extreme manifestation of educational inequality: "At the first stage of one's school studies, 15–30% of children of social groups with lower education and more than half of Roma children suffer a failure that results in marginalized social situation, unemployment for a lifetime or dependence" (Gazsó 2006: 213). Sociologists have been emphasizing since the 1980s that in Hungary primary schools have to (or should) handle an especially difficult task, as almost two-fifths of the students come from a socio-cultural environment with lower education and other disadvantageous factors. "This is the social background to the fact that a significant number of these students finish primary school as functionally illiterate. Major researches show that primary school is unable to help those children to catch up who fall behind the average and develop slower" (Gazsó 2006: 213). In the PISA assessments of recent years, Slovenia, Poland, and the Czech Republic have shown improving or stagnating tendencies (in the fields of reading comprehension, sciences, and mathematics) – the results of all the countries in the region are worse in all three areas. The Hungarian results of 2012 indicate better – stagnating – results (from: OECD PISA 2009 database, PISA 2012).

I just need to study something' belongs to the past" (Jancsák and Polgár 2010: 27), another one writes about the drastic decrease of further education plans (Nyüsti 2013). Judit Lannert has discovered a surprising turn in parents' attitude towards further education: "there is a significant increase in the number of those who think it makes no difference what school children study at" (Lannert 2012: 40–41). The data of *Ifjúság 2012* indicate a significant growing uncertainty in terms of plans about (further) education: while earlier every fourth 15–29-year-old person was uncertain about their further education, it is at least every third in 2012 (Székely 2014).

Various conclusions can be drawn from all this. On the one hand, a number of young people intend to choose more consciously – apparently with more efforts – a trade or major (even abroad) that is considered to be well-paid or safe. On the other hand, more and more refuse to believe in the illusion that a 'diploma' would provide them with (immediate) livelihood. Thirdly, for young individuals of certain social groups, further education does not appear as a viable option. The withdrawal of the state from education obviously did not only trigger democratization and denationalization but also led to large social groups falling behind. It is clear that as the expectations towards schools and their tasks increased after the regime change, much of the trust was also lost. It is interesting to note that the general dissatisfaction with the economic-political system reaching the institutions of education is high particularly among the young, whilst in other parts of the world dissatisfaction increases with growing age (Tóth 2009).

## About some changes of the workplace as a medium for socialization

Let us have a look at what kind of influences young people are exposed to in the world of work. The data of *Ifjúság 2008* and *Magyar Ifjúság 2012* reveal repeated changes of workplaces among young people. The question is whether it is related to their plans about personal fulfilment and career building or to the unpredictable fluctuation of the labour market.

A founding concept of the late modernist youth sociology is the disintegration of the standard life-course sequence of school—>graduation—>work as well as changing workplaces and schools repeatedly. The young adults in Hungary are more and more likely to interrupt the school life-course (Nyüsti 2012), which intervals are spent doing jobs, training courses, learning languages, gaining experiences. Some think this kaleidoscope-like series of various activities to gather skills proves to be more profitable later on the labour market (Sági 2012, Nyüsti 2013). Frequent changes of trainings and workplaces can enhance young

people's gathering experiences, socialization at the workplaces and career building in the beginning of their working lives – especially in a world characterized by short-term, project-based working practices (from the employees' point of view) (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999).

Others interpret the data on frequent changes of workplaces as a negative phenomenon affecting the young adults. This is supported by the fact that 37% of the young has already been unemployed during their rather short period of working life as well as the fact that a significant number of young people "can set foot on the labour market only temporarily – for example, they are employed for a fixed term, odd jobs or they work without being declared" (Laki 2011: 120–121).[14]

It may appear that young adults with no family ties who are flexible and able to adapt are suitable for a world of project-based working practices as they can do extra work and overtime. Workplace flexibility, the loosening of standard employment, the spreading of atypical jobs (Hárs 2013) are all in favour of young people. These latter working forms make also grey (or black) employment possible for the young; moreover, even employment with legal conditions is often unpredictable and it is accompanied by psychologically and physically exhausting workload and low payment. The great extent of uncertainty and widespread underemployment do not enhance the development of any kind of professional identity, independent livelihood, and financial independence. Péter Róbert's research reveals that the prospects of young people with degrees at the beginning of their working life are far from the ideal. International surveys in 2008–2009 showed that Spanish and Hungarian graduates are in the worst situation.[15] Underemployment was characteristic of 40% of Hungarian graduates; five years after the beginning of their working life, a significant number worked in jobs that are not considered such that require a degree. (Women are significantly more likely to be underemployed, and a higher number of them feel that they are overqualified for their jobs.) The first job has a particular impact on the job five years later. "Practically, if the graduate's first job was not connected to their qualifications, there is a significant chance of underemployment or overqualification in the case of their present jobs" (Róbert 2010: 484). However, people with degrees (especially men) in Hungary have incomes and salary advantage that are outstandingly high – even on an international scale (Róbert 2002, Lannert 2008).

The impossibility of creating one's independent livelihood is not only an obstacle for young graduates in starting a family. The studies of Ágnes Utasi

14 The problem occurs as the start of working life becomes more difficult and unsure. Let us make note of the phenomenon when one's employment starts with leaving one's profession as they considered their training 'useless' even during their studies.

15 The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society survey (http://www.reflexproject.org). From our region (as well as from the 17 countries), Czech young people show the best results and the Polish are in the middle (Slovakia and Romania were not included in the research) (Róbert 2010: 477).

on single people revealed that the pictures painted by Western literature about the 30–40-year-old single individual who is marketable and not in a steady relationship is only valid for a small number of Hungarian young people. For them, it is really a chosen lifestyle – both in terms of career and free time. Most of young single people in Hungary are not single by choice: two-thirds of women are single mothers[16] and one-third of men delay marriage. Half of the men, as they live in villages and have lower education, are unable to make a living for a family, and therefore they are not desirable partners for the available women (who are oftentimes more educated than them) (Utasi 2003, 2004).

## About peer groups and friends as medium for socialization

The young are extremely heterogeneous.[17] Surveys on student lifestyle reveal a sectioned world. The fact that in the last decade position in the consumer culture has become the main aspect in identity formation among young people in their teens and twenties (also) means that a (major) part of young people cannot acquire means that are important or just considered important due to lack of finances. Because of the fast technological developments, this is accompanied by increasing segregation and a series of frustrations.[18] The feeling of segregation and unease triggers the marginalization of some. Lonely young people find it extremely difficult to process negative experiences and defeats.

The loneliness of young people is not only indicated by the habit of watching three hours of television every day (Török, Szekszárdi, and Mayer 2011) but also by "the complete disappearance of the willingness to do social activities" (Bauer 2011: 223). Companies, communities, the desire for social activity are absent, which Bauer explains with the spreading of online communication as well as with the fact that (off-line) community spaces that could serve as the scene for

16 The reason is that those who tend to comply with the traditional expectations marry early but also get divorced by their 30s.

17 This is also true for the value system of young people. For instance, the group of the 18–29-year-olds is very different from the one of those under 18 in terms of "submissive behaviour". According to the Hungarian data of the last phase of the ESS value survey, among the 18–29-year-olds, rule-following and self-subordination are clearly ranked to the last place, whereas the ideas of freedom, independence are ranked as more important than the country's average. Among young people under the age of 18, increasing conservativism as well as conformity and decreasing tolerance and solidarity can be detected (Kapitány and Kapitány 2012).

18 This is mainly about possessing ICT technologies. The consumption habits of young people that are distinctively different from those of the adult society are heavily influenced by the different attitude they have towards information technology (Gábor and Szemerszki 2007).

shared activities and conversations are less and less available.[19] It is interesting to note, however, that although among the 13–19-year-old Hungarian people the most typical forms of entertainment are not social activities (listening to music, computer and video games) – on an international scale, they have the most virtual friends in the region (Török, Szekszárdi, and Mayer 2011). In terms of friends, the authors (Utasi 2004, Albert and Dávid 2007) reveal that on an international scale Hungarian people have few friends, relationships are looser, scarcer.[20] *Ifjúság 2012* also reveals that one-fourths of young people do not have a steady circle of friends with whom they would spend their free time (Székely 2014). The presence or absence of friendships does not only greatly influence the individual's quality of life but friendships are also the building blocks of networking, which (could) greatly influence the employment options of young people. (Young people in employment received the biggest help from acquaintances, relatives, and parents when finding their latest job (Laki 2006).)

Relationships between friends, colleagues, neighbours, and relatives have been operating with instrumental motivation – as opposed to emotional motivation – since the regime change (Utasi 1990, 2013). Therefore, mainly instrumental assistance has worked with the help of a network of strong relationships, while emotional contact and assistance showed severe deficiencies. Since the 1990s, it has been clear from sociological research that among young people in post-socialist countries communal interest was pushed to the background in favour of self-interest.[21] This indicates a recession to materialistic world view, which has influence on forming friendships.

## An outlook on the factors that contribute to the identity formation of Hungarian young people

In the followings, I intend to place the results of Hungarian youth and family sociology into a new perspective by using contemporary Western notions.

19 For example, sitting around in pubs is not a viable option for everyone.

20 According to the 2006 ISS survey, micro-social isolation and narrow interpersonal networks were typical in Hungary. E.g. 41% of those interviewed are in contact with 0–4 people on an average day, including the ones they live with anyway. This proportion in the ex-socialist countries is as follows: the Czech Republic 18%, Slovenia 25%, Latvia 29%, and Poland 32% – all are better than the Hungarian figures. According to ESS's 2010 data on private social activity, Romanians and Hungarians are at the worst place, followed by the Polish. In the other post-socialist countries, friends, acquaintances, and neighbours socialize far more.

21 See many international researches on public affairs, political activity, e.g. the fourth, sixth, and seventh chapters of one of the latest fp7-mayplace survey.

## Changes of socialization agents

It is obvious that paths of socialization for young people are not as clear-cut as they used be. Earlier ways of socialization have disintegrated: there is a multiplicity of socialization processes that are of opposite directions. Young people continuously develop in different socialization mediums, and they have to re-form, sometimes reconstruct themselves accordingly (Lahire 1998). It has come to surface about young people of secondary school age in Hungary that students "are forced to take up more and more roles" (Paku 2010), which increases the risk of overloading due to a conflict of roles. Moving among the multiple – and often – simultaneous socialization mediums, the problem of transfer among socialization areas is a fundamental problem for young people in Hungary as well – i.e. knowledge from school inapplicable to everyday problems, skills and mentalities required at the workplace that infiltrate friendships and relationships.

A social theoretical explanation for the crisis of (socialization) institutions that can be applied to the Hungarian situation is François Dubet's theory about the decline of institutional programmes (Dubet 2002, Takács 2012: 16–17) as well as Anthony Giddens' theory about the shaken status of expert knowledge (Giddens 1990, 1994; Rényi, Sik, Takács 2014). In his book, François Dubet analyses why the 'institutional programme' that socializes individuals and ensures that the coherence of society is on the decline today. The idea of the institutional programme is the socialization of individuals supervised by dedicated professionals – teachers, nurses, social workers, and adult educators – who are trained for this task and whose professional activity is directed to create socialized and, at the same time, autonomous individual subjects. This paradoxical aspiration creates tension between socialization and the requirements of autonomy. The autonomy of an individual can lead to questioning authorities – whether that of teachers or parents – as well as to wavering dedication and devotion on behalf of the executioners of the institutional programme. These professions are shaken to their cores as their representatives face the changed conditions and the representatives change themselves in the course of the process. With the decline of the institutional programme, certain power and hierarchical relations loosen – like the unequal nature of or even the vulnerable position in a teacher–student, social worker–client relationship – and at the same time new forms of power and control emerge.

## (Lack of) trust and solidarity

Young people can be characterized by a high level of distrust in Hungary; the indices of system-level trust are the lowest on an international scale. It shows a similar amount of distrust towards systems (e.g. government) as towards people outside the close circle of relationships. According to two-thirds of the subjects

of a Hungarian survey conducted around the turn of the millennium: 'generally, we cannot trust' or 'we can never trust' other people (Utasi 2004). The lack of trust is accompanied by an ambiguous attitude towards breaking the norms in everyday life. Young Hungarian adults agree with the statement to a great extent that 'if one wants to succeed in life, they are forced to break certain rules' (data from Hungarostudy, qtd by Susánszky 2011: 145). On the one hand, they think that it is pointless to act against corruption, while, on the other hand, "young people all think honesty is not profitable today in Hungary, and those who are ready to lie, swindle, and steal can be more successful" (Székely et al. 2012: 4).

According to international value surveys, young people in Hungary can be characterized by a significant lack of cooperation and solidarity (Tóth 2009). This tendency is not only typical of Hungarian young people (although the measurable differences are particularly worrying). Danilo Martuccelli discusses fading solidarity in relation to singularization (Martuccelli 2010). In Martuccelli's view, singularization is a structural and cultural process in which production, the market, public institutions, and social policy adapt to the various demands and life situations of individuals. Along with the deteriorating interpersonal relations, this enhances the disintegration of normative order in general. The pressure of singularization encourages the individual to create themselves as an individual being – independent of all models, values, and norms, and creating singularity (also) means a complete adaptation to any situation. With the disappearance of a normative framework, the responsibility of an action and its consequences are put on the actor, the individual exclusively, and this diversion of responsibility is identified as a new form of power by Martuccelli. Singularity, the norm of individualization therefore destroys commonness and the feeling of solidarity (Martuccelli 2010; Rényi, Sik, and Takács 2014).

The latest figures of ESS show that the willingness to help has drastically decreased (much under the country's average) among people under 18. A similar fall-back was measured in terms of tolerance, which "indicates the danger of intolerant young people appearing, who are capable of cruelty," which is concluded to be a result of negative individualization by the author duo (Kapitány and Kapitány 2012).

## Construction of identity

In late modernity, due to weakening traditions and roles, the individual loses their usual footholds. Identity is more difficult to construct by means of roles that have been evident for decades and centuries. With the transformation of the meaning of work, its identity-forming role has become questionable, even though jobs, steady employment was (one of) the most important factor(s) of identity formation (Kohli 1990, Laky 1998). The operating mechanisms of project

capitalism work specifically against identity forming: the authors emphasize the danger of the disintegration of identity due to the multiplicity of contacts and projects with short deadlines and the requirement of pluralization (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). The question is if profession cannot be a factor of young people's identity, then what other (status) characteristics are relevant.[22] Barna Bodó's research shows that in the case of young people living beyond the borders of Hungary, being Hungarian minority does not automatically become an identity-forming factor (Bodó 2013). It seems that education has a key role in some cases. László Laki's research on the 'subjective structure image' of young people (Laki 2006) shows that half of the people interviewed considered themselves as members of the lower class and half of them of the middle class, i.e. much more of them saw themselves as belonging to the middle class than the number of people interviewed in their parents' generation. The author explains this phenomenon with the expanding scale of education, "which is experienced as mobility compared to their parents, and young people anticipate themselves as candidates who can potentially fill these statuses 'assigned' to degrees, ignoring the fact that school and status mobility are separated nowadays" (Laki 2006: 194).

There are many foreign theories about the potential of university and college status in identity formation. However, there are more and more people today who question the role of such communities in the formation of a homogeneous identity due to the multiple identities of students as well as to the high number of students who fall behind and/or have experiences of failure. Student socialization in Hungary manifests in a number of individual patterns – exactly because of its disintegrated and precarious nature. The student setting of mass higher education appears as a turbulent chaos according to students' accounts. Therefore, students create a personal network of relationships, not an independent identity (Pusztai 2010). Pusztai's socialization model seems to be well-grounded in displaying internal and external social environment as rivals that compete for "the most important institutional resource", students' time. According to this, family burdens, friends from the outside, and employment are all against the success of student socialization (Pusztai 2010: 45).

The Hungarian empirical results seem to support Dubet's notion of 'dialogical individual', which claims that individuals try to create, more or less successfully, an equilibrium between their environment and themselves according to different logics of action (Dubet 2005). As society provides neither solid values nor norms nor integrational roles, individuals are never completely socialized – which

22 Bodó writes about *a drive to adapt* as well as about the difference between an awareness of identity and that of origin. He thinks that "although many young people experience their nationality as a characteristic, there are much more who have a reflective attitude towards being a minority: they look at themselves in a multidimensional terrain. They are looking for an answer to the dilemma of 'what I am/what I am not'" (Bodó 2013).

is even more true for young people with uncertain conditions. Their identity is continuously constructed along heterogeneous principles in the tension of different interrelated logics of action (Rényi, Sik, and Takács 2014). Therefore, young people are uncertain, not just due to external conditions (of macro-social nature and created by friends/acquaintances who have also uncertain identities) but also because of their unpredictable reactions originating from their own uncertainty – which also further increases unpredictability.

Multilevel socialization, the plurality of the socialization framework can evoke the feeling of uniqueness in young people, i.e. the feeling of independence, originality. At the same time, these tendencies can result in the feeling of loneliness, not being understood, as they have no (small) community of specific socialization framework at their disposal and multiple socialization makes self-expression difficult as well as it increases the possibility of not being understood by the environment and the frustration that follows (Lahire 1998). According to Bernard Lahire, due to the disappearance of common grounds and as a consequence of individualization, it has become more difficult to relate to friends and peers. As these relationships are of extreme importance when founding one's identity, their uncertainty further intensifies the already heightened experience of frustration and anxiety.

In Giddens's notion, 'pure relationships' are phenomena of key importance in late modernity, and decisions in connection with them are distinctly related to forming identity. As formal and everyday relationships are characterized by existential anxiety and lack of trust, ontological security and trust placed in others, the world, and ourselves can only be founded in pure relationships that are developed during intense, long quality time spent together (Giddens 1992).

Family sociologist François de Singly examines how components of identity are formed beyond the identity determined by the factors of the individual's status. In the centre of Singly's sociology, there is the 'individualized family', whose primary role is the construction of the personal identity of family members. Individualized families can be characterized by autonomy towards parents and relatives as well as within the family (even children of very young age), which has the social consequence of reduced power of authority in relations outside the family as well. A family that develops "individualized identity" suffers from this extra functional burden: couples or teenagers find it difficult to create a balance between "narcissistic" expectations of authenticity and developing originality and statutory expectations of limitations of individual will typical of long-term relationships.

Family has become of utmost importance in Hungary today in terms of identity building. Ágnes Utasi concluded in one of her papers that in terms of the loss of trust, "the desire for security and the need to belong somewhere strengthen the role of family relations and that of a close family that enjoys unconditional

trust".[23] Paradoxically, the trust in family relations increases the value of family cohesion just when the number of family and relative relations is decreasing, the ratio of single individuals of the population is increasing, more and more are trying to finish their bad relationships and replace them with a better one (Utasi 2004). The most important and most reliable source of information for young people is clearly family and friends, which is further strengthened by a high level of satisfaction with partners and friendships (70 and 82%) as well as a high level of acceptance of the parental value system (Székely 2014).[24]

It may be the case of two opposing tendencies: the late modernist expansion of autonomy and the weakening of authority as opposed to a defence mechanism of enclosing and finding ontological security only in close family circles.

## Routinization – fundamentalism – learned helplessness

Gender and family roles, just like the earlier components of status-defining identity, have transformed, although there seems to be no significant change in terms of attitudes and actual behaviour in Hungary: surveys among young people indicate the acceptance of traditional gender roles (relevant research quoted by Csurgó and Kristóf 2012).[25]

In order to understand actual behaviour, Jean-Claude Kaufmann's approach can provide a basis, who is mostly interested in how identity changes amidst the tension of changing roles and unconscious habits from the eighties and nineties. Kaufmann demonstrated a number of examples and concluded that ideas and notions of young people are subordinated to unconscious incorporated habits, modifying the preceding habits of the actors.[26] Kaufmann is convinced that the organization of a young couple's everyday life reactivates the past habits of the family, which can guarantee habitual comfort and certain identity (as well

23 Among the circle of family and relatives, one of the 'objective' factors is the guarantee of paying back assistance or loan to each other over generations, as well as the appearance of unemployment that enhanced the collaboration of immediate family members, as well as the fact that the stigma of unemployment also reduced the number of relationship ties.

24 According to the data of *Ifjúság 2012*, the majority of young people between 15 and 29 (46% of whom completely and 36% partly) accepts the views of life according to which their parents live (Székely 2014).

25 The traditional distribution of gender roles, i.e. the man is responsible for the income and the woman for the household, is very highly favoured in Hungary. A relatively large proportion of Hungarians agree with this model of the gender roles (61.2%), while in Poland and Romania less than half accept it (45%) (PPAS 2006). With the statement "a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children", 80% of Hungarians agree (in Romania: 58%, in Poland: 40%), while another traditionalist conviction, "a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family" reaches 64% (in Romania: 42%, in Poland: 40%) (Philipov 2006 – qtd by Pongráczné – S. Molnár 2011).

26 Being a family sociologist, the author's most convincing example is the difference between egalitarian discourse concerning household chores of young couples and the actual work done.

as the explosion of tensions and the relationship)[27] (Kaufmann 2001). This habitualization is described as the wanted or unwanted consequence of family socialization, as an unconscious automatization by the author. Giddens (1994) follows the same logic by claiming that the assumption that life is a series of free choices totally contradicts reality. He also argues with the unavoidable nature of habituation that: everyday life could not exist without creating routines. The psychological effect of routines is essential to create ontological security, as the continuity of life can be created by means of routines. The phenomenon of routinization can lead to the pathologies of late modernity: dependencies and fundamentalism.

Dependencies provide actions with a predictable course instead of taking risks. However, in this case it is not the rituals of the community but compulsively repeated individual rites that set the limitations to actions. Traditions keep attracting crowds due to their routinization that creates continuity. However, as these traditions are based on the refusal of modernity, they take on the form of fundamentalism (Giddens 1994: 100).

Growing conservativism and attraction to fundamentalism among the young in Hungary have an expanding literature along with the growing tendency, which cannot be summarized within the scope of this paper.[28] Some explain the strengthening of radical political groups that offer organized experiences with young people's needs for an organized framework (Csepeli, Murányi, and Prazsák 2011). Ildikó Szabó examines young people's attraction to extremist right wing values in terms of national identity (Szabó 2009), arguing that the underdeveloped social consensus of national identity leads to the separation of national socialization and political socialization. The lack of democratic socialization, transforming the theme of nation into political means, and a national identity built on frustrations and resentments are all reasons that the extremist *Jobbik* is able to provide young people with a strong community by mobilizing them vigorously both on online and offline forums. However, surveys on free time greatly contradict the idea of the radicalization of young people. They reveal that young people's free time activities are predominantly passive: most of them spend time on the Internet, watch television, and relax. After the compulsory activities, the 15–29-year-olds spend their weekdays at home, 76% of them staying at home at weekends, i.e. they do not socialize and do not have

27 The effect routinized habits have can be various. Marriage stabilization is a result of a process developing norms, in which all parties let themselves be identified with one role because this allows them some balance. It is obvious though that this process of developing norms creates a trap for women: the precondition of peace and stability of the relationship is their acceptance of a subordinate role, which means carrying all the burdens of the family.

28 International value surveys (European Social Survey, World Values Survey) indicate that Hungarian society is closed, inner-directed, where traditional values dominate regardless of age (Tóth 2009, Keller 2010).

a social life. Almost one quarter of the subjects have no steady circle of friends with whom they would spend their free time, and the idle use of free time is characteristic of them (Székely 2014).

That is why young people today in Hungary are called 'the new silent generation' – as the majority of people born between 1982 and 1996 can be characterized with conformity, uncertainty, and passiveness. Surprisingly, no intention of being active can be found in terms of plans for further education or employment; there is a stagnation that can be experienced. At the same time, more than half (52%) of the young people would rather leave the country if they had the opportunity (Székely 2014).

The question is when the phenomenon of passivity, drifting, powerlessness, and uncertainty that pertain to everyday life have become pathological. The feeling of lack of prospects is increasing among the young as well (Susánszky 2011, Oross 2013), which together can trigger paralysis.

In terms of the phenomena that are typically considered the pathology of late modernity, László Laki sees the reason for young people's generally bad mood in their realistic view of society (Laki 2006). Many of the people that participated in the earlier *Ifjúság*-surveys gave accounts of fears and anxieties – for example, in terms of their entrance to the labour market or being dismissed. A constant state of uncertainty and anxiety brings along psychosomatic illnesses and a deterioration of life quality as well as it increases the risk of lifestyles and attitudes that are considered to be deviant. Since the regime change, health assessment surveys have shown an increase of psychological and psychosomatic illnesses among the young (Pikó 1999). About a quarter of the young people have psychosomatic symptoms such as regular headaches, tension, anxiety, and sleeping problems. Sleeping disorders occur in the case of 20–30% of those under 18, which can cause a deterioration of well-being and cognitive capacity, be harmful to one's health as well as increase the danger of drug abuse, illegal drug use, and risk of accidents (Suszánszky 2011). Youth sociological surveys consider the uncertain state of purposelessness, having no status, not moving anywhere as risk factors in terms of deviant behaviours typical of young people – alcohol, drugs, gambling, eating disorders, workout addiction, compulsive shopping, and workaholism.

## (Lack of) autonomy

The question is: what can young people rely on? Do they resort to the imprinted habits and internalized values of earlier generations as support? That is why the implicit question of the examination was how the urge autonomy that is a characteristic of late modernity present in young people's lives in Hungary.

In Alain Ehrenberg's central idea, the norm of autonomy, the self-referential act is becoming a general mechanism: the norm of autonomy pervades all – political,

corporal, social, and therefore psychological – levels (Ehrenberg 1995: 2002).[29] The norms that encourage displaying autonomous behaviour reach all social classes and can be sensed at the bottom of the social hierarchy as well: even in the case of an uncertain job, motivation and the ability to present oneself need to be displayed. Due to the change in norms, the nature of authority is transformed as well, it is no longer based on automatic obedience but on initiative, the ability to improve, flexibility etc.

It seems that the transformation of social expectations in terms of the young are not accompanied by a pressure of achievement or an increasing extent of autonomy – contrary to Western late modernist social theories. Surveys on the young show the unfolding of tendencies that are reverse to autonomy both in terms of values and behaviour. Reactions typical of the Kádár-era, a need for a paternalist state, authoritarianism, a lack of critical attitude, conformity, a lack of motivation for novelty are becoming common. In this light, it is not surprising that almost every third young person found the petty bourgeois attitude typical of the Kádár-era true for themselves, which claims "it does not matter which system we live in, the point is to survive, we cannot make a difference in terms of politics, anyway" (Kern and Szabó 2011: 56).[30] A striking demonstration of the phenomenon is that one quarter of the 18–29-year-old young individuals agree with the statement that: "under certain circumstances, a dictatorship is better than a democratic political system" – the younger and more wealthy they are, the more they agree with it (data from the fifth round of ESS, quoted by Ságvári 2012).

Hungarian young people have grown old to their parents in terms of their value choices – as opposed to expectations (Ságvári 2012). For young people, in today's Hungary, family is not a scene for generational tensions or conflict of roles, and they do not perceive it as an obstacle to their autonomy. In the setting of new power relations and an uncertain anomic society, it is the (idealized) family (and its values) that serves as the clear (and often the only) reference point for the majority of young people.

29 Ehrenberg sees autonomy as a personal choice and the individual's initiative, the norm of a society where everyone is supposed to be the agent of their own change.

30 Moderateness in demand for autonomy is also reflected in the fact that 41% of young people between 15 and 29 who live with their parents do not intend to move out in the near future (Székely 2014).

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# How Professionals in the Social System and Child Protection Perceive Their Profession

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**Abstract.** Our research is based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews made with 20 professionals in social care and child protection. The research aims at finding the answers to how the legacy of the past affects the field workers' professional mentality and how it surfaces in the treatments of clients, to the current issues of the social and child protection profession, and what ways to improvement exist. The analysis of the interviews points to the fact that the pervasive role of professionals in social work and child welfare is damaged in the course of their work, and dilemmas concerning interests and values often arise in everyday work. Cooperation with clients and the representatives of power is burdened with conflicts. While we expect reflexivity on the part of experts, as they are parts of a hierarchical system, they are not given the opportunity to expose their point of view, to dissolve their doubts; they respond with suppression to the suppressive system, and give help in function of merits. Our research shows that fear, uncertainty, and distrust are present on all levels of this profession, namely on all levels of helper–helped, helper–associated field, helper–power, and helped–representative of power.

**Keywords:** Hungarian child protection and social work, professional mentality, professional integrity

## Introduction

It is important to note at the beginning of this article that we do not intend to appreciate or judge the work of social workers and child protection professionals. By our research based on a qualitative methodology, we wish to add new points of view to the renewal process of this profession and to the discussions of recent

years concerning the crisis of the field. Our research[1] is based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews made with 20 professionals in social care and child protection. We have deliberately chosen helpers from various fields (family support service, child welfare, support service, Regional Child Protection Agency, provisional home for families, social politician of an NGO, school social worker, social assistant in homeless care, mediator, trainer). Most of them are employees, but there are a few managers or professional coordinators as well. The respondents work in Hajdú-Bihar County, Hungary, providing services in settlements of various sizes. Concerning their work experience, two-thirds of the interviewees have worked in the field for 10 years, others as young professionals have a few years of work experience. The research aimed at getting feedbacks about the motivations of social workers and the subjective appreciation of this profession.

We examined their view on this profession, their opinion about the clients, the difficulties within cooperation, the moral dilemmas helpers face in their work and the possibilities to solve these. We would like to use our research results to draw the attention of professionals and decision-makers to the fact that during the past 20–30 years, before it could have taken shape, the pervasive role of social workers and child protection professionals has been in danger, and in many cases the basis of cooperation has become fear; moreover, professional values have suffered damage as well, and thus in many cases confidential relationship is founded on respect for authority. As a consequence, professionals frequently see themselves – like their clients – as victims, and the outcome of this process is that social problems confer value to the client through the terms of suffering and victimhood; this value itself is therefore becoming the cause and justification of action (offering and accepting help). Researches confirm that in cases of different mental disorders, addiction, post-traumatic stress, crises, clients typically see themselves as victims (Szabó 2011). The role of a victim offers a comfortable identification possibility, in which moral primacy falls outside one's life and the social worker's authority. If we set victims and perpetrators as two sharply opposed poles of a dichotomy, then it makes facing ourselves or practising self-criticism impossible.

Different theories describe particularities of late modernism in various manners. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, for example, individuals are in an increasingly worsening economic situation, bureaucratic organizational forms are disappearing, global network-based capitalism is emerging, which entails the exploitation of employees, the suppression of individual identity, and the increase of uncertainty. Dubet points to the increase of autonomy along with

1 Within the research project entitled *The Political and Sociological Use of Narratives of Victimhood in Europe and Hungary* (RH/885/2013) supported by the University of Debrecen, we examined four thematic fields: social care, child protection, healthcare, and justice. (Some of the interviews made within the framework of the research were used by Eszter Papp in her thesis.)

the decline of institutions. In Memmi's view, regulation becomes incidental, the aim of institutional functioning being the shaping of individuals (qtd by Rényi et al. 2014: 20–21). The individualization of public policies imposes individual solutions, and thus helpers get the burden of interpreting problems specifically, without the support of standards and well-defined procedures and norms; individual suffering legitimates help, while the helper becomes the subject or victim of the responsibility their own decision or action encompasses. Professional success and failure are both interpreted individually as well (Rácz 2012).[2] The basis of professional help is reflexivity, based on individual histories and conclusions drawn from them (Hegyesi–Kozma 2002, Banks 2012). "Thus, institutional programme is based on the paradox resolution to socialize the individual and at the same time to create them as a subject; this endeavour results in a tension between socialization and autonomization, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, we could see that at present socialization is guided also by the principle of freedom" (Rényi et al. 2014: 38). Concerning social assistance, Fassin (qtd by Takács 2014) outlines that subjectification, as being an individual subject in the face of the state, and subordination, as being dependent on the goodwill of the state, are present simultaneously. Those who receive social assistance request that assistance not with reference to their rights but to their merits and suffering, where this latter gives them legitimization (Takács 2014). According to Boltanski, in order to feel pity – which differs from empathy, the basic value of social work –, the representation of suffering people is needed, which emphasizes that the subject's suffering is individual, but it could be anybody (qtd by Rényi 2008).

In the present study, following an overview of the professional objectives and the new definition of the ISFW – which also determines the framework of the interpretation of the view on this profession –, the research findings will be presented. Our qualitative research aims at finding the answers (1) to how the legacy of the past affects field workers' professional mentality and how it surfaces in the treatments of clients, (2) to the current issues of the social and child protection profession, and (3) to the ways of improvement that might exist.

## Social work in the society

Social work has a long history, yet helpers had to struggle a lot while it became a widely acknowledged profession and calling. "In the course of history, social work appears where people constrained or forced to otherness can't break out from their otherness and from its consequences without professional help" (Katz

2 Based on the ideas of Trocmé, Rácz (2012) presents those interpretations in which the displacement of a child could mean a success for the professional, in many cases such interpretations also ensuring an exemption for them.

2009: 108). Social work is a practice-oriented, multi-faceted activity; its main objective is to make people in need capable of having as much control as possible over their lives (Lüssi 1997, Johnsson-Svensson 2005). Professionals work with individuals living in a social environment, who mutually influence each other – that is what Welch's human ecosystem theory is about; due to the nature of a two-directional interaction, it is possible for an individual to effectuate successful transactions applying a problem-solving attitude (Woods 1994). "The individual enters on different levels of social environment, and acts there, respectively the environment confronts the individual. This two-directional action constitutes the field of social work" (Woods 1994: 33–34). Social work and child protection are activities implying intervention, determined by a permanent "pendulous" movement between individual help and care, and communal tasks, thus being a process in the course of which problems of private sphere are transferred to the public sphere (Katz 2009, Johnsson-Svensson 2005). "The basis, task, meaning of social work is the responsibility assumed for the other – this gives its raison d'être, the framework of the professional activity" (Katz 2009: 108).

Its central term is empowerment, which means to authorize, to make capable, to render strong, that is, giving power to those deprived from power. Its main purpose is to increase the will and capability of the individual to gain autonomy concerning everyday issues regarding them, to have a role as significant as possible in controlling their life. Its philosophy is based on trust in people. Social work is the professional solving of social problems (Woods 1994, Lüssi 1997, Compton-Galaway 1994, Hegyesi–Kozma 2002, Kozma 1994). Pincus and Minaham outline four interlinked objectives: 1. to enhance the problem-treating and -solving capacities of the individual; 2. to link the individual with the systems that provide them with services; 4. to promote the humane operation of different resources; 4. to have a positive attitude towards permanently changing social policy (qtd by Woods 1994: 35).

The global definition of social work was approved in July 2014 by the IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) General Meeting and the IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work) General Assembly. Thus, "social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" (IFSW 2014).

## The relations of 1989 continue to exist: social work and child protection in Hungary

The history of social work in Hungary progressed similarly to the international one until socialism began. However, the era of state socialism eroded social work and child protection. In the process of centralized redistribution of property, values and interests, social work merged into healthcare, while child protection typically merged into education. Ferge (1985) points out that Hungary was unique in Europe until 1945, that it had untouched feudal relationships in tenures, which greatly inhibited the formation of democratic institutions. In addition to scarce resources, power groups were interested in maintaining inequalities limiting the reduction of poverty.

After the Second World War, a number of reforms, such as the radical land reform in 1945, then the nationalization of the mines, banks, and large factories created a good basis for economic development, and thus for the reduction of social inequalities and poverty. Later, all the living standard indicators deteriorated between 1949 and 1952, and political tensions increased. The tensions culminated in the 1956 political crisis, followed by a period of economic and political revival. The period between 1957 and 1977 was characterized by development, although the reproduction of low incomes persisted (Ferge 1985: 15–16). The rate of poverty in the 1980s was estimated at 10–30% as descriptive data to validate social work (Ferge 1985: 17).

Zsuzsa Ferge remarks three major sections in the developments of social policy: 1) the period lasting from 1945 to 1948, as stage for establishing social policy; 2) the period between 1949 and 1956, when social policy was subject to political and economic interests, and 3) between 1956 and 1978, when social policy was developing but without autonomy (qtd by Domszky 1999: 53).

From the perspective of the social work profession, a positive development of the 1960s brought about educational counselling, and the first social organization training was established in 1972, followed by psycho-educational training. In the 1970s, social work was revived in Hungary by starting social organization training, and socio-political changes in the eighties established the possibility to develop a uniform, comprehensive training programme. In 1985, Zsuzsa Ferge led the formation of the first social policy training, and then further educational venues launched trainings in social matters. The Support Fund for the Poor was set up in 1979, and the TBZ (Social Integration Disorders) researches were launched in 1981, which drew attention to serious social problems. As one result, several family support services were established in the mid-eighties. Simultaneously with starting the training, specialists tried to create the training syllabus, develop new methods and flesh out the services with content, supported by foreign experts, by

studying international scientific literature and international study visits. "It was very dominant in shaping the education and social work praxis that we primarily established relationships with Anglo-Saxon social work, and our training was largely founded on its effects" (Szabó 1999).

After the change of regime, many civil society organizations were established and began operations in the social field. The Social Act of 1993 initiated the build-up of social services, while the Child Protection Act of 1997 urged the establishment of child protection structure (Domszky 1999; Pik 2001). This process was reinforced by creating a number of professional advocacy organizations, as highlighted: in 1987, the Hilscher Rezső Social Policy Association, in 1988, the Social Workers' Association in Hungary, in 1989, the Association for Hungarian Family Helpers, and in 1990 the School Association responsible for the development of social education on international quality. These four organizations established the Social Work Association with Phare support in 1994, which created the Social Work Code of Ethics in 1995 (www.3sz.hu). The changes beginning in the 1980s can be described through the work of professional organizations along four main characteristics such as *innovation* (to develop new services and methods, and channelling them into regional work), *regulation* (to establish a legal framework for social services and training and to create a code of ethics), *professionalization* (to develop trainings, to implement a further training system, and to adjust to international education standards), and *articulation* (formation of professional identity, advocacy). Therefore, improving services and the build-up of the welfare system started along the principles laid down in the social and child protection acts, which the representatives of the newly (re)born profession regarded with high expectations, as commitments to the profession's core values, standings were clear. Domszky (1999: 52) notes that in relation to child protection:

> the law fundamentally owes its birth to the socio-historical event of the change of regime. Its significance appears in legal history so that this was the first complete and independent legal regulation of the Hungarian child protection. While its significance lies in the history of child protection as it brings forth new institutions, transforms and compiles our child protection. The new law associated our former responsibility with professional challenges, an event that 'only comes once in a life'.

The UNICEF (2007) evaluation study on Central and Eastern European countries notes that the social, political, and economic transformations that occurred since 1989 led countries to make new laws in social services, education, child protection, and in this transformation the process of deinstitutionalization played a key role, as well as the support for familiar forms of accommodation, building up a support system for a number of target groups, for example, people with disabilities. In

addition to the service attitude, prevention efforts also appeared. Although an earlier UNICEF research on Eastern and Central European countries in 1997 claims that despite a dramatic fall in the birth rate since the 1980s there was an increase in the number of children who were placed under child protection, which may also prove the initial uncertainty of the newly established systems. Overall, Hungary has therefore a belated and slow professional progress after the change of regime until the present day; in the first 10 years, the social and child protection professions could not keep up with the rapid development of the service system, and later it could not stabilize its professional framework. Consequently, the helper work is typically based on performing official and semi-official and administrative tasks, while partnership with clients remains in the background (Patyán 2013).

Katalin Katz (2009: 113) believes that the natural development of the profession is lacking in Hungary, in a former socialist country:

> After the disappearance of the former regime, social work burst into action, mainly so that it massively imported foreign (mostly Western) knowledge and professional experience while trying to apply those. However, it turned out that there were a number of problems to tackle that need to acquire experience and establish practice locally because the situation and culture are always and everywhere individual.

Szoboszlai and Bugarszki (2014) draw attention to that the care and services in the social work field still carry the legacy of socialism, as the paternalistic patterns are still clearly palpable: "The symbol of the paternalistic approach to helping service – 'caring' work – hardly implements the quasi-equal status in social work which would facilitate our effort to enter individual or family life, and establish forms of partnership in helping relations" (Szoboszlai 2014: 91). Therefore, the local history of social work after the transition appears to have a uniquely Hungarian operation in addition to the democratic ideals of the Western world, where the law and not social workers determine social work, where social work narrows down to administration and administering that work during practical working (Szoboszlai 2014). Citing Bugarszki's critical words: "(...) the profession exists along the relations of 1989, and the personal entanglements or conflicts of those relations even to the present day" (2014: 72).

Prestige is an individual value position, a status, irrelevant of the person holding it. The prestige of different professions is a special field, which primarily shows the rank in the hierarchy of values. Social workers need a high level of devotion in order to fulfil the above mentioned professional objectives, even if the prestige of social care and child protection profession is low (Domszky 1999). Neither clients nor decision-makers take into consideration how straining it can be to be a helper and to make decisions about human lives (Urbán 2008). Regarding the image social work

students[3] have on their career, Fónai et al. (1996) found that evaluating the prestige of 27 professions, social work was put on the 23rd place due to low enforcement of interests and power related to profession. Due to the profession's low prestige, professionals receive a low income too,[4] while the field of child protection is further divided by the extension of the teacher career to certain spheres of this kind of work, by the absence of wage decompression and delays in the introduction of the planned social career. Those who work in the social field and child protection too feel that the profession entered a crisis. The primary solution is seen in the spiritual development of professionals and in the renewal of the profession. Due to the uncertainty of values of late modernity in general and the rapidly changing legal environment which gives the framework of the professional work, helpers often feel they are in lack of tools. Due to low social appreciation, they themselves are often oppressed and helpless, in many cases they are badly off like their clients (Rácz 2012, Krémer 2014, Szoboszlai 2014, Bugarszki 2014, Takács 2015, Bogács 2015). A further consequence of the low prestige is that they are driven more and more by prejudices (Rácz 2014a). In Hungary, the political situation does not enhance either the "popularity" of social workers. The state does not assume the principles of social work, which are the following: "a legal system based on human rights and on the principle of social justice, endeavour to abolish inequalities in the name of social cohesion, respect for otherness, the values of change, progress and mobility, the right to community organisations and independent action" (Bugarszki 2014: 66).

Evaluating the situation of the social work performed, in 2005, Bass-Márton could only estimate the size of the sector, which was very variable as estimates pointed between 5 and 80 thousand employees. The sector's weight and the precise community embeddedness seem hard to be defined as helping activities can be performed through a wide variety of trainings; furthermore, the data since installing the system are not fully available and empirical research concerns only part of the area.

People with social qualification often apply for work in family support and child welfare services. According to the CSO time-series data, between 1998 and 2014, the number of family support employees increased from 2,100 to 2,500 and the number of service clients from 246 thousand to 399 thousand. At the same time, the number of child welfare service workers decreased from 3,500 to 2,900, while the number of beneficiaries decreased from 158 thousand to 140 thousand. The number of departments for the two types of services is 1,200, the number of covered settlements is almost 100% (STADAT 2.5.14).[5] People in long-term residential care and transitional care numbered 90 thousand, of which nearly 60% were the elderly, but here the employees were not included

3 102 students participated in the survey: 15 men and 87 women.
4 See, for example: http://index.hu/belfold/2013/11/26/ime_a_legertelmetlenebb_diplomak/.
5 https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg003.html.

(STADAT 05/02/15).[6] In 2011, 5,300 people were employed in child care homes, of which, however, only 10% were qualified social staff, and there were 5,500 foster parents, while the number of children and young adults without a family was 21 thousand (Social Statistical Yearbook 2011).[7]

Based on the 2013 aggregate data for statistical numbers, occupied jobs in the social sector and child protection involve 70,220 professional people, there were 67 thousand staff members with professional qualifications, and 55% with secondary education. This is Bass-Márton's (2005) estimate on the approximate upper limit of accurate, aggregate data, although diminishing the weight of some helping activities such as elderly care, disability care, child protection, etc. This total data represents 91 types of jobs, for example, special education teacher, physician, guardian care, home care, or child protection assistant. There are, however, only 660 social worker jobs available.[8] The weight of the sector can be assessed by the number of people with social qualifications: 31 thousand employees have qualifications in social work, social pedagogy, and social policy. From 2001 to 2014, 151 thousand students have participated in social training, which data also include specialist further training and higher vocational trainings as well as basic and specialized master's degrees (Balogh et al. 2015: 41, 76–77).

There are valuable qualitative research data on the location. Hajdú-Bihar County belongs to the country's disadvantaged regions, the amount (39.4%) of per capita gross domestic income is below the EU average. The population on January 1, 2012 was 538,037 people, 5.4% of the country's total population. It ranks fourth among the 19 counties regarding population. Activity rate was 53.1%, ranked 13$^{th}$ among the counties and Budapest, which typically lags behind the national average value (55.8%). The unemployment rate was 12.1%, ranked 17$^{th}$ among the counties and Budapest. The social welfare is essential for Hajdú-Bihar's society for improving the quality of life. According to the 2010 data, 37 day nurseries operated in the county, 15 of which were in the county seat. Family support institutions are available in all settlements. The number of long-term residential and temporary placement institutions was 53 units, and more than 4,500 beds were available to those in need. Elderly daily care institutions had 2,700 beds, while 2,300 residential nursing home beds were available (based on an exploratory-assessment study in 2013 to establish the regional development concept of Hajdú-Bihar County). According to the 2013 aggregate data, the statistical numbers of employees and the posts occupied in the social sector and child protection in Hajdú-Bihar County are the followings: nearly 6,000 people are employed as professionals; however, the number of people with required specific job qualifications is only 5,300 in the county, while workers with secondary education are over-represented with 58%.[9]

6 https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsi001.html.
7 https://www.teir.hu/szoc_agazat/ksh_evkonyvek/a2011/html/tablak.html.
8 Source: KSH 2014, 2023 OSAP data collection, not published.
9 Source: KSH 2014, 2023 OSAP data collection, not published.

## Findings of the qualitative research

### How helpers view the profession

We tried to find out why the interviewees wanted to become helpers. The vast majority of them indicated that the reason for their choice of profession was that they wanted to deal with people, helping people is in their attitude, and they were motivated by the will to do something and to offer support for those in need. With respect to students in social work as well, Fónai et al. (1996: 117–118) found that their motivation for choosing this profession was that they wanted to deal with people, to offer them help, which is also what they find good about this profession; meanwhile, they consider it a hard profession since it is full of failures, and they also suppose that all what they would experience during work would try them. The fact that wages are low is on the third place according to them. Respondents stressed upon the importance of humanity in their work as the most important value, equality, acceptance, patience, respect, tolerance, openness, care also being very important, respondents being unable to conceive their work without these values. Regarding the humanitarian principle, Fassin notes that it implies the intrusion of moral feelings into politics,

> the substitution of politics of law and justice with politics of mercy and sympathy. Despite this – or perhaps due to this ethics –, humanitarianism unavoidably leads to the institutionalization of inequalities, and forcedly presumes that certain lives are more valuable than others. (...) They become sufferers instead of persons claiming their rights, thus actual life avoids the normalisation of everyday life as well (qtd by Takács 2014: n.y.).

The importance of empathy was mentioned by all respondents; in their view, it is necessary to have empathy for the situation of the client, which should precede the act when plans and common objectives are outlined together as well as when the action plan is elaborated and executed. Respondents also stressed the importance of tolerance and recourse, the maximal acceptance of the client's personality, of a supporting attitude in offering help, which means that the client's problem is not approached by blaming them but by searching for a solution. In relation to this, the importance of objectivity was also stressed, which can ease, but also encumber, cooperation with the client system (Kozma 1994, 2002). Professionals agree that these values are permanently present in their work, but also in their private lives, indicating that social work is a pervasive profession: "I try to live my life according to these values. I can't separate my work from my everyday life because that's how I am what I am, with these values" (manager of a support service). We tried to identify the respondents' fears and distresses connected to their work, and whether

or not these values got damaged in the course of the actual work. Fears arise daily, in which context professional errors were mentioned mostly, many respondents also sharing that they carry a huge responsibility, and they are very much afraid that they would take wrong decisions, and this could cause even tragedies. A further revealing aspect was that they frequently experience unrealistic expectations on the part of the clients. They highlighted that many clients struggle with problems of subsistence, and they expect salvation and immediate help accordingly, so it is very hard to make them understand that social work can respond to these financial problems only to a limited extent, for example it cannot ensure financial solution for housing and other credits or usury. Related to the crisis of this profession, an increasing number of professionals highlighted that social work cannot offer an adequate answer to poverty (Krémer 2014, Takács 2015).

Experts interviewed during the research pointed out that clients expect from them a response to individual problems and the understanding and appreciation of individual suffering. Provoking compassion is one of the possible ways to compel help. Fassin emphasizes that children are often involved in supplication, which thus prompts even more to take action (qtd by Takács 2014). With respect to values, the interviewed child welfare and child protection professionals distinctly mentioned children and that sorting out their life, the protection of their interest above all is the ground of their work. According to Fassin, besides compassion, need is also a proper rhetoric basis for the individual. Exigence points out the series of unsatisfied needs. Those who wish to stress upon their merits, when requesting help, they refer to the fact that commitment to social re-adaptation and the presented positive qualities entail the desired help. In such cases, a typical attitude is distancing oneself from others, the unmerited (qtd by Takács 2014). We should mention at this point that at the initial phase of social work the dilemma of the merited and unmerited was already present, and it is even more present in today's social politics (Hegyesi–Kozma 2002, Csoba 2010). In Fassin's view, the fourth type makes reference to justice; in this case, a legal or another type of injury can be observed, which needs solution (Takács 2014).

## Reflexions on professional work

In the opinion of the interviewees, the personality of the client is of utmost importance, getting to know the client's personality, mapping their life circumstance and in function of these circumstances being aware of expectations we can have towards them also bearing special significance. In the view of the majority, a young professional tends to have too high, idealistic, and unreal expectations towards their clients.

Cooperation with clients is based on partnership, on the treatment of the client as an equal partner. According to Leadbeater (2004), services should be

tailored to the person's need, which should be the ground of cooperation and the link between the individual and the community. In practice, however, this can hardly be fulfilled; many think that this work is embedded into a hierarchy of relationships, as winning one's trust requires prestige, but this prestige means, on the one hand, professional prestige, which is a high-quality practice of the profession, an outstanding expertise, the adequate, quick, professional solving of problems, while, on the other hand, it also means the embodiment of power, the role of a manager, and in many cases of a decision-maker. Initiating cooperation itself fills experts with fear in many cases. Some professionals shared that at the first meeting pressure is too high since this is when it turns out whether or not they would be able to cooperate in the future. Social workers in the child welfare field have to take serious decisions concerning the life of endangered children. They experience a huge fear for taking the right decision, whether displacement is the right solution or it would worsen the child's situation – there are not any objective criteria to help their work, as being endangered is a plastic term.

It is important to examine how helpers experience success and failure. Interviewees unanimously shared the view that the slightest positive change should be considered a success. Typically, success is when they can give some help to the client, when they understand their problem and can give an answer to their suffering. There were interviewees with a slight criticism towards themselves and the system who thought that the fact that the system is functional at all can be considered a success, yet this is also a reason for experiencing failure, namely that the system is dysfunctional. Failure is much more spectacular, and it gets more attention in the media. There are countless stories of social and especially child protection cases, which showed the dysfunctions between different service providers: "Media also suggests that we are good for nothing. I never hear experts speaking, relating what they do in difficult cases. There are distortions all the time. People should be made aware of what social work consists of" (Mediator).

Moreover, media shows slices of social work sporadically, typically through Christmas charitable activities, when the main topics are starvation, the support given for survival, the reduction of child suffering, along the typology described by Fassin. According to the interviewees, most people get a clear understanding of what social work is only when they get in contact with a helper, or if there is a person in their family or close environment with this profession. Therefore, it is very important for professionals that people who contact them get a positive impression of them since that is how "civilians" can determine this profession.

Low prestige is manifested mostly with respect to wages. According to the interviewees, social appreciation of this profession would be highly enhanced if the government recognized it also financially, since in many cases the helper and the client are in similarly difficult situation (Rácz 2014). In the opinion of professionals, if social workers enjoyed a higher esteem, clients would accept

them more easily, since in most cases clients do not believe that helpers can change their situation in a positive direction. Moreover, due to low appreciation, professionals are not motivated, and reach burn-out much more rapidly. Burn-out has several symptoms such as negativism, cynicism, inflexible attitude, and the rejection of renewal. In extreme cases, paranoia might emerge as well, when the social worker feels that the colleagues and bosses are there only to make their life more difficult (Zastrow 1995).

Burn-out was ranked as a frequent phenomenon in the field of social work and child protection, which is caused mainly by the accomplishment of too many tasks full of responsibility and a high number of clients. It occurs frequently that helpers face difficult cases but are alone to take decisions, are unable to surpass dilemmas, and bring the problems home. The most frequent causes of burn-out are the following: too many working hours, lack of a career plan, lack of appreciation both on the part of clients and managers, low income, lack of power, and erroneous working policies (Zastrow 1995). According to the examinations of Maslach, burn-out is less significant with those persons who regularly analyse their personal experiences and feelings with their colleagues, and thus they have the chance to get a feedback about problematic situations or their work in general. This secure background means a lot when a crisis situation needs to be solved (qtd by: Zastrow 1995: 79–80). Thus, reflexivity, just as the supportive background of this profession, the team, and consultation or supervision are all protective factors. The interviewees were consistent that it is of utmost importance that professionals identify their own limits, and make an abstraction in case of a negative impulse. Unsuccessful intervention is not necessarily and exclusively the helper's failure, as clients often project their own faults onto the expert. It is also important to examine whether the service provider ensures a proper background for development, relief, and everyday work in general. Generally, professionals recognize burn-out on themselves and their colleagues. As a solution, analysts suggested case discussions, individual and group supervision, which is in many cases not automatically ensured for experts. A further step is to establish good relationships with the colleagues since in problematic situations they expect positive reinforcement from one another. An outstanding proposal was to have more holidays since in a loving family is much easier to go through annoying cases at home.

As we have already mentioned, cooperation with clients is in many cases placed in a hierarchical system of relations. For interviewees, it is clear that clients expect them to help in sorting out a difficult life situation, but they consider a serious problem that in most cases clients let professionals take all the decisions, and expect them to put an end to their suffering as an expert, to rectify the problem, to cure the teenage child, and to represent them in administrative issues. Taking the experiences of the helpers, we can say that these are excessive, unreasonable

expectations since the majority of the clients live in extreme poverty, and it is impossible to find immediate solution to their problems. Many helpers have the impression that clients want to force out radical changes from their helpers, they assign helpers some sort of a "saviour" role. However, the opposite attitude can also be observed towards the family helpers of child welfare services when clients wish to be "left alone". These clients keep a rigorous distance from the helper; they do not want to let them into their private sphere. They are in a constant fear since their first encounter because they dread that the process is irreversible, and at the end their child would be taken away (Szilvási 2006, Rácz 2012).

Concerning the typology of clients, the interviewees distinguished two main categories in what concerns cooperation: helpful clients and impeding clients. Helpful clients are generally aware of the limits of their competence, are cooperative, and are worthy of help. They accept that helpers cannot solve everything, are motivated in fixing their problems; moreover, they realize what they need to do in order to have a good relationship with the expert. It is much easier to cooperate with these people, the relationship is also more sincere since they accept to be advised and they speak much more openly about their problems. Impeding clients have a narrow-minded attitude, they do not accept the helper's opinion, moreover, react quite aggressively to the slightest critic. A complete lack of motivation or will to act characterizes them, and they expect an activity on the part of the expert. Cooperation is also difficult with reticent clients, who fear to speak about or are ashamed of their problems. In the case of family helpers of child welfare service, the refusal of cooperation is coupled with antipathy. Clients often presume the helper has bad intentions, and the only thing they can think about is that the helper wants to take away their child. They are especially keen on provoking fear in the helper, and they do not accept any advice; they are completely reluctant (Hüse 2014). According to the experience of professionals, clients are informed, they know that experts who meet children have the obligation to report. Therefore, clients are not entirely sincere, they do not dare to speak about their problems since they think that opening up could have serious consequences. Some fear social stigmatization, which is why they do not want their problems to become known. In such cases, clients try to show an unreal image of their situation towards the helper. If the helper still manages to establish a trustful relationship, it will break once an authority measure is implemented, since clients feel that they were betrayed. This is a two-way process as the authority of the expert enhances, but the client's trust decreases. However, the principle of authority is contrary to the set of values of this profession.

The persons interviewed within the framework of the research see themselves as exposed. Especially young social workers feel so, due to the lack of experiences and limited self-protection mechanisms. They also expressed that the sponsor, operator, professional coordinator, as well as clients have much too high

expectations towards professionals. In the case of child protection professionals, the chance of committing a mistake is much higher, and thus responsibility is higher too. All this is coupled with the interest of media for well-saleable, valuable stories of suffering. Interviewees considered clients too as entirely defenceless due to their difficult situation and insecurity.

## Ethical dilemmas in the practice

Basically, five types of dilemmas can be distinguished when examining the everyday functioning of social work: 1) the dilemma concerning intervention and non-intervention; 2) objectivity and subjectivity; 3) the role of a professional and that of a non-professional helper; 4) the dilemma of who deserves the service; and 5) the dilemma of values and interests (Andok–Tímár 2002). The task of a social worker is to represent the interests of the client. The role of a social worker encompasses two main functions: control and help. The control function is quite controversial since the autonomy of the client must always be considered. Concerning help, it is to mention that it is often switched towards a pitiful guardianship (Varsányi 2006).

In a significant number of cases, experts suppress their moral dilemmas even though they frequently face situations when they cannot feel empathy, which do not fit into their set of values: "those moral dilemmas, which arise in the everyday practice of social work, obstinately resist any attempt to reduce them to psychological issues" (Jordan 1994: 66). Helpers can find points of reference in the Code of Ethics of Social Work (2011). "Social work is a professional activity based on the ethical principals determining the responsibility of social workers. The social worker has the responsibility to ensure professional services within their competences, according to their sphere of activity".[10] Many professionals in the field of family care mentioned that the conflict between spouses and partners often causes problems. In such cases, clients try to conceal the conflict, to misrepresent themselves and family members in order to gain the helper's empathy and compassion and to have the helper's on their side. In such cases, the dilemma is caused by the fact that clients expect help from the family helper, who in turn ca not be a partner in denigrating the other party, cannot act to anybody's detriment; as experts, they have to put the child's interest on the first place. Experience shows that clients feel that the helper abandons them or even takes the other party's side. In such cases, they expect from the helper to enforce the principle of justice: "They expect us to do justice among them, but mediation isn't about that! I can't take on this role of a justiciary" (Mediator).

10 Code of Ethics of Social work. Introduction, Article 4: http://3sz.hu/sites/default/files/uploaded/etikai_kodex_2011.pdf.

A moral dilemma occurs in almost each child welfare case since these experts have to take decisions affecting children's lives. Such is the case, first of all, when one has to decide whether displacement is a grounded and proper decision, whether it would be better for the child to live in the child protection system, whether a real solution was achieved to the family's situation, while they agree that every child needs their real family and displacement should be only an ultimate solution. A further cause of the dilemma is whether all possible assistance was given to the family in order to keep the family's unity (Szilvási 2006, Rácz 2012). Professionals gave account of dilemmas concerning adoption as well; for example, in one case, the dilemma was caused by the fact that the adopting family had lost their own child two months earlier, and it was obvious for the helper that they had not overcome this yet.[11] It is also a cause for dilemma when the sponsor of an institution sets certain conditions to the offered support and donation; for example, in one case of Christmas donations, the assisted could not be a Roma and in case of families at least one of the parents should have been employed. In many cases, conflicts overshadow the relationship between the sponsor and the manager or the leader and the employee within a specific service, which also causes moral dilemmas to the workers. In the professionals' opinion, in such cases, professional debates are rejected, decisions are taken by use of power, which influences their treatment of clients as well. Several researches highlight that experts have few possibilities to elaborate and introduce new methods or to shape their work and working conditions. They have less influence in personal issues, for example, in the employment of new work force and in the elaboration of documentations, regulations, professional programmes. In lack of these, quality work also meets many difficulties (Rácz 2006, Rubeus Egyesület 2015).

The international literature reflects the challenges of the profession as well as its low social prestige (Biggerstaff 2000, Varzinskiene 2009, Eustern 2014). Literature highlights, among other things, how difficult it is to define the concept of social services at a European level as the term is used in respect to a variety of services, and a number of concepts are used interchangeably as social work in different countries in different ways, like social care, social services, and social work activities. (Notably, the Hungarian practice of child protection and social work are separate, child protection is typically a pedagogical task.) Asquith et al. (2005) believe that there are various manifestations of the professional crisis such as: a professional identity crisis; erosion of the boundaries between professions; no increase in the number and qualifications of workers; high staff turnover; deteriorating working conditions; lack of resources; hindering effective social work, etc. Asquith et al. (2005) claim that although professional identity in social work is inseparable from the current characteristics of the specific organizational

11 This case means the substitution of professional rules with a merciful attitude, since in such cases a child cannot be placed with a family until mourning was completed.

structures, it would be more useful if the identity of the profession were based on the fundamental values and principles of the profession so that social workers' activities should be more distinguished from the other human service work, thus protecting and limiting the scope of the profession. The 2008–2009 global economic crisis accelerated, deepened this process burdened with uncertainty and challenges. As seen in the European Social Network's (2015) *Public Social Services in Crisis*: *Challenges and Responses*, this assessment study highlights that between 2008 and 2014 the studied countries, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain, were forced to make austerity measures due to the economic crisis reducing the social and care spending. Naturally, the crisis has greatly affected the living standard of the population, increasing poverty and social exclusion, and this compels social and child care to search for new ways and open the question as to how it is possible to provide high-quality services with shrinking resources and worsening working conditions. As an outcome of searching new ways, the measure and method of the state's role should be reconsidered, community resources channelled, and communal social work strengthened.

## Conclusions

The findings of our research based on a qualitative method show that professionals have difficulties in finding answers to the challenges of their work and to social changes. In many cases, they feel abandoned and without proper tools, and due to the low prestige of their work they, too, see themselves as excluded. They feel exposed like their clients.

The analysis of the interviews points to the fact that the pervasive role of professionals in social work and child welfare is damaged in the course of their work and dilemmas concerning interests and values often arise in everyday work. Cooperation with clients and the representatives of power (managers, sponsors, decision-makers) is burdened with conflicts. In the course of the analysis of stories of suffering, the search for individual answers to the client's specific situation acts against professional practice, while values of the profession get damaged, for example, cooperation, based otherwise on trust, becomes grounded by authority or, instead of empathy, mercy becomes the moral basis of help.

While we expect reflexivity on the part of experts, as they are parts of a hierarchical system, they are not given the opportunity to expose their point of view, to dissolve their doubts; they respond with suppression to the suppressive system and give help in function of merits. The lack of self-reflexivity in many cases means that experts in social work and child protection do not even have the need to expound their opinion.

The functions of education (on behalf of a proper socialization) and empowerment (in order to enhance autonomy), incorporated by the helper, mobilize and extinguish the roles of the *victim*, *chaser*, and *rescuer*. The helper respects the person in need, and represents their rights and interests. In accordance with the profession's values, they believe in the existence of the client's resources and positive features that can be mobilized, and they offer the client opportunities starting from the idea of freedom. According to Krémer (2014), in practice, it is precisely the offering of opportunities that is omitted. According to the triangle of the drama, in the context of assistance, it is easy to identify the victims who do not trust themselves and are not capable of assuming (individual and professional) responsibility for their own deeds. The client can also be a victim, who shifts responsibility and problem solving to the expert. The chaser undervalues the victim if they take the control over the victim's life, undervalues their abilities, does not trust that they would be able to solve problems together, with proper professional help and the mobilization of social support. This could be a reason for prejudice, contempt, detestation, aggression which could also be verbal towards the other. Finally, the rescuer's main feature is that they do not trust in the ability of the victim to interpret a problem and to act, and therefore they take over control from the client, who assumes the role of a victim (Berne 1984). The question is which the hidden losses of these "games" are that the profession can give account of. According to Berne, one way to avoid games is consciousness and open communication. Our research shows that fear, uncertainty, and distrust are present on all levels of this profession, namely on all levels of the helper–helped, helper–associated fields, helper–power, helped–representative of power. In addition to this, due to low self-confidence and self-esteem, the helper fears that they would commit an error, that their family life would be harmed because of burdens they carry home, and also fear the judgment of the society, which receives news about their work through the false voice of the media, typically through extreme cases.

Debates initiated repeatedly on the crisis of this profession show directions of change (for example, No 3/2014 of the periodical *Esély* and No 2/2015 of the periodical *Párbeszéd*). However, for the sake of a change, it is indispensable that the state fulfils at least its minimal obligations, namely that it ensures the framework of social work, the set of conditions for professional activity, a wide range of possibilities for proactive and reactive interventions, the opportunity for evaluation and follow-up, and the framework of quality (Rácz 2014b). The rest is to be solved by the social care and child protection profession.

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# The Development of Volunteering in Post-Communist Societies. A Review

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**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the development of volunteering at aggregate level in the post-communist societies, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Volunteering as a formal activity performed for organizations or associations is an older activity in Western Europe, but in Central and Eastern Europe it has been a new phenomenon after the collapse of the communist regime. During the communist rule, volunteering was compulsory for children and for adults as well. In this period, not only the voluntary activities were under state control but also the civil society, which is the seed-bed of volunteering. After the collapse of the communist regime, volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe decreased. The main reasons of this are the bad experiences in communism. In the transition in Central and Eastern Europe, the culture of volunteering in some countries is better developed, such as in the Czech Republic, while in others less developed, such as in Romania or Bulgaria. At aggregate level, the main determinants of volunteering are democracy, value change, secularization, and individualization. All these processes have occurred in Western Europe, while in Central and Eastern Europe are just in progress. Besides the communist experiences, that is why volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe is less developed.

**Keywords:** volunteering, post-communist societies, modernization

## Introduction

Nowadays, volunteering is a widespread activity and it is interpreted from many perspectives. The definition of the term depends on cultural and social backgrounds. In the special literature, there are a variety of definitions about volunteering. For example, Juknevičius (2003) considers volunteering an unpaid activity for the benefit of others. The volunteer offers time or energy or money, and in exchange receives moral satisfaction (Juknevičius 2003). Others (Shead 1995, Voicu and Voicu 2009) consider volunteering as a formal activity within an organization.

In this paper, my goal is to present – based on special literature – a theoretical background regarding the development of volunteering in post-communist societies, focusing on Central and Eastern European post-transition countries. First, I will present some definitions about volunteering and its motivation and how modernization influenced the development of volunteering in general. During the processes of modernization, democracy, cultural changes, secularization, individualization influenced volunteering tendencies. Then I will present volunteering in postmodern societies. In Putnam's (2000) interpretation, it seems to be a declination of volunteering in postmodern societies, while Inglehart (2003) considers that volunteering is not declining, just transforming into new types.

In the next part, there is briefly presented how the communist leaders interpreted volunteering. During the communist rule, volunteering was compulsory for every citizen and it was made for the benefit of the state. After the collapse of the communist regime, during the transition, the volunteering as a free choice appeared as a new phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe. At first, volunteering was surrounded by social prejudices, but over time volunteering started to be a common activity driven by either external or internal motivations. Finally, I will present the differences between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe related to volunteering tendencies. In spite of the modernization processes and measures, volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe is less developed than in Western Europe.

## The definition of volunteering

Volunteering is a complex term with a variety of meanings which depend on cultural and social backgrounds. Different authors use and emphasize different characteristics of volunteer activity (Voicu and Voicu 2009). In Juknevičius' (2003) definition, volunteering is an unpaid activity for the benefit of others or that of the environment. The volunteer offers his/her time, intellectual or physical energy, or money, etc. In exchange for this, he/she receives moral satisfaction, the approval of others, and the hope of eternal life. The volunteers are not forced to be members of the voluntary associations; they can start or close their activities whenever they wish (Juknevičius 2003).

After Wuthnow (1991), the main character of the volunteer is the altruistic attitude, meanwhile others emphasize the un-altruistic character of volunteering. Tilly and Tilly (1994) stress that volunteering is uncommodified, while other authors consider it commodified. Wilson and Musick (1997) consider informal helping a sort of a voluntary activity, but after Shead (1995) volunteering is a formal activity. Voicu and Voicu (2009) consider volunteering "as a formal, non-altruistic, and uncommodified activity" (Voicu and Voicu 2009: 541). They "define

volunteering as an activity through which individuals spend part of their time, without any wage, by free choice, in a formal way, within an organization, working for the benefit of others or of the entire community" (Voicu and Voicu 2009: 541).

Others consider that volunteering is not a simply giving of time for somebody or for a purpose but also a cultural and economic phenomenon which is part of the organizational mechanism of a society and shows the sharing of the social responsibilities and the level of engagement and participation expected from the citizens (Anheier and Salamon 2001).

In this paper, volunteering is interpreted as a formal activity in institutional backgrounds.

Fényes and Kiss (2011) resume well all the definitions and characteristics of volunteering in four attributes:

1. Volunteering is a free-of-charge work and paid work is excluded. On the other hand, it is possible to financially support the voluntary organizations or to reimburse for the volunteer the professional costs emerged in the volunteer activity. These costs are such as meals, travel costs, or symbolic prizes. The definition does not include work based on individual initiative and made for the common good or work based on mutual help with relatives, friends, or neighbours.

2. Volunteer work means producing material, intellectual goods or services for the benefit of others (individuals, groups, or communities), respectively for the public good and for specific cases. In this case, hobbies, amateur engagements, sports, and games are excluded from volunteering (Fényes and Kiss 2011). Generally, volunteering is a helping activity which is highly needed with the decline of the traditional civic community based on solidarity, reciprocity, and community support. However, helping within the family or the relatives cannot be included in this category.

3. Volunteering is a non-obligatory activity, carried out by people's own choice and out of free will; thus, any obligatory voluntary work (e.g. in the communist organizations) cannot be regarded as voluntary work.

4. The volunteering motivation is intrinsic (subjective, value-oriented) and/or extrinsic (instrumental, but not directly material). It is not a purely altruistic pro-social activity and it can also be beneficial for the individual, too (Fényes and Kiss 2011).

There appeared many types of volunteering, which are based on different motivational issues. There are three types of volunteering: traditional (or old type), modern (or new type), and mixed volunteering. The traditional volunteer is motivated by helping others and is characterized by altruistic values. The new type of volunteering relies on motivations related to career development, personal growth, useful leisure activity, work experience, and professional improvement, and it is typical of young people (Fényes and Pusztai 2012).

## Modernization and volunteering

Nowadays, several voluntary-related researches focus on volunteering as an organizational work. In the wake of modernization and globalization, it seems that a new type of volunteering has appeared, which takes place in organizations and associations called voluntary organizations. Inglehart (2003) contends that membership and volunteering go together.

Voluntary organizations are regarded as bridges between the citizens and the state. In this sense, individuals acquire social and civic skills and habits such as collaboration, feelings of responsibility and solidarity, shared goals, and public spiritedness (Halman 2003). After Newton (1999), voluntary organizations also teach people trust, moderation, compromise, reciprocity, which constitute the civic virtue. Through volunteering, people also develop their skills of democratic discussion and organization (Newton 1999). At aggregate level, volunteering reduces the deviant behaviour, such as drug use, criminal activity, teenage pregnancy, etc., and increases the democratic and economic development (Halman 2003).

It is certain that volunteering is related to democratic regime. The democracy as the best political system is the seed-bed of civil society, but it is also true that the strong civil society is the key for the maintenance of democracy. To achieve this, it is important that citizens not only take part as voters but are also present in civic, political, and organizational tasks (Halman 2003). This has made possible the appearance in the modern society of three types of volunteering: volunteering in "green" associations, welfare- and healthcare-related organizations; volunteering for political and interest organizations; volunteering in religious organizations (Inglehart 2003). Halman (2003) claims that one of the main cogwheels of a society to become and remain democratic is the participation of individuals in voluntary organizations (Halman 2003). In other words, civil society is a transition to democracy, which strengthens the democratic consolidation and develops various accomplishments of established democracies (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014).

Another result of modernization is the change of values, which affects volunteering as well. Inglehart (2000, 2003) examined how the shift of values shaped volunteering. After the author, modernization gives rise to two distinct dimensions of cultural change. The first change is typical in industrial societies, where the traditional values changed to secular-rational values. This change brings a lower rate of civic activism. The second change is typical of the knowledge societies, where the survival values changed to self-expression values, which are conducive to a higher level of civic participation, especially volunteering (Inglehart 2003).

For the societies cherishing traditional values, the parent–child ties, the deference to authority, the absolute moral, the sexual standards, and the traditional family values are important; they reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide, have high levels of national pride, and a nationalistic outlook.

Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences. Societies with high levels of survival values are characterized by material values, the low rate of subjective well-being, relatively poor health, intolerance toward outgroups, low interpersonal trust, and rejection of gender equality. These societies also emphasize hard work. Societies with a high level of self-expression values have the opposite opinion about the above-mentioned. In these societies, there are high rates of participation in all three types of volunteering. People do not only express themselves but are also civically active (Inglehart 2003).

The history of communist rule also had a lasting impact on the value system. In the course of history, 25 societies experienced communist rule for periods ranging from 40 to 74 years. In these societies, there is a high level of secularization and a low level of self-expression values (Inglehart 2003).

Summarizing the foregoing, the entire historical heritage is reflecting on a society's value system, including religious heritage, colonial ties, the level of economic development, and the experience of communist rule (Inglehart 2003). However, the changing of the value system is reflected on the voluntary trends and the dynamics of a society.

Other characteristics of modernization, such as individualization and secularization, also had an impact on volunteering. With the appearance of individualization and secularization, the motivation and the patterns of volunteering changed from traditional to modern, from collectivistic to individualistic, from membership-based to programme-based. While the traditional volunteering was lifelong and demanded commitment, the new, modern volunteering is temporary and has a non-committal bases. Nowadays, volunteering is more based on personal interest and needs than on serving the community. Today, the volunteers do not take so much care for older or disabled people but are interested in 'trendy' problems such as refugees, human rights, animal rights, and other modern issues (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003).

The value change tendencies created by Inglehart (2000, 2003) are valid for the post-communist countries as well. The Eastern European countries were agrarian societies, where before the communist rule traditional values changed into secular-rational values. After the collapse of the communist regime, there occurred the more or less transition from survival to self-expression values. In the post-communist area, the process took place at various speeds. There are countries where the modernization was performed successfully, but there are countries where it is still in process. It is the same with the development of the democratic infrastructure. The transition in Eastern Europe is slow because it is initiated externally and it is not an intrinsic one. Western Europe tries to develop this area in all kinds of ways, e.g. the European Union, sorts of foundations, financial institutions such as the World Bank, etc. In a modern and democratic society, people have the chance to express their preferences, to satisfy their needs,

and to get involved in social life (Halman 2003). For people from the post-socialist bloc, this was a new kind of opportunity, which they had to learn how to use.

Finally, yet another factor is necessary for modernization: the international migration. There are social scientists (e.g. Aleksysnska 2011, Voicu 2014) who examined the effects of migration on civil participation. Aleksynska (2011) has shown that immigrants are active in the life of their hosting society, but there are also differences between the immigrant groups. The propensity of the immigrants to volunteering is influenced by the level of development of the country of origin as well as by their culture of origin. Immigrants from developed and non-Muslim societies are more likely to volunteer in the hosting society. However, the background of immigrants can facilitate or hinder their civic involvement (Aleksynska 2011). Another determinant of civil participation besides the original culture is the host society's culture. Voicu assumes that "the strength of its average effect on individual propensity to become a member in associations is two or three times stronger as compared to the culture of origin" (Voicu 2014: 631). If somebody has been for a long time in the host society, then the social norms and institutions help him/her to adopt the local participative patterns (Voicu 2014). This way, international migrants returning to their society of origin will bring along a new cultural participation, which assumes a higher level of participation in associations. Otherwise the returning international migrants can influence positively the civil participation, including volunteering in the society of origin. Based on Goodman and Hiskey (2008), globalization made possible for migrants to maintain a strong bond with the sending communities, which are now called transnational communities. In these kinds of communities, the migrant's involvement in the local civil society is higher and is accepted by the community (Goodman and Hiskey 2008). In sum, the social experiences of migration may increase the propensity to volunteering in societies of origin, where the volunteering is at a low level such as in Central and Eastern Europe.

## Volunteering in postmodern societies

Volunteering, more exactly the organizational volunteering in the so-called developed societies (e.g. America, Western Europe) is an older activity than in other societies such as post-communist countries. From the developed societies came the tendency to help the disadvantaged countries with material goods or with human help in difficult situations such as natural disasters, wars and social conflicts, diseases or famine. Over time, the development of volunteering in these countries has made a long way.

Putnam (2000) is the first social scientist who claimed that the civic participation in the Unites States has declined. In his view, some of the reasons of this decline in post-industrial societies are, for example, the increase of time spent in commuting

and watching television or the increase of female participation in the work force. In other words, in post-industrial societies, participation rate is lower than in other countries (Putnam 2000). The highest decline is among young cohorts, what could be explained with two reasons: (1) the impact of the life cycle: youth do not prefer volunteering as much as old cohorts do or (2) there is a generational change: the youth are less able to volunteer when they get older (Putnam 2000).

Putnam's (2000) most important attribute is that the decline of civic participation in the Unites States is a generational change, which means that the younger generation's civic engagement is lower than that of the older generation's. Inglehart (2003) considers that volunteering has not decreased, only traditional volunteering is less, but the new type of volunteering is more frequent among youth, such as volunteering in more flexible organizations, e.g. sports organizations.

The general view is that economic development brings the rise of volunteering, but Putnam's (2000) finding contradicts this expectation. Inglehart (2003) suggests that the decline of direct participation tends to be linked with the rise of the industrial society. Industrialization brings secondary associations, which have many members on paper, but in practice just a few are active. In other words, the appearance of post-industrial society brings urban sprawl, longer commuting time, two-career families, electronic communications, etc. Those listed below cut the time and energy available for civic activities. In the light of these, economic development is not raising the rates of civic participation but is hindering it and bringing long-term intergenerational cultural changes (Inglehart 2003).

Putnam (2000) found in his research that the major feature of the decline in civic activism is intergenerational nature, which means that the younger birth cohorts show lower rates of participation than older birth cohorts. The question which Inglehart (2003) puts is as follows: "Is this a uniquely American phenomenon, or something found across advanced industrial societies?" (Inglehart 2003: 60).

Inglehart (2003) and his colleagues examined data from 17 rich countries and 31 developing and ex-communist countries. They came to the followings: younger people show lower rates of membership and participation in various types of voluntary associations than the older fellows, but also the young show higher rates of membership and volunteering than the old. So, it is not so easy to find the reason of the decline of civic activism (Inglehart 2003).

Inglehart (2003) found that young people are more active in youth and sports organizations than the old people. In rich countries, the young are less likely to be members of other types of associations. In developing societies, the young are more likely to be members of everything except social welfare and other voluntary associations than older people. This result shows that the phenomenon may be linked with economic development. But when Inglehart (2003) and his colleagues examined the volunteering, they found that the young are more likely to do unpaid work. In less developed societies, the younger cohorts are likelier

than the old to be members of any kind of association, and likelier to do volunteer work in all types of association. This pattern shows that intergenerational shift in rich countries seems to be applicable (Inglehart 2003).The most popular volunteer organizations in the 50 examined societies are religious, church organizations with 12 percent, sports, recreational associations with 8 percent, and with 7 percent are social welfare organizations for the old, the handicapped, the deprived as well as education, arts, music, and cultural organizations. Less popular volunteer organizations include peace movements, Third World Development, and human rights groups with 2 percent (Inglehart 2003).

At the level of the 50 societies, there are three types of volunteering associated with three underlining dimensions. The first type is volunteering in environmental associations, peace movements, welfare activities for the old, the handicapped or the deprived, volunteering in health-care, and developing poor countries' activities. In certain countries, this is the dominant type of volunteering. It is quite the opposite in ex-communist societies, where volunteering rates fell with the end of communist rule. Summarizing the results of Inglehart (2003), on this type of volunteering, the most powerful impact has the percentage employed in agriculture and the society's score on Survival/Self-Expression values (Inglehart 2003).

The second dimension is related to volunteering for political parties, local organizations concerned with poverty and unemployment, women's groups, and labour unions. This dimension is highly present in communist countries such as China and Vietnam, in agrarian societies such as Uganda or the Philippines, and in advanced industrial societies too such as the US and Sweden. In post-industrial societies, Self-Expression values are higher and there is a high employee rate in the service sector. One aspect of these, employment in the service sector, reduces volunteering in this type of volunteering, but Self-Expression values increase volunteering in this kind of groups (Inglehart 2003).

The third type involves volunteering in religious or church-linked organizations, youth work, sports groups, educational and cultural associations. This dimension is characteristic of US and three African countries (Zimbabwe, Uganda, and South Africa). Inglehart (2003) found that cultural change has a strong impact on this type of volunteering; the transition from Traditional to Secular-Rational values is linked with declining rates of participation in these groups. On the other hand, the shift from Survival to Self-Expression values is raising participation (Inglehart 2003).

The level of volunteering is not equal in Western Europe too. The general tendency is that volunteering decreases from north to south and from east to west. The highest level of volunteering is in Sweden and the Netherlands, while in Italy and Spain it is the lowest (Voicu and Voicu 2009).

At the individual level, volunteering depends on education, religious practice, social network, income, and age. In other words, people with a dominant status

volunteer more. At aggregate level, the level of development, widely trusted and better-educated citizens influence the level of volunteering. In sum, volunteering depends on culture and resources (Voicu and Voicu 2009).

With the appearance of individualization, people became disconnected from family, friends, neighbours, and social groups, and grew more interested in personal realizations such as developing a lucrative career, personal happiness, having success and achievements, meanwhile neglecting public interests. Among the consequences, there are increased crime rates, marital breakdown, drug abuse, suicide, tax evasion, etc. (Halman 2003).

After Putnam (2000), four factors are responsible for the erosion of social capital, which also explain the decline of voluntary activities:

1. The increased pressure of time and money – people are so occupied with their work that they are unable to get involved in civil activities like volunteering.
2. Increased mobility. Americans move so often that it is difficult for them to get acquainted with their neighbours and to engage in voluntary activities.
3. Traditional family – the carrier of social capital is on decline, which appears from the increase in marital breakups and the decline in the number of children.
4. The impact of technology and mass media. People's scarce free time is increasingly devoted to watching TV and the need for direct personal contacts is reduced (Putnam 2000, 246).

Increased mobility, time pressure, and the impact of technology decreases the inclination of people to be involved in voluntary activities (Halman 2003).

According to Putnam's (2003) research results in America, volunteering in churches and clubs had declined, while the volunteering in charity and social services had risen. For this, the explanation is the age of volunteers, because the older generation had appeared among the volunteers. This is possible because this generation was "socialized in a time when civic values were highly valued" (Halman 2003, 185).

In post-communist countries, volunteering for organizations or associations is not so common. The reason is the bad experience from the communist rule. In this period, the civil society was under state control and volunteering was compulsory, even not complying with it being sanctioned. However, while civil society was under state control, there were some independent organizations too, which were against the communist regime.

With the collapse of the communism, organizational networks (controlled by the state) ceased, too. There was no state to protest. In the transition period, the infrastructure of the NGOs could not develop as well as it was expected. For example, in Romania, there did not emerge any detailed law about voluntary work. Not only people do not recognize the benefits of volunteering to their life but organizations and associations also share this deficiency.

## Volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe

The concept of volunteering in the transition became out-of-date in Central and Eastern Europe because of the requirements demanded by the communist state concerning the free time and effort contribution for some common social, cultural, and political causes (Anheier and Salamon 2001). The development of the civil society in the 1990s was a new phenomenon just as democracy.

The main condition of the development of democracy is the network of voluntary associations. Civil society does not exist without voluntary associations. The civil society's essential character is the civil participation of the citizens in public life (Juknevičius 2003). In Eastern Europe, during the communist rule, not only the political sphere was under total control of the Communist Party but also the social sphere and welfare development (Rimac and Zrinščak 2010).

There are two kinds of concepts about the changes in post-communist countries. The first is linked with the name of Marius Povalis Šaulauskas. Šaulauskas (1998) had distinguished four orientations of social change in post-communist societies:

1. Restitutive: orientation to the restoration of old, non-existent social structures and institutions;

2. Imitative: orientation to the creation of social structures and institutions that originated in different social environments;

3. Continuative: orientation to the development and modification of the existing social structures and institutions;

4. Innovative: orientation to the autonomous creation of distinct and qualitatively new social structures and institutions (Juknevičius 2003: 127–128).

The second concept is related to Rimac and Zrinščak (2010). On the one hand, they consider that the post-communist societies – in spite of having changed the formal procedures – did not change their behaviours and values significantly. On the other hand, the social costs of the transitions were high and had a significant effect on people's social relations and values (Rimac and Zrinščak 2010).

In post-communist societies, the development of civil society came off in two steps. In the first step, which is called the revolutionary period, development was very fast and it was guided by the restitutive and imitative orientation. In the second period, called evolutionary, the rhythm of development was reduced and the continuative and innovative orientations were stressful. This approach can be applied to voluntary activities, too (Juknevičius 2003).

Juknevičius (2003) emphasizes Karl Marx's (1975) definition about the division of labour. The individual is subordinate to the division of labour and labour is life's principal need. In 1961, the theory of Marx (1975) about communism was applied to the programme of communism builders. Marx's aim was to change the labour concept from a disagreeable duty into a source of pleasure (Juknevičius 2003).

The communist rule in all of Eastern Europe stemmed from Soviet Russia. So, whatever happened there affected Central and Eastern European countries, too. Volunteering in Soviet Russia was characterized by the followings:

1. Red Saturdays (*subbotniks*): Vladimir Lenin was the first leader of Soviet Russia, who tried to put all of Marx's theories into practice. Lenin introduced Red Saturdays, when all Soviet citizens worked in their workplace for free and students did some charity work. Red Saturday was held once in a year, a Saturday close to Lenin's birthday. It was emphasized that these actions brought economic gain, and not the feeling of achievement, which is important is any voluntary action.

2. Voluntary works in trade unions: after the Civil War, the number of military-related voluntary organizations increased together with the rate of sports and cultural organizations. Lenin called them trade unions. The participation in these organizations responded to social integration.

3. All voluntary activities involved children and adults, too. Children had to assist the lonely, the elderly, and the disabled. Volunteering strengthened unselfishness, sacrifice in youth.

4. Voluntary work was totally under state control. Volunteering was compulsory, it was called 'compulsory volunteering'. That kind of volunteering was the *subbotniks*, which was not an individual choice. It is not accidental that after the collapse of the state pressure, Red Saturdays disappeared and the importance of volunteering suddenly fell (Juknevičius 2003).

The theory of Rimac and Zrinščak (2010) contends that the modernization intention of the communist state resulted in clear boundaries between public and private life, between bourgeois and the working class, named dual social order. In this period, civil society did not exist and connections across the society were extremely limited. The dual social order generated a strong division between "us" and "them", and as a result the practice of solidarity and social sensitivity was manifested only in closely related social groups (Rimac and Zrinščak 2010). In this social situation, voluntary activities had no place.

The whole actions succeeded by the communist rule led to the distrust of people in voluntary work and organizations. In the first part of the transition, the establishment of the NGOs was realized on external initiatives (e.g. World Bank). In the second part of the transition period, these external sponsors left, and the civil society could not organize itself. The associations established after the regime change fell. They exist only on papers, but only just a few of them are active.

## The dynamics of volunteering in post-communist countries

Volunteering has changed significantly after the fall of totalitarianism. In the socialist society, two types of voluntary associations existed: truly voluntary and quasi-voluntary associations. The truly voluntary organizations were the opposite of the system: this kind of organizations included, for example, religious associations, underground political circles, or green movements. Quasi-voluntary associations were completely controlled by the state. These were, for example, professional associations like Young Pioneers or the Young Communist League (Juknevičius 2003).

After the communist rules collapsed, truly voluntary associations started to disappear because there was no state to be opposed to, while the quasi-voluntary associations disappeared because they had lost the control of the state (Juknevičius 2003).

In the new situation, there are three basic scenarios of the development of voluntarism in post-communist countries:

1. In the countries incorporated into the Soviet Union, influenced by Marxism, volunteering was firstly creased by the old ideology and the continuative orientation was weakening. After these statements, volunteering in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia should decrease more significantly than in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria.

2. Volunteering has a large influence on the population's capacity to build new political regimes and on their operation under democracy and their cooperation for the development of public good. Post-communist countries in 1998 were divided into two groups: Poland, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic composed the first group. In these countries, reforms were carried out rapidly. Here, volunteering should have fallen less significantly. The second group was composed by Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. In these countries, democratic reforms were not introduced so easily, and thus voluntary actions should have a significant decrease.

3. Neither the influence of Marxist ideology nor the speed of political and economic changes had a dynamic impact on the development of civil society, including volunteering (Juknevičius 2003).

In the 21st century, there also are problems with the development of the civil society. In many respects, people could not get over the communist experience. They still have problems with trust, free work evokes bad memories in them and they consider it a waste of time, at least in Romania.

Voluntary organizations in post-communist countries can be classified into six categories:

1. Welfare organizations (including social services for the elderly, the handicapped, or disadvantaged people and organizations concerned with health, poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality);
2. Religious or church organizations;
3. Trade unions and professional associations;
4. Political parties and movements;
5. Interest groups (youth clubs and movements, sport or recreation, education and cultural activities, women's groups);
6. Ideology-based movements (third-world development, human rights, ecology, animal rights, and peace movements) (Juknevičius 2003).

Trade unions had ceased after the decline of the communist regime. The number of working people for trade unions declined in post-Soviet countries because under the communist regime membership in trade unions was compulsory, but these trade unions did not fulfil their part: the employees had no right to complain to employers or to strike. It is natural that in post-communist countries this type of trade unions broke up. The importance of religious organizations increased in the democratic milieu, except in Bulgaria and Poland. In fact, we can expect some decline in all countries after secularization. Welfare organizations under the communist regime were out of law in spite of the need for them. The state was declared as the main provider of all welfare facilities, but this has changed after 1990. The state was not able to answer all the needs of its citizens. In general, the civil sphere can solve the welfare problem if the state is weak, but in the case of post-communist countries there is a dilemma whether the civil society is consolidated enough to mobilize itself and take action for the welfare of citizens. It is the same case with the interest groups and ideology-based organizations. The exception is the Czech Republic, where this kind of voluntary actions have declined the least (Juknevičius 2003).

There are only two countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic and Hungary, where the democracy and the civil society is advanced, and the level of volunteering is rising, but the potential in this direction exists in all the post-communist countries (Juknevičius 2003).

The degree of volunteering participation of the individuals in a society depends on the opportunities available and the number of voluntary organizations. In Central and Eastern Europe, the voluntary sector is just in "an embryonic state" (Crawford 1996: 111). The economic development is the driving force for voluntary organizations because economic wealth increases individuals' opportunities to spend more time in different kinds of organizations (Halman 2003).

The other part of the reasons can be located in the character of the communist rule. Communist modernization was just a fantasy. The state just practised its power while individuals were suppressed. "For several decades, the state completely discouraged civic society and individual initiative" – the public space

was the place where the lies dominated. In this public space, public activities were characterized by the pretended attitudes and emotions. This kind of experience in post-communist countries "led to the rejection of public life and, implicitly, of volunteering as a way of acting on behalf of others". Moreover, the meaning of volunteering was reinterpreted and falsified by the state. It was compulsory to participate in party rituals and do unpaid work as voluntary work for the state. The time of volunteering was controlled by the state (Voicu and Voicu 2009: 553).

As the result of the communist regime in Central-Eastern European countries, the rate of volunteering is very low. In Russia, it is the lowest, 8.8 per cent. The rate is somewhat higher in other Eastern Europe countries with an average of 16.2 per cent, while Romania's rate is 15.7 per cent. It is curious that Poland (13.7%) and Hungary (14.8%) have lower rates of volunteering than Romania (Juknevičius 2003).

From the researches ran by Fényes and her colleagues (2015) in Hungary, it turns out that the new type of (or modern) volunteering is partially present among young people. The youth have mixed motivations for volunteering: besides the intention of helping, there appear motivations related to career development or the useful spending of leisure time. It is also true that the employers do not take voluntary experiences as much into account as it happens in Western European countries (Fényes 2015).

## Differences between Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe

The difference between Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe was always evident. In Western countries, where the democracy is stable, the volunteering rate is much higher, while in newly established Eastern countries it is lower (Juknevičius 2003).

The changes after the communist rule had an important impact on all components of the social system. The most visible are the economic and political changes, but they depend on the changes of the social structure and social values. The differences between Eastern and Western Europe can be observed in the lack of participative values, mistrust in democracy and governments, less developed entrepreneurial values, self-responsibility, autonomy, and individual planning (Voicu and Voicu 2009).

There are two main approaches of the social scientists which aim at finding the reasons of why people get involved in voluntary activities. The first approach focuses on individual and local resources (income, social and human capital). The more resources an individual has, the more likely he/she is to volunteer.

According to the second approach, a volunteer is managed by his/her beliefs and values; in other words, the cultural dimension has an important impact on volunteer work. Membership in the communist area has a negative effect on the determination of volunteering. These countries developed a non-volunteering culture. Some of the reasons are the lack of democratic experience, the rural aspect of the whole area, and the patriarchal population. In this kind of societies, people used to solve their problems with face-to-face methods and not by civic participation in voluntary organizations (Voicu and Voicu, 2009).

In general, the main predictors of volunteering in the majority of the European countries are education, religious practice, social network, income, and age. People with a dominant status are able to volunteer more often. In ex-communist countries, in predicting the volunteering social capital, religious practice has a lower importance, while income is more important. This is relevant for Romania as well (Voicu and Voicu, 2009). In Western societies, volunteering is transcending national boundaries and is becoming an international phenomenon, while in Central and Eastern European countries these transnational phenomena are less common (Anheier and Salamon 2001). Among the students in universities, programmes like Erasmus or Erasmus+ are more and more popular, which increases international volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe, too. This fact confirms again how the level of education effects volunteering.

In Central and Eastern Europe, volunteering has social prejudices because of the communist experience. However, people who volunteer do not feel pride for their work. The fact that somebody works for free is not recognized socially or even by most of the employers.

The most voluntary actions took place after the European Union had declared the year 2011 the European Year of Volunteering. In Eastern Europe, this was the year until when the post-communist countries had been trying to develop volunteering in different ways. For example, in Hungary, the School Community Service for the students in high school was introduced or in Romania the 78/2014 Act of volunteering was renewed.

Another difference between Western and Eastern Europe is the existence of volunteer centres or local co-coordinating agencies. In France, Netherlands, or Germany, this kind of establishments exist, which inform citizens about volunteering opportunities or match volunteers with organizations that might need them (Anheier and Salamon 2001). In Central and Eastern Europe, this is not common. In most of the countries, just voluntary organizations had some kind of statements of their volunteers, but there were no central databases. In this way, citizens willing to volunteer and voluntary organizations could not work together appropriately.

## Conclusions

Volunteering is an activity which is related to social life and is affected by democracy, welfare, economic development, and cultural changes. In general, volunteering means giving up on and overstepping egoism at the individual level, but if the ideological background changes it will have an impact on volunteering in a whole country (Juknevičius 2003). For this, the post-communist area is a very good example. The communist rule had a strong control on the civil society, which resulted in 'compulsory volunteering' called *subbotniks*. After the collapse of the communist regime, volunteering declined in these societies because of experiencing the deformed volunteering culture.

With the passage of time, the decline stopped. Voicu and Voicu (2009), analysing the data from the periods of 1990–1993 and 2005–2006, concluded that the rate of volunteering in post-communist societies is increasing. People started to get involved in voluntary activities for the sake of the other or the collectivity (Voicu and Voicu 2009). Volunteering in organizations is an 'import' from the Western European culture, but in spite of this the volunteering culture in Eastern Europe is different. Combining the post-communist culture with the Western culture, there appears a new value pattern with elements from both cultures, which influences the development of volunteering culture in Central and Eastern Europe. In some countries, the rate of volunteering is lower, like in Russia, but there are countries where the rate is high, like in the Czech Republic or Slovakia (Voicu and Voicu 2009, Juknevičius 2003).

Before the communist regime, in the inter-war period, volunteering was not a common activity either. In this period, the eastern societies were patriarchal societies, and the inhabitants were not involved in organizational activities (Voicu and Voicu 2003a). So, until 1989, volunteering had been a missing link in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting from the 2000s, volunteering still constitutes a new phenomenon and can still be interpreted, after Voicu and Voicu (2003b), as a "missing link on the road to European integration" (Voicu and Voicu 2003b: 15). Today, we can say that the culture of volunteering is in embryonic state because cohorts born in the late 1980s socialized in the transition period when the Western 'introduced' volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, these cohorts are able to volunteer (see Fényes 2015).

Taking into account that people with a better education, wealthier and young are more likely able to do voluntary work, the best solution to improve the level of volunteering in Eastern Europe would be focusing on young and better educated people because they are sensitive toward civil issues and are able to get involved in voluntary organizations. For them, one should show the advantages and the rewards of volunteering and advertise for them the volunteering opportunities (Voicu and Voicu 2009).

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# Youth and Regionalism. Research Note on the Hungarian Youth's Value Preferences

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**Abstract.** In Hungary, the geographic and settlement environments determine and influence the youth's present and future opportunities, aspirations and values. Different opportunities in terms of quality and quantity are available on each level of the settlement hierarchy, often creating gaps in the youth groups of the society. Inequality relations cause the most significant disadvantages in the lives of the rural young people that greatly influence their quality of life, values, and plans for the future. In this study, we analyse the results of the latest nation-wide representative research on youth, especially the regional characteristics of the youth's value preferences.

**Keywords:** youth, regional inequalities, regionalism, youth research

## Introduction

In Hungary, the family socialization process has changed a lot during the twentieth century. The grandparents of today's youth experienced strong community and family control in childhood; later, generational boundaries became less obvious. Today, gender discrimination has diminished, parental and community controls have loosened up. However, the changed social and economic situation hinders establishing an independent existence, i.e. a life independent from parents. The boundaries of children's and adult existence have merged, which generates a number of conflicts. During the post-socialist transition, people had to face the fact that young people's life was no longer passing along as easily as planned as in the past (Domokos 2012). Formerly, the primary and secondary socialization

factors integrated young people into different careers in an easily predictable way. Today, however, they learn the rules for adult life from those who were socialized along the traditional ways of life. Young people incorporate a combination of norms, values, attitudes that will determine the development directions of the Hungarian society, the economy, and the policy in the long run (Ságvári 2012).

The political, economic, and social changes, however, have brought forth another kind of institutional framework, resources, services, and opportunities that bring along changed prospects and pose barriers for young people as well (Gazsó and Laki 2004). The increased average age has transformed people's life paths and the various life stages, and generations' paths have changed. Most of the young people schedule to complete their education, enter employment, form long-term relationships, get married, and establish a family differently than their parents have done. The study process and the world of work have changed, gender roles and relationship habits have transformed. The decisions for career and relationship cannot be regarded as final, so the process of growing up is becoming more and more uncertain (Somlai 2013).

Young people begin sexual relationships sooner and they start to make decisions about where and how they spend their free time earlier than the generation of their parents, but they attend school longer, and consequently they marry and have children later. Sexual maturity, growing up in a social sense, and entering employment become gradually separated. The dimensions of growing adult occur gradually and partly shifted in relation to one another. Young people meet most psychological criteria for adulthood, but do not have the essentially defining social features for adulthood, they are not incorporated into the institutional structure of the society (Vaskovics 2000). The milestones in adulthood – as for leaving school, starting a job, moving from the parental home, marriage, or starting a family – do not follow a certain pattern (Murinkó 2010). The formation of the new youth has taken place with the second demographic transition processes, thus changing the whole adolescence.

## Changes in the social situation of young people in Hungary after the change of regime

As in other developed countries, massification of graduate education has occurred in Hungary too, as the number of full-time students tripled between 1990 and 2010 (Somlai 2013). The position of learning has changed in the course of a career. Previously, completing school by a specific age was a requirement because then it was possible to begin an earning activity. As in other developed countries, success in the Hungarian labour market requires adaptation to the

changes. The skills quickly become obsolete, so people intent on success in the working world need to continually improve their knowledge and skills. A significant number of young people live under the compulsion of obtaining various qualifications. The middle-class families encourage their children to obtain higher education and greater cultural capital. A growing number of social groups try to hand down their social positions by motivating their children to compete for cultural resources, so the families are investing more time and effort into the training of the younger generations. This phenomenon extends adolescent life (Kabai 2014). By contrast, poor families who strive to meet daily substantial needs have no means to support their children's education for a long time. Children living in poverty can experience their disadvantages at the lowest levels of education, which are further worsened in the future. They become drop-outs, school-leavers without qualifications, taking on a much higher risk than those living under better conditions.

Upon the completion of studies, they could begin the integration into the world of work in principle. According to statistics, however, one in four unemployed is under 24, three-quarters of the unemployed young people look for work for more than a year in vain, nearly a quarter of this generation live below the poverty line, and one in five has no option for a profession (Csoba and Diebel 2011). On national level, young people have better qualifications; yet, there has been no increase in their employment. Labour market position was the central organizing force for carrier advancement for a long time. The transformation of the economic structure influenced participation in the world of work and family life. Before the nineties, unemployment was an unthinkable phenomenon, so, when it became a general phenomenon during the transition period, it most dramatically affected the whole population, but especially the most vulnerable social groups. The losers of the change of regime included school-leavers as well (Domokos 2012).

In industrialized societies, most of the young people and their families receive less support in the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, even though education and training are becoming more burdensome (Kabai 2014). Young people are compelled to live in their parents' families for a long time, where there is no way for financing their housing. Leaving the parents' house is a major position change in the lives of young people, wherein the social structure terms and conditions play an important role (Somlai 2010). Independent housekeeping from parents is the start of an independent lifestyle, in which the individual makes everyday decisions independently. In Europe, there are large differences in the average age of leaving the parents due to the structure of the labour market, the welfare system, the different characteristics of the housing market, and different cultural habits. Making decision for separation has different, important factors according not only to countries but also to the type of settlement and social groups (Murinkó 2010). The socialist state regime regarded housing policy

as a priority to create independent housing. The radical decline in the role of the state has limited young people's access to housing and to creating conditions for living independently from parents (Domokos 2012). In becoming adult, family background and state transfers play a predominant role, while the state transfers become more and more limited in the post-communist social context.

The cultural transformation after the change of regime brought a stronger enforcement of western consumer patterns, which favoured the popularity of cohabitation. Today, there exist marriage, cohabitation, the visitor relationship, mosaic families created by remarriage, and a number of other forms of relationships and family forms in our country (Tóth 2012). The life forms are optional and the variety of choices allows more flexibility but may also lead to greater insecurity (Somlai 2013). The youth's behaviour in relationships is adjusting to the transformation that has been taking place continuously since the change of regime. As the most visible sign, they make cohabiting relationships later and with less intensity than the previous generations. The first relationship attempts, however, happen at an early age. In the age of consumerism, personal fulfilment becomes a key issue for individuals and a key element in career advancement. As more and more time is spent on studying or working, people are not able to produce sufficient energy for cultivating personal relationships; thus, establishing and maintaining relationships become a difficult task (Utasi 2004).

Family and parental engagement occur as an option in modern societies, competing with other areas such as professional career or leisure. The majority of young people consider family as an important goal in life, but as they adapt to the changed life opportunities, the realization of the intention to start a family, especially its timing, changes (Vaskovics 1995). In many areas of life, unpredictability increases and life strategies – previously believed to be certain – have lost their guarantee – thus, postponing childbearing seems a realistic choice for many.

The prevailing values always adjust to the current existential conditions, and these changes entail the transformation of values. Younger age-groups tend to find those appropriate life strategies most easily that best adapt to the specific conditions (Ságvári 2012). The post-material values are slowly replacing material values. Individualism has become a strong organization power to manage everyday life, also prevailing in career and family planning (Somlai 2007).

The position in the global consumer culture has become an important factor in shaping identity. The Hungarian youngsters use digital technology like their peers living in the most developed countries, which has changed their communication, work, and learning habits – such devices have appeared that have transformed their way of life, have changed their way of thinking (Rab and Székely 2007). Large masses stay outside of their traditional relations, they only rely on themselves, facing all the risks and opportunities (Kabai 2014).

Hungary's traditionally low confidence level has not changed significantly since the change of regime as the experiences of the parents' generation are inherited in the dimensions of trust and mistrust. Trust is a key component of social integration. In relations burdened with distrust, people establish defensive mechanisms based on pessimism to avoid risks, which deters the creation of innovation on individual and social levels. The communities characterized by trust have better communication, collaboration, and a higher level of tolerance (Ságvári 2012), which favours the progress of young people as well.

Data from the fifth wave of the European Social Survey 2010 conducted on young Hungarians (investigating the age-group of the 15–29-year-olds) showed that their confidence level in the existing economic and political system and institutions is among the lowest on the continent. Moreover, unlike in most countries, young people are more dissatisfied in Hungary than the older generations. The youth considers corruption as a serious social problem which the state should tackle. They regard the citizens' role to be less important in the fight against corruption – most of them are convinced that their attempts would be unsuccessful. Young people have low interpersonal trust level, but this value is similar to the other countries examined (Ságvári 2012).

The youth do not constitute a homogeneous social group, but the presence or absence of various resources determines their way of thinking and organizing life. In the nineties, inequalities became bigger between young people, and those in the worst situation start with disadvantages at school and the workplace, which affects other areas of their life. The gap grows between the group of youth who have marketable skills, key competences in the labour market, and perspective and the group of youth who are drifting, permanently living in insecurity (Ságvári 2012). The type of settlement and its endowments where a youth resides have a significant impact on the intensified polarization processes.

## The characteristics of regional inequalities in Hungary

The main reasons for the emergence of the significant regional differences in the economy relate to the economic transformation after the political transition. During the economic transformation, the former key sectors degraded, which unilaterally impacted the outdated heavy-industrial regions and the agricultural regions, that is, the eastern part of Hungary. Operational capital mainly arrived in the western and central parts of the country (mainly along the Austrian–Hungarian border zone and the Vienna–Budapest axis) and promoted the establishment of competitive sectors and enterprises of advanced technology. Central Hungary – including Budapest and its agglomeration – and the North and West Trans-Danubian (western) regions had dominance in potentials to promote economic

development, which they have used to gain so much economic advantage since 1990 that the other regions have not been able to compensate.

Typically, these latter regions have an underdeveloped economy, a high rate of unemployment, significant ethnic and cultural differences compared to the social mainstream, and they are hubs of social exclusion. These phenomena are accumulating mostly in lagging regions. By the millennium, the rural poverty had become constant, the unemployment rate of rural youth had reached highs and stagnated there. Consequently, the reproduction of extended rural poverty began. The Hungarian phenomenon is particularly notable; while in the Western European countries poverty is concentrated in big cities, in Hungary, it is rather a rural phenomenon (Kovách 2012). In these settlements, the over-representation of the Roma population is noteworthy as well. The 'settlement comfort' here is substantially below the national average in terms of apartments, institutions, and commercial establishments. The population's age pyramid in the settlements in the greatest risk of poverty is constantly moving towards the young population, which clearly relates to the increased segregation of the population (Bihari and Kovács 2006). Approximately two-thirds of the children in need live in rural areas. Particular attention should be paid to the regions where the proportion of children living in poverty is over the national average, because small villages dominate these regions in terms of settlement structure. As a direct consequence, people living there have real difficulties to access basic health, social and child welfare, and public educational services. Regional dimensions greatly affect education in Hungary as well. In Hungary, mostly the regions and the size of the settlements influence the youth's education and the inequalities therein. The smaller the settlement is, the more likely is the inhabitants' educational level lower compared to the national average, preventing them from a higher educational attainment than a vocational qualification. The proportion of the groups of inhabitants with low educational attainment grows as the settlement hierarchy is lower in Hungary.

The trends in the emergence of regional inequalities in Hungary have two periods. The first period is the first half of the 1990s (the period right after the political transition), when the income gap opened up rapidly and significantly and the inequalities grew, whereas in the second period, in the second half of the 1990s, the emerged inequalities stayed on this high level. In this period, the regional income inequalities could be described in a well-defined way, that is, with the Budapest–country contrast. By the early and mid-1990s, the polarization processes had created a spatial structure strongly embedded in the present, whose essential elements are determined by the urban–rural development gap, west–east division, and the mosaic nature of urban–rural relation (Nemes Nagy 2004). Consequently, the inequalities between settlement types are a determining phenomenon in the Hungarian settlement and social structure, and still in

a wealth of relevant issues that are reflected in the social situation and in the presence of economic potentials. The disadvantages reinforce each other, and the regions in a disadvantageous economy, economic-geographic situation struggle with serious social problems (Obádovics, Bruder and Kulcsár 2011). Since the regional disadvantages have hardly decreased since the political transition, and the economic performance and the condition of human resources also remain heavily differentiated regionally, today, vast welfare gaps occur among people living in different types of settlements as concerns life conditions and perspectives.

The outlined regional inequalities and their effects influence the youth's current situation and future opportunities. The Hungarian youth's aspirations, values, and plans for the future are heavily dependent on the settlement dimensions that distinguish clear groups in this perspective. Consequently, on the lowest level of the settlement hierarchy, the presence of severe income shortage, unpredictable financial existence from month to month, and deprivation are considerably more likely to occur than in the lives of urban youth. We assume what young people over 18 consider the most serious or insurmountable problems belong more likely to problem types related to livelihood and uncertain future than to the lack of social, communal, and other values.

## Research and sampling

The Hungarian Youth 2012[1] Research is the fourth youth research in Hungary that uses a large sample. The research was carried out in 2012, interviewing 8,000 people who were between 15 and 29 years old. The major topics (family, childbearing, education, labour market, working and studying abroad, political attitude, media, sport, leisure, politics and religion, sexuality and drugs, housing situation and life conditions) of the questionnaire contained a total of 260 questions. Our study does not analyse the age-group of the 15–17-year-olds due to the characteristics of the chosen research topic; it particularly describes the correlations among young people over 18 (signifying maturity) that characterize their future, values, and visions about their future on the basis of regional-settlement dimensions of the place where they live. The sample formed on the basis of the above criteria contains 7,143 people over 18 years old, 49.9% of them are male (3,565 people) and 50.1% of them are female (3,578 people). The average age is 24.01 years, and divided into age-groups the proportion of people between 18 and 23 years old is 46.2% (3,297 people) and that of the people between 24 and 29 years old is 53.8% (3,844 people). A vast majority of people over 18, exactly 42.6% of them (3,160 people), have a certificate of final examination in secondary or vocational school and they are currently not studying in higher education. The second

1 Hungarian Youth Research 2012 made by 'Kutatópont'.

largest category is made up by people with primary education: they represent 25.3% (1,794 people) of the sample. The proportion of people with vocation (acquired in vocational or vocational secondary school) is 18.8% (1,328 people). Consequently, the proportion of people without a certificate of final examination in a Hungarian secondary school is large within the sample, it is larger than the proportion of people with a certificate of final examination, 44.1% (3,122 people). The rate of graduates or people attending higher education is 13.3% (939 people). In the sample, the majority of the young people live in East Hungary (42.5%, 3,034 people), 26.91% of them live in Central Hungary (1,930 people), and 30.6% of them live in West Hungary (2,185 people). According to the settlement type, the distribution of the sample is the following: 32.7% (2,335 people) live in villages, 33.2% (2,371 people) live in towns (not ranked), 2.4% live in one of the five towns with county rights (172 people), the proportion living in county seats is 16.7% (1,196 people), and 14.8% is the rate for the capital (1,067 people).

7.5% of the interviewed young people[2] are Roma or Gypsy (536 people). People who declare themselves to be Roma live mostly in villages (3.4%, 247 people) and in small towns (other towns) (2.5%, 182 people). The proportion of metropolitan Gypsies who live in big towns, that is, in Budapest, county seats, or towns with county rights is 20% (107 people) in the sample.

Most young adults assess their financial situation – based on subjective self-classification – as unstable (58.8%, 3,903 people), 38.2% of them (2,537 people) having hardly enough income, 16.3% of them (1,082 people) having financial problems from month to month, and 4.3% of them (284 people) living in poverty. The majority of the people who claim their financial situation to be stable (41.2%, 2,733 people) live well by managing their money (34.8%, 2,308 people); however, only 6.4% of them (425 people) live without worries.

Primary education (32%) characterizes mostly people living in villages – evidently, the lower the status of a settlement, the higher the rate of the young people with primary education. Most people without a certificate of final examination (primary school, vocational school, vocational secondary school) live in towns not ranked (other towns) and villages; from this point of view, 45.2% of young people living in small towns and 54.2% of them living in villages have low educational attainment. According to the data on the Roma's educational situation, the proportion with primary education is significantly[3] larger (64.0%) compared to non-Roma young people who mostly have vocational secondary or secondary school attainment (45%). There is a significant gap in the top of the educational hierarchy since the rate of young Roma people with a diploma is only 2.7%, while this rate is 14.1% among non-Roma young people.

2 We consider those respondents to be gypsy who chose the 'Roma, gypsy' option for the question: "Which ethnic group do you belong to?"

3 Value of Chi-square: 504,236, $p \leq 0.001$.

## Some summarized results of the Youth Research

The youths today are extremely conformist and adapt to the prevailing system seamlessly. They accept their parents' values and ideals of life without any particular criticism, and only 10% of them reject those, that is, rebellion is not typical of them. In fact, the youth living in Budapest are more rebellious (29% accept their parents' values) than those living in rural towns (47%) or villages (52%). Young people are passive, do not join organizations or care about politics, and do not voice their opinions. Their choice for a political value is characterized by the effort to be neutral and reserved towards politics. Very few of them would answer questions related to public life and politics because they could not answer or were so suspicious that they did not want to answer. Two-thirds of them did not answer the question 'which party would you vote for?'; only 30% want to vote in the next election and only 19% of them are certain to vote. The youth – 78% of them think so – share the opinion that Hungarian politicians barely care about young people's opinion. Their level of trust in social institutions is extremely low. They do not trust government, parliament, banks, or – as novelty – the president or the Constitutional Court despite that the latter has been one of the most popular institutions since the political transition. Young people do not believe in the system so much that only 40% consider democracy to be the best possible system; 33% of them gave the following answer for choosing between democracy or dictatorship: "For people like me, one system is just like any other", that is, the proportion of those who are insecure and would possibly accept dictatorship is really large.

Youngsters think that presently the biggest problems are uncertain future and unemployment. Young people spend their free time passively; usually, they just stay at home in front of a screen – TV, computer, etc. Few do sports; only one-third of the respondents say that they do some kind of sports outside of school at least once a week. They do not want or cannot move from home: 71% of young people between 15 and 29 years old live with their parents. They do not really know what to do with their lives: they are not willing to marry, have children, or even to have a relationship. It is proved that not only the rate of people living in marriage (10%) but those living in cohabitation has decreased; moreover, the rate of young people who never want a child has increased (10%) and so has the rate of those who live alone. Only 15% of young people between 15 and 29 years have a child.

Despite their uncertainty, they strive for an orderly life; mostly, they consider family, children, and homeland as values. Although they find it difficult to decide on marriage, 63% of them fancy a married life. They view the future quite pessimistically: they see few possibilities in employment, even though 40% of them work. The rate of unemployed among them is high (25%), but only 14 percent of them are searching actively for a job. They are aware of the economic

recession and they do not see the end of it (the last time when Hungarian youth considered the economy to be in such a bad situation was in 1994). A growing feeling of aimlessness has been affecting them since 2008.

## Settlement-regional differences as regards financial situation and level of subjective welfare

The results of the analysis of financial situation show that the settlement slope is a financial slope at the same time, when we primarily focus on whether the money, that is, the available income in the families, is sufficient for a month or they run out of it by the end of the month. As young people in bad financial situation (indigent) are concerned, people in Budapest experience the least money shortage, whereas people in villages experience shortage most regularly at the end of the month. The indigent young people living in villages usually have only primary education, the number of women exceeds that of men, and a significant majority of them live in East Hungary, but South Trans-Danubia is also overrepresented in this respect.

The vast majority of these young adults live in households regardless of the type of the settlement, where they cannot regularly spare, save, or make reserves. Therein, the fewest young people live in Budapest, while the rate of young people living in this type of household is extremely high in villages. The young adults who live in the most stable financial situation, in households where money never runs out by the end of the month, seem to live in Budapest and in county seats. From this point of view, the welfare divide occurs between the types of settlements as well as in contrast with the two previous settlement categories only about one-third of the people living in county seats, other towns, or villages say that they do not run out of money by the end of the month. The results on the possibilities of making money reserves reinforce this coherence. The ratio of households able to save money is equally low in all settlement types, but the advantage to people living in Budapest is clearly perceptible as compared to the people living in the other settlement types.

The ratio of occasional saving is much higher in each settlement type; the highest proportion is in county seats and Budapest, and it is below 30% in the rest of the settlement types. Debt is one of the substantial reasons for the strikingly difficult, sometimes severe financial situation. We cannot tell the extent of the indebtedness since the research did not aim at examining the pattern of spending, but the rates of indebtedness can be detected. The dividing line of indebtedness seems to be between Budapest and the other settlement types. The extent is the smallest in Budapest, while it is around 30% in the other settlement types: in county seats and

towns with county rights, 33.7% of the respondents have debts; this rate is 29.9% in the other towns, while 32.1% of the village residents have debts. Regardless of the settlement type, a significant proportion of the debts are housing loans, that is, the reason of indebtedness is the loan taken for housing in 40–50% of the cases.

This extent of indebtedness should explain the households' poor capacity to make reserves and that a great many experience money is running out by the end of the month. In addition, this reveals another problem: the incapacity to repay the loans and additional difficulties. Apparently, repayment means a big problem for 50% of the people in debt regardless of the settlement type. In connection with the experienced financial poverty, the analysis of the perception of subjective financial well-being clearly demonstrates the hierarchical differences between the settlements. The lower the settlement on the hierarchy, the bigger the proportion of the people with financial difficulties, or the indigent. This proportion exceeds the rate of 25% in the case of young people living in villages. Examining those who live in continuous financial insecurity (who can hardly make ends meet), the dividing line clearly appears between Budapest and the other settlement types. It also means that young adults living in households in Budapest experience uncertain financial management to a lesser extent than people in the other settlement types. Actually, young people (and the households they live in) with a stable financial situation claim that they live well by managing their (or their household's) money: the biggest proportion of them lives in Budapest (61.5%), whereas only 34.0% of young adults living in villages are satisfied with their or their households' financial situation. Ethnicity has significant influence on life conditions in Hungary. Because of the specific situation of Roma people, we should highlight the coherence that a significantly[4] great proportion, exactly 62.3%, of the Roma people in the sample struggle with financial problems every month or are indigent in contrast with 17.2% of the majority society. Non-Roma young people have considerably more capacity to save money, 84.2% of young Roma people (or their households) are not able to spare or save money. Consequently, the young Roma people (70.9%) struggle with money shortage at the end of the month, more than the young non-Roma people (24.4%).

## The most serious issues considered by the youth in regional dimensions

According to the surveyed young people, today in Hungary, the most serious problems arise neither from the shortages in social, environmental, communal, family or personal-individual relations nor from improper operation but,

4 Value of Chi-square 649,080, $p \leq 0.001$.

above all, the currently unpredictable future, the lack of aims, and the risk of unemployment pose insolvable problems. This 'problem-map' reflects some kind of anomic conditions and shows little differences between settlement types, only that the rural and urban youths prioritize the issues differently. Examination on regional differences perfectly demonstrates correlations to be in accordance with settlement types; the young people in East Hungary define the most serious and insoluble problems chiefly as hopeless, uncertain future, unemployment and employment difficulties, uncertainty of existence and aimlessness, just as the young people in West Hungary do. Unlike the other two regions of the country, the young people living in a better situation in Central Hungary define unemployment and employment difficulties as the most serious problems, but a hopeless, uncertain future, aimlessness and uncertainty of existence are also among their priorities.

## Decisive factors of values – what is needed for success?

In the light of the aforementioned, answers to the question "what factors are especially necessary for the young people's individual success in Hungary?"[5] become more essential. In all these three regions of the country, people indicated the most essential factors for success in the same categories at a regional level. Unanimous opinion in accordance with statistics shows that the most determining factor is a stable job, then good connections and acquaintances, and, thirdly, willpower and ambition. In contrast, there are some factors (very similar in the three regions of Hungary as well) that they never consider necessary for success, including good manners, enterprising, IT skills, manoeuvring, luck, violent behaviour. In East and West Hungary, language knowledge is dismissed as a factor for success, this being only considered in Central Hungary by a small rate (2.9%). In this case, we do not mention the analysis of settlement types because there is no visible difference between the opinions at regional and settlement level (from village to city) as we can find the same views in all settlement types as at regional level.

Regarding the individual techniques for success, young Roma people's values have some focus differences as compared to young non-Roma people's opinions. As detailed before, young people mostly consider the stable job – good connections, acquaintances – willpower and ambition trio to be the key for success regardless of regional affiliations. In contrast, according to young Roma people living in Central

5 There were 19 options that the respondents could choose from: 1. willpower, ambition; 2. honour, morality; 3. stable job; 4. health; 5 violence; 6. good diploma; 7 good manners; 8. good family background; 9. hard work; 10. intrigue, insolence; 11. language knowledge; 12. good connections, acquaintances; 13. money, finances; 14. suitability; 15. computer skills; 16. luck; 17. knowledge, preparedness; 18. manoeuvring, 19. entrepreneurship.

Hungary, the most crucial factors for success are good connections, acquaintances, then good employment, money, and finances. In East Hungary, they think the most important thing for success is a stable employment, then money and finances, and, thirdly, good connections and acquaintances. West Hungary is the only region where the Roma people think the same factors to be essential for success like the other young people do in the region. They think having a stable job is the most important, the second is willpower and ambition, and the third is good connections and acquaintances as well as money and finances.

The majority of the young people think that they have a chance to get the desired job (regardless of what problem they have previously highlighted as the most serious one on the 'problem-map'). 54.3% of them in East Hungary, 60.9% in West Hungary, and 53.6% of them in Central Hungary express optimistic views. These results also show that people in West Hungary are significantly[6] more optimistic and confident in that their career moves in the desired direction on the labour market. The young people in East Hungary, however, are significantly more pessimistic: 13.5% of them do not believe that they would ever get their preferred job. This rate is 10.4% in West Hungary, while in Central Hungary it is only 8.5%. The proportion of those uncertain about their future job is relatively high (it is between 20% and 30% in all the three regions of Hungary), proving that a great proportion of young people struggle with planning the future, and they are uncertain to ever get the desired job on the labour market.

The examination of the factors[7] that are most required to get the desired job or a good one in the views of young people shows significant[8] relations in the regional comparison. Young people in East Hungary think that the least needed factors to get a good job are family background (3.84), language knowledge (3.93), continuous learning (4.00), whereas the most needed factors are good connections (4.37), professional knowledge, skills (4,35), professional practice (4.31), support (4.26). There is a minimal difference in Central Hungary: young people think good connections (4.44) and professional knowledge, skills (4,46) have equal importance on the way to the desired job, and professional practice has similar effect (4.42). Outstanding is the role of support with the greatest value (4.34) in this part of Hungary. The young people in Central Hungary value the importance of language knowledge the least although this rate is 4.18. There is a significant difference in West Hungary, where family background (3.79), good educational attainment (4.03), and continuous learning (4.03) are the least important dimensions on the way to success on the labour market.

All these regional coherences confirm and strengthen the results of this research, stating that:

6 Value of Chi-square: 43,134, $p \leq 0.001$.
7 Graded on a scale of five.
8 Examining with the ANOVA test.

> Conformity is typical of them, they do not want to overthrow the existing status quo, and most of them accept their parents' ideals of life. Uncertainty can be observed among them, while commitment is missing in many cases, they are aimless, which they perceive as a problem in their generation, meanwhile they desire order in life. The passivity of the 15–29-year-old people has increased in the recent years, civil activity is missing from most of their lives, and they are apolitical and refrain from the issues of public life. They mostly spend their free time at home in front of screens, and sedentary lifestyle and stagnant deviant behaviour characterize them (Székely 2014:26).

## Summary

This study aims at summarizing the situation of young people over 18 according to the dimensions of settlement and habitation, primarily through factors and possibilities that determine chances on the labour market. The geographic, settlement environment determine and influence young adults' present and future possibilities, aspirations, and values. Different possibilities emerge on each level of the settlement hierarchy that often create gaps in terms of quality and quantity among the society's young age-groups too. The most determining social disadvantages arise from the inequality relations and occur mostly in young people's life who live in villages. The lowest rate of people with diploma and the highest rate of people with primary education exist here with all the short- and long-term consequences. Noteworthy is the phenomenon that confirms the effects of settlement levels, that is, the settlement slope is a financial slope at the same time. This means that money shortage at the end of the month mostly occurs in young people's lives who live in villages, while it occurs the least frequently in Budapest. In addition, an analysis on the young people's financial situation verifies that a so-called income gap can be detected between the group of towns with county rights, smaller (other) towns, villages, and the group of county seats and the capital city. Moreover, the capacity of young people living in villages to make money reserves and to establish investments to stabilize their future is reduced; they are more likely incapable of saving money as compared to young people living in big towns or in the capital. Consequently, young people who are in the most stable financial situation mostly live in big towns, that is, on the top of the settlement hierarchy. The problem of debts present in young people's life (or in their households) is an expressively influencing factor in their ability to make money reserves. Examination of indebtedness in accordance with settlement types shows the dividing line between Budapest and the other settlements, that is, the young people in Budapest experience debt the least, while regardless of

the size of the settlement, the rest of the young people experience it the most. The indebted young people chiefly live in villages or in small towns and have a certificate of final examination; a vast majority of them live from month to month or are indigent, or rather, they can only avoid money shortage at the end of the month if they manage their (or their household's) money shrewdly. The type of their (or their household's) debt is mostly housing loans regardless of the settlement type. The ability to repay the loans does not depend on the settlement type and it creates clearly critical situations in young people's lives. Repayment means a regular problem approximately for half of the indebted young people. One noteworthy result of the research demonstrates and confirms that the problems appearing in the first place of the youth's 'problem map' that seem to be the most insurmountable are fear of losing secure livelihood and aimlessness. This lets us conclude that they do not perceive that they control their own fate, and the concern for losing control over their own fate causes serious tensions for them. Nevertheless, they fear an unplannable future, aimlessness, and unemployment, which all point to this direction.

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# Twenty-Five Years in Collective Consciousness from Hungarian Perspective

## Research Note on Demographic Changes and Economic Development in Orbaiszék, the Eastern Part of Covasna County

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**Abstract**: Since the collapse of communism, Romania and its rural areas have been going through a major migration process that has been affecting both the economic capacities and the demographic growth of the countryside. This paper examines some of the root causes of demographic and economic changes going on in the eastern part of Covasna County called Orbaiszék (in Hungarian) in the post-socialist transition period (1990–2015). It also focuses on how the Hungarian community sees the last two and a half decades compared to the period before 1989. The outcome of the field research carried out in three villages, i.e. Harale (in Hungarian: Haraly), Pava (Páva), and Peteni (Székelypetőfalva), in 2014 and 2015 emphasized that population decrease, poverty, unemployment, and state desertion increased people's vulnerability to social exclusion. The developed survival strategies include work migration, multiple job-holding (where possible), self-supplied food production, and reliance on social aid. The survival strategies introduced so far do not show a long-term solution for developing viable strategies and sustainable economic growth; the transition period has still lots of issues to solve before coming to an end.

**Keywords**: change, transition, demographic, economic power, ethnic group, migration, poverty

## Introduction

More than twenty-five years after the fall of communism Romania is still facing major challenges regarding implementation of economic, social, institutional, and legal reforms. Transition from socialism to capitalism, the transformation from a socialist system to a market economy happens very slow and in some cases obstructed by those in power.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the main demographic and economic changes of the post-social transition period as well as the causes of poverty and migration in the eastern part of Covasna County. It also presents the way Hungarian people from the so-called Szeklerland region remember the former era and the way they see their present life. The study includes some of the results of the field research carried out in three villages from Covasna County, i.e. Harale (Haraly), Pava (Páva), and Peteni (Székelypetőfalva), during 2014 and 2015. The field study carried out in Harale and Peteni consisted of two main parts. First, the inhabitants were asked to complete a questionnaire which had 34 questions grouped along four main topics: family, household, farming, and relationships. A mixed questionnaire was used, questions were both open- and close-ended. Second, the responses given had been summarized, and then interviews were done in all the three villages. In this article, I will present a summary of the field research.

The research was focused on revealing the ethnic, religious, social, and economic structure of the villages as well as the effects of modernization and globalization processes going on after 1990. The focused and semi-structured interviews, completed by participant observation, aimed at revealing public consciousness and remembrance of the last decades. I have also used the results of earlier ethnographic-anthropologic researches carried out in the area, especially the results of the field research realized in Pava. I recorded five interviews in every village between 2014 and 2015. The subjects of the interviews were usually chosen from among the local elite; where there were no elite in the village, I took an interview with the people responsible of the village or the people who were 'looked up to' by the other villagers, whose deeds, decisions, and attitudes were an example to follow for the rest of the community. By local elite I mean here the best-educated and best-trained people of the local community, while people who are 'looked up to' are that group of people who exercise the major share of authority or influence within the community even though they are not highly educated or trained. These people usually try to do their best in order to serve the community and their common interests. The two expressions are close to each other in our view, the only difference being that people who are 'looked up to' nowadays are not necessarily the best-educated people; some of them gained authority due to their economic potentials or to their skills.

I also interviewed people who had moved from the villages but still went back to visit or work the gardens. They looked at the processes going on with the eyes of an outsider, and they were eagerly revealing details unnoticed during the research. The data obtained from the questionnaires was compared and completed with the data and the statistics made by the local governments, the National Institute of Statistics – Romania, and the data published in Hungarian publications.

The studied field, Orbaiszék, lies in the eastern part of Covasna County, historically considered the seat of the Orbai Szeklers. The region is geographically

well-defined: in the eastern and southern part, it is bordered by the Carpathians, in the west by the river Râul Negru (in Hungarian: Feketeügy), while in the north is neighbouring Kézdiszék, the northernmost part of Covasna County. Covasna County was organized on the territory of the former *Three Chairs*[1] (Háromszék). The name itself shows us that it historically consisted of three different *chairs:* Sepsiszék, Kézdiszék, and Orbaiszék, which were geographically defined units. The chair denominations are still used by the Hungarians and Hungarian-speaking Roma inhabitants.

The second section of the paper deals with the definition of the transition period and its different manifestations in former communist countries, including Romania. Transition is also highlighted by how it deals with ethnic issues and the solutions found and applied to the occurring problems, and/or the way they were treated by the governments. It also describes the reaction of the minority groups to the government policies and outlines the special situation of Covasna and Harghita counties in representing interethnic issues during the last decades. The following two sections analyse the demographic and economic changes characteristic to the transition period in the above mentioned villages. The last section concludes the topics and results discussed in this paper.

We must state that it is not our aim to thoroughly analyse all the root causes of migration and the cause–effect relationship between demographic and economic changes, but to give a description of the last twenty-five years based on collective consciousness and to connect memories to the ongoing changes.

## Transition in post-socialist countries

After the collapse of the communist regime, Romania – as most of the former communist-socialist countries in Eastern Europe – was facing the problem of building new legal and institutional systems which would respond to the needs of a democratic society and market economy. The uneven development of Eastern European countries shows that some countries succeeded more than the others in building new legal and democratic systems (Kyvelidis 2000). Political and economic elites in Central and East European countries reacted differently to the new situation they were facing. Serbia, for example, held a distinct position regarding the process of socio-political and economic transition: the first phase of the transition period (1991–2000) was disastrous for the country due to an unstable political situation (civil wars for the Yugoslav secession) along with a major economic crisis. The political changes in October 2000 brought along substantial material and institutional progress. Although transition reforms in Serbia have progressed, their political legitimacy is rather poor since veritable

1 Chair is a historic denomination for a smaller administrative unit.

social consensus has not been reached on the key issues (Vujosevic, Zekovic, and Maricic 2012).

The legal and economic development and the adoption of reforms in most East European states are due to Western economists who played an important role advising the 'shock therapy'. It assumed rapid price liberalization, privatization, legal and economic reforms; a leap towards capitalist institutional and market arrangements. In adopting shock therapy, Eastern Europe has managed to a larger extent than Russia and the Asian bloc states, meaning that it allowed the flow of private investment and the advent of Western businesses into the region. In the same time, the West was urging East European states to break with their communist past (Kyvelidis 2000).

The Eastern European states internalize the institutionalization of constructed world models with more efficient Western states, isomorphism playing a major part in their development. The whole process leads to more legitimacy in the eyes of the developed capitalist world. To the extent that the state's effectiveness could be enhanced, the reason would often be that states are rewarded for being similar to one another; the process was helping most of the states in their European Union accession. This similarity can be used in interstate transactions, in attracting career-minded staff, in being acknowledged as legitimate and reputable, and in fitting into administrative categories that define eligibility for foreign aid and investments (Kyvelidis 2000). Economies in Central and Eastern Europe (comprising Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, former East Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia) performed best in introducing market economy and social reforms due to their relative wealth during the socialist era, to their recent history of pre-socialist mature capitalism, and their geographic and cultural proximity to Western Europe. The Balkan states (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and the states of former Yugoslavia except Slovenia: FYR of Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia) had less cultural, geographical, and historical connections with Western capitalist states. Their revolutions were 'bloody' (in Romania) or delayed (until 1992 in Albania), and the successive political systems were captured by elite or regional interests, while the Balkan states are characterized by widespread poverty, organized crime, and political instability (Bezemer 2006).

The preface of a recent publication on post-communist Romania analyses communism under Ceauşescu characterized by a cult of personality based on clientelism (Sum 2015). It also states that the communist regime in Romania did not only cultivate a chauvinistic form of nationalism that was anti-Russian and anti-minority but was also characterized by extreme isolation, centralization, and economic mismanagement during the socialist rule. These characteristics also describe a part of the communist legacy the country is still struggling with.

Nostalgia for the former totalitarian regime both on cultural and individual level is seen as the manifestation of a fundamental mutation produced by communism

and then by transition. The antidote to frustration in post-communist states is *democratic happiness*. Romania, though, is characterized by unhappiness and hopelessness, which reflect the result of the incoherent and unstable legal system, endemic corruption and weak infrastructure, doubled by the lack of coherent country strategies (Ficeac 2015). The continuous waves of migration (millions of individuals) – especially among the taxable population – mass tax evasion, and incompetence for absorption of European funds have contributed to the decline of the pension and welfare system, the healthcare system, the education system, and all public institutions in general. Thus, democratic happiness can only be achieved by the consolidation of the democratic system (Ficeac 2015).

Studies showed that most Romanians admitted that a generation would need to pass before the transition might be considered complete. This new generation is firmly pro-democratic based on their participation in the 2014 presidential election or in the 2013 protests against the Roşia Montana mining project, which mobilized tens of thousands of young people (Stan and Vancea 2015). The positive examples of citizen participation still raise concerns about the challenges the Romanian political system faces. We can mention among them corruption, which continuously exists under a weak justice system, or the minorities who still face indifference and discrimination before the state. Salat and Novák (2015: 75) affirm that "although the relationship between the Romanian state and the Hungarian minority remains critical to political stability and democratic consolidation, the medium- and long-term impact of Romania's minority regime will also depend on its potential to address, with the tools of diversity management, the challenges faced by the Roma community". Another major issue is raised by the administrative capacity of the state, with the healthcare, education, and welfare systems in a constant crisis.

Referring to the Tismăneanu Report, Ficeac states that "communism lasted for almost seven decades in the Soviet space and over four decades in the European countries that had entered Moscow's sphere of influence after World War II, and its effects of the collective consciousness have been much stronger and longer lasting" (Ficeac 2015: 9). The Final Report of the Tismăneanu Committee outlined that "communism in Romania fell only officially on 22 December 1989. Unofficially, structures and especially communist methods and mentality continued to exist under different forms, representing manifestation forms of the old regime, transfigured but not fundamentally transformed" (Tismăneanu, 2006: 636). It has been ten years since the publication of the Report, but most of its suggestions are still waiting to be implemented. This slow transition to the democratic way of life as well as facing the communist past show us that Romania might have adopted some of the requirements of a market economy but not implemented the social-administrative reforms so necessary to ensure the minimum requirements of a decent way of life for its citizens.

Discussing the perspectives of the Hungarian minority in Romania, Salat expresses his concern about the effects of nation-state practices and discrimination, which (1) centralizes power and decision-making in such a way that all major decisions are made by the majority according to their interests, (2) promotes such language and education politics that favour the members of the majority, and (3) supports migration towards territories inhabited by minorities among the members of the majority. All these procedures are completed by positive discrimination whose effects are felt in the so-called ethno-business phenomenon. Referring to the results of the Ethno Barometer 2000, the chances of the Hungarian community to cope with the integrating policies of the Romanian state are very low (Salat 2005). The statistics of the censuses in the 21st-century Romania supports Salat's views as far as the Hungarian community is concerned. The analyses of demographic processes show that besides natural growth and net migration assimilation has also had a great effect in the identification changes of the Hungarian community (Kiss and Barna 2012).

Szeklerland (mainly Covasna and Harghita counties), one of the most mediatized regions of Romania, raises many questions on both sides. Scholars writing in Romanian or English mostly avoid discussing ethnic issues regarding Szeklerland as it is a very sensitive topic and mostly present in political discourses. The fact that the majority (Romanians) living here is a minority and the minority (Hungarians) form the majority in Szeklerland is an oddness that is hardly perceived in other parts of the country. Political discourses mostly deal with majority–minority relations without analysing the causes and effects of the ongoing processes. Researchers studied the traditional way of life (Biró 1998, Bodó 2000, Gagyi 1999), ethnic relations (Anăstăsoaie 1999, Anghel 2015, Dorondel 2013, Bodó 2002, Jakab and Pozsony 2011), ethnocultural diversity (Horváth and Nastasă 2012, Kiss, Fosztó and Fleck 2009, Zăloagă 2015), historic traditions (Ambrus 2012, Bárdi and Hermann 1998, Egyed 2006, Imreh 1979), and demographic processes (Kiss 2010, Kiss and Barna 2012) going on in Szeklerland and Transylvania on a large scale, but there has not been carried out a complex research on the post-socialist period.

## Demographic indices

The last 25 years have spectacularly put their fingerprint on the countryside. The demographic decrease between 2002 and 2011 is 7.3%, which ranks Covasna County among the least shrinking counties of Romania, the national average being 12.2% (Kiss and Barna 2012).

Between 2014 and 2015, I conducted a field research in three villages of Orbaiszék: Harale, Pava, and Peteni. The main reasons for carrying out a research

in these villages was to study the interethnic relations and processes going on in the last decades. I have chosen three villages that lie relatively close to one another, though each of them can be accessed in a different way. Harale lies at the feet of the Carpathians and can be accessed by taking a minor road, Pava lies by the county road, while Peteni can be reached by taking a minor road towards the plain of the River Feketeügy. There is one bus leaving from Harale to the neighbouring town of Târgu Secuiesc in the morning and coming back in the afternoon. There is no public transport to connect Peteni to any of the neighbouring villages or towns: locals use their own cars and horse-driven carts when travelling. Pava, now part of Zăbala (Zabola) village, is easily accessible both by bus and by train. I consider it important to know how these villages can be reached as it contributes to their development on a large scale. All the three villages show a drastic decrease in the number of their inhabitants as the chart shows below (Varga 1998, Pozsony 2010, Pozsony 2011, Szabó 2015).

**Table 1.** *Demographic description of the three villages (no of people/years)*

| **Village** | **Harale** | | | | **Peteni** | | | | **Pava** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | 1966 | 1992 | 2011 | 2015 | 1966 | 1992 | 2011 | 2015 | 1966 | 2010 |
| **Total population** | 393 | 274 | 215 | 201 | 266 | 160 | 149 | 154 | 865 | 828 |
| **Hungarians** | 392 | 272 | 209 | 170 | 266 | 102 | 139 | 76 | 786 | 344 |
| **Roma** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 58 | 0 | 78 | 0 | 392 |
| **Romanians** | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 79 | 92 |
| **Other** | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: The data used for 1966, 1992, and 2011 come from the official data of the population census published by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics; the data from 2010 was collected during the field research carried out by the ethnography students from Babeş–Bolyai University of Cluj; the data shown for 2015 were collected during my own field research. I have used the census data from 1966 as a reference point because it was the last official data referring to the village of Pava as an independent administrative unit. The village became part of Zăbala in 1964 as the result of a major territorial-administrative reorganization going on in Romania.

The data shown above have their logical explanations and reasons in the course of time and history besides the bad condition of roads and the lack of public transport. We will consider each village separately.

*Harale*, famous for its coopers making wooden, staved vessels had fruitful economic relations with Moldova and other parts of Romania, which is still preserved in the name of the road connecting Târgu Secuiesc with Focşani called Cooper's Road. The village became part of the village demolition programme in the 1980s, which was the reason why many people sold their houses and moved to the neighbouring town.

> It was in the 1980s when they were planning to demolish small villages... They [note: the Gypsies] bought the houses very cheap, for 5–10 thousand lei.[2] There were many people moving to towns, the inherited houses were also sold then in order to get some money (63-year-old man).

That was the period when ethnic Roma people started to buy houses in the village and settle down. By 1990, only four coopers were carrying on the traditional crafts and by 2015 there had left only one. The 2011 census data presents a continuous decrease in the number of the inhabitants and by 2015 the number of the people living there had dropped almost to half in less than 50 years, young people continuously leaving their home for the more developed parts of the country or abroad.

> Industrial centres attracted the people from here to Braşov, Târgu Secuiesc, and the children who inherited the houses do not want to come back; some of them only come home for the weekend. They do not get involved in country life. They do not sell the house and their property, but their children will not come to live here for sure. They will sell it! (63-year-old man).

According to our field research, the family structure of the village shows the following results: about 47% of the inhabitants are elderly, 24% consist of families where more generations live together (children, parents, grandparents), 12% form a nuclear family (parents and children), in the case of 10% of the total inhabitants, we have found that grown-up children stay together with their parents, 3% are young married couples and 4% shows cases where more families stay together. The family structures presented show that the process of population ageing is a persisting phenomenon in this village. The local kindergarten and elementary school also indicate this process as they are operating with one kindergarten group and one class running with major age-group.

*Peteni,* traditionally an agrarian settlement, was the first village in Orbaiszék where collectivization was successfully imposed already in the 1950s. The collectivist structure brought well-being to the whole village, it ensured the material background for their children to study further. Old people remember it with nostalgia:

> [...] it was Canaan during communism. We did not have to pay any duties, nor give in crops; they shared among the people everything that had been produced. It was possible because those who did not enter collectivization had to give in goods instead of everybody else. They were forcing them this way to enter collectivization (80-year-old woman).

2 Around $22,000–45,000 according to BNR currency exchange rates (www.anrp.gov.ro).

> There were big parties at the mineral water spring. The band was playing, we were singing and dancing. It was different from what we have now. They watch TV now, nobody goes out (82 year-old man).

However, starting from the 1970s, most of the youngsters did not return to their home village but stayed in the newly built factories in the towns of Braşov (Brassó), Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), and Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely) after finishing their studies. City life and the newly built block of flats attracted the young generations, offering them a totally new way of life. The inherited houses in the countryside were sold, which is how the first Roma families could buy houses in Peteni towards the end of the 1970s.

> They started to move to Târgu Secuiesc, they sold the house. The one where Józsi, the Gypsy, lives was sold this way. It was really cheap. They gave the house to Józsi, the Gypsy, for the price of a set of furniture because they needed to furnish the block of flat in Târgu Secuiesc (80-year-old woman).

The process of migration to neighbouring towns continued after 1990; there is a constant drop in the population number due to the lack of new-born children. During our field research, we have studied the family structures of the village, which resulted that 57% of the population are elderly living alone or with their spouse, 12% form a nuclear family, and in the case of 31% of the population more generations live together. We must also mention that only 54% of the houses are inhabited in the village, 46% are not inhabited or, in some cases, are used during the weekends. The demographic development of the ethnic groups living here shows opposing directions: the Hungarian ethnic group is characterized by population ageing, while the Hungarian-speaking Roma ethnic group forms a fast-growing community. The kindergarten and the elementary school are totally maintained by Roma children.

*Pava*, now officially part of Zăbala village, was traditionally inhabited by falconers. During centuries, the occupation has lost its importance and the locals got involved in forestry and agriculture. According to non-official data from 1992, there lived 873 Hungarians and 102 Romanians (Bartos 1996). The Hungarian-speaking Roma community members were also considered Hungarians in this dataset. The research carried out in 2010 numbered 344 Hungarians, 392 Roma, and 92 Romanians (Pozsony 2011). We can state that the demographic movements in the village have revealed a fast-growing Roma community and a declining Hungarian and Romanian population.

> The ones who study further never come back. I do not wonder. There is no place to work for them (58-year-old man).

The local kindergarten is maintained mostly by the Roma community: 80% of the children going there come from Roma families. The number of Hungarian and Roma pupils studying at the local elementary school is built up in two equal parts.

> There are 11 children in the first grade, six Hungarians, and five Gypsies. In the third grade though, only two out of eight are Hungarians (48-year-old woman).

Hungarian and Roma children go to general school to Zăbala as well as Romanian pupils who start their elementary studies there. Because of the very small number of children, the elementary class in Romanian language was closed down in Pava 10 years ago.

Post-socialist transition is rooted in the last decades of the communist era. The industrialization process that started in the 1970s together with the village demolition project had long-lasting effects on the countryside (Mungiu 2010). The real impact of village modernization can only now be assessed as we study the present demographic and economic situation. As we have seen above, the three villages show three different ways of development though they have a lot in common. The migration process that started with the industrialization had long-lasting effects. Educated young people and their children have never returned to their villages, they stayed in the industrial centres where they could acquire a higher social status or at least offer more comfortable circumstances for their children. These children were already born in the city and it became their natural habitat. After 1990, the migration process continued; as unemployment rates were raising, young people migrated to cities or abroad in order to live a decent life. In parallel, talented children went to study at specialized schools, and then at universities. After finishing their studies, they have tried to find a well-paying job in the city, and the majority has never returned home. The once fruitful communities turned into helpless and powerless ones in the case of Harale and Peteni. The fast-growing number of the Hungarian-speaking Roma community indicates the direction of the development these villages are heading to at present. The case of the village Pava shows a more sophisticated ethnic condition. Although it also witnesses a total change in its ethnic proportions and undergoes the loss of educated people, the fast-growing Hungarian-speaking Roma community shows a bigger effect on the village than in the previous cases.

## Restitution processes and economic power

In 1991, people could claim their land, forest, and other properties back. In Szeklerland, most of the land and forest was inherited by Hungarians, though after claiming the properties back much of them were sold to whoever was able to

pay for them. In the first decade of the post-socialist transition period, economic power was held by Hungarians in Orbaiszék, (Pozsony and Anghel 1999), but it gradually went over into the possession of the Romanian and the Roma ethnic groups (Szabó 2015).

In the villages we were studying, restitution processes started with the issue of the 1991 restitution law. All three communities managed to claim their lands and forests back, except for *Pava*, the largest village among the studied ones, which had altogether 646 hectares of land according to the 2015 official data, out of which 67% arable and 33% meadows. When we compare the data originating from 1879 (Pozsony 2011 – quoted data gathered by Ferenc Kozma in 1879) to present conditions, we realize that the whole territory, both land and forest, has undergone major changes. The territory of the village was 3,640 hectares in 1879, which had decreased to 1,116 hectares by 2015. The arable area decreased from 711 hectares in 1879 to 433 hectares in 2015, while the meadows increased from 119 hectares to 213 hectares. The most stunning change occurred with the forest, which lay on 2,565 hectares in 1879 and only 470 hectare was given back to the people by 2015. Due to the 1964 territorial reorganization of the country, the bounds of Pava decreased in favour of the neighbouring Covasna town; the 1968 administrative reorganization of the country annexed most of the territory of the Vrancei Mountains (Háromszéki Mountains) to the neighbouring Vrancea and Buzău counties. Thus, the previous owners have to travel to the seats of the neighbouring counties in order to claim their forest back. Due to administrative problems, they have had little success until now.

The old-new owners cultivate their lands, except the elderly and the people who inherited land but do not live in the village. These people let their land for money or crops. As there is no major farmer in the villages of Harale and Peteni, the tenants are mainly Romanian farmers coming from Zăbala, the neighbouring village. The members of the Hungarian community live on their pension and on agriculture. The members of the Roma community have not inherited any land; most of them live on social allowance the government ensures as well as on the allowance received after their children or they work in Hungary and come home only occasionally. "Some go abroad to work, to Italy or Germany. But they come home." (63-year-old man, Harale), and there is only one entrepreneur family in Harale dealing with second-hand clothing.

Extensive farming is not widespread among local farmers, only four people cultivate bigger lands than 20 hectares, and other three are farming on a territory of between 15 and 20 hectares including their own land and the leased ones in Pava. People live on agriculture and raise livestock mainly for family purposes. For 37%, the major income for the members of the Hungarian and the Romanian community in Pava is ensured by the pension they get, 10% work in agriculture, 20% work in factories, 19% take seasonal jobs, 10% are employed in services,

and 4% are intellectuals (Pozsony 2011). As the above proportions show, most of the people let their land, some take seasonal jobs, and only a small proportion has a secure income.

> The young go to work to these foreign factories, the trousers factory and the wheel factory. The latter is in Sfântu Gheorghe, there is a bus coming to take them. Mainly women are going. Some men go to the forest to work in logging. Many of them work abroad. In Hungary, Germany... (58-year-old man)
> You can hardly find someone to take care of the animals. They go to work to Hungary, but do not count that they get the same payment as home. It is very difficult to do anything here (35-year-old man).

As far as economic power is concerned, all three villages show similar tendencies: Hungarian community members are too old to cultivate their land or do not have the necessary machinery to work on a larger territory, so they let their land to the Romanian farmers from Zăbala. Pava, which is numerically larger, has more Hungarian farmers who try to work the land and also lease it from older people. It is important to mention that Zăbala is the administrative centre of Peteni and Pava villages, with a numerous Romanian community whose members are also involved in the local administration. Their possibilities for extensive farming were relatively higher after 1990 than those of the Hungarians; the restitution processes resulted large land and forest properties for many members of the Romanian community, in many cases due to their position occupied in the Local Commission for Land and Forest Restitution and also due to the fact that they had had the necessary material background for buying properties from the Hungarian community members.

Most of the people involved in agriculture in the above examples work the land only on a small scale in order to provide for their families. The ethnic Roma people live on social allowances, though the three Roma communities show different stages of development: the Roma of Peteni are very poor and live under miserable conditions, having large families; the Roma of Harale live in decent conditions and are supported by the ones working abroad; the Roma of Pava have acquired good living conditions in the last 25 years and also try to put their fingerprint on the village, but only in a territorial sense so far.

Although all the three villages have their own natural or traditional resources to establish an attractive living, they do not have the power or the leader to help them carry it out. The cooper from Harale organizes a camp every summer where they teach how to make utensils, casks and barrels, and other accessories out of pine wood. It is a popular initiative, but it takes place only once a year and does not exhaust all the possibilities the village and their inhabitants can offer. Peteni is rich in mineral springs and has a mineral water basin equipped with a

sauna house. It is not popular among tourists as it is poorly advertised. Pava lies right at the foot of the Carpathians and very close to Covasna spa. There is also a mineral spring in the upper part of the village and a quarry that has been closed down. Shepherds and people involved in forestry benefit from the proximity of the woods, but inhabitants rarely do so for recreational reasons. Every year on 26 December, a hiking tour is organized by the youngsters of Zăbala and Pava, which is very popular among people. Last year, around 150 inhabitants participated in this one-day hiking. It shows that there is a real demand for taking part in social occasions; it only needs to be organized.

## Conclusions

Twenty-five years after the collapse of communism people do not believe in change any more. The last decades have shown them that the changes they were looking for so eagerly would never come. Most of the inhabitants of the Orbaiszék region remember the communist era as a period of well-being and order, which they totally lack in present times. Although they admit that the former regime had its negative effects on people's lives, not all the three communities experienced the bad sides of communism, and time has made them forget the misfortunes they had had. What people really miss from older times is the *sense of community*, the occasions when they could be together. All of the interviewees remarked that individualization has become stronger among youngsters and even among middle-aged generations.

The Hungarian, Romanian, and Roma ethnic groups living together have responded differently to the ethnic and demographic processes going on in the three villages, as follows:

The changes have contributed to the decrease, weakening, and ageing of the Hungarian population as well as to the increase of the Roma ethnic group. Although there have not been visible and fundamental changes in the number of the Romanian population, their influence and role in state institutions have significantly intensified.

The constant rise in the number of the Hungarian-speaking Roma community ensures the maintenance of Hungarian-language education. We can witness in most of the villages that Hungarian education is sustained by the growing number of Roma children.

The economic power of these villages consists of the dimension of the land claimed, the land given back, as well as the ownership of the machinery used for cultivating land. The economic strength of village life is made up of the ownership proportions of the forest, the arable lands, the meadows, and the livestock raised; their ethnic division and cultivation outlines the economic

sphere of interest of the village. The main sources of income and the occupation of the population show not only the economic power of the given settlement but also underline demographic indices. Most of the agricultural entrepreneurs are of Romanian origin who lease the lands of the elderly Hungarian farmers not only in their home village but also in the neighbouring villages. Romanian and Roma communities have taken over the economic power; the economic resources have been mainly transferred to ethnic Romanian people, but they could not replace the educated leaders of the community in the traditional sense of the word.

The number of those working abroad is constantly rising not only among the Roma nationality but also among Hungarians. Smaller enterprises can hardly find proper workforce for unskilled jobs, while Hungarian unskilled workers hope to earn as much money as the members of the ethnic Roma group abroad.

The continuous economic changes have brought uncertainty in the life of the people and accentuated the role of money. There is a tremendous shift in values: in the 1990s, local communities were contesting for economic power, meaning the ownership of land, and for territorial ethnic representations (Pozsony & Anghel 1999), whereas today power has undergone a change in meaning referring only to money. We must also state here that unemployment rate has shown a hectic scheme in Covasna County in the last decades: in December 1991, the rate of unemployment was 3% and continuously growing, in February 2002, it was 13.5%, and in December 2005 it was 4.9% according to official data.[3] It is also important to mention that the industries developing in the region offer workplaces mainly for women, a fact which contributed to the shift of the traditional role of men and women. The effects of men working abroad and their children growing up without having a father model in their lives will be felt later.

The post-socialist transition period still has a lot to solve, local communities still try to reinvent themselves and find the surviving strategies which can respond to the present conditions and circumstances. A viable example of surviving strategy is in Tövishát (Sălaj County), where land owners have restarted subsistence agriculture, in which they focus on growing enough food to feed themselves and their families (Biczó 2013). We can also find similar tendencies in the Orbaiszék region, though on a smaller scale, which shows that people are trying to find viable strategies for the future.

3 http://www.anofm.ro/statistica.

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# Digital Transition: Children in a Multimodal World

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**Abstract.** With the Internet's omnipresence in both private and public spaces, children grow up immersed in a connected, multimodal, open world. The rise of Facebook and YouTube (i.e. the interactive, so-called web 2.0 platforms emerged in 2004–2005) led to the World Wide Web colonizing our everyday lives: we might call this phenomenon a digital transition. Meanwhile, after 2012, the pervasiveness of mobile technologies has enabled a broader access to online spaces across generations, geographies, gender and social status. The present research note aims at contextualizing preliminary findings of a qualitative study on digital literacy, conducted among children aged 6–8 in a school from a central Romanian small town.

**Keywords**: digital literacy, children aged 6–8, Romania

## Digital literacy of young children: a local study in the European context

Over the last decades, technological development has led to a paradigm shift in the communication landscape. Multimedial or multimodal spaces brought about by online platforms – audio, video, and/or text-based, synchronous and asynchronous channels of communication – have widened the choice of self-expression, learning, playing, and work. A major shift in our lifestyles has occurred since Tim O'Reily (2005) popularized the term web 2.0 standing for a multimodal, interactive cyberspace, designed as an architecture of participation. The 'digital turn' (Westera 2013: 141) brings about major transitions in the ways we acquire and store knowledge, the tools and channels of socializing, dating, or gaming. The term 'digital transition' encompasses the vast array of social, economic, and cultural transformations enabled by smart mobile technologies, more and more affordable for individuals and organizations. Digital transition is an organic part of the social transition described by Castells (2010) as the rise

of a network society. 'Multimodality' is a generic term used by linguists and communication theorists to mark the various channels of human messaging, from verbal or non-verbal to written texts, rebranded by information technology researchers to express this variety enhanced by the interactive World Wide Web (LeVine and Scollon 2004).

Given the increasing mobility due to devices such as smartphones, tablets, and wearable technologies, texts are produced and read across a range of spaces and involve a variety of networks, and this has brought about significant changes in everyday literacy practices (Arrow and Finch 2013; Avgerinou and Petersson 2011; Plowman, Stevenson, Stephen and McPake 2012; Smeets, Van Dijken and Bus 2012). The implications of this dynamic change for young children have not been examined in depth yet (Bakó and Tőkés 2015b, Marsh 2015).

Research aimed at exploring children's and youth's digital literacy has only been carried out since 2010 in a more systematic and comparative way, although the use of digital technologies as educational tools date way back in the mid-1990s. From innovative educational methods, ICTs have become major sources and channels of learning for the young generations. With the Internet providing a wealth of information for entertainment and learning, children and young people use online spaces on a daily basis. Their level of digital skills and competences measured along online behaviour across Europe – on a scale from 0 to 10 – shows significant differences between Romanian and other European kids. Although the European and the Romanian average scores for the diversity of online activities are similar, for specific online competences and the trust in such competences, European children perform better than their Romanian peers, as shown in *Table 1*.

**Table 1.** *Digital competences of Romanian children in European context (2010)*

| Measurement scale 0–10 | Specific online competences | Diversity of online activities | Trust in online competences |
|---|---|---|---|
| European average | 5.19 | 4.67 | 6.35 |
| Romanian average | 4.26 | 4.69 | 5.96 |

Source: Tőkés and Velicu 2015b: 440

Based on previous studies carried out in several European Union (EU) countries and the United States (Holloway, Green, and Livingstone 2013; Mascheroni and Cuman 2014; Rideout 2013), we started up an exploratory qualitative research aimed at mapping the digital literacy of children aged 4 to 8 years old in a kindergarten from Western Romanian city Cluj-Napoca and in an elementary school in Sfântu Gheorghe town, situated in central Romania. Funded by the Institute for Research Programmes of the Sapientia Foundation from 1 March 2015 to 31 July 2016, the inquiry is part of the EU COST Action IS1410 involving similar endeavours from over 30 countries (COST 2014). Our local results will be

thus compared and contrasted with European researchers' data and conclusions, based on a common frame of reference and interpretation developed in a white paper (Sefton-Green, Marsh, Erstad, and Flewitt 2016).

The present research note is focusing on the preliminary results of the inquiry conducted among children aged 6 to 8 years old from a preparatory class in a small town.[1] Final analysis will include, in mid-July 2016, both kindergarten and school children under scrutiny.

## Why and how to study young children's digital literacy?

The process of social change in family life, digital transformations, and the growth of a schooled society have deeply impacted children's lives (Sefton-Green et al. 2016). Despite the digital transition or the shift to a 'web-life' (Ropolyi 2014: 9), the landscape of access, skills, and understanding the Internet is fractured in Europe, with digital divides concerning frequency and quality of connectivity occurring mainly among the rich and the poor. As Sefton-Green et al. (2016: 3) contend:

> Whilst it is true that a child born in any affluent city in Europe in 2015 may come from a family immersed in digital technology, constantly connected to the Internet with every member of the household possessing a smart phone, tablet, with PCs, smart televisions in the home and schools awash with smart boards, 100% Wi-Fi coverage and so forth, we also know they will have classmates with very different experiences of the digital. Less affluent families may well only have access to the Internet via a smart phone, of which there may be only one in the household and reliant on precarious pay-as-you-go tariffs. For that child, school may be the portal to the digital century.

Children are engaged in reading, writing, and multimodal authoring across a range of screen-based media in homes and communities. The differences due to socio-economic status and family histories are worth exploring despite their vulnerable age and hardship to access their worlds in multiple contexts. In kindergartens and schools, well-designed tools and methodologies can facilitate children's learning in an interactive way. Young children's play with new technologies is crucial for enabling them to rehearse social practices of digital literacy for real-life situations (Bakó and Tőkés 2015b; Burke and Marsh 2013; Grimes and Fields 2012; Holloway, Green, and Livingstone 2013).

1 Preparatory classes are aimed at socializing children to school before entering the 1st grade in Romania.

Our qualitative inquiry was aimed at exploring the following issues:

a) The use of ICTs[2] by 4- to 8-year-old Romanian children (location, duration, activities);

b) The level of digital literacy of 4- to 8-year-old Romanian children;

c) Favourite technologies, platforms, and applications of 4- to 8-year-old Romanian children;

d) Attitudes of 4- to 8-year-old Romanian children toward ICTs.

Our methodological framework is based on a small-scale qualitative inquiry carried out in an affluent city's working-class kindergarten and a small town's middle-class elementary school.

Data was gathered from four key sources:

a) participant observation and discussion with children using tablets (20–25);

b) interviews with kindergarten and school teachers (4–5);

c) interviews with parents (10–15);

d) visual research: analysis of photos taken and children's drawings (20–25).

We have been asked at several conferences why the limitation to 4-year-olds in kindergarten and why not involve children starting from the 3-year-olds, this age marking an important shift in psychological development in terms of language use, capacity of self-expression, independence, and mobility. The answer is not only for convenience sampling – children from the middle groups are aged above four – but also for gathering more content-rich information in a limited timeframe, given the short amount of time available for our exploratory study (16 months only, due to small grant-funding requirements).

After the first, pilot data gathering, we have been also asked at conferences why not give a standard set of tools and techniques for children's' drawings for better comparable results? In our pilot study, we let the children choose their own technique and paper size. Indeed, works done in watercolour, though very artistic, were more difficult to decipher and subject to content analysis. In contrast, using the most familiar technique with children – coloured pencils – turned out to be both more detailed and appropriate in depicting imagery. We used these tools further on during our data gathering, and used standard A4-sized paper.

Another key issue was the controversial concept of 'digital literacy', how to define it and how to assess it? There is a growing body of research on this topic, ranging from a broad, overarching definition of digital literacy – including knowledge, skills, and attitudes alike – to a narrow, more instrumental, functionalist approach, focused mainly on skills (Rosen, Cheever, and Carrier 2015; Tőkés and Velicu 2015a). The European Commission uses the term 'digital competence' for the narrower sense and defines it as follows:

2 Information and Communication Technologies.

> Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) for work, leisure, learning and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, access, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet (DG CONNECT F4 2014: 3).

Meanwhile, the EU-wide digital literacy research project (COST 2014) defines and assesses this key-term on three levels (Sefton-Green et al. 2016):

a) Operational level: abilities related to the use of ICTs and informational content;

b) Cultural level: the process of decoding the significance of the operational level;

c) Critical level: the selective, flexible, and creative adaptation of ICTs.

Our inquiry used the broader concept of digital literacy, including not only what and how can a 4- to 6-year-old kindergarten child or a 6- to 8-year-old preparatory school kid perform with a tablet but also the way s/he understands technology, the language – both verbal and visual – used in relation to their digital worlds and the creative processes it involves.

## What do we know of children's digital literacy? A literature review

Our research team's MA student members[3] were instrumental in carrying out a thorough literature review of studies concerning digital literacy among children and young people, issued in Romania from 2005 to 2015 in mainstream journals.[4] Out of a list of 55 journals compiled by the research group coordinator, students created a database of 7,922 articles, among which – using search words for titles – we depicted those related to the Internet (241 articles) and those concerned with children's online behaviour: seven articles only. Despite the overwhelming role Internet plays in our lives since platforms like Facebook (2004) or YouTube (2005) have emerged and mobile technologies took over (2012), research on these topics is still too scarce.

With the growing body of research on children's online behaviour and their digital literacy, there is still a long way to go in contextualizing and actualizing inquiries on this topic. As broadband Internet access has become available in a fast pace to over 80% of the population in Romania (*Table 2*), parents and educators are likely to be more interested in understanding children's digital lives.

3 Mária Csíki, Boglárka Lovász, and Hunor Szőcs.

4 We defined 'mainstream journals' those indexed in databases and acknowledged as such by the Romanian Council for Research in Higher Education (CNCS).

**Table 2.** *Broadband Internet penetration rate in Romania (per 100 inhabitants) (2012–2015)*

| Reference date | Broadband Internet | Mobile broadband |
|---|---|---|
| 31.12.2012 | 50.4 | 35.5 |
| 30.06.2013 | 56.2 | 41.1 |
| 31.12.2013 | 68.2 | 48.0 |
| 30.06.2014 | 72.2 | 52.4 |
| 31.12.2014 | 81.1 | 60.2 |
| 30.06.2015 | 84.7 | 64.2 |

Source: ANCOM (www.ancom.org.ro)

Summarizing the richer international literature and the scarce local research on children and youth digital literacy and online behaviour, we may conclude as follows:

a) The importance of this topic is acknowledged across several disciplines: psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and communication studies (Holloway, Green, and Livingstone 2013; Mascheroni and Cuman 2014; Rosen, Cheever, and Carrier 2015);

b) The level of children's digital skills vary across age, economic status, residence, and cultural capital: the younger, poorer, rural, and working-class children are less skilled (Bakó 2015; Sefton-Green et al. 2016; Tőkés and Velicu 2015a);

c) Parents are disconnected from their children's online lives although they assist to it (Arrow and Finch 2013; Vinter 2012);

d) Educators are searching for new ways to integrate ICTs in their daily practices in order to catch up with the children's learning needs (Arrow and Finch 2013; Avgerinou and Pettersson 2011; Smeets, Van Dijken, and Bus 2012).

## Digital literacy of children aged 6 to 8 years old: preliminary results

After analysing a body of 34 drawings,[5] five participant observations with children using tablets, and six interviews – three carried out with educators and three with parents –, we found that all children under scrutiny had daily access to smart mobile technologies at home (phones and/or tablets), most of them with

5 Children made drawings two times: first time on the general topic of the Internet (June 2015), with techniques of their choice, and secondly on the topic of *Computers, tablets, mobile phones, and me* (November 2015), with coloured pencils. Out of 26 children, only 17 children's drawings were included in the research – of those whose parents signed the informed consent agreement form.

strict parent supervision in terms of screen time. Only one child out of 17 was let free to use his tablet whenever he felt so. When asked how they learned to use their smart devices, children answered they were guided by on older brother or sister or cousin, not by parents. When testing the Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (2014 Edition) used for the purpose of an enhanced user experience during our research, children have noted that although they have daily access to a tablet at home, it is smaller (7"), slower, and of poorer quality of display. They also complained about the slow download speed of games when they played at home.

All 17 children participating in the research were happy and keen to draw, test the tablet, and talk about their device use. Some of them (three children) even expressed their curiosity on the research details, and wanted to open a discussion on why are we, adults, curious about their way of using tablets and the Internet. All children found the browser and the Google Play Store at once, and asked permission to download a favourite game. All of them understood what an e-mail is and which application should be used for it, although they noted that had never tested it. As expected, all children tested used mobile devices for entertainment purposes mainly and were allowed to play downloaded games at home. Most of them used their parents' devices – only one child had his own tablet available "whenever I wanted to, except when a friend was coming by – mom told me it is impolite to use it when I have visitors" (boy, 7).

As for the drawings, children depicted a world of a family life immersed in smart devices – tablets and mobile phones. Compared to a pilot study carried out in 2013 in the same school among 2nd and 3rd graders, with a corpus of 128 drawings on the topic *My Family and the Internet*, we can detect a major shift from the desktop world to the tablets and mobile phones or laptops. While in 2013 the iconic drawing for the Internet was the desktop in the middle of the room, placed like an altar, with children and parents on the sides,[6] in 2015, desktops are almost absent from children's drawings. Although decoding children's drawings is a complex process, discussing with them and seeing their world both through visual and verbal narratives can give important clues (Anning and Ring 2004, Leitch 2008).

Parents expressed their concerns over their perceived low level of digital skills, and were more worried about their children's screen time than about the content they might access online. They were also worried about an unhealthy, static lifestyle that digital technologies bring about. At a meeting with all parents, when we talked about their concerns over the recent switch to digital textbooks in Romania, they considered such educational materials useful, but they considered a blended learning environment – with the mixed use of digital and classical books – more instrumental for children.

The interviewing teachers – all working with 6- to 8-year-olds – expressed their concerns over their lack of digital literacy and their difficulties in catching

6 See the sidebar picture of our research team's blog: https://digilit2015.wordpress.com/.

up with the students' learning needs. They considered necessary to participate in trainings to develop such skills, and were keen to practise more in order to enhance their digital literacy. They also noted that the Net Generation is more difficult to keep interested in class due to a narrower attention span.

## Conclusions and way forward

Although defining and assessing digital literacy is a debated topic for policy and research alike, there is a broad consensus on its importance and the different levels of analysis (DG CONNECT F4 2014, Sefton-Green et al. 2016).

Our preliminary results on 17 children aged 6 to 8 years old regarding tablet use, completed with participant observation and discussions with kids as well as interviews with three teachers and three parents, have led us to conclude that children are relaxed about smart device use, have a daily experience of it, and are immersed in multimodal technological environments through gaming, but when it comes to understanding opportunities and risks they prove to be mainly narrow routine users.

Meanwhile, parents are rather stressed about their need to catch up with the children's level of digital competence, and try to limit device use at least in terms of screen time, but are less concerned with children's online content consumption or security risks. On their part, educators would be keen to integrate ICTs in a blended learning environment if provided with training for a competent use of smart devices.

For a fine-tuned inquiry, further data needs to be gathered, and a comparative analysis with similar European research projects should be carried out in 2017. Broadening the research framework from small-scale approach and direct stakeholders (children, parents, and teachers) to policy makers, the gamer industry and other parties involved in children's web-life are likely to follow: it is a digital transition for us all.

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