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The Wealth Gap between Ageing Immigrants and Native-Born in Ten European Countries*

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Abstract: Using data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe from 10 European countries, this study contributes to the research on immigrants' economic incorporation by focusing on the nativity wealth gaps in mid and late life. Three origin groups of immigrants were distinguished: non-European, post-communist, and West, Central, and South European countries. We estimated the size of the wealth gap between each immigrant population and natives, the sources of the gap, and the trajectory of wealth convergence. The data revealed that the mean net worth of native-born groups was higher than that of all immigrant sub-groups. The gap was widest for non-European immigrants and lowest for West, Central, and South European immigrants. Differences in the rate of homeownership accounted for the largest portion of the gap, while neither differential levels of income nor education accounted for much of the gap between native-born and either non-European immigrants or immigrants from post-communist countries. Reception of gifts or inheritances did not account for a meaningful portion of the gaps. Estimation of the rate of convergence suggests that it would take an average of 85 years after arrival for an average immigrant household to bridge the wealth gap between it and an average native-born household. The rate of wealth convergence was somewhat faster for non-Europeans and slower for West, Central, and South Europeans.

Keywords: immigration, wealth inequality, European societies, immigrants' economic integration, SHARE data

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The ever-growing literature on immigrants' economic incorporation in host countries reveals that the economic disadvantage of immigrants is substantial upon arrival in the host country, but tends to decline with the passage of time. Hence, as immigrants master the local language, acquire cultural codes, adjust their occupational skills, and expand their domestic networks and ties, they experience occupational and economic mobility [e.g. Chiswick 2005; Algan et al. 2010; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2011; Maskileyson and Semyonov 2017]. Nevertheless, even if immigrants reach earning parity with natives at some point in the course of their working lives, the gap in accumulated wealth at later stages of the life course may still be substantial. This is because the economic disadvantages experienced by immigrants in their early years in the host country may limit their ability to save, invest, or purchase a home, and therefore to accumulate wealth.

Curiously, whereas the body of research on the incorporation of immigrants into the labour market of the host society has become substantial, less attention has been given to immigrants' accumulated wealth and wealth disparities between immigrants and natives at later stages of their life course [for notable exceptions, see Ferrari 2020; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 2013]. This neglect is unfortunate because well-being at an older age is largely dependent on the resources and benefits accumulated in the past. We argue that accumulated wealth better represents and better captures the potential for consumption and the ability to cope with existential needs, especially at older age, when labour market earnings are reduced, or are non-existent.

In the present paper, thus, we contribute to knowledge in the field of inequality and immigration by turning attention to the wealth holdings of immigrants and the nativity wealth gap at later stages of the life. We do so, first, by estimating the size of the wealth gap between immigrants and natives and, second, by examining the extent to which the size of the nativity wealth gaps varies across the three origin groups of immigrants in European societies. We then estimated the extent to which the gap can be attributed to differential earnings, intergenerational transfers, and home-ownership. Lastly, we estimated the rate of wealth convergence between each immigrant group and comparable native-born, based on the relationship between wealth and years since migration.

Similar to Ferrari [2020], we take advantage of data from the SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) project to conduct empirical analyses, distinguishing three groups of immigrants: non-Europeans, immigrants from post-communist countries, and immigrants from West, Central, and South European countries (WCS). For each group of immigrants, we estimated the level of household wealth compared to natives. We believe that the findings of the study are instructive regarding the extent of economic inequality between migrants and natives in late life, as well as the sources of these disparities. As such, they provide more general insight into the long-term consequences of migration.

Determinants and sources of the nativity wealth gap

Previous studies that focused on the nativity wealth gap invariably found that the wealth holdings of immigrant households are lower than that of native-born households [e.g. Cobb-Clark and Hildebrand 2006; Painter and Qian 2016; Hao 2007 for the US; Shamsuddin and DeVoretz 1998 for Canada; Bauer et al. 2011 for the US, Australia, and Germany; Gibson et al. 2010 for New Zealand; and Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 2013 for Israel]. The wealth gap is typically attributed to disparities in three important sources of wealth: labour market earnings, home ownership and intergenerational transfers. On all three dimensions, immigrants usually lag behind the native-born population. That is, immigrants' lower wealth holdings in older age may result from lower lifetime earnings, lower amounts of intergenerational transfers, lower rates of homeownership, or a combination of the three.

Turning first to labour market earnings, a large number of studies repeatedly reveal that immigrants face difficulties in attaining lucrative jobs and converting their human-capital resources into economic outcomes; therefore, their earnings are lower than the earnings of native-born individuals with similar work related attributes. [e.g. Alba and Foner 2016; Chiswick 2005; Büchel and Frick 2004]. For some groups (mostly immigrants from less developed countries and immigrants that are socially or ethnically distinct from the host population), the earnings penalty lasts for many years after arrival; in some cases, the penalty persists in the second generation as well [e.g. Duleep 2015; Maskileyson and Semyonov 2017; Algan et al. 2010]. For other immigrants (mostly those arriving from rich, highly-developed countries and of similar ethnic origin), the earnings penalty is minimal, and in some cases earnings surpass that of comparable native-born populations [Maskileyson and Semyonov 2017]. The earnings penalty experienced by immigrants (even if only temporary) may have long-lasting consequences for wealth accumulation. That is, the earnings disadvantages of immigrants may hinder their ability to save, invest, and accumulate assets throughout the years compared to the native-born population.

A second source of individual and household wealth is intergenerational transfers. Such transfers had become more significant in the latter part of the 20th century as ageing 'baby-boomers' had accumulated sufficient wealth to assist their offspring with inter-vivo gifts and bequeaths. From a social inequality perspective, such intergenerational transfers are likely to increase the gap between the 'poor' and the 'rich' [e.g. Benton and Keister 2017; Szydlik 2004; Keister 2003; Picketty 2014]. Immigrants' likelihood of receiving transfers is likely to vary in accordance with the circumstances of migration. Overall, however, the likelihood of receiving transfers is expected to be lower among immigrants than among the native-born individuals. This is especially true for immigrants who leave places with depressed economic conditions or unstable political systems. In such cases, immigrants are more likely to remit and transfer money to family members left in their country of origin than to receive transfers and financial

support [e.g. Vallejo and Keister 2019]. Furthermore, in many cases, immigration implies a break with the past, which decreases family ties and the likelihood of receiving intergenerational transfers. Thus, it is reasonable to expect a lower likelihood of immigrants receiving in vivo or intergenerational transfers compared to native-born populations.

Access to homeownership – a third most important source of wealth disparities – is often singled out as the most important component of household wealth. For the overwhelming majority of households (except for the very rich), housing is the single largest component of household wealth, and is often used as a proxy for wealth [e.g. Wind 2017; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2011]. As a form of wealth, housing is a particularly attractive asset because it provides existential security and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the house can be used while still maintaining its values, and often the value even appreciates over time [Mathä, Porpiglia and Ziegelmyer 2017]. Thus, homeownership has become, for most families, an efficient strategy for building wealth assets and as a major component of intergenerational transfers.

Immigrants' disadvantages in the housing market were demonstrated and discussed in several studies that arrived at similar conclusions. First, rates of homeownership are considerably lower among immigrants than among native-born individuals [Alba and Logan 1992; Bourassa 1994; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 2000]. Second, the value of the housing assets of immigrants who own their own homes is lower than that of housing owned by natives [Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein and Davidov 2002]. The disadvantages of immigrants in the housing market can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, immigrants may lack the necessary economic resources, especially shortly after their arrival in the host country, to invest in housing and make regular and steady mortgage payments. Second, immigrants are likely to find the housing market less accessible than natives. The purchase of a home requires familiarity with the institutional and financial arrangements that exist in the new country. Such familiarity takes time to acquire.

Further, immigrants may face barriers in the form of unwelcoming institutions and agents that operate in the housing market. Financial institutions may be reluctant to provide loans to immigrants due to insufficient credit history or uncertainty regarding the immigrant's future plans, as well as a lack of a solid credit record. Immigrants may also face constraints derived from their legal status or from restrictions on home and business ownership as well as outright discrimination [Akresh 2011]. Aside from institutional and social barriers, immigrants may have different preferences or views than natives regarding the permanency of their residence, which may also affect or delay decisions concerning the purchase of housing. Consequently, immigrants are less likely to benefit from financial gains derived from the housing market, which in turn have a profound effect on accumulated wealth and wealth disparities [Mathä et al. 2017].

Some studies have found that with the passage of time, immigrants are able to accumulate wealth in the host country and to narrow wealth disparities

with the native-born population [e.g. Cobb-Clark and Hildebrand 2006; Painter, Holmes and Bateman 2016; Painter and Qian 2016; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2011]. Others contend that the wealth gap has remained substantial throughout the years. According to Hao [2004], for instance, it takes an average of 22 years of residence (in the United States) for immigrants to close the wealth gap and to catch up with the wealth holding of comparable native-born Americans. In New Zealand, however, Gibson, et al. [2010] detected lower levels of wealth among migrant couples (but not among mixed couples); the gap partially disappeared when demographic and labour market attributes were introduced to the analysis as control variables. According to Shamsuddin and DeVoretz [1998], immigrants to Canada were able to close the wealth gap within a period averaging 15 years. The impact of length of residence in the host country, regardless of the size of the wealth gaps and its rate of convergence, may vary considerably across immigrant sub-groups.

In the analysis that follows, we aim to contribute to the body of knowledge on immigration and immigrant well-being in later life by studying nativity wealth disparities and their sources in ten European countries. Based on the theoretical and empirical literature on wealth inequality, we expect that differences between immigrant and native-born households in earnings, intergenerational transfers, and especially homeownership would account for substantial portions of the nativity wealth gap. We also expect the wealth disparities between immigrants and native-born households to be more pronounced for immigrants who arrived from less developed and poor economies and who are culturally and ethnically different from the majority population in the host societies.

In the context of European societies, we expect wealth disparities to be most pronounced for immigrants of non-European origin, followed by immigrants from post-communist countries, and lowest for immigrants from rich WCS European countries. This is due not only to differences in human capital resources but also to differential treatment by the host society stemming from cultural differences and prejudice. Lastly, we expect the wealth gap to decline with the passage of time in the host country. The wealth of immigrants from WCS European countries is likely to converge rapidly to that of natives. The process of convergence for non-European immigrants is expected to be slower because they are more likely to face discrimination in the labour and housing markets and are more likely to remit rather than receive intergenerational support.

Immigration in the European context

Before proceeding with the data analysis, we provide a brief review of the context of immigration in Europe. Until the middle of the 20th century, Europe was mostly a source of emigration (mainly to North and South America), but after World War II, many European countries were transformed from emigration societies into important destinations for immigrants. Indeed, during the second

half of the previous century, immigration changed the demographic composition and ethnic fabric of most European countries. More specifically, many European countries have become home to communities of immigrants from Africa, Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe.

The influx of immigrants to Western European countries in the post-World War II era is often attributed to high demand for workers due to rapid economic growth, rising educational levels, declining fertility, and the ageing of the population. The demand for the labour force, mostly in Western and Central European countries, was met by a large supply of immigrant labour from outside and within Europe. Initially, in the middle of the 20th century, the demand was met by recruitment and importation of guest workers and labour migrants from poor countries outside and inside Europe coupled with the arrival of a large number of ex-colonials from Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Later on (especially since the mid-1980s), European countries were faced with an influx of refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East, Africa, and the former Yugoslavia. After the downfall of the former Soviet Union, the initial inflows were also followed by large numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and post-socialist countries [Castles and Miller 2003].

Consequently, the relative size of the foreign-born population in Western Europe, whether ex-colonials, immigrants, guest workers, labour migrants, or refugees and asylum seekers, has grown steadily. Indeed, immigration from less-developed countries in Asia, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, coupled with immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, contributed not only to the growth of the Western Europe population (that otherwise would exhibit negative population growth) but also to changes in the composition of the population [Parsons and Smeeding 2006]. Currently, the immigrant population in Europe is highly diverse and varies considerably across countries. For example, Germany has large immigrant populations from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union. Switzerland has become home to immigrants from former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, India, and China. The Netherlands received large numbers of Moroccans and Surinamers. The United Kingdom hosts ex-colonials from India, Pakistan, and the West Indies. In Belgium and France, large numbers of immigrants arrived from ex-colonies in Sub-Saharan and North Africa, and the Scandinavian countries have accepted both immigrants from neighbouring countries and asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East. Yet, despite cross-country differences in immigrants' country of origin, they can be roughly divided into three major sub-groups of origin: immigrants from the poor, less-developed countries outside Europe (non-Europeans); immigrants from post-communist, mostly East European, countries; and immigrants from West, Central, and South (WCS) European countries.

Data and variables

Data for the analysis were obtained from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). SHARE is a nationally representative panel study of households with at least one person aged 50 and over in Europe [Börsch-Supan et al. 2013]. The SHARE dataset is especially suited for the study of wealth disparities in older age due to the rich financial information collected, along with socio-demographic and household attributes.

The unit of analysis in this study is the household (not individuals), as wealth is typically a household attribute. It should be noted, however, that SHARE data are derived from national probability samples, and since foreign-born populations constitute a small share of all societies, their numbers in the sample are quite small. Therefore, for the purpose of the present analysis, we combined data from nine EU-15 countries and Switzerland, all of which participated in waves 5, 6, and 7 of the SHARE and included more than 90 sampled households of immigrants. (The list of countries, the number of native-born and immigrant households, and their mean net worth by nativity status and by region of origin are presented in Appendix A of the article online.)

The SHARE data in all countries were collected in respondents' homes using face-to-face interviews and a computer-based questionnaire (computer assisted personal interviewing – CAPI). The questionnaire covered a wide range of topics and was highly structured to ensure the comparability of data across countries. Individual level data included information on country of birth and length of residence in the host society (for non-natives), along with demographic and life-course details. Household data were obtained from the primary respondent. Nativity status of the household was based on responses to a question on place of birth. We distinguished between households whose members were all native-born (hereafter Native-Born Households) versus households in which at least one adult was not born in the country of residence (hereafter Immigrant Households).[1] The immigrant households were further divided into three sub-groups according to country of origin: immigrants who arrived from countries outside Europe (hereafter Non-Europeans), immigrants who came from post-communist Europe,[2] and immigrants from West, Central, and South Europe[3] (hereafter WCS-Europe).

[1] The inclusion of households with 'at least one foreign-born' in the 'immigrant household' category increased the number of 'immigrant' households. This resulted in more conservative estimates of the nativity gap. Nonetheless, the majority of these households were all-immigrant households.

[2] Post-communist European countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

[3] The West, Central, and South European countries (WCS) are: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Net worth – the dependent variable – served as the measured indicator of household wealth. Net worth is defined as the sum of real and financial assets minus debts. Real assets included the values of primary housing, other real estate, owned businesses, and owned cars. Financial assets were composed of the sum values of all accounts, bonds, stock, mutual funds, and savings. Debts include housing debts (primarily mortgages) and all financial debts. All assets and debts were measured in Euro terms adjusted for purchasing parity power (PPP) for Germany, 2015.[4] Countries differ considerably in the average level of household wealth as well as in the shape of its distribution, although in all countries the distribution is highly skewed. Since we are interested in the nativity wealth gaps within countries, we standardised the distribution of net worth in each country on a ranked 100-point scale.[5] Such a standardised ranking scale enables a comparison of the gap across countries with different mean values and reduces the skewness of the wealth distribution. Yet, it should be noted that similar (almost identical) results were obtained when net worth was expressed in Euro terms and transformed into logarithmic distribution following procedures utilised in previous studies of wealth inequality [e.g. Campbell and Kaufman 2006; Cobb-Clark and Hildebrand 2006; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2011, 2013].

Household attributes that were selected as predictors of a household's net worth include income (in Euros), gift or inheritance (received or not), and home-ownership (owner versus non-owner). Other household characteristics were introduced as control variables. These include: age (couple's average in years), household type (distinguishing between lone male, lone female, and couple), number of children, education (couple's average years of formal schooling), labour force status (retired versus at least one person economically active), pension recipient (at least one person collecting pension), and community type (rural versus urban). The 10 countries were included in the analysis as a set of dummy variables for control purposes. (The definitions of all variables, their detailed measurements, and the mean (or percentage) values are listed in Appendix B of the article online.)

Data analysis proceeded in several steps. First, we provide a descriptive overview of the wealth distribution for all population groups and estimates of the wealth gap between each sub-group of immigrants and native-born. Second, we estimated a set of regression equations predicting net worth as a function of nativity status, controlling for household characteristics and country of resi-

[4] Germany was chosen, as it is the largest European economy. It was also the base category in the regressions. The year 2015 was chosen as this was the latest year for PPP correction supplied by SHARE at the time.

[5] The 100-point scale of household wealth was constructed for each country separately as follows: all households with no wealth or negative wealth were lumped together into zero (0) category. All households with positive wealth were divided into 100 equal size categories from 1 (low) to 100 (high) according to the amount of their net worth.

dence as dummy variables. Subsequently, we decomposed the nativity wealth gap for each sub-group of immigrants into components that can be attributed to differentials in income flow, reception of gifts and intergenerational transfers, homeownership, human-capital resources, and demographic attributes, and the portion of the gap that can be attributed to nativity status. Lastly, we estimated the trajectory of wealth convergence between each sub-group of immigrants and native-born under different assumptions regarding the shape of wealth growth over time.

Analysis and findings

Descriptive overview

Table 1 is a descriptive overview of household wealth (measured as average position on the ranked order 100-point scale) for native households and for all sub-groups of immigrants. The table also displays the wealth gaps between immigrants and the native-born population in terms of mean differences and ratios. The data presented in Table 1 revealed that the mean position of native-born households on the 100-point ranked scale was higher than that of all sub-groups of immigrants, indicating a wealth gap in favour of natives. The net worth of immigrants who arrived from non-European countries was considerably lower than the wealth of native-born households, as well as that of other migrant populations. The wealth holding of WCS immigrants, although slightly lower than that of the native-born population, was considerably higher than the wealth holding of the other two sub-groups of immigrants. The wealth of immigrants from post-communist countries fell somewhat between the non-European and the immigrants from WCS countries. These patterns held, with very few exceptions, within each of the host countries (see Appendix A online).

Immigrant households differed from the native-born population not only in levels of net worth but also with respect to an array of socio-economic and demographic attributes (figures not presented). Immigrants tended to be somewhat younger than the native-born population; they were less likely to be retired, and when retired, they were less likely to collect pension. Immigrants, more than natives, were attracted to urban places where employment opportunities were relatively abundant. Differences in educational levels between immigrants and natives vary across countries. In some countries, the level of formal education of immigrants' years of formal schooling was lower than that of native-born. In other countries, it was similar or even higher. Similarly, differences between natives and immigrants in household income and the likelihood of receiving gifts and transfers were not consistent across countries (not shown here). However, with regard to homeownership (which was the single most important component of net worth for the overwhelming majority of households), the data showed that in all countries immigrant households were less likely to own a home compared to natives.

Table 1. Household Net Worth (100-point ranked scale) and disparity in mean net worth between native-born households and immigrant households, and ratio of net worth of immigrant households to native-born households by nativity status of households across ten European countries (on ranked scale)

	Mean net worth (ranked)	Disparity (native – immigrant group)	Ratio (immigrant/ native)	N
		(ranked)	(ranked)	
Household nativity status				
Native born HH	50.68	–	–	36 062
Immigrant HH	42.64	8.04	0.84	4 406
Origin of immigrant household				
Non-Europeans	29.79	20.89	0.59	872
Post-communist Europeans	39.54	11.14	0.78	889
West, Central, and South Europeans	48.26	2.42	0.95	2 645

Note: All currency is adjusted by PPP for Germany 2015; all countries include the respondents of waves 5, 6, and 7 (without repeats), except the Netherlands (wave 5), Greece (6 and 7), and Luxembourg (5 and 6).

Determinants of wealth and sources of wealth disparities

Although the descriptive findings are quite informative and interesting in their own right, it is not clear from these data whether and to what extent differences in wealth holdings between sub-groups of immigrants and the native population can be attributed to nativity status, their place of origin, dissimilarities in the socio-demographic characteristics of the households, or different rates of home-ownership. Therefore, in the analysis that follows, we present estimates of a series of regression equations predicting net worth (expressed in terms of relative position on the standardised 100-point scale).

Two sets of regression equations predicting net worth were estimated. In Equations 1a and 1b, we let net worth be a function of a household's nativity status and household's attributes (i.e. age, education, family type, income, labour-force status, gift, rural residence). A variable for years since migration was not included in these models because we addressed and considered the impact of tenure in the host country on wealth in a later section. In Equation 1a nativity status is defined by a dummy variable distinguishing between foreign-born households and native households. In Equation 1b, nativity status is defined by

Table 2. Coefficients of regression equations (standard errors) predicting household net worth (measured on 100-point ranked scale) in 10 European countries

Models	1a	1b	2a	2b
HH nativity status (ref. native)				
Immigrant HH	–8.813**		–4.33*	
	(–0.57)		(–0.45)	
Origin of immigrant HH				
Non-Europeans		–17.35**		–8.03**
		(–1.32)		(–1.04)
Post-communist Europeans		–11.19**		–6.02**
		(–1.03)		(–0.73)
West, Central, South Europeans		–4.84**		–2.39**
		(–0.67)		(–0.56)
Household attributes				
Age	0.17**	0.16**	0.14**	0.14**
	(–0.02)	(–0.02)	(–0.02)	(–0.02)
Household type (ref. couple)				
Lone-male	–11.64**	–11.44**	–5.48**	–5.41**
	(–0.52)	(–0.52)	(–0.44)	(–0.44)
Lone-female	–15.30**	–15.11**	–8.01**	–7.95**
	(–0.44)	(–0.44)	(–0.36)	(–0.36)
Years of education	1.47**	1.46***	1.19**	1.19**
	(–0.05)	(–0.05)	(–0.04)	(–0.04)
Number of children	–0.75**	–0.68**	–0.41**	–0.38**
	(–0.12)	(–0.12)	(–0.10)	(–0.10)
Retired	1.12*	1.05*	0.61	0.59
	(–0.53)	(–0.52)	(–0.42)	(–0.42)
Receive pension (=1)	0.81	0.69	0.1	0.05
	(–0.60)	(–0.59)	(–0.49)	(–0.49)
Household income (logged)	7.32**	7.25**	5.20**	5.17**
	(–0.28)	(–0.28)	(–0.24)	(–0.23)
Received gift or inheritance	5.24**	5.18**	4.30**	4.27**
	(–0.49)	(–0.49)	(–0.41)	(–0.41)
Rural	3.36**	3.18**	–0.97**	–1.04**
	(–0.35)	(–0.35)	(–0.30)	(–0.30)
Home owner		36.56**	36.45**	
			(–0.33)	(–0.33)
Intercept	47.69**	48.04**	26.98**	27.26**
	–(0.67)	(0.67)	(–0.57)	(–0.57)
R-square	0.19	0.19	0.45	0.45

N = 39 474

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; all currency is adjusted by PPP for Germany 2015; Age, years of education, number of children and logged household income are centered around the grand mean; Country fixed effects, compared with Germany, are calculated but not shown.

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

three dummy variables representing immigrant's origin (i.e. non-Europe, post-communist, and other European countries) versus native-born households. In Equations 2a and 2b, we added homeownership to the set of predictors of net worth. All equations were estimated as fixed-effects models by including dummy variables representing all countries included in the sample.[6] The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 (country coefficients are not displayed).

The findings reveal that the average wealth holding of all sub-groups of immigrants was significantly lower than the wealth holding of native-born households, even after controlling for household attributes. This is evident from the negative sign for immigrants in Equation 1a and for the three sub-groups of immigrants in Equation 1b). In line with expectations, the wealth disparity was most pronounced for the group of non-European immigrants (b = –17.35 points in Equation 1b) and least pronounced for immigrants who arrived from WCS countries (b = –4.84 in Equation 1b). The wealth disadvantage of immigrants from post-communist countries fell between the two other groups (b = –11.19 points in Equation 1b). Comparing the values of these coefficients to the raw disparities presented in Table 1 suggests that even after controlling for variations in the socio-demographic attributes of households, wealth disparities between sub-groups of immigrants and native-born hardly changed. We can conclude, then, that immigrants are less successful than natives with similar socio-demographic attributes in accumulating wealth. The coefficients representing the household's attributes revealed that the household's net worth was positively associated with larger income flows and with the reception of gift or inheritance. Net worth also tended to increase with the level of education and it was strongly associated with household's composition.

Regardless of nativity status, households composed of lone males or lone females tended to have lower levels of net worth than households inhabited by a couple. The number of children in the household was negatively associated with households' accumulated wealth. Other things being equal, residence in rural areas was associated with lower net worth. However, once we controlled for household attributes, and income in particular, labour force status (whether retirement status or collection of pension) was not significantly associated with a household's net worth. Although net worth was strongly influenced by almost all socio-demographic attributes of households (as well as by income and reception of gifts), the nativity wealth gaps remain substantial, negative, and significant in Equations 1a and 1b.

In Equations 2a and 2b, we included homeownership as an additional predictor of net worth. Homeownership has long been viewed as the most important source of wealth assets for most households and is often used as a proxy of

[6] Fixed effects models were preferred over hierarchical linear modelling due to the small number of degrees of freedom at the second level with only 10 countries.

wealth. We expect, therefore, that differential rates of homeownership between immigrant sub-groups and natives will become a major source for the disparities in net worth. Consistent with our expectation, the data revealed that inclusion of homeownership among the predictors of net worth (in Equations 2a and 2b) caused a considerable decline in the size of the coefficients representing nativity status (compared to their size in Equations 1a and 1b).

The decline in the size of the coefficients suggests that a substantial portion of the wealth disparity between immigrants and native-born households can be attributed to differential rates of homeownership. Yet, it is important to note that even after taking into consideration differences in the rate of homeownership between immigrants and natives, the net worth of the former remained substantially and significantly lower than that of the latter. This is evident from the regression coefficients (b = –4.33 for immigrants in Equation 2a and b = –8.03; b = –6.02; and b = –2.39 for non-Europeans, post-communist, and WCS immigrants, respectively, in Equation 2b).

Decomposing the nativity wealth gaps

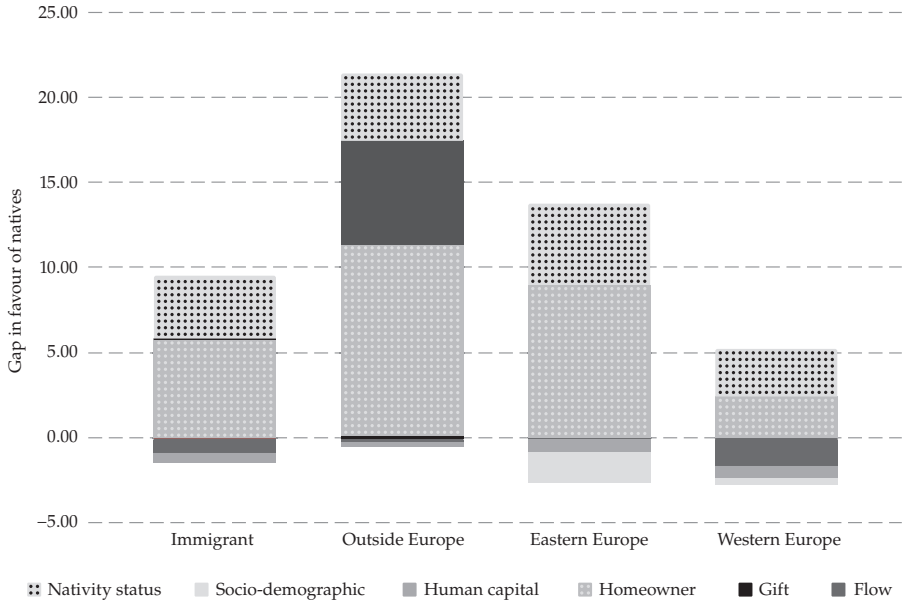
In the analysis that follows, we decomposed the wealth gap between each subgroup of immigrants and the native-born population into the portions of the gap that are attributed to nativity status and to the differences in various households' characteristics. Several techniques are commonly used for decomposing mean gaps between groups using regression models. The model adopted here decomposed the wealth gap into two major components: the portion of the gap attributed to mean differences in the attributes of the groups and the portion of the gap attributed to nativity status (unexplained portion). The first component was further divided into mean differences of specific attributes (i.e. homeownership, income flows, intergenerational transfers, and socio-demographic attributes).

The decomposition procedure adopted here can be formulated using the following notation:

$$Yn - Yi = \Sigma [bn_j (Xnj - Xi_j)] + k$$

where Yn and Yi are the mean values of wealth position (measured on the 100-point scale) of natives and immigrants, respectively; Xn and Xi are the mean values of all j predictors of wealth for natives and immigrants, respectively; and bn are the j coefficients associated with each of the predictors of wealth for the native population. Here, k is the portion of the wealth gap that remains unexplained (cannot be attributed to mean differences in characteristics) and is thus attributed to nativity status. The results of the decomposition computation are displayed in Table 3 for each of the immigrant populations. A graphic illustration of the gaps and of the components of the gaps for each group is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Components of the wealth gap between immigrant groups and native-born European households (obtained through indirect standardisation)



The largest wealth disparity was observed between native-born and non-European households (Yn – Yi = 20.89 wealth points), and the smallest gap (only 2.42 points) was between WCS immigrants and native-born households. According to the analysis, most of the gap between non-European immigrants and native-born households (81.2% or 17.0 points) was attributed to differences in the characteristics of the households, and only 18.8% (3.9 wealth points) was attributed to nativity status. By contrast, in the gap between native-born and WCS immigrant households, almost the entire (albeit very small) gap was attributed to nativity status (2.76 wealth points). In the case of immigrant households from post-communist countries, 57.2% of the gap (6.37 wealth points) was attributed to different characteristics, and 42.8% of the total gap (4.77 wealth points) was attributed to nativity status. Apparently, the data suggest that the portion of the gap attributed to nativity status was inversely related to the size of the wealth disparity.

Given the strong effect of homeownership on the relative size of household wealth (previously presented in Table 2), it is not surprising that differential rates of homeownership played the single most important role in explaining the differential levels of wealth accumulation between immigrant populations and the native-born. Homeownership accounted for about 54%, 80%, and about 100% of

Table 3. Decomposition of the total gap in net worth (measured on a 100-point ranking scale) between native-born and immigrant households in 10 European countries

	Immigrants		Non-European immigrants		Post-communist		West ,Central, and South European countries	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Total gap	8.04	100.00%	20.89	100.00%	11.14	100.00%	2.42	100.00%
Gap due to nativity status	3.7	46.02%	3.94	18.85%	4.77	42.84%	2.76	113.80%
Gap due to different source	4.34	53.98%	16.95	81.15%	6.37	57.16%	–0.33	–13.80%
Sources:								
Income	–0.89	–11.11%	–0.25	–1.19%	–0.09	–0.81%	–1.63	–67.41%
Gift	0	0.04%	0.07	0.35%	0.05	0.45%	–0.06	–2.30%
Homeowner	5.74	71.37%	11.32	54.17%	8.96	80.41%	2.45	101.33%
Human capital	–0.6	–7.42%	–0.25	–1.20%	–0.77	–6.95%	–0.64	–26.25%
Socio-demographic	0.09	1.10%	6.06	29.00%	–1.78	–15.95%	–0.46	–19.17%

the wealth gaps between native-born and non-European immigrants, immigrants from post-communist countries, and WCS European immigrants, respectively. Interestingly, neither differential levels of income flows nor education account for much of the wealth gap between native-born and either non-European or immigrants from post-communist countries. In the case of immigrant households from WCS Europe, wealth was actually 60% lower than expected, based on their (relatively high) income flows. Differences in the reception of gifts or inheritances did not account for a meaningful portion of any of the wealth gaps. Differences in socio-demographic attributes accounted for a substantial portion of the wealth gap (16%) only between non-European and native-born households.

Estimating the convergence of wealth

Following studies that underscore improvement in immigrants' economic status with the passage of time in the host country, it is reasonable to also expect a growing convergence of household wealth between natives and immigrants over time. In this section, we discuss the findings of estimated trajectories of immigrants' wealth accumulation associated with length of residence in the host country and our quest for a hypothetical point of conversion with native households' wealth. We estimated a regression equation predicting household's wealth as a function of nativity status along with household's characteristics and interaction terms between nativity status and years since migration (YSM). The equation was estimated, first, for the migrant population as a whole (column 1), and second, when distinguishing among the three sub-groups of immigrants (column 2).

The estimated coefficients for the interaction between YSM and immigrant origin enabled us to arrive at the hypothetical number of years it would take an immigrant household to close the wealth gap with a comparable native-born household. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 4, and the graphic illustrations of the rate of wealth convergence are presented in Figure 2. To avoid a cumbersome presentation of the coefficients pertaining to household's attributes (previously included in Table 2), only the coefficients of the interaction terms between YSM and immigrant origin are displayed in Table 4.

The findings derived from Equation 1 suggest that, other things equal, the rate of increase in wealth for an 'average' immigrant household was distinctly slow, as evident by the small (positive) coefficient of the interaction between nativity status and years since migration (b = 0.105 in Equation 1). According to this estimate, it would take an average of almost 85 years for a migrant with average characteristics (8.9/0.105 = 85) to bridge the wealth gap with an average native-born household. However, the data based on Equation 2 revealed that the rate of linear increase in wealth over time was statistically significant only among non-European households (b = 0.32). Specifically, it would take the average non-European household approximately 60 years (19.6/0.32 = 60) to close the rather wide wealth

Table 4. Coefficients of regression equations (standard errors) predicting net worth (measured on 100-point ranking scale) as a linear function of nativity status and interactions with years since migration (YSM) in 10 European countries

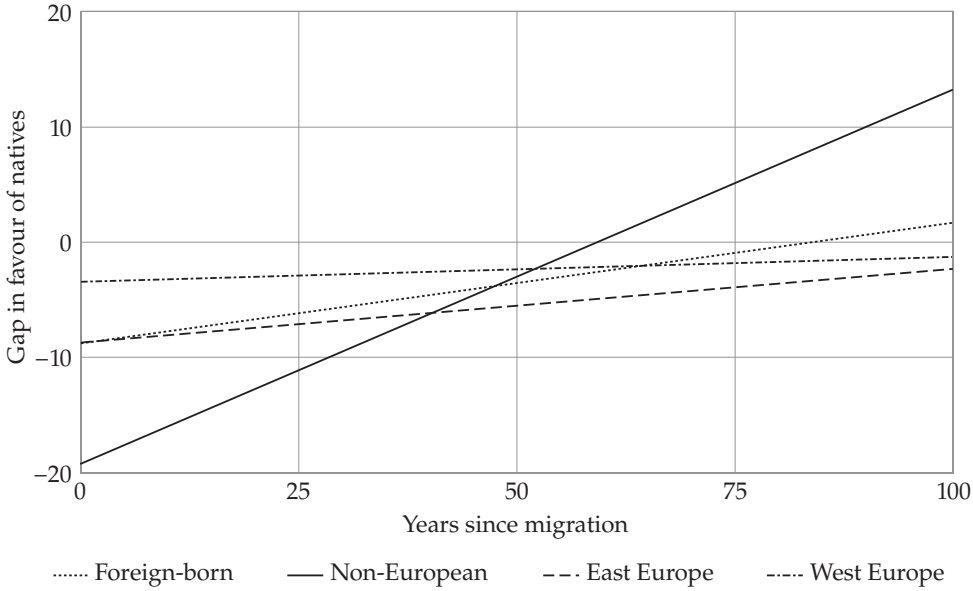
Models	1	2
Nativity status (ref. native born)		
Immigrant HH	–8.763**	
	(1.180)	
Immigrant HH X YSM	0.105**	
	(0.023)	
Origin of immigrants HH (ref. native born)		
Non-European		–19.152**
		(2.684)
Post-communist countries		–8.673**
		(1.694)
West, Central, and South Europe (WCS)		–3.377*
		(1.447)
Outside Europe X YSM		0.324**
		(0.061)
Post-communist X YSM		0.064
		(0.034)
WCS X YSM		0.021
		(0.028)
Intercept	27.044**	27.441**
	(0.569)	(0.572)
R-square	0.452	0.453

N = 39 474

Note: The estimated equations include all socio-demographic characteristics that were presented in Table 2 (the coefficients are not presented to save space and to avoid repetitions); robust standard errors in parentheses; all currency is adjusted by PPP for Germany 2015; age, years of education, number of children and household income are centred around the grand mean; country fixed effects, compared with Germany, are calculated but not shown.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Figure 2. Estimated trajectory of growth in net wealth for immigrant groups as a linear function of years since migration in 10 European countries (based on the regression equations presented in Table 4)



gap with comparable native-born households. For migrants from post-communist countries, the coefficient was small (b = 0.06) and was on the border of statistical significance. For immigrant households from WSC Europe, the coefficient was even smaller (b = 0.02) and not statistically significant. Apparently, and contrary to our expectations, the very small (almost negligible) wealth gap between WCS European immigrants and native-born households was not affected by time spent in the host country but was attributed to other sources (especially differences in rates of homeownership). Nearly identical findings were obtained when the growth of wealth was modelled as either exponentially increasing, or with a declining rate (results can be obtained from the authors upon request).

Conclusion and discussion

We embarked on the present research with the goal of examining wealth gaps between immigrant and native-born households at later stages in the life course within the context of European societies. We contend that the study of wealth disparities in later stages of life is most meaningful because, at later stages of life, people tend to exit the economically active labour force, and therefore, their

economic well-being becomes more dependent on wealth and assets accumulated in the past than on flows of earnings. The data for the present analysis were obtained from national samples of mid-life and older-age households in ten European countries. Although some minor cross-national variations in wealth distributions may exist, the analysis clearly showed that in all 10 countries, the wealth accumulated by immigrants, even at an older age and after many years of stay in the host country, was considerably lower than the wealth holding of socioeconomically identical native-born households.

The nativity wealth gap was most pronounced in the case of non-European immigrants (who arrived from mostly poor countries outside Europe and who typically differed from the native-born population in racial and ethnic composition and in culture). By contrast, the gap was least pronounced in the case of immigrants arriving from Western, Central, or South European countries (countries that are similar in many characteristics to the host countries). The nativity wealth gap was intermediate (although still considerable) in the case of immigrants who came from post-communist countries. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that neither differential levels of income nor differential reception of intergenerational transfers accounted for a substantial portion of the nativity wealth gap for all groups of immigrants.

The data revealed that the largest portion of the gap was attributed to homeownership. Apparently, lower rates of homeownership among immigrants, whether due to a lack of necessary financial resources or limited access to credit or cultural constraints, have had detrimental consequences for the wealth accumulation of immigrants. The rate of wealth convergence observed among all immigrant groups was quite slow, and for an average immigrant household, the gap (which still persists in the older age population) was not likely to be closed during the life time. Notably, the only group that could possibly reach wealth convergence with comparable native-born households at some point in time was the most disadvantaged group (i.e. non-European immigrants). The 'steep' rate of convergence among the non-European immigrants, however, might be biased due to the low levels of initial wealth that can lead to a steeper increase of wealth (especially in the initial years).

In summary, the data revealed that immigrants were lagging far behind native-born in the accumulation of wealth, and they were unlikely to be able to close the nativity wealth gap in their life time. Such disparities, indeed, have significant consequences for inequalities in economic well-being between immigrants and native-born individuals, not only at a young age but also at later stages of life. Although not studied here, lower levels of accumulated wealth may also decrease the amount of intergenerational transfers to be received by the second generation; hence, they may also increase wealth disparities between sons and daughters of immigrants and native born. Given that homeownership was found to be the single most important source of the nativity wealth gap, we contend that public policies designed to promote and increase homeownership among immigrants can decrease the wealth gap between immigrants and natives across generations.

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Vocational School Students' Aspirations for Higher Education and Selected Social Background Characteristics

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Abstract: This study examines the association between vocational school students' aspirations for higher education and different factors that may be related to their social background. Using cultural reproduction and relative risk aversion (RRA) theories, the study draws on data from 7060 students of four-year vocational upper secondary school programmes in Croatia. A multinomial logistic model with a random intercept was applied, in which students' aspirations for pursuing higher education served as the outcome variable. Apart from indicators of socio-economic status (SES), vocational school students' characteristics related to cultural habits and behaviours, as well as their concerns with downward mobility, were used as regressor variables in the analysis. All three constructs showed independent effects on aspirations for higher education, controlling for vocational sector, gender, school achievement, and school year. Further, a moderation effect was identified, indicating that the association between cultural capital and aspirations for higher education was stronger among students with more educated parents. In contrast to previous studies, the findings point to the potential complementarity of cultural capital and RRA concerning educational aspirations. We discuss the implications of the study and directions for future research.

Keywords: aspirations for higher education, cultural capital, relative risk aversion, socio-economic status, vocational education

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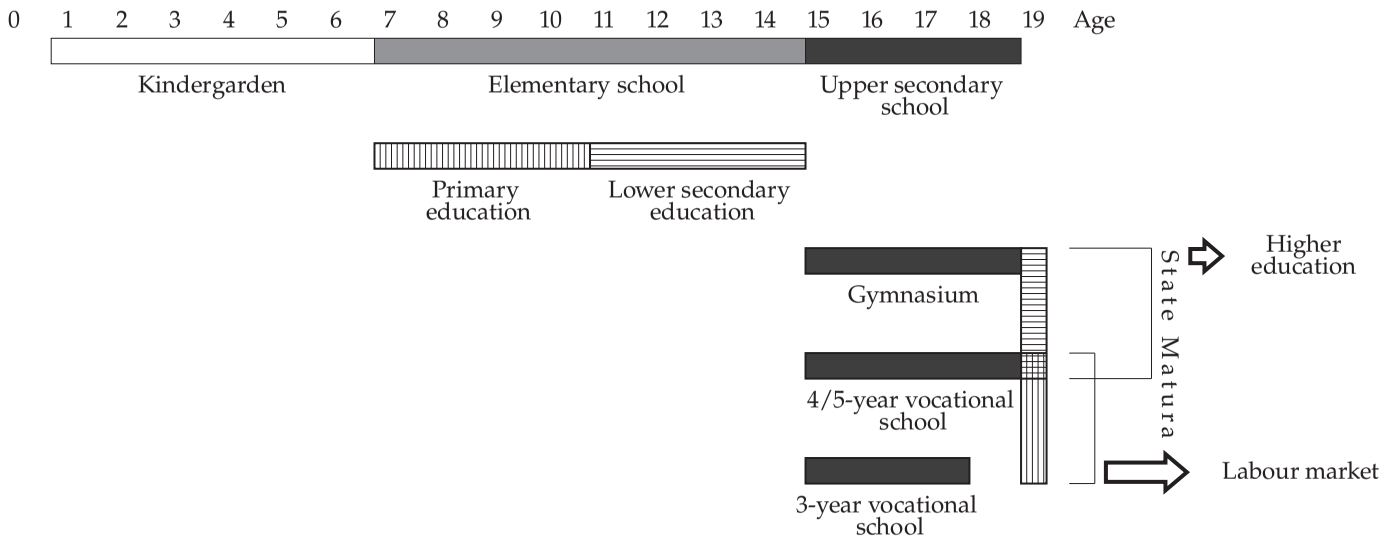
Introduction

Social inequalities in access to higher education are a topic of great concern in sociological research [e.g. Lynch and O'riordan 1998; Shavit, Arum and Gamoran 2007]. One way to approach these inequalities is to examine the association between students' social background and their educational aspirations [Dupriez et al. 2012; Matějů et al. 2007]. This is due to the fact that higher educational aspirations tend to be associated with greater motivation and higher educational attainment [Gorard, See and Davies 2012; Morrison Gutman and Akerman 2008]. Such an approach also allows us to address social factors that shape selection processes before the actual transition into higher education. This may be achieved by taking into account the relationship between family background, school performance, and educational aspirations [Khattab 2015], as well as by assessing the observed differences in aspirations 'that remain after taking differences in academic performance between students into consideration' [Dupriez et al. 2012: 506]. The latter effect refers to what is generally described as a 'social self-selection' process [Boudon 1974; Dupriez et al. 2012]. In this regard, educational aspirations may be seen as an important link between social origin and young people's future educational and occupational careers [Matějů et al. 2007]. Thus, the aim of this paper was to examine the socio-cultural factors shaping the educational aspirations of vocational upper secondary school students in Croatia. We refer to the fact that vocational education often presents an entry point to secondary education for students from low socio-economic (SES) backgrounds, and that, besides preparation for employment, it may lead to further education, including participation in higher education [Field and Guez 2018; Griffin 2014; Hoelscher et al. 2008].

Using cultural reproduction and relative risk aversion (RRA) theories, this study expands the existing body of research in several ways. Although there are studies discussing the relationships between students' SES, cultural capital, RRA, and educational aspirations, these relationships have rarely been examined in combination, as well as in the context of vocational upper secondary education. Furthermore, the study allows for insights into cumulative processes related to educational inequality, since it investigates the interaction effects of SES and students' years of schooling with cultural capital and RRA. To the best of our knowledge, these interaction effects have not been addressed in previous studies on vocational school students' educational aspirations. As past studies on vocational school students' aspirations for higher education were primarily based on research in Anglo-Saxon contexts, the study complements these with insights from the understudied educational setting of Croatia.

Figure 1. Simplified scheme of the Croatian education system (adapted from Eurydice 2019)



Context of the study

In Croatia, students enrol in upper secondary education at the age of 14 or 15 after completing compulsory elementary education (primary and lower secondary education; Figure 1). At this point, students choose between academically oriented gymnasiums and four-year or three-year vocational schools (upper secondary education). Gymnasium programmes focus on general secondary education, thereby preparing graduates for the transition into higher education. Vocational schools with four-year technical and related programmes lead to professional qualifications but also enable access to tertiary education.[1] By contrast, three-year vocational schools prepare students for entry into the labour market in industrial, trade, and craft occupations. A certificate from three-year vocational schools does not entitle students to further their education in universities and polytechnics [e.g. Eurydice 2019; Palekčić, Radeka and Zekanović 2015].[2] Therefore, the rationale for focusing on four-year vocational school students is that the programmes enable both entry into the labour market and the transition into higher education. This dichotomy of choice for vocational school students is not unique to Croatia but is also typical for other countries experiencing rapid growth in tertiary education and an increase in demand for more educated workers [e.g. Masson 2009; OECD 2012].

In 2017, approximately 65% of all upper secondary school students attended vocational programmes, about 71% of whom were in the four-year programme and 29% in the three-year programme [Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2018b]. Recent demographic trends have induced changes in the structure of secondary education: smaller cohorts of students in secondary education have led to a surplus in enrolment places and consequently to a reduction in the number of students in three-year vocational schools. However, the proportion of students enrolled in four-year vocational schools was more or less stable, while the proportion of gymnasium graduates slightly increased [Matković 2011]. Consequently, it may be assumed that students in four-year vocational schools and gymnasiums have become more heterogeneous with regard to their ability and social background characteristics. The most important criteria for entering universities and polytechnics in Croatia are students' results on the State Matura examinations,[3] school

[1] There is a small number of five-year programmes that also lead to professional qualifications and enable access to tertiary education. For the ease of the reader, we will use the term 'four-year programmes' when referring to both four- and five-year programmes.

[2] If students attending three-year vocational schools want to go into higher education, they have to complete an additional bridge-programme as a prerequisite for taking the State Matura examinations.

[3] State Matura examinations have two purposes: (1) certifying completion of secondary education for gymnasium students and (2) qualifying a student for entrance to higher education. Hence, if a four-year vocational school student wants to continue education at the tertiary level, he or she has to pass the State Matura examinations.

grades, and, in some cases, students' results on faculties' admission tests. Roughly 51% of the students in Croatia enter higher education upon graduating from a gymnasium, and around 43% after a four-year vocational school[4] [Šćukanec et al. 2015]. Nearly all students who finished four-year vocational schools in the summer of 2017 applied for tertiary education programmes (98.1%), about two-thirds (65%) passed the State Matura examinations, and 45.1% entered tertiary education successfully within the same year [Šabić 2019]. In comparison, the percentages for gymnasium students were 99.2%, 95.5%, and 86.7%, respectively.

Theoretical framework and prior research

International research has produced considerable evidence that there is an association between social background and aspirations for higher education, that is, students from privileged backgrounds tend to have higher aspirations for tertiary education than students from less privileged families [Dupriez et al. 2012; Khattab 2015; Matějů et al. 2007]. Whilst different theories have been used to explore the link between students' educational aspirations and their social background [Dupriez et al. 2012; Matějů et al. 2007], this study focuses on two approaches – cultural reproduction theory [Bourdieu 1984] and relative risk aversion theory (RRA) [Breen and Goldthorpe 1997]. Although some scholars see these two theories as competing explanations of class inequalities in education [Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007], they may be approached as complementary [cf. Glaesser and Cooper 2014; Puzić, Odak and Šabić 2019].

Cultural reproduction theory sees educational inequality as a consequence and generator of class inequalities based on different distributions of capital (economic, social, and cultural capital). It rejects the view that education is meritocratic, stating that the educational system reproduces existing social inequalities, thereby favouring students from socio-economically and culturally privileged backgrounds. Thus, it emphasises the effects of students' family habitus as the 'deeply ingrained system of perspectives, experiences and predispositions family members share', which is related to social class [Reay 1998: 527]. In the school environment, these classed attributes of socialisation are recognised as cultural capital and are translated into educational advantage. Consequently, students from the dominant classes feel more confident in the educational system and have higher educational aspirations [Khattab 2015]. Cultural capital is a multifaceted concept as it includes all cultural resources that positively affect educational achievement and aspirations [Bourdieu 1997; Puzić, Gregurović and Košutić 2016]. These resources may include students' linguistic or cognitive com-

[4] About 3% of the students finish secondary education outside Croatia. The share of students from other types of secondary schools (three-year vocational school, schools in the system of adult education etc.) is 1% or less.

petencies, manners, and tastes, possession of cultural goods (books, works of art, musical instruments, etc.), or other internalised aspects of the dominant culture [Bourdieu 1997]. Although the relationship between cultural capital and educational outcomes has been examined internationally in many quantitative studies, most of these studies focused on the effects of cultural capital on educational achievement rather than on educational aspirations [e.g. De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp 2000; DiMaggio 1982; Jæger 2009; Tan 2017; Wang 2011]. In a study that examined the educational aspirations of Turkish high-school students, Arastaman and Özdemir [2019] found that cultural capital and self-efficacy beliefs had effects on students' academic aspirations, despite the fact that participants' cultural capital perceptions were relatively low. Addressing the educational underachievement of Black Caribbean boys, Stockfelt [2016] showed that cultural capital – operationalised as dispositional beliefs about the value of schooling – positively affected aspirations toward higher education. Using a sample from Macau middle schools, Wang [2011] demonstrated that watching sophisticated television programmes had effects on students' educational aspirations, while other forms of cultural capital (e.g. attending one-time cultural events with parents, household educational resources) exerted only marginal effects. While these and other studies [e.g. Jæger 2009; Puzić, Odak and Šabić 2019] found positive effects of cultural capital on educational ambitions and school achievement, others indicated ambiguous effects [Boone and Van Houtte 2013; Lamb 1989; Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007]. These variations in results may be related to different operationalisations of cultural capital, as well as to different educational levels or national contexts [Barone 2006].

In contrast to cultural reproduction theory, which tackles the structural reasons for educational inequalities, RRA theory has its roots in methodological individualism [Goldthorpe 1996]. RRA theory is predominantly used in explaining educational decisions, mostly in periods of educational transitions, such as from lower to higher educational levels or programme choice. It is based on the distinction between the primary and secondary effects of social origin: primary effects refer to the relationship between social origin and school success, and secondary effects are tied to the process of educational decision-making net of ability [Boudon 1974]. According to RRA theory, students shape their educational decisions and aspirations in relation to the social position of their parents (family). Moreover, students from all classes alike tend to avoid downward mobility, that is, they tend to achieve at least their parents' social position [Breen and Goldthorpe 1997]. The aspirations to pursue tertiary education are thus lower for students from families of lower SES – children from less privileged classes achieve status maintenance with relatively less ambitious degrees, while children from higher classes have to pursue higher levels of education to maintain their (family's) social status [Breen and Goldthorpe 1997]. The RRA model has been researched internationally [e.g. Becker 2003; Daniel and Watermann 2018; Davies, Heinesen and Holm 2002; Stocké 2007] with mixed results concerning its effects on educational ambi-

tions and decision-making. Using data from a Dutch panel survey of high school students, Need and de Jong [2000] found that the RRA mechanism can explain class differentials in students' aspirations for higher education, which may be responsible for class differentials in educational attainment. In an analysis of different pathways through the educational system in Denmark, Davies, Heinesen and Holm [2002] found that only five out of seventeen analyses showed the expected effect of the motive for families' status maintenance on educational transitions. Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede [2007] showed that secondary school students' aspirations for higher levels of education were formed through concerns with downward mobility, albeit no direct effect of social background on schooling ambitions has been found. Drawing on data from factorial and traditional surveys of upper secondary school students in Germany, Daniel and Watermann [2018] called into question the RRA hypothesis (that RRA is the driving force behind aspirations for higher education), since the authors did not find social differences in students' situational intentions for engagement in higher education. Although past studies indicate the relevance of RRA for educational aspirations, it has been noted that the observed effects may be far from conclusive, since they often rely on proxy variables instead of robust indicators of the theoretical construct [Stocké 2007; cf. Daniel and Watermann 2018].

Hypotheses

In line with our research aim and theoretical framework, we defined the following hypotheses:

- *H1: Based on cultural reproduction and relative risk aversion theory, cultural capital and RRA contribute independently and positively to vocational upper secondary school students' aspirations to pursue higher education.*
- *H2a: With regard to cultural reproduction theory, students' SES will positively moderate the relationship between cultural capital and aspirations to pursue higher education.*
- *H2b: Since students from all classes tend to avoid downward mobility, students' SES does not moderate the relationship between RRA and their aspirations to pursue higher education.*
- *H2c: As it is presumed that cultural capital and RRA affect educational aspirations consistently throughout secondary education, students' years of schooling do not moderate the relationships between cultural capital and RRA on the one hand and aspirations for pursuing higher education on the other.*

Methodology

Sample and procedure

The data used in the present study were collected during the 2017/18 academic year as part of a broader research project that focused on conditions and needs related to informing upper secondary school students about higher education choices and procedures for enrolment to study programmes in Croatia.[5] In this research project, quantitative, and qualitative data were collected from both gymnasium and four-year vocational school students, that is, from students who were attending programmes that qualified them to take the State Matura examinations and apply for higher education programmes, as well as from their teachers, school principals and counsellors (total N = 13 785). The dataset used in this study contained quantitative data obtained from 7060 students of first, third, and final year from 42 four-year vocational upper secondary schools, representing 14% of all schools of this type in Croatia. The random sample of schools was stratified by geographical location (administrative counties). In each school, students from at least one class were randomly selected and invited to participate in the research. In the majority of the schools (81%), two or more classes from every year group participated in the research, resulting in a range of 12 to 380 participating students per school. The data were obtained via a questionnaire survey for students, which they completed at school during one school lesson (45 minutes).

Measures

Demographic variables

The vocational sector attended by the students was used as a control variable in the analysis. Vocational sectors were economics, electrical engineering, catering and tourism, health care, mechanical engineering, graphics, agriculture, art, chemical technology, road traffic, forestry, geology and mining, optics and glass processing, personal services, construction and geodesy, shipbuilding, and railway traffic sector. To restrict the number of categories in the analyses, vocational sectors with less than 5% of students in the sample were merged into one broader category called *other sectors*. In addition to vocational sector, we also controlled for school year attended by the student (the data were available only for students in first, third and final year) and gender. We decided to control the effects of the aforementioned demographic variables considering that previous research

[5] The project 'Analysis of the conditions and needs in secondary education related to informing on higher education choices and procedures for enrolment on study programmes through the Central Applications Office' was financed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, Croatia.

showed that students from different vocational sectors [e.g. Jokić and Ristić Dedić 2014] as well as students from different age groups [e.g. Jokić et al. 2018] on average have different ambitions for pursuing tertiary education. Furthermore, females are more likely to enrol in universities than males [Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2018a; Jurviste, Prpić and Claros 2015].

School achievement

School achievement was operationalised as a sum of a student's final grades in the Croatian language, mathematics, and a foreign language at the end of the previous year of schooling (Cronbach's $\alpha = .68$). These three school subjects are of special importance in the Croatian educational system, since the State Matura examinations in these subjects are compulsory for nearly all students who want to enter university. Grades were expressed on a scale of five points, which is officially used in the Croatian educational system (1 – *insufficient*, 2 – *sufficient*, 3 – *good*, 4 – *very good*, 5 – *excellent*). School grades are one of the criteria for entering universities and polytechnics in Croatia. Therefore, students who have higher grades may have higher aspirations for pursuing tertiary education. Accordingly, we used school achievement as a control variable in the analyses.

Socio-economic status

Students' SES was operationalised using information about parental employment status and level of education [Sirin 2005]. Students were asked about the employment status of their mother and their father (separate items). The response options were: *Employed, Unemployed, Retired* and *I don't know/It doesn't apply*. Furthermore, students were asked to mark the highest educational level for their mother and father (separate items). The response options were *elementary education, upper secondary education, higher education*. Based on these two items, parental level of education was recoded to the following scale: 1 – *both parents have finished elementary education*, 2 – *one parent has finished upper secondary education*, 3 – *both parents have finished upper secondary education*, 4 – *one parent has finished higher education, and* 5 – *both parents have finished higher education*.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital was measured using two sets of items. The first set of four items referred to the cultural activities of students in the last year (*In the last year, how often did you attend movies; museums, or art galleries; theatre plays; opera, ballet, or classical music concerts? Scale: Never, Approximately 1 or 2 times, Approximately 3 or 4 times, More than 4 times*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .62$). The second set consisted of three items and referred to students' cultural activities in the growing-up period (*Think about your growing-up period. How often did your parents: Take you to museums or*

art galleries; Take you to various artistic events [theatre plays, ballet, classical music concerts]; Encourage you to read books that are not a school assignment? Scale: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very often; Cronbach's α = .71). Both measures refer to students' cultural habits and behaviours, that is, to students' embodied cultural capital as a system of adopted dispositions related to social class [Bourdieu 1997]. These dispositions are seen as part of family habitus, that is, the deeply ingrained system of dispositions that family members share [Reay 1998]. Students' results on the two cultural capital scales were transformed to z-scores and summed to create a composite cultural capital score.

Relative risk aversion

We used the Croatian translation of the RRA scale [Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007], which contained six items (e.g. *I find it important to achieve a better job than my parents; I am afraid to achieve a lower position than my parents later in life*). Students reported on a scale from 1 – *This does not apply to me at all* to 5 – *This applies fully to me*. Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.72. Scale results were formed as the mean of the results on six items.

Aspiration to pursue higher education

Students' aspirations for pursuing higher education were measured using the item *In the future, I want to pursue higher education (Yes, No, I don't know)*. This variable served as the outcome variable in the analyses.

Statistical analyses

We employed multinomial logistic modelling with a random intercept to take into account the hierarchical nature of the sample and the fact that pupils were nested within schools [e.g. Hox, Moerbeek and Van de Schoot 2018]. Aspiration to pursue higher education served as the outcome variable. *No* was the reference category, and parameters were estimated for categories *Yes* and *I don't know*. The model included control variables as well as measures of SES, cultural capital and RRA. We also included interaction terms.

The analyses were performed using the mixed-model procedure in IBM SPSS 22. We used robust estimation for the tests of fixed effects to account for possible violations of model assumptions [e.g. Heck, Thomas and Tabata 2012]. The intraclass correlation coefficient values for categories *Yes* and *I don't know* were .107 and .025, respectively. The belonging design effects were larger than 2 (19 and 4, respectively), which confirmed that random intercept analyses, rather than fixed intercept analyses, should be conducted [Huang 2018].

The majority of students (N = 6272; 88.8%) provided responses to all variables, which produced an almost complete dataset (98.5% of all cells were com-

pleted). The missing rates for individual variables were low (≤ 4.2%), and because a missing rate of 5% or less is usually considered inconsequential for data analysis [Dong and Peng 2013; Schafer 1999], we decided to run a complete-case analysis. All variables had variance inflation factors (VIF) smaller than two, meaning that there were no signs of multicollinearity.

Results

Descriptive statistics

More than one-quarter of participating students attended the economics sector (Table 1). Other vocational sectors with relatively large student representations were electric engineering, catering, tourism, health care, and mechanical engineering. There were more males than females in the sample, which is in accordance with the gender distribution of students in vocational upper secondary schools in Croatia [Ministry of Science and Education of Croatia 2019]. Average school achievement corresponded to grade 3 (i.e. *good*). Students from different school years were evenly represented in the sample.

For the majority of the students, both parents were employed at the time of the research and held at least an upper secondary school diploma. On average, students participated in the listed cultural activities fewer than once or twice in the previous year. Similarly, they were rarely encouraged by their parents to participate in cultural activities during their childhood. On average, students reported medium levels of RRA. Regarding the outcome variable, more than two-thirds of the students from the sample wanted to pursue higher education, while one-quarter was indecisive.

Multinomial logistic random intercept model

We tested the multinomial logistic model to check for the independent contributions of SES, cultural capital, and RRA in explaining students' aspirations for pursuing higher education while adjusting for other variables. Multinomial logistic models result in separate estimates of parameters for each outcome category minus the reference category. In the present study, we chose category *No* as the reference category, so parameter estimates were calculated for categories *Yes* and *I don't know*.

Parameter estimates for category *Yes*

Regression parameters of the control variables indicate that students were less likely to aspire to higher education (i.e. to choose category *Yes* in comparison to reference category *No*) if they attended the health care sector or some of the

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of regressors and outcome

	M, %	SD	Range
Control variables			
Vocational sector (%)			
Economics	25.1%		
Electrical engineering	22.6%		
Mechanical engineering	7.1%		
Catering and tourism	12.4%		
Health care	10.7%		
Other sectors	22.1%		
Gender (%)			
Females	46.1%		
Males	53.9%		
School achievement	10.2	2.33	6 – 15
School year (%)			
1st year	32.7%		
3rd year	33.1%		
Final year (4th and 5th)	34.1%		
Socio-economic status			
Mother's employment (%)			
Employed	72.7%		
Unemployed	22.7%		
Retired	2.2%		
I don't know / Not applicable	2.4%		
Father's employment (%)			
Employed	78.6%		
Unemployed	5.7%		
Retired	12.3%		
I don't know / Not applicable	3.4%		
Parental education	3.4	0.91	1 – 5
Cultural capital and relative risk aversion			
Cultural activities in the last year	1.8	0.57	1 – 4
Cultural activities in childhood	2.4	0.93	1 – 5
Relative risk aversion	3.3	0.77	1 – 5
Outcome variable			
In the future, I want to pursue higher education			
No	7.0%		
Yes	67.9%		
I don't know	25.2%		

smaller vocational sectors (i.e. other sectors) than if they attended the largest vocational sector, economics (Table 2). Female students were more likely than male students to express a wish to attend higher education. Furthermore, students with higher school achievement tended to have higher aspirations than low-achievers. Students who attended first year of upper secondary school tended to have lower aspirations for higher education than students who were in the last year of upper secondary school. However, there was no effect related to attendance of the third year of upper secondary school. These findings indicate that it was necessary to control for the selected variables in our model.

Regarding SES, the children of unemployed mothers were less likely to aspire to higher education than children whose mothers work. Further, children of more educated parents tended to have higher aspirations for higher education. This suggests that at least some elements of SES have statistically significant effects on students' aspirations that are independent of the effects of control variables. Lastly, students with higher levels of cultural capital, as well as students with higher RRA, had higher aspirations for higher education. The other main effects were not statistically significant. The interaction terms indicate a moderation effect of parental education on cultural capital. More specifically, the association between cultural capital and aspirations for higher education was stronger among the children of more educated parents. Interaction terms related to other pairs of variables were not statistically significant.

Parameter estimates for category *I don't know*

Regression parameters of control variables indicated that students were more likely to choose category *I don't know* instead of the reference category *No* if they had higher school achievement and if they were in their first or third year of upper secondary school compared to final-year students (Table 2). Regarding SES, students are more likely to be indecisive if their parents were more educated. Further, students with higher estimates of cultural capital, as well as students with higher levels of RRA, were more likely to choose category *I don't' know* than category *No*. The interaction terms showed that the relationship between cultural capital and indecisiveness about pursuing higher education (compared to having no such aspirations) was stronger for the children of the more educated parents. Interaction terms related to other pairs of variables were not statistically significant.

Parameter estimates for category *Yes* had systematically larger absolute values than estimates for category *I don't know*. Moreover, parameter estimates for category *I don't know* either had the same direction as estimates for category *Yes* or were statistically insignificant, indicating that indecisiveness regarding higher education really lies somewhere on a continuum between relatively firm decisions to pursue or not to pursue higher education. These two findings held for all regressors that were in at least one instance (i.e. for at least one outcome category) flagged as statistically significant, except the dummy variables representing school years.

Table 2. Multinomial logistic random intercept model of vocational school students' aspirations for higher education – first part

	Yes		I don't know	
	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	3.17**	0.23	1.28**	0.21
Control variables				
Vocational sector[a]				
Electrical engineering	–0.19	0.26	0.07	0.22
Mechanical engineering	–0.60	0.34	0.03	0.22
Catering and tourism	–0.28	0.27	–0.06	0.27
Health care	–0.39*	0.19	0.20	0.21
Other sectors	–0.87**	0.26	–0.23	0.23
Gender (female)	0.43*	0.18	0.10	0.18
School achievement[d]	0.39**	0.04	0.16**	0.03
School year[b]				
1st year	–0.63**	0.20	0.53**	0.20
3rd year	0.23	0.13	0.54**	0.15
Socio-economic status				
Mother's employment[c]				
Unemployed	–0.32**	0.12	–0.16	0.10
Retired	0.71	0.49	0.70	0.51
I don't know / Not applicable	–0.36	0.35	–0.13	0.27
Father's employment[c]				
Unemployed	0.11	0.23	0.19	0.25
Retired	–0.22	0.15	–0.17	0.16
I don't know / Not applicable	–0.20	0.33	0.01	0.28
Parental education[d]	0.42**	0.06	0.23**	0.06
CC and RRA				
CC[d]	0.36**	0.06	0.18**	0.06
RRA[d]	0.66**	0.12	0.31*	0.15
Interactions				
Parental education x CC	0.13**	0.05	0.11*	0.05
Parental education x RRA	–0.01	0.08	–0.03	0.07
1st year x CC	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.11
3rd year x CC	–0.02	0.10	0.00	0.11
1st year x RRA	–0.20	0.15	–0.13	0.19
3rd year x RRA	–0.16	0.16	–0.10	0.20

Table 2. Multinomial logistic random intercept model of vocational school students' aspirations for higher education – second part

	Yes		I don't know	
	B	SE	B	SE
School level variance	0.18	0.06	0.02	0.02
ICC	.05		.01	
AIC	59 163.0			
BIC	59 176.5			

Note: The outcome variable is 'In the future, I want to pursue higher education' ('Yes', 'No', 'I don't know'; the reference category is 'No'). CC – cultural capital, RRA – relative risk aversion, ICC – intraclass correlation coefficient, AIC – Akaike information criterion, BIC – Bayesian information criterion. [a] The reference category is Economics. [b] The reference category is Final year. [c] The reference category is Employed. [d] The variable is grand-mean centred. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Additional analysis showed that the model without interaction terms fit the data somewhat better (AIC = 58 052.3, BIC = 58 065.7) than the model with interactions. However, we decided to report the model with interactions because it was instrumental in addressing our research problem. Directions and statistical (in)significances of the estimated parameters for the main effects were the same in both models, and their values were similar.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to address the association between vocational school students' aspirations for higher education and different factors related to their social background. Apart from the control variables, students' background characteristics were assessed by SES indicators as well as through indicators based on cultural reproduction and RRA theories.

The results of the descriptive statistics revealed that students showed strong aspirations for higher education, with one-quarter of them being indecisive and a minority showing no intention to pursue the tertiary sector. This suggests that, despite being qualified to enter the labour market, the majority of four-year vocational school students perceive extended educational careers and transition into higher education as a preferable option. This is supported by administrative data on applications to Croatian higher education institutions [Šabić 2019].

With regard to possible background characteristics that may be associated with students' aspirations for higher education, the analysis indicated the relevance of students' SES as well as the effects of two reproductive mechanisms: cultural capital and RRA [Bourdieu 1984; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997]. All three

constructs showed independent effects on aspirations for higher education (Hypothesis 1 confirmed), controlling for vocational sector, gender, school achievement, and school year. The adjustment for the effects of these control variables allows us to infer with greater confidence the effects of the examined background characteristics [e.g. LaValley 2008]. Compared to students who did not aspire to higher education, the effects of SES, cultural capital, and RRA were positive and consistent for those who showed a clear intention to continue higher education and those who were yet indecisive in this regard. This result is consistent with previous findings regarding secondary school students' aspirations for higher education [Daniel and Watermann 2018; Dupriez et al. 2012; Khattab 2015]. It has to be noted that the effects of cultural capital for each of the mentioned categories of students were stronger for those of higher SES, that is, for those who had more educated parents (Hypothesis 2a confirmed), and that these effects were not dependent on school year (Hypothesis 2c partly confirmed). Both findings echo Bourdieu's thesis [Bourdieu 1984] on the importance of cultural capital for social reproduction. The analysis showed that the effects of RRA on aspirations for higher education were not dependent on parental education (Hypothesis 2b confirmed) nor school year (Hypothesis 2c partly confirmed). The lack of a moderation effect of parental education on RRA is in line with theoretical expectations, and it may be partly explained by potential normative expectations concerning participation in higher education in Croatia [Šabić 2019]. The fact that there was no interaction effect between year of schooling and RRA suggests that mobility concerns consistently affect aspirations for higher education throughout secondary education.

In summary, the results of our study support previous findings on the importance of SES and cultural capital [Khattab 2015; Wang 2011], as well as RRA [Chesters and Watson 2013; Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007], for educational aspirations. However, in contrast to previous studies [e.g. Breen and Goldthorpe 1997; Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007], our study indicates that cultural capital and RRA may be used together in examining educational aspirations. Along these lines, our findings suggest that vocational school students from low-SES families face similar barriers to other students of low SES. The analysis indicated that these barriers may be associated with constraints related to parental education and employment status, fewer past and present cultural activities, and concerns with downward mobility. Furthermore, since we were able to control for students' academic achievement, the effects of SES, cultural capital, and RRA may be interpreted as being related to students' self-selection processes that affect educational choices independent of ability (secondary effects) [Boudon 1974; Nash 2003]. Notably, these effects correspond with a more integrated perspective on social self-selection processes [cf. Goldthorpe 1996; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997] that refers to rational (status-related concerns) as well as cultural factors (habitual processes and experiences) [Nash 2003; Puzić, Odak and Šabić 2019]. Nevertheless, this assumption should be subject to further clarification [cf. Glaesser and Cooper 2014; Nash 2003; Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007].

From this perspective, our earlier assumption that vocational education might facilitate participation in higher education for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds seems, at best, incomplete. This means that formal arrangements, such as recognition of prior learning or bridging programmes conducive to vocational school students [Field and Guez 2018; Griffin 2014], may be more realistic in connection with earlier interventions in the educational careers of disadvantaged students [Doolan, Puzić and Baranović 2018; cf. Heckman 2006; Neugebauer and Schindler 2012]. The results of our study suggest that these interventions may address cultural constraints, such as those related to self-perceptions of students' academic potential [Lynch and O'Riordan 1998; Reay et al. 2001], as well as students' perceptions of 'the difficulties and risks of undertaking higher education compared to being in the full-time labour market' [Chesters and Watson 2013: 199]. Accordingly, our findings further point to the importance of improving low-SES students' knowledge about the benefits (e.g. life chances and career perspectives in relation to different levels of qualifications) and costs (e.g. considering potential scholarships and funding opportunities) related to higher education [cf. Daniel and Watermann 2018].

Concerning the shortcomings of the present study, one is related to the cross-sectional nature of the study design, which reduces the possibility of inferences about the effects of SES, cultural capital, and RRA on educational aspirations at different points in students' educational trajectories. A second limitation of the study is the students' self-assessment of their school performance and their parents' employment status and level of education. In future studies, it would be more accurate to use official school grade records and parental questionnaires to obtain the aforementioned data. Furthermore, research would benefit from additional measures of cultural capital (e.g. parental cultural practices) and RRA (e.g. motives for status maintenance in relation to parents' class position) that could also be gathered via parental questionnaires. Further, the present study focused on the relationship between students' background characteristics and aspirations for higher education, thereby omitting factors related to school composition (e.g. with regard to educational practices or influence of peers) or the wider institutional context (e.g. the structure of the educational system). While it is certainly possible that some school characteristics affect students' aspirations for higher education, we accounted for the relatively small values of intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC), which indicate that the major regressors of aspirations for higher education are most likely situated at the student level. The relationship between the institutional context (e.g. with regard to level of differentiation and/or standardisation within the educational system) and educational aspirations could be examined in future research on data from different countries and different educational settings.

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Improving Knowledge Production in Comparative Survey Research: Cross-Using Data from Four International Survey Programmes*

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Abstract: In the context of flourishing cross-national and multi-level research, the variety of macro and micro data sources available to researchers have evolved into an interdependent ecosystem of social indicators. Focusing on four comparative social surveys, this paper examines the extent to which secondary data users take advantage of a range of complementary data sources to broaden the breadth or strengthen the robustness of their research. Using two Google Scholar-based datasets of 2789 and 796 publications, we find that, despite the complex equivalence issues in comparative survey research, users combine data to a considerable extent, aiming to increase conceptual, geographic, and temporal coverage and cross-validate findings. Selecting the example of the European Social Survey, 183 journal articles are qualitatively examined to identify specific epistemic gains attained by analysts when combining ESS survey data with data from other comparative programmes. The strategy involves risks, emanating from either analysts' own misjudgements or arising from the wider issues of comparability and transparency in cross-national survey research. However, a number of data harmonisation platforms have recently emerged that may facilitate the standardisation of measures across surveys, augmenting the possibilities for future theory development and research.

Keywords: comparative surveys, social indicators, academic users, data ecosystem, multi-level analysis
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Cross-national surveys in the social science data ecosystem

In 1962 and 1970, Rabier pioneered the first European multi-nation surveys to investigate mass attitudes towards European integration. The surveys involved a limited number of western European countries and their success led to the launch of the Eurobarometer in 1974 [Norris 2007]. In the 1980s, large general-purpose cross-national surveys began to emerge around the globe with the specific aim to facilitate systematic cross-national analysis. These are now widely regarded as some of the main data sources on contemporary societies [Kuechler 1998; Mochmann 2008; Smith 2019]. They facilitate comparisons of large numbers of countries in a cross-sectional and cross-time perspective, a format that encourages analysts to determine causality or to test developmental societal theories, such as modernisation theory [Andress et al. 2019]. They offer ample possibilities to study public opinion in a variety of institutional and societal contexts in which analysts can quantify the extent to which differences in outcomes reflect differences in country-specific features, such as demographic structure, public policies, labour market characteristics, and many others [Norris 2009; Bryan and Jenkins 2015]. In this respect, comparative social research is sometimes considered the equivalent of an experimental research design in the natural and physical sciences [Mochmann 2008].

Making the most of these possibilities, an increasing share of studies based on cross-national surveys employ multi-level design, combining individual-level micro data with macro indicators, seeking explanations of social phenomena in interaction between actors and institutions [Andress et al. 2019; Smith 2019]. This strategy is facilitated by the growing availability of systematically collected country-level data, coupled with matching micro-level data that saturate a full multilevel analysis [Quandt and Luijkx 2015]. National statistical offices are among the largest providers of comparable macro indicators, along with numerous international organisations such as the UN, the World Bank, the OECD, Eurostat, the Global Health Observatory, and the IMF [Vezzoni 2015; UNECE 2017], while cross-national survey programmes usually provide comparable micro-level data.

This paper builds on the assumption that, from the perspective of secondary data users, a variety of macro and micro sources represent an ever more interdependent 'ecosystem' of indicators, rather than a collection of discrete segments. The concept of an ecosystem has been adopted by several non-biological academic disciplines in recent years, so that we now have, for example, software ecosystems, mobile application ecosystems, innovation ecosystems, and strategy research ecosystems [Oh et al. 2016; Seppanen et al. 2017]. Most recently, this has extended to an ecosystem of technologies for social science research [Duca and Metzler 2019]. While the term is often used metaphorically and the theoretical conceptualisations outside biology are still being developed, it generally refers to a group of interacting actors that depend on each other's activities [Jacobides et al. 2018]. Davies [2012] describes the elements in the open data ecosystem as autonomous and self-organising components, linked together in local and global

feedback loops. In a similar vein, EU science policy documents refer to research infrastructures as originally stand-alone undertakings that are 'becoming more and more part of a connected ecosystem forming a unique resource for advanced research' [ESFRI 2018: 18]. Given the complexity and distributed nature of the numerous data sources used by social science analysts, we adopt this general notion of an ecosystem to conceptualise their mutually enriching interconnectedness.

While we also investigate the extent to which micro and macro indicators are combined in academic publications, our main interest is in the bottom-up synergies between four comparative surveys which count among the leading sources of individual-level comparative findings. The World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Study (EVS) are global longitudinal survey research programmes that study changing values and their impact on social and political life. The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is a cross-national collaboration programme that conducts annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to the social sciences, and the European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that measures the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural patterns of diverse populations in Europe and aims to spread higher standards of rigour in cross-national research.[1] Having fielded their first waves in 1981 (WVS and EVS), 1985 (ISSP), and 2002 (ESS), the four programmes have generated rich time series of general-purpose social indicators, which have been widely used for longitudinal comparative research by generations of scholars in a variety of social scientific fields [Heath et al. 2005; Norris 2009].

The decision to focus on this group of data providers was motivated by two considerations: first, the availability of a large bibliographic dataset based on European Social Survey publications [Malnar 2019], which, among other bibliometric variables, documents cross-survey usage; second, the overlapping character of the four surveys in terms of themes, country membership, and temporal span creates ample possibilities for cross-usage. All four are general population cross-sectional programmes that produce comparative data on contemporary societies and deposit the data in public archives as a 'public good' for members of various academic communities to use in secondary analysis [Jowell et al. 2007; Vezzoni 2015]. Over recent decades, these four time series have become essential sources for academic research, bringing with their use the unavoidable limitations that come with indirect data collection. The trade-offs between the convenience of having ready data produced by someone else and the effort of dealing with data collected independently from the formulation of the research question are well-known [Damian et al. 2019: 4]. For example, the data may not cover all the concepts, the entire geographic region, the exact years, or the specific population that a researcher is interested in [Johnston 2014; Gonçalves 2016]. In this respect 'data completeness' is a useful concept, one that quantitative social scientists usually

[1] Survey websites: www.worldvaluessurvey.org (WVS); www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu (EVS); www.issp.org (ISSP); www.europeansocialsurvey.org (ESS).

associate with missing data [Faniel et al. 2016], but that can be extended to refer to issues of conceptual, geographic, and temporal coverage.

From the perspective of secondary analysts, the key element of completeness is conceptual relevance, determining how a particular data source is able to fill existing knowledge gaps [Müller-Bloch and Kranz 2015]. Any survey's conceptual range is necessarily limited, and even more so in cross-national designs, where only certain subjects and only certain aspects of those subjects can successfully be measured cross-nationally [Jowell 1998; Lagos 2008]. Whereas the four comparative surveys share a number of concepts, they are also thematically distinct. The EVS and WVS were developed primarily to test the modernisation and secularisation theory and process, which is why they include fewer indicators of behaviours and more indicators of values, while the ISSP and ESS, with their (partial) modular format, were designed to enable the testing of a set of thematic theoretical approaches and include more behavioural items (for more on the historical development of large comparative surveys see Heath et al. [2005]; Norris [2009]; Groves [2011]; Hadler et al. [2015]; Quandt and Luijkx [2015]). Clearly, each individual survey has a narrower conceptual range than all four combined, which means that there may be improvements in data completeness that can be achieved by their cross-use.

Another limitation faced by secondary data analysts is geographic range. Although they partially overlap, the four surveys differ substantially in the size of their membership, which directly translates into comparative scope. Two of them are global and two European, but with very different coverage of their target areas. The WVS is sometimes referred to as covering 90% of the global population [Haerpfer and Kizilova 2016: 723] and the EVS in its recent waves included almost all European countries. The ISSP and the ESS cover considerably smaller shares of their target regions, with methodological rigour being the main rationale behind this approach. A discussion of the complex relation between the size of membership and equivalence issues is not the aim of this article. Attention here is instead focused on how secondary analysts handle the consequences of these two inclusion philosophies. When dealing with various aspects of data limitation, such as (a lack of) conceptual or geographic scope, the conventional solution is to adjust the research question to achieve a better fit with the chosen data set [Doolan and Froelicher 2009]. This study explores the prevalence of an alternative 'ecosystem' approach, in which analysts can respond to issues of incompleteness by taking advantage of the co-existence of multiple survey resources and their combined conceptual, temporal, and geographic breadth.

Besides coverage issues, the validation of findings is another vital aspect of comparative survey data use to which the ecosystem notion can be applied. Methodological literature documents an almost endless number of equivalence issues in comparative research, and highlights how designing successful cross-national studies is an elaborate and methodologically complex process in which there is much more potential for biases and errors than there is in single-nation

surveys [Lyberg et al. 2019; Smith 2019; Lynn et al. 2006; Damian et al. 2019]. Ensuring measurement equivalence when there are multiple distributed actors and many social and cultural contexts remains a challenge [Briceno-Rosas et al. 2020] and may not result in the desired level of quality, as the 'data from different countries were possibly collected using different methods, under different conditions, and in different cultural contexts' [Quandt and Luijkx 2015: 795]. The validation of results, always considered an element of good research practice [Mathison 1988], is therefore even more vital when we analyse comparative data. In this respect, the co-existence of multiple comparative time series is often viewed as an opportunity for replication and generalisation, as converging findings provide much stronger confidence in conclusions than comparisons between countries at a single point in time do [Tengö et al. 2014; Norris 2009; Heath et al. 2005]. This is something that our study will also examine.

While many publications in the field of comparative survey research discuss issues of governance, quality control, transparency of documentation and procedures, questionnaire development, harmonisation, translation, and fieldwork management [Jowell 1998; Harkness 1999; Lynn 2003; Lyberg et al. 2019; Hadler et al. 2015; Pennell et al. 2017; Lindstrøm and Kropp 2017], few studies empirically investigate the knowledge production side of comparative programmes [e.g. Damian et al. 2019], and we found none that study combined data use. This theme is more commonly discussed in the medical literature, particularly in relation to systematic reviews, based on the entire population of relevant studies [Oliver et al. 2005; Petticrew and Roberts 2006; Harden 2010]. Apart from the ubiquitous experimental method, it is also customary for medical surveys to be combined to improve target population coverage when samples are small, incomplete, or of poor quality [Schenker et al. 2002; Dong et al. 2014]. Judging from the findings of Schenker et al. [2002] and Dong et al. [2014], this practice often raises concerns about validity issues. Roberts and Binder [2009] find that the separate and pooled approaches to estimation lead to different results and caution that it is often not appropriate to combine similar data from more than one survey. Others highlight inconsistencies in question wording but conclude that 'in spite of complicating issues, combining information from multiple surveys appears to be potentially useful and an important area for further research' [Schenker and Raghunathan 2007], a point that seems equally relevant for social survey research.

The aim of our study was to determine the analytical benefits that support the cross-use of datasets in comparative survey research, a strategy that we term the 'ecosystem' approach. Specifically, we examine how analysts take advantage of the co-existence of the four comparative social survey programmes and their combined conceptual, temporal, and geographic breadth when answering research questions, dealing with issues of data incompleteness, and validating findings.

Data and measures

In order to address our research objectives, we relied on quantitative and qualitative information and two original databases.

Dataset 1 – publications based on the ESS

Our main data source is the European Social Survey bibliographic database [Malnar 2019], updated annually as part of an ongoing bibliographic monitoring exercise.[2] The data collection process uses Google Scholar to search for the key-phrase 'European social survey' in the past publication year. Google Scholar is the search engine of choice because it indexes scholarly literature across an array of publication formats and disciplines and thus attempts to index the totality of the realm of scientifically relevant documents, such as articles, books, chapters, reports, and theses [Mayr and Walter 2007; Ware and Mabe 2012; Harzing 2012]. An ESS-based publication is defined as any type of academic publication in the English language that used at least one ESS item in its primary analysis, a fact established through a case-by-case review of abstracts and texts. The version of the ESS bibliographic database we used contained 4914 records for the period 2004–2019, which were entered into an SPSS data file, and 2789 full texts (1821 of them journal articles), acquired through open-access and subscription-access schemes. This makes it a unique bibliographic resource for monitoring the academic usage of a major cross-national survey.

The ESS dataset is suitable for the purpose at hand as it contains a set of variables that measure the use of other data sources in the 2789 downloaded texts. With respect to macro indicators, it documents the presence of GDP and GINI, two widely employed measures of country-level affluence and inequalities, and the use of multi-level analysis, an indirect but robust indicator of the presence of macro measures in respective explanatory models. In addition, it records the use of other national or cross-national survey sources, as well as the specific presence of WVS, EVS, or ISSP data. In this way, we identified 304 publications in which ESS data are combined with data from the other three comparative programmes, and these were the key subset of publications we used in our study.

In order to examine the use of multi-level analysis and highlight thematic overlap between the four surveys, we used the topic variable, which was derived from 4914 ESS publications. The open coding approach, common in qualitative research [Blair 2016], involved a human coder who identified and catalogued the themes the authors addressed based on the publications' titles, abstracts, and

[2] The authors are directly involved in producing the bibliographic data file, which is to be made public and accessible from the ESS ERIC webpage by the end of 2021. Currently, all data that support the findings of this study are available from the authors upon request.

texts, an exercise that resulted in a list of 26 main topics. The same approach was used to compile a list of topics in Dataset 2. Finally, the full texts of 304 publications that combine ESS data with data from the three other comparative surveys were reviewed to identify the main analytical reasons behind this strategy. Six motivations for cross-using data were identified and a six-category variable was constructed to quantify their presence across the 304 publications by assigning them appropriate codes (see Table 3 in the results section).

One limitation of the approach adopted, owing to the availability of Dataset 1 is that several parts of the analysis are focused on one of the four surveys, the European Social Survey. Nonetheless, considering the similarities in their mission and target academic audiences, findings on patterns of cross-survey use are likely to be relevant for all four surveys.

Dataset 2 – publications based on the WVS, the EVS, and the ISSP

In order to examine the thematic contrasts and complementarities between publications based on the four comparative surveys, as well as the rationale for using multiple survey waves, we constructed a supplementary dataset consisting of English-language journal articles that used data from the WVS, the EVS, and the ISSP. We used the same methodology for this dataset: a keyword search for the phrases 'World values survey', 'European values study', and 'International social survey programme' across the Google Scholarplatform, combined with human reviewing for primary data use. To limit the work effort, the search was restricted to journal articles and to selected publication years. The supplementary dataset thus consists of 796 articles, among them 193 WVS articles for the year 2016, 143 EVS articles for the years 2015 and 2016, and 261 ISSP articles for the years 2011, 2014, and 2016. EVS articles were sourced for two consecutive years to increase the sample size and ISSP articles from three scattered years to lessen the potential effect of fielding schedule on the structure of topics, knowing that modules recently deposited in data archives tend to be analysed more than older ones. The 199 ESS articles for the publication year 2016 were taken from the original ESS bibliographic database

In addition to the two datasets, our study draws on other publicly available information. To summarise and compare survey characteristics such as time span, fielding frequency, and geographic coverage, we gathered information from the official homepages of each survey.

Results

Combining ESS data with other micro- and macro-data sources

Using the ESS dataset (Dataset 1), we first examined the overall practice of combining micro- and macro-data sources in publications with ESS primary data use. This was found to be considerable (Table 1). GDP, the most used macro indicator, is referred to in about 37% of ESS publications, either as part of the analytical models or in the text, and a third of ESS-based journal articles use multi-level analysis, which suggests the use of macro indicators.[3] The presence of other micro data is also significant, with about a third of ESS publications containing data from additional national sources, but more often from other comparative sources, or both. The prevalence of combining data sources is best demonstrated by the fact that among the 1821 ESS journal articles analysed, the total share of those that used either other micro data, GDP or GINI macro indicators, or multi-level analysis is 69.9%. The share would undoubtedly increase if the bibliographic dataset documented the presence of other macro indicators besides GDP and GINI. This suggests that the majority of ESS-based publications rely on supplementary data sources. While this finding is not unexpected, the picture empirically corroborates and quantifies the notion that there is a rich landscape of interacting social indicators, or 'ecosystem', in international academic publications.

In order to refine our insight into the epistemological benefits of combining the ESS with macro indicators, we examined the use of multi-level analysis across individual topics (Table 2). We can see considerable variation in topic use, with some topics being much more frequently analysed in interactions between individual-level and contextual conditions (e.g. national-level policies or institutions) than others. On one hand, the structure of causality is likely to make some topics more reliant on the inclusion of high-quality comparative macro indicators, while other topics may rely primarily on individual-level explanations. On the other hand, the availability of standardised comparative macro indicators relevant for individual topics may also determine the scope of multi-level analysis use. In any case, we found this highly relevant comparative approach evident in at least 20% of ESS international publications across every topic and often more. The implications for knowledge production are considered below in the final section.

Combining ESS data with data from three comparative surveys

In the rest of our study, we narrowed our focus to examining the analytical motivations behind combining ESS data with other sources of comparative micro data. Specifically, we employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a systematic insight into 304 publications in which academic

[3] The use of multi-level analysis in the ESS bibliographic file is only available for journal articles.

Table 1. The share of publications that combine the ESS survey with other data sources

	%	N
Publications citing the GDP indicator	36.7	1023
Publications citing the GINI indicator	11.1	311
Journal articles using multi-level analysis*	34.8	634
Publications combining ESS data with other survey data	32.0	893
Cross-national survey(s)	18.2	508
National survey(s)	10.7	298
Both	3.1	87

Note: N = 2789 ESS publications; * N = 1821 ESS journal articles.

Table 2. Using multi-level analysis across topics in ESS journal articles

Topic	%	Topic (continued)	%
Nation, ethnicity	48.0	Social inequalities	28.7
Family, children, partners	41.5	Education	26.7
Welfare	40.5	Subjective well-being	26.1
Immigration	36.4	Religion, religiosity	25.4
Health	36.2	Culture, values	25.3
Gender issues	33.1	Crime	25.2
Work, employment	31.1	Social capital	25.1
Ageing, age groups	29.2	Economic issues	24.8
Politics	28.7	Civil society, volunteering	20.8

Notes: [a] Only topics with 100 or more publications are included; N = 1821.

authors pair ESS data with data from three other comparative programmes: 186 joint publications with WVS data, 149 with EVS data, and 99 with ISSP data. In 72.7% of the cases ESS is combined with one survey, while in the rest of the publications the data from two or all three surveys are present.

First, we qualitatively reviewed the 304 texts for the analytical reasons behind the combining of data and, as already noted, identified six categories that by and large saturate the broad rationale behind these strategies. Coding each publication into one or more categories (there can be more than one rationale for combining data sources), we obtained a summary quantitative picture (Table 3).

'Improving conceptual coverage' and the 'validation of findings' are the most frequent incentives for combining datasets. This echoes the debate about

Table 3. Analytical reasons for combining ESS data with data from the WVS, the EVS, and the ISSP (%)

	WVS (N = 166)	EVS (N = 81)	ISSP (N = 57)	Total (N = 304)
Reason for combining data [a]		(%)		
Combining concepts, indicators	51.8	64.2	43.9	53.6
Validation, robustness checks	34.3	27.1	43.9	34.2
Adding non-European countries	26.5	0.0	17.5	18.1
Adding time points	12.0	19.7	14.0	14.5
Pooling samples across surveys	1.2	9.9	5.2	4.3
Adding European countries	3.0	2.5	0.0	2.3

Note: [a] All relevant reasons were coded for each publication.

limitations in the scope of subjects that can be measured cross-nationally, as well as the need for validity checks in the face of significant potential for biases in cross-national research. In about a third of cases, analysts combine comparative data to tackle issues of geographic coverage, mostly to add non-European regions into the comparison, while in 15% of cases the rationale was to increase the number of measurement points. Pooling datasets and treating them as a single sample is the least frequent reason for combining data. The table also reveals specific complementarities between surveys – for example, combining indicators is most frequent in ESS – EVS combinations while robustness checks are most prevalent in ESS – ISSP combinations. This is not surprising considering that the two surveys have developed a number of similar thematic modules and seem to constitute the most suitable pair for verification of findings.

While this quantitative picture provides a valuable general insight, we sought to obtain a more detailed understanding of the practice of combining comparative data sources and the analytical motives for this. For this purpose, we qualitatively examined 183 journal articles from the 304 combined publications, assuming that scientific rigour and comparable format make this subset the most suitable choice for systematic examination. Following the order of reasons listed in Table 3, the next sections present an overview of our findings.

Improving conceptual coverage

We identified four typical strategies in publications where improving conceptual coverage was the main motivation for combining comparative survey sources:

Adding aggregate indicators into the explanatory models (28 articles). The most widespread approach identified was the addition of aggregate country-level in-

dicators or context conditions from other comparative surveys to complement analytical (regression) models based on the main ESS dataset. These indicators usually represented concepts or sub-concepts not present in the ESS, such as shares of materialists or post-materialists, indicators of gender and family roles or of national and supranational identity, and environmental values. In statistical terms, aggregate indicators come in many forms, such as country mean scores, population shares, factor scores, composite indicators derived from several items, estimates averaged across several surveys, and standard deviations.

Descriptive completeness (25 articles). Another common practice is a descriptive combination of indicators, with authors citing marginals from other surveys to support their general discussion or argument. In more elaborate instances, analysts combine blocks of indicators from various surveys in the form of charts or tables, often through various sub-sections in the text. These indicators usually cover a variety of complementary but not identical measures and are used to construct a more comprehensive descriptive picture of the phenomenon under investigation, such as family change, public opinion on gay rights, levels of social capital before and after an economic crisis, and similar phenomena.

Combined causal design (11 articles). Using this strategy, authors present two or more explanatory models or studies, based on two or more comparative datasets, addressing subjects that are complementary but not identical. The aim is to establish different dimensions of causality or to test different but related hypotheses, usually in the form of separate regression models, and use the combined result from all the datasets to answer a general research question. The main purpose is to combine diverse indicators, not to validate findings.

Country case studies (9 articles). Here analysts observe a phenomenon in a single country, using several (comparative) sources to address different aspects or dimensions, frequently using NUTS-level analysis in combination with regional administrative data. Sometimes no cross-country comparisons are made and cross-national datasets are simply combined for a national study. Other times the main dataset is a national survey or a primary study, which is the basis for an explanatory model, enhanced by comparative indicators from several comparative surveys for international comparisons.

In all cases, secondary users gain an epistemic advantage from the fact that the combined conceptual coverage across the four comparative surveys is greater than that arising from any single use.

Validating findings

The second most frequent reason for combining ESS data with data from the three other surveys was to validate findings, a strategy made possible by a number of overlapping themes, concepts, and, to a limited degree, individual indicators. To highlight their thematic complementarities, Table 4 presents the structure of topics analysed in journal articles based on each of the four comparative surveys

(Dataset 2). In the top two rows are topics frequently analysed using data from all four surveys, most notably politics. The middle rows consist of topics more often found in publications based on pairs of surveys, such as culture or religion in both values studies, while the bottom part presents topics that are more prevalent in one survey's publications, like immigration in the case of the ESS or the environment and social inequalities in the case of the ISSP. Topics with a greater than 10% share among publications based on each survey are marked with an asterisk.

Thematic correspondence measured in this way is clearly stronger for some survey pairs that others, but the findings also suggest that all four programmes offer opportunities for studying a large variety of similar topics and issues. Accordingly, the qualitative reviewing identified four validation strategies:

Cross-validating theoretical models or estimates (30 articles). The largest group are publications where hypotheses are corroborated across more than one dataset. Analysts usually present separate explanatory models based on two or more comparative surveys, examining the consistency of associations across analysed countries. This strategy is not always straightforward as replicating models across

Table 4. Distribution of topics in journal articles based on the four surveys (%)

Topic [a]	WVS (N = 193)	EVS (N = 143)	ESS (N = 199)	ISSP (N = 262)
	(%)			
Politics, democracy	14.5*	16.8*	25.1*	14.5*
Economy, recession	15.6*	13.3*	13.6*	9.2
Culture, values	24.9*	17.5*	6.0	5.3
Social capital	11.9*	10.5*	7.0	3.8
Religion	10.9*	14.7*	3.0	8.4
Welfare, policies	6.2	7.0	10.6*	21.0*
Work	4.7	6.3	15.1*	12.2*
SWB-QOL[b]	15.0*	8.4	12.6*	6.1
Family	5.7	10.5*	7.5	16.8*
Immigration	5.2	3.5	14.1*	6.1
Social inequalities	1.6	6.3	8.5	13.0*
Environment	5.8	0.7	3.0	10.7*
Health	4.7	4.9	10.6*	5.3
Gender issues	8.8	10.5*	7.5	5.3

Notes: N = 797; [a] up to two topics were coded per article; only topics investigated in 50 or more articles are presented; [b] subjective well-being and quality of life.

surveys may require the use of strategies such as scaling the models down to the smallest common denominator, using corresponding but not identical indicators, presenting regression tables with missing cells, or carrying out partial replication by cross-validating only some associations. In most cases the results are found to be consistent across surveys, but this may also be due to the known issue of publication bias [e.g. Franco et al. 2014], with authors who find conflicting results opting out of publishing their studies or parts of them. However, some authors report findings that are (partially) contradictory and suggest that fellow researchers should be cautious when drawing conclusions based on a single dataset.

Sensitivity testing (15 articles). Like the first group, these publications retest their main hypotheses or explanatory model using an alternative dataset, but with the explicit aim of controlling for measurement specification. They compare matching concepts or associations measured in different ways in terms of phrasing or scales, examine the effect of ambiguous wordings and similar. Examples include prospective and retrospective indicators of voting behaviours, alternative measures of multiculturalism, measures of globalisation exposure, etc. Again, the results are mostly found to be robust, and show congruency across different measures. But there are some notable exceptions where authors find no consistent patterns across surveys and conclude that the results are dependent on the choice of dataset, which is obviously a problem.

Validating trends (3 articles). In some cases, analysts use multiple comparative surveys to cross-validate trends across a set of countries for the same or a similar time period – for example, secularisation trends or the convergence of values.

Descriptive corroboration (3 articles). The least ambitious approach employed is that of seeking a descriptive convergence of results, typically by comparing the values of corresponding individual indicators from several surveys, such as trust in the legal system, party membership, or a belief that immigrants make crime problems worse.

In addition to these direct validation strategies, a number of the authors who used ESS data reported that they were replicating analyses from previous articles using WVS, EVS, or ISSP data. Such cases are not documented in the ESS bibliographic dataset and are therefore not part of our review. In this respect, the extent of cross-survey validation of findings in our study is underestimated.

Expanding the geographic scope

In about 20% of publications (Table 3) the main rationale for combining ESS data with the three other surveys is to add non-European countries into the comparison or, very marginally so, to add European countries. We identified three typical patterns:

Inserting or combining global country aggregates (11 articles). Because of its comprehensive thematic coverage and larger national samples, the ESS is probably the leading cross-national survey source for analysing individual-level out-

comes related to immigration. This results in a set of publications in which country aggregates from global comparative surveys, particularly the WVS, are used in ESS-based explanatory models to test the acculturation effects of immigration. In a typical design, estimates in ESS immigrant sub-samples are compared with identical or similar aggregate indicators in their countries of origin – for example, levels of trust or civic participation, attitudes towards homosexuality, cultural distance, and others.

Seeking transatlantic comparisons (7 articles). These publications compare European (ESS) countries with Western transatlantic regions (North America, Australia, and New Zealand) to look for convergence or contrasts. The United States, particularly with its specific value structure, is often an important comparison point for topics such as welfare chauvinism, preferences for redistribution, desired levels of immigration, and others. It should be noted though that a number of authors who seek to make this specific comparison chose to combine ESS data with US national datasets such as the General Social Survey.

Observing global patterns (6 articles). The most ambitious approach identified includes publications that seek to test the universal validity of theories or findings, with analysts combining several comparative datasets to observe relevant relationships across a range of countries from around the globe. Examples include examining value trends, system responsiveness, changes in unionisation, popular support for health care, motivational selectivity of migrants, and others.

Again, in all cases, secondary users seek to benefit from the greater geographic coverage across the four surveys.

Expanding the time scope and scale

The four datasets differ considerably in terms of their time-series length: the EVS, the WVS, and the ISSP date back to 1981 and 1985, while the ESS was first fielded in 2002. Their measurement frequency is also very different, with the ESS being fielded biannually, the WVS roughly in 5-year intervals, and the EVS and ISSP in close to 10-year intervals.[4] We identified three strategies related to the time dimension.

Combining time series (13 articles). In the majority of cases, analysts merge two or more survey series, usually partially overlapping, to create a single and more dense string of measurements, sometimes observing short-term, medium-term, and long-term dynamics on different datasets, depending on their time span and fielding frequency. Such strategies enable the observation of shared indicators or relationships across a longer time period, often across several decades

[4] In the case of the ISSP we refer to the typical fielding frequency of the same ISSP substantive module, which usually, though not always, defines the frame of interest for academic users, while the demographic section is fielded annually.

and in a number of countries. Trends typically explored this way include religiosity and religious practice, subjective well-being, inequality and redistribution, and more. Sometimes multiple comparative surveys are used to observe trends in analytically related yet distinct concepts measured by separate datasets, such as various aspects of the secularisation trend or the effects of the economic crisis on various aspects of social capital.

Combining cross-section and trend (5 articles). Some publications use one comparative dataset for cross-section analysis and explanatory model building, usually the more recent one or the one with richer conceptual coverage and obtain a simpler cross-time picture from another comparative survey that goes further back in time. An example is an ESS-based model of the political participation of young Europeans, with EVS/WVS data used to illustrate trends in three non-electoral forms of participation.

Compensating for time-series gaps (3 articles). This strategy is mostly pragmatic, used by some analysts who examine larger sets of countries in a cross-time perspective and face a problem of inconsistent participation in their main dataset. In such cases they may resort to other comparative surveys to fill in the missing time points for one or more countries, using identical or similar indicator(s) at the closest available time points.

Pooling data

Merging surveys to use estimation techniques appropriate to a single pooled sample was the least frequent reason for combining data. Harmonisation issues, rather than user preferences, are the likely reason for these low numbers, as analysts are generally keen to increase sample sizes and measurement frequency. This is demonstrated in Table 5, which shows that within-survey pooling of samples, where no harmonisation barrier exists, is a markedly widespread analytical

Table 5. Multiple waves use in four comparative surveys (Dataset 2)

	WVS (N = 193)	ESS (N = 199)	EVS (N = 143)	ISSP (N = 262)
	(%)			
Articles using multiple rounds	39.9	39.1	28.0	25.6
To conduct cross-time analysis[a]	36.5	41.7	87.5	68.7
To pool samples	59.5	73.6	37.5	55.2
N =	193	199	143	262

Note: [a] Publications combining cross-time and pooled cross-sectional analysis were counted in both categories.

strategy, particularly in the cases of the ESS and the WVS with a denser fielding frequency, where combined sample sizes across all waves and countries come close to or surpass 400 000 cases. The other key reason to use multiple rounds is, of course, cross-time analysis, a prevailing motivation in EVS and ISSP publications.

Only 7 articles containing pooled cross-survey datasets were considered; these typically included a dependent concept, such as attending religious services, social mobility, or the effects of schooling reforms in a cross-time perspective in a narrow social group, such as single-country churchgoers, single-country immigrant group, birth cohorts, or occupational category. In these research designs, relevant sample sizes or, sometimes, adequate measurement density cannot be achieved by cumulating rounds across individual comparative surveys alone, so cross-survey pooling is the solution of choice.

Discussion and conclusion

Our study, which is descriptive in nature, examined what we term the 'ecosystem' approach to answering research questions in comparative research, an approach characterised by analytically motivated reliance on multiple data sources. Specifically, we investigated the combined usage of four comparative surveys, one of the key segments of individual-level data providers. We found that analysts benefit from inserting country aggregates from each other's repository of indicators, building complementary explanatory models, cross-validating theoretical models, comparing European and global estimates, and observing the dynamics of phenomena across a longer combined timespan. In the majority of cases, the use of multiple data sources was not a marginal exercise but a necessity in order to answer the research questions or to answer them in a more complete or valid way. Such practices are consistent with the broad notion of an ecosystem as adapted by the non-biological sciences. The four comparative programmes are characterised as interacting 'actors', whose rich series of longitudinal indicators are combined by academic authors to enhance or validate their analytical approaches. We could further extend the notion of interacting actors to the exchange of best practices in comparative methodology, such as fieldwork monitoring, management, or transparency [Lyberg et al. 2019; Jowell et al. 2007; Briceno-Rosas et al. 2020], but the present study was mainly focused on the analytical dimension, which, to our knowledge, has not yet been empirically explored. Not least because in the light of limited research funds the surveys can easily be perceived as competitors, while the aspect of epistemic complementarity and analytical cross-usage is seldom highlighted.

A potential weakness of our study is the lack of attention to the ways in which the 'ecosystem' of relevant social indicators increasingly includes big social data and other types of IT-based high-volume data, a development widely expected to open new epistemological possibilities for studying contemporary

societies [Olshannikova et al. 2017]. The reason this aspect is missing is that we did not detect any significant combined usage of (social) big data and data from comparative survey programmes, which is in itself a relevant but perhaps somewhat disappointing finding. Creating methodological and theoretical synergies between big data and traditional data can be considered one of the key future challenges for social and data scientists [White and Breckenridge 2014: 336–337].

Our study also brings into view some further issues and limitations. The first one arises, perhaps paradoxically, from the proliferation of multi-level comparative studies [Smith 2019; Andress et al. 2019], a widely used comparative approach that relies on a web of standardised cross-national indicators measuring individual and macro-level variables. Besides achieving greater explanatory power, the multi-level trend may also negatively impact existing disparities in knowledge production between countries and regions by relying on a more costly multi-data model of data collection and training. According to the ESS bibliographic report, approximately a third of authors offering reasons for excluding individual countries from analysis, despite their micro data being available in the cumulative ESS data file, cite the absence of standardised macro indicators for doing so [Malnar 2019: 25]. As noted in the literature, the OECD world is more completely documented with respect to social science statistics than other geographic areas, which biases insights towards the prosperous parts of the world [Goerres et al. 2019; Wysmułek 2018; Kroneberg 2019]. In this vein, missing macro indicators may lead to what could be termed 'secondary' exclusion, in addition to which less affluent countries are also less likely to field the surveys regularly in the first place, or less likely to field them in full accordance with the centrally prescribed protocols [Norris 2009; Lynn 2003], which are additional reasons for exclusion. With other analysts cautioning that future levels of funding for surveys that produce official statistics and social indicators are unlikely to grow and may well decline [Keeter 2012; Massey and Tourangeau 2013], the problem of imbalanced knowledge production could become even more persistent.

Returning to our main focus, combining micro indicators from comparative social surveys, the most obvious concern relates to validity risks. To what extent do considerable differences in questionnaire and sampling designs, translation procedures, fielding modes, and monitoring protocols, etc., make these strategies a viable analytical choice? As our study shows, analysts combine indicators across surveys in a variety of ways, with the scientific quality of these strategies largely depending on their expertise and analytical rigour. There is always a risk of errors originating from their own misjudgements, in terms of the selection of indicators and hard-to-replicate harmonisation decisions [Winters and Natcher 2016], or from larger problems with measurement equivalence in cross-national survey research. The latter highlights the importance of the transparency of survey methodology and protocols, which is essential for enabling analysts to make informed decisions [Lyberg 2019; Norris 2009; Harkness 1999]. In worst case scenarios, combining data can result in a decrease in the validity of findings and estimates.

On the other hand, our study shows that many analysts find the use of cross-survey data to be an important strategy for reducing uncertainties with respect to the validity of findings, allowing them to carry out robustness checks and sensitivity testing using independent, yet conceptually overlapping data sources. In a way, surveys represent each other's criterion-validity point [Drost 2011; Boukes and Morey 2018], at least relatively so, by providing opportunities to assess the agreement of their measures and results with external benchmark data. When discussing the issues surrounding cross-country data comparability in the context of the globalisation of public opinion research, Heath et al. [2005: 329] suggest that in particular 'data of lower than ideal quality should be checked against the results of other surveys that cover the same topics'. Such strategy may indeed help reduce uncertainties in many instances, but no comparative programme will ever be able to eliminate all the sources of survey and comparison error [Smith 2018], and if the cross-checking process ends up in conflicting outcomes, analysts must rely on informed methodological and theoretical judgements to decide how to proceed.

Finally, if the modest thesis that combining comparative data is 'potentially useful' [Schenker and Raghunathan 2007] is accepted, the question of how to facilitate such approaches arises. Among the many issues of cross-survey comparability, the factor that most directly hampers the efforts to combine data is the low standardisation of measures. Sharing a similar general mission, the four comparative surveys we examined have in common a number of widely used concepts and themes, but specific items, scales, and question wordings are rarely identical, with the exception of the two values surveys that originate from the same project and have shared between 100% and 30% of their content [Klingemann 2017: 139]. As noted by some scholars, this situation tends to confine the user to one particular programme, making it difficult or impossible to compare findings between projects [Heath et al. 2005; Tomescu-Dubrow and Slomczynski 2014]. In the light of our study, this situation forces analysts to take calculated risks by relying on similar but not harmonised measures, or to opt out of cross-survey data usage, and particularly from the pooling of samples, despite the obvious affinity for a larger number of cases that is indicated by the popularity of the intra-survey merging of waves in our study. Nonetheless, as the number of major general-purpose comparative surveys is relatively small, it is not inconceivable that their governing bodies would, at some point, consider pursuing the partial convergence of indicators, either of their own accord or at the prompting of other stakeholders, such as users or funders.

Alternatively, while ex-post harmonisation approaches are more complex and may not achieve the same level of comparability, there are several examples of national surveys on household income, health, mobility, and others being successfully transformed into integrated datasets with comparable measures, increased cross-national variation, and larger combined sample sizes [Dubrow and Tomescu-Dubrow 2016; Burkhauser and Lillard 2005]. There is also a grow-

ing number of digital platforms available for secondary data users, developed specifically for output harmonisation and replication purposes [Winters and Natcher 2016; Jeffers et al. 2017]. The availability of such resources suggests an increasing demand for cross-survey data use, driven by the need for improved timeliness, geographic or subpopulation detail, and statistical efficiency in social science data [NASEM 2017]. It may also signal the emergence of a new era in cross-survey standardisation and collaboration, with augmented possibilities for theory development and policy research.

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Diverging Paths among Central Eastern European Mothers? The Degree of Incongruity between Employment Preferences and Their Actual Experiences (1994–2012)*

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Abstract: This paper examines the congruity between mothers' preferences and actual experiences when raising preschool children, using data on mothers of reproductive ages (18–49) from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (1994, 2002, and 2012). The findings show that (i) with one exception, in all the countries and years, mothers whose preferences were congruent with their actual employment statuses outnumbered those whose preferences and employment statuses were incongruent; (ii) whereas Czech mothers improved their situations during the period (the congruity increases), Polish mothers – who began the period with the highest congruity – experienced a decrease in congruity, while Hungarian mothers showed the lowest congruity and saw a slight improvement in their situations (they achieved more congruity); and (iii) women who had their children during the communist regimes were more likely to experience incongruity because they worked more than they desired to, while women who became mothers during the post-communist period were more likely to experience congruity when they stayed at home, but they were also more likely to experience incongruity because they were inactive and considered working desirable. Therefore, the results confirm similar trends and diverging paths among the three countries. The high degree of incongruity between preferences and actual experiences is a sign of the problems faced by mothers attempting to reconcile work and family life and also impacts other phenomena, such as female employment, gender equality and fertility.

Keywords: work–family conflict, gender roles, refamilialisation, fertility, post-communism

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Introduction

The fall of the communist regimes in 1989 brought about a profound transformation of Central European societies. Structural changes in the economy due to the transition to a market economy resulted in increased unemployment and job insecurity. Many authors [Blum 2016; Hašková and Saxonberg 2016; Javornik 2016; Pascall and Kwak 2010; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008] warned that Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries were undergoing a general process of 'refamilialisation'. This worsened the economic position of women, as they stopped working and began staying at home to care for their young children, although each country differed in terms of adopted measures.

This study focuses on the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, which historically belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (although in the case of Poland this involved only part of its territory, as the rest belonged to Russia and Prussia). They later became part of the Soviet Bloc after the Second World War, and in 2004 they acceded to the European Union [Hašková and Saxonberg 2016]. The three countries are also similar in their political progress towards democratisation, and their labour markets were similar before the 2009 economic crisis [Javornik 2016].

Despite these similarities, these countries also show differences: for example, Poland is characterised by a greater emphasis on Catholicism and traditional values [Sobotka 2008], more large households with many generations living together and fewer single-parent families [Iacovu and Skew 2011]. By contrast, the Czech Republic – and to some extent Hungary – is much more secular and liberal [Sobotka 2008]. This article focuses on the gap between mothers' work-family orientations and their employment statuses. The existence of a incongruity between what mothers prefer and what they experience is related to mothers' autonomy, that is, in Janus's words [2013a: 97], 'their freedom to choose between employment and homemaking as alternative means of self-fulfilment and economic independence.' The high degree of incongruity between preferences and actual experiences is a sign of the problems mothers face when attempting to reconcile work and family life and also impacts women's labour-market participation, gender equality at work and in the family, and fertility [Kuchařová 2009].

Using a diachronic perspective (1994–2012), this study investigates (i) the degree of congruity between mothers' work statuses when they became mothers (women aged 18–49) and what they considered to be the most desirable option for a woman who has a preschool-age child,[1] (ii) whether congruity has increased

[1] It is assumed that these attitudes are related to personal preferences, although some authors criticise the use of general attitudes towards female employment as an indicator of personal preferences for women themselves [Hakim 2003]. This issue is discussed in the Data and Methodology and Conclusion sections.

or decreased over the last two decades, and (iii) whether changes in congruity were similar or differed among the three countries.

This paper contributes to the literature on maternal employment and work–family reconciliation, focusing on three countries that are usually clustered together in international comparisons, despite the fact that they differ in terms of family policies and their impacts on maternal employment. The results show some common patterns and divergences during this period. Among the common patterns this research has found, the number of mothers whose preferences were incongruent with their actual experiences was greater than the number of those whose preferences and experiences were congruent, except in the Czech Republic in 2012. This congruity was largely due to two mechanisms: (i) belief that it is desirable to stay at home when having small children and actual behaviour and (ii) the increased percentage of mothers experiencing congruity working full time and considering it desirable. Lastly, another common pattern found is the main incongruity between preferences (work less) and experiences (working more than what they considered desirable). Regarding divergences among these three countries, the degree of congruity was different in each country (the Czech Republic had the highest percentages and Hungary the lowest) and changes in congruity also differed throughout the period (whereas Czech and Hungarian mothers improved their situations because their congruity increased, those of Polish mothers worsened because their congruity decreased).

The paper is structured as follows: The second section compares the main features of family policies developed in the three countries during the post-communist era and their impacts on fertility, maternal employment and the enrolment rates of preschool children. The third section focuses on the evolution of public opinion towards maternal employment and the factors that influence such opinions. The fourth section introduces the research questions, database, variables used and methodology. In the fifth section, the results are presented. The sixth section discusses the results and the seventh section concludes.

Fertility, family policies, and maternal employment after communism

During the communist era, the CEE countries developed a new model of gender relations, since family policies combined defamilialist aspects by promoting gender equality and familialist aspects by supporting traditional gender roles [Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006]. The female employment rates in these countries were much higher than in Western Europe, with 70–90% of women aged 15 to 55 working, the majority of them full time [Pollert 2003]. This system was rated by Pfau-Effinger [1998] as a dual earner model with state childcare and by Crompton [1999] as a state-socialist dual earner/state carer model.

This female employment pattern was supported both by communist ideology, which saw female employment as 'liberation' for women, and by the need

for a large workforce, given the system's inefficiency [Pascall and Kwak 2010]. The obligation to work also involved financial necessity, since a single salary did not ensure a decent standard of living [Sobotka 2008]. Indeed, entrance into the labour force was also a matter of 'social membership' and eligibility 'rights' were based on the possession of continuous, full-time employment [Szalai 1992]. Nevertheless, the promotion of female employment was not accompanied by other aspects related to gender equality, such as parental leave for fathers. In the private sphere, traditional gender relations were never discussed and remained unchanged [Deacon 2000], leading to an overburdening of working mothers [Pascall and Kwak 2010]. This double burden on women led to a decrease in fertility [Anderson and Kohler 2015; McDonald 2000].

With the fall of the communist regime, the governments in the region had to undertake major cutbacks to social services and austerity policies to adapt to the capitalist system. As a result, the question researchers raised in the 1990s was what direction family policies would take, given that women's participation in the labour market during communism had often been perceived as 'forced commodification' [Adamik 1993] and 'as a matter of compulsion rather than rights' [Szalai 1992: 6]. Governments adopted (cheaper) refamilialisation policies, making it difficult for mothers to work [Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2008]. Among these measures, two were particularly noteworthy during the 1990s: the drastic reduction in nursery places for children under three years of age (these childcare services were not part of the schooling system in these countries at that time) and the extension of paid parental leave (the Czech Republic being the paradigmatic case, with the extension of parental leave from three to four years in 1995 without a simultaneous increase in employment protection, which was maintained at three years). Traditional gender relations in the private sphere were not questioned, domestic work and childcare were considered feminine tasks [Pascall and Kwak 2010].

Despite these similar tendencies towards refamilialisation, there were also differences between the three countries that originated in the historical roots of family policies, which continue to have an influence on family policies today [Hašková and Saxonberg 2016]. Poland has been characterised by a more liberal policy, with shorter maternity leave, fewer childcare places and means-tested benefits limiting access to parental leave, whereas the Czech Republic and Hungary have longer maternity leave, more places and higher enrolment rates for preschool children, and flat benefit rates (in Hungary, there is also a two-year benefit based on the income-replacement principle). For Javornik [2016], while Poland is a case of implicit familialism, the other two countries promote explicit familialism. Hungary, moreover, differs from the rest by encouraging fathers to take parental leave more (4–7%) than the other countries because it is the only country to offer extended leave based on the income-replacement principle [Hašková and Saxonberg 2016; Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2008]. These differences in family policies and their consequences for achieving congruity between preferences and actual experiences are addressed in this paper.

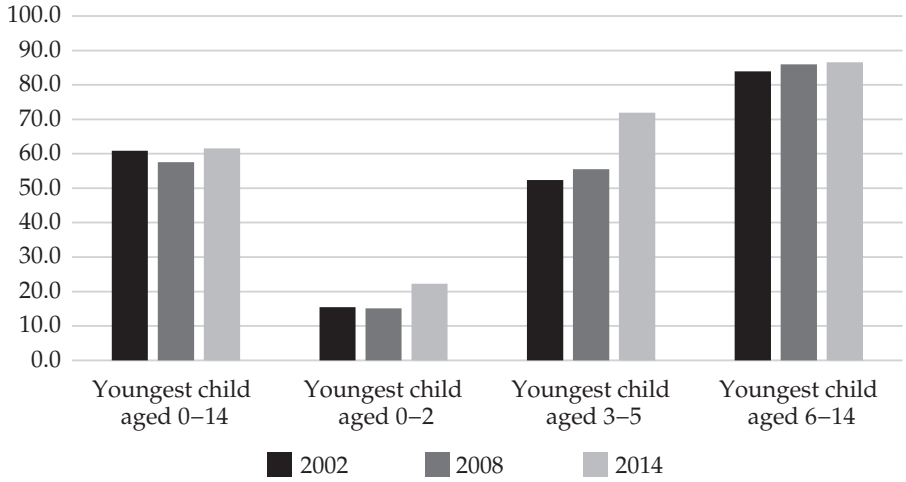
These trends have led some authors to point out that family policies have not undergone substantial changes in recent decades [for the Czech case, see Saxonberg, Sirovátka and Janoušková 2013; for the Polish case, see Szikra and Szelewa 2010]. Other authors have argued that the Czech Republic has undergone a change of model from 'female mobilising' (high quantity and quality of childcare without generous leave) towards 'explicit familialism' (low childcare rates, longer leaves, and parental leave payments) [Szelewa and Polakowski 2008]. More recently, Szelewa [2017] argued that, in Poland in 2016, the implementation of the universal child allowance (for all families from the second child onwards or the first in the case of families with fewer resources, extended in 2020 to cover all first-born children) represents a measure that transforms the policies of implicit familialism into explicit familialism, bringing Poland closer to its Central European peers.

Although the refamilialisation policies implemented in recent decades had a pronatalist objective, fertility has fallen sharply in Central Eastern European countries between 1989 and 2013, and the age at first childbirth has increased. This is due, in part, to the increased cost of childbearing and childraising, which had largely been subsidised during the socialist regime [Frejka 1980].

Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c show the evolution of maternal employment (women aged 15–64) from the beginning of the past decade to 2014. It shows that Polish mothers (1c) worked the most (about half of mothers) when their children were under the age of three, due to the means-tested benefit system, which made many of them ineligible for parental leave once maternity leave was completed. The Hungarian case (1c) exemplified the opposite extreme, as few mothers with children aged 0–2 worked because parental leave was well paid and was based on the income-replacement principle until the age of two. Czech women (1a) occupied an intermediate position, but their rates were more similar to those of Hungarian women than Polish women, because they had a flat-rate benefit for up to four years (three years with protected employment). However, there is a noted effect from the introduction of a reform in 2008 that allowed for a more flexible system, under which two or three years of leave could be chosen, as maternal employment of mothers with children below three increased from 15% in 2008 to 22% in 2014. In the Czech Republic, there was also an upward trend in the employment of mothers with children aged three to five (55–72%), a trend that also occurred in Hungary, though to a lesser extent. In the case of mothers with children aged 6–14, Czech women had the highest and most stable employment rates throughout the period (around 85%). In Poland, the rate rose between 2006 and 2008 but then stabilised around 75% in 2014, and in Hungary, it increased by five percentage points between 2008 and 2014 to 79%.

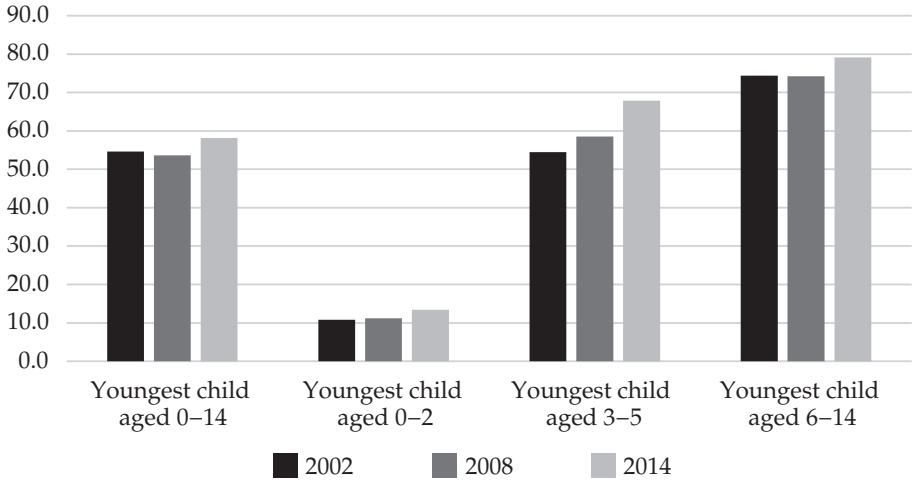
Figure 2 shows that the number of children under the age of three attending childcare was very low in all three countries, with Poland having the lowest numbers and Hungary the highest. Hungary, moreover, began to distance itself from the other two countries as of 2010 and had nearly 20% of children enrolled, a figure that is in line with the strong commitment, made years earlier, of the

Figure 1a. Employment rates for Czech women (15–64) with children (aged 0–14) by age of youngest child (2002–2014)



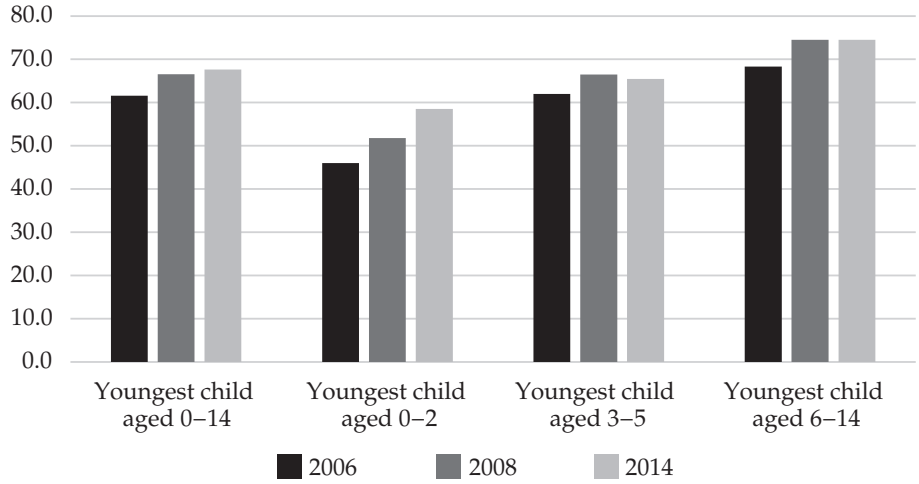
Note: Figure 1a. Retrieved 10 September 2020 (https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm). Table: MER-Child-Age-15-64.
Source: OECD Family Database.

Figure 1b. Employment rates for Hungarian women (15–64) with children (aged 0–14) by age of youngest child (2002–2014)



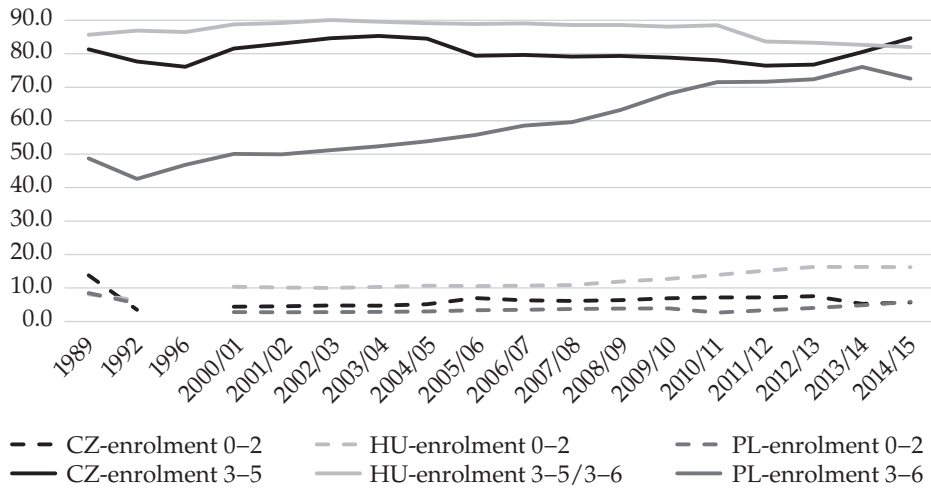
Note: Figure 1b. Retrieved 10 September 2020 (https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm). Table: MER-Child-Age-15-64.
Source: OECD Family Database.

Figure 1c. Employment rates for Polish women (15–64) with children (aged 0–14) by age of youngest child (2006–2014)



Note: Figure 1c. Retrieved 10 September 2020 (https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm). Table: MER-Child-Age-15-64.
Source: OECD Family Database.

Figure 2. Enrolment rates of children aged 0–2 and 3–6 (1989–2015)



Note: Retrieved 18 June 2018 (https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/monitoring-in-the-cee-cis-and-baltics-the-monee-project/). Table: 5.1.1. Data for Hungary refer to children aged 3.5 (1989–1996 data) and 3–6 (2000–2015).
Source: MONEE database.

Hungarian authorities to increase childcare availability [Robila 2012]. Poland rose from 2011/2012, and from 2013 onwards, its percentages equalled those of the Czech Republic, although both remained below 10%. Polish mothers reconcile work and employment through two mechanisms of informal welfare provision, which are vital in the region [Polese et al. 2014]: family support (especially by grandmothers) and the hiring of informal caregivers (nannies). In Poland, the most educated women are in the public sector, with more secure jobs and more incentives to remain, so the informal childcare market is widespread [Javornik 2016]. Poland also stands out for its marketing of care services: 57% of crèches in 2013 were private [Szelewa 2014] and 78% in 2017 [Szwelewa and Polakowski 2020].

The gradual increase in enrolment of children between the ages of three and six in Poland since the late 2000s is noteworthy. Enrolment rose steadily from 50% to 72.6%, while in Hungary it was fairly stable (above 80%) but lower in 2015 than in 2000. Finally, the Czech Republic experienced some fluctuations throughout the period, with a decline in the middle of the last decade and a subsequent recovery reaching levels very similar to those at which it began.

Evolution of public opinion towards maternal employment

As previously mentioned, during the communist regimes, traditional gender roles were maintained. The impact of communist ideology on the family, however, was somewhat contradictory, as Sobotka [2008] observes. While it was a deeply anti-religious ideology that eroded some traditional norms related to sexuality, marriage and the family, it also gradually advocated a conservative family model, promoting the idea of parental 'duty' and the women's responsibility to society to bear children. As a result, paradoxically, communism and Catholicism – in some respects – developed a similar morality [Ferge 1997].

Hašková and Saxonberg [2016] highlight that from the early years of the communist period, psychologists complained about the long hours children under the age of three spent in nurseries, which made them prone to psychological disturbances. In addition, paediatricians argued that infectious diseases spread easily in nurseries because they were overcrowded. With the change in the economic situation in the 1960s (not as much labour was needed because the economy was stagnating) and the decline in fertility, psychologists and paediatricians found the right climate to criticise nurseries. Progressively, governments in the region extended maternity leave for mothers to three years, after which children would attend kindergarten, which were more widely accepted because – contrary to the nurseries – they have educational goals and were responsibility of the ministries of education.

Table 1 shows the evolution of the general population's opinions on two items related to the role of mothers (columns labelled A). These opinions are

Table 1. Evolution of attitudes towards maternal employment (1994–2012) in general population (A), among women 18–49 (B) and among mothers 18–49 (C): 'What a woman should do when she has a preschool child' and 'Agreement with preschool child suffers when mother works'

	Czech Republic			Hungary			Poland		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
					1994				
Stay at home	53.9	47.7	49.8	63.9	54	54.9	74.5	65.2	69.2
Work part-time	39.4	46.3	44.0	31.3	38.8	38.5	14.4	19.8	16.5
Work full-time	6.6	6.0	6.2	4.8	7.2	6.5	11.2	15	14.3
Child suffers	49.7	46.3	46.7	73.1	61.9	64.4	68.3	64.2	69.5
					2002				
Stay at home	39	37.5	36.3	46.8	42.3	42.6	56.5	44.8	47.1
Work part-time	47.7	50.5	52.6	46.7	48.4	49.4	23.7	31.5	29.3
Work full-time	13.3	11.9	11.1	6.5	9.3	8	19.8	23.7	23.6
Child suffers	50.7	45.2	45.4	65.4	58.6	62.5	55	49.7	54.2
					2012				
Stay at home	39.1	35.5	35.6	35.3	32.8	34	58.1	42	49.7
Work part-time	44.4	45.1	45.4	48.3	48.5	45.8	28.4	39.1	34.2
Work full-time	16.5	19.4	19	16.4	18.7	20.2	13.5	18.9	16
Child suffers	33.2	30.7	30.4	51.7	48.2	53	45.5	32.7	38.9

Note: A = general population, B = women aged 18–49, C = mothers aged 18-49. Weighted data.
Source: ISSP 1994, 2002 and 2012. Author's calculations.

compared with those of women (aged 18–49, columns labelled B) and those of mothers (aged 18–49, columns labelled C). The first question asks what a woman should do when she has a preschool-age child: work full time, part time or stay at home. The second question examines the degree of agreement with the statement 'A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works' (5-point Likert scale). The table shows the sum of the percentages of the interviewees who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.[2]

[2] One of these items will be used to construct the dependent variable (the question regarding what women should do when they have a preschool-age child), and the other will be used as the independent variable (agreement with the statement that preschool-age children suffer when mothers work).

Concerning the opinion on whether a mother should work when her child is of preschool age, Poland has the most traditional opinion and the Czech Republic has the least. While in Hungary the whole population is increasingly less supportive of the choice to stay at home, in the Czech Republic and Poland, there was first a decline in the 1990s and a slight upturn in the following decade (Poland) or a stagnation of this option (Czech Republic). This is in line with the results of Mullerova's [2017a] study, which found a resurgence of more traditional attitudes in favour of higher task specialisation between men and women in the Czech Republic. A similar trend was highlighted by Szelewa [2014] in Poland.

In all three countries, a minority of the population supports women working full time. It is considered more desirable for mothers to work part time than full time, although this preference for part-time work is lower in Poland. Support for the statement that young children suffer when the mother works declined in all three countries over the period, with the decline in Hungary being more marked in the 2000s and more gradual in Poland since the 1990s, while in the Czech Republic a slight increase was followed by a sharp decrease. While the Czech Republic showed the least agreement with the statement in all three years (1994, 2002, and 2012), Hungary showed the most agreement with it.

In 1994 and 2002, there was a more pronounced preference for part-time employment (in the three countries) and for full-time employment (in Hungary and Poland) among women and mothers than the general population, while in 2012, the preferences of the general population approached those of women and mothers. The differences between mothers and women were not pronounced. Staying at home lost support among mothers and women throughout the period, except in the case of Polish mothers from 2002 to 2012. Women and mothers tended to agree that children suffer when the mother works to a lesser extent than the general population, though with some nuances (Hungarian mothers in 2012 tended to agree more than the general population). The Czech Republic had fewer differences among the three groups analysed (general population, women and mothers).

Discussion of the negative effects of separating young children from their mothers continued after the fall of communism [Sirovátka and Válková 2018], which, together with nurseries' bad reputations since the communist era, explains why the majority of the population supports mothers staying at home when they have children of preschool age [Saxonberg, Sirovátka and Janoušková 2013].

Institutionalist authors highlighted the impact of family policies on the development of these attitudes [Gangl and Ziefle 2015; Kremer 2006].This approach considers family policies as an important explanatory factor for explaining cross-country differences in preferences towards maternal employment. The institutionalist approach can be complemented with the culturalist one, which pays attention to the role of culture as an explanatory factor of these preferences. Pfau-Effinger [1998] introduced the concept of gender culture to refer to the norms and values regarding 'correct' forms of gender relations and of the divi-

sion of labour between men and women. Pfau-Effinger [2005] argues that norms and ideas continuously interact with institutions. As Sirovátka and Válková [2018: 285] explain in their analysis of the Czech case, 'we may expect that not only do employment opportunities generate demand for childcare, but also childcare policies are shaping attitudes of the public towards women's and mothers' labour-market participation, which in turn influence the demand for childcare and, consequently, provision of the policies'. In the same vein, Hašková and Saxonberg show the continuous interaction between institutions and cultural norms in the three countries [2016: 566]. On the one hand, the policies enacted earlier create normative structures that define the limits of the behaviour of individuals and groups in later years. On the other hand, policymakers are influenced by the dominant cultural norms in their society and also by the norms of their group. In addition, it is difficult to disentangle the effect of institutional and cultural factors [Boeckman, Misra and Budig 2015; Uunk 2015].

Objectives

Although most mothers surveyed in the three countries preferred to stay at home or work part time until their children start school, the experiences of many Czech, Hungarian, and Polish mothers were not congruent with this preference. To determine the degree of congruity between the preferences of mothers of reproductive ages and their personal experiences is the first objective of this study.

Determining the changes in the degree of congruity over the last two decades (1994–2012) is the second objective of this research. The study analyses how a mother's age impacts congruity. As noted by Ferge in reference to the communist era [1997: 161], '*the debate is about whether women wished to work or were only coerced to do so*' (author's italics). In her opinion, it is possible to differentiate a first period in which women's aspirations to emancipate were more important and a second period in which they felt more pressure from political authorities to work. After the fall of the communist regime, the development of family policies that encouraged mothers to stay at home was justified. Governments argued that this was what they really wanted to do but had been unable to because of 'forced commodification' [Adamik 1993].

Following Frejka [2008], this paper makes a distinction between mothers born before and after 1966. The mothers in the first group experienced their most fertile years during the communist regime and were marginally – and only in the case of younger women – affected by the transition, since most of their children had already been born by 1990. The mothers born after 1966 adopted new childbearing and family formation strategies in the new post-communist context – except those born in the second half of the 1960s, who experienced part of their fertile life under communist conditions and part of it during the transition. When attempting to compare past behaviour (when they became mothers) with cur-

rent attitudes (when they were interviewed), we cannot be sure if respondents changed their attitudes during that period because the study is cross-sectional and no question was included in the surveys to compare past and present attitudes. To avoid this problem (at least partially), we restricted our sample to mothers of reproductive ages (18–49), because the period elapsed between the moment of having a child and the moment of the survey is shorter compared with the whole sample of mothers.

Finally, the third objective is to analyse the similarities and differences between these countries and whether they have converged in the last two decades.

Data and methodology

To fulfil the above objectives, the 'Family and Changing Gender Roles' module of the ISSP was used. The three surveys in which the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland participated (1994, 2002 and 2012) were chosen. The samples are representative of people aged 18 years and over, and the size of each sample varies among countries and surveys, with a minimum size of 1012 (Hungary in 2012) and a maximum size of 1804 (Czech Republic in 2012). From the total sample, we chose mothers of reproductive ages (18–49) who had a spouse or partner when they were raising preschool-age children. With this restriction, the sample size was 846 cases in 1994, 711 cases in 2002, and 586 cases in 2012.[3]

The dependent variable measures the degree of congruity between mothers' employment preferences when raising a preschool-age child and their actual experiences. To construct it, we used two items: 'Do you think that women should work outside the home full time, part time or not at all when there is a child under school age?' and 'Did you work outside the home full time, part time or not at all when a child was under school age?' Unfortunately, these questions do not distinguish between children below three and those 3–5 years old, which would have been preferable as such a distinction may have affected respondents' opinions and behaviours. As shown in Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c, mothers' employment statuses differed depending on whether they had children aged 0–2 or 3–5, a pattern closely related to the availability of childcare services (Figure 2). The dependent variable was created by comparing the responses to a question about behaviour (what the respondents did) and a variable concerning attitudes towards maternal employment (what women should do).[4]

[3] The focus of the analysis is on mothers with partners because the circumstances in which single mothers with young children must decide whether to work are very different from those of mothers with partners.

[4] It is assumed that these attitudes are related to personal preferences. Some authors criticise the use of general attitudes towards female employment as an indicator of women's specific preferences for themselves [Hakim 2003]. Nevertheless, since the available surveys reflect general attitudes, most studies have used them as proxy variables for women's pref-

The percentage of congruity was obtained by adding three percentages that represent the alignment between employment preference and actual work status when the interviewees became mothers. The first percentage represents the group of interviewees who responded that it is most desirable when a mother has a preschool-age child to work full time and they did so. The second percentage represents the group of mothers who prefer to work part time and they did so. The third percentage represents those who prefer to stay at home and they did so.

There were three potential types of incongruity between preferences and actual experiences: (i) the respondent may prefer to work full time but only worked part time; (ii) the respondent may prefer to work either full time or part time but did not work; and (iii) the respondent may prefer to work part time or not at all but worked more than she desired to because she worked full time (in the first case) or either full time or part time (in the second case).

As independent variables, national contexts were used, including the three countries as dummy variables. In addition, several individual-level control variables were included in the multinomial regression analysis:

(i) Age: The samples were divided into two age groups. The oldest group included women born before 1966, while the youngest group comprised women born in 1966 or later.

(ii) Education: Education level is measured with two categories. The first category includes interviewees with secondary education or below and the second category includes the mothers with tertiary education.

(iii) A variable that measured the degree of agreement with the following sentence: 'A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works'. Previous research has shown that a mother's personal care attitudes are significantly related to her labour-market status, with a bidirectional relation between attitudes and behaviours [Corrigal and Konrad 2007; Fortin 2005; Himmelweit and Sigala 2004; Steiber and Haas 2009].

(iv) The employment status of the male spouse when there were preschool children in the home (worked full time, part time or did not work). This variable controls for whether the mothers' preferences are constrained by economic factors, as women tend to work if their partners are inactive or unemployed to maintain a minimum standard of living in the family.

The analytical strategy had two parts: a descriptive analysis and a multinomial regression. First, the total percentage of congruity between preferences and actual experiences in the three countries and the variation in congruity from 1994 to 2012 are shown. Second, a multinomial regression was carried out to test which

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erences [Schleutker 2017]. More concretely, the same ISSP items used in this research have been used previously by Janus [2013a, 2013b], Kangas and Rosgaard [2007], Steiber and Haas [2009], and Schleutker [2017], among others. As Kangas and Rosgaard [2007] argue, these questions are similar enough to be used as proxies for personal preferences used by Hakim.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (sample: mothers aged 18–49) (1994–2012)

	1994	2002	2012
DEPENDENT VARIABLE			
Congruity preferences-experiences			
Prefer home & stayed at home	27.6	22.6	22.5
Prefer part-time & worked part-time	4.6	7.4	9.5
Prefer full-time & worked full-time	6.2	9.7	14.4
Prefer full or part-time and worked less than desired or didn't work	10.0	18.8	17.3
Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired	51.7	41.5	36.3
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES			
Countries			
Czech Republic	26.0	36.0	46.8
Hungary	36.5	28.3	25.0
Poland	38.3	36.9	28.2
Cohort			
Born before 1966	83.8	56.1	10.9
Born 1966 and later	16.2	43.9	89.1
Education			
Primary + secondary	85.1	82.1	81.1
Tertiary	14.9	17.9	18.9
'A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works'			
Strongly agree	26.9	20.0	14.0
Agree	33.2	33.4	24.7
Neither agree nor disagree	13.8	13.7	18.7
Disagree	19.3	26.5	27.1
Strongly disagree	6.7	6.3	15.5
Employment status of the partner			
Home	3.7	3.7	5.7
Part-time	0.9	1.3	3.1
Full-time	95.4	95.0	91.2

Source: ISSP 1994, 2002 and 2012. Author's calculations. Weighted data.

independent variables explain this congruity or incongruity. We use weighted data for the descriptive analysis and unweighted data for the multivariate analysis. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for all variables used.

Results

Descriptive analysis: evolution of the degree of congruity and incongruity

This section is divided into two parts. The first part provides a descriptive analysis of the percentage of congruity between mothers' preferences and actual employment statuses and the variation in congruity over the twenty years analysed. In the second part, the impact of individual variables and national contexts on the degree of congruity is analysed for the three years studied.

As shown in Table 3, only in one case was the number of mothers whose experiences were congruent with what they considered desirable greater than the number of mothers who experienced incongruity, a pattern shared by all three countries. The greatest congruity was experienced by Czech mothers in 2012 (54.8%) and Polish mothers in 1994 (48.6%), while Hungarian mothers in 1994 experienced the lowest congruity (32.3%).

The changes in congruity in the Czech Republic and Hungary on the one hand and Poland on the other differed: while in the first two, the trend has always been towards an increasing level of congruity (especially in the Czech Republic), in Poland, the trend has been the opposite. One pattern that the three countries shared was that congruity is largely based on the fact that mothers considered it desirable to stay at home when women have a young child and that this is what they actually did ('Prefer home & stayed at home' row)[5]. However, this general trend must be clarified: while in Hungary and Poland the percentage of this option has tended to decrease (from 25.6% to 19.3% in Hungary and from 38.5% to 23.9% in Poland), in the Czech Republic, it decreased in 2002 and rose again in 2012, showing a higher percentage in 2012 (23.4%) than in 1994 (19.1%). The means-tested system in Poland and the well-paid two-year leave in Hungary, as opposed to the four-year paid system in the Czech Republic, could help explain these results.

A final common pattern in all three countries was the increase over time in the proportion of mothers who preferred to work full time and did so ('Prefer full time & worked full time' row), with very similar figures in all three countries in 2012 (with a slight decrease in Poland from 2002 to 2012). The increase in congru-

[5] Remember that, as explained in the Data and Methodology section, the percentage of congruity is a result of adding three percentages of mothers, who experience a correspondence between preferences and labour experiences when they became mothers. In the same line, the percentage of incongruity is a result of adding three percentages of mothers who experience a gap between preferences and labour experiences when they became mothers.

Table 3. Evolution of the coherence and the gap between attitudes and work status and their components when children are under school age (sample: mothers aged 18–49) (1994–2012)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland
1994			
Prefer to stay at home & stayed at home	19.1	25.6	38.5
Prefer part-time & worked part-time	12.0	2.2	1.5
Prefer full-time & worked full-time	4.1	4.5	8.6
Total congruity	*35.3*	*32.3*	*48.6*
Prefer full-time & worked less than desired	1.2	0.0	0.7
Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired	56.0	57.2	40.2
Prefer full or part-time & didn't work	7.4	10.7	10.5
Total incongruity	*64.6*	*67.9*	*51.4*
2002			
Prefer to stay at home & stayed at home	20.0	22.9	25.3
Prefer part-time & worked part-time	10.7	6.1	4.8
Prefer full-time & worked full-time	9.0	5.7	14.6
Total congruity	*39.7*	*34.8*	*44.7*
Prefer full-time & worked less than desired	0.5	0.9	0.4
Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired	42.6	46.5	35.1
Prefer full or part-time & didn't work	17.2	17.9	19.8
Total incongruity	*60.3*	*65.3*	*55.3*
2012			
Prefer to stay at home & stayed at home	23.4	19.3	23.9
Prefer part-time & worked part-time	16.2	3.4	4.0
Prefer full-time & worked full-time	15.2	14.6	12.8
Total congruity	*54.8*	*37.3*	*40.7*
Prefer full-time & worked less than desired	2.2	0.5	0.0
Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired	30.3	38.3	44.4
Prefer full or part-time & didn't work	12.7	23.8	14.8
Total incongruity	*45.2*	*62.6*	*59.2*

Source: ISSP 1994, 2002 and 2012. Author's calculations. Weighted data.

ity in the Czech Republic stems from the fact that the number of mothers who preferred to work part time or full time and did so increased to 6.2% and 15.2% in 2012. The Czech Republic was the only country in which a significant percentage of mothers preferred to work part time and managed to do so.

Table 3 also shows how incongruity between preferences and actual experiences varied over time. The main component of incongruity in the three countries was that mothers worked more than they considered desirable ('Prefer part time or stay at home & worked more than desired' row). The percentage of this type of incongruity was much higher in 1994, as the majority of the respondents had their children during the communist era. Interestingly, however, the change in this category differed between Poland and the other two countries. In Poland, during the 1990s, it fell (from 40.2% to 35.1%), but in the 2000s, it peaked (44.4%), which is likely related to Poland's liberal family policy and the increased prevalence of traditional views on maternal employment. However, in the Czech Republic and Hungary, the decrease in this category was constant throughout the period. Indeed, in Poland, this category mainly comprised mothers who preferred to stay at home but who worked full time, while Czech and Hungarian mothers preferred to work part time. Another contrast can be observed between Hungary on the one hand and Poland and the Czech Republic on the other: in Hungary, the number of mothers who wanted to work but did not increased significantly during the period (from 10.7% to 23.8%). This confirms the difficulties mothers faced in returning to work [Fultz and Steinhilber 2004; Glass and Fodor 2007]. In the Czech Republic and Poland, this category first increased during the 1990s and then decreased during the 2000s. The smallest category is represented by the 'Prefer full time & worked less than desired' row, i.e. mothers who wanted to work full time and worked part time, which is not surprising given the low number of part-time jobs in these countries, even if this option is considered desirable by many mothers (see Table 1).

Multinomial regression analysis: factors explaining the probability of experiencing congruity and incongruity

The aforementioned differences could be due to the effects of composition in the samples, i.e. individual characteristics. Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the multinomial regression analysis to verify which factors increased or decreased the probability that a mother would experience congruity between her preferences and actual experiences.[6] Table 4 focuses on individual characteristics (controlled for national contexts) and shows the marginal effects of each dependent variable.

[6] Due to the small number of cases of mothers who said that they worked less than they considered desirable, this category has been added to that of mothers who did not work even though they considered it desirable to do so.

Table 4. Marginal effects of the probability of experiencing coherence or inconsistency between attitudes and behaviours (sample: mothers aged 18–49) (1994, 2002 and 2012) – first part

	Coherence attitude-behaviour			Gap attitude-behaviour	
	Prefer to stay at home & stayed at home	Prefer part-time & worked part-time	Prefer full-time & worked full-time	Prefer full or part-time & worked less than desired / didn't work	Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired
Year: 1994					
Observations: 846					
Pseudo R^2: .094***					
Cohort					
Born 1966 or later	.139***	–.010	–.062	.104***	–.171***
Education (ref. tertiary)					
Primary+sec.	.175***	–.018	.0005	–.042	–.115**
Preschool child suffers when mother works	.066***	–.004	–.038***	–.010	–.013
Year: 2002					
Observations: 711					
Pseudo R^2: .056***					
Cohort					
Born 1966 or later	.076***	–.003	–.053**	.078***	–.097***
Education (ref. tertiary)					
Primary+sec.	.010	.019	–.066***	.035	.0008
Preschool child suffers when mother works	.072***	–.005	–.044***	–.026**	.004

Table 4. Marginal effects of the probability of experiencing coherence or inconsistency between attitudes and behaviours (sample: mothers aged 18–49) (1994, 2002 and 2012) – second part

	Coherence attitude-behaviour			Gap attitude-behaviour	
	Prefer to stay at home & stayed at home	Prefer part-time & worked part-time	Prefer full-time & worked full-time	Prefer full or part-time & worked less than desired/ didn't work	Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired
Year: 2012					
Observations: 586					
Pseudo R^2: .059***					
Cohort					
Born 1966 or later	.074	–.028	.007	.031	–085
Education (ref. tertiary)					
Primary+sec.	.065	.047	–.056	.075	–.131*
Preschool child suffers when mother works	.058***	–.004	–.067***	–.005	.019

Source: ISSP 1994, 2002, and 2012.
Sig. ***p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05. Controlled for employment status of the partner and for countries.

Table 5 focuses on national contexts (controlled for individual characteristics). Due to the limitations of our dependent variable, as previously explained, we had to be cautious when interpreting the results.

As it is difficult to interpret the results because the coefficients from multinomial logit are relative to the base outcome, in Table 4 we examined the marginal effect of changing their values on the probability of observing an outcome. We used marginal effects to show the change in probability when the predictor or independent variable was increased by one unit. In the case of binary variables, such as those used in this analysis, the change is from 0 to 1. In Table 5, to elucidate the model, we used predicted probabilities to calculate the predicted probability of the occurrence of each of the five categories of the dependent variable in each country after controlling for individual variables.

Table 5. Evolution of predicted probabilities of coherence or inconsistency by country (sample: mothers aged 18–49) (1994–2012)

	Coherence attitude-behaviour			Gap attitude-behaviour	
	Prefer to stay at home & Stayed at home	Prefer part-time & worked part-time	Prefer full-time & worked full-time	Prefer full or part-time & worked less than desired / didn't work	Prefer part-time or stay at home & worked more than desired
Year: 1994					
Observations: 846					
Pseudo R^2: .094***					
Czech Republic	.201***	.113***	.033***	.090***	.560***
Hungary	.221***	.024***	.060***	.106***	.588***
Poland	.388***	.012**	.095***	.102***	.400***
Year: 2002					
Observations: 711					
Pseudo R^2: .056***					
Czech Republic	.167***	.117***	.096***	.168***	.450***
Hungary	.179***	.056***	.080***	.194***	.489***
Poland	.261***	.050***	.146***	.186***	.355***
Year: 2012					
Observations: 586					
Pseudo R^2: .059***					
Czech Republic	.245***	.170***	.136***	.111***	.335***
Hungary	.146***	.041***	.202***	.236***	.372***
Poland	.229***	.048***	.143***	.173***	.404***

Source: ISSP 1994, 2002, and 2012.

Sig. ***p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05. Controlled for cohort, education, employment status of the partner and attitudes towards maternal employment.

Starting with the individual factors (Table 4), younger mothers, whose children were mainly born in the post-communist period, were more likely to have achieved congruity between preferences and actual experiences by staying at home in 1994 and 2002. These mothers were more likely to experience incongruity when staying at home and considered it desirable to work, while being a mother whose children were born during the communist period was associated with experiencing incongruity due to working more than desired. In all three surveys, less-educated mothers were more likely to achieve congruity by staying home, and in 2002, they were less likely to achieve it by working full time compared to mothers with a tertiary education. Agreement with the statement about child suffering ('A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works') was associated with a preference for staying at home and doing so in all three surveys and with being less likely to achieve congruity by working full time.[7]

Finally, Table 5 compares whether the probability of having experienced certain types of congruity or incongruity was similar in the three analysed countries after controlling for individual variables. In 1994, Polish mothers were more likely to achieve congruity by staying at home or working full time than Czech and Hungarian mothers, and less likely to have worked more than they considered desirable. In addition, the more noticeable difference between Czech and Hungarian mothers was that the former were more likely to have experienced congruity through part-time employment than the latter (11.3% and 2.4%), even surpassing Polish women (1.2%).

The pattern discussed above was reproduced by Polish mothers in 2002. Hungarian mothers, however, moved away from Czech mothers; in addition to being less likely to work part time, they were also less likely to achieve congruity through working full time than Czech mothers, which increased their probability of working full time from 3.3% (1994) to 9.6% (2002). At the other extreme, Hungarian mothers were more likely in 2002 to experience incongruity by not working when they preferred to work (19.4%).

Some patterns in 2012 differed from those in the previous decade: Polish mothers were no longer different from Czech mothers in their greater likelihood of achieving congruity by staying at home or working full time; however, Polish mothers were still less likely to work part time than Czech mothers (4.8% and 17%, respectively), a pattern they shared with Hungarian mothers (4.1%). Hungary stands out for its lower probability of mothers staying at home and its higher probability that they would achieve congruity with full-time work and that they would experience incongruity in preferring to work but not doing so (23.6%), while Poland had the highest proportion of mothers who worked more than they desired to (40.4%).

[7] The employment status of the spouse showed little significance and, therefore, was not shown in the results.

Discussion

This paper has examined the degree of congruity between the employment preferences of mothers of reproductive ages in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland between 1994 and 2012 and their actual experiences, paying particular attention to the difference between women who had children during the communist period and those who did so after its fall. This paper contributes to the literature on family policies and their consequences for maternal employment and work–family reconciliation, focusing on three countries that are usually clustered together in international comparisons. The similarities and differences in the degree of congruity between mothers' preferences and actual experiences in the aforementioned countries and variation in congruity over time were analysed.

The three countries showed different degrees of congruity, with the Czech Republic having the highest levels in 2012 (but lower than Poland in 1994 and 2002) and Hungary having the lowest throughout the entire period (Tables 3 and 5). As for similarities, the findings show that in all cases except the Czech Republic in 2012, the number of mothers whose preferences and actual experiences were incongruent was greater than the number of those whose preferences and experiences were congruent. Table 5 shows that the most likely scenario in all three countries and all three surveys was for mothers' preferences to be incongruent with their actual experiences because most worked more than they desired to. The highest figure was in Hungary in 1994 (58.8% of probability), and the lowest was in the Czech Republic in 2012 (33.5%). By contrast, the highest congruity was achieved by mothers who stayed at home and preferred this option, with the highest figures in Poland in 1994 (38.8%) and the lowest in Hungary in 2012 (14.6%). The only exception to this pattern was Hungary in 2012, where mothers who worked full time and also preferred this option (20.2%) outnumbered the previously mentioned group. The results also confirm that the proportion of mothers who worked full time and preferred this option increased in the three countries.

Nevertheless, divergences among the three countries could also be observed. While Czech and Hungarian mothers achieved greater congruity over the two decades analysed (the former group to a greater extent than the latter), the opposite trend was observed among Polish mothers. Cohorts born before 1966 were more likely to have worked more than they considered desirable when they had young children than those born after 1966. The preferences of the latter cohorts were more likely to be congruent with their experiences when staying at home, but they also encountered incongruity since they were more likely to be inactive although they prefer to work compared to older mothers, who became mothers during the communist period and experienced this type of incongruity less frequently. Table 1 shows that mothers preferred to work part time instead of full time when they had a preschool-age child, but the actual labour-market conditions provided few opportunities to realise their preferences, in contrast with neighbouring countries such as Austria and Germany, where part-time employ-

ment is very common among mothers [Riederer and Berghammer 2020; García-Faroldi 2020]. Only in the Czech Republic in 2012 is the percentage of mothers who achieve this type of congruity (prefer and experience part-time work) noticeable (16.2%).

These results are consistent with the family policies historically developed in these countries, confirming that many mothers were 'forced' to work during communism even though they preferred to stay at home. Once this 'top-down' pressure to work disappeared, mothers in the post-communist period could stay at home because they felt it was the right thing to do (Table 1). Nevertheless, these women also faced greater difficulties in working at the end of their parental leave even when they wanted to [Glass and Fodor 2007; Mullerova 2017b; Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2008].[8]

The findings also show that in the last decades mothers' support for staying at home when raising preschool-age children has decreased, and fewer mothers agree that children suffer when mothers work. Accordingly, some of them prefer to work without interruption when they become mothers, though part-time work is a desired option that is unavailable to many of them. In their analysis of the Czech Republic and Poland, Saxonberg and Sirovátka [2008] highlight that women's career aspirations are rising in both countries, but family policies have gone against their aspirations. University enrolment rates have increased since 1989, and younger, better-educated women are giving new meaning to education, as a way to accees to high-skilled jobs and are now thinking about career opportunities, unlike their predecessors [Michon 2010].

In many cases, the parental leave system in the Czech Republic has increased the congruity between Czech mothers' preferences and their actual experiences. While the group of Czech mothers who achieved congruity by staying at home remained fairly stable, the number of mothers who harmonised their preferences with their work statuses by working part time or full time increased (Table 3). Szelewa and Polakowski [2020] characterise recent reforms in childcare policies as an example of explicit privatisation, because efforts of the social-democratic government (2014–2017) to extend access to childcare were aimed at creating a market for childcare services. This policy made it easier for Czech mothers to combine work with access to childcare services, though on a private rather than public basis.

The Hungarian case is interesting because it shows a dichotomy between mothers: they were more likely to work more than they wanted to and to prefer to work but have not. Although the former group was more numerous than the latter, the trend over the two decades has been for the former to decrease and the latter to grow (Tables 3 and 5). The increase in congruity in Hungary was much

[8] Other factors, especially economic ones, influence the greater or lesser difficulty mothers encounter in returning to the labour market (e.g. GDP growth, unemployment rate, wages, etc.), but it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse these.

lower than in the Czech Republic, perhaps due to the significant changes that occurred from the mid-1990s until the beginning of the 2000s and made it difficult to access family benefits, creating a 'two-track' family policy that favoured the better-off between 1998 and 2002 [Glass and Fodor 2007]. The first maternity benefit is a two-year insurance-based benefit for employed women, is linked to past income and provides wage replacement at a rate of 70%. The second tracks are both universal tracks and are less generous; one is available to all women and the second is a special track for career housewives with three or more children [ibid.]. Middle-class women benefit more from the first one, returning to work after a maximum of two years; however, many Hungarians think preschool-age children suffer when mothers work (Table 1). Poor and minority women receive a universal but less generous provision and stay at home to care for their children. Family policies in Hungary have sometimes been described as 'optional familialism', but only families with greater resources can truly choose between different childcare arrangements, as the value of family allowances decreased by half in the 1990s [Glass and Fodor 2007; Szikra and Szelewa 2010]. In Hungary, class differences intersect with ethnic discrimination of the Roma, affecting the distribution of and eligibility for social benefits [Glass and Fodor 2007; Szikra and Szelewa 2010]. This pattern of 'two-track' family policies continues nowadays and has been described by Szelewa and Polakowski [2020] as explicit public dualisation: public childcare services are predominantly used by employed women (often with higher education), and fewer options are available to excluded mothers, who have to stay at home even if they would prefer to work.

Poland occupies an intermediate position between the Czech Republic and Hungary in the degree of congruity between preferences and actual experiences but, unlike the other two, shows a decrease in the degree of congruity over time (Tables 3 and 5). This phenomenon is due to the combination of two interrelated factors. First, we can observer a decrease in the percentage of mothers who prefer to stay at home when raising a child and stay at home when their own child is born (from 38.5% in 1994 to 23.9% in 2012). Indeed, Table 5 shows that the probability of experiencing this situation has continuously been reduced between 1994 and 2012 (from .388 to .229). The second factor is an increasing number of mothers who report that they work more than they consider desirable (from 40.2% to 44.4%). Indeed, Table 5 shows that the probability of experiencing this incongruity increased in Polish mothers between 2002 and 2012 (from .355 to .404). These patterns are consistent with, on the one hand, a resurgence of traditional values and what Szelewa [2014] describes as a second wave of anti-feminism and an attack on 'gender ideology' and, on the other hand, liberal and implicitly familialist family policies. As a result, many mothers would like to stay at home to care for their children but have to work. In this sense, one possible line of research would be to analyse whether the incongruity found diminishes in the coming years when the effects of new family policies can be seen: an increase in the number of places for children under the age of three (2011), the new parental leave scheme

(26 weeks more) that considerably contributes to family support during the first year after childbirth (2013) and, above all, the impact of the new universal child allowance system (2016). With this measure, according to Szelewa [2017], family policies become explicitly familialist. Indeed, Szelewa and Polakowski [2020] highlight how recent reforms in childcare services imply an implicit marketisation with a stratifying effect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the fall of communism has not brought about a substantial and rapid increase in the congruity between mothers' employment preferences when raising preschool-age children and their actual employment statuses. As a consequence, in spite of the implementation of family policies with pronatalist intentions, fertility continues to be lower than it was before 1989. Policymakers should take into account existing family policies and their popularity. For example, long-term paid parental leave is widely supported by the population in the three countries, and nurseries for children under the age of three still have a poor reputation in them [Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007]. Nevertheless, some changes in public opinion can be detected, particularly in the Czech Republic. According to Eurobarometer 74.1 (2010), 72% of Czechs consider their childcare services to be good, in contrast to 46% of Poles and 52% of Hungarians.

Previous research has shown that 'modern' couples are more prevalent in countries that reserve a portion of paid parental leave for fathers [DeRose et al. 2019]. However, this measure is not very popular in the countries analysed in this paper. Data from the ISSP (2012) show that two-thirds of the Hungarian and Czech populations believe that the mother should enjoy the entire parental leave period, even when both parents have the same employment status and are eligible, while less than 10% support equal distribution. In this case, Poland stands out from the rest, as its population is divided into three almost equal parts: those who believe it should be for the mother, those who believe it should be shared equally, and those who believe that some weeks should be reserved for the father. This pattern is consistent with Poland being the country with more 'modern' (egalitarian) couples [DeRose et al. 2019]. Poland is the only country of the three to have paid paternity leave for two weeks (since 2012), although only one in six fathers takes it [Szelewa 2014]. It is also the only country that reserves one month of childcare leave as an individual and non-transferable entitlement for each parent, although it is rather a symbolic than a real entitlement, as it is unpaid and no time is reserved for fathers in paid parental leave [Szelewa 2017; Koslowski et al. 2020]. The contrast (almost a contradiction) between both the explicitly maternalistic direction of Polish policies in recent years and anti-feminist ideology [Szelewa 2014] on the one hand and support for greater involvement of fathers in the care of their children on the other requires further research.

Finally, it should be taken into account that childcare policies could have unintended negative side effects. For example, DeRose et al. [2019] found that fathers' quotas are also associated with an increased probability of mothers labour participation but are less effective in promoting equal participation in domestic work, thus leaving many women with a second shift [ibid.: 1013]. They also found that couples in countries with generous parental leave are less likely to have modern labour sharing, because household specialization is encouraged when mothers take parental leave [ibid.: 1008].

Results show that many Czech and Hungarian (and to a lesser extent Polish) mothers find it desirable to work part time while raising a preschool-age child. However, most of the employment offered is full time. Furthermore, the authorities do not ensure that re-entry into their jobs is enforced without affecting their working conditions [Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2008]. Mullerova [2017b] shows the negative effect the extension of parental leave has had on the mother's probability of returning to work at the end of parental leave. Fultz and Steinhilber [2004: 259] note that in all three countries, employers discriminate against women workers with family responsibilities and limit the duration of their contracts to avoid family leave. Incorporation into the European Union in 2004 has been an improvement in this respect, as European institutions have pressed for effective equality between men and women at work and have promoted measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life [Mullerova 2017a].

This study has some limitations. First, the data source used does not directly measure the personal preferences of the respondents, because the item included refers to general attitudes towards maternal employment (what women should do). It would have been preferable to have information about personal preferences. Nevertheless, most studies have used general attitudes (more frequently in surveys) as proxy variables for women's preferences [Schleutker 2017]. More concretely, the same ISSP items used in this research have been used previously by Janus [2013a, 2013b], Kangas and Rosgaard [2007], Steiber and Haas [2009], and Schleutker [2017], among others.

Another limitation of using a question about attitudes is that they could change over time, and we cannot be sure whether mothers' attitudes when they answered the questionnaire were the same attitudes they had when they became mothers. We have faced this problem by limiting the sample to mothers of reproductive ages (18–49), for which the period between becoming mothers and participating in the survey is shorter than for the whole sample of mothers.

A final limitation of this study is that the preschool-age category is too broad (children below six years) and preferences and employment statuses could differ among mothers depending on the age of the children. As we have seen (Figure 1), the employment rates of mothers vary with their children's age (i.e. 0–2, 3–5 or 6–14), and the enrolment rates differ between children below three and older children (Figure 2). Unfortunately, ISSP surveys do not make further distinctions within this category.

Regarding other limitations of the analysis, some of the effects of the family policy measures are probably not visible because they were recent at the time of the survey or were approved after 2012. A final limitation is that the sample is restricted to mothers, which leaves out of the analysis all those women who have not had children due to external constraints.

The high degree of incongruity between preferences and actual experiences shown in this study is a sign of the problems faced by mothers attempting to reconcile work and family life and is connected with other phenomena, such as women's labour-market participation, gender equality at work and in the family, and fertility [Kuchařová 2009], which was shown in this section. Although recent family policies have had explicit pronatalist goals, fertility remains low. A possible line of research could analyse whether family policies have a different impact depending on the characteristics of the mothers, their number of children and how social constraints affect different types of mothers. We are aware that other factors, especially economic ones, influence the ability of women to achieve congruity, and more research is needed in this area.

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Thomas Frank: *People Without Power – The War on Populism and the Fight for Democracy*
New York 2020: Metropolitan Books, 307 pp.

The American historian, journalist, and author Thomas Frank is no ordinary liberal. He is wholeheartedly left-wing and a Democrat, but at the same time he is one of the starkest critics of the Democratic Party and the liberal punditry. Frank gained a somewhat prophetic status after his 2004 book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* managed to anticipate the success of Trumpism twelve years ahead of time. With his own home state of Kansas as a starting point, he described in the book how the white working class has left the Democratic Party and come down in favour of the Republicans and their cultural values regarding abortion, same-sex marriage, guns, and religion. As a result, the citizens of the once radical left state of Kansas have since the 1960s been voting against their own economic interests and the state has become a Republican heartland. Despite some empirical criticism, the book earned Thomas Frank international recognition as one of the most insightful analysts of American politics.

In *People without Power* (titled *The People, No* in the United States), Frank advances a thought-provoking claim: Ever since its invention in the 1890s, populism has been mischaracterised by its enemies to keep ordinary citizens from democratic influence. Frank follows the history of populism and what he calls anti-populism in the United States from its birth at the end of the 19th century and all the way up to the recent success of Donald Trump. Frank traces the term 'populist' back to its conception in 1891 as a reference to supporters of the agrarian People's Party and their demands for the reform of capitalism under the slogan 'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none'. The party's platform in 1892 was unmistakably opposed to the American economic system: 'The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice, we breed the two great classes – tramps and millionaires.' (p. 23) According to Thomas Frank, many of the People's Party goals – a government-controlled currency, government control of the railroads, regulation of monopolies, the income tax, the direct election of senators – are familiar to us today, because they have largely been achieved. The People's Party broke apart after a catastrophic election in 1896, but populism's ideas and demands lived on and had many victories in the following years. Historians later identified the key features of the populist ideology as equality, hostility to privilege, and anti-monopoly, and this – according to Frank – still ought to be the proper use of the term: 'The idea of working people coming together against economic privilege.' (p. 14)

Frank shows throughout the book how this notion of populism is quite different from how the 'respectable and highly educated' see it: to them, populism is 'a one-word evocation of the logic of the mob' (p. 2). He excellently lists the numerous books published in recent years that paint populism as the biggest threat to democracy in our time. The many book titles foreseeing the imminent breakdown of democracy serve to show how absent the opposite perspective has been in the debate on populism – that the current anti-populist narrative is the true anti-democratic mode of thinking because it represents a certain fear of the 'ignorant masses', fear of the people, fear of democracy itself. In addition, Frank shows that many of the connotations of today's populism – racism, authoritarianism, anti-free trade, backward-looking nostalgia – are upside-down com-

pared to the populism of the 1890s, which favoured free trade, was progressive, was open towards immigrants, and was committed to forming a political union between white and black farmers.

Frank shows that the elites' criticism of populism – the Democracy Scare – is not confined to the 1890s and the 2010s. It runs throughout the 20th century, including as a response to Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. The Wall Street Crash in 1929 ushered in the Great Depression, and as a response to the crisis the Roosevelt administration changed the federal government's role in the economy. It handed out relief to the unemployed and hired them to build large public infrastructure projects. It created a national old-age pension scheme, bailed out farmers, regulated banks and other industries, protected unions, and encouraged people to join. As a response, the newspapers, business owners, and the economic expertise of the day – much like in the 1890s – came together in an anti-populist attack on Roosevelt. According to them, he represented the mob. He prioritised the shiftless and lazy over the capable and talented. Fundamentally, he represented the problem with popular sovereignty, which, as one representative of the then economic elite put it, was that 'it vests complete direct power in those are least endowed, least informed, have least, and thereby reduces government to the lowest common denominator' (p. 131). Frank's analysis shows that the opposition to populist movements takes the same form, regardless of whether the year is 1896, 1936, 1968, or 2016. The populists' followers are characterised as ignorant, irrational, anti-intellectual, and morally deplorable.

The essence of anti-populism is that if only the political issues could be kept from the people, the elites would make wise decisions. This mode of thinking is by no means new. The democratic principle that the uneducated masses ought to have as much say as the professors and intellectuals have always been regarded as a scandal for the latter group. The intellectual discomfort with the idea that the few are thinking and the many are not; that the many are making mistakes that the few have warned against; that the many without insight won't listen to the few who have insight, is a well-known formula. This book's thought-provoking contribution is to view the contemporary deploring of populism in this historical light. We tend to think of populism and the accompanying anti-populism as very contemporary phenomena. Frank shows that this really is a reiteration of a more than a century old American trope. In addition, he shows that the anti-populist criticism often has been on the wrong side of history in the sense that many of the populist goals have been achieved and that they are regarded as highly sensible today, for example anti-trust laws, regulation of railroads, fiat currency, the income tax, and Social Security.

People Without Power brings a most welcome perspective on anti-populism as a fear of democracy, a perspective that has been suspiciously absent in the thousands of articles, opinion pieces, books, and podcasts on contemporary populism. Frank exclusively deals with the United States regarding populist movements, anti-populist reactions, and most of his historical and theoretical sources. It is a shame that he doesn't sufficiently engage the broader academic and political debate on populism, including in Europe. Even though there is no consensus on the correct use of the term 'populism', a very common definition includes an antagonism between the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite', as well as the idea that politics should be an expression of the *volunté générale.* This means that populism is fundamentally a moral claim about the right basis of politics – that is, *who* should govern, not *what* should be done. Consequently, most theorists agree that there are both right-wing and left-wing varieties of populism. According to Frank, however, only left-wing politics can be true populism, and populism and right-

wing policies are mutually exclusive: 'it takes a hallucinatory bravado to call yourself a populist while cracking down on workers and ignoring anti-trust laws …' (p. 214). Trump is no 'genuine populist'; he represents 'right-wing demagoguery'. Frank convincingly describes 'the learned class' – professors, journalists, politicians, professionals, think tanks – and criticises its talk about demagoguery as a reflection of their fundamental opposition to include non-experts in decision-making. However, he doesn't disqualify the concept of demagoguery as such. He several times describes politicians as demagogues but avoids defining what is meant by this term. The selection of politicians he calls 'demagogues' hints at an understanding of demagoguery as closely related to racism. However, it is not clear whether left-wing politics *eo ipso* equals populism and racism equals demagoguery.

It is enjoyable to read Frank's razor-sharp criticism of his fellow contemporary liberals and the Democratic Party – especially his analysis of the modern liberal *scolding* of people who don't live up to the liberals' moral standards. Clinton's description of certain Trump supporters as 'deplorables' and 'irredeemable', of course, serves as the most revealing example in the liberal moral rebuke, but Frank includes many other examples of statements that reinforce the impression that liberals feel that they are better people. Unfortunately, Frank falls victim to a very common mistake in the political analyst business: allowing personal opinion to muddy a cool analysis. In the concluding chapter, Frank outlines what he believes a modern-day populism would and should look like. It would enlist millions of embittered voters 'with far-reaching proposals of the kind we haven't heard for many years: universal health care, no more grotesque student debt, banking reform, war on monopolies, a reimagining of our trade policy' (p. 254). But, indeed, we have heard those proposals recently in the 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign – whom Frank also quotes for calling the campaign a blueprint for a 'political revolution'. It seems, however, that Frank is guilty of the same crime as the elites he has spent the rest of the book condemning: not accepting the choice of the people. Frank notes how new-style Democratic leaders 'delivered a version of national health insurance that, amazingly, did not inconvenience Big Pharma or private insurance companies' (p. 226). This way, he makes it seem like the Democrats were pandering to the economic elite against the wishes of the ordinary citizen. He doesn't leave room for the possibility that people for the most part didn't want to lose their private health insurance. In general, it seems difficult for Frank to acknowledge that the voters – the average American, the people – may not support the 'complete reversal' that he is advocating – for example, a single-payer healthcare system and student debt cancellation. He argues that the key to making it work is movement-building on a massive scale and enlisting millions of ordinary people who have lost faith in democracy. This underlines his one-sided view of democratic politics: the democratic promise can only be redeemed through left-wing policy. This of course constitutes a paradox if 'the people' are not interested in a radical left-wing vision. The consequence of this viewpoint risks becoming an echo of the 20th-century Marxist bewilderment at the fact that Western workers did not want a revolution.

Another shortfall in the book relates to its description of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius's Little Blue Books publications in the 1920s. The pocket-sized left-wing essays, famous works of literature, and self-education tracts represented, in Haldeman-Julius's own words, 'a democracy of literature' because they were made available at a price so low that virtually anyone could afford them. This meant that 'tramps read Zola and dirt farmers wanted to know about Goethe' (p. 249). Although the publication and wide consumption of liter-

ature is hailed by Frank as populism in its best form, we are still left with the unsolved paradox of democracy: It is a democratic ideal that no one is better than anyone else, but at the same time everyone acknowledges that something is better than something else. We are opposed to hierarchies between people but have no problem making hierarchies of things, such as art, food, music, literature, and academic work. The example of Haldeman-Julius' Little Blue Books shows that even though a whole-hearted small-d democrat would never restrict the suffrage to include only the people who read, he, in casu Thomas Frank, still considers it a democratic victory when the 'common man' shows his 'love for learning'.

People Without Power – The War on Populism and the Fight for Democracy is a very convincing counterargument to the talking heads' present debate on populism, and it presents a thought-provoking thesis on the relationship between populism, democracy, and the elites. The book should be understood as Thomas Franks rallying cry to the Democratic Party and American liberals: they need to remember how their populist +tradition thought and how it talked in the years of its peak liberal greatness – in order to figure out how it might do so again.

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Michelle Jackson: ***Manifesto for a Dream: Inequality, Constraint, and Radical Reform***
Palo Alto, CA, 2020: Stanford University Press, 200 pp.

Extraordinary times require extraordinary solutions. In recent years, the attention to social inequalities has been growing, shining a light on both its causes and the related social and political consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the discussion of inequality even more poignant. Disparities between the rich and the poor appear to be increasing as unemployment and distress particularly affect the already vulnerable. This book is not about the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for social inequalities, but it is appearing at a timely moment when there is a pressing need for radical ideas for social policies that will help the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities. The book's aim is to be a manifesto for academics, researchers, university students, and policy-makers. And it is a manifesto to inspire change. Academic research in the social sciences is criticised for negligence in the promotion of radical change in the social structure of current societies.

Jackson proposes four causes to explain the deficiency in radical ideas in academia. The first is pragmatism and it implies that individuals are incentivised to research and promote policies that are marketable to citizens and public institutions. Consequently, small policies that are easier to implement and have low economic costs are simpler to market in the public sphere. Second, scientific research on the impact of large institutional change on an individual's life is more difficult to test. The effects of large reforms cannot be easily assessed causally using randomised control trials or field experiments, making them less researched. Moreover, the specialisation of academics in narrow fields of studies disincentivises approaches that consider the larger institutional and societal picture. Conversely, narrower questions are preferred. Third, ideological barriers are present when competing interests reduce the incentive to support large societal change. For example, an academic might want to fight inequalities but has incompatible economic values or is attached to existing institutions, making it difficult to dismantle the organisations in place. Fi-

nally, self-interest could also be a factor that affects what policies are promoted, as academics are not a representative sample of the population and they profit directly from large salaries and from the privileges that derive from their advantaged socio-economic background.

Jackson introduces the concept of inequality of constraints to explain inequalities and the barriers to individual achievement. This concept is compared to the commonly used idea of equality of opportunity. The use of equality of opportunity as an epistemological construct is critical as it forces researchers to focus attention on the individual instead of on the broad institutional factors that might contribute to inequalities. Moreover, using this term implies a dichotomisation between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. But previous research on social mobility and social stratification has widely shown that these two are strongly intertwined. Societies with high economic equality display higher levels of equality of opportunity. The several weaknesses of using the concept of inequality of opportunity inspired Jackson to propose the idea of inequality of constraints. The latter focuses on the institutional factors that determine inequalities denoting that: 'individuals face unequal opportunities primarily because society offers unequal constraints'. Consequently, the attention on social institutions appears critical.

Social institutions play a vital part in the life course of an individual, determining opportunities and offering safety nets when in need – but not for everyone. Socioeconomic conditions affect the type of interactions and how an individual interacts with institutions, determining benefits for some but disadvantages for others. Social institutions are necessarily interconnected as they protect from different risks that could have spill-over effects on other life outcomes. However, this web is not as developed and solid for everyone. Privileged individuals manage to be successful thanks to their broad web of supportive social institutions, which are of crucial importance when they face any constraints in life. Moreover, they have the skills to effectively interact with these institutions. Conversely, disadvantaged individuals lack the support of interconnected and high-quality social institutions and are less able to communicate with them. Consequently, they are unable to benefit from necessary support when they need it, which contributes to persisting life inequalities. For example, an underprivileged individual may have access to a high-quality education but lacks affordable medical care. The absence of medical care affects not only the capacity to recover from illness but also the ability to effectively attend and learn in educational institutions. For this reason, Jackson depicts social institutions as separate nodes that interconnect to each other by links that can be positive, missing, or negative.

A quick fix for inequalities of constraints is not easy to find, but real-world policies can stimulate radical ideas to promote societal change reforming social institutions. Radical real-world policies exist, and they can tackle the unequal distribution of income or encourage institutional reform. For example, a widely cited solution to address the unequal distribution of income is Universal Basic Income (UBI). So far, this policy has only been implemented in trials or on a small scale, for instance in Alaska, where a yearly dividend from oil revenues is paid to citizens. To be more radical, UBI must allow for the effective redistribution of income and be accompanied by an institutional network of supportive services (e.g. education and health care). Social reform can target the interconnectedness of institutions or their quality. A good example of a well-connected institutional network that supports the individual is the flexicurity model implemented in Denmark. There employers benefit from

flexible work contracts and employees benefit from unemployment security and active labour-market policies that help people to retrain. The policy is effective as it offers institutional resources throughout the life course and provides the unemployed with a web of interconnected public services. Nevertheless, flexicurity tackles inequalities late in life but does not eradicate disparities that start from birth. For this reason, early childhood intervention and the larger set of policies that follow the individual from 'cradle to grave' are proposed in line with the ideas presented in the Beveridge report promoted in Great Britain after the Second World War. The cited list of real-world policies are great examples of how public policy can eradicate inequality of constraint. Nevertheless, these are not that radical, as they already exist in countries that experience persisting social inequalities.

To go one step further in the dream, thought experiments can help people to envision radical institutional reforms. An interesting example that encompasses several key aspects of the arguments made throughout the book is the 'rubber band' policy. The idea sets out from the viewpoint that privileged individuals want to invest in their children, so they leverage their economic and social resources and help their children to access the best institutions. However, they are not interested in investing in other children. Consequently, the policy aims to create incentives for the parents of privileged children to also support the disadvantaged. Changing the self-interested behaviour of parents is not feasible. Therefore, the 'rubber band' policy uses the self-interested behaviour of the parents to help the disadvantaged. The kind of policy implies that the success of an advantaged child is conditional upon the success of a poor child. For example, if a disadvantaged child fails to get accepted into a top college, the privileged child would also not be granted access. In this context, wealthy parents are incentivised to invest in institutions that support underprivileged children to do well in life so that their own children will also benefit. Moreover, the expected wider access of poor people to a college education will likely lower the large income gains associated with a university degree, thereby reducing inequalities. At first glance, this policy looks very radical and raises moral questions, as it ties the life of one individual to that of another one. However, considering that, in modern-day societies, the destiny of an individual is already directly tied to that of their parents, the difference appears to be one of degree and not of kind.

The references throughout the book are to the US context. But how generalisable to other countries are the arguments it makes to promote radical change? The answer is not straightforward. First, existing institutions and levels of inequality shape the perception of radicality and the urgency of radical change. For example, in most European countries, university, education, and health care are already accessible for a small fee. Eliminating the existing fees might not be seen as radical or effective to combat inequalities. Conversely, in the United States, university enrolment and health care come at an exorbitant cost, and the idea of eliminating fees might seem extremely radical but effective at fighting inequalities. Second, culture and religion shape the radicality and acceptability of policies. Beliefs could be the gatekeepers in the implementation of some policies, heightening the perceived radicality of certain ideas. Third, some strands of the population might consider a policy extremely radical while others do not, which could lead to tensions in society. In this context, the surge in political polarisation documented in recent years raises questions about the feasibility of radical policies and whether they can be implemented without causing a societal backlash. Overall, when designing social policies and when pro-

moting radical societal change, public opinion and context play a critical role.

The relationship between policy-makers who promote radical change and citizens is not an easy one. In democracies, policies should obtain broad approval from the population, but it could be a struggle to achieve this for radical policies. Should academics and policy-makers therefore impose solutions in a top-down manner claiming that they are acting in the interests of their citizens? The risk of sounding elitist and detached from public opinion then lies just around the corner. But there are examples in history of cases where public opinion has changed abruptly and policies that had been perceived as radical were subsequently accepted by the wider public. So, hope for radical policies exists even where it might be unexpected, and where citizens seem not particularly receptive to change.

What does Jackson imply with the term 'dream' in the title of the book? The 'Manifesto for a Dream' refers to the American dream – the belief that everyone can make it in life and fulfil their life aspirations regardless of their social background or where they come from. However, this is not a reality in the contemporary United States. This dream seems even further from reality in the current world impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, schools are an important social institution that supports the learning of children. The current absence or virtual format of this institution places a higher burden on parents and children. In this situation, the learning gap between vulnerable and privileged children is set to increase and thereby generate long-term inequalities. The disparity in the support children receive in homeschooling is critical, and this is coupled with distress caused by economic deprivation and exposure to health hazards, which are currently exacerbated by this major shock. This crisis is set to leave a major scar on future generations and radical policies are needed to allow the wound to heal and reduce social inequalities. To achieve this aim, social scientists need to be bold, do research, and promote ideas that can address the inequalities of constraints, and thereby help build the social institutions that will effectively change the social structure.

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Marsha Siefert (ed.): ***Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945-1989: Contributions to a History of Work***
Budapest and New York 2020: Central European University Press, 486 pp.

While the scholarship on global labour has increasingly broken beyond the confines of the Western-European meta-narrative of progress [Strath and Wagner 2017], the study of labour in the 'Eastern Bloc' has remained conspicuously under-theorised (pp. 4–5) [on the labour transition, however, see Vanhuysse 2007, 2008]. Building on the fashionable scholarly trend on transnational history in labour studies [Hofmeester and van der Linden 2018], this volume offers a bottom-top approach that unpacks 'Sovietisation' as 'an internal negotiation among the hierarchies of labor as they intersect local communist party membership and goals' (p. 11). Across 17 dense chapters the volume covers a diverse range of topics pertaining to the organisation of labour: creating a socialist workforce (Part I); enshrining rights and establishing discipline (Part II); managing safety and risk (Part III); the unrest and reform (Part IV).

Broadly speaking, the book aims to go above and beyond existing studies and strive for a holistic take on agency, whereby 'an everyday life perspective' not only centralises the factory but also 'encompasses and emphasizes promises and prac-

tices away from the shop floor' (p. 13). This broader view is better suited to capturing the gap between communist parties' macro-level developmental goals and the on-site reality of factory managers dealing with the non-homogenous historical legacies of late industrialisation. Against this background, the crux of the book is uncovering why and how, crucial top-down levers of organising and managing labour were circumvented by workers, with the management's tacit acknowledgement (p. 16). By drawing on previous studies that had centralised the role of agency (p. 13), the main argument, which gives coherence to the breadth of individual case studies, is that labour laws, employment contracts, and social welfare policies and benefits were essentially derived by means of 'negotiation from below' (pp. 13–16). In this sense, virtually all the contributors show that studying labour in state socialism requires a disentangling of how 'material conditions and everyday instrumentalities" warped the "choices and dilemmas of those participating at various levels in the labor hierarchy' (p. 12).

While the emphasis of the book is on worker agency, the individual chapters essentially offer a complex analysis of the co-constitutive relationship between actors, structure, and process in shaping state-labour interactions. The list of contributors contains an impressive array of well-established scholars. Let me here provide an overview of two chapters devoted to communist Romania so as to better highlight the main conceptual threads among the various facets of the state-labour relationships that pertain to a single variation of 'state socialism'. Alina-Sandra Cucu shows in detail that in the early 1950s, Romanian communists deployed a discursive strategy that blended economic and socio-political considerations; however 'failing to generate surplus weakened not only the factory, but also the polity' (p. 50). Against this background, the socialist transformation implied that the 1950s Romanian worker had to be simultaneously created 'as a producer and as a political subject' (p. 51). Forging the ideal worker – a 'Stakhanovite' who embraced over-production as the social duty of the political individual – could buttress a substantively different and much faster economic transformation than Taylorism (p. 54). In this sense, Stakhanovites provided an answer to the long-standing question of catch-up development in a (semi)peripheral country that lacked the structures and contingencies typically associated with Western capitalist development (p. 54). Against this background, Stakhanovites were elevated discursively and ideationally as *the* embodiment of socialist construction in the form of a modernising project at the factory level (p. 55).

At the same time, however, by zooming in on the leather and footwear factory in early 1950s Cluj, Cucu shows that creating Stakhanovites was not at all a straightforward process (p. 52). The creation of new workers could bypass the need to manage existing workers (p. 57), nor evade the tricky legacy of late industrialisation, wherein the putative benefits of Stakhanovism were not at all apparent to the masses of peasant-workers, unskilled workers, and commuters whom the communist authorities were trying to 'elevate' (p. 64). In addition, Romanian management quickly realised that the Soviet handbook on forging Stakhanovists involved unsustainable costs and equipment that was simply not available (p. 59). This meant that, despite claims to the contrary in reports from the 1950s, Stakhanovites did not 'organically emerge' but had to be made through a type of proactive top-down strategy (p. 62).

Yet, given the ubiquitous lack of resources, the creation of 'new socialist workers', as officially sanctioned by the first Five-Year Plan in 1951, had to rely on an intricate balancing act (pp. 59–61). This was necessary because creating Stakhanovists

depended not just on incentivising individuals but also on generating an environment conducive to this outcome, where every (technical and human) cog in the wheel played a specific role (p. 62). Specifically, managers had to negotiate between the top-down demands for Stakhanovists, the limited tools they had at their disposal (which mostly involved 'shaming' slackers – p. 61), the piecework system that allowed would-be Stakhanovists to thrive and the inherent tensions this upward mobility generated between existing high-skill workers and apparent 'unworthy profiteers' of the new opportunity structure (pp. 63–64). The latter was particularly problematic, as the Communist Party's over-emphasis on a 'pedagogic project' geared towards the individual labourer rather than the working class as a whole often had perverse effects that fractured the solidarity of the emerging labour class (pp. 51–52). Against this backdrop, while Stakhanovism seemed like an appealing way to overcome the constraints of time in late development (pp. 64–68), it ultimately involved a type of factory-floor negotiation that limited its actual productive capacity (p. 64).

Shedding new light on the 'welfare gestalt' of socialism (in Kaufmann's [2013] sense), Grama analyses how policies designed to improve work safety in the 1950s were construed as responses to a 'crisis of labour productivity' that threatened vital facets of the socialist economic transformation, such as 'the need for mechanization, the management's duty to procure working equipment and the trade unions' role in better organizing the labor process' (pp. 251–252). Grama dissects how and why work accidents showed authorities and factory managers alike 'the interdependence between social insurance, labor markets, working conditions and production practices' (p. 260). In this sense, the standardisation of work safety policies and the socialisation of risk were designed to create the type of clear-cut delineation of responsibilities 'between those who controlled the labor process and those who merely performed work' that allowed the socialist state to use welfare incentives to 'reduce contingent work and produce stable, skilled and productive workers' (pp. 248, 251–252). In this line of thought, Grama uses the discrete case of accident and disability pensions as 'regulatory mechanisms of the labor market' to argue for the broader point that, in communist Romania, 'social insurance is constitutive of, rather than external to, the industrial wage relation' (p. 269) (for a general theory, see Vanhuysse [2006]).

Set against the backdrop of the 1970s global crisis, the Romanian 1977 pension reform overtly sought to 'put an end to the regime of complicities' whereby the regulatory role of accident and disability pension was undermined by a range of intermediary factors (pp. 246–248). Specifically, the reform sought to completely curtail the possibility that some injured workers accessed early retirement and specific benefits on the basis of ailments defined in a top-down fashion as 'illegitimate' or 'insufficient' (p. 247). The crux of the issue was that work accidents had been increasingly conceptualised as a component of labour productivity, which meant that factory-floor bargaining became a virtual developmental hurdle in that it sapped social insurance out of the national budget (pp. 247–248). This can be seen, for instance, in how the 1950s communist authorities started to account for work accidents as 'wasted working days' (pp. 250–252). Within the ideational landscape of socialist economic transformation, this practice was supposed to enable management to curtail workers' attempts to obtain a disability pension (p. 248). By calculating labour productivity as a function of working hours, socialist planners also expected to gain a type of overview with which it would be possible to create a state-wide demand for workers (p. 250).

At the same time however, while the standardisation of practices and required paperwork did yield a modicum of results (pp. 252–254), what soon became obvious was the clash between ambiguous historical legacies and the inconsistent practices of socialist authorities themselves (pp. 255–257). Furthermore, a crucial issue was that while old-age pensions could be used as an incentive to create a top-down defined 'socialist labour ethos', the immediacy of work accidents created a contingent ebb and flow of productivity that was not easily plotted in a long-term plan (pp. 257–259). For instance, it became obvious from the early 1950s that, at the factory level, the budget for work accidents was one of the first budgets to end up overstretched, forcing managers to divert funds that had been earmarked for other welfare benefits (p. 257). On a deeper level, however, the issue was that the attempts to socialise the risk of work accidents 'brought actuarial and insurance strategies onto the shop floor', which effectively 'altered the nature of the wage relationship by formally making the body of the worker, rather than labor power, the object of the employment contract' (pp. 260–261). This clashed with the reality that workers in fact had to 'artfully navigate' an intricate maze that involved both the amorphous institutional infrastructure and a range of actors – medical offices, accounting offices, labour inspectors, trade union representatives, each with contingently defined interests. The existence of multiple porous boundaries essentially forced authorities to simultaneously suspect workers and state functionaries *and* to legitimise the critique and 'public denunciation of work safety inspectors, union officials and sometimes even of workers themselves' (p. 269).

Summing up, Marsha Siefert's book impresses through a level of analytical clarity that transforms detailed and otherwise disconnected historical narratives into a rich and coherent conceptual map of communist history. By drawing on the conceptual toolkit of global history, all chapters unearth new facets of pre-existing explanations and causal relationships regarding the intricacies of the state-labour relationship in socialist economies. By creating an open dialogue with the bourgeoning literature on global labour, the book sends out the strong message that the historical development of labour relations in communist countries is far more than a story of 'backwardness'.

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Maja Göpel: *Unsere Welt Neu Denken: Eine Einladung*
Berlin 2020: Ullstein Buchverlage,
208 pp.

In this ambitious book, the German economist and political scientist Maja Göpel gave herself a near-impossible task: to change the way we are thinking about our society and our role in the environment. By discussing

economic growth and development, technological progress, consumption, the role of the state, and justice, and other key topics, she demonstrates how humans have to view themselves as part of the ecological system and accept that the current way of life cannot go on forever. The book is organised in ten short but ambitious chapters that promise to give insights into how this endeavour can succeed. Throughout the book, Göpel supports her arguments with evidence of the ecological and social costs of the economic system, builds on or argues against the positions of scholars that came before her, such as Daly, Solow, Keynes, and Rawls, and presents her arguments in an accessible way.

Following a brief introduction on the structure and goals of the book, the second chapter deals with the fact that humans nowadays are facing a drastically different reality. With population growth exploding over the last half century and biocapacity and natural resources depleting, Göpel claims we are living in an altered setting that we are not adapting to. While there is less room for growth and expansion – economically or ecologically – we are stuck in thought patterns that assume we can outgrow distributional conflicts. As part of this critique, she posits that small-scale solutions, praised for their efficiency, have been unable to solve the bigger problems.

In the third chapter, 'Nature and Life', Göpel presents two opposing views on growth and sustainability: the Brundtland Report and Solow's model of substitutability. The latter posits that every element of natural capital can be exchanged by a technological solution. While we are extracting resources and degrading ecosystems, we are ignoring the complexity and regenerative capacity of the ecosystem, as well as the numerous 'services' that it provides. The fourth chapter, 'Humans and Behaviour', deals with homo economicus. Göpel claims that most economists are working with a false assumption: humans as selfish utility-maximisers. Referring to the ultimatum game, she argues that science has since proven this concept to be false. She identifies further fundamental problems in economics, such as a tendency towards methodological individualism, and scholars that are often taking the old ideas of Smith, Ricardo, and Darwin out of their historical context and present them as laws of nature. Göpel argues that the role of ideas, especially in this influential branch of social science, is bigger than we often assume. They shape the way we view the world and influence our decision-making processes. A change in the system, therefore, would have to start with rethinking human behaviour and the basic 'truths' of economics.

The fifth chapter, 'Growth and Development,' asks whether we need to reconsider the true costs of our economic system. Looking at, for example, the correlation between growth and climate change, Göpel posits that we are working with the wrong perception of growth. Expecting eternal growth in a limited world with limited resources would be naive. She further remarks that more growth does not necessarily equal more welfare and argues that we need to be aware of the inflation of economic indicators by unproductive economic sectors, such as the finance industry. Finally, by arguing against the validity of our measures for extreme poverty, she claims that the success story of economic growth and development is built on false perceptions of the economy and people's living situations.

In the sixth chapter, 'Technological Progress', Göpel takes apart the notion that technological progress alone can solve the problem. Referring to the spread of the steam engine, the light bulb, automobiles, and others, she argues that we are observing a 'rebound effect' (p. 98). Every time a technology takes a significant step forward, increasing its efficiency, its reach widens in the population, leading to a higher toll on

the environment than before the improvement. What this teaches us, according to Göpel, is that we should not rely on technological progress to solve the problem of climate change for us. If we want to be able to use it for our advantage in fighting climate change, we need the right guidelines and circumstances for helpful innovation to thrive.

Breaking down a second myth on fighting climate change, chapter 7 argues that we need to drastically change the way we consume and set prices. Göpel argues that decoupling the economy from its pressure on the environment – through innovation – has not been successful, as also described in chapter 6. Being left without this 'deus ex machina,' Göpel considers how the market could be influenced in order to induce more environmentally friendly consumption. As consumers are expected to purchase according to price levels, this could be achieved through internalising the environmental costs of goods or services.

In chapter 8, 'Market, State, and Public Domain', Göpel goes back to an argument introduced at the beginning of the book: many small solutions do not necessarily lead to a good outcome for society. With this reference to the 'Tragedy of the Commons', she lays out her arguments as to why the 'invisible hand' is currently not governing the market towards the best outcome for society. First, market failures exist, and they justify the involvement of the state. Second, the market cannot exist without the state around it. And lastly, many of the most important innovations are based on state-funded research.

In the last two chapters, Göpel introduces the dimension of justice, and tries to give the reader ideas on how to move forward. As a start, she argues that different individuals will have different responsibilities to act and to change their behaviour. Based on studies highlighting the inequality-enhancing effects of climate change, she puts justice at the centre of the endeavour to rethink society. In the last chapter, she chiefly focuses on discerning the main lessons from her book and how people can use them to affect change in their surroundings, or rather, not despair, when change does not come quickly.

The added value that Göpel brings with this book is clear. In a very comprehensive and approachable take on the state of sustainability in society, she manages to find a good mix between detail and the bigger picture. If the audience for her book is the general population, it can help them to take a look behind the curtain. If the audience are policy makers, then maybe this book can act as a wake-up call that there is more at stake than we think, and that the truths (of economics and human behaviour) that we hold to be self-evident appear not so true anymore. The author repeatedly invites the reader to rethink the way we organise our societies, be it our taxes, consumption, the role of the state, or, most importantly, our ideas and values. In this also lies the strength of her arguments. It appears to be far from logical to reduce our consumption and, therefore, our welfare, in a world that allows endless growth. When we, however, change the way we look at the world, we realise some problems in the argument. Firstly, our world is not limitless and we are working with scarce resources. Secondly, disaggregating the principle of growth we observe that much of its drive comes from the expansion of the rather unproductive financial economy. And lastly, is there actually a neat linear correlation between consumption and welfare? Following these critiques, our limited world makes it reasonable to put a hold on our consumption, as value does not only come from the amount of goods and services we consume. In a short take on agricultural subsidies, Göpel shows how these critiques can be applied to a specific field of policy. If we assume that we have limitless resources and that growth itself is the goal, it seems plausible to grant

subsidies based on the size of farms. A simple change in our priorities, and a step away from the golden cow called economic growth, allows us to reconsider and come up with solutions that offer more value to both humans and their environment.

If these arguments do not read like a revelation, that is because most of them are not. It is nothing new, that the market will need steering and that the current economic system appears to be driving us towards ecological disaster. The caveats and dangers here have not only been predicted by earlier economists (from Smith to Keynes, as Göpel points out) but have since then again and again been supported by evidence. Göpel's arguments in this book also closely resemble at least in their basic form those of William Ophuls, another scholar of political transformation. In a daring treatise on scarcity and political institutions (originally published in 1977), Ophuls [Ophuls and Boyan 1992] argued that our institutions and values do not recognise the gravity of the ecological impact of our way of life. He furthermore similarly criticises the almost naïve belief in salvation through efficiency. And while his recommendations for political change are rather unorthodox and questionable, his warnings are still relevant today. Nearly forty years later, now less focused on state coercion and rather on value change, Ophuls [2011] repeats his warnings that we require a fundamental shift in our perspective on the ecosystem and our role in it. Like Göpel, he argues for a move away from a growth-centred society and a view on human welfare that is detached from its classical relationship to consumption, a view that is shared by a growing number of economists and political scientists.

Finally, it must be remarked that, while Göpel aims to present the different topics in a comprehensive and inviting manner, this sometimes comes at a cost. A rather unfortunate example of this is the chapter on justice. Based on the issue of inequality in resource use and wealth, she introduces the reader to the difficulty of assigning responsibilities for both future climate action and past emissions. From this point onwards, it is not clear anymore which concepts of justice she is basing her arguments on, and the theoretical base for her arguments in this chapter is sparse. The only theory of justice mentioned in this chapter – by John Rawls – receives just a few paragraphs of attention and adds nothing much to the question of how justice can be understood in an intergenerational context and how this connects to ecological degradation caused by humans. This, after all, would have to be the basis for all proponents of sustainable policy. It is unfortunate, as the literature is not short on different approaches to this particular question [see, e.g., Shue 2014; Wolf 1995]. The reader therefore remains in the dark about the ethical foundations for Göpel's use of the word 'justice', and the ninth chapter reads more like an op-ed than an ambitious piece of political science literature.

Fortunately, this remains an isolated case, as the rest of the book manages to present complex issues in plausible yet not too crude ways. She connects topics from different fields and makes a rather successful case for her central argument: If we want to avoid ecological degradation, the human suffering that comes along with it, and other negative aspects of our current socio-economic environment, we have to adopt a new way of thinking. She supports this clearly with examples throughout the book and offers the reader many opportunities to change perspective. And while most of her individual arguments are not new, the fact that they are still painfully relevant today is – alongside her comprehensive and inviting approach – the raison d'être for this book.

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Annemarie Mol: *Eating in Theory*
Durham, NC, 2021: Duke University Press, 208 pp.

Anthropologist and philosopher Annemarie Mol presents this book as an 'exercise in empirical philosophy'. Pursuing the ambitious aim of rekindling theoretical terms in alternative ways, she examines the bodily, cultural, and social processes that are entailed in the act of eating. Based in science and technology studies, anthropology, and philosophy, Mol combines her philosophical argument with ethnographic examples. However, *Eating in Theory* is neither a contribution to food studies, nor does it elaborate a general theory on eating. Even if the author intensively engages with theoretical discourses, she calls her approach a *style*, not a *theory*. By taking inspiration from eating instead of thinking, Mol aims to escape humanist universalisms, revalue life-sustaining labour, and allow for greater inclusion of nonhumans in theory: 'What if we were to stop celebrating 'the human's' cognitive reflections about the world, and take our cues instead from human metabolic engagements with the world?' (p. 3)

While the book's theoretical ambition is laid out in the introductory and concluding sections, the other chapters, discussing alternative interpretations of the terms *being*, *knowing*, *doing*, and *relating*, serve as exemplary interventions of the proposed style. Like the dishes in a buffet, they do not add up to a coherent whole but are offered for selective inspiration. Thanks to the very comprehensible language, it is easy to follow Mol's thoughts even when she navigates us through challenging waters. All the chapters follow the same structural principle: An empirical story about eating is put into dialogue with a text from the canon of philosophical anthropology in regard to the realities it sought to address, but leading to alternative theoretical conclusions. Her repetition of the phrase 'this is the lesson for theory' allows for a purely result-oriented reading. Additional ethnographic examples, set off from the main text, run in parallel throughout the book. Even if the two-column division is difficult to follow at times, these examples effectively enrich the empirical basis of the book. Despite these regionally diverse illustrations, the book's theoretical focus is limited to authors writing in English, Dutch, French, and German, because Mol's aim is to revisit the dominant canon of continental philosophical anthropology. Accordingly, the author starts with an introduction to 20th-century continental philosophical thought. Acknowledging the relevance and historical validity of works such as Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Mol criticises the hierarchical conceptualisation of 'the human' that prioritises the political as a distinguishing feature of humanity while relegating bodily and life-sustaining aspects, perceived as 'too close to nature', to the background. In her view, this conceptualisation does not provide an adequate response to current challenges such as planetary ecological fragility: 'The Anthropocene requires us to revisit what we make of Anthropos' (p. 20). Mol's suggestion is to revisit historically evolved concepts for contemporary purposes by using the principles of empirical philosophy. She sketches the initial divergence between philosophical normativity and the empirical gathering of facts and

explains how these opposites were eventually fused in 'empirical philosophy'. The aim of the sub-discipline is, on the one hand, to bring philosophy down to earth and, on the other, to alter the empirical by conceptually giving it a multiple character.

In the first intervention chapter, Mol turns to *being*. In contrast to the prior assumption that thinking resides in a transcendental realm, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's contribution was to situate it inside human bodies. But since he drew his inspiration from the brain injuries of former soldiers, his model of the body was primarily a neuromuscular one. Mol expands it to include metabolic aspects that lead to different conclusions about being. Responding also to Tim Ingold's thoughts on walking, which are equally focused on the neuromuscular body, Mol notes: 'while, as a walker, I move through the world, when I eat, it is the world that moves through me' (p. 49). As we eat, we do not primarily apprehend our surroundings, but become mixed up with them. At the same time, if we consider where our food has traveled from, our being is not just local, but multi-sited and dispersed.

In the next chapter, dedicated to *knowing*, Mol highlights how the classical subject-object distinction changes fundamentally if we approach it from the perspective of eating and cooking, as the incorporation of objects into a subject transform both the eater and the food. Moreover, the model of *doing* is revisited thoroughly by turning our attention to processes of digestion. This more uncontrolled form of activity stands against the established understandings of doing as based on wilful action. The chapter on *relating* is both complex and revealing. Unlike many philosophers of the 20th century who have described and thought of relations primarily between people, Mol extends her frame toward nonhumans. She points to the asymmetrical nature of relations when it comes to eating and thus shifts the question from 'how to achieve equality to how to avoid the erasure of what is different' (p. 4).

The book concludes with a return to the political, over which Mol initially privileged the sensual. Based on the increasing theoretical sensibility to nonhumans over the last decades, the question is how to reshape politics so that it overcomes anthropocentric predispositions. Mol suggests looking for the political in places where we would normally not expect it to exist. This requires, the author tells us, a broader understanding of politics, equating it 'not just with making decisions but also with exploring alternatives' (p. 138). Even though she is aware of the skepticism of some who find this extension of the term too loose and doubt its effectiveness, Mol underlines that much can be gained. Through this, demands such as those of subaltern studies, which criticised elitist historiography and instead aimed for a 'history from below' that describes the role of women, peasants, farmworkers, etc., are being implemented. Mol follows this call by making such actors relevant through a focus on food and, thus, life-sustaining labour.

The book produces an insightful provocation that emphasises the necessary equality between thinking and doing as well as between theory and empirical research. The credo 'form follows function' is fully applicable in this case, as the elegant but at the same time remarkably clear language allows for a transdisciplinary and even general readership. Philosophical considerations that are perceived as difficult to access elsewhere are sketched effortlessly without losing historical depth or omitting contexts. Actually, the rigid contextualisation and empirical cross-checking of philosophical works is the book's greatest strength.

Another strength of the book is how Mol lets us get close. Following the phenomenological tradition, she shares with us the situations and (physical) experienc-

es from which she draws her reflections. Mol writes about her own cooking, eating, pregnancy, digestion, and eventual physical decay. This radical orientation towards the body addresses aspects that have been silenced in humanist discourses before. Mol's interest in the metabolic level upturns the long-established hierarchy of the senses, as she starts her thinking from the most fundamental processes of life: eating, digesting, and excreting. Since these are essential to human life, but at the same time are not exclusively human properties, Mol creates an inclusivity that answers the calls of feminist theory and post-humanist literature. However, her discussion of metabolism might not be too fine-grained for those who engage more intensely with the term. Instead it functions as an incentive to deeper engagement with it through other literature.

While the book thoroughly develops the link between empiricism and theory, the connection from theory back to practical application, on the other hand, is left to us, as Mol's interventions do not lead to specific solutions. However, she explicitly invites the reader from the beginning of the book to understand her text as a toolkit, to be used selectively, and that spinning it further is what the author wishes for. In this respect, the book lives up to its promise of being a provocative stylistic stimulus – rather a scratch on the surface than an in-depth elaboration. In this way, Mol avoids a philosophical claim to uniqueness; nor does she force a paradigm shift. Instead, she presents a solution-oriented approach to theory, to serve as a descriptive tool to understand the world and consequently to act differently in it. Precisely because of this pragmatic approach, the book is a chance also for non-philosophers to productively engage with philosophical thought. By taking eating as the lens through which she looks at philosophy, Mol reveals its blind spots while also opening a door to its possibilities and strengths. The book thus helps to make philosophical thought accessibly usable in the social sciences and beyond.

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Susan D. Blum (ed.): *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*
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'The saddest and most ironic practice in schools is how hard we try to measure our students and how rarely we ask them' (p. 29). This quote emphasises what this book is about: bringing learning back to the students and involving them in the classroom. The book starts by elaborating what grades are for. It explains how grades are a measurement developed to evaluate students. But also, how this book intends to provide examples of what to do instead of grading and why this is the future of education instead of continuing to give grades.

The teachers who contributed to this book teach in different fields. They show that going gradeless in the classroom can be done in various ways. The teachers draw a connection between a theoretical framework and real-life settings, where concepts, problems, and reasons are addressed to explore the field of 'ungrading'. This part of the book also reveals the intention behind giving grades. The system was developed to be able to rank students, but it leads students to focus more on the grade than on their learning outcomes: 'students are taught to focus on schooling rather than on learning' (p. 57). The contributing authors are all concerned about how grades standardise learning and practice through a model of education that they do not find applicable in their classroom.

They have all noticed a growing focus among students on cutting corners and accumulating points instead of focusing on learning. They argue that grades do not promote learning, only a measurement of students' ability to adapt to a system. They show that a culture that focuses on achievements rather than learning encourages students to adjust and compromise their learning to reach the best possible result. The motivation of obtaining a good grade then becomes extrinsic instead of intrinsic. Teachers moreover have a difficult time expanding knowledge and practices among their students because the grades control what gets done in the classroom; consequently, grades do not help teachers to talk about student learning outcomes, as they do not give adequate information about a student's capability in a given course.

The contributors present cases that provide an overview of how they have attempted to go gradeless while still working within the requirements of the institution in which they work. Despite having different backgrounds and working in different fields, what they share is the intention to give empowerment and a joy of learning back to students. This change of focus generates a dialogue between the students and the teacher, but it also leads to a consistent focus on giving constructive and helpful feedback without a grade attached. As schools still require a grade in the end, teachers cannot remove grades entirely. The teachers therefore describe the challenges and difficulties they faced with implementing an ungraded course while at the same time meeting institutional expectations. One example the book provides is developing different contracts for students, in which they are able to see the amount of work that is expected from them depending on what grade they want to receive. Students also do a self-assessment do that they have a way to show what they have learned through the course, and so that teachers can see how they can improve their teaching. Hence, the book also argues that there should be a continuous conversation between students and teachers to improve the course and, thereby, student learning outcomes. Going gradeless during the semester creates an environment in which students are encouraged to give and receive feedback. In this way it becomes a matter of improving rather than judging, as students are given the freedom to learn in their own way. In this kind of system, students can make process letters if a teacher is indecisive about what grade to assign. Teachers want to give students responsibility for their own learning; therefore, by having these process letters, agreements, and individual talks during the year the students can follow their own performance and argue whether they think they are keeping up or not. At the end of the year, the students give themselves the grade they think they deserve and discuss it with their teacher. As the quote states, the students are thereby given an opportunity to argue for their own work and accomplishments. One might wonder whether students would give themselves more than they deserve. However, the contributors to this book argue that they have almost always been in the situation where they have to give the students a higher grade than they assigned themselves.

The book concludes with a section on the benefits of going gradeless as a teacher. One of the arguments about going gradeless is the stress level among students in their classrooms. When the primary focus is placed on achievements, this generates a stressful environment for the students because grades are the marks that are supposed to help them achieve what they want later in life. However, when teachers decide to stop giving grades during a semester, the feedback from the students is about how their level of stress decreases as they are able to focus on learning. Removing the grades also changes the focus for the teachers and may even add a different

perspective on a student's capability in a specific course.

This book provides several arguments about why going gradeless can be the future of education. It also emphasises how removing grades is not only tied to one specific course or field. Likewise, it also shows that there is more than one way to do this, and this makes it a source of inspiration and a tool for teachers and other educators to use. Furthermore, the book questions whether grading should continue to be used in our school system, as it may not help our students to become better learners, and also because giving grades might not be the right way for teachers to get to know their students' competences, as giving grades does not generate an environment for dialogue and feedback. Going gradeless as a teacher may be difficult, as the entire school system is often built upon grades, which are themselves an entry to step up to another level. The cases discussed here are practical rather than just theoretical. However, as the book also argues, switching to a gradeless classroom also requires a change in mindset for teachers. What is valuable in this book is how the teachers also explain the different obstacles they encounter and how they overcome these obstacles by adjusting to the cultural framework they work in and to the requirements they have to meet. The book encourages us to base learning on dialogue, which should be monitored along the way to give more empowerment to the classroom. Thus, it provides several arguments for why going gradeless is the future of education and encourages teachers and other educators to experiment with what should be the primary focus of being in a classroom. It encourages us to reflect on the questions we ask students if we want the students to focus more on learning than schooling.

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Violaine Delteil and Vassil Kirov (eds):
Labour and Social Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe: Europeanization and Beyond
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Among the simultaneous challenges of post-communist transitions, the liberalisation of markets has been surprisingly constant and successful [Appel and Orenstein 2018], but the related transformation of labour markets and social regimes has unfolded along a much more sinuous path [Vanhuysse 2006a, 2006b]. According to Delteil and Kirov, fully dissecting this intricate process relies crucially on understanding how Europeanisation, involving economic integration and fiscal and political regulation, has been an 'ambivalent force for change' (p. 1). While most studies adopt a supply-and-demand, diffusion-style view of Europeanisation, across 12 dense chapters the co-edited volume by Delteil and Kirov analyses in depth how both the 'top-down' Europeanisation and its 'bottom-top' counterpart have been partial and contingently defined (p. 1). By recognising that the various socio-political actors in CEE states were not just passive rule-followers, the book sheds new light on the prevailing theories of post-communist transitions, such as historical institutionalism, varieties of capitalism, or the bourgeoning 'diversity of capitalism' literature (p. 2).

To begin with, the crucial coordinate for understanding the ambiguities of Europeanisation is the tension between the weakening of the EU's strength after the accession of the CEE states and its newfound strength in the aftermath of the 2008–2009 global crisis (p. 7). On a broad level, the latter in particular has given the EU enough thrust so that 'top-down' Europeanisation appears stronger than its 'bottom-top' counterpart (p. 4). On a more discrete level, however, the 'bottom-top' Europeanisation that did unfold was – particu-

larly in the area of work and labour laws – fragmented among sectors and even firms, according to a plethora of factors that relate to 'commercial activities, nationality and culture of the headquarters, local politics' and so on (pp. 4–5). This was further complicated by the fact that FDI, the crucial component of rebuilding CEE capitalism (Appel and Orenstein 2018), had a non-homogenous impact in the guise of 'agglomeration effects' (p. 9). These manifested either as spatial disparities, through the creation of 'special economic zones', or as a productive divide between domestic and foreign business, as states sought to invest in high-tech foreign firms with an immediate payoff that could be used for political gains (pp. 9–11). In addition to FDI's own ambiguities, further ambivalence was generated by the growing role of remittances, which tended to overwhelmingly concentrate in the 'low value added domestic services sector' (p. 10).

The layering of contingently defined solutions to such ambivalences implies that the trajectory of labour was by no means linear. On a first level, neoliberalisation, as an early component of Europeanisation, built on the legacy of diluting class conflict through targeted state policies [Vanhuysse 2006a, 2007]. On a deeper level, however, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008–2009 crisis, unions have increasingly carved out space for a 'voice' through mechanisms such as the 'externalization of domestic conflicts' (pp. 14–15). The crux of the issue is that, given the increasing range of actors involved and the ambiguities of capital, unions have had to craft innovative strategies and seek out new partners that range from social movements to domestic business and political parties (p. 14). The fact that unions have become more proactive and have sought specific alliances can be seen in that the shifts in the power of labour over time are both more fluctuating and more complex than the macro-level ebb and flow of economic and/or institutional cycles (p. 14).

While the emphasis of the book is on the various facets of agency, the individual chapters essentially offer a complex analysis of the co-constitutive relationship between actors, structure, and process in shaping labour and social transformations in post-communist Europe. Let me provide an overview of two chapters: Drahokoupil and Myant's re-evaluation of the major conceptual tenets of 'dependent capitalism' as the hallmark of CEE economic development, and Meardi's in-depth analysis of the limited success of both 'hard' and 'soft' acquis. For Drahokoupil and Myant it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that CEE economies are dependent on 'outside know-how and technology'. But neither the degree nor the exact nature of the 'dependency' are fully clear (p. 42). Moreover, it is not at all unambiguous how MNCs shaped the trajectory and mechanisms of organised labour. For instance, while multinational companies (MCSs) have enough thrust to bypass domestic institutions, by giving host countries easy access to capital and know-how, in their on-the-ground functioning MNCs cannot simply superimpose pre-existing practices and norms. Instead, they need to factor in a range of contingent realities (pp. 42–43). This raises some key questions as to how exactly MNCs shape the institutional landscape of host countries (p. 43). On a very broad level, since MNCs themselves do not appear to have been causal factors for liberalisation, they typically eschew partisan strife (p. 45). This suggests that MNCs did not push for reducing the space for a voice and collective bargaining (pp. 45–46). Rather, domestic business seems much more likely to offer a broad base 'for pressure for more substantial reductions in employee protection' (p. 47). Therefore, on a more concrete level, as the authors show through a comparative study of motor vehicle manufacturers, MNCs mostly influence the *nature* of col-

lective bargaining. While some foreign-owned firms exhibit a pattern of reducing the worker's voice, the more common pattern, especially in export-oriented manufacturing (p. 48), seems to be that MNCs are quite tolerant of local employment practices, and more often than not seek contingently defined negotiation, both implicit and explicit (p. 42).

Broadly speaking, the chapter unearths five fundamental factors that have shaped the potential strength of trade unions, understood as its concrete capability to extract demands from management (p. 52). First, since the product market itself has warped MNCs' long-term investment strategy, it has also directly influenced collective bargaining. The key trade-off, even if not always at the forefront of formal agreements, has been between 'concessions to management on pay, conditions and flexibility' and employment security (p. 49). Second, unions have gained significantly more power in situations where MNCs had to offer, from the outset, attractive conditions just to secure a labour force adequate for their specific sectors (p. 49). Third, historical legacies have also played a role in a more-or-less proportional way: the longer the period of time spent under state socialism, the higher the likelihood of a strong union existing, as keeping up membership and strength is easier than creating it out of a void (p. 50). Fourth, although direct superimposition does not seem likely, labour relations in the HQ or parent MNC do influence their counterparts in CEE host-countries. At the very minimum, HQ practices make investors either more willing to maintain or, conversely, completely dismissive of good relations with labour representatives (p. 50). At the same time, however, because HQ practices are not grafted onto a void, the fifth crucial factor is the scope of international employee contacts, which enable unions in the host-countries to internalise, in a contingently defined manner, the practices that management takes as fixed and exogenously given (p. 51).

These multiple overarching ambiguities are also reflected at the level of company responses. Drahokoupil and Myant use work-time flexibility as a crucial test through which they highlight two ideal cases and the scope of contingent negotiations (p. 53). The crux of the issue is that the reaction of management can come into conflict with the long-term prospects of solidifying a reliable workforce, and this creates room for union power and negotiation (p. 52). The two ideal cases imply either full union recognition, wherein management acquiesces to most worker demands, or full dismissal, wherein only minimal national standards of labour protection remain in force (pp. 53–54). The common denominator is that overall power relations tend to lead to sui generis types of bargains. A particularly noteworthy thread, however, is that even within ad hoc negotiations, MNCs appear more willing to accept existing practices than to seek leverage for major structural change (p. 55). This occurs because MNCs are typically confronted with ready-made conducive environments [Appel and Orenstein 2018], where it would cost them more to push for change than it would to accommodate some demands (pp. 54–55). What further strengthened this specific development was the nature of wages: on the one hand, since MNCs offer lower wages in CEE than in Western Europe, they can still be profitable even if they do accommodate union demands; on the other hand, since they offer higher wages than domestic businesses, the demands they are presented with are more nuanced and less violent (pp. 54–55).

For Meardi, the crucial question for understanding the reach and nature of Europeanisation in CEE is whether EU policies were enough to engender the type of 'holistic' convergence that would cover the institutional as well as the social level (p. 123). In this sense, Meardi dissects how,

during the 'settled times' of 2004–2008, the new member states of the broader CEE region adopted and implemented the parts of the 'hard' and 'soft' acquis that pertained to labour relations. On the one hand, part of the dilemma is that the 'hard' acquis is both limited to a relatively narrow set of policies and seemingly 'adoptable' through a formalistic approach, without the ensuing monitoring and sanctioning that lead to the creation of specific polity-wide norms (p. 123). This is particularly evident in the case of EU regulations on health and safety, whose emphasis on broad preventive principles has in the CEE new member states has only been translated as a set of more-or-less new, fixed guidelines (pp. 124—124). In addition to problematic issues, such as shady reporting, this has led to a very unclear picture of what actual improvements have been achieved by applying the 'hard' acquis. Similarly, the attempt to create a dual channel for employee representation has yielded mixed results, as it was formally implemented, only to clash in practice with the specific legacy of communism (p. 127). In post-communist countries work councils are at best ineffective and at worst even disregarded by workers (p. 127). Even in the case of policies on equal opportunities, which seem arguably the most successful part of the 'hard' acquis in CEE, application and enforcement are lacking, to the point that the pace of convergence has grown markedly slower (p. 130).

On the other hand, the 'soft' acquis also has an ambiguous track record in CEE new member states and has mostly failed to create the channels for wide-scale social dialogue (p. 133). In this sense, while the European Employment Agenda may very well have led to an increase in funding for active labour market policies, CEE new member states understood it mostly as a tool for 'flexibility', with comparatively less emphasis given to the 'security' side of this agenda (in an understanding of the EES as Danish-style flexicurity – pp. 133–134). Similarly, the arguments for tripartite social pacts (the state–unions–employers) have not garnered much political support outside amorphous roles for gaining legitimacy (p. 139). One particularly important barrier is that employers proactively choose not to organise, as the institutional environment allows them enough backdoors for different arrangements, which the EU is simply incapable of eroding (p. 141).

Summing up, Delteil and Kirov's co-edited volume impresses with its analytical clarity, conceptual richness, and vast research scope. In addition to challenging entrenched theories of Europeanisation, all the chapters unearth new facets of pre-existing explanations and causal relationships. The book's dialogue with mainstream studies sends the strong message that understanding broad processes such as Europeanisation can only be done by factoring in the contingently defined role of agency.

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Christopher J. Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti: *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics*
Oxford 2021: Oxford University Press, 218 pp.

Using theoretical frameworks from Maurice Duverger, Francis Fukuyama, Ernesto Laclau, Seymour M. Lipset, Peter Mair, Roberto Michels, and Cas Mudde, to name a few, Christopher J. Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti introduce the concept of technopopulism in an accessible yet comprehensive way. To demonstrate their concept of technopopulism, they focus in particular on three politicians: Emmanuel Macron, Tony Blair, and Beppe Grillo. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce their novel concept and analyse these cases. Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti understand technopopulism as a form of political logic in the sense that contemporary politics are structured through contextually and historically specific incentives and constraints that shape the way in which contenders for public office compete with one another for votes (p. 21). That is precisely their main point of interest: the way in which technopopulism encourages all political actors to adopt both technocratic and populist narratives and modes of action. However, even though technopopulism has, according to their analysis, changed the way in which politicians compete with each other, it has not entirely replaced the ideological competition that dominated politics in the past.

Technopopulism, as a structuring logic, dates to the 1990s, but certain changes, which are described in chapter 3, took place between 1965 and 1989 that allowed this political logic to flourish. Before that and since the 1890s political parties had played the role of mediating the relationship between politics and society. They achieved this by generalising and articulating some overarching objectives, clear messages on how to govern, to whose benefit and to what ends. By the mid-1960s, 'deep sociological transformations whose translation into political life was partial at best' (p. 88) had started to undermine the ability of parties to do this. The growing disconnection between society and politics started to undermine the legitimacy of existing party systems. The resulting mix of disaggregated social values and emerging notions of *popular will* and the *common good* gave rise to a relationship between politics and society that the authors call technopopulism.

In the last chapter of the book, the authors normatively evaluate the technopopulist logic and they reach the conclusion that technopopulism is weakening democracy. They claim that technopopulism may not necessarily weaken democracy in terms of eroding democratic institutions and the system of checks and balances, but it does so mostly in terms of the quality of democratic representation (p. 173). One of the reasons for this is that technopopulism is making the political competition not about certain parts of the population pursuing their legitimate interests (i.e. an ideological competition), but about finding the right expert leader of *the people*, who will implement the right efficient policy and hence secure the *common good*. Once you have found this leader (or at least you believe you have found her), there is no other legitimate option, and therefore every other remaining choice is wrong (p. 175).

Throughout the book, Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti describe several cases of technopopulism, which they divide into two general categories: 'pure' and 'hybrid' cases. Pure cases include examples of technopopulism through the party, technopopulism through the electoral base, and technopopulism through the leader. Among hybrid cases are examples of left-wing and far-right technopopulism. The authors do this to demonstrate that there are a variety of ways in which technopopulism can be implemented into a political party and that it can be combined with a clear ideological

line. This is precisely why the authors claim that technopopulism has not (perhaps not yet) replaced ideological political competition. It just created another logic of competing for votes. Even though pure cases of technopopulism have distinct modes of operation, they all share a similar logic, which is to represent *the people's* desire for a good life and embody the expert figure of an efficient leader/party that will, without unnecessary delay, craft the optimal policy and secure the *common good* for the nation. These actors usually employ public opinion experts in order to find out what *the people* desire and either use this knowledge to formulate the party's political programme or to create an agenda for the leader. Alternatively, the party can develop a direct way in which to poll the people and create this sort of expert base of common sense, as is the case for parties that embody technopopulism through an electoral base. Strong importance is increasingly being placed on the marketing of political agendas by the public and by the parties of all technopopulist cases themselves.

These new modes of approaching political competition have several consequences, which the authors describe in chapter 4. Concretely, they talk about the increasingly conflictual nature of political dialogue, desubstantialisation, democratic discontent, new authoritarianism, closure of the revolutionary horizon, and the rise of identity politics. When you are presenting yourself as the only expert capable of solving the issues of *the people*, it is difficult to have a civilised debate with anyone who opposes you. This is because if your persona is about to withstand this confrontation, your opponent must either be stupid or morally corrupt (not acting in the name of *the common good*). Desubstantialisation is in turn strongly connected with what Tony Judt termed 'the unbearable lightness of politics', referring to the shift of politics from intellectual debate to marketing terms, short messages, and high-impact images (p. 149). Democratic discontent is best described as a continuous trend of declining trust in politics (p. 154). Closely connected with this is the idea of the new authoritarianism, which is best described as an increased monitoring of the people (pp. 161–162). Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti argue that these processes epitomise the undermining of democracy that is taking place under the political logic of technopopulism. 'If the ultimate foundation of political legitimacy is assumed to be the democratic principle of collective self-government, the fact that the rise of technopopulism tends to weaken the sense of effective representation that citizens feel with respect to the government implies that it must also weaken the grounds for their compliance with it' (p. 158). This results in lower participation in elections but rising participation in protest events.

The authors put forward a daring but compelling theory that frames the current political era in a concise, clear, and versatile way. Technopopulism carefully contextualises 'the end of history' that we have been living since the end of the Cold War. It offers an explanation of how we got here, makes sense of the confusion this era often brings, and suggests some steps that can be taken to move forward from here. It is important to note that Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti believe that we should try to overcome technopopulism, as they see it as dangerous for democracy. They suggest concrete actions that would make political parties 'more democratic' in their words, and they explain why this is desirable and why it would help bridge the divide that they observe between the political sphere and society and that they blame on technopopulism.

Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti take the opportunity to contemplate a contemporary 'big event' in the light of their theory at the conclusion of the book. They discuss the coronavirus pandemic and the re-

sponse from politicians, emphasising that science and its personification, scientific experts, have taken a central place in politics during the global crisis. The authors point out that the technopopulist tendency to be doing something, whatever that something may be, has been clearly visible at political briefings, informing nations about the next policy that will last for several weeks, until new evidence arrives. These briefings have been distinct for the number of experts who surround politicians when they are announcing the news, supposedly to lend legitimacy to the new sets of guidelines. The politicians have embraced the roles of solving problems, containing the virus, and saving the economy all at once. They consult virologists, public health scientists, epidemiologists, economists, and perhaps even sociologists, and these scientists provide the framework within which the politicians can act. The authors demonstrate in this way how technopopulism can be used as a lens through which to analyse the crisis.

Even though Technopopulism is a compelling theory that has the potential to bring about a paradigm shift in political science, Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti are inconsistent with their research method throughout the book. In the first part, they start the discussion by methodically describing examples and then use these examples to demonstrate their claims. But in the middle of the book they change course and start to describe the historical circumstances that led to the evolution of technopopulism. This would have been appropriate if the authors had used the method of examples in this historical approach as well. However, they are not trying to describe the era preceding technopopulism, they are just describing that era to explain what led to the current situation. Therefore, though I would suggest that the method of examples should have been used even in this historical excursion for the sake of methodological consistency, as it does not undermine the legitimacy of their argument. Nevertheless, it could result in confusion about what is the most suitable methodology for researching technopopulism, and future researchers who use the authors' concepts will have to deal with this dilemma.

Overall, I find *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics* to be a refreshing read. As mentioned above, it has the potential to create a paradigm shift in the way political scientists think about the contemporary political era. Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti manage to put forward a new, persuasive, and sufficiently complex theory within the space of a fairly thin volume that, thanks to contemporary references to current political figures and events, keeps the reader engaged and contextualises the topic in an approachable way. Technopopulism has the potential to be a new middle-range theory in the best sense of the term and one that will reshape our understanding of politics.

Reading *Technopopulism* in the context of the 2021 Czech parliamentary elections campaign, the concept seems rather familiar. Technopopulism captures this environment of parties criticising each other over the management of public affairs, with the coronavirus pandemic playing a central role in this criticism. A huge part of the political campaign of all parties is based on a narrative of criticising the competence of others, instead of formulating concrete ideas and uniting the electoral base behind a common goal. The question that arises throughout a reading of this book is whether this is possible or even desirable anymore.

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