

Membership in Civic Association in Central and Eastern Europe: a Longitudinal Analysis

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the trends in civic participation in ten post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe, trying to see which mechanism led to changes in the pattern of civic participation during the post-communist period – intra-cohort change or cohort replacement. The analyses are based on the three successive waves of European Values Survey, collected in 1990, 1999 and 2008. Using the cohort decomposition analysis, the social change is partitioned in changes due to the replacement of the older cohort socialized in an environment less favourable to civic participation and to the changes produced by the transformation in the social context and by individual aging. During the last two decades, the rate of civic participation has decreased in all the countries included in the analysis, with the exception of Slovenia. This negative evolution is due to the intra-cohorts changes and it is quite likely the outcome of the economic crises occurred during the transition to the market economy and of the inappropriate functioning of the democratic institutions. The cohort replacement exerts a significant positive effect on most countries, but its contribution to the total social change is weaker than the effect of the intra-cohort change.

Keywords: *Civic Participation, Central and Eastern Europe, Longitudinal Analysis, Cohort Decomposition*

Introduction

The civic participation in Central and Eastern Europe is below the level recorded during the older democracy in Western Europe and North America. Post-communist societies from the former soviet bloc are known for being civically and politically passive for various reasons: distrust in institutions and people (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012), lack of communication with their fellow citizens (Mondak & Gearing, 1998) or economic hardships (Lane, 2005). On the other hand, the political and the civic participation are very important for the consolidation of democracy in the region (Badescu & Radu, 2010) and this lack of involvement is detrimental to the consolidation of the democracy.

The dynamics of the civic participation in the Western democracies were already investigated and the results pointed out a stable pattern in Western Europe (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012; van Ingen, 2008) and a decrease regarding the civic activism in the case of the United States (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012), as predicted by Putnam (2000). The evolution of the civic participation was less investigated in the post-communist countries, due to the lack of comparative data. Howards (2003) investigated the dynamics of the civic society in Russia and in East Germany finding a decrease of the civic activism in Russia between 1995 and 1999, while Wallace, Pichler and Haerpfer (2012) compared four countries from Central and Eastern Europe with the ones from the Commonwealth of Independent States and with the trend registered in

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Western Europe. The current work fills in this gap of lack of information about the dynamics of the civic society in Central Europe, by analysing the trends in the membership in civic associations in 10 countries from Central Europe, that are currently members of the European Union. While Wallace, Pichler and Haerpfer (2012) analyse the trend only in four countries in the region: Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania, the current paper extends the comparison by including other six countries, not investigated by Wallace, Pichler and Haerpfer (2012) namely: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic. Moreover, while the previous work only described the trends, the current analysis goes further and decomposes the social change to its components and investigates the mechanisms producing the changes in the civic participation during the post-communist period.

The social change in attitude and behaviour occurs due to three different mechanisms: the replacement of the older cohort by the younger ones that have a different attitude and behaviour, changes occurring because of the transformation of the political, economic and social context and changes due to the individual transition from one life cycle to another. During the last 20 years, the countries from Central and Eastern Europe have experienced a significant transformation of their politics and society, with a stronger impact on the civic society evolution. The freedom of speech and the association process provide a favourable background for the civic participation, while the increasing number of NGOs provides more opportunities regarding the involvement. Therefore, the post-communist cohorts were socialized in a more favourable climate concerning the civic participation. On the other hand, the economic hardships and the democratic deficit, in some post-communist countries, affected negatively the willingness to participate.

This paper analyses the dynamics of membership in the civic association between 1990 and 2008, paying special attention to the mechanisms of social change in ten post-communist countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romanian, Slovakia, and Slovenia). The paper is based on data from three successive waves of European Values Survey (1990, 1999, 2008) and employs the linear cohort decomposition (Firebaugh, 1992), a technique allowing the separation of the effects produced by the cohort replacement of those caused by the intra-cohort change, namely by the contextual transformations and the individual life cycles.

This paper is organized in four sections. The first section includes the theoretical framework, while the second describes the data used in the analyses, the method employed and the main indicators. The third section presents the results of the empirical analyses and the last section contains the main conclusions and the implication for further researches.

Cohorts' replacement, contextual changes and life cycles effects

According to the theories of social change, the transformations in attitude and behaviour are the result of three different mechanisms: the cohorts' replacement, the contextual changes and the life cycles effects.

The contribution of the *cohorts' replacement* to social change is based on the assumption that attitudes and behaviours are learnt early in life and remain stable afterwards. The primary formative experiences have an enduring influence on the behaviours and the attitudes of every generation (Mannheim, 1952; Ryder, 1965). The attitudes and the behaviours of each cohort significantly differ from the others, depending on the type of social, economic and political context during their formative period. Therefore, the differences among the generations 'reflect a historically specific set of conditions' (Alwin, 1990, p. 348). The social change is the outcome of cohort replacement, older cohorts being replaced by younger ones socialized in a different environment.

According to the sociological literature, civic skills are acquired early in life and the participation during the formative years and youth increases the probability to participate in civic activities during adulthood (Kirlin, 2002). Few institutions and life experiences are particularly important

for learning the skills required for civic participation: family, school and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Parents are usually models for their offspring and their participation will lead to a similar behaviour among the young generation (Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977; Langton, 1984; Janoski & Wilson, 1995; Khane & Sporte, 2008). A similar effect was reported in the case of neighbourhood (Khane & Sporte, 2008). Moreover, the family climate seems to be important as well, Almond and Verba (1963) reporting higher political competencies and civic skills among the children raised in families that involved them in decision making since early in their life.

The school may boost civic participation through various channels that contribute to the acquisition of fundamental civic skills. Therefore, curricular, as well as extra-curricular, activities seem very important in creating civic skills, such as teaching classes of civic education (Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977; Torney-Purta, 2002; Khane & Sporte, 2008), students' involvement in community service programs and clubs (Khane & Sporte, 2008; Claes, Hooghe & Stolle, 2009). Moreover, what happened in the classroom exerts an important role on pupils' civic competences, like discussing problems encountered by the local community and possible ways to overcome them, providing students with an open climate and with the opportunity to openly discuss controversial issues, encouraging them to participate in school councils or exposing them to civic role models (Langton, 1984; Torney-Purta, 2002; Khane & Sporte, 2008). All mentioned activities help children to develop a civic identity and to acquire and practice civic skills (Kirlin, 2002; Kelly, 2008). Hooghe and Wilkenfeld (2008) show that by the age of 14, the teenagers have already acquired the 'fundamental attitudes associated with citizenship' (p. 166).

Contextual effects. Changes in attitudes and behaviour might occur as the outcome of social, economic and political events experienced during the adulthood. The unusual events, such as the Great Depression, World War II or the French Revolution create new relevant issues in life and may cause certain transformation in the early orientations (Sears & Valentino, 1997). However, not only significant events such as wars and revolutions, but also transformations in the political and economic landscape can induce transformation in what regards people's willingness to participate. Such transformations are: changes with respect to the access to basic democratic right, like freedom of speech and association, a period of economic hardships (Wallace & Pichler, 2008) or poor quality output of the public institutions, which undermine legitimacy. In the case of the United States and Western Europe, Putnam (2000) shows that the contextual changes, like secularization and consumerism, may decrease the civic engagement.

Aging and the life cycle effects. While there is no consensus regarding how aging affects civic engagement, previous researches found a significant effect of aging on civic activism. Howard (2003) shows that older people are more likely to take part in the civic activism. This is because they have already collected experiences of participation and they have acquired the skills needed for the civic participation. Jennings and Stoker (2004) find that civic involvement increases during middle-age and decreases afterwards. Participation is also connected with individual resources, those having more resources being more probable to participate, because they have resource to share (Wilson, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Therefore, older people who have many resources in terms of time, wealth and skills are more likely to participate. On the other hand, Rotolo (2000) points out the existence of significant differences in participation depending on marital status and parenthood, while van Ingen (2008) shows that having children may induce a positive effect regarding the civic participation. All in all, the movement from one life cycle to another exerts an effect on civic participation.

The contextual effect, aging and the life cycle effects represent the intra-cohort part of the social change. Therefore, social change may occur due to changes in attitudes and behaviours of the successive birth cohorts and is the result of the replacement of the older population cohort with the new cohorts. The second mechanism leading to social change may be represented by the intra-cohort change, transformations produced within the cohort during its adult life and due to either growing old or to the transformation of the social and economic context.

Civic participation in post-communist countries

Post-communist transition brought many significant changes regarding the civil society and the civic participation in Central and Eastern Europe. The establishment of the new democratic rights and institutions created the framework for the development of the civil society. Moreover, many international NGOs became active in the post-communist countries. However, the level of civic participation remains very low, as already documented by previous researches (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012; Valkov, 2009a). Looking from a longitudinal perspective, there are some factors that have stimulated the development of civic society in Central and Eastern Europe, while others have obstructed it.

The change of political regime, from totalitarian to a democratic one, provided the post-communist citizens with a large range of political rights and civil liberties, like freedom of speech and freedom of association which are central for civic participation (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012). The younger generations are now socialized in a democratic context and are more likely to share pro-democratic values and attitudes as well (Voicu, 2010). The educational curriculum in schools includes civic education and a closer contact with the Western culture, makes the younger generations more inclined to assume participatory behaviours and to be more active in the civic associations. In addition, in all post-communist countries, the number of NGOs has increased a lot, providing people with more participation opportunities (Howard, 2003; Lane, 2005).

Previous researches analysing values and behaviours of the younger cohorts in post-communist societies point out to a significant effect of socialization during the transition period. The younger people are more inclined to support democracy (Mishler & Rose, 2007) or to participate in protest activities (Nikolayenko, 2007, 2008). I expect to find a similar effect of the early socialization during democracy on civic participation, because younger cohorts can acquire civic skills in school, they can learn about civic participation from mass-media and from direct contact with the Western culture and they have the opportunity to get involved, due to the increased number of organizations existing in the new democracies from Central and Eastern Europe.

Several macro-level factors were employed to explain the persistence of the lower implication of post-communist citizens in the civil society: the economic development, the level of democratization and the pre-existing institutional framework of civic participation.

Generally speaking, economic prosperity influences the propensity towards civic participation. People living in prosperous societies are more likely to get involved in civic associations (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006; Acik-Toprak, 2009). Wealthier societies have enough resources to support associations and their citizens are more educated and have more leisure time to spend outside the formal labour market (Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001). A lower level of economic development could partially explain the weakness of civic societies in post-communist countries; most of them scored low on this dimension as compared to the Western countries (Lane, 2005). Moreover, studies have shown that Slovenia, which is the most prosperous post-communist country, has the highest score regarding the civic participation in the region (Acik-Toprak, 2009; Wallace, Picher & Haerpfer, 2012). On the other hand, all post-communist countries have experienced an economic crisis during the first decade of the post-communist transformation that has produced disappointment with the new political and economic system and made many people avoid the public sphere (Lane, 2005). Moreover, the economic hardships make people more concerned by their own survival and less interested in the public life (Wallace & Latcheva, 2006).

The country level of democratization exerts a significant impact on the level of civic participation (Acik-Toprak, 2009). A minimal access to civil liberties and political rights is required in order to establish and run some civic organizations. Moreover, democracy fosters a participatory political culture that is needed for the development of civic associations (Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001). Although many countries from Central and Eastern Europe reached a certain level of

democratization, some inadequate democratic forms, such as corrupt elections and deficient party formation, occurred in many of these societies and led to political apathy (Lane, 2005).

According to Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001), the institutionalized cultural frames affect the level and the character of the associational activity across nations (p. 810). These frames are rooted in the political, religious and economic history of those countries. Basically, the establishment of the new civic associations in post-communist countries has to fit these specific frames in order to be successful. Although the level of the civic activism was never very high, civic associations existed before the establishment of the communist regime (Valkov, 2009b) and even during the communist period. Lane (2005) points out that during the communist period a fragmented civic society developed, but it had different shape as compared to the Western one.

The communist state had established certain associations, like women's associations and labour unions, which provided some basic welfare services, but the membership was rather compulsory. The legacy of the compulsory membership resides in the mistrust in the formal organization and civic passivity (Howard, 2003). On the other hand some associations were established outside the state bureaucracy, like writers associations, professional associations or philatelic clubs (Lane, 2005). The membership was not compulsory, but the activity was strictly monitored by the state. Moreover, due to the economy shortage, the communist citizens have developed private social networks, that helped them get access to goods and services (Howard, 2005). These networks continued to exist during the post-communist transition and obstructed the development of the formal civic associations.

According to Lane (2005) the pre-existing framework did not fit the Western model of civic involvement and made the external help provided by the Western countries non-attractive and non-effective for the development of the civic society. Moreover, this external help represented rather a 'top-down' approach, than a membership based one, because the external donors came with their own agenda which did not always correspond to the local one. This generated even more distrust in formal institutions (Wallace, Picher & Haerper, 2012).

Therefore, the economic crisis, the ineffective democratic system and the lack of compatibility between the local institutional structure of the civic society and the model of the Western civic society exerted a negative effect on the development of the civic society. I expect these factors to exert a similar negative impact on all the cohorts and to have an impact on the level of the civic participation via the intra-cohort mechanism.

Previous researches focused on the dynamics of the political participation in Central and Eastern Europe pointed out a negative evaluation during the first year of transition due to the 'honey moon' effect (Weil, 1989). In the beginning of the transition the general expectations were very high and the new democracy was highly praised. Therefore, people were very willing to support democracy and to get involved in political activities. However, due to the economic crises and to the failure of the new regime to provide the expected output, the population was disappointed and the political participation decreased everywhere (Kostadinova, 2003). I expect to find a similar evolution in the case of the civic participation as well.

Based on the theoretical framework exposed here, I formulated the following hypotheses:

(H1) *The level of the civic participation decreased in the countries from Central and Eastern Europe during the last two decades.*

(H2) *The intra-cohort change exerts a negative impact and represents the main mechanism of change of the civic participation in post-communist countries during the investigated period.*

(H3) *The cohort replacement exerts a positive effect on the civic participation, the cohort socialized during the post-communist period being more inclined to participate in the civic life.*

Data and methods

The analysis is based on the data set resulting from the three successive waves of European Values Survey (EVS), carried out in 1990, 1999 and 2008 in countries from all the European regions. The questionnaire provides information regarding the orientation of the attitudes, the values and the behaviours with respect to a broad range of life domains, including civic participation. Other information regarding the social background variables is available, too. My analyses deal with the following ten countries belonging to the former communist bloc: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. All the national samples are probability samples². The database provides information regarding each country from three points in time, 1990, 1999 and 2008. The data comes from the Integrated Dataset EVS 2008 (GESIS, 2010).

The linear cohort decomposition method, adapted for logistic models, was used to test the hypotheses. The method, proposed by Firebaugh (1989) allows the decomposition of the social change in two orthogonal components, the intra-cohort change and the cohort replacement. The first step is to pool the cross-sectional data and to regress the target variable of the survey year and the cohort (respondent's birth year). The intra-cohort change can be estimated according to the slope of the year weighted by the length of the time interval $t_i - t_1$ (the difference between the year of the last investigation and the year of the first one) (p. 253). The cohort replacement is estimated by the slope for the birth year weighted by the rate of the cohort turnover (the difference between the average of birth year at the time of the last survey and the same average at the time of the first survey). Because my target variable is a dichotomous one, I have adapted the linear decomposition model to the logistic regression, following the method used by Brooks (2000) and Brooks and Manza (1997).

Although the linear decomposition does not solve the confounding effects of aging, period and cohort, it has the advantage of employing the most information to estimate the cohort replacement effect, because it uses both non-spanning and spanning cohorts. However, it just partitions the social change in two orthogonal components – those produced by the modification of the population composition and those due to the change within the cohort (Alwin, 1996).

Although some authors recommend not using the control variables in the cohort decomposition models because other variables might mask the pure cohort replacement effect (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988), Alwin (1990) shows that cohorts differ with respect to education, and education has a significant effect on values and behaviour. Therefore, Alwin recommends the education monitoring when decomposing the social change in order to separate the effect of early socialization from the effect of schooling. Consequently, I have chosen to run two different sets of models for each country, one set without any control variable, which presents the pure effect of the cohort replacement and a second set including education as control variable that accounts for inter-cohort differences. No other control variable was used as it might induce errors in estimating and interpreting the cohort replacement effect (see Firebaugh & Davis, 1988). In all the models described I used listwise deletion of missing values. A table including a number of cases, by country and the percent of deleted cases after listwise deletion is provided in the Appendix (see Table A1)

The dependent variable is represented by the *membership in voluntary organizations*. The variable indicates whether the respondent belongs (coded 1) or not (coded 0) to any of the following voluntary organizations and activities: social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people, religious organizations, educational, artistic, musical or cultural activities; third world development or human rights, conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights, professional associations, youth work, sports or recreation, women's groups, peace movements, voluntary organizations concerned with health and other groups³. From the original list of

² For more information about European Values Study see the website: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu>.

³ The alternative model was tested, using an index without trade unions membership as dependent variable, but the final results were very similar.

organization included in the EVS questionnaire membership in political parties and in labour union was skipped when editing the index. I have excluded the political parties as the political participation is different from the civic participation and I have also excluded labour unions because the membership in labour unions was compulsory during the communist period and it used to be higher in the beginning of the post-communist period, as a heritage from the communist time without a clear connection to the real civic participation.

The participation in the civic organization is not a one-dimensional concept, the authors distinguishing between old and new social movements (Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001) or between instrumental and expressive associations (Glanville, 2004). However, I have followed Ruiters and de Graaf (2006), who consider it as a single dimension concept and built one indicator that included all types of associations. My choice was determined by the relative limited level of the civic participation in the countries investigated, which reduced the number of the cases used in the analysis. Therefore, a multidimensional approach would produce more insightful results, but due to reasons of reliability I have decided to include the participation in all the types of associations as a single indicator.

The analysis employed only one control variable: education, measured in age when completed.

Results

The countries in Central and Eastern Europe differ in respect to the speed of transition and to approaching the social and economic reforms. Some countries have experienced a milder transition with a less harmful economic crisis than others. The figures in the Table A2, in the appendix, show that while some countries went through a period of economic depression, not only in the beginning of the 90', but also in the beginning of 2000, other countries recovered faster or had a smoother transition. These differences might leave their mark on the level of civic participation and could explain, at least in part, the different trends experienced by some countries.

Although in seven of the ten countries analysed in the current paper, the trends in civic participation were very similar, there are some notable differences. The data in Figure 1 indicate a decline in civic participation in the seven countries, during the transition period, which was more abrupt during the first decade, while the pace of change was reduced during the second decade. In the beginning of the post-communist transition, more than 50% of population from Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic and Lithuania declared that they belonged to civic associations, while in 1999 this percent drastically decreased in all of these countries. Romania and Bulgaria had the lowest participation rate in 1990 and the decreasing trend reduced the civic involvement even more. One should mention that Bulgaria and Romania were the poorest countries in 1990 among the ten investigated, and had a lower GDP in 2000 than in 1990. Moreover, they have the lower GDP during the entire period and in the same time, among the lowest level of civic involvement.

Slovakia and the Czech Republic followed a different pattern. The pace of change was very slow in the Czech Republic during the first decade under investigation, while during the second decade, the civic participation decreased with 15%. In Slovakia the civic association membership increased first and then drastically decreased during the second decade. Both countries had a higher level of economic development and in 2000 the GDP was almost the same with the one in 1990, which indicated that the countries overcame the difficult transition period by the end of the first decade of the post-communist transition. This might partially explain the relative stability of the association membership over the first decade of transformation. Afterwards, the trend became a descending one in what concerned the civic participation, which can probably be explained by another mechanism, like the gap between the frame provided by Western tradition of civic participation and the pre-existing tradition of civic participation in these countries.

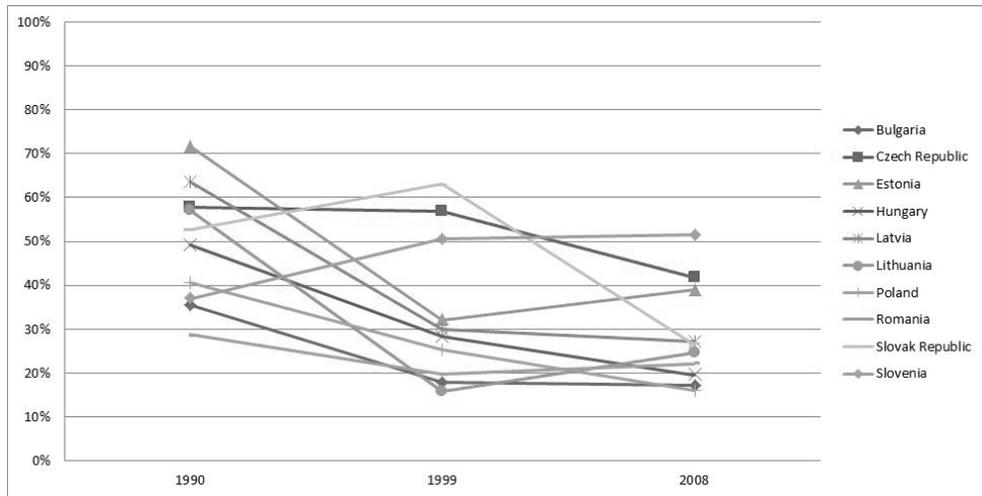


Figure 1: Trends in membership in civic associations in Central and Eastern Europe (1990 – 2008)

Table 1: The results of the logistic regression decomposition 1990 - 2008

	No controls						Education monitoring							
	SC		ICC		CR		SC		ICC		CR		N	
Bulgaria	-0.988	***	-1.132	***	0.133	***	3533	-0.988	***	-1.113	***	0.095	***	3412
Czech Republic	-0.669	***	-0.744	***	0.082	***	5803	-0.669	***	-0.869	***	0.057	**	5397
Estonia	-1.395	***	-1.326	***	0.060	***	3530	-1.395	***	-1.287	***	0.056	***	3483
Hungary	-1.359	***	-1.453	***	0.095	**	3510	-1.359	***	-1.576	***	-0.024		3472
Latvia	-1.517	***	-1.670	***	0.180	***	3422	-1.517	***	-1.690	***	0.170	***	3295
Lithuania	-1.406	***	-1.560	***	0.152	***	3517	-1.406	***	-1.596	***	0.137	***	3336
Poland	-1.306	***	-1.436	***	0.122	**	3554	-1.306	***	-1.587	***	0.032		3396
Romania	-0.368	***	-0.479	***	0.158	***	3738	-0.368	***	-0.499	***	0.115	***	3530
Slovak Republic	-1.136	***	-1.258	***	0.037	**	3965	-1.136	***	-1.428	***	0.007		3938
Slovenia	0.573	***	0.375	***	0.156	***	3405	0.573	***	0.382	***	0.118	***	3292

Notes: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05;

SC = social change, ICC = intra-cohort change, CR = cohort replacement, N = listwise sample size for the analysis

The evolutionary process in the case of Slovenia was completely different. In the beginning of the transition the civic participation level was very low, similar to the Bulgarian one. However, the membership rate increased during both decades, although the pace of change was slower during the second period. This result is corroborated by other researches that have also pointed out a revival of the civic society in Slovenia and associated this evolution with the high level of the economic development in Slovenia, as compared to other countries in the region and with the particularities of the Slovenian history (Acik-Toprak, 2009).

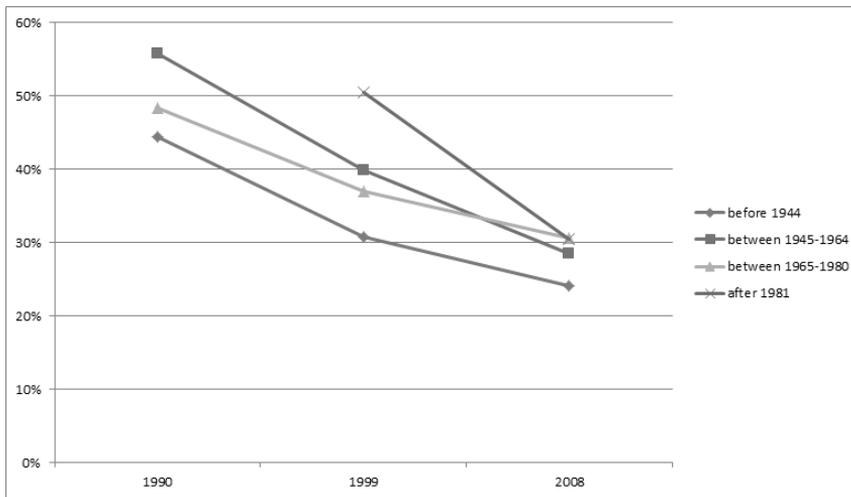


Figure 2: Civic participation by cohort in Central and Eastern Europe 1990 - 2008

The results in Table 1 indicate a similar evolution. Basically, social change of the civic participation between 1990 and 2008 is negative and significant in all the countries under investigation with the exception of Slovenia. Latvia and Lithuania registered the highest gap, regarding the social participation, between the two points in time, while in Romania the social change was the lowest. All in all, the data validated the first hypothesis, showing a negative trend with respect to the civic participation in the post-communist countries.

The second hypothesis of the current research refers to the intra-cohort changes. According to the results in Table 1, intra-cohort changes are very important in all the countries included in the current analysis. In all these countries the intra-cohort changes are highly significant and negative, with the exception of Slovenia, where they are positive and significant. Therefore, the civic participation decreased in Central and Eastern Europe during post-communist period mainly due to the changes occurred in the social and economic context, and also due to the changes in the individual life cycles. Latvia and Lithuania displayed the highest intra-cohort changes over the investigated period. Therefore, the data validated the second hypothesis, pointing out the significant negative intra-cohort effects everywhere in the region. Due to significant positive effect of the intra-cohort change, Slovenia is again an exception.

The third hypothesis is supported by the empirical data, too. The data in Figure 2 presents the civic participation by generation at an aggregate level, in all countries together. The results show that the civic participation differs according to cohort. The older cohort is less civically active in all three points in time, while the youngest is more civically active. According to this data the oldest generation, born before 1944, has the lowest membership level of for all three points in time 1990, 1999 and 2008. This is a common country trend that can be noticed by the country analyses shown in Table 2. The other two generations, born and socialized during communist period (1945-1964 and 1965-1981) and the one born after 1981 have high levels of membership as compared to the older generation, but the differences between generations are smaller regarding the 2008 data. This might be the effect of collapsing all the countries together in Figure 2.

Table 2. The percent of the members in civic associations by generation and countries 1990-2008

	Survey year	Born before 1944	Born between 1945-1964	Born between 1965-1980	Born after 1981
Bulgaria	1990	32%	41%	28%	
	1999	10%	24%	20%	33%
	2008	12%	21%	19%	15%
Czech Republic	1990	54%	61%	59%	
	1999	53%	59%	58%	64%
	2008	42%	40%	40%	47%
Estonia	1990	65%	81%	63%	
	1999	28%	34%	33%	48%
	2008	33%	39%	44%	37%
Hungary	1990	47%	53%	47%	
	1999	28%	32%	24%	29%
	2008	14%	22%	19%	23%
Latvia	1990	61%	66%	61%	
	1999	21%	34%	37%	33%
	2008	19%	24%	31%	35%
Lithuania	1990	52%	65%	54%	
	1999	15%	13%	19%	50%
	2008	20%	22%	26%	32%
Poland	1990	36%	46%	42%	
	1999	19%	31%	23%	
	2008	16%	18%	12%	17%
Romania	1990	18%	38%	33%	
	1999	12%	25%	22%	23%
	2008	20%	22%	25%	21%
Slovak Republic	1990	50%	56%	48%	
	1999	64%	66%	59%	60%
	2008	25%	27%	28%	25%
Slovenia	1990	27%	44%	43%	
	1999	45%	55%	50%	50%
	2008	40%	49%	60%	56%

The cohort decomposition models present stronger proofs in support of the inter-cohort significant differences. In the model without controls, cohort replacement is positive and statistically significant in all countries, showing a positive effect of the early socialization on younger cohorts as compared to the older ones. However, in the models with education control, the cohort replacement is positive and significant in some countries, but not in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. In these countries, the difference between birth cohorts is due to the effect of a different level of education, while in case of the other countries the higher level of civic

participation registered among the younger cohorts is due to the socialization in an environment more favourable to civic participation. The strongest positive effect of early socialization occurs in Latvia and Lithuania, followed by Slovenia and Romania. All in all, the results of the decomposition support the idea that younger generations have a higher membership level than the older ones and that cohort replacement is a significant mechanism of social change leading to the increase of the civic activism in central and Eastern Europe, although their effects are smaller than those of intra-cohorts changes.

Conclusions

This paper focuses on the trends in civic participation in ten post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe, trying to see which mechanism led to changes in pattern of civic participation during the post-communist period – intra-cohort change or cohort replacement. The analyses are based on the successive waves of the European Values Survey, collected in 1990, 1999 and 2008. Using the cohort decomposition analyses, the social change is partitioned in changes due to the replacement of the older cohort socialized in an environment less favourable to civic participation and to the changes triggered by the transformation of the social context and by individual aging.

The results support all three hypotheses. During the last two decades, civic participation has decreased in all the countries included in analysis, with the exception of Slovenia. These countries have entered the post-communist transition with a low level of civic participation as compared to the Western countries and during the last decades this level has decreased significantly. Moreover, this negative evolution is due to the intra-cohorts changes and it is quite likely that the outcome of the economic crises occurred during the transition to the market economy and of the inappropriate functioning of the democratic institutions. The cohort replacement exerts a significant positive effect on most of the countries, but its contribution to the whole social change is weak compared to the effect of the intra-cohort change.

After twenty year of post-communist transformation, the civic society seems to be weaker than in the beginning of the transition and weaker than the one in the Western countries. The general economic and political context strongly discourage civic participation, while the incompatibility between the Western type of volunteering and the civic tradition in post-communist countries obstructed the involvement in civic activities. However, there are positive prospects regarding the future development of the civic society in Central and Eastern Europe. In all countries included in this study, the new generation seems to be more civically active as compared to the older ones. This means that post-communist societies socialize their younger citizens in a more participatory culture and, in the long run, a more vivid civic society will develop due to cohort replacement mechanism.

Although civic participation is a multidimensional concept, this paper considers it as a one-dimensional concept and taps it by a single indicator, due to constraints related to the data availability. Therefore, the measurement of civic participation using a single indicator might slightly bias the results, because membership regarding all types of civic associations is included in the same indicator. This represents a limitation of this study and further researches might investigate the dynamics of the civic participation using separate indicators for new versus old social movements or intrinsic versus expressive associations. A larger sample can be useful and may lead to a better understanding of the processes that take place in the civic society in post-communist countries.

Further researches should investigate the way the civic society will evolve in the long run in post-communist societies and whether the consolidation of democracy in these countries produces more civically active citizens. Basically, this study is restricted only to countries which

are now members of the European Union, having a more consolidated democracy than the post-communist countries that are not part of European Union. Therefore, further researches should compare the dynamics of the civic society in the post-communist EU and non-EU members and to investigate whether and how the EU accession impacts the civic activism.

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Appendix

Table A1: Total number of cases by country and percent of deleted cases after the listwise deletion of missing values

Country	% of deleted cases	N after listwise deletion
Bulgaria	3.5	3412
Czech Republic	7.6	5397
Estonia	1.4	3483
Hungary	1.1	3472
Latvia	3.7	3295
Lithuania	5.2	3336
Poland	5.3	3396
Romania	5.6	3530
Slovakia	1	3938
Slovenia	3.4	3292

Table A2: The Gross Domestic Product between 1990 and 2008

	1990	2000	2008
Bulgaria	7.527	7.213	11.991
Czech Republic	16.320	16.886	23.223
Estonia	10.087	10.937	18.773
Hungary	12.282	13.583	18.004
Latvia	10.078	8.531	15.593
Lithuania	12.497	9.516	17.568
Poland	8.171	11.753	16.436
Romania	7.849	6.837	11.780
Slovakia	12.442	12.718	20.515
Slovenia	16.405	19.722	27.197

Source: United Nation Development Program
(www. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/>)

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