

... TO BE CONTINUED? CHALLENGING THE CULTURAL LEGACY ARGUMENT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE¹

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Abstract

According to Nations in Transit 2016, many countries in Central and Eastern Europe are still not considered fully 'consolidated democracies'. One of their features is that political participation is weaker and less developed than in established democracies. In the literature, the 'post-communist heritage' is treated as one of the most important explanations for the lack of political participation in the region. In a first step, the paper disentangles the post-communist heritage. In contrast to the widely held beliefs in large parts of the literature, the post-communist heritage is not as monolithic as it is portrayed. With respect to the variety across countries and over time, this paper breaks down positive and negative facets of the post-communist heritage. Secondly, it is argued that the effects of the transformation are still underplayed in research on political participation in Central and Eastern Europe. By mainly focusing on cultural explanations, scholars therefore tend to lose sight of present explanations for weak political participation in the region.

Keywords: Central and Eastern Europe, cultural heritage, transformation, political culture, political participation

1. Fuzzy and Ambiguous: Political Participation in Central and Eastern Europe

In comparison to established democracies, Central and Eastern European societies are characterized by weak civic engagement in politics. In the literature, the weakness is located in different spheres of citizens influencing politics. Central and Eastern European civil society is considered to be 'weak'², civic traditions are 'less salient'³ and in terms of political participation citizens just participate less.⁴ According to past research, the so-called post-communist heritage is adduced for being the most important explanation for the supposed lack of political participation in Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, Barnes states that

¹ The paper was presented at the conference "(Dis)Satisfaction with Democracy and Citizens' Involvement in Post-Communist Europe", at Södertörn University, 2-3 October 2014. The author is grateful for the received constructive feedback.

² Marc Morje Howard, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (2002): 157-69.

³ Jan Germen Janmaat, "Civic Culture in Western and Eastern Europe," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 47:3 (2006): 363-93.

⁴ Natalia Letki, "Socialization for Participation? Trust, Membership, and Democratization in East-Central Europe," *Political Research Quarterly* 57:4 (2004): 665-79.

citizens share 'a lack of participation due to the long authoritarian experience'.⁵ Similarly, Pop-Eleches and Tucker contribute that the 'pervasive distrust of the public sphere under Communism' caused an attitudinal legacy that is responsible for citizens' abstention from participation.⁶ In essence, such contributions strongly refer to the cultural legacy, caused by citizens' negative experiences before 1989, which still influences political participation nowadays negatively. However, bearing in mind the contemporary history of Central and Eastern Europe, several social movements, demonstrations or other forms of citizen participation had a great influence on crucial political and societal developments in socialist times such as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring in the late 1960s, Solidarność in Poland in the 1980s, the Baltic independence movements, the Monday demonstrations in East Germany in the late 1980s as well as the large-scale demonstrations in Serbia led by the Zajedno coalition from the mid-1990s onwards.

According to Schäfer, Central and Eastern Europe is different from Western Europe in terms of other factors that seem to have an influence on political participation there.⁷ The purpose of this paper is to discuss those differences and the respective branches of the literature on weak political participation in the region. Before the part of the literature is presented, which portrays the cultural heritage in Central and Eastern Europe as a rather negative and unified phenomenon, the paper draws on general research on political participation. By developing a definition and reflecting on the scope of political participation, it becomes clear that various variables have influence on political participation. Subsequently, the 'cultural heritage theory' is confronted with emancipatory forms of citizens' participation in socialist times. It will be shown that the picture of the socialist past is not as black and white as the widely held beliefs in the literature suggest. Therefore, the purpose of the section is to demonstrate that political culture under socialism shows a greater variety than it is mainly introduced. Furthermore, attention is drawn to the post-socialist time. Regarding the comparatively low level of political participation, it will be demonstrated that the impact of the transformation is not mirrored adequately in the literature on political participation in the region. In 1989 the great and widespread transformation towards democracy and capitalism began and had a great influence on Central and Eastern European politics, economies and societies. Therefore, the year 1989 marks the starting point of the great

⁵Samuel H. Barnes, "The Changing Political Participation of Postcommunist Citizens," *International Journal of Sociology* 36:2 (2006): 79.

⁶Grigore Pop-Eleches and Joshua A. Tucker, "Associated with the Past?: Communist Legacies and Civic Participation in Post-Communist Countries," *East European Politics & Societies* 27:1 (2013): 46.

⁷Armin Schäfer, "Consequences of Social Inequality for Democracy in Western Europe," *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 6:2 (2012): 27.

transformation⁸ and likewise the beginning of a 'cultural and civilizational break'.⁹ Following Sztompka's diagnosis, political culture in Central and Eastern Europe is at least twofold, shaped by the socialist and the transformation heritage. The paper will illustrate that those two heritages vary over time and across countries. In the light of the multifaceted nature of political participation, it is argued that only focusing on the socialist past is too narrow and appears rather simplistic. Additionally, by mainly referring to the socialist heritage - hence the past - such an approach underplays the effects of the transformation and hampers new insights regarding recent developments.

2. Preconditions for Political Participation and Its Multifaceted Nature

Before elaborating on preconditions for political participation, it is necessary to define this crucial term. The challenge any definition of political participation faces is to capture the dynamic character of the phenomenon. A too static and predetermining approach would not sufficiently take into account the vibrant and diverse character of political participation. Therefore the definition of the paper emphasizes citizens' 'telos'¹⁰, meaning their intention to influence political decisions or people who make those policies. Here, political participation is defined as 'actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics'.¹¹ Kaase and Marsh add to the definition that 'all voluntary activities by individual citizens' can influence political decisions either 'directly or indirectly'.¹² Additionally, Norris contributes that any dimensions of activity should count as political participation that 'are either designed directly to influence government agencies and the policy process, or indirectly to impact civil society, or which attempt to alter systematic patterns of social behavior'.¹³ Therefore the proposed definition of political participation is:

⁸Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁹Piotr Sztompka, "Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29:2 (1996): 115-29.

¹⁰Iasonas Lamprianou, "Contemporary Political Participation Research: A Critical Assessment," in *Democracy in Transition*, ed. Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 21-42.

¹¹Lester W. Milbrath and Madan Lal Goel, *Political Participation How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publ. Co., 1977), 2.

¹²Max Kaase and David Marsh, "Political Action. A Theoretical Perspective," in *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*, eds. Samuel H. Barnes, Max Kaase and Klaus R. Allerbeck (Beverly Hills: Sage Publ., 1979), 42.

¹³Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide, Communication, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16.

Any voluntary action of private citizens by which they seek to directly or indirectly influence any political outcome, representatives, civil society's stakeholders or like-minded people.

Furthermore, the history of research on political participation is a story of enlarging the scope of participatory tools. As a reaction to the branching out of political participation in the 1970s, Hirschman prominently proposes the differentiation between exit-based and voice-based political participation.¹⁴ Thereby he stresses the intention to participate, either directly through voting or indirectly through party membership. Teorell et al. specify the typology (see Fig. 1) and add to Hirschman's dimension a second one - 'representational' and 'extra-representational' participatory channels.¹⁵

Fig. 1. Typology of Different Forms of Political Participation¹⁶

		Channel of expression	
		Representational	Extra-representational
Mechanisms to influence	Exit-based	Voting	Consumer participation ¹⁷
	Voice-based	Associational participation	Protest

Thereby it is not only essential whether citizens intend to influence any political outcome directly or indirectly. It is equally crucial whether citizens choose representational or extra-representational channels. The underlying assumption is that any form of political participation beyond the scope of classic representation such as protest results in an additive expression of opinion in public. However, the figure should not give the impression that citizens have to choose between different channels. Extra-representational channels or direct participation are not a 'strict

¹⁴Albert Otto Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970).

¹⁵Jan Teorell, Mariano Torcal and José Ramón Montero, "Political Participation: Mapping the Terrain," in *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*, eds. Jan Van Deth, José Ramón Montero and Anders Westholm (London: Routledge, 2007). 340-44.

¹⁶The figure is taken from Jan Teorell, Mariano Torcal and José Ramón Montero, "Political Participation", 341.

¹⁷By applying political consumerism citizens participate through boycotting large supermarket chains or favoring certain products such as fair trade or organic products. See Michele Micheletti, *Political Virtue and Shopping: Individuals, Consumerism, and Collective Action* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)/ Dietlind Stolle, Marc Hooghe and Michele Micheletti, "Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation," *International Political Science Review* 26:3 (2005): 245-69.

alternative to political representation'. It rather serves as a complementation of classic representation.¹⁸

According to Verba et al., participation is a 'complex field where various variables have impact on. No magic bullet would do the trick'.¹⁹ Correspondingly, political participation depends on socio-economic resources such as income and education²⁰ as well as on biographical conditions such as age, socialization, gender, and previous participatory experience.²¹ However, citizen participation in politics does not do not take place in isolation: variables such as the intensity of citizen mobilization or institutional environment need to be taken into account, too. Examples for the latter are the electoral system or the level of decentralization.²² According to Brady et al.²³, many citizens are not engaged in politics because simply nobody asked or mobilized them. Additionally, mobilization is equally crucial for all forms of political participation such as becoming a member of a party, voting, or protesting.²⁴ Figure 2 provides an overview of the most influential variables regarding political participation.

¹⁸Archon Fung, "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance," *Public Administration Review* 66 (2006): 66.

¹⁹Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady, "Political Equality: What Do We Know About It?," in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn M. Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004). 658.

²⁰Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)/ Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation," *The American Political Science Review* 89:2 (1995): 271-94/ Christopher J. Anderson and Pablo Beramendi, "Income, Inequality, and Electoral Participation," in *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation. A Comparative Perspective*, eds. Pablo Beramendi and Christopher J. Anderson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008). 278-311.

²¹Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba and Kim Jae-on, "Political Participation and the Life Cycle," *Comparative Politics* 6:3 (1974): 319-40/ Daniel A. McFarland and Reuben J. Thomas, "Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation," *American Sociological Review* 71:3 (2006): 401-25/ Daniela F. Melo and Daniel Stockemer, "Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis," *Comparative European Politics* 12:1 (2014): 33-53.

²²Daniel Treisman, *The Architecture of Government: Rethinking Political Decentralization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)/ Kateřina Vráblíková, "How Context Matters? Mobilization, Political Opportunity Structures, and Nonelectoral Political Participation in Old and New Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 47:2 (2014): 171-202.

²³Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Beyond Ses", 271-94.

²⁴Philip H. Pollock III, "Organizations as Agents of Mobilization: How Does Group Activity Affect Political Participation?," *American Journal of Political Science* 26:3 (1982): 485-503/ Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci, "Party Mobilization and Political Participation in New and Old Democracies," *Party Politics* 13:2 (2007): 217-34/ Laura Morales, *Joining Political*

Fig. 2. Preconditions for Political Participation

		Focus on	
		Actors	Structures
Feature	Direct	Mobilization	Institutional environment
	Indirect	Socio-economic resources, age, gender	Political culture

In the light of the insights presented above, it is surprising that weak political participation in Central and Eastern Europe is mainly linked to the cultural legacy of communism. Political culture impacts on political participation, but it is just one out of various preconditions for political participation. In the following sections the arguments of the 'cultural legacy approach' will be outlined and subsequently confronted with other branches of the literature that are dealing with political participation and political culture in Central and Eastern Europe.

3. The Socialist Legacy and Its Negative Influence on Political Participation

Past scholars widely agreed on that democracy requires a supportive culture, the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of principles underlying essential freedoms, rule of law, and human rights.²⁵ However, it takes time before all relevant actors of democracy internalize such norms and values. They do not 'evolve overnight'.²⁶

Regarding political culture in Central and Eastern Europe, past research treated the socialist period as the main influential factor and it served as a starting point of most inquiries about weak political participation. The debate on the political culture of communism started long before the collapse of the Soviet Union. For instance, the discussion contained the argument that the official 'Marxist-Leninist' ideology has

Organisations Institutions, Mobilisation and Participation in Western Democracies (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2009).

²⁵Gabriel A. Almond, "Comparative Political Systems," *The Journal of Politics* 18:3 (1956): 391-409/ Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, *Political Culture and Political Development, Studies in Political Development* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965)/ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971)/ Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Introduction: What Makes for Democracy," in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, eds. Larry Jay Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1990).

²⁶Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address," *American Sociological Review* 59:1 (1994): 1-22.

failed in mobilizing people despite 'communist propaganda' in schools and the media. People rather ignored than adopted the ideology.²⁷

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the debate about political culture in the region changed. The shift was from which impact does communism have on people to what is the legacy of this period? Therefore, post-socialist political culture was linked to the legacy stemming from people's experiences under communism that is supposed to have left people 'incompetent'²⁸ for the transformation. Sztompka highlights in a very drastic way the 'civilizational incompetence' of Central and Eastern European societies; speaking of a lack of democratic and economic culture in terms of norms, rules and values which is portrayed as the result of the socialist experience.²⁹ Crawford and Lijphart identify six 'key legacies' of communism and their influence on post-socialist societies: 'the absence of successor elites', 'weak party systems', 'the interrupted process of nation building', 'command economic systems', 'the persistence of institutions established under the old regime', and 'the history of backwardness, victimization, and intolerance'.³⁰ Just to outline the last legacy, the backwardness in economic terms refers to the peripheral status in the world economy of post-socialist Europe after 1989. Victimization in contrast, hints at the political helplessness in a way that the vigorous exercise of power created a widespread aversion to politics and intolerance for opposing views.³¹ Moreover, the monopoly of a single elite, namely the Communist party, is adduced for stifling autonomous counter-elites under communism³² and therefore intolerance towards democratic politics of negotiation. Ceka adds that the transformation from a one party system to a multi-party system overstrained the newly empowered electorate.

²⁷Robert C. Tucker, "Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society," *Political Science Quarterly* 88:2 (1973): 173-90/ Gabriel A. Almond, "Communism and Political Culture Theory," *Comparative Politics* 15:2 (1983): 127-38/ Mary McAuley, "Political Culture and Communist Politics: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed. Archie Brown (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984). 13-39.

²⁸Piotr Sztompka, "Civilizational Incompetence," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22:2 (1993): 85-95.

²⁹Ibid. 88.

³⁰Beverly Crawford and Arend Lijphart, "Explaining Political and Economic Change in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Old Legacies, New Institutions, Hegemonic Norms, and International Pressures," *Comparative Political Studies* 28:2 (1995): 179.

³¹See Ken Jowitt, "Weber, Trotsky and Holmes on the Study of Leninist Regimes," *Journal of International Affairs* 45:1 (1991): 31-48.

³²Beverly Crawford and Arend Lijphart, "Old Legacies, New Institutions: Explaining Political and Economic Trajectories in Post-Communist Regimes," in *Liberalization and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions*, eds. Beverly Crawford and Arend Lijphart (Berkeley, Calif.: International and Area Studies, 1997). 1-39.

Therefore citizens were not adequately prepared for pluralism and political competition.³³

In order to address weak political participation in the region, two further features of the legacy shall be mentioned: democratic norms and values in post-socialist societies as well as post-socialist civil society. In comparison to Western Europe, civic traditions are considered to be less salient. Due to the authoritarian experience, people's perception of the state and the public sphere is different because of the negative bias stemming from the legacy. Therefore, the rift between the private and the public is wider in Central and Eastern Europe. Citizens prefer informal social networks 'with minimal links to the state'.³⁴ This caused one of the most important features of the legacy – over time citizens developed an extensive distrust in the state and its institutions.³⁵ However, the realm of the socialist legacy is not limited to trust in state authorities. It also affects interpersonal trust negatively.³⁶ Furthermore, the supposed low level of trust impacts on peoples' attitudes towards democracy in general. Therefore, peoples' interest in politics is relatively low as well as their satisfaction with the democratic order.³⁷ In addition to that, the weakness of civil society in the region has drawn tremendous scholarly attention in particular. The already mentioned features of the socialist legacy such as mistrust in the state and its organs or the persistence of private network friendships cause citizens' abstention from politics and low levels of organizational membership.³⁸ Furthermore, the authoritarian regime smothered any space for independent civil society.³⁹

³³Besir Ceka, "The Perils of Political Competition: Explaining Participation and Trust in Political Parties in Eastern Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 46:12 (2013): 1611.

³⁴Jan Germen Janmaat, "Civic Culture in Western and Eastern Europe", 377.

³⁵Roger Sapsford and Pamela Abbott, "Trust, Confidence and Social Environment in Post-Communist Societies," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39:1 (2006): 59-71/ Rebecca McKee, Adrianna Murphy, Erica Richardson, Bayard Roberts, Christian Haerpfer and Martin McKee, "Do Citizens of the Former Soviet Union Trust State Institutions, and Why?," *East European Politics* 29:4 (2013): 377-96/ Zsolt Boda and Gergő Medve-Bálint, "Does Institutional Trust in East Central Europe Differ from Western Europe?," *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities* 3:2 (2014): 1-17.

³⁶Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Political Culture and "Covert Participation" in Policy Implementation," *The American Political Science Review* 78:3 (1984): 603-21.

³⁷Irene Martin, "Interest in Politics and the Political Culture Approach: The Case of the New Democracies of Southern and Eastern Europe," in *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe. Attitudes in New Democracies*, eds. Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller and Gert Pickel (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). 71-90.

³⁸Marc Morje Howard, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society, 160-62.

³⁹Anna Grzymala-Busse and Pauline Jones Luong, "Reconceptualizing the State: Lessons from Post-Communism," *Politics & Society* 30:4 (2002): 529-54.

To sum up, the socialist legacy arises from the time before 1989. The long authoritarian experience is used in order to explain low support for democracy, low level of trust and weak civil society in the region. Moreover, weak political participation is portrayed as a direct effect of the socialist past; in particular electoral and associational forms are highly affected.⁴⁰ In the next step, different forms of political participation before 1989 will be discussed in order to counterbalance the first approach.

4. Emancipatory Forms of Political Participation Before 1989

Over decades scholars debated forms of political participation beyond the official channel, especially in the Soviet Union.⁴¹ As outlined at the very beginning of the paper, Central and Eastern Europe experienced several large-scale social movements, demonstrations or other forms of citizen participation such as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring, Solidarność in Poland, Sąjūdis in Lithuania, and the Zajedno coalition in Serbia. On a general level, DiFranceisco and Gitelman state that most emancipatory form of political participation under communism had to be 'covered'.⁴² Such forms either took place within official institutions in partly concealed ways or outside of the existing political apparatus. Regarding the former, Segert shows by using the example of the SED in East Germany that the socialist party was not as homogenous as sometimes perceived. For instance, the loyal 'Intelligentsia' was part of the existing power structures in society but they were not identical with the top-level elite. The Intelligentsia gained more influence after the 1960s and contributed to a less oppressive regime.⁴³

The range of participation beyond the Communist party spans from writing letters to newspaper editors or contacting those who hold positions in policymaking

⁴⁰Alexander C. Pacek, Grigore Pop-Eleches and Joshua A. Tucker, "Disenchanted or Discerning: Voter Turnout in Post-Communist Countries," *The Journal of Politics* 71:2 (2009): 473-91.

⁴¹Jerry F. Hough, "Political Participation in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies* 28:1 (1976): 3-20/ Theodore H. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979)/ Aryeh L. Unger, "Political Participation in the USSR: YCL and CPSU," *Soviet Studies* 33:1 (1981): 107-24.

⁴²Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Political Culture and "Covert Participation" in Policy Implementation", 603.

⁴³Dieter Segert, "Loyalitäten im späten Staatssozialismus und ihr Wandel am Beispiel der intellektuellen Dienstklasse der DDR," (Loyalties in Late State Socialism and Their Change Using the Example of the Intellectual Dienstklasse of the GDR) in *Loyalitäten im Staatssozialismus. DDR, Tschechoslowakei, Polen* (Loyalties in State Socialism. GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland), eds. Volker Zimmermann, Peter Haslinger and Thomás Nigrin (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2010). 205-18.

institutions to organizing protests.⁴⁴ There is no doubt that the vast majority tried to keep a low profile in order to avoid sanctions.⁴⁵ Additionally, those who were active despite the prevailing threat showed both high amounts of motivation and higher levels of education.⁴⁶ However, emancipatory forms of political participation existed and have to be mentioned in order to describe the time before 1989 in an adequate and differentiated way. Two prominent cases of this type of political participation are selected and will be outlined to illustrate autonomous political participation. Those are the dissent movements in Soviet Russia and the workers' movements in Yugoslavia.

In the case of Yugoslavia, the working class had a great influence on the Communist party after the Second World War. The majority of the small socialist cadre for instance had a working class background. However, shortly after they came to power the party turned into a rather clientelistic party.⁴⁷ Despite the development of the Communist party, the workers' self-management continued to exist as an official part of the Yugoslav socialist ideology.⁴⁸ All employees elected workers' councils for a period of two years. In order to enable an independent development of self-managed companies, enterprises and factories were free from any external influence.⁴⁹ Certainly, channels existed through which the Communist party had the possibility to influence the workers' councils, such as having members elected to the Workers' boards or via trade unions.⁵⁰ However, the self-managed companies shared a great amount of rights and duties including real autonomous decision-making. In this context, Pateman prominently highlights the spillover effect of small-scale participation in the workplace as a school of democracy. Therefore it is not surprising that especially the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia experienced many workers' strikes such as the first reported mining strike in Trbovlje in 1958 or large dockers' strike in Rijeka in 1969 where more than 1500

⁴⁴Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Political Culture and "Covert Participation" in Policy Implementation", 609-12.

⁴⁵Matt Killingsworth, *Civil Society in Communist Eastern Europe: Opposition and Dissent in Totalitarian Regimes* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2012).

⁴⁶Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Political Culture and "Covert Participation" in Policy Implementation", 609.

⁴⁷Marija Obradović, "From Revolutionary to Clientelistic Party: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, 1945–1952," *East European Politics & Societies* 27:3 (2013): 376-79.

⁴⁸Goran Musić, "Yugoslavia: Workers' Self-Management as State Paradigm", in *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control from the Commune to the Present*, eds. Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini (Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2011).

⁴⁹Naidan Pašić, "Self-Management in Yugoslavia: Some Impending Problems," in *Self-Management: New Dimensions to Democracy*, eds. Ichak Adizes and Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1975).

⁵⁰Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 89-93.

workers took part. Overall, more than 3000 strikes have been reported by the end of the 1970s.⁵¹ Thus, workers' self-management in Yugoslavia is an example for comparatively free participation within the socialist system.

One could argue that Yugoslavia has always been a special case both before and after 1989. Therefore, the following section focuses on independent forms of participation in the Soviet Union. Voronkov and Wielgohs state that resistance against the socialist regime has existed since the very beginning of the Soviet Union.⁵² Michnik contributes that 'the communist system contains protest in its ideological nature'.⁵³ Thereby revisionism and dissidence was a common feature of trying to influence the public sphere.⁵⁴ However, any form of protest was perceived as internal threat to the regime and was immediately held down by the regime. One of the most well-known forms of distributing protest communication is the 'Samizdat'.⁵⁵ In order to avoid censorship, dissents published flyers, letters, or essays themselves. The purpose of those letters was not only limited to communication between dissents; several were directly addressed to the Communist party and its leaders.⁵⁶ In essence, the demands of the heterogonous group of dissents emphasized individual rights and a rather democratic understanding of socialism.⁵⁷ According to Bahry and Silver, in the late 1970s 6.5 % of Soviet immigrants to the US belonged to a permanent discussion group, 4.1 % distributed samizdat.⁵⁸ Moreover, the impact of samizdat can be demonstrated by comparing claims made by dissents in the 1960s and 1970s to speeches of Gorbachev in the late 1980s. Many claims made by dissents can prominently be found in the latter.⁵⁹ Therefore the discourses of samizdat had great influences on the political elite of the Soviet Union but with a certain delay. Although the dissidents were a rather small group of

⁵¹Goldie Shabad, "Strikes in Yugoslavia: Implications for Industrial Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science* 10:3 (1980): 300-01.

⁵²Viktor Voronkov and Jan Wielgohs, "Soviet Russia," in *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition*, eds. Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

⁵³Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays, Society and Culture in East-Central Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁵⁴Christian Joppke, "Revisionism, Dissidence, Nationalism: Opposition in Leninist Regimes," *The British Journal of Sociology* 45:4 (1994): 543-61.

⁵⁵Robert Sharlet "Dissent and the "Contra-System" in the Soviet Union," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35:3 (1984): 135-46.

⁵⁶Serguei A. Oushakine, "The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat " *Public Culture* 13:2 (2001): 202-03.

⁵⁷Ann Komaromi, "Samizdat and Soviet Dissident Publics," *Slavic Review* 71:1 (2012): 76.

⁵⁸Donna Bahry and Brian D. Silver, "Soviet Citizen Participation on the Eve of Democratization," *The American Political Science Review* 84:3 (1990): 831.

⁵⁹Serguei A. Oushakine, "The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat", 213-14.

counter elites, they contributed to more controversial understanding of socialism and the communist regime.

The given examples show that different forms of political participation existed under socialism. Workers' self-management in Yugoslavia might be an extreme case but it illustrates that citizens were encouraged to participate at their workplace. In turn, the dissent movement of the Soviet Union was mainly working in the underground for a long time. However, dissidents created 'a new horizon of expectations that had not existed in Central and Eastern Europe since the Prague Spring'.⁶⁰ Particularly at the end of the Soviet Union many bystanders could be activated to raise their voices in public and protested on the streets. The end of the Soviet Union as well as the revolutions in its satellite states were heavily shaped by large-scale demonstrations and forms of protest beyond dissident networks.⁶¹ The human rights movement, strikes of more than 400 000 coal miners in the summer of 1989 or the environmentalist movement⁶² demonstrate in the Soviet Union the range and scope of citizen participation at that time. Therefore, the heritage stemming from the time before 1989 is not as black and white as other parts of the literature portray it. It rather incorporates negative and positive features at the same time.

5. Political Culture in Central and Eastern Europe – Rather Dynamic than Monolithic

According to the last section, the socialist heritage consists of diverse facets. So far, emancipatory forms of political participation before 1989 have been discussed. Such forms that mainly took place beyond the Communist party are one piece of the puzzle of the cultural heritage in Central and Eastern Europe. Another one consists of the political elite itself, speaking of their understanding of state socialism and interpretation to govern or rule. As this understanding changed over time, political culture in Central and Eastern Europe consequently changed in the 20th century in many regards.⁶³ In the following paragraph, the former Soviet Union is used to very

⁶⁰Vladimir Tismăneanu, "The Moving Ruins," *Journal of Democracy* 25:1 (2014): 151-53.

⁶¹Rasma Karklins and Roger Petersen, "Decision Calculus of Protesters and Regimes: Eastern Europe 1989," *The Journal of Politics* 55:3 (1993): 588-614.

⁶²Geoffrey A. Hosking, "The Beginnings of Independent Political Activity," in *The Road to Post-Communism. Independent Political Movements in the Soviet Union, 1985-1991*, eds. Geoffrey A. Hosking, Jonathan Aves and Peter J. Duncan (London: Pinter Publishers, 1992). 1-28./ Theodore H. Friedgut and Lewis Siegelbaum, "Perestroika from Below: The Soviet Miners' Strike and Its Aftermath," *New Left Review* 181:1 (1990): 5-30/ Olaf Corry, "The Green Legacy of 1989: Revolutions, Environmentalism and the Global Age," *Political Studies* 62:2 (2014): 309-25.

⁶³Stephen White, "Soviet Political Culture Reassessed," in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed. Archie Brown (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984). 77.

briefly give an example of different forms of socialism and the respective political culture.

In regard to the first phase of the Soviet Union, Janos highlights the 'transfer culture' at that time⁶⁴; meaning the intention of the political elite in the 1920s and 1930s to transform society into a communist one, which is linked to Lenin and his vision. The vision includes the goal of modernizing the economy in terms of education, industrialization, or urbanization and later to catch up with Western economies. In 1927 Stalin came to power. Out of his understanding of leading the Soviet Union, a new official political culture emerged shaped by Prussian military discipline and a high level of state power. Furthermore, political opponents to his ruling were either sent into exile or were eliminated.⁶⁵ After Stalin's death in 1953 a more pragmatic, less radical political elite filled the political vacuum. In order to improve the standard of living and to increase their own legitimacy, the new political elite tried to develop a less authoritarian form of socialism; in particular in Hungary in the 1960s as a reaction to the crisis of 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s as a reaction to the crisis in the years 1962 - 1968. However, in the late 1970s and 1980s political stagnation and economic deficits of the system became more and more visible. Gorbachev's attempts to reform the political and economic system failed as they could not prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁶⁶

In addition to the different approaches to governing and ruling the country, Almond distinguishes between three different types of political culture before 1989⁶⁷:

1. The official 'Marxist-Leninist' political culture, which is identical with the official ideology and was represented by the political elite.
2. The 'operational' political culture that is what the regime was willing to tolerate, speaking of moderate forms of disobedience.
3. The 'real' political culture, which refers to people's attitudes towards the regime.

Almond's three different types of political culture should be understood as ideal types, which hint at an even further differentiation, in particular when it comes to the third type - citizens' diverse attitudes. Moreover, all three types of political culture influenced people's perception of politics and the Communist party in

⁶⁴Andrew C. Janos, "What Was Communism: A Retrospective in Comparative Analysis," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29:1 (1996): 6.

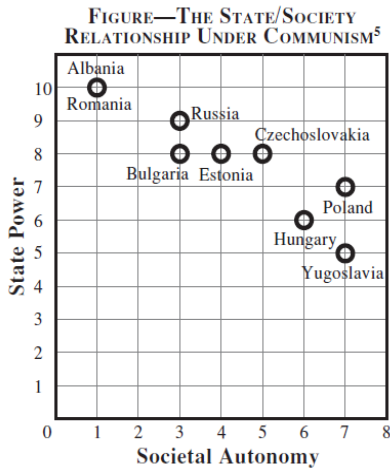
⁶⁵Ibid. 9.

⁶⁶Christian W. Haerpfer, "Post-Communist Europe and Post-Soviet Russia," in *Democratization*, eds. Christian W. Haerpfer, Patrick Bernhagen, Ronald F. Inglehart and Christian Welzel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 311-12.

⁶⁷Gabriel A. Almond, "Communism and Political Culture Theory", 131.

particular.⁶⁸ As mentioned above, in the second part of the 20th century Central and Eastern European states were characterized by a growing diversity when it comes to the type of regimes, e.g. such as state power or societal autonomy.⁶⁹ Mungiu-Pippidi's graph⁷⁰ shows two crucial features of nine post-socialist countries in 1989 – state power and societal autonomy. Thereby, she illustrates the great variety of political regimes within the region, which supports the presented argument; political culture in Central and Eastern Europe appears rather dynamic than monolithic. The outlined differences regarding the socialist regimes illustrate the great heterogeneity over time and across countries, which breaks down the different facets of the cultural heritage. The variety within the region caused different starting points for the transformation.

Fig. 3



6. The Transformation and Its Implications for Political Participation

On a rather abstract level, Welzel and Inglehart claim that political culture and mass beliefs in particular play a crucial role when it comes to 'realizing the goals of

⁶⁸Samuel H. Barnes and János Simon, *The Postcommunist Citizen*. (Budapest: Erasmus Foundation, 1998).

⁶⁹Joseph Rothschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷⁰Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "The Other Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 21:1 (2010): 120-27.

transformation' and 'translating them into actions'.⁷¹ In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, Kornai points out why the transformation heritage in Central and Eastern Europe is so influential, in particular regarding political culture. The transformation was a 'complete transformation, parallel in all spheres'⁷² which is also known as the 'dilemma of simultaneousness'.⁷³ Additionally, Kornai highlights the non-violent and peaceful proceeding as well as the incredible speed of ten to 15 years during which the transformation took place.⁷⁴ However, this very optimistic point of view is overshadowed by the fact that these processes caused many challenges.

At the very beginning, the old regime (the nomenclature) partly played an ambiguous role after 1989,⁷⁵ which strongly depends on the type of transformation of the elite. Thereby the range is from immediately replacing the old regime to a transformation of the Communist party into a social democratic one⁷⁶. Therefore and in accord to the type of elite change, the transformation of the political elite after 1989 was more or less mirrored by a change of politicians and therefore more or less visible for citizens. In general, the influence of the elite on the transformation was a very dominant one. Therefore the elite had the possibility to 'manipulate the transformation process in order to safeguard their individual interests'.⁷⁷ Additionally, the establishment of constitutions, free elections, independent courts of justice, pluralistic party systems, and free media did not proceed easily.⁷⁸ At this point of the transformation, problems appeared in two ways. First of all, media, courts as well as political parties require independent journalists, judges, and politicians. Due to the widespread power of the Communist party, it was almost

⁷¹Christian Welzel and Ronald F. Inglehart, "Political Culture, Mass Belief, and Value Change," in *Democratization*, eds. Christian W. Haerpfer, Patrick Bernhagen, Ronald F. Inglehart and Christian Welzel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 128.

⁷²János Kornai, "The Great Transformation of Central Eastern Europe. Success and Disappointment," *Economics of Transition* 14:2 (2006): 217-18.

⁷³Claus Offe, "Das Dilemma der Gleichzeitigkeit. Demokratisierung und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa," (The Dilemma of Simultaneousness. Democratization and Market Economy in Eastern Europe) *Merkur* 45:4 (1991): 279-92.

⁷⁴János Kornai, "The Great Transformation of Central Eastern Europe. Success and Disappointment", 217-18.

⁷⁵ Michael Burton and John Higley, "The Study of Political Elite Transformations," *International Review of Sociology* 11:2 (2001): 187.

⁷⁶Wolfgang Merkel, *Systemtransformation: Eine Einführung in die Theorie und Empirie der Transformationsforschung* (System Transformation: An Introduction to the Theory and Empirics of Transformation Studies) (Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss., 2010).

⁷⁷Michael Albertus and Victor Menaldo, "Gaming Democracy: Elite Dominance During Transition and the Prospects for Redistribution," *British Journal of Political Science* 44:3 (2014): 577.

⁷⁸Herbert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions," *Party Politics* 1:4 (1995): 447-72.

impossible to fill the vacuum with people free of any former engagement in the Communist party. However, over the course of the transformation, at one point a new elite replaced the old one in all post-socialist countries. One could argue that peaceful changes of government are essential for any democratic system. However, in almost every case of change of government, the reputation of the political elite remains very low. Just because the political elite is free from any engagement in the Communist party before 1989, does not seem to make them trustworthy automatically. Thus, scholarly attention should be drawn to the performance of the current political elite, speaking of clientelism and corruption. Citizens' attitudes towards politicians might be similar in comparison to the socialist times but the phenomenon cannot only be explained by focusing on the past.

Moreover, the transformation of the economic system brought negative consequences for certain parts of society.⁷⁹ Neoliberal reforms and unequal points of departure of different societal groups caused an unequal distribution of former state property, a high level of unemployment, and subsequently distrust in political and economic elites and in particular in institutions.⁸⁰ Jacobs points out that individual success during the transformation process has significant negative influence on people's thinking on democracy.⁸¹ Furthermore, international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the EU tried to guideline the Central and Eastern European states on their path to democracy and capitalism.⁸² For instance external knowledge and financial support fostered the emergence of a myriad of new NGOs. However, many of those NGOs show a certain dependency on external funding which hampered an independent development of domestic civil society.⁸³ Therefore, parts of Central and Eastern European societies perceive this external influence negatively and consider it to be

⁷⁹Erik Allardt "The Questionable Blessing of the Modernization Concept," in *Structural Change and Modernization in Post-Socialist Societies*, eds. Wladyslaw Adamski, Pavel Machonon and Wolfgang Zapf (Hamburg: Krämer, 2002). 308/ Ivan Szelenyi, "Making Capitalism without Capitalists: Revisited," *International Political Anthropology* 1:1 (2008): 139-48.

⁸⁰David W. Lovell, "Trust and the Politics of Postcommunism," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34:1 (2001): 31-32.

⁸¹Jörg Jacobs, *Tücken der Demokratie. Antisystemeinstellungen und ihre Determinanten in sieben post-kommunistischen Transformationsländern* (Perils of Democracy. Anti-System Attitudes and Their Determinants in Seven Post-Communist Transformation Countries) (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 284-86.

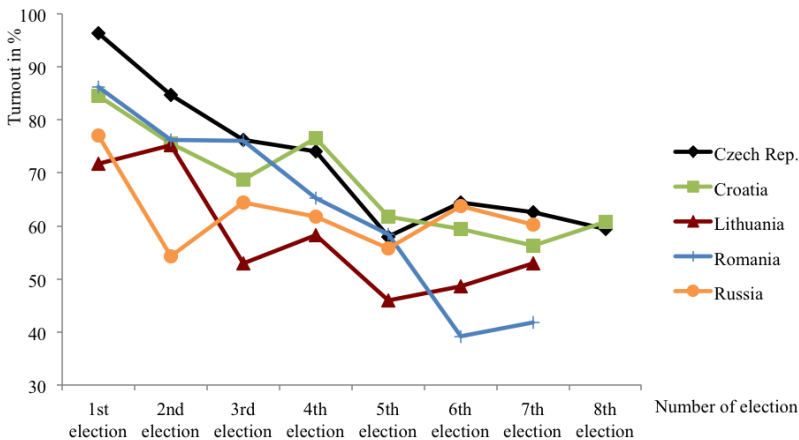
⁸²Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "The Other Transition", 73-74.

⁸³Adam Fagan, "Promoting Democracy in the Western Balkans after the Global Financial Crisis: Good Intentions Badly Executed?," *Southeastern Europe* 37:3 (2013): 283-311/ Nikolaos Tzifakis and Asteris Huliaras, "Hegemonic Relationships: Donor Countries and Ngos in Western Balkan Post-Conflict Reconstruction," *Southeastern Europe* 37:3 (2013): 312-29.

illegitimate or 'foreign agents'.⁸⁴ In the light of this, liberal democracy appears as something brought in from the outside. Correspondingly, it is weakly rooted in society and therefore less supported.

In addition, at the beginning of the transformation great expectations sprouted both in political and economic terms; expectations that have been mostly disappointed over time.⁸⁵ Frustration and disillusionment are essential, when it comes to political participation in general. With respect to electoral participation in particular, turnout rates are comparatively high at the very beginning of the transformation (see Fig. 4). For instance electoral turnout of the first national election after 1989 in the Czech Republic is 96.3 %, in Romania 86.2 % or in Croatia 84.5 %. Since 1989, electoral turnout has decreased, partly in a drastic way. By comparing the turnout of the first election after 1989 and the latest one, the range of decline is from 16.8 % (Russia) to 36.8 % (Czech Republic) or 44.4 % (Romania).

Fig. 4. Turnout of Parliamentary Elections in Five Central and Eastern European Countries (1989 - 2015)⁸⁶



Scholars of the cultural legacy approach could argue that citizens were still used to participate in elections in the early 1990s, although voting was not mandatory anymore in most of the cases. Correspondingly, it took a while before citizens realized that they are not forced to participate anymore. Other explanations refer

⁸⁴Jovanka Matic, "(Too) High Expectations of Democracy in Serbia? Interpretation of Empirical Research Results," *Southeastern Europe* 36:3 (2012): 304-27.

⁸⁵Ivan Krastev, "Deepening Dissatisfaction," *Journal of Democracy* 21:1 (2010): 113-19.

⁸⁶Data obtained from: Wolfram Nordsieck, *Parties and Elections in Europe*, (Düsseldorf, 2016), available at <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed on 02-15-2016).

to the great enthusiasm or the 'democratic honeymoon' at the early stage of the transformation. In this context, Ulram and Plasser show that the beliefs in democracy and its capability of solving the most salient problems diminishes constantly in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989.⁸⁷ Additionally, unfulfilled expectations are the source of great potential for frustration, disappointment and apathy.⁸⁸ The latter enabled fruitful possibilities for populist or nationalist parties and more (empty) promises.⁸⁹ Moreover, the socialist period appears for some societal groups, at least in retrospect, in a positive way. Particularly the losers of transformation are prone to such nostalgic attitudes.⁹⁰ Out of their negative perceptions of current burdens and day-to-day problems, the socialist times appear positive in comparison to the present.⁹¹ In the light of this, the proceeding of the transformation and the implementation of democracy in particular have heavily influenced the decline in political participation.

To conclude, the transformation brought many changes to the region in political, economic, societal as well as cultural terms. Regarding political culture, the differentiation between effects stemming from the socialist times or from the transformation is intricate. Certainly the socialist heritage had great influence on the time after 1989, e.g. the persistence of the nomenclature. However, explaining weak political participation by only focusing on the socialist past appears too narrow. The discussed effects stemming from the transformation are proper ones and partly independent from the time before 1989. Furthermore, White points at the danger that legacy arguments tend to explain present phenomena by interpreting the past in a way that the past is blamed for current recent developments. Moreover, White claims that by mainly focusing on the past, researchers tend to lose sight of present explanations.⁹² In this vein, Meyer-Sahling

⁸⁷ Peter A. Ulram and Fritz Plasser, "Political Culture in East-Central and Eastern Europe: Empirical Findings 1990-2001," in *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe. Attitudes in New Democracies*, eds. Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller and Gert Pickel (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). 34-35.

⁸⁸ Mihai Varga, and Annette Freyberg-Inan, "The Threat of Selective Democracy. Popular Dissatisfaction and Exclusionary Strategy of Elites in East Central and Southeastern Europe," *Southeastern Europe* 36:3 (2012): 352.

⁸⁹ Dieter Segert, "Populismus in Ostmitteleuropa: Stimme der Transformationsverlierer oder Gefährdung der Demokratie?," (Populism in Central and Eastern Europe: the Voice of the Losers of the Transformation or a Threat to Democracy?) *Berliner Debatte Initial* 22:1 (2011): 61.

⁹⁰ Mitja Velikonja, "Lost in Transition: Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-Socialist Countries," *East European Politics & Societies* 23:4 (2009): 538.

⁹¹ Irina Gigova, "The Good Life and Post-Communist Nostalgia," *East European Politics* 29:4 (2013): 536-42.

⁹² Stephen White, "Soviet Political Culture Reassessed", 63-64.

adds that regarding the socialist legacy, respective authors are prone to emphasize negative elements of the socialist past.⁹³

7. Future Prospects: More Differentiated Perspectives and Shifting the Focus of Analysis

The post-socialist legacy and its implications for political participation in Central and Eastern Europe are puzzling at first glance. In order to approach the puzzle, three relevant branches of the literature have been discussed. The first group of scholars perceives socialism in a negative way by emphasizing forced participation and negative attitudes towards politics stemming from the long authoritarian experience. However, the danger of selecting only 'aspects of a previous political culture which support one's hypothesis about the present' is imminent.⁹⁴ Therefore, the literature on citizen' participation and political activism under socialism has been considered in order to counterbalance the first branch. It has been shown that political participation beyond the official channels existed. Furthermore, the presented example of dissent movements in the Soviet Union illustrated that a small share of the population participated in an 'covert' way but that the dissident discourse had great influence on the top level of the political elite in the end. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the alleged socialist heritage consists of many facets and varies across countries and over time. Therefore it is not as monolithic as parts of the literature present it.

Additionally, the variation is not limited to the time before 1989; it also applies to the time of transformation. In this context, Mishler and Rose argue that the effects of the latest economic and political performance are at least equally crucial for citizen' participation than the socialist past.⁹⁵ In this vein, Tanasoiu proposes the 'Homo Post-communistus' in order to highlight the frustration stemming from the transformation and the deepening of disappointment about the political elite, flourishing corruption or simply high but unfulfilled expectations.⁹⁶ Correspondingly, Segert points out that both the 'state socialist legacy' and the 'legacy of the radical transformation processes' have a great impact on current

⁹³Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling, "Varieties of Legacies: A Critical Review of Legacy Explanations of Public Administration Reform in East Central Europe," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 75:3 (2009): 513-14.

⁹⁴Stephen White, "Soviet Political Culture Reassessed", 65.

⁹⁵William Mishler and Richard Rose, "Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies," *The Journal of Politics* 59:2 (1997): 434.

⁹⁶Cosmina Tanasoiu, "Homo Post-Communistus: Portrait of a Character in Transition," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 14:4 (2013): 601-04.

phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe.⁹⁷ Hooghe and Quintelier even claim that the effect of socialization under socialism is 'rendered non-significant'.⁹⁸ Therefore, this paper can be understood as a theoretical underpinning of authors such as Segert or Hooghe and Quintelier who argue that the times of the transformation needs to be taken more into account.

To conclude, what are the future prospects of research on political participation in Central and Eastern Europe? In the light of this paper, three conclusions can be drawn from the analysis: Political culture plays an essential role when it comes to explain weak political participation in the region. However, it is just one out of various preconditions for political participation. Explaining weak political participation in Central and Eastern Europe by mainly referring to the socialist times and the respective negative experiences citizens does not take into consideration the complexity of the situation. The 'magic bullet' does not exist in the case of Central and Eastern Europe just as it does not exist in any other region in the world. By comparing political participation in Western and Central and Eastern Europe, it is crucial to include factors such as mobilization of people by the political elite and the institutional and socio-economic environment, for instance speaking of access points into politics and other excluding mechanism. Research on such factors in Central and Eastern Europe is slowly increasing but it is important to shift the focus of analysis to such crucial and established preconditions for political participation beyond the cultural argument.

When it comes to political participation in Central and Eastern Europe, Teorell et al.'s typology allows drawing a more differentiated picture of the region. With respect to different forms of political participation, associational and electoral forms are supposed to be relatively low. Under socialism most of the citizens tried to keep a low profile, due to low levels of trust in the political elite, forced party membership and threatened by sanctions. At the beginning of the transformation in turn, electoral turnout was comparatively high. However, it has declined more or less steadily over time. It is argued that the outlined effects of the transformation are at least equally crucial for representational channels as the socialist legacy is. In contrast to that, voice-based, extra-representational forms of political participation were autonomously applied under socialism. Firstly, direct forms of political participation such as demonstrations or protest have a long tradition and seem to be more tangible. Secondly, it seems to be the case that Central and Eastern European citizens prefer collective forms of political participation to individual ones

⁹⁷Dieter Segert, "*Transformationen in Osteuropa im 20. Jahrhundert*" (Transformations in Eastern Europe in the 20th Century) (Wien: Facultas, 2013), 15.

⁹⁸Marc Hooghe and Ellen Quintelier, "Political Participation in European Countries: The Effect of Authoritarian Rule, Corruption, Lack of Good Governance and Economic Downturn," *Comparative European Politics* 12:2 (2014): 209-32.

such as voting.⁹⁹ The latest examples for such collective actions are the widespread protests in Bosnia (2014), Bulgaria (2013), the protest on Maidan in Ukraine (2013-2014), anti-government protests in Romania (2015) or the protest against Putin in Russia (2011-2012). However, future research on political participation needs to intensify the debate on what it actually means when people favor channels beyond classic representation. Thereby, the transformation and its aftermath need to be considered properly. It raises the essential question of how to assess the transformation. How deeply rooted are democratic norms and values in society? Do citizens perceive democracy as 'their' system or just as an arena for the political elite that is far remote from people's level?

Past research showed that major social change such as the transformation or the financial and economic crisis affect people's attitudes towards democracy and correspondingly their level of political participation. However, the experiences citizens have made in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 are very heterogeneous just as they perceived the socialist times differently: dissimilar starting points at the beginning of the transformation, increasing social inequality due to neoliberal reforms as well as the effects of the economic and financial crisis since 2008 have caused major changes, in particular in terms of individual availability of socio-economic resources. According to the vast literature on preconditions for political participation, such major social changes are considered to affect people's political behavior in a drastic way. One future task for research on political participation in Central and Eastern Europe is to identify relevant patterns stemming from the transformation as well as the economic crisis.

Moreover, it has been argued that by mainly focusing on the past, the danger of losing sight of present explanations is incorporated. The socialist past has still great impact on the Central and Eastern Europe. However, shifting the scholarly focus to the transformation and to more recent developments might offer new insights beyond cultural explanations. Carothers' mile stone contribution emphasizes that the beginning of any transformation does not automatically guarantee a steady path towards democracy.¹⁰⁰ Thus, scholarly attention should be drawn to the performance of the current political elite, speaking of clientelism. Furthermore, a new regime type - 'competitive authoritarianism', a hybrid political system consisting of democratic and authoritarian elements - becomes more and more

⁹⁹Tsveta Petrova and Sidney Tarrow, "Transactional and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity: The Puzzle of East-Central Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 40:1 (2007): 74-94/ Ondřej Císař, "The Diffusion of Public Interest Mobilisation: A Historical Sociology Perspective on Advocates without Members in the Post-Communist Czech Republic," *East European Politics* 29:1 (2013): 69-82.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (2002): 5-21.

salient in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to that, at the same time, any assessment of political participation in Central and Eastern Europe should take the variety of preconditions for political participation into account. Citizens' abstention from representational channels in particular might be explained by their negative experiences with the state and its bodies before 1989. However, it might also be a symptom of a crisis of representative democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, which is rather rooted in the transformation and which might not be solved by simple generational change.

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