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PÁL NYÍRI \*

'My Heart's Anna': Intimacy, Affect, and  
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**Abstract**

In Europe, youth volunteers are a small segment of a growing and increasingly diverse Chinese presence. Currently limited to Eastern Europe, including a handful in European Union member states such as Hungary and Poland, Chinese volunteers may later participate in domestic volunteering projects in Western Europe as well. As elsewhere, volunteering is linked to other ways of mobility. Studying abroad can be a stimulus to volunteering and vice versa; volunteering is typically accompanied by experiences of sightseeing and nature tourism that are shared with other young Chinese (tourists, students and expatriates). Yet it also represents a potentially new, more compassionate modality of engaging with the unfamiliar. This is significant against the background of the rapidly changing power relations between Europe and China, analyses of which often portray Europe as a hapless target of Chinese greed or manipulation.

*Keywords: trans-national volunteering, China, Eastern Europe, cosmopolitanism.*

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## *1. Introduction*

I am Ao Xuan, third-year tourism management student, currently applying for internships in South America and Africa (...) I am thinking, too, of doing a gap year before going to the U.S. for graduate study. (...) In 2013, I visited 6 countries, 40 cities, very ordinary, nothing over the top. Early in the year I applied to be an overseas volunteer in Kenya, East Africa, for a month. I finished in March and went to Egypt. During the summer break, I went to India to volunteer for two months. ... In September, I travelled in Iran for half a month and celebrated my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in the desert. (...) For 20 days around the national holiday (in October), I set out from Chengdu to backpack in Tibet and on to Nepal. During the days I spent at school this year, I studied Spanish and brushed up my Korean (...)

In India, (I went) from rejecting to accepting to liking (the country), I learned tolerance (...) I wouldn't want to close a window on understanding a new world by rejecting something. (...) I won't believe any more what people say about the world, I look with my own eyes (Ao Xuan 2014).<sup>1</sup>

Ao Xuan's blog posts, circulated on a number of Chinese social media platforms, are a long stream of self-observation and - analysis. She discusses at length the options she is considering for her next volunteering project, including language practice, personal interest and "résumé value," and offers advice to others. In a later post, she informs her readers that she finally chose to teach English in Guatemala. Her posts are an example of new ways in which young Chinese weave volunteering and travel in poorer countries into their self-making as global citizens, which also include ambitions to study and work in or just experience Western countries. These new ways of engagement with the world are a product of China's emerging middle class sensibilities and reflect a new facet of the globalisation of China's affluence. While the number of Chinese students, young corporate expatriates and lifestyle migrants in Europe is rapidly increasing, Eastern Europe also hosts a growing number of Chinese youth volunteers. This article explores how their volunteering experiences, often of an embodied nature, contribute to a self-professed cosmopolitanism.

## *2. Volunteering in China: A confluence of state interest and middle-class sensibilities*

The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province triggered a mass influx of spontaneous volunteers from across China. This phenomenon drew attention to the rise of youth volunteering in China, many commentators (e.g. Teets, 2009; Shieh and Guo, 2011) seeing it as a turning point for grassroots civil society. Yet volunteering is often encouraged by the state, local governments or educational institutions, some of which actually mandate a certain number of volunteering hours (Fleischer, 2011). Volunteer work, of course, has its origins in high socialism, but its current wave fits the

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<sup>1</sup> All blog posts are in Chinese. Translations are mine.

combination of neoliberal governing techniques with state paternalism that characterises China today. Indeed, it corresponds to state exhortations of moral citizenship (Tomba, 2009), assists goals of environmental protection, and helps deliver services to disadvantaged groups for which the state does not provide the resources (Teets, 2012). Indeed, Jessica Teets, revising her earlier interpretation in the surge of volunteering, now understands it as part of a ‘consultative authoritarianism’ (Teets, 2013).

Crucially, volunteering emerges from the confluence of state discourse; a popular view of a ‘moral void’ in contemporary China propagated by intellectuals and the media; the impulse of a new, affluent urban youth to fill that void and ‘do good;’ and the increasing expectation by employers that job applicants show evidence of meaningful social engagement. This situation displays close parallels to the ‘humanitarianization of the public sphere’ in Europe and the U.S. (Muehlebach, 2012; Grewal, 2014). But in China, volunteering projects stretch over a range from the completely state-driven (such as at international sports events) to the encouraged (most service delivery projects), the tolerated (work with rural migrant children, HIV patients and other ‘sensitive’ groups) and occasionally the persecuted when a group is seen as overly independent (such as the rural network of Liren school libraries, forced to close in 2014).

### *3. The origins of overseas volunteering*

Sixty years ago, post-World War II global infatuation with the United States was slowly beginning to fade. Loud and obnoxious American tourists were the butt of scorn around the world, and as the Vietnam conflict dragged on, the motives of Americans abroad were attracting increasing suspicion. In 1958, *The Ugly American* by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer marked the beginning of a wave of criticism of American foreign policy. The publication played a role in the U.S. government’s decision to establish the Peace Corps, an organisation charged with delivering part of foreign aid by dispatching volunteers abroad. It was to improve Americans’ image abroad while helping them develop a deeper understanding of the world.

As time passed, international volunteering emerged in more countries, initially as a government-engineered tool of public diplomacy and later as a complex sector with state and private actors that produced an increasingly globalised architecture of aspirations, activities, and support structures. In the fifty years after its founding, the Peace Corps dispatched over 200 thousand volunteers overseas. (After 9/11, both George W. Bush and Barack Obama pledged to double its size as a response to the growth of anti-American sentiments around the world.) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, founded in 1965, sent over 39 thousand over the same period. The positive impact of young volunteers from the ‘free world’ on their sending countries’ international image was a major factor behind the launch of these schemes during the Cold War.

Today, government-financed overseas volunteering schemes are an indicator of national wealth, openness to the world, and aspirations on the global stage. Two volunteering programmes of the German government, launched in 2008 and 2011 respectively, have already helped nearly 30 thousand young people volunteer abroad. World Friends Korea, started in 1990, has had over 20 thousand participants. The

stated goals of these programmes invariably include the strengthening of international understanding.

But although volunteering is imbued with a universalism reflected in the belief in a shared humanity, volunteers do not necessarily have the same ideals of what constitutes a desirable future. Some attempt to help people acquire skills intended to help them do better in a global market economy; others wish to help develop livelihoods while preserving perceived traditional forms of social organization. Some espouse 'global citizenship;' others act out of a sense of national responsibility or pursue agendas of religious or spiritual salvation (e.g. Watanabe, 2014). In recent decades, international volunteering has increasingly become dominated by NGOs and private non-profits that aim to match aspiring volunteers with the needs of NGO projects worldwide. Andrew Jones (2011) argues that international volunteering, by imparting flexibility and 'global skills' and blurring the distinction between work and leisure, in effect, trains young people for contemporary forms of corporate work.

Recently, global volunteering has expanded to countries with newly affluent citizenries that, not long ago, themselves were recipients of aid. As global hierarchies of wealth change, the distribution of wealth *within* societies becomes more unequal, and affluent populations become more mobile, the direction of volunteer flows becomes more complex. The appearance of young Chinese teaching English in Indian slums, summer camps in Russia, or refugee camps in Lebanon reflects this complexity. At one level, they are individuals who have accumulated particular globalized forms of cultural capital - namely, a degree of mastering the English language, skills and behaviours associated with upward mobility - and are now themselves becoming agents of its spread in a process that, simultaneously, generates more globally expendable social capital for them, in the form of skills, networks, and enhanced resumes in a situation of endemic graduate underemployment. At other levels, they pursue individual fulfilment and help their government's efforts to spread a more favourable image of China.

#### *4. A Chinese Peace Corps?*

A senior reporter for *Southern Weekend*, a leading Chinese news magazine, recently suggested that a Chinese initiative similar to the Peace Corps would go some way towards improving China's poor image in Africa (MqVU, 2104). In fact, the Chinese government has a long history of sending 'volunteers' to poorer countries. Medical teams have been dispatched to African countries since the 1960s. More recently, the government has been sending young people to teach Chinese around the world. Although their work is modestly remunerated, it is referred to as volunteering and described in terms of self-sacrifice, skills transfer, and world betterment. The Chinese government has also specifically included the dispatching of volunteers to Africa in the framework of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation. According to China's first White Paper on Foreign Aid, released in 2011, China had dispatched 405 youth volunteers to 19 countries during the preceding two years. Their duties had included teaching Chinese, practicing Chinese medicine, agricultural technical extension, computer training, and disaster relief. Through a separate channel, the Chinese government had dispatched 7,590 volunteer Chinese teachers.

The government's effort fits into a global pattern of harnessing international volunteering to the service of public diplomacy. More specifically, it is part of China's agenda to create a 'soft power' base comparable to that of the West and Japan.

But for those young people who wish to volunteer abroad, representing their nations is not necessarily an important motivation. The impulse to engage actively in projects perceived to be socially meaningful appears to be a corollary of the emergence of young middle classes around the world. Most organisations facilitating volunteering abroad are not government-affiliated, and some explicitly refer to global citizenship, often tied to notions of global social justice. Canada World Youth, for example, 'envisions a world of active, engaged global citizens who share responsibility for the well-being of all people,' and Global Visionaries, based in Seattle and San Francisco, aims 'to educate ... global citizens who promote social and environmental justice' (cited in Schattle, 2008: 78-79). AIESEC,<sup>2</sup> the world's largest student organisation, with headquarters in the Netherlands, places over 20 thousand student volunteers and interns internationally every year, many through a programme called Global Citizen. Volunteers from countries outside the West account for an increasing share of these. For example, between 2010 and 2012, the six largest sending countries of AIESEC volunteers in the Ukraine were China, Turkey, Brazil, India, Poland, and Indonesia. In Russia, the top senders were China, Brazil, Poland, Colombia, Indonesia and India.

This reflects a fast-paced globalisation of international volunteering, a sector with diverse actors in terms of goals, activities, and target populations, but nonetheless with some identifiable shared values and promises. Volunteering programmes abroad promise their participants the satisfaction of doing good and intimate experiences with people distant from them, most of the time, not only in terms of geography and culture but also in terms of class. Returning home a more authentic person, encountering people who are poorer but happier: these tropes are so widespread in global volunteering that volunteers probably expect to experience them.

### *5. What motivates Chinese volunteers abroad?*

While no comprehensive figures on Chinese volunteers abroad – either government-sponsored or via other channels – are not available, it is clear that their numbers are rising. What makes some young people want to volunteer abroad rather than in their own societies? This choice can be contested: in China, overseas aid is often criticized for diverting resources from the domestic poor. The promise of adventure and exotic destinations may be a draw; the desire to experience the unfamiliar indicates a certain openness to other life-worlds and, perhaps, a sensitivity to 'distant suffering' (Boltanski, 1999) or 'compassionate cosmopolitanism' (Hanmerz, 2004: 27). In some cases, actual experiences abroad dampen that enthusiasm, but in others it becomes stronger and more committed, leading to careers in international organisations or academia. For young Chinese, volunteering abroad is such a new phenomenon that it

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<sup>2</sup> AIESEC stands for 'Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales,' or International Association of Students in the Economic and Business Sciences. The full name is no longer used since the association's membership has extended beyond economics and business.



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is too early to say whether it will correlate with career choices or a more open or reflexive worldview. But the blogs and tweets that they post online in copious numbers suggest that, for many of them, it is an eye-opening and much anticipated experience, and one that can involve careful planning. As AIESEC requires every overseas volunteer to publish a blog post on their experiences and many post additional pieces on other accounts, the repository of texts generated in this way can be seen as representative of a large body of overseas volunteers. For this article, I read nearly a thousand blog posts generated between 2014 and 2016.

No doubt, Ao Xuan, the blogger, is a privileged young woman whose family has the means to pay her tuition in the U.S. and, in the meantime, humours her fancies that take her around the world. Her breathless advice-column style of writing sometimes comes across as over-the-top. But her hunger to engage with the world in as many of its aspects as possible is unquestionably sincere, and the circulation of her posts suggests that enough young Chinese find her narration inspiring. Certainly, being well-versed in global fashions or having the wherewithal to study in Western countries does not always produce reflexivity, curiosity, or openness to alternative views, as nationalist demonstrations by well-to-do Chinese students worldwide demonstrated in 2008 (Nyíri and Zhang, 2010). Yet at least some students who leave Mainland China harbour explicit aspirations of 'international citizenship' (Xu, 2015: 33). Ao Xuan is emphatic on this point: 'Why don't we reflect on ... how we force concepts carried from the environments in which we grow up onto people we encounter on those distant continents?'

Like many others, Ao Xuan began her quest by searching AIESEC's offers. AIESEC has been operating in China since 2005. Today, the country is the top source of AIESEC volunteers worldwide. For a fee and after a vetting process, AIESEC matches applicants with projects that seek volunteers and provides advice. In 2013, AIESEC China sent 2,847 volunteers abroad, up from 1,291 in 2010. The number of Chinese AIESEC volunteers in Egypt and Kenya rose from five and nine in the summer of 2010 to 78 and 118, respectively, two years later. In India, they made up 35 per cent of all AIESEC volunteers, so many that the experience of 'diversity' in teams was under threat. This caused AIESEC to reduce the number of placements overall, and in India in particular. In 2014, the number of volunteers from China dropped to 2,754.

While there are no statistics, AIESEC staff say it is the largest provider of volunteer placements abroad in China. Despite the Chinese government's call for more overseas volunteers, however, AIESEC receives no government support. At most universities, it operates - in the words of Célestine Yu, the head of AIESEC's branch at Southwest University of Finance and Economics, a particularly active branch that helped Ao Xuan go abroad - as an 'underground organisation.'<sup>3</sup> Some of the more open-minded, smaller schools have allowed it to register as a university organisation, but generally, it is not allowed to advertise, and some universities actively suppress it. This practice is likely to be due to university managements' desire to avoid the risk of incurring government disapproval for working with organisations not explicitly supported by the state, as well as, according to Yu, of being held responsible by parents for students getting into accidents abroad. Although AIESEC's

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<sup>3</sup> I interviewed Yu during her exchange year at the University of Lille, France, in October 2014.

communication makes no reference to government policy, it is occasionally influenced by the latter. For example, an internal document states that while AIESEC does send volunteers to Vietnam, it is ‘unsuitable to build too many partnerships’ there ‘because of the limitations of the broader China–Vietnam political environment.’

Yu herself first heard about AIESEC in high school. As a first-year student of French at Sichuan Normal University, AIESEC helped place her as a volunteer teaching English in a slum in the Indian Punjab together with other volunteers from Brazil and Taiwan. Although she found the experience poorly organised and physically overwhelming, she nonetheless describes it as transformative, one that changed her from an introverted bookworm into a more open and accepting person and gave her new ideas about the countries her fellow volunteers came from. It was also a cheap way to travel: 6 weeks in India cost her 10,000 yuan (around \$1,600), including the rather hefty 2,500 yuan she had to pay AIESEC.

For many volunteers, Yu said, travelling on a shoestring was the motivation for going abroad. Others wanted to ‘add points’ to their CVs (some degree programmes in China require an internship, and spending that time abroad was seen as a bonus). Such factors explained in part why most volunteers tended to be business or foreign language students. But many others volunteered for the experience itself. And, Yu added, even those who had other motivations tended to undergo something similar to her own change of personality. One volunteer, writing about her experiences during a month of English teaching in a poor neighbourhood of Surabaya, Indonesia, for an essay competition sponsored by AIESEC and the hospitality site Airbnb, described an overwhelming sense of human warmth and hospitality within her host household and among neighbours. The volunteer, who went by the English name Fiona, stayed at the house of a schoolteacher living in very modest circumstances (‘they just had a simple tofu soup with rice for three meals a day’) but described a moment when she ‘felt I would like to live here for the rest of my life’ (AIESEC China, 2014a).

Such moments of elation may be precisely the sort of intimate experiences of the ‘other’ that volunteers all over the world seek when they embark on their trips, but they go against the grain of prevalent attitudes in China that value economic development, are contemptuous of ‘backward’ countries – an attitude frequently applied to Southeast Asia – and have no room for romanticizing poverty. Attitudes towards Indonesia are often tinged with specific animosity because of that country’s history of discrimination against ethnic Chinese, so much so that a 2012 internal report by AIESEC reassured staff that ‘there is no need to be too worried about anti-Chinese’ incidents. Yet, although Surabaya has a significant ethnic Chinese population, Fiona makes no reference to ethnic Chinese in her post, and indeed uses the Indonesian name of the city rather than the Chinese one, Sishui.

Even more dramatically than her emotions towards her hosts, Fiona’s post laid bare her affection for her fellow volunteers. ‘I used to doubt whether I could get along soon enough with young people from a dozen countries,’ she wrote, but her misgivings quickly dissipated, and she developed an attraction bordering on infatuation to a young African woman who introduced her to bar hopping:

My heart’s Anna, she is such a cool girl! From head to toe, she radiates a Black temperament that’s free and easy and at the same time mature. ... She is a

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Muslim with her own ideas who charts her own path and accepts no rules.  
Words can't express my admiration and love for her. ...

Once having been abroad, many volunteers want to go back; repeat rates are high. Zhang Boyang, a second-year student at Nanjing College of Accounting, went to Kazakhstan to teach English at a summer camp. In her bog post, she voiced a frequent refrain by Chinese volunteers: that Kazaks (or Africans, or Indonesians) are much poorer than Chinese – 'a little like China's level 20 or 30 years ago, but they are really so much happier than we are.' She, too, described returning home a new person: 'I no longer felt that spending time to find out what I was good at or liked was a waste of time: the world is so big, there are so many things to do, it's necessary to take time to explore' (AIESEC China, 2014b). Back in Nanjing, Zhang set up an AIESEC chapter at her college. After graduation, she went abroad again as an intern with Ernst & Young in the Netherlands, and after a year, she was offered a job.

That so many volunteers went abroad again, Yu explained, was in part the effect of developing an international circle of friends. Most of the time these are fellow volunteers, but in some cases they are locals. 19-year-old Wendy describes her parting with the six-year-old son of her black middle class Johannesburg host family in moving terms. Every day he came to her room to wake her up; at night, he bade her good night. Before going to work, she took him to school; most days, she took him out for a treat. When she left, the boy clung to her, crying and saying he wanted to go back to China with her (WengDan13, 2016).

## *6. Volunteers' stories*

AIESEC asks every returned overseas volunteer to post a story about her or his experiences. In the months after the 2016 summer school holiday, they posted over 700 of these. The largest number of volunteers went to Egypt, followed by Sri Lanka, Russia, Indonesia, and India. Most went abroad following their first or second year at university and who were, thus, between 19 and 21. A typical stay abroad lasted between one and two months. The most common type of project appears to have been English teaching, but although most projects tend to involve either children or the environment, they cover a rather wide range of settings and interactions. For example, while some Chinese volunteers in Africa worked at rural boarding schools, others visited the homes of poor families in South African townships to deliver food and consumer goods and to play with children, as well as soliciting donations from local businesses. Some worked among large teams of foreign volunteers from all over the world; others were the only foreigners in local teams.

The stories are intended to be testimonials, attesting to life-changing experiences so that more young people would be inspired to join the ranks. (As one of the titles puts it, 'A Bigger World, A Better Self.')

They are by no means spontaneous records, even less so than some of the personal blog entries. Nonetheless, they are written in a variety of ways that does convey a sense of the range of settings in which Chinese volunteers work and the effects those have on them. Some are rather dry accounts of the projects, others highly personal and nearly ecstatic, yet others convey a sense of perplexity or introspection; finally, some reveal a genuine interest in the substance of local livelihoods and issues (such as what leads

otherwise kind and funny teachers in Tanzania to use corporal punishment and whether it is effective). Some focus on fellow volunteers, others, such as one of a visit to a South African co-worker's childhood home in Soweto that has one bed for the whole family, describe friendships with locals. A few reflect on the reasons they decided to go abroad; some of these relate to personal crises such as a loss of direction, doubts about choices for the future (often based on parental advice of following peers), or, as one volunteer returned from Thailand wrote, 'a broken heart' that made her 'want to do things I have not dared do before' (Ji Wantong, 2016). Often, preferences for a destination are influenced by earlier impressions. For example, one volunteer chose South Africa because of her interest in jewellery as well as her memories of watching the football World Cup on television.

A frequently recurring trope is that volunteering felt 'like a dream.' The sense of liminality – of a suspension of the norms observed in ordinary life and a consequent observation of one's experiences and behaviour as, in retrospect, 'unreal' – is, of course, typical of volunteering and indeed of travel in general. Such a framing can, however, also work to facilitate narrating volunteers' emotional responses to their environment, not all of which are unequivocally positive. A volunteer at an HIV prevention project in South Africa describes her astonishment at high school girlfriends who go together to get contraceptive injections after school (VeraYoung, 2016). But such accounts convey a sense of grappling with difference rather than rejecting it. Only very rarely does one encounter summary judgement such as that of a volunteer at a youth summer camp in Belarus who labelled cafeteria food – in English – 'ugly and uneatable.' Although she, too, balanced this with a positive assessment of the youth and the teachers, it was clear that the country with its ubiquitous Lenin statues impressed her little.

One of the most engaging reads is an account by Shanny, a volunteer in Egypt who found herself drawn to a female Turkish teammate. Shanny's initially ambivalent attraction to 'Alangu' (a 'Chinese' name she gives her) grows into an obsession as the chronicle proceeds. In the long text, there is little mention of the volunteers' project or indeed of Egypt; most of it is taken up by descriptions and photos of Alangu against backgrounds of bus rides and night revelries under the desert stars. Like Anna, Alangu is a party girl. Her frequent drunkenness and flirting both surprises Shanny (as it goes against her image of Muslims) and, initially, repels her. But her self-confidence and wilfulness also attracts Shanny, and they become inseparable. There is sexual innuendo in Shanny's account of an awkward moment of embracing Alangu and being interrupted by a fellow volunteer (Shanny\_Chua, 2016).

The sort of emotional and physical intensity in describing intimacy with former cultural strangers displayed in Fiona's and Shanny's accounts is particularly effective in conveying the change undergone by volunteers. Occasionally, too, there are actual descriptions of romantic involvement – for example, with a Sri Lankan diving instructor. If this unexpected experience of feeling at ease in unfamiliar places and with unfamiliar people is a form of embodied cosmopolitanism, then a very different form is conveyed through references to English-language popular culture and the English- or Cantonese-sounding (thus evoking Hong Kong pop culture) names or online handles chosen by volunteers. The posts ostensibly serve to introduce unfamiliar, mostly poor non-Western societies, and often profess fervent love for the people and their lifestyles. Yet the frame within which local authenticity is to be

understood and appreciated is a global English-language modernity that unites Chinese volunteers with like-minded young people elsewhere, notably other volunteers.

As the blog posts are abundantly illustrated with photos, the same trends can be observed in the visual representations: invariably, volunteers post photos with locals (host families and in the setting of the project, often including children), scenery and monuments, as well as group photos with non-Chinese volunteers. While there is the occasional joy of meeting a fellow Chinese in an unexpected location, the stories frame interactions with locals and fellow volunteers alike in terms of discovering their shared humanity. An alternative frame that would posit Chinese and Nepalis or Indonesians as fellow Asians, and in which Chinese volunteers would have a cultural edge over their Western peers in understanding the people they work with (cf. Yamaga, 2006; Watanabe, 2014) is, at least in these multinational settings, notably absent. Other perceived categories, such as that of Muslim societies as conservative, are often actively questioned. A recurrent theme is religion, particularly Islam, which volunteers typically regard as alien and somewhat frightening but fascinating at the beginning, but come round to see with more ease and, in some cases, approve of as a moral compass. 'Is religion really that alien?' asks the title of one of a post from Bahrain (Ritian xiao gege, 2016). The most perceptive accounts manage to suspend judgement and avoid referring to either Chinese or Western standards. As one post admits, 'I am more of an observer than a volunteer' (Xiao zhu, 2016).

A central theme, and sometimes explicit aim, of the stories is to dispel perceived prejudice in China that views African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian countries as backward, dangerous, or hostile. A compilation of seven stories by AIESEC Southwest Finance's World Citizen Training Programme begins with listing what the editors perceive as the common view of a country ('the daily life of Indians: raping and being raped,' 'Lebanon: death and decay') and then proceeds to contrast those with volunteers' impressions: Indians respect traditional culture and live in beautiful houses, young people in Beirut go out dancing every night (AIESEC Southwest Finance, 2017). In a post entitled 'An emotional beer with an Indonesian Muslim,' an anonymous male volunteer describes an Indonesian friend in the following way:

Kemas is 22 years old and 185 cm tall; his facial features can absolutely be described as handsome. His prominent nose and chiselled profile give an impression of agility, and the smile on his face makes one feel his friendliness. He is usually dressed in a casual short-sleeved shirt and trousers. In a crowd, no one would tell him apart from a Chinese. If you see him, you definitely wouldn't associate him with Muslims. (AIESEC fu Yinni zhiyuanzhe, 2016)

The author does not need to state that he is writing against the double stereotype of Southeast Asians as short and swarthy and of Muslims as fierce-looking and oddly dressed, and certainly not at all like Chinese. He then proceeds to describe how Kemas, who comes from a strongly observant middle-class family, treated him to a beer and asked him not to tell anyone. In other words, not only did Kemas behave contrary to expectations, but also showed his trust by sharing an experience he kept secret from his parents. The author's conclusion could almost be an anthropologist's:

Western secular lifestyle and the tradition of living as a Muslim may clash in their essence, but in actual life they smoothly find a delicate balance ... In this way, the mosque and the bar strangely but harmoniously coexist. (Ibid.)

Another male volunteer in Indonesia begins his account with listing some of the things Chinese people associate with Indonesia: 'Poor, anti-Chinese, fried rice, volcanoes ... But naïve me believes that "Love can change everything" (don't laugh).' The title of a third post, 'Malaysia isn't a mess, it's paradise' (Luo Zekai 2016), speaks for itself.

Contrast between pre-departure anxieties and reality on the ground is a frequent theme. 'Piglet' writes about the 'strong sense of insecurity that hit' her when her Tanzania-bound plane took off, remembering her mother's admonition never to go out alone in Africa, and the 'sense of comfort and ease' that never left after the first night out under the stars at her destination. A volunteer English teacher at a rural school, Piglet also describes how her initial judgment that her pupils were speaking faulty English changed after she realised that it was possible to be a sophisticated user of English despite following locally specific standards. 'To conclude "This is wrong" without a deep understanding of a new culture is highly superficial,' she decided. She also observed that it required hard work to distinguish between inevitable differences that needed to be accepted as outcomes of different cultural standards and practices that one should insist on changing (Xiao zhu, 2016). A volunteer who returned from Slovakia wrote that the 'point of overseas volunteering is ... not necessarily changing the world, but getting a clearer understanding of this world ... accepting the world's diversity, embracing the world's imperfections' (weiwei, 2016).

Such reflection is particularly noteworthy because it takes place at a time of both rising nationalism in China and an expanded range of encounters with non-Chinese in the context of the globalisation of Chinese businesses. This combination has resulted in a growing perception that Chinese people and Chinese interests are constantly being slighted in other countries. Such suspicions periodically explode in online invective and sometimes offline protest, whether against the Ghanaian government rounding up Chinese miners, the Malaysian government dragging its feet in the inquiry about a Malaysian plane that vanished with a majority of Chinese passengers, or the Vietnam and the Philippines opposing China's claims in the South China Sea. Added to the stereotype of Africans and Southeast Asians as lazy and of Muslims as dangerous (Nyíri, 2006), such issues quickly evolve into campaigns of abuse, threats, and consumer boycotts (Nyíri, 2009). The young urban consumer class, from which volunteers hail, often takes the lead in these. Against this background, the World Citizen Training Programme is particularly significant. It is significant, too, against the background of increasingly unfavourable coverage of the perceived social insensitivity of Chinese corporate expansion in Africa and elsewhere receives in Western media.

This does not mean that the stories are devoid of stereotyping. Often, Indonesians, Africans, Nepalis or Sri Lankans are described as simple, honest (*chunpu*) and happy, adjectives frequently encountered in the more mainstream, unflattering narratives of poorer countries but here meant as positive, though necessarily ambivalent, attributes of premodern societies, akin to the Western narrative of the 'noble savage' (cf. Nyíri, 2013). This perceived contentedness with a



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simple life with few material riches elicits a mix of admiration, perhaps even envy, and worry, as in a post by Ada, a volunteer who taught English at a Sri Lanka orphanage. Having first written that 'Sri Lankans are all so kind, simple and honest, and their happiness, too, is so simple,' she relates how she was taken aback when, asked about their 'dream job,' the children, next to 'teacher' and 'doctor' (which were, apparently, appropriate to aspire to in her mind) also mentioned 'driver.' 'At that time, I became a little depressed and thought whether they would stay in this small town their whole lives.' She was heartened when she heard local university students talk about how joining AIESEC made them conscious of the environment, women's rights, and foreign affairs. 'These ideas about becoming world citizens with a global vision gave my heart a spark' (sdxxdadu, 2016). Clearly, Ada felt that, having become a 'global citizen' herself, she was now an agent of that mission.

### *7. China House, Nairobi*

Huang Hongxiang, a Columbia graduate in international development, was twenty-six when he founded China House. He also runs a website called 'China-South Dialogue,' devoted to 'citizen journalism' on China's engagements with Africa and South America. During his studies at Columbia, Huang spent several months in South America and wrote about the labour- and environment-related troubles of Chinese mining and metallurgy concerns. After graduating, as a fellow in journalism at a South African university, he wrote an exposé of Chinese involvement in ivory smuggling. He then moved to Nairobi and found a job as public relations officer at a small Chinese company. The company gave him an apartment to run China House and a shoestring budget.

Huang started out as an outspoken critic of both Chinese companies' environmental and labour practices abroad and the lack of Chinese reporting on these subjects, but has blunted his criticism as he canvassed support for China House, which he sees as a vehicle for a more socially meaningful and fair Chinese engagement with Africa, an incubator of corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects that will make a difference, a place where young, open-minded Chinese can meet African peers, and more ambitiously, as a laboratory for a new kind of Chinese-African engagement. As a first step, Huang persuaded his friend, a Nairobi-based manager of the state-owned Chinese company AVIC, to let AVIC sponsor a national precision part-making competition for students of vocational schools.

On the one hand, the story captures much of the contradictory dynamics of China's African engagements. AVIC, whose core business is exporting aircraft and parts, has its roots in the Chinese military-industrial complex and has in the past been subject to U.S. sanctions because of its business with Iran. But Huang's friend, Axel Qi, is a far cry from the standoffish, button-down managers that staff many state-backed Chinese projects in Africa. Qi grew up with the stories of his grandfather, an army doctor who worked in Somalia in the 1960s as part of Mao's aid programme to Africa. (During the 1960s and 1970s, 30 government-dispatched Chinese medical teams worked in nearly as many African countries, setting up rural clinics and reaching large segments of the local populations.) He made up his mind to make his own way to Africa and took the AVIC job because they agreed to send him to Kenya.

In Nairobi, Qi met and married a Japanese woman who works as a development consultant for the Japanese government – China’s main adversary – in Africa.

On the other hand, the case of China House also illustrates the way nationalism and cosmopolitanism can be simultaneously present in volunteering schemes. Huang castigates his fellow nationals for staying aloof of local societies in Africa and South America, dismisses their CSR schemes as formal exercises only designed to gain the approval of elites, and has even proposed that Chinese companies in Africa mandate that Chinese employees socialise with their local colleagues. Indeed, Huang has once described his trajectory as leading ‘from international public servant to world citizen’ (Huang, 2014). Yet he makes it equally clear that the ultimate goal of his efforts is to rectify China’s poor reputation in these countries. He envisions China House as a place for young Chinese to meet locals and other foreigners, but this very distinction reveals that he continues to see the world in terms of national groups.

Huang’s plan is to provide modest accommodation and contacts to allow ten Chinese interns, volunteers, and researchers to stay in Nairobi at a given time. Huang’s partner in the startup, Wang Yuan, who had studied public policy in the United States, is a research analyst at the Sino Africa Centre of Excellence Foundation (SACE), founded by a young Ghanaian businessman with business interests in Kenya and China.

When it opened, China House was an empty apartment with three mattresses to sleep on and piles of books, donated by the Chinese embassy, in lieu of chairs. But the first volunteers seemed unfazed. Within a month, China House was home to a ‘fellow’ – a postdoc from the Netherlands who studied Chinese land acquisitions in Africa – and a handful of student volunteers, all Chinese but most with international experience or ambitions. One came from Harvard, another from Sun Yat-sen University in Canton on her way to a master’s programme at Columbia, and a third from Peking University’s law school. Soon afterwards, three young people showed up after resigning their jobs in Peking and Canton. By 23 June 2014, the day Huang Hongxiang turned 26, he says he had received 82 applications.

One of the very first volunteers was Arting, a politics and economics student at Hong Kong University who had received a Hong Kong government scholarship because of her stellar results on the national university entrance examination. During her first two years at university, she did exchanges in Europe and the U.S. In the following year, cutting short a coveted paid internship with an international bank. Arting applied to China House as she had always wanted to go to Africa. In Nairobi, Arting was helping SACE with a survey of Chinese companies’ CSR practices in Kenya. Another intern, Richard, also came from Hong Kong, where he was studying marketing and international business management. He, too, first interned at an international bank, but found it unchallenging though well paid. When Arting told him about the China House internships, he quit and followed her. Unlike Arting, he had no special interest in Africa, but while studying, he developed an interest in social enterprises and was attracted to the concept of China House. In Nairobi, Richard was helping China House liaise with Kenyan public relations and social media companies to publicize the student competition sponsored by AVIC.

A third intern, George, was not an academic high-flyer. He completed his bachelor’s in public affairs management at a run-of-the-mill university in Mainland China and had just enrolled in a master’s in international relations at the University of



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Nottingham's Ningbo campus but decided to take a 'gap year' before starting to indulge his 'passion' for Africa. In Nairobi, George was an intern first at a law firm interested in developing a Chinese clientele and then at the Bank of Africa. More entrepreneurial and less driven by social concerns than Arting or Richard, he was nonetheless brimming with enthusiasm for Africa. 'After I came here, my perceptions of Africa totally changed,' he said. 'Good food, good weather, good environment...' After his return from Africa, George wanted to set up a home-grown platform for Chinese students wanting to go abroad and foreign students who wanted to do internships in China.

In fact, there already are home-grown online networks in China facilitate such exchanges, if not quite as focused as AIESEC. In 2011, 22-year-old Chen Lu launched CAPE, a blog to facilitate the exchange of ideas among young Chinese with experience abroad. Chen has been inspired by Ashoka, the global platform for social change with its slogan 'Everybody Can Be a Changemaker,' the influential idea-sharing platform TED, and the 'sharing economy' (Airbnb is a sponsor of both CAPE and AIESEC China, and the CAPE website features the Creative Commons logo). These connections give an idea of the cosmopolitan ethos embraced by CAPE, which quickly developed into a network of volunteers with a supporting digital infrastructure. As of early 2014, over 100 CAPE 'meetups' had taken place in 25 Chinese cities.

A separate circuit, with a home-grown infrastructure with few links to international organisations - and therefore largely invisible outside China - has arisen since 2008 to support disaster relief abroad. After the armed clashes in northern Burma in 2014 sent a wave of refugees to China who were subsequently forcibly repatriated, a network of local volunteers, volunteer translators, online activists and donors emerged to bring - essentially smuggle - emergency supplies to these displaced people inside Burma. After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, a number of Chinese volunteers flew to Kathmandu with supplies and cash, and an ad hoc network of Chinese translators and activists already in Nepal emerged locally to help direct these efforts. These networks, too, include key members who are outside China, including in Western countries, and who can translate up-to-the-minute news from English posts or provide advice on organising relief. According to a Netherlands-based activist involved in the effort in Burma, volunteers in disaster relief networks tend to be in their 30s or older, including entrepreneurs and managers with time and money to spend, as well as retired army or police officers with domestic disaster relief experience. As with AIESEC, their efforts receive no government support and, in fact, cannot be publicly advertised in China because of government sensitivity to being accused of interference in other countries' affairs. Moreover, on the ground, neither the activities of these volunteers nor those involved in AIESEC projects intersect with the work of official aid teams dispatched by the Chinese Red Cross and other government organisations. They largely inhabit three separate milieus that are spatially separate and differently configured in terms of relations with the local population and government.

### *8. Volunteers, China, and the world*

Volunteers from China and other countries with new middle classes - notably Turkey, Poland, India and Brazil - are certain to become more visible in the coming years.

While governments may try to promote and harness such initiatives for their own goals of ‘soft power,’ the individuals involved may equally leave their imprint on government agendas in the coming decades: that, at least, is what Huang Hongxiang hopes. Women like Fiona, whose Indonesian pupils besieged her with questions about Chinese culture, are exactly the kind of people the Chinese government wants to improve its popular image in Southeast Asia. And yet, remarkably, many more young Chinese volunteers abroad are teaching English – including at the British Way English Academy in Sri Lanka! – than Chinese, even in countries where it is an official language. In other words, they are standing in for native speakers of English in the same way as white Westerners have frequently done in China by virtue of their skin colour. Now, Chinese appear to have graduated into the category of the globally modern that bestows on them the capacity to teach the language of globality. This may not always be a blessing for their charges – and tells a separate, fascinating story about the global state of English – and, as a broader phenomenon, is certainly not without problems, as numerous critical studies of volunteering show. Nonetheless, working in multinational teams, free to form their own ideas about the world, can be a departure from ideas about global development hierarchies that prevail in China.

The few who try to carve out a niche for Chinese non-profit initiatives overseas, like Huang, largely attempt to stay on the good side of the Chinese government, since this is important for the success of their mission to attract more mainstream interest in China. Huang was pleased that China Central Television’s Africa bureau did a story on the opening of China House and that his CSR initiative with AVIC was ultimately embraced by the Chinese embassy in Nairobi – and swiftly appropriated as an activity to be run annually in the future. In an article he probably hoped would be picked up and circulated in China, he described the mission of China House as ‘heralding the peaceful and warm [nature] of China’s going out to the world.’ But, so far, his criticism of China’s engagements in Africa and South America has not become any more muted.

Volunteers are a small group among the growing numbers of Chinese who travel to the poorer countries of the world to do business or work as managers or technicians on projects involving Chinese investment or construction. In general, engagements by these migrants with local societies have been limited, and studies described their attitudes as characterized by a ‘civilizing mission’ to teach these societies how to develop through hard work (Nyíri, 2006). Such attitudes, though present, are remarkably rare in the accounts of AIESEC volunteers. As a growing number of young Chinese work around the world, and not only in rich countries, more of them, like Huang or Ao Xuan, question received wisdom about China’s relationship with the world. They no longer necessarily subscribe to the view that prevails in China, which holds that there is a hierarchy of nations according to economic development, that every nation ought to fight its way up that ladder, and that this fight takes place in a world shaped by a zero-sum rivalry of powers, principally between America and China. An increasing number of young Chinese either explicitly voice their doubts about this view or talk about the world in ways that eschew this framework. Others, however, see received wisdom confirmed by their actual experiences: a volunteer in Indonesia called his stay a ‘month-long lesson in patriotism;’ he was led to this by observing that almost all consumer goods in shops were made in China but were much more expensive than there. ‘Socialism is still the

best,' he concluded semi-jokingly, referring to China's official view of itself as a socialist country (Tan, 2016).

Moreover, a newfound acceptance of diverse lifestyles and views does not necessarily lead to an expanded ability to reflect on the elements of intolerance those views entail. In her long list of attributes of her Turkish fellow volunteer Alangu, Shanny mentions, in passing, that 'she likes paperbacks; the one at her fingertips right now is *Mein Kampf*.' She does not stop to ponder what this might mean, and never mentions her idol's political views, or, for that matter, the political repression that targets young people in Egypt. In fact, many accounts avoid reflecting on political or social issues altogether, although a significant minority does comment on issues such as social inequality and their own privileged position.

Actual contact with a diverse range of locals appears to be one of the main distinguishing characteristics of volunteering, and is built into its institutional architecture and ideology. But such experiences are not limited to volunteers. Just three weeks after arriving in Cote d'Ivoire, a young, French-educated Chinese man working at an international company in Abidjan felt sufficiently moved by what he saw as the discrepancy between the usual Chinese complaints about being victims of discrimination and biased criticism in Africa and the reality of them mistreating locals that he wrote an impassioned blog post for the site of Phoenix TV, the popular satellite television channel. Based on his personal experiences, he methodically repudiated the stereotypes, common in China, that Africans were lazy, looking for handouts, indifferent about delays, and uninterested in learning (Lu, 2014).

In a memoir of serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal, Jim Fischer writes: 'We thought we had answers to other people's problems, but we came away with more answers to our own problems' (Fisher, 2013: 181, quoted in Hindman 2014: 52). As Heather Hindman notes, a debate on the Peace Corps took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with some suggesting that

volunteers themselves should be seen as the product of the Peace Corps experience, not so much as aid workers supporting lands, but as a new kind of American citizen. One author suggested ... that volunteering should be seen as a required part of American and world citizenship. (Hindman, 2014: 52)

This view was underpinned by a survey of returned Peace Corps volunteers that found that while only 25 per cent thought their time abroad had been very valuable for the country they were in, 92 per cent believed that it had been very valuable to themselves (ibid.).

In Europe, youth volunteers are a small segment of a growing and increasingly diverse Chinese presence. For now, they are limited to Eastern Europe, including a handful in European Union member states such as Hungary and Poland. In the future, one may well find Chinese volunteers in domestic volunteering projects in Western Europe as well. As elsewhere, volunteering is linked to other ways of mobility. Studying abroad can be a stimulus to volunteering and vice versa; volunteering is typically accompanied by experiences of sightseeing and nature tourism that are shared with other young Chinese (tourists, students and expatriates). Yet it also represents a potentially new, more compassionate modality of engaging with the unfamiliar. This is significant against the background of the rapidly changing

power relations between Europe and China, analyses of which often portray Europe as a hapless target of Chinese greed or manipulation.

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## Employee Relations at Asian Subsidiaries in Hungary: Do Home or Host Country Factors Dominate?

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### Abstract<sup>1 2</sup>

Asian foreign direct investment is substantial in Hungary in regional comparison. Multinationals from China, India, Japan, and Korea are important investors in the Hungarian economy. The main aim of this article is to describe how home and host country institutions and business and management culture influence the operation of the companies in question, first of all in the various areas of human resource management. In the analysis, we rely mainly on the Varieties-of-Capitalism approach, given its emphasis on the organizational and related cultural differences that result in different types of capitalisms in the world economy. The article is based on company interviews conducted with the representatives of seven Asian subsidiaries in Hungary (1-10 interviews per company) that are operational in the automotive and/or electronics industry. Our conclusion is that management and labor relations in these companies evolve under the influence and through the interaction of related home and host country business culture, thus they contain elements of both. However, we found the clear dominance of host country impacts, which has become more pronounced over time.

*Keywords:* foreign direct investment, Asian multinational companies, emerging multinationals, impact on the local economy.

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## ***1. Introduction***

Asian foreign direct investment (FDI) is substantial in Hungary in regional comparison. Hungary is host to large Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Korean outward FDI to a greater extent than other new Member States of the European Union. Multinationals operational in the automotive, electronics, and other industries, as well as in certain services, from Japan, Korea, China, and India play an important role in the Hungarian economy. For example, the Japanese Suzuki and Denso, the Chinese Huawei and the Wanhua Group, the Korean Samsung and Hankook, and the Indian Apollo Tyres and SMR are all important companies that leave their marks on the performance of the Hungarian economy and/or on smaller regions of the country.

The main aim of this paper is to show how home and host country institutions and business and management culture influence the operation of the companies in question, first of all in various areas of human resource management (HRM). The general and business culture and *modus operandi* of Asian firms differ considerably from those of European and East Central European ones. These differences may cause problems in the everyday operation of subsidiaries (Adler and Graham, 1989) if they are not handled and taken into account at an early stage of investment. Furthermore, they can even influence the performance of the company through supporting certain types of modus operandi over others (Ambos and Schlegelmilch, 2008). Thus, the actual operational mode of a company may be a mix of adaptation to the local business environment and of maintaining certain home country practices. In this article, we analyze whether home or host country practices dominate in the areas of industrial relations, employee relations, and vocational training in selected Asian subsidiaries in Hungary. Selection of these areas is based on data availability. We concentrate on qualitative data obtained from company interviews. Our findings suggest that host country impacts dominate in the overwhelming majority of areas.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we present the theoretical framework of our analysis and a review of the related literature, followed by a brief background section on Asian FDI in Hungary. Then the methodology that was applied is briefly described. In the next section, we present the results of our analysis. The last section concludes.

## ***2. Theoretical basis and review of literature***

The literature offers a wide range of approaches to explain the differences in HRM between countries and also the variety of combinations multinational companies employ when transferring their home countries' rules, procedures and values, or opting for varying degrees of 'localization.' The most commonly used concepts and tools for such analysis come from three main disciplines: the international human resource management literature (IHRM), the school of thought concerning cross-cultural differences and, more recently, the field of Varieties of Capitalism (VoC). As defined by the *SAGE Handbook of Human Resource Management* (Hall and Wailes, 2009), IHRM is largely concerned with questions concerning 'the extent to which multinational companies reproduce similar sets of HR practices across their subsidiaries' (ibid.: 122). The study of cultural differences and cross-cultural business



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encounters sheds light on important factors such as individualism vs. collectivism, the degree of respect for hierarchy, the role of networks, work ethics, etc. (For a review of the literature, see e.g. López-Duarte et al., 2016.) While fully acknowledging the usefulness and applicability of both the IHRM and cultural approach, in this paper we shall analyze our qualitative raw data from the perspective of an extended VoC framework. We now present this approach and explain the reasons we used it in our analysis.

### *2.1 The Varieties-of-Capitalism approach*

The Varieties-of-Capitalism (VoC) approach, which has been widely used recently in the business literature (see e.g. Fernandez and Aalbers, 2016; Schneider and Paunescu, 2012; Schneider, Schulze-Bentrop and Paunescu, 2010; Witt and Jackson, 2016) is an institutionalist approach which was elaborated for Western developed countries (Amable, 2000). It is designed to help make sense of the systemic variety of developed capitalist economies' politico-economic institutions. As opposed to the Washington consensus and traditional neoclassical approaches that assume convergence among economies, it emphasizes the existence of different capitalist trajectories (Hall and Soskice, 2001) which depend to a great extent on local specificities. It assumes that the institutional structure determines the strategy of firms; the sources and origins of their competitive advantage. It distinguishes two main types of national political economy: Liberal Market Economies (LME), and Coordinated Market Economies (CME). In LME, companies coordinate their activities primary through hierarchies and competitive market arrangements. In CME, firms rely mainly on non-market relationships to organize and manage their activities. Overall, many transactions are governed by institutional arrangements that are external to the firm.

Thus the VoC approach is relevant at the micro-level as well: it increases understanding of how firms are able to induce their employees and business partners to make high asset specificity investments that enhance their competitiveness in international competition (Carney et al., 2009) – thus involving the type and characteristics of interactions with employees and partners that influence the company's capacity to create and exploit its core competencies, and therefore its level of competitiveness. The VoC approach concentrates on institutions and analyses in detail strategic interactions between firms and institutions in five main areas: the financial market; the labor market; educational and vocational training; corporate governance; and inter-firm relationships. These five spheres represent the institutional settings in which firms have to resolve their coordination issues. According to Hall and Soskice (2001), companies will adjust their strategies and organizational practices to take advantage of institutional opportunities at the location of their operations, therefore the institutional environment can confer a comparative institutional advantage on firms that align themselves with the opportunities and resources in their environment. Understandably, if a firm goes abroad and establishes its affiliates and subsidiaries in an environment which is institutionally different from that of its home country, it must adapt its *modus operandi* to a certain extent to its new environment, which may be very different to its domestic one. This is why it is worth analyzing the interactions of internationalized firms with, and the level of their adaptation to, their

foreign environment, which understandably differs (to a different extent with different host countries) from their home business environment.

Thus our main research question is the following: in the case of Asian subsidiaries operating in Hungary, does the host or home country institutional impact dominate (if present at all) in the various areas of operation of the firms?

Understandably, our research is only a first step in exploring this area. We cannot take into account many elements at the present level of our project. For example, the behavior of firms influences development in these five areas (financial market, labor market, educational and vocational training, corporate governance, and inter-firm relationships) as well. Furthermore, the different spheres are mutually reinforcing. There are other limits to the VoC approach and various critiques of the latter, such as the actual diversity of the market economy in various countries, the actual “diversion” from the predicted characteristics of LME/CME, the influence of politics and policies, and the problem of explaining fundamental institutional change (Kang, 2006) as well as its limits in the analysis of firm behavior (Carney et al., 2009).

## *2.2 Results of empirical studies*

Concerning one of our areas of analysis, the literature does not provide conclusive evidence about the applicability of the VoC approach to Asian economies. According to Carney et al. (2009), there is no unique form of capitalism, but several forms of Asian capitalisms which are fundamentally different from the Western types of capitalism. Witt and Redding (2013) present similar findings in an analysis which embraces all four countries in our sample (among others): China, India, Japan, and Korea. According to their findings, only Japanese capitalism can be integrated into the VoC approach. Other countries’ forms of capitalism are fundamentally distinct from the Western types. As the authors state: ‘the Varieties of Capitalism (VOC) dichotomy is not applicable to Asia; [...] none of the existing major frameworks capture all Asian types of capitalism; and [...] Asian business systems cannot be understood through categories identified in the West’ (Witt and Redding, 2013: 265). However, the authors categorized the 13 Asian economies under analysis into five groups according to various institutional variables: (post-)socialist economies, advanced city economies, emerging Southeast Asian economies, advanced Northeast Asian economies, and Japan. They underline the large diversity of Asian economies along various factors related to VoC. Furthermore, they emphasize important business elements which are present in many Asian countries but which exist neither in Western Europe nor in North America. For example, differences in business trust, and, related to this, in forming business networks, as well as the high level of family control in firms, different business-culture values, or the high level of informality. As far as the countries we examined are concerned, China and India belong to the (post-) socialist category, Korea is an advanced Northeast Asian economy, while, as we have seen, Japan forms a group in itself. Mazumdar (2010) analyses India’s fit and concludes that Indian capitalism is distinct (in line with the VoC approach), but also that any historical and economic history analysis should accompany the examination of factors which determine the classification of certain countries. Furthermore, the author shows that not all VoC factors are easily analyzed and relevant for India. Other authors underline further factors that influence Asian capitalism; for example, Andriessse et al. (2011)

propose a link between regional VoCs and global value chains in Asia. Similarly, Pananond and Giroud (2016) underline the differences in the institutional background of internationalizing Asian multinational firms.

On the other hand, as already seen, Japan can be integrated into the VoC approach (see e.g. Amable, 2001) and there are papers which have located one (Korea: Condé and Delgado, 2009; India: Sibal, 2014 and Mazumdar, 2010; China: Witt, 2010) or more (Hoen, 2013) Asian economies along the LME-DME spectrum in an extended VoC model or analyzed them according to the areas of the VoC approach. Here we do the latter and we agree with Condé and Delgado (2009: 21) that the VoC approach is ‘a valuable guide to research on the diversity of settings in which the capitalist order takes structure.’

As for Hungary’s case, it is similarly not straightforward. In East Central and Eastern Europe, authors have tried to fit emerging local capitalism into the VoC framework and found that it contains elements of both LME and CME, thus it can be perceived as a ‘mixed’ model (e.g. Mykhnenko, 2007). Others have stated that VoC differ considerably between the former Soviet Union and the new members of the European Union, and they cannot be integrated into the original VoC categories of LME and CME. Thus, some authors have customized the VoC framework and identified distinctive varieties of capitalism that embrace several countries of the region. Lane and Myant (2007) and Nölke and Vliegthart (2009) consider that the Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) presents common institutional characteristics and forms a distinctive VoC – Dependent Market Economies (DME). Their high reliance on foreign direct investment and incoherent institutional systems are important characteristics from this point of view. They thus have a specific type of comparative advantage that is based mainly on their role as an assembly platform for semi-standardized industrial goods, not on radical or incremental innovation (Nölke and Vliegthart, 2009; Farkas, 2011; Szanyi, 2012; Rugraff and Sass, 2017). On the other hand, Ozsvald (2014) noted that, while initially similar to each other, viewed from a later and different perspective (based on the development of stock exchanges and the concomitant pressure for the improvement of corporate governance mechanisms), the lumping together of the Visegrad countries conceals the important recent institutional divergence within this group of countries. Similar conclusions are drawn by Allen and Aldred (2012). It is important to note that, according to management research, diversity again characterizes the region, as management culture in CEE still differs considerably from Western European practices (Reynaud et al., 2007; or Karoliny et al., 2009 and Kazlauskaitė et al., 2013 specifically for human resource management) suggesting high heterogeneity and diversity within the region. Furthermore, it should be noted that many authors have pointed to the failures of the VoC approach in explaining and describing CEE capitalism – see e.g. Bohle and Greskovits (2007). In spite of these controversies, many characteristics of various VoC-related areas are straightforward for Hungary and for other countries of the CEE region – thus this unresolved classification issue does not hinder our analysis.

To our knowledge, only one paper has thus far tried to compare on the basis of VoC emerging economies in East Central Europe and in Asia. Hoen (2013) points out that, generally, European emerging economies (former transition economies and present Member States of the European Union) have overall converged to a different

extent to the LME, with the Baltic states and Poland becoming closest and the Central European countries, among them Hungary, somewhere in between (the group furthest from convergence is formed by South Eastern European countries). On the other hand, emerging Asian economies are converging towards a CME model with strong state influence and imperative bureaucracy, with China being in the lead (i.e. most similar to the coordinated model). The author does not expect convergence between the two groups of countries, thus expecting countries from the two continents to diverge towards two different models in the future. While we do not agree with this conclusion, we agree with the need to apply a dynamic approach; i.e., to consider changes over time.

The use of the VoC approach in our analysis is not without precedent in the literature. This approach can be fruitfully used in industrial relations and employment relations research. Based on the LME-CME distinction, Hamann and Kelly (2008) identify various areas (for example, for explaining labor market outcomes, differences in training and welfare regimes, differences in skill composition, etc.) in which the VoC approach may serve as a suitable analytical framework. Dibben and Williams (2012) extend the use of the VoC approach by incorporating emerging economies and their industrial relations into the analytical framework and by introducing the Informally Dominated Market Economy form of market economy. They also capture the impact of formal as well as informal institutions on employment relations in emerging economies. In human resource management, for example, Wilkinson and Wood (2017) base their analysis on the LME-CME dichotomy to understand similarities and differences in HRM practices between countries and the changes that occurred therein after the global crisis.

Overall, while acknowledging the weaknesses of the VoC approach, especially in succeeding at identifying a specific Asian type of capitalism, we agree with many other authors that the VoC approach and its five main areas of analysis represent a useful tool for comparing the institutional factors and operational practices present in various “national” capitalisms. This approach may prove to be useful when comparing host and home countries of foreign direct investment projects in the areas of institutions and practices, and thus the actual features of a subsidiary in a host country, especially in terms of employment and industrial relations.

### *3. Background: Asian FDI in Hungary*

As FDI data are now available that are in line with the Ultimate Investing Country (UIC) principle – whereby FDI is assigned to the country of the foreign investor that ultimately controls the investment in the host country (OECD, 2015) –, we have a clearer picture about how much FDI from Asia is invested in Hungary and other Visegrad countries. Previously, FDI data were broken down according to the nationality of the immediate investor, and as Asian multinationals quite often channel investments through other countries before they reach their final destination, this resulted in a low value for Asian FDI in Hungary. The latest BPM6 FDI data are available for Hungary for 2016, and here are presented broken down according to ultimate investment and direct investment (Table 1).

Table 1: FDI stock originating from the four countries under analysis  
(and Hong Kong) in Hungary in 2016 (million euros)

	direct	ultimate	direct as % total stock	ultimate as % total stock
China	165.82	1826.08	0.22	2.40
Hong Kong	505.08	167.67	0.66	0.22
India	-14.23	2077.75	-0.02	2.73
Japan	838.73	2373.80	1.10	3.12
Korea	1447.32	1357.95	1.90	1.78
Total	76202.71	76202.71	100	100

Source: Hungarian National Bank

It is obvious from Table 1 that the shares of the countries under analysis in the total FDI stock in Hungary are substantially larger than the shares for the nationality of the direct owners, with the exception of Korea (and Hong Kong, which is included in the analysis as the majority of Hong Kong FDI is in reality Chinese). The combined share of the four countries under analysis (plus Hong Kong) in reality exceeds 10 per cent of total FDI stock in Hungary, which is quite a substantial amount given the large geographical distance and, in the case of China and India, the large gap between the level of economic development of the home and host economies in question (and especially because of the fact that the home economies have substantially lower per capita GDP than the host country). On the other hand, it may be the large geographical distance or tax optimization which explains the dominant indirect nature of these investments (i.e. the use of intermediary countries and subsidiaries located in between the final/ultimate owner and the local subsidiary). Furthermore, among the BRICS members, which include India and China from our selected group of countries, another important explanation is that the real origins of investment are being concealed (Aykut et al., 2017; Kalotay, 2012), given in certain cases the hostile or at least non-welcoming approach to these investments in developed and in European countries.

Comparison of the data of the Visegrad countries<sup>3</sup> shows that Hungary is an important host country for Asian FDI (Table 2). In per-capita terms, Hungary has more FDI than the Czech Republic, and particularly Poland.

<sup>3</sup> Data for Slovakia are not available.

Table 2: FDI stock originating from the four countries under analysis (and Hong Kong) in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary (million USD)

	Korea		India		Japan		China		Hong Kong		Five countries together		Per capita USD
	Immediate	Ultimate	Immediate	Ultimate	Immediate	Ultimate	Immediate	Ultimate	Immediate	Ultimate	Immediate	Ultimate	Ultimate
Czech Republic	3255	3046	-1	100	1908	3314	707	1096	116	204	5985	7760	730
Poland	1135	1784	103	299	887	4996	223	827	347	465	2695	8371	218
Hungary	1533	1438	-15	2200	888	2514	269	1942	441	160	3116	8254	845

Source: OECD BMD4 - latest available data (Czech Rep. and Poland: 2017; Hungary: 2016).

Hungary is an especially important target in regional comparison for Indian and Chinese FDI, while Korean and Japanese investors are relatively more present in the Czech Republic. Overall, the presence of investors from all the four countries is substantial in Hungary (above 1 billion USD for each country!), which makes Hungary a good case for our analysis.

#### *4. Research question, methodology, and data*

In this article we describe how we assessed whether the host or home country institutional impact dominates (if present at all) in Asian subsidiaries that operate in Hungary. We base our analysis on the VoC approach, thus we concentrate on the areas of industrial relations, employee relations, and vocational training. These areas are widely analyzed in the VoC literature, which helps us to compare the practices of Hungarian subsidiaries with those of the home countries of the multinationals under analysis. Thus we can rely on the results of previous studies wherein the abovementioned features of the various types of Asian capitalism and the dependent-market-economy (DME) type of capitalism (Hungary) were assessed. First, we use these results to present the institutional characteristics of the economies under analysis in the VoC framework. In the second step, the paper relies on detailed company case studies based on semi-structured interviews. After selecting the areas for analysis, we compiled two sets of questions (see Annex). These questions were used to conduct interviews with the representatives of seven Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Indian-owned subsidiaries in Hungary (1-10 interviews per company) separately with blue-collar workers and with managers. There were two Japanese, Indian, and Chinese companies each, and one Korean firm in our sample. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the authors between December 2016 and May 2019 (Table 1). Each interview lasted between half an hour (mainly blue-collar workers) and two hours (mainly managers). All interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality. The answers were noted down by the authors in detail and then analyzed. The number and length

of interviews did not justify the use of qualitative data analysis software or the application of any coding techniques.

We must note that our access to the subsidiaries in question was not without problems. In certain cases it took a long period of time to get in touch with the management of the companies (usually with the help of an intermediary; for example, a representative of an industry association, a ministry, etc.) This limited access explains the low number of companies in our sample. While our sample is understandably not representative, we were able to access some 'flagship' Asian-owned subsidiaries in Hungary and some of minor importance, thus we think our results are generalizable.

As noted, Hungary is a relatively important host to Asian FDI in the CEE region, which makes it a good case for analysis. All seven companies are operational in the automotive and/or electronics industry, which are the leading hosts of Asian FDI in Hungary (KSH, 2018). Concentrating on these two, highly interrelated industries helped us to assess the industry impact, which may be significant in the area under examination (Alkhalidi et al., 2014). All seven firms are among the leading investors in Hungary from their own countries. The information from the company interviews was supplemented by data from the balance sheets of the subsidiaries.

Table 3: Details of interviews conducted in the framework of the research

Company No.	No. of sites in Hungary	Year of establishment/acquisition	Entry mode	Number of employees at present	Number of interviews managers/blue-collar workers	Date of interviews
1	2 plants in one location, 1 in another	1989	green-field	2500 permanent + 500 seasonal	1 (HR manager)	12 April 2017
2	Budapest/HQ, countryside: 1 logistics center, 1 factory unit	2005	green-field	330 (white-collar, directly) + 2500 (blue-collar, indirectly)	4 (managers: HR, marketing PR, legal, logistics)	4 times between winter 2016 and April 2017
3	1	1991	green-field	3000 permanent + 200 seasonal	2 managers (HR and general)	April 2017
4	3 factory sites + 1 purchasing and warehouse	One in 2009; Second in 2011;	brown-field	2400 total	4 with managers & 5 with blue-collar	January 2017



Company No.	No. of sites in Hungary	Year of establishment/ acquisition	Entry mode	Number of employees at present	Number of interviews managers/ blue-collar workers	Date of interviews
	location	Third in 2016			workers	
5	3 plants + HQ in Budapest	2006 (All three)	brown-field	850 total	4 with managers & 4 with workers	December 2016
6	1	2017	acquisition (the acquired plant was established through a greenfield investment)	2000	2 managers & 1 worker	April-May, 2019
7	1	1998	green-field	650-700	1 manager	May, 2019

Source: Authors' compilation based on company interviews conducted in the framework of the research

Our qualitative research justifies why we relied on company interviews: in-depth information about employee relations and vocational training could only be obtained through interviews. The information collected from the interviews with Asian subsidiaries in Hungary is presented and compared in the three following areas: industrial relations, employee relations, and vocational training. Here we assess whether host or home country practices are dominant in the case of the subsidiaries.

This type of methodological approach of relying on interview-based company case studies has both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that we were able to obtain detailed quantitative and qualitative data in the target areas and their development over time. Conducting multiple interviews for five companies allowed us to compare the opinions of managers and workers in a given area – however, differences were not large. At the same time, the low number of companies in the sample results in the limited generalizability of our conclusions.

Overall, our contribution to the literature is threefold. First, we reinforce the applicability of the VoC framework for analyzing various areas of human resource management in local subsidiaries of foreign-owned multinationals. Second, we contribute to the VoC literature as well: our analysis supports the results of the VoC literature concerning the problem of whether a 'unified' Asian variety of capitalism exists. Our results also show the diversity of Asian economic models on the basis of information collected about Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Indian subsidiaries in Hungary. Third, we show the dominance of host country characteristics over home country ones in the operations of Asian subsidiaries in Hungary.



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### *5. Do home or host countries' impacts dominate in applied business practices? An analysis of Asian subsidiaries in Hungary*

After having presented the main characteristics of Asian FDI in Hungary, we now turn to the question of management in our sample of subsidiary companies. From among the managerial functions we shall focus on various areas of human resource management (HRM), which is perhaps the most important issue when analyzing the interaction between home and host country culture and institutions.

We depart from the results of the already mentioned VoC-based theoretical and empirical analysis in comparing certain institutional characteristics of the Asian countries in our sample and the DME model which characterizes Hungary (Table 4), based on Witt-Redding (2013) and Carney et al. (2009) for Asian countries and Rugraff and Sass (2017) for Hungary. In the literature, the 'business system' (Whitley, 2000) and 'national business systems' (Morgan, 2001) approaches state that an institution's control over products, labor, and financial markets differ by national economy. In this approach, the national effects of the institutions of both the home and host countries of the multinational company are identified.

It is important to note here that the four Asian countries' 'home country VoC' differ to a great extent, as already mentioned. Similarities can be found among them in the dominant business group, which characterizes all the Asian countries under examination. These are domestically-owned 'networks' of companies (Witt, Redding, 2013). On the other hand, in the DME model the dominant actors in the economy are the local affiliates or subsidiaries of foreign-owned multinational companies (Nölke and Vliegenhart, 2009). One important similarity is a low level of workers' organization and low union density in all five cases. In other areas, the five countries differ from each other. For example, the level of state intervention, the contracts of employees, and the provision of vocational training is different. The level of state intervention is highest in the Chinese case, while in Japan it is minimal. In the case of Hungary, we can evaluate the level of state intervention as relatively low; however, its tendency to increase after 2010 has been well-documented (Mihályi, 2015; Szanyi, 2016; Sass, 2017). The contracts of employees differ due to the special Japanese type of lifelong employment on the one hand, and on the other due to the 'mixed' economies of China and India wherein state-owned firms use long-term-, and privately-owned firms short-term contracts (Witt and Redding, 2013). In Hungary, while on average contracts are longer term, there are many 'techniques' through which especially Hungarian-owned SMEs make these contracts shorter term (see e.g. Fazekas and Varga, 2005). Pay rises and promotion depend on different factors as well as skill acquisition. For example, skill acquisition is related mainly to on-the-job training in Japan and Korea, while in the other three cases job-seekers should accumulate skills before they enter the labor market (or while on the labor market). The frequency of training provided by the companies is related to the previous factor: it is more frequent in Japan and Korea and rare in the other Asian cases, while in Hungary it is relatively frequent, reflecting partly the asynchrony between education and the skills required for the actual jobs. Even here there is a large difference between the dominant multinational firms' local subsidiaries or large local firms that provide more training, and Hungarian-owned SMEs which do not offer such training

to their employees. We can also note that, in certain areas, two or three countries may be similar to each other, but overall there are very few areas in which all the Asian countries in the sample have the same characteristics.

Table 4: Institutional characteristics of the countries under analysis

	<b>China</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Korea</b>	<b>DME</b>
<b>industrial relations</b>					
high or low share of expatriates among the leading managers of the subsidiary	not relevant				mixed, usually low
State intervention in wage bargaining	high	low-medium	low	medium	company-level, low
subsidiary-/company-level coordination about working conditions: yes/no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
works council or trade union at the subsidiary: yes/no (which?)	no (low union density)	no (low union density)	no (low union density)	no (low union density)	Usually no (low union density)
<b>employee relations</b>					
long-term/short-term contracts	short (private), long (state-owned)	short (private), long (state-owned)	long	medium	long-term
<b>vocational training</b>					
vocational training exists at the workplace: yes/no	no	no	yes	yes	yes
overall education level: high/low	medium	medium	high	high	low-medium for blue-collar workers, medium-high for white-

	China	India	Japan	Korea	DME
					collar
<b>employees</b>					
turnover of employees: high or low	medium	medium	low	medium	rather high (blue-collar)
main basis of promotion and pay rises	relationships	relationships and seniority	seniority	seniority	merit, seniority
skill acquisition	private	private, some corporate	on-the-job training	on-the-job training, private	private (partly state-financed)
training at the firm: frequent/rare	rare	medium	frequent	frequent	relatively frequent

Source: based on Rugraff and Sass (2017); Witt and Redding (2013)

Note: DME: dominant actors: affiliates of foreign-owned multinational companies

Based on the above areas of analysis, we compiled two questionnaires on the basis of which interviews were conducted in the seven companies. The interviews were conducted with numerous persons from each company (between one and ten interviews per company; when only one interview was conducted, it was with a leading manager of the firm). On the basis of the information obtained from these semi-structured, questionnaire-based interviews, we compiled Table 5.

Table 5: Institutional characteristics of sample subsidiaries in Hungary compared to the features of the DME model

	China	China2	India1	India2	Japan	Japan2	Korea	DME
<b>industrial relations</b>								
high or low share of expatriates among the leading managers	high; manager pairs (one local, one Chinese)	low	low - 5 or 6 managers	very low - only one	relatively high - between 25-30	low	low - sharply decreasing since establishment	low
subsidiary-level coordination about wages (as opposed to involving headquarters of MNC)	yes, based on regional averages	yes, based on regional averages	yes	yes	yes (based on city average)	yes	yes, based on regional averages	yes
subsidiary-level coordination about working conditions: yes/no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
works council or trade union at the subsidiary	neither (they don't have to due to the relatively	trade union	trade union	trade union - but not very strong	no trade union, there is a works council	no	yes, works council	usually no (low union density)

	China	China2	India1	India2	Japan	Japan2	Korea	DME
	small number of employees employed directly)							
<b>employee relations</b>								
long-term or short-term contracts	both (short-term for expats, longer term for locals)	long-term	long-term	long-term	long-term (except for leased workers)	long-term	long-term (but also some short term for interim workers, e.g. before Christmas, before Olympics, world championships, etc.)	long-term dominates
various "social" and other services for employees	yes (for example, food - even a Chinese chef)	yes (company card with discounts in shops and for certain services)	yes	yes	yes (company day, free hot meals, contribution to travel costs)	yes (special working schedules for the disabled, pregnant women and women with small children, bus services for commuters)	yes (even products as gifts)	yes
<b>vocational training</b>								
vocational training exists at the workplace	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
overall education level: high/low	High (they employ only white-collar workers)	Low (among the blue-collar workers but high among managers)	Medium: High school education (min 8 classes) preferred for plant managers; literacy skills for shop floor workers	Low: No requirements as long as workers have technical skills; enough if they are literate	Low: can be characterized as semi-skilled (blue-collar workers)	Low (among blue-collar workers but high among managers)	Low (among blue-collar workers but high among managers)	Medium - low (blue-collar workers)
<b>employee</b>								
turnover: high/low	High	Medium	Low; however, it is high during harvesting season	Low	Rather high among blue-collar workers (low among white-collar)	High below age 30	Rather high	Rather high
skills: general/industry-specific/ firm-specific	Industry-specific in the case of the white-collar workers. Maybe the same in the case of outsourced	General and firm-specific	General and firm-specific; industry-specific skills for mid-level managers	General and firm-specific	Firm specific, of limited use elsewhere	General and firm-specific	Industry-specific (initial skill can be rather general as they get vocational training)	Industry-specific

	China	China2	India1	India2	Japan	Japan2	Korea	DME
	blue-collar workers							
training at the firm: frequent/rare	Relatively frequent	Relatively frequent	Frequent	Rare	Relatively frequent	Frequent	Relatively frequent	Relatively frequent
<b>other</b>	informal manager pairs per area (one local, one Chinese); management works in open office	team-level shift-based bonus system	the effect of the Indian religion "Vastu" is strongly felt in the production process	signs and posters giving general instructions to workers; team-based atmosphere	working in pairs on the shop floor; management in open office	age allowance for older workers; loyalty prizes; "key worker" program	very clean environment; management in quasi-open office	

Source: interviews with managers and workers conducted by the authors

First of all, differences between the Asian countries under analysis in the various areas correspond to the findings of the empirical literature concerning whether a unique, distinct form of Asian capitalism exists. Similarly to the conclusions of Carney et al. (2009) and Witt and Redding (2013), the differences are much more apparent and stronger than similarities. This is seen, for example, in the number of expatriates, or the presence of works councils, employees' education level, etc.

We tried to exclude industry impacts by concentrating on firms in two very much interrelated industries: automotive, and electronics. Thus the industry effects can be ignored. Our results show that in many areas host country characteristics shape local outcomes to a great extent, while in other, less numerous areas, the home country impact dominates. For example, the share of expatriates seems to depend to a great extent on home country "traditions": Chinese and Japanese companies include a relatively large number of expatriates (the factor of time is not significant here as the Japanese factories were established a long time ago and the number of expatriates has been declining but it is still among the highest in the group. On the other hand, Chinese subsidiaries arrived more recently to Hungary). In contrast, the Korean firm and the Indian firms work with a significantly smaller number of expatriates (this is true for both Indian companies in our sample).

Wages and working conditions, on the other hand, are uniformly determined at the subsidiary level, which is clearly an impact of the host country environment. On the other hand, some home country characteristics remain. An interesting finding was the existence of a shift-based team-level bonus system at one Chinese company, which approach suggests Asian values (namely, collectivism) and is unlike the approach of typically individualistic European systems. Not only is group performance considered important, but also seniority, and this approach is widely applied in Japanese subsidiaries.

Furthermore, vocational training is important at all companies, even those in which the home countries do not often use this approach. This clearly reflects the impact of the host country environment; mainly the lack of (efficient) vocational training at specialized schools in Hungary (see e.g. Varga, 2018). On the other hand, due to the current labor market situation (labor shortage), wages and other rewards have become more competitive in Hungary. However, requirements for physical workers have been reduced (primary education is sufficient) given that such employees can be trained in processes quickly. This again reinforces the importance

of training, which is done relatively frequently at all of our companies, with the exception of one Indian firm.

In addition to vocational training, companies also engage in intensive training for white-collar workers (problem management, presentation techniques, professional training, and leadership training). Interestingly, no intercultural training events were reported at our sample companies, although according to several interviews the issue causes problems at numerous companies. For example, in Japanese companies employees get very little feedback, and corporate goals are not known at the operator level. On-the-job training methods are present in almost all companies. These complement and complete the training process.

Similarly, long-term contracts seem to be important due to host country characteristics (i.e. the need to comply with regulations in Hungary, which are relatively flexible in European comparison, but more 'rigid' compared to certain Asian countries (see e.g. Gyulaváry and Kártyás, 2012); the recent relative lack of labor force' and the importance attached to a 'secure' workplace by employees – the last factor was also emphasized by our interviewees), even in those cases where in home countries these types of contract are not preferred.

The long-term orientation of China and Japan is also reflected in their commitment to continuous development, as emphasized in our interviews. In addition to research and development, these companies place great emphasis on collecting and incorporating innovative ideas from employees, and even absorbing good practices from employees' previous workplaces, as our company interviews showed. They even financially reward new ideas, although the extent of the rewards are not related to the gains brought about by the idea. This can be evaluated as the transfer of home country practices to the host country.

We also consider the high degree of uncertainty avoidance to be a major cultural difference. The high level of the former indicates the need for rules. Although Hungary is characterized by a lower score<sup>4</sup> in terms of uncertainty avoidance compared to the Asian countries in our sample (see for details Hofstede, 2001, for example), such requirements for employees can be observed at Hungarian subsidiaries. According to one employee's response, compliance with these rules may sometimes be more important than performance itself, which again is a reflection of the use of home country practices.

An interesting issue is the presence of works councils and/or trade unions. While, as we saw, the level of unionization is uniformly low in both the host and home countries, in our sample we can find five cases where either a trade union or a works council operates at the subsidiary. Here we explain this 'deviation' by the fact that three out of these five companies were acquired from a German foreign owner, thus they may have maintained the heritage of the previous operational mode – reflecting the VoC and institution of the previous owner.

In the 'Other' section we delineated certain factors which we found reflect the impact of the home country culture in terms of being very different from the host

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. <https://www.reuters.com/article/hungary-labour-manpowergroup/hungary-suffering-worst-labour-shortage-on-record-survey-idUSL8N1CV24M>;

<https://www.ft.com/content/ac950cdc-5805-11e7-80b6-9bfa4c1f83d2>;

[https://bbj.hu/business/labor-shortage-among-biggest-problems-for-38-of-businesses\\_139994](https://bbj.hu/business/labor-shortage-among-biggest-problems-for-38-of-businesses_139994)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

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country's (Hungary) business environment and culture. One of these was the location of management in open offices, except for in the Indian companies. In the Korean case, the management office was initially completely open, but due to the demands of Hungarian managers (who now predominate as the number of expatriate managers has declined considerably since the establishment of the company in the early 1990s), there are now walls between the managers' workplaces. In the other cases, offices are completely open – a feature not characteristic at all of Hungarian offices. Another interesting difference from the host country is the introduction of 'working-in-pairs' systems. In the case of one of the Chinese companies, this affects managers, and the organization is informal: Chinese managers are not denoted as 'Chinese human resources managers,' but every Hungarian manager knows who his or her Chinese counterpart is. In the case of the Japanese company, 'working in pairs' occurs on the shop floor, and the company and management have a deep interest in finding the right pairs whose combined working efficiency is highest. Another interesting feature which differs from the host country business culture is the much cleaner working environment. This is characteristic of all (larger) subsidiaries of foreign multinational companies, basically unrelated to their country of origin. However, we deem that this 'cleanliness' is at the highest level in the Korean company. We assume this is again a feature of home country traditions and practices.

An interesting finding is the diversity of the two Chinese companies. While this can be partly explained by their different entry modes (greenfield versus acquisition of a firm from a German company), another reason can be found in the literature. Zheng (2016) notes that Chinese multinational companies tend to consolidate overseas subsidiaries that operate in more developed countries less than other firms, which can be explained by the lack of strong ownership advantages and managerial expertise at handling international operations. Due to this fact we can trace a weaker home country impact in the case of one Chinese subsidiary (acquired), while the other Chinese subsidiary (greenfield) uses more of its own practices.

We found other features of 'implementing' certain home country business or operational practices in the host country in the case of the Indian companies. In one company, it is apparent to a Hungarian (post-socialist) eye that there are many posters and signs on the walls of the plant with different production-efficiency-related watchwords and slogans. Similarly, at the other Indian company the impact of Indian religion was strongly felt in the organization of the production process. According to the HR manager, Indian people are much more religious than Hungarians, thus it was quite strange at the beginning to realize that religion can have such a strong effect on the efficiency of mass production in the host country environment. According to the former, there is another important difference that stems from the cultural background: all the Indian employees subscribe to the values of the company. They try to emulate this in various ways in the Hungarian plants down to the lowest levels of hierarchy, thereby making employees realize how important it is to be loyal to the company and its values. In relation to this, the interviewee saw a significant difference between the Indian and Hungarian employees.

Overall, our analysis supports the use of the VoC approach and institutionalist analysis in understanding the impact of host and home country institutions on the 'mix' of management techniques used in the various areas of human resources management and industrial relations in subsidiaries of multinational firms. The

outcome of the interaction of host and home country institutional pressures results in various mixes of policies at the subsidiary level. We found that although firms are assumed to follow a standardized approach to managing labor across borders, the impacts of the local 'national business system' (Whitley, 1999) clearly dominates in the case of Hungary. On the other hand, some minor but interesting traces of home country practices can be found at each subsidiary.

## *6. Conclusions*

In this article we have shown that Asian FDI is quite substantial in Hungary even in regional comparison - in contrast to our beliefs based on previous data. This provided us with a good basis for the analysis of Asian subsidiaries concerning whether home or host country factors dominate in employee relations. Relying on the 'Varieties-of-Capitalism' approach, we analyzed this problem based on company interviews. In our sample we had seven electronics or automotive subsidiaries owned by Asian multinationals. The low number of firms in our sample may limit the generalizability of our results; on the other hand, through limiting the impact of industrial sector and including subsidiaries of diverse characteristics and size, the results may still be quite general.

Our analysis underlines the differences between the Asian home countries in terms of their institutions, and thus the fact that their capitalism cannot be 'squeezed' into one Asian variety. Concerning our main research question, we found that management and labor relations in these companies evolve under the influences and through the interaction of related home and host country culture, thus they contain elements of both. We showed that there are significant differences between the various Asian and Hungarian institutional characteristics, with the exception of low union density, uniformly present in the countries under analysis. We found that host country impacts dominate in almost all areas, although certain elements of the home country business environment are transposed to the host country plant and continued in the local environment (or attempts are made at this). The reaction of local workers and/or managers may change or at least modify the former if they differ fundamentally from the host country's local environment. This also underlines the importance of the host country's institutions. On the other hand, some elements of home country practices are successfully transferred to Hungary and maintained in everyday operations.

There are many ways in which our research can be continued. It is yet to be understood in which cases there are modifications of operating practices, and in which cases investors stick to their approaches and methods and try to find explanations for these. Another area for future research could involve examining the impact of the level of embeddedness or the mode of entry on the level of adaptation of local institutions. Furthermore, changes over time in the level and areas of adaptation may also be interesting. On the other hand, a comparison of Asian subsidiaries with subsidiaries from other home countries may generate further explanations in terms of the selection of areas of adaptation.



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## Questionnaire

### General characteristics of the company

- 1.1 Name of the company (can be anonymous)
- 1.2 NACE-code of main activities or main products/industry
- 1.3 Address of the company (at least city)
- 1.4 Legal status: company limited by shares, other:...
- 1.5 Year of foundation:
- 1.6 Who is the controlling owner and when did it acquire/establish the Hungarian subsidiary/affiliate?

### Management

- 2.1 On the basis of which factors was the location in Hungary chosen for the setting up of a subsidiary/affiliate?
- 2.2 Do you have a strong link with the HQ? What is the extent to which the company uses expatriate managers? How has that developed over time?
- 2.3 Have you found any differences between Hungarian-owned companies and Asian ones in terms of work organization and practices? What are the main differences between Hungarian-owned (or Western-owned) and Asian workplace?
- 2.4 How do you recruit workers? How important is employee retention? How significant is the role of the employment agency in the recruiting process?
- 2.5 What is the shop floor worker profile in terms of age, gender, and skills?
- 2.6 Does the company have a seniority policy? How significant/serious is the rotation of new employees?
- 2.7 Does a new employee induction program exist? What does it look like?
- 2.8 What attitudes do you want to see in workers? What do you value the most?
- 2.9 How do you manage the performance of workers? Does the company apply bonus schemes? Are there any non-financial incentives?
- 2.10 To what extent are Asian production methods are being implemented at your company? Do quality circles exist? How important are quality policies at your company? In what way is quality control exercised? How successful is the *kaizen* initiative at your company?
- 2.11 What is your opinion about typical Asian (for example Japanese) methods of production and management? How do employees find typical Asian management and production methods?
- 2.12 Does a trade union function at the site? How would you describe relations with trade unions?
- 2.13 Does the company have its own social policy? What does it look like?

### Questions for workers

- 3.1 For how long have you worked for the company? Why did you start to work here? How would you describe the labor market in your city/village?
- 3.2 Is this your first workplace after you finished your schooling? Where did you study and for how long?
- 3.3 What is your position at the company? Are there any career opportunities?
- 3.4 Are you directly employed by the company or through a temporary employment agency?

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- 3.5 In your opinion, are there any differences between the work organization methods and practices of Asian-owned companies operating in Hungary and other foreign-owned companies?
- 3.6 How many hours do you work weekly? How are these scheduled? Is overtime common? Do you receive extra payment for this?
- 3.7 Are you required to be multiskilled?
- 3.8 How often are training events organized for workers?
- 3.9 How much pressure do you feel from managers and supervisors? How much pressure do you feel from workmates and colleagues? How much pressure do you feel from the sheer quantity of work? How much pressure do you feel from quality assurance policies? What is your response towards involvement programs?
- 3.10 Has there been an increase in the speed of work?
- 3.11 What does the pay system look like? What does company welfarism look like? Are you a trade union member? How do you perceive trade unions?



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## Followers, Challengers, or By-Standers? Central European Media Responses to Intensification of Relations with China

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### Abstract<sup>2</sup>

The article answers how growing intensity of China-V4 relations in the period of 2010–2017 impacted the media discourse of China in Central Europe. While diplomatically speaking China and the Visegrad countries reached perhaps the most positive and intensive relations ever, the top-down impact on people’s perceptions is less clear. Media play an important role as an intermediary between the politics and public opinion and their role in EU-China and China-Central Europe relations has been previously discussed. The paper summarizes empirical findings of large-scale research of media reporting related to China in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic from 2010 till mid-2017 in which more than seven thousand media outputs were consulted. It is found that the political relations led to quantitative increase of media coverage of China, yet the qualitative impact is ambivalent, thus questioning the success of Chinese soft power attempts. The discourse on China in the Czech Republic and Hungary is in no small extent politicized, polarized, and media often inform about China based on domestic political considerations, while in Slovakia there is little interest in China overall and media largely follows official narratives and international discourse.

*Keywords:* China, China-Central Europe, China-V4, Chinese soft power, image of China.

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## *1. Introduction*

Since 2011, China and Central Europe started to write a new chapter of their relations under the labels of 16+1 platform and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Although sometimes referred to as ‘traditional friends’ (Turcsányi and Qiaoan, 2019), the two sides have spent most of their history neglecting each other. Given the political realities, Central European countries started meeting China in their capacity as independent countries only after the First World War. Yet, this era did offer only few chances to interact, given the geographical distance, and more immediate security, political, and economic challenges both sides faced. Although both China and Central Europe ended up in the communist camp after the Second World War, the contacts were frozen soon after as the result of Sino-Soviet split. When the ice started to melt during the 1980s, it met an abrupt end with the events of 1989 again. For about two decades since the fall of Communist regimes in Central Europe, the attention of both China and Central Europe was directed towards the West. It was only after the 2008 economic crisis that the Central European countries started to see China as a potential partner and soon after the two sides started to develop contacts under the banners of the 16+1 platform and the Belt and Road Initiative, reaching the most active levels ever in their history (Fürst and Tesař, 2014; Turcsanyi, forthcoming).

There has been a scholarly and pundit discussion about what goals China has pursued in the region. Some have claimed that increasing the economic interaction has been the prime Chinese intention, while others have raised a possibility of political goals being the most important ones (Turcsányi et al., 2014), including the option that China has attempted to ‘divide and rule’ Europe (Gaspers, 2018; Turcsányi, 2014). Although there is no definite answer yet on China’s motivations in CEE, most observers would agree that China tries to improve its image internationally, both in general and also in particular with its recent initiatives (Balding, 2018; Boboc, 2017). It is therefore meaningful to study how the increase of diplomatic exchanges between China and Central Europe have impacted the image of China in these countries. Media play an important role here as an intermediary between the politics and public opinion.

The aim of this article is to answer a research question of how growing intensity of China-Central Europe relations in the period of 2010-2017 impacted the media discourse of China in Central Europe. More specifically, the focus will be on whether the improving political relations with China led to similar improving of China’s image in the Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak media, and hence whether the Central European media have been susceptible to Chinese narratives. This research can be seen as complementary to the one by Turcsanyi and Kachlikova which focused on how selected media in Spain, Poland, and the UK reported on the BRI in the first four years of the BRI (2013-2017) (Turcsanyi and Kachlikova, unpublished). It was found that European media largely followed Chinese narrative frames of economic opportunity, which helped to improve the general image of China in the media. This paper adopts a significantly more comprehensive method to study more media outlets and their overall reporting on the political and economic issues related to China, not just limited to the one on the BRI.

It will be concluded that overall there was a growth in terms of the quantity of articles dealing with China. Although the BRI was indeed framed positively (in

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Hungary and Slovakia), no considerable qualitatively positive impact can be observed when it comes to the overall image of China, meaning that media discourses in Central Europe did not imitate the improving political relations between China and Central Europe by improving the overall sentiment of China in reporting. In the Czech Republic, the intensification of contacts with China took place in the background of a continuously highly polarized discourse on China, and it might have only strengthened the perception of China as ‘the Other’ (Karásková et al., 2018). In Hungary, the assessment of Hungarian-Chinese relations is influenced by the political attitude of the given media outlet towards the government, yet in the conditions of overall political dynamics in the country, the voices critical of the government were being, to no small extent, overwhelmed and side-lined. Slovakia finds itself in between the two, with relatively little impact of the intensification of the diplomatic relations on the quality and the quantity of the media discourse.

The article will proceed as follows. First, the theoretical section will present the context in which China-Central Europe relations started to develop actively in the aftermath of 2011. We will present a framework in which Chinese foreign policy conducts public diplomacy in order to improve its soft power and legitimize itself domestically. The image of China conveyed by media in Central Europe can be seen as an intermediary indicator of the extent of success or failure of China’s soft power activities. Second, the methodological section will explain concrete steps taken as part of this study, such as the selection of the case studies, period of study, and most importantly the media analysis and coding process. Third, the empirical part will present outcomes of the research related to the three case studies. Finally, the concluding section will sum up the findings and offer answers using the concepts presented in the theoretical section.

## *2. China’s soft power and relations with Central (and Eastern) Europe*

Former Chinese State Councillor Dai Bingguo (2010) suggested that China has three core interests: regime security, national sovereignty, and economic development. It can be argued that the first – regime security – is superior, and it depends on the other two – the government being able to provide economic development while satisfying increasingly nationalist feelings on the part of the Chinese population.<sup>3</sup> The problem is that these interests often require contradictory foreign policy behaviour – China needs a stable international environment for economic development, yet a nationalistic public wants an uncompromising foreign policy – something which can easily undermine the international stability and the image of China (Turcsanyi, 2016). Following this logic, the pro-active and ambitious international initiatives of China such as the BRI or the 16+1 platform can be seen as an attempt to break out of the contradictory pattern between domestic and international public opinions (Sørensen, 2017). Initiatives which put China in the driving seat and see leaders of various countries competing in wooing China would appeal to the nationalistic Chinese population which wants to see China regaining its traditional international ‘status’ (Deng, 2008; Edney, 2015; Poh and Li, 2017). At the same time, other countries are

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<sup>3</sup> Previous version of parts of this section appear in another publication of one of the authors (Turcsanyi and Kachlikova, unpublished).

excited about the economic promises and in the process, allegedly, tune down criticism of matters such as the human rights record or perceived threatening foreign policy moves (Jakimów, 2019).

Promoting China's soft power abroad is in line with these considerations about the Chinese 'core' interests and it has been an official policy goal at least since the time when Hu Jintao (2007) stated that China must 'enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country' and that 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture'. Subsequently, President Xi Jinping announced that 'we should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's messages to the world' (Kissinger Institute, 2014). Interestingly, Chinese leadership has often treated culture as the main feature of the concept, even to the extent that we can talk of 'cultural soft power' (Aukia, 2014). This understanding has its roots in the very first academic article in China published on the topic by the then Fudan professor Wang Huming (1993) titled 'The Culture as a National Power: Soft Power'. Yet, at the same time, it is the economy which remains the main attraction of China internationally (Chen and Song, 2012), and China has utilized active summitry and promises of 'mutual' economic benefits to drive the expectations (Shambaugh, 2015).

Peter Gries argues that public opinion plays an important role (not only) in democratic countries when it comes to foreign policy (Gries, 2014). In democracies, an elected government may fall out of favour and be defeated at the next election, while in authoritarian political systems, the government wants to avoid angering the public and putting itself under pressure. Both in democratic and authoritarian systems, media play an important role as an intermediary between the politics and public opinion. The role of European media when it comes to informing and driving the image of China was discussed by William Fingleton, who shows that many in China have long complained about what they see as bias and overly negative reporting on China (Fingleton, 2016). It is therefore reasonable to study European media images of China, both as a way of understanding European public opinion drivers and a way of assessing the success or failure of Chinese public diplomacy efforts towards improving its soft power.

Central and Eastern Europe has a specific position within Europe when it comes to relations with China. As formerly part of the Communist bloc of countries, the events of 1989 set China and the CEE countries towards opposing trajectories. After China violently suppressed the Tiananmen square protests, the CEE countries were treated as 'traitors' of Communism and Chinese media reported in a negative way about their transformation experiences (Tubilewicz, 1997). In a similar way, the legitimacy of the post-1989 political regimes in CEE has been based around the rejection of Communism, putting China in a sensitive spot (Turcsanyi and Qiaoan, 2019; Karásková and Bajerová, 2019). The relations between the two sides remained cold for most of the 1990s and the 2000s. However, the 2008 global financial crisis created an environment in which both sides again started to look at each other. At the time, the CEE countries were in search of new export markets and investment sources, after their 'traditional' Western European sources struggled with the recession (Szent-Iványi, 2017). China, on the other hand, was elevated to the engine of global economic growth as the only major economy that continued its development with only a minor slowdown (Turcsanyi, forthcoming).

In 2011, China-CEE relations started writing a new chapter when Premier Wen Jiabao visited Budapest and met representatives of (mainly economic ministries) of the 16 countries of the CEE region. The same setting of the countries met the year later in Warsaw at the first summit at the Prime Minister level, which has since then met annually. The main aspect of the relation was since the beginning directed at the 'pragmatic' cooperation with the aim of increasing economic interaction. The targets were set already by Premier Wen who announced a 10 billion USD credit line for the infrastructure constructions in the CEE region and promised that the China-CEE trade would double (from 50 billion to 100 billion USD) by 2015. The necessity of producing material outcomes was recognised by a number of Chinese authors who were cautioning that the CEE countries approached China with the excitement due to temporary economic needs after the 2008 global financial crisis and following the European debt-crisis (Long, 2014; Zhu, 2016; Xu, 2015). Liu Zuokui (2013) put it even more straightforwardly when he called the situation after 2012 in CEE from China's perspective as a 'window of opportunity period'.

### *3. Methodology considerations*

Visegrad countries offer a good opportunity to study whether China has managed to turn this 'window of opportunity' into an improved image in the CEE region. The study of ECFR (Godemont et al., 2012) put them at roughly same level when it comes to the economic approach towards China, yet very differently when it comes to the political attitude. The Czech Republic was found to be the most critical country of the European countries involved in the study. Since the independence the country followed the ideal of the normative underpinning of foreign policy based on a critical reflection of own Communist experience, under a strong influence of anti-Communist revolutionary-turned President Václav Havel (Karásková et al., 2018). China was regarded from this perspective as a symbol of non-democratic 'Other' (Karásková and Bajerová, 2019) and the political relations remained cold for a long time. Coincidentally, this was reversed after 2013 when the newly elected President Miloš Zeman became more vocal on the issue (Karásková, 2016) and the government of Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka led to an active pro-China U-turn in Czech foreign policy with the aim of attracting economic benefits (Karásková et al., 2019).

Hungary, on the other hand, was among the most supportive of China in 2012 together with other, mainly South European, countries struggling with the consequences of the economic crisis. Moreover, Hungary has had the most experience with China among the Visegrad countries as thanks to the visa policy at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s it has received a large number of Chinese immigrants who have established a growing community in the country (Nyiri, 2007). Increasing Chinese presence has not triggered any alarm in Hungarian political circles or among the wider public. In fact, throughout the 2000s, Hungary started to look towards China as probably the first country in the region. Finally, Slovakia was located by the authors of the ECFR study more or less in the middle of the spectrum. When it comes to relations with China, Slovakia is a unique and paradoxical case in the region. On the one hand, as the smallest of the V4 group, the country has been mostly 'cautious' in its approach towards China, trying to avoid taking too critical stances (Gregušová, 2003; Fürst and Pleschová, 2010). Slovakia has tacitly supported the BRI

and the 16+1 platform but has done little overwork to push it through (Husenícova et al., 2019).

The paper looks at how the media in three Central European countries – Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia – have responded to the intensive and unprecedented development of relations with China. The article will draw on the extensive research conducted by the ChinfluenCE project<sup>4</sup> which focused on the media discourses of China in the three countries since the year 2010 until mid-2017. This selected period allows us to compare the images during the dynamic increases of the China-CEE interactions after the beginning of the 16+1 platform (2012) and the Belt and Road Forum (2013), with the one immediately preceding (2010-2012). Moreover, there are indications that the European discourse on China took a downturn after the first Belt and Road Forum in May 2017, after which various European politicians started taking more critical positions on China. Hence, focusing on the situation prior to that allows us to understand the dynamics in the first ‘honeymoon’ period of the BRI and the 16+1 platform.

What people know about the world is largely determined by what the media report about it (Lippmann 1922). This assertion, ever more relevant today than a century ago when Lippmann formulated it, gives media the power over the public’s constructing images, especially on issues which the general population has little knowledge of or lack direct personal experience with, leading to a media-dependency on topics which are remote (Adoni and Mane, 1984). Image refers to ‘the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others’ (Dichter, 1985: 75). If the entity is a country, than national image is a sum of beliefs and assumptions one has about a nation or, in other words, ‘the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people’ (Kunczik, 1997: 46).

Moreover, what media depicts as important tends to enter into the public discourse (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) and vice versa (Cobb and Elder, 1971), creating an interplay between media and the public and setting an agenda for both. The world according to Lippmann is ‘out of reach, out of sight, out of mind’ and media do not reflect the reality but shape it (Lippmann, 1922). In doing so they construct a different social reality. How the shaping of the social reality through media takes place has been a long time focus of agenda setting theory which ‘has become in less than half a century one of the most refined media effects theory’ (Corbu and Hosu, 2017: 12). What used to be a rather homogenous theory has developed into various forms, such as the first level and second level agenda setting and framing and is distinguished from agenda building.

Based on the accessible numbers of the audience (readers, listeners, etc.), checked periodically for the whole analysed period of six and half years, we have selected altogether 86 media – dailies, weeklies with a political and/or economic focus, TV stations, radio stations and online news servers. The selected outlets represent the most read, listened to, and watched media in the three countries, encompassing mainstream as well as ‘alternative’ sources, public as well as privately-owned ones, including media with Chinese co-ownership (although still very few). The comprehensive automatic search was then performed to identify outputs dealing with

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<sup>4</sup> See ChinfluenCE (2019).



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China in connection with politics or economics, while those discussing other aspects in relation to China – such as sport or art – were not included in the dataset. The level of the analysis was thus a single output, regardless of its lengths or the outlet which published it (e.g. media articles were treated in a similar fashion as a lengthier transcripts of TV news or programmes on China). While Czech and Slovak researchers were able to access transcripts of TV and radio shows dealing with China, in the Hungarian case the analysis did not catch texts produced by TVs and radios in 2010 and 2011 due to limited access to transcripts. The search resulted in establishing the dataset of texts in three different languages. Altogether more than 7,000 pieces of media news discussing China's politics and economy have been selected for the analysis.

The set of media outputs was then subjected to a multi-stage analysis. The research focused on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the discourse's transformation. Each text was coded for the issue, an affective attribute and for agenda setter(s). Every text was treated as a single unit carrying an aggregated sentiment value and was labelled as conveying either positive, neutral or negative sentiment regarding China, focusing on the overall context of the article and putting aside the question of the objectivity of articles or correctness of facts mentioned in them. If the text carried both positive and negative sentiment, it was coded as neutral, focusing on the overall impression of the text on a hypothetical audience. The authors relied on an overall context in which the words were used. The decision on coding the text as being either positive, neutral or negative to China thus derived from the overall context of the text, following the approach of 'speculation of a common-sense kind on the likely impression made on an average audience' (McQuail 1992: 227).

For the study of China's image abroad, and thus for the successful projection of China's influence outside its frontiers, we used the well-established and long-developed approaches of first and second-level agenda setting. The second-level agenda setting, which enables one to trace affective attributes (negative, positive or neutral tone of the reporting), seemed especially promising in this context. We have also recorded themes which were prevalent in the articles, such as world politics, bilateral economic relations, human rights or arms embargo, providing detailed knowledge of the discourse and enabling comparative analysis. Altogether, this approach allowed us to produce datasets of how the media talk about China, what topics they cover, what sentiment they spread, and whether there have been changes in the coverage and sentiment over time.

## *4. Case studies*

### *4.1 Hungary: Followers taking over*

We have analysed almost 4,000 Hungarian media outputs, published between 2010 and June 2017 of the selected 15 media sources that were most widely read, listened to, or followed and had nationwide coverage. One of the first findings is that the number of articles on China has been generally stable in the analysed period; however, two significant phases may be recognized based on the number of publications. The first phase lasted from 2010 with a constant increase of attention until it peaked in 2013 (the year of the China's 12th National People's Congress),



while during the following phase, there has been a gradual decline in the number of articles on China. The rise and fall of publication may be explained first by exaggerated hopes regarding the expected inflow of Chinese investment to Hungary, and later by the confrontation with reality, that few of the hopes had been realized.

Hungarian media coverage on China has been very pragmatic – or valueless – during the period under study. Most of the articles analysed focused on the general economic situation of China, its role in world politics and economics, and the development of Hungarian-Chinese relations. Topics like human rights, Tibet, the Dalai Lama or the protection of intellectual property rights have been barely mentioned. Instead, themes like the ‘Chinese economy’, ‘China and the World’ and ‘Hungarian economic relations with China’ were by far the most important ones (found in over 1500, 1100 and 700 articles respectively). Meanwhile issues like ‘censorship’, ‘Tibet’, or ‘Uighurs’ appear in fewer than 200, 100 and 50 articles respectively, underscoring the fact that Hungarian society does not see these issues as defining factors when it comes to its views of China.

It should be noted that more than half of all the articles were published by the small group of online news services, including *hvg.hu* which published almost one-third of all the articles alone, while *index.hu* and *origo.hu* released a further 14 and 11 per cent of the news respectively. Nevertheless, digging deeper, the picture gets a bit more complicated, as the original source of at least 52 per cent of all news was the official Hungarian news agency (MTI) and not individual media companies, thus the share of articles produced by other media outlets themselves was less than half of the total. It is not surprising that this fact has had an impact on the generally neutral image of China in the Hungarian media, as 87 per cent of the news based on the MTI as a source were neutral. Including all sources, 4.8 per cent of news was positive, 9.4 per cent negative and 85.8 per cent neutral between 2010 and 2017. When excluding all news based on the MTI, the picture gets slightly different: 3.7 per cent of the articles produced by media sources themselves were positive, while 12 per cent was negative.

When individual media sources are taken into account, domestic political division lines and their impact on the image of China itself becomes obvious. Media sources believed to be close to the government (Hungarian national television and radio channels, TV2, *origo.hu*) publish significantly more positively about China, while media sources on the opposition side (*Magyar Nemzet* daily, *index.hu*, *HVG*, *hvg.hu*, *RTL Klub*) published more negative than positive ones. Still, neutral news dominated their activities.

The share of negative news (thus the polarity of the discourse on China) had been constantly increasing between 2010 and 2017. Negative news made up 6 per cent and positive news 5 per cent of all articles in 2010, while the share of negative news rose to 15 per cent against 5 per cent of good news in 2017. The year of 2013 seems to be the turning point, not only in terms of absolute numbers of articles, but in terms of sentiment as well, since there were 4 per cent positive and 3 per cent negative news items in 2012, and as much as 12 per cent of all news on China was negative and 5 per cent positive in 2013. An interesting observation may be that the articles dealing with the BRI were more positive than the overall average of the articles on China – there were three-times more positive leaning BRI-related articles, compared to the average where there are twice as many negative as positive articles (Matura, 2018). This can be

interpreted as showing that during the period under study, the BRI had a positive impact on the overall media image of China in Hungary.

To sum up, the Hungarian media discourse on China is mostly one dimensional, focusing overwhelmingly on economic data and the development of bilateral relations. At the same time, it is strongly politicized, as the assessment of Hungarian-Chinese relations in the media is strongly influenced by the political attitude of the given media source towards the government. Although there is a consensus in Hungary that China is a prominent political partner, and although society does not seem to focus too much on sensitive issues such as human rights, the opposition-leaning media published articles with the negative sentiment in an increasing fashion throughout the study period as a way of criticizing the government. At the same time, given the political dynamics in Hungary, the pro-government voices in media following the official line have been becoming dominant and were marginalizing and overwhelming the opposition voices.

#### *4.2 Czech media: Challengers fighting back*

The quantitative analysis of Czech media revealed that the number of articles on China rose steadily with the intensification of Czech-Chinese bilateral relations, culminating in 2016 with the visit of both the PRC's president Xi Jinping and the Dalai Lama in Prague. Qualitatively, the image of China in the Czech media over the period in question was mostly negative or neutral: only 14 per cent of the analysed media outputs were inclined to view China positively, while 41 per cent viewed it negatively. The remaining 45 per cent were presenting China in a neutral light. The polarity of Czech articles is especially telling in comparison to the Slovak and Hungarian cases which showed the overwhelming majority of articles on China being coded as neutral.

The polarity of analysed outputs did not evolve significantly during the researched six and a half years. Despite public promises of future Chinese investment, the image of China in Czech media remained mostly negative. When analysing journalists themselves as agenda setters in matters of political and economic affairs concerning China, the picture is more apparent still: only 6 per cent of analysed occurrences were positive, 64 per cent were neutral and 30 per cent negative. In other words, open promotion of China by journalists was rare, and this finding holds throughout the period examined. However, in the leftist media (*Haló noviny*) or media with a Chinese (co)owner, the image of China was distinctly more positive. In the cases of the *Týden* weekly and TV Barrandov, it is evident that the takeover by the Chinese company CEFC led to exclusively positive coverage of China.

Regarding the topics, Czech media paid most attention to the Chinese economic and political relations with other countries and organizations (US, Russia, EU, India, Japan, etc.). Human rights, including general information on abuses and violation of rights of minorities, the death penalty, detention of dissent or organ harvesting, were the second most important category of the topics covered by the Czech media. The human rights reporting, however, did not go beyond stating the notoriously known and in various cases the issue was artificially attached to articles which dealt with seemingly unrelated topics. The themes of communism,

authoritarianism, and censorship followed in frequency, revealing the importance of the issue to Czech journalists and Czech society in general, perhaps symbolizing an ongoing internal struggle with its own Communist past.

While the prevalence of the above-mentioned categories remained constant in the studied period, notions of Tibet, though it scored in frequency, fluctuated in time, culminating in 2016 when the Chinese president Xi Jinping and the Dalai Lama both visited Prague. A counter-narrative to the human rights discourse spread in Czech media, arguing that Tibet was liberated by the People's Liberation Army in 1959 and saved from theocracy that supported slavery and feudalism and from the Dalai Lamas who punished disobedient subjects with 'cutting off hands and poking eyes out'. These lines were repeated by President Zeman, the Communist member of the European Parliament Miloslav Ransdorf, journalists in the Communist daily *Haló noviny*, alternative media, and the Chinese embassy.

Interestingly, the issue of relations with Taiwan was – in comparison to the Tibet issue – largely marginalized, although Taiwan and the Czech Republic share a similar history of transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy, an experience of living on the borders of a great power and, on top of that, Taiwan is one of the three most important Asian investors in the Czech Republic.

As far as the issue of the Belt and Road Initiative was concerned, a hypothesis that articles dealing with the issue would exhibit higher positive polarity had to be rejected. Out of 1,257 analysed Czech texts, only 23 mentioned the Belt and Road (or New Silk Road) initiative between 2010 and mid-2017. From these 23 items, 11 were coded as neutral, 6 as negative and 6 as positive. The media which carried texts with a positive sentiment and at the same time mentioned the BRI were either connected with the Czech Communist party or media with Chinese co-ownership. It can be argued that media did not pay much attention to the BRI and, in these limited occurrences, the issue was portrayed with an even polarity.

It is noticeable that the Czech media exhibit a tendency to portray China as a direct opposite to the values and preferences of the Czech Republic. This process of 'othering' China gradually shifts into outputs that, ostensibly, do not contain any link to the country (e.g. articles on alleged 'censorship' on the Czech internet). The analysis of the Czech media outputs demonstrated that the Czech debate on China is highly politicized and stereotyped. The hijacking of the 'China issue' by domestic political and economic interests masks several perils. Instead of a serious debate on China's growing international role and Czech foreign policy towards it, or a sober assessment of possible benefits and potential risks of Chinese investment for the Czech economy, a hollow debate is waged on whether to have any relations with China at all. The fragmented, non-transparent, and emotional public debate might draw attention away from the real content of agreements, from the motivations of political and economic elites and from the actual Chinese strategy in the region. As an example, at times of efforts at strengthening Czech-China political and economic relations, the media sharply increased information about somewhat unrelated issues such as Tibet.

Throughout the researched period, the Czech media served to some extent as a sceptical antidote and a challenge to the promotion of closer Czech-Chinese relations with by far the highest share of negative leaning articles on China among the three countries in question. This negativity mostly stemmed from the perceived necessity to

balance a domestic pro-China discourse pushed for by (part of) the Czech political and economic elites. This balancing worked both ways – the Czech media thus also contained the highest share of positive articles on China compared to Slovak and Hungarian research results.

#### *4.3 Slovakia: By-standers with little interest*

Slovak media paint at first sight a rather unengaged picture when China comes into question. The volume of media reporting on China has mainly been fluctuating throughout the examined period. Nevertheless, there is a clear increasing trend in the number of China-related articles. Interestingly, the increased output of Slovak media was not driven by topics related to Sino-Slovak relations, but rather by topics covering Chinese domestic politics and economic performance of the country.

When discussing China, the Slovak media put forth a neutral representation of China in as many as 68 per cent of all the articles. Only six per cent of articles spread positive views of China, while 26 per cent presented China in a negative light. This sentimental distribution of the articles remained quite immune to the time change and even despite rising engagement (and media coverage volume) remained virtually the same.

Most of the media discussed domestic issues of China or the issues of Chinese global economic influence. Of all the topics Slovak media covered, the majority received more negative than positive coverage overall. Only three topics stand out as being discussed favourably towards China – history and culture, the 16+1 platform, and the Belt and Road Initiative. However, these three topics account for only five per cent of the total media coverage of China in Slovakia. At the same, this also shows that the recent diplomatic efforts by China brought some results as they contributed positively to the overall image of China in Slovak media.

Interestingly, the ‘alternative media’ (which often spread news favourable of Russia and on numerous occasions outright proven to be fake) did not differ from this picture. The only portion of Slovak media which differed were tabloids which were the only group in which the share of negative articles was higher than the percentage of neutral pieces and that also had a much greater amount of positive news of China. Interestingly, Slovak tabloids show a more polarized image of China, not too different from the overall image of China in the Czech media.

On average, Slovak media outlets tend to have more negative than positive perceptions of China. Only one media outlet consistently reports positively on China, and this outlet is regarded to be of disinformation provenance (Parlamentné listy<sup>3</sup>). Despite this, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has all of a sudden begun to receive favourable coverage. While in general, the share of negative articles on China is almost 4.5 times higher than the share of positive articles, this is not true for the coverage of BRI. In this case, positive media mentions are 1.5 times more frequent than the negative ones.

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<sup>3</sup> *Parlamentné listy* was labelled a disinformation outlet by a Slovak watchdog Konšpirátori.sk at the time. However, in the second half of 2017, the site was re-evaluated and taken away from the list. See <https://medialne.etrend.sk/internet/parlamentne-listy-uz-nie-su-na-zozname-konspiracnych-webov-polepsili-sa.html>.

Overall, economic topics prevail over domestic and foreign policy related topics. The Chinese economy was discussed 1.7 times more often than Chinese foreign policy and 2.1 times more often than Chinese domestic politics and policies. Among the top five topics covered by the media, only a single topic is not related to the economy but rather to domestic policy. Security-related topics are seriously underrepresented in the media discourse. The reason for the thematic imbalance in the media coverage is connected with the composition of the actors involved in the media debate, where economists have a dominant position in the media discourse.

Most of the reporting on China is taken from the international agencies, with extremely little attention being paid to Sino-Slovak relations. Hence, there is basically no debate going on about how to approach China. This may cause the country political and security challenges when an important issue related to China emerges. This was most visible around the time when the potential acquisition of TV Markíza by CEFC, a Chinese company, was announced. The proposed deal received very little coverage compared to similar Russia-related incidents even though there was already evidence from the Czech Republic available that showed when the CEFC bought two Czech media outlets, they completely changed their discourse on China to a completely positive one (Karásková et al., 2018; Šimalčík, 2017).

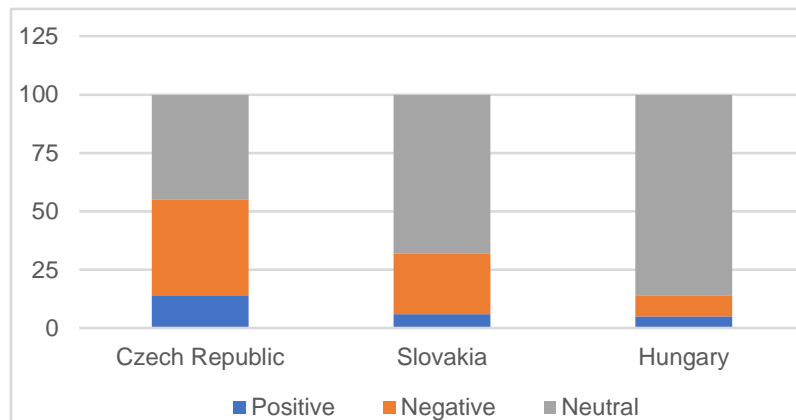
### *5. Comparisons and concluding remarks*

Summing up the findings, the research of Central European media in the three countries revealed that the impact of the intensifying of political relations between China and Central European countries on the media narratives is ambiguous. One observable – and quite natural – outcome has been the quantitative rise in the number of articles dealing with Chinese politics and economy. The impact on sentiment is less clear, however. There was a slight growth of negative-leaning articles in Hungary over time, perhaps related to the growth of criticism towards Orbán's policies by opposition figures and the somewhat prominent role of China in Hungarian politics. At the same time, the image of Belt and Road Initiative in Hungarian media is much more positive than the average image of China. In Slovakia, we have noted the similar impact of the BRI improving the sentiment of articles on China, but overall media discourse throughout the period under study did not change much. Finally, the Czech media image of China noticed no considerable changes during this time. The coverage of the Belt and Road Initiative fits into the overall picture of a polarized discussion.

The Czech media image of China is the most polarized from the three countries under investigation – interestingly, there are the highest shares of both negative and positive articles on China in the Czech Republic. This reveals the country to be conforming to what Dragan Pavlicevic calls 'politics of dreams and fears' (Pavlicevic, 2018) in Central (and Eastern) Europe. On the one hand, China has become symbol of a dream of economic opportunity and material prosperity, bringing about solutions to the economic struggling. For some, on the other hand, China may even fit the patterns of the 'enemy image' (Gerő et al., 2017) as the surviving Communist authoritarian country standing for the values which were set aside by the revolutions in Central Europe in 1989. The share of the articles with negative sentiment in the Czech Republic is indeed almost at the level of those with a neutral

one, pointing towards very sceptical Czech media attitudes to China, which can be seen as *challenging* the government's (and the president's) attempts to warm up relations with China. Compared to that, Hungarian media inform about China overwhelmingly in a neutral way with most media following the government lines, although some critical media do bring about negative sentiment as well, mainly as a way of criticizing the government. Given the increasing dominance of the government in the Hungarian media spectrum, however, the Hungarian media reveals patterns of *following* the official positions. Slovakia stands somewhere in the middle – the human rights agenda, typical of the Czech discourse, is present in a limited way, and so is the focus of the Hungarian media on the bilateral aspects. In effect, the Slovak media recycle international news on China without adding as much own value and perspectives as the media in the other two countries do and largely conform to the role of a bystander when it comes to relations in China, to some extent similar to the whole Slovak position vis-à-vis China (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Sentiment of the media discourse



Source: Own research as part of the ChinfluenCE project

To contextualize these findings within the theoretical knowledge, most importantly, the results show that we should not exaggerate the impact of Chinese public diplomacy on China's soft power. The Central European media might be generally less susceptible to Chinese narratives than expected, even though when reporting on concrete aspects of bilateral relations or issues directly touching them, such as the 16+1 platform or the BRI, they would adopt parts of Chinese frames in the process of covering them. All in all, however, the media image of China consists of much more than that and is shaped to a significant extent by the domestic issues in China (be it human rights, economy or others), as well as the general international news involving topics such as regional geopolitics or global governance. Chinese attempts to offer economic incentives to the Central European countries have little impact on changing the overall picture of China as this depends also on how China is portrayed by the international media. Moreover, an important variable influencing the media image in the three countries under study turns out to be the role of China in domestic politics. In the Czech Republic, China has become a highly sensitive and polarizing issue, and strengthening the China-friendly voices led to the similar strengthening of the critical



voices. After it started to become clear that the economic expectations were exaggerated, the critical voices became even more dominant. In Slovakia, there was little political and business interest in China and so the media reporting followed largely international news and brought a neutral picture of China. Hungarian media discourse of China includes some polarization as the opposition adopts any topics to criticize the government, yet China is far from being the sensitive issue in itself as it is in the Czech Republic.

To conclude, it has become common to talk about ‘Chinese influence’ and assume that various exchanges with Chinese entities automatically lead to transfer and acceptance of Chinese political positions (Benner et al., 2018; Diamond et al., 2018). Although there is some limited evidence that this has happened in the cases of Slovakia and Hungary when it comes to the specific issue of the BRI, these articles formed only a small portion of overall discourse on China. Overall, the image of China in Slovakia and the Czech Republic remained more or less the same – and far from overly positive – while the one in Hungary continued to be neutral, and actually becoming slightly more negative with the time. This means that if China attempted to improve its image in Central Europe and build soft power position there, it has not been very successful, unlike perhaps in the Western Balkans where China’s ‘symbolic power’ (Vangeli, 2018) might have been more entrenched due to different socio-economic, political, and historical contexts (Turcsanyi and Qiaoan, 2019). Overall, these results add further evidence to the growing body of academic literature suggesting that there is no conclusive evidence that the CEE countries would be getting closer to China as a direct result of Chinese initiatives (Matura, 2019; Liskutin, 2019).

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## Book Review

**Leslie K. Wang (2016) *Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 208 pages.**

Chinese American sociologist Leslie K. Wang from the University of Massachusetts Boston works on a very delicate topic, leading her readers into the world of state-run childcare institutions in China and their interaction with the Western world. *Outsourced Children* scrutinizes the unfamiliar world of the practices, values and underlying assumptions related to the institutional care regimes of abandoned or orphaned children in the People's Republic of China in recent years.

It is widely known that China, along with Korea (see Kim, 2010) and Russia, has been among the top providers of internationally adoptable children for several decades. A Google search for the joint words of 'adoption' and 'China' floods us with an ocean of information from adoption agencies' websites through technical details of adoption possibilities from China to adoptive families' personal stories. We learn that a magnitude of 140 thousand orphaned or, referred to by the nearly synonymously used term, abandoned children were adopted internationally from China during the last nearly two decades. 90 per cent of the adopted children were girls, and the proportion of children with special needs among the adoptees has increased. In fact the adoption of children with special needs has become the typical case in recent years.

Leslie K. Wang assesses the complex, controversial and fateful situation of abandoned and orphaned Chinese children and how different forms of Western aid influence their life trajectories. Her line of thought is driven by the seeming controversy of why 'in a time of unprecedented growth and prosperity in the PRC [People's Republic of China], certain daughters and sons have been cast out of their families in large numbers' (p. 28). The PRC's tough practice of social engineering through the now abandoned one-child policy partly accounted for this. On the other hand, free hospital care for all from socialist times ceased to be available in the 1990s, placing a heavy burden on parents of infants with special needs. Leslie Wang did not spare time and effort to provide a dynamic view and a profound analysis of orphanage care and international adoption of Chinese children, and to make us understand how the transnational adoption process reflected China's changing relationship with the 'industrialized' world.

*Outsourced Children* is structured into seven chapters, plus 20 pages of endnotes and an index. The introductory chapter familiarizes readers with the complex and controversial phenomena the author studied, and with some of the basic notions she worked with. We learn about the unexpected social setup that created the space for the empirical research of the author: 'Since the 1990s, intensive Western investment into certain highly marginalized youth living in the PRC' has been occurring 'that would have been unimaginable only a few decades earlier when the

nation was inaccessible to the outside world' (p. 3). This transnational exchange led to the exportation of tens of thousands of mostly healthy girls to Western homes through adoption, and to the importation of first-world actors, resources and practices into orphanages to care for children with special needs. Several factors added up to the massive abandonment of children. On the macro level it was the light speed rate modernisation of Chinese society, the one-child policy of the state, and China's attempt to produce intensively reared 'high-quality' citizen-workers out of healthy children. On the micro level these were complemented by the stigmatization of orphans and disabled children lacking an ancestral lineage, and by the conviction that only male children could take adequate care for their elderly parents. Neglect and doom in Chinese state orphanages, called Children's Welfare Institutes, were first publicized internationally by a British documentary of undercover footage titled *The Dying Rooms: China's Deepest Secret*, aired in the UK in 1995. Wang emphasizes that the heated international exchange that followed between China and the 'West' demonstrated 'how children are deeply interwoven with notions of national autonomy, identity, and global status' (p. 12). It also led Chinese state authorities to quietly accept and make use of international NGOs' involvement in the care of orphans and gave way to the international adoption of children.

In an attempt to understand why certain children were abandoned while others cherished and nurtured even by the same family, Chapter 2 traces the modernisation project of the Chinese state and how economic reforms, punitive fertility regulations, 'population quality' governing policies and even healthcare-related practices in public hospitals contributed to its realization. Wang contrasts Chinese and first-world views of and expectations from children. While Western middle-class parents consider their children 'emotionally priceless', to use Viviana Zelizer's term on American childbearing, Chinese children have been valued according to their perceived future economic productivity by their parents. Wang also points out that 'child abandonment has historically served as a socially acceptable survival strategy for poor rural families' (p. 30), and this strategy was corroborated by government policies defining the social value of children. This chapter has a substantial part on debates about *suzhi*, or human quality, a core yet somewhat vague notion underlying Chinese social engineering and attempts of modernisation. It is used referring to the aim to creating a 'high quality' population, a quality that is seen as continually improvable through external intervention. The author notes that the quest to improve demographic quality in the PRC has profoundly alarming eugenic overtones (p. 33).

There is an intriguing discussion of the peculiarities of the sex ratio at birth (SRB) that, other than being abnormal with much higher rates of males in the PRC, also shows substantial regional variation there. Wang's account of the so-called '1.5 child policy' (one-son-or-two-child-policy) implemented in rural areas after the mid-1980s shows how it led to the official legitimization of daughter discrimination.

Chapter 3 tackles the process of international adoption from the PRC. It analyses how abandoned girls were transformed into 'high quality' offspring through the outsourced intimacy of international adoption. Wang argues that Western investment in the adopted children in fact promotes the PRC's population project; she claims it to be a conscious strategy on behalf of the Chinese government to use these children as a form of 'soft power' to increase interest in and awareness of the PRC as



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an international superpower. Paradoxical as it may seem at first sight, this governmental attempt to gain 'soft power' through children sent overseas may evoke that the PRC considered the transnational migration of its entrepreneur population a patriotic act (see Nyíri, 2001). Wang discusses the many factors that make female Chinese infants extremely popular with potential US adoptive families. Racial and gender stereotypes, religious drives, as well as the idea of saving a child from political repression and gender discrimination all contributed to this popularity. Surprisingly, the informal domestic adoption of girls also became a massive phenomenon in China for parents who, for example, already filled their son-quota and longed for a daughter, or who wanted a daughter for emotional support. As Wang explains, girls are more easily adopted by Chinese families as they are seen less directly related to their birth families than boys who carry on the family name. The last thematic section of Chapter 3 reveals how the rise of China as a world power is reflected in restrictive changes in its adoption law.

The next two chapters (4 and 5) provide first-hand ethnography from two pseudonymized Children's Welfare Institutes that receive Western aid in different forms. Wang emphasizes throughout her book that it was the international adoption of abandoned Chinese daughters that paved the way to the acceptance of Western assistance for youths with special needs in Chinese state institutions. Chapter 4 presents the Tomorrow's Children unit within the Haifeng Children's Welfare Institute that offers palliative and medical care for severely ill or disabled infants. It is managed and financed by Western evangelical Christians driven by principles of self-sacrifice and the intention to help those in need. As the author describes in vivid detail, the Tomorrow's Children unit occupies an entire floor of the Haifeng Children's Welfare Institute, and it hires its own staff of working-class Chinese carers complemented by Western volunteers who serve shorter time periods working with the children. Altogether different child-related notions, norms, values and practices apply on the floor managed by the Western evangelical NGO. Wang's intriguing comparison and contrast between the special needs children's treatment at Tomorrow's Children Unit and the rest of the Haifeng Children's Welfare Institute offers a fundamental contribution to our thinking of childcare as related to culture and social class. She discusses in detail the pragmatic logics of care underlying the attitudes of Chinese carers and the intensive logics of care manifest in the operating rules of the palliative unit as well as in the Western volunteers' behaviour with children. These opposing logics generated conflicts between carers and volunteers on a daily basis.

Yongping Orphanage, the other Children's Welfare Institute that served as a fieldwork site discussed in Chapter 5, housed about 40 special needs and disabled children. It received financial support through a local grassroots organisation of affluent Western expatriate wives that also provided sporadic shifts of volunteer work with the children at the orphanage.

The author explains that Haifeng Children's Welfare institute was registered as part of the international adoption program. The NGO's attempt to transform severely ill and abandoned children into internationally adoptable global citizens through medical assistance and personalized childcare was accepted by local Chinese authorities, and it was presented as an example in national media. Yongping Orphanage, however, was not connected to the international adoptions programme,

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and Western volunteers' occasional attempts of intensive and transformative care were confronted more rigidly by Chinese carers' custodial approach of care. These confrontations, as Wang evaluates, increased uncertainty in the lives of these children with special needs.

The number of internationally adoptable healthy Chinese female infants decreased dramatically by the early 2010s. The author argues that China's rise as a global power was paralleled symbolically by serious restrictions in its adoption law, giving way to the international adoption of disabled or special needs children. Chapter 6 presents this shift in the transnational adoptive process and discusses the role the values, aims and ambitions of American evangelical Christian families played in it. This chapter also demonstrates that the legal market of internationally adoptable 'children involves a constellation of constantly shifting local and global social, political, and economic factors' (p. 148).

Leslie K. Wang's fascinating book is the outcome of nearly two decades of research. The bulk of her empirical material was produced during extensive fieldwork she conducted in China. Starting in November 2006, she spent 14 months doing research and working as a full time Chinese-speaking Western volunteer at the Tomorrow's Children Unit and at Yongping Orphanage, followed by five subsequent shorter field trips until 2014. Empirical richness and thick descriptions characterize her book, which reflects a profound engagement with the field. The author demonstrates a sharp eye to notice and analyse micro-interactions among children, local staff, and Western volunteers she witnessed as a participant observer. Leslie K. Wang went intimately close to her field and to the people she studied. Her institutional ethnographies are alive with the personalities, life stories and experiences of children with special needs. The author also spent shorter study periods at six other institutions, made 60 interviews with volunteers, Chinese carers, NGO staff, adoptive parents, and adoptees, and conducted archival research.

Connecting macro and micro levels, global and local actors, private and public spheres, *Outsourced Children* tackles a delicate issue. It provides a fundamental background to our understanding of child-related aspects of Chinese families and Chinese society in the midst of skyrocketing capitalist transformation, contextualizing how Chinese birth control and heavily restricted childbearing aimed to accelerate modernisation.

Leslie K. Wang's analysis is highly informative for scholars working on the values and cultural assumptions underlying the outsourced childcare regimes observed among Chinese migrant entrepreneur families in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as for an audience interested in international adoption, China, childcare in China, and Chinese presence in the Western world.

It is an excellent and considerate, yet passionate text that gives voice to all the social groups involved. It may add an extra dimension to the book that the author, also a life coach, is a collaborator of the Family Development Project that intends to improve health and wellbeing in Chinese American families through research and education (<https://www.familydevelopmentproject.com>). It is a book that wants to make a difference, and not only in the academic sense. The concluding chapter reveals Wang's commitment to the lives and fate of abandoned and particularly

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special needs children, and her hope for a time when Chinese authorities and society stand up jointly against the stigmatization of special needs children.

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The Politics of Manufactured Crisis: Political Entrepreneurship and the Fiscal Wars of the Early 2010s in the U.S.

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**Abstract**

It is a widely used assumption in the literature on political decision-making that leaders ‘choose their battles’ according to their interests. This strategic approach often results in seemingly ‘fake crises’; crises which are – as opposed to natural disasters – not exogenous in nature. These crises are exceptional in that they are avoidable and are the product of political entrepreneurs following deliberate agendas. In this paper, the logic of crisis manufacturing is illustrated by a case study of the ‘fiscal wars’ of 2011–2013. The case study shows how, given the right institutional environment, political entrepreneurs, even those outside the political mainstream, can use crisis manufacturing to their advantage. In order to exploit the institutional veto points related to fiscal policy in the U.S. constitutional system, various actors associated with the Republican Party and the Tea Party movement used a networked, coalition-based approach to reach these goals. Although their quest to instill a regime of fiscal conservatism was eventually unsuccessful, they did manage to raise their national profile and set the policy agenda for an extended period.

*Keywords:* Political entrepreneurship, manufactured crisis, policy studies, Tea Party, fiscal policy.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The sources of policy crises are well-studied in contemporary policy studies, and rightly so. Depending on their nature, policy crises involve significant losses in terms of human lives (as in the case of disasters or armed conflict) or economic value (as in the case of financial meltdowns, for example). The analysis of the root causes of crises, therefore, is a natural preoccupation for policy researchers.

Policy crises come in two major types: those which are exogenous, and those which are endogenous in nature. Whereas exogenous shocks tend to lead students of public policy towards the global context – e.g., to seismology in the case of tsunami prediction –, crises with endogenous causes highlight the role of political actors and institutions. Endogeneity – here defined by the condition that the impetus for the crisis comes from inside the realm of the political system – may still be the unpredictable outcome of unintended acts.

But, at least in some cases, crisis stems from the premeditated deeds of the political class. The logic of these *manufactured crises* – to borrow a term used by Porter (2014), among others – is distinct from those initiated by exogenous causes, and also from those of the ‘unintended’ subclass of the endogenous kind. We rely on multiple strands in the literature to delineate a theoretical framework for describing the logic of manufactured crisis. The former include works related to institutional change, political entrepreneurship, U.S. fiscal policy (see ‘fiscal cliff’) and the study of the public policy of American conservatism and the Tea Party.

In this article the logic of manufactured crisis is explored through outcome-centric research (Gschwend and Schimmelfennig, 2011: 184). As opposed to inductive research aimed at generalization from a sample, the focus of the former is internal validity as it develops a causal link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables. That said, as the theoretical framework matures over prospective studies, questions of external validity may once again come to the fore (we discuss a few of these in the Discussion).

Our case of choice concerns the role the Tea Party movement played in the U.S. debt ceiling crisis of the early 2010s. This episode in U.S. policy history seems particularly suitable for an outcome-based study of the logic of manufactured crises. First, it was clearly an endogenous crisis: opponents of public debt accumulation would not have had much leverage over other political actors except for exploiting the debt ceiling. In this it represents an exemplary case of a ‘man-made’ disaster in waiting, as nothing separated calamity from normalcy except for a simple vote (as occurred on a number of previous occasions).

Moreover, the debt ceiling debate offers a natural case for the study of the role of political entrepreneurship in crisis-manufacturing as a distinctive set of players played an active part in fomenting the crisis – the Tea Party movement and its congressional allies. The subject of the debate is equally suitable for our purposes. The high-stakes negotiations surrounding the debt ceiling created a real-life ticking bomb scenario, in which a potential shortcut to massive political capital accumulation was matched with correspondingly high political risk.

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<sup>1</sup> I am thankful for comments by Gábor Győri and two anonymous reviewers. Any errors that remain are my sole responsibility.

In the given settings, all the major components of a major endogenous policy crisis were at play: political entrepreneurs striving for a return on political investment; easily removable institutional constraints; a high-risk, high-reward environment, and a firmly defined timetable for the negotiations to unfold. In light of these features, the Tea Party maneuvering regarding the debt ceiling promised to be a classic case of manufactured crisis.

In what follows, an overview is first provided of the literature on the endogenous causes of crises in general, and the role of political entrepreneurs in particular. Second, we discuss the rationale for case selection. Third, an empirical case study is presented of the fiscal wars of 2011–2013 with an emphasis on how the logic of crisis-manufacturing unfolded in the strategic moves of the political leaders of the Tea Party movement. A discussion of the theoretical relevance of the networked, coalition-based strategy of the Tea Party follows, along with considerations related to the external validity of the proposed framework. The final section recapitulates and considers avenues for further research.

## *2. Endogenous policy crises*

Policy crises can range from ‘acts of war, threats of force, and terrorist attacks to environmental calamities, industrial accidents, health epidemics, and natural disasters’ (Schneider and Jordan, 2016). Many of these are exogenous (such as disasters) or man-made (such as industrial accidents) and are usually not related to the strategic agency of political actors. An endogenous crisis, on the other hand, features such strategic motives and deliberate action.

The phrase *manufactured crisis* is a recurring term in reports and studies, with subjects ranging from public schools (Berliner and Biddle, 1996) to social security (Baker and Weisbrot, 2001; here under the more derogatory ‘phony crisis’ moniker). Most recently, it was applied to the Iran ‘nuclear scare’ (Porter, 2014). Its wide-ranging usage points toward a concept that travels well through fields and paradigms.

Generally speaking, this approach is associated with the ‘power-critical’ branch of crisis studies (Hart, 1993: 37). This states that – as opposed to practitioner-oriented research focusing on crisis management – policy crises are ‘politically controversial phenomena’ and are best understood as elements of a constructed social reality. While from this research direction have stemmed a fair amount of studies of the politics of crisis, these have mostly used the presence of policy crisis as a given, a fact of reality that political actors can relate to (e.g. by ‘exploiting’ it – Boin et al., 2009). However, a conceptualization of endogenously created crises remains elusive.

A compact definition of the latter can be constructed by combining this notion with the theory of political entrepreneurship. Non-exogenous policy crises are those initiated from within the domestic political system, as opposed to, for example, the Iran hostage crisis of 1979–1981. A sub-type of these are man-made crises, intentional or unintentional: their subject, severity, and timing is not dictated by factors from outside the community of political actors. Finally, a manufactured crisis is both endogenous and is ushered in by the strategic intent of political entrepreneurs as opposed to unintended consequences.

Our primary concern in this paper is the sub-type of endogenous crisis initiated by political entrepreneurs. The notion of manufactured crisis, then, posits a causal

link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables. Case studies that fall under this or other monikers abound in the literature. Hay (2010) demonstrates that the ‘Winter of Discontent,’ the period of major strikes in 1979 in the United Kingdom against the policies of the Labour government in charge at the time, was ‘in many respects a manufactured crisis,’ concluding that ‘Keynesianism’s death in Britain was not economically given, but politically orchestrated.’ This literature, in contrast to the similar research direction centered on the term ‘crisis exploitation,’ does not take crisis as a given. While crisis opens new avenues for strategic behavior (as described in e.g. Boin et al., 2009: 83), our focus is less on ‘post-crisis politicking’ and ‘framing contests’ than pre-crisis brinkmanship.

In this, its roots are in theories of endogenous crisis in general, and the role of political entrepreneurship that initiates these in particular. Studies of endogenous crisis are now abundant in economics, where financial meltdowns provide ample data on intra-system imbalances, upsetting more traditional theoretical accounts (see Lucarelli, 2011: 7–9). While these may be endogenous crises of the unintended sort, intentionality is more difficult to avoid – or: easier to establish – in political science studies. Here, the prevalence of exogenous explanations of change is more of an obstacle (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010: 5–7). Furthermore, endogeneity may be defined by factors other than the general political system, as in the case of political institutions, which can change according to varying patterns of self-enforcement and reinforcement.

### *3. The role of political entrepreneurship in manufacturing crises*

In order to cut through some theoretical complexity, our focus is on political entrepreneurship as a distinct force for endogenous policy change. In this we follow the literature on various aspects of the entrepreneurship of political aspects, such as public, institutional, political and policy entrepreneurs (see e.g. Schneider et al., 1995; Sebők, 2018; Laffan, 1997; and Sheingate, 2003, respectively), which portray bureaucrats and politicians as ‘agents of change.’ Mintrom and Norman (2009) go on to directly link policy entrepreneurship and policy change.

What is somewhat less well elaborated in this line of research is an account of political entrepreneurship performed by groups or networks, as opposed to individuals or homogeneous coalitions. This approach may be particularly fruitful in assessing the sub-types of manufactured crisis. The subjects of agency (i.e. individuals or groups) are of interest insofar as they reshape how the crisis unfolds: more heterogeneous players with unstable preferences may – but need not – add dynamic depth to the game.

Needless to say, multiple sources contribute to the conversion of simple games to multi-stage dynamic games. The shifting membership and, therefore, underlying preference-structure of coalitions as political entrepreneurs is one such factor. Their capability to ‘manufacture opportunities themselves by transforming “events” into “crises”’ (Polsby, 1983: 168–170, cited by Sheingate, 2003: 189) may be both reinforced or diluted by their multi-agent setup.

Our outlook is also affected by the nature of the leverage and the stakes involved. Baumgartner and Jones (2010: 21–22) make the distinction between policy subsystems and the macropolitical level. Crises of only subsystem-level interest can be



pushed up to the level of macropolitics, where attention is scarce and sequential: at any given time, general interest cable news channels will only cover a handful of events. One indicator of such macropolitical potential is the leverage involved. The Cuban Missile Crisis was of utmost importance not only because the exact location or destructive capability of the missiles involved; it was magnified by its relation to defense doctrines and the validity of verbal ultimatums in a multi-phase Cold War game.

Similar near-existential threats include protracted strikes (as in the case of the Winter of Discontent) and other disruptions to the ordinary provision of basic goods and services. Legislative gridlock may also be a source of policy crises: obstruction (in the form of filibuster or other institutionalized veto points) can undermine government policies, thereby impacting the everyday life of citizens.

In light of these considerations our research question is related to the role of political entrepreneurship in the creation of manufactured crises. We argue that given the right institutional environment, political entrepreneurs, even those outside the political mainstream, can use crisis manufacturing to their advantage. Since no off-the-shelf theoretical treatments are available for studying the logic of manufactured crisis, we rely on an empirical case study of what appears to be a clear-cut case of an endogenous crisis: the so-called fiscal wars of the early 2010s.

In this period, in order to exploit the institutional veto points related to fiscal policy in the U.S. constitutional system, various actors associated with the Republican Party and the Tea Party movement used a networked, coalition-based approach to advance their goals. Although their quest to instill a regime of fiscal conservatism was eventually unsuccessful, they did manage to raise their national profile and set the policy agenda for an extended period.

For the insurgents, the institutional arrangement of the debt ceiling proved an accurate choice for a battlefield with its high risk nature and sound footings in popular opinion (see unpopular bailouts). Nevertheless, despite the generally favorable setting it took proficient political entrepreneurship to manufacture a crisis of the given proportions. Insurgencies – a moniker which was also often applied to the Tea Party, and with good reason – frequently resort to elements of asymmetrical warfare, such as hostage-taking, suicide bombers, and other suspensions of the laws of war (or in this case: conventions and gentleman's agreements not to tinker with the full faith and credit of the U.S.). Guerrilla warfare is often characterized by small numbers of mutineers (or 'freedom fighters'), their dependence on popular help, and decentralized, amorphous system of command.

The networked, coalition-based and guerrilla approach to manufacturing policy crises – as well as its potential for subverting existing policy arrangements – represents a potentially unique class of endogenous crisis, which could be fleshed out using real world examples. In particular, we will investigate the factors explaining the networked nature of the Tea Party crisis manufacturing coalition; how political entrepreneurs designed and operated that network; and how the dynamic nature of shifting political coalitions offered the possibility for more radical participants to hijack the conservative agenda and to further escalate the situation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments on the research question and the logic of manufactured crisis.

Furthermore, we discuss whether these three key elements of the case are connected; i.e. whether networks are especially suited to crisis manufacturing via shifting coalitions. In order to realize the theoretical potential of this framework for studying endogenous policy crises, we adopt a case-study-based, inductive approach to theory development which is thoroughly informed by our empirical work.

#### *4. Case selection*

In this article we rely on outcome-centric research in exploring the logic of manufactured crisis (Gschwend and Schimmelfennig, 2011: 184). The examination of these propositions is undertaken by utilizing the conventions of qualitative case study research. Our aim is to provide an ‘analytic narrative’ that ‘pays close attention to stories, accounts and context’ while at the same time extracting ‘explicit and formal lines of reasoning, which facilitate both exposition and explanation’ (Bates et al., 1998: 10). Our focus is on internal validity, even as we are optimistic with regard to a potential generalization of the framework (see Discussion).

The U.S. debt ceiling crisis is an obvious case for the study of manufactured crisis for a number of reasons, including the consensus of various participants and commentators that in fact it was the result of strategic intent aimed at policy stability.<sup>3</sup> As Jessop (2014: 18) put it, the U.S. ‘fiscal cliff’ negotiations exemplified ‘the paradox of a political stagecraft that manufactures crises or controversy around some issues and thereby diverts political attention from other, perhaps more fundamental, themes, problems and crises (which are depolitized by default).’

The notion of a ‘fiscal cliff’ is closely related to the post-2000 implosion of the extant institutional structure and informal conventions regarding U.S. fiscal policy (Meyers, 2014). Partly due to the extreme polarization of American politics (Jacobson, 2013), the previously innocuous policy instrument of the debt ceiling was turned into a weapon in political fights. The clear deadlines and high stakes (i.e. financial collapse) associated with its resolution lent themselves well to games-of-chicken-style set ups for intransigent political actors.

In this, and besides its evidently endogenous nature, the debt ceiling case also offers a control group of previous instances when the renewal of federal borrowing authority was routine drill. Ever since the introduction of a wholesale debt limit – as opposed to individual authorizations – in 1917, and the subsequent extension of the rule to nearly all U.S. financial obligations, the debate had largely steered clear of the fiscal cliff: ‘despite the rhetoric, when push comes to shove debt ceiling increases get the votes they need – though often not without considerable political strife’ (Wallach, 2013: 3).

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. a Wall Street Journal article assuming that House Speaker John Boehner’s ‘decision to postpone a debt ceiling showdown is best understood as the GOP’s attempt to break a cycle of manufactured crises that have worked to President Obama’s advantage.’

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324624404578258221969657306>

Similarly, a New York Times editorial called the fiscal feuding ‘an artificial national crisis that put the economy and the savings of Americans at risk.’ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/05/opinion/end-the-debt-limit.html>

It is no overstatement that an ‘exemption consensus’ prevailed in U.S. politics for almost a century before the fiscal wars of 2011–2013.<sup>4</sup> This encompassed two strands of opinion: the very cessation of the debt ceiling provision and the de facto termination of the requirement to be achieved by circumvention (see the so-called Gephardt, and McConnell rules). While important differences remain between the two positions, for our purposes they signify the same content: the elimination of the debt ceiling provision as a means of crisis manufacturing.

As far as methods are concerned, in this study strategic intent on behalf of those critical of consecutive debt ceiling increases is unearthed by an analysis of secondary sources, including media reports, voting behavior, pressure group scorecards, and FCC filings. The wealth of information surrounding the debt ceiling crisis provides a magnificent target for a study of such a low level of demand with regard to external validity.

## *5. Case study: The U.S. debt ceiling and crisis manufacturing by coalition*

### *5.1 A network of political entrepreneurs*

The key element of the endogenous emergence of policy crises is crisis manufacturing undertaken by political entrepreneurs. In the case of the debt ceiling negotiations in the early 2010s, these entrepreneurs were mainly associated with the Republican Party and/or the conservative movement. Major players included House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as Tea Party members of both Houses of Congress, and the grassroots and its unofficial leaders: former VP-nominee Sarah Palin and radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh.

A further refinement involves detaching the group of fiscally conservative ‘Young Guns’ of the time (such as House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Whip Kevin McCarthy, and Rep. Paul Ryan) from establishment figures in other leadership and senior committee positions. Tea Party financiers (such as the Koch brothers) and their networks also merit consideration as autonomous players.

The congressional arm of the Tea Party movement had its origins in the stance of ‘strident fiscal conservatives like Senator Harry F. Byrd’ (Wallach, 2013). A more immediate progenitor was the historic Republican takeover of the House, hallmarked by the Contract with America, the brainchild of former House Speaker Newt

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<sup>4</sup> Besides most Democrats, at various times and in different forms this view was endorsed by an extremely heterogeneous group of Republican policy-makers and stakeholders. These included FED-chair Ben Bernanke, former OMB directors David Stockman, Mitch Daniels and Jim Nussle, and former presidential candidate Steve Forbes. Similarly, business leaders (such as Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), and an overwhelming majority of a Booth Business School survey of thirty-six leading economists questioned the usefulness of the provision and/or decried attempts to use it for political brinkmanship. Even the Wall Street Journal joined the ranks of the repeal camp, arguing that since ‘Republicans are never willing to shoot their debt-limit hostage (...) the limit has now become Democratic leverage against Republicans. Why continue the pretense of fighting over a debt limit that doesn't limit debt?’

[http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304104504579377303355489512?mod=WSJ\\_Opinion\\_LEADTop](http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304104504579377303355489512?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEADTop)

Gingrich. His standoff with President Bill Clinton resulted in two consecutive government shutdowns – for reasons very similar to the limited government-themed demands of the Tea Party insurgency.

The protagonists of this second coming of a Republican revolution were more diverse and less centralized. A month before the 2010 midterms a nationwide canvass of Tea Party organizers by the *Washington Post* asked ‘Which national figure best represents your groups?’ and got the following responses: no one, 34 per cent, Sarah Palin, 14 per cent, Glenn Beck, 7 per cent, Jim DeMint, 6 per cent, Ron Paul, 6 per cent, Michele Bachmann, 4 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Before the intake of Tea-Party-affiliated new members of Congress – and her own thematic presidential run in 2012 – Bachmann formed the Tea Party Caucus, which – at least as an official center of Tea Party politics – did not take hold.<sup>6</sup> Tea Party activists revered the individual citizen and distrusted the Beltway elite.

The focal point of the Tea Party had always been outside Congress, dispersed across America and less structured than would have normally been the case with a movement of such political clout. In consequence, members of Congress associated with the Tea Party often resorted to a constrained view of their mandate, summarized in the approach of a ‘Contract from America’ and the practice of signing pledges (such as the Anti-Tax Pledge). In the face of this power vacuum, talk show hosts, TV commentators and out-of-work Republican politicians vied for leadership status and popular support. Nevertheless, the movement was not entirely grassroots or self-financed. Non-profit organizations set up by conservative businessmen or activists (such as Tea Party Patriots, FreedomWorks, and Americans for Prosperity) provided support to like-minded causes (sometimes by astroturfing) and candidates from the beginning.

The basic cleavages were thus encoded in the structure of the debt ceiling debate from the beginning of 2011. Three somewhat coherent blocs of political actors took to the trenches: Democrats, by and large united around a strategy of cost minimization in exchange for raising the debt ceiling; establishment Republicans, sharing in and often leading party efforts to exert maximum concessions from Democrats in non-military spending cuts without sacrificing the full faith and credit in U.S. debt; and Tea Party faithful, who were only interested in abrupt changes of dramatic proportions in the face of a perceived ‘big government takeover’ of America. With this cast of characters, crisis manufacturing on behalf of a network of conservative actors unfolded in three overlapping phases between 2009 and 2013.

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Debt is in the air (2009–2011)

The movement that eventually gained attention as the Tea Party engaged in its first bursts of political activity in early 2009 in response to the first stimulus package by incoming president Barack Obama and a Congress controlled by Democrats.<sup>7</sup> With upcoming legislation that included the Affordable Care Act (‘Obamacare’), an aborted

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/tea-party-canvass/>

<sup>6</sup> Form some, any formal caucus constituted a betrayal of the grassroots origins of the movement (Chaffetz – <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0810/40528.html>). For others, even the Tea Party Caucus was not radical enough: they went on to form the Liberty Caucus (<https://www.facebook.com/houselibertycaucus>).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28keli.html>

attempt at introducing cap-and-trade-style climate change regulation, and the Dodd-Frank financial regulation package, right-wing activists were mobilized by a 'leftward lurch' in federal policy. The icing on the cake was a 1.9 trillion USD increase in the debt ceiling, which even some Democrats – mostly 'blue dogs' from vulnerable districts – voted down. They also insisted on tougher rules for future spending (pay-as-you-go rules).

In light of these developments, elements of the credo and legislative agenda of the upstart Tea Party movement were shortlisted via online voting (with more than 450,000 participants, according to organizers).<sup>8</sup> The resulting 10-point Contract from America included a balanced budget constitutional amendment, a tax code of 4,543 words (the length of the original constitution), a limit on annual growth in federal spending, a moratorium on earmarking and a ban on tax increases. This selection attests to the preoccupation of the Tea Party with all things fiscal (and with a direct constitutional foundation for any public policy proposals).

Furthermore, opinion polls seemed to suggest that the public was on board for a more restrictive budgetary approach. An AP-CNBC poll showed a 14 per cent increase over two years in the response 'very worried' to the question 'How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children?' The result (56 per cent, with 29 per cent 'somewhat worried') substantiated Tea Party claims that the majority of the electorate had become hostile towards new interventionist programs by the federal government.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, as to the structure of budgetary rebalancing, participants were evenly split between spending even more on priorities such as education, on the one hand, and cutting spending on the other.

Explanations for the causes of 'runaway' public debt were just as conflicting. Democratic conventional wisdom blamed the Bush tax cuts, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the combination of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession. Tea Party rhetoric was centered around crises of a different sort: manufactured crises. At the time, Glenn Beck made frequent references to the echoes of a 'possible arrival of a 'New World Order,' which would be ushered in by Mr. Obama using 'a strategy of manufactured crisis to destroy the economy and pave the way for dictatorship.' Tea Party activists repeated these arguments around the country. It was not long before Republican strategists – by principle, and also convinced that they were on the right side of public opinion – set out to manufacture a crisis of their own.

### 5.1.2 Phase 2: Strategic unity – tactical diversity (2010–2011)

It has to be emphasized that the panic surrounding ever-increasing public debt was not, by any stretch, the invention of right-wing conspiracy theorists. Federal debt was increasing at a historic rate in nominal terms (see Figure 1), with a surge in Debt/GDP from the mid-fifties during the period 1990–2006 to 91 per cent in 2011.<sup>10</sup> Projections looked even worse with entitlement-related spending getting especially out of hand

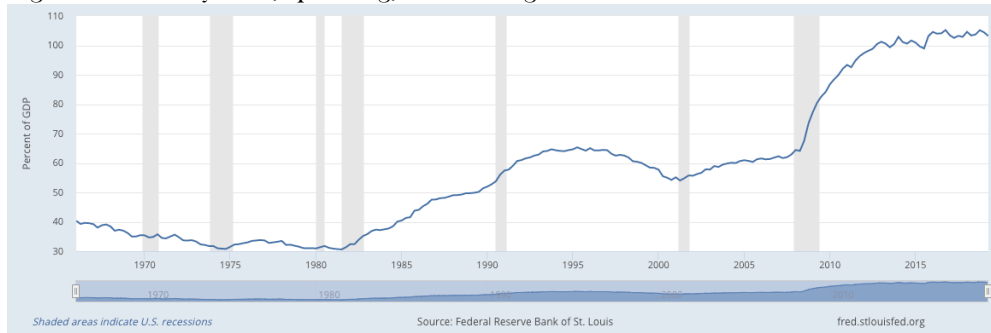
<sup>8</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15contract.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15contract.html?_r=0)

<sup>9</sup> <http://surveys.ap.org/data/per cent5CGIK per cent5CAP-CNBC per cent20Poll per cent20Topline per cent201 per cent20112310.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Indexes differ according to the specifics of underlying data. The calculations presented here are corroborated by St. Louis FED data: <http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/GFDEGDQ188S>.

(CBO, 2011: 80). In the short term, the unusually long recession took its toll, as did the – short-lived – discretionary spending increases denounced by Tea Party activists (again, see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Statutory debt, spending, and GDP growth: 1948–2013



Source: OMB, Bureau of Economic Analysis. End of fiscal year.

The fiscal situation was worsening but immediate repercussions were not expected: bond yields remained low for a sustained period and a fiscal collapse was not on the horizon. In this situation it required political entrepreneurship to convert a moral panic into a political, let alone a legislative, strategy. Not that Republican leaders had much choice<sup>11</sup>: Tea Partiers held liable *both* parties for runaway debt and also posed a larger threat to the establishment of the GOP: most ‘patriots’ were Republicans and, by virtue of their mobilization networks, a threat to reckon with in Republican primaries. Post-crisis accounts of events were unerring in declaring that ‘the establishment held back the Tea Party by basically co-opting their issues and rhetoric – while in the process moving the party even more to the right.’<sup>12</sup> Yet there was a fine line between co-optation and forcing a shutdown, as Boehner made clear to incoming freshmen in December 2010: ‘For people who’ve never been in politics it’s going to be one of those growing moments (...) but we’ll have to find a way to (...) help people understand the serious problem that would exist if we didn’t do it.’<sup>13</sup>

Based on the premises of ‘adult’ behavior on the part of the eighty-five incoming House members, a coalition between establishment- and Tea Party Republicans firmly set in: Boehner had donated ‘millions of dollars from his own campaign chest to the challengers,’<sup>14</sup> singled out the ‘monstrous’ ACA as a target for repeal and, after the election, announced a renewal of the Republican moratorium on budgetary earmarks. The speaker-in-waiting was also no stranger to some leading Tea Party organizers, notably Dick Armey, with whom he had served as a member of the Gingrich House leadership (and Armey duly endorsed him for Speaker<sup>15</sup>). He was fully preparing to ‘lead by being led.’

<sup>11</sup> Even as they acted as agents of the agenda. Their analytical status is, therefore, ambiguous.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/editorials/2014/08/09/tea-party-steers-gop-right-away-from-white-house/Trz1NOrjXO4Oin3MIIRVEN/story.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=all>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/10/20/dick-armey-backs-john-boehner-for-house-speaker/>



Even then, there were ominous signs: candidates with Tea Party backing – such as Peter Schiff in Connecticut – were touting their pledges to devote all their ‘time in the US Senate to forcing an immediate end to deficit spending, by leading a filibuster against the raising of the national debt ceiling and fighting every big spending bill that comes across the Senate floor’ (in the event, Schiff lost his primary).<sup>16</sup> Similar pledges were made by hundreds of Tea Party candidates in a Ulysses-like act of tying themselves to the mast against the siren calls of big government. Before long (in December) there was ‘disagreement between Boehner and (...) at least one freshman member of the leadership team, about how to control the federal deficit.’<sup>17</sup>

Thinly veiled threats were also issued by the Young Guns. When Boehner had suggested in an interview that ‘he might compromise with Democrats if the middle-class tax cut was the only option,’ McCarthy was quick to push back: ‘It’s a generational thing (...) we have our ideals, but also our principles.’ Ryan added: Boehner never asked him to tone down his anti-debt rhetoric: ‘I think he realizes the kind of class we’ve got coming in, and the kind of times that we are in (...) And I think he realizes that he can’t stand athwart history or the direction of this new conference, anyway. If he tried, they’d throw him out.’<sup>18</sup> With a potential challenge for the speakership by Cantor looming, Boehner had a vested interest in championing the cause of spending and – by inference – debt reduction.

Next on the agenda was how to approach the issue in an adult, but at the same time expedient and unhesitating manner. ‘Starving the beast’ of federal government had been a favorite policy proposal of conservatives for decades – even when a balanced budget (or, indeed, debt reduction in general or a ban on earmarked funds to be used in the states or locally) was not high on the agenda.<sup>19</sup> While fiscal conservatism was gaining strength with the electorate, House Republicans were also conscious of what the T.E.A. in the Tea Party stood for: Taxed Enough Already.

Thus the issue of spending reduction was chosen as the carrier for a strategy of confrontation with a Democratic president and Senate. As Rep. Ryan put it: ‘we owe it to our employers, the people who elected us, to give them a choice of two futures.’<sup>20</sup> The other signature item on the Tea Party agenda was even more self-evident: over 2009 the conservative base developed an obsession with the Democrats’ health care proposal, fretting over a purported government takeover of their insurance policies in general, and ‘death panels’ in particular.<sup>21</sup> ‘Obamacare’ perfectly fit the bill, being a second issue directly related to the overarching leviathan theme so popular with Tea Partiers.

In the event, the combination of spending cuts and an anti-health-care stance had naturally developed into a winning combination for Republicans preparing to gain

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.redstate.com/diary/goper/2010/05/26/with-rob-simmons-out-support-the-tea-party-candidate/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=2>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> The Reagan presidency was notorious for its rocketing public debt (see Wallach, 2013). And anti-earmark crusaders in Congress (such as Tom Coburn – who even earned the nickname Dr. No) were often vilified by fellow Republicans more captivated by the idea of getting reelected.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=2>

<sup>21</sup> A term coined by Sarah Palin to describe – incorrectly – a segment (the Independent Payment Advisory Board) of the proposed legislation as authorizing bureaucrats to decide who were ‘worthy of medical care.’ Between 2010 and 2012 about four in ten U.S. adults consistently shared this opinion. <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/258753-poll-four-in-10-believe-in-health-law-death-panels>



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a majority in the House in the 2010 midterms (the Senate, at that time, seemed out of reach). The former was selected as an agenda item and manufactured by the coalition of a diverse selection of players, creating common ground for at least some part of the period. All participants did their part: talk show hosts and town-hall speakers amplifying the negative message, Young Guns rolling out alternative policy proposals, and party leadership recruiting and aiding candidates to take on vulnerable Democrats.

Yet one piece was missing: a bridge between electoral and legislative strategy or, put more simply, a path to ‘get things done.’ This was not trivial, as Democrats were expected to hold on to the Senate and the president professed to be trigger happy about vetoing any acts that would have undone his first-term achievements. In a system based on the separation of powers, a freshly mobilized House majority needed allies, or at least some sort of institutional leverage. If they could not expect anything to get passed in concert with the Senate, they needed to create previously non-existent veto points to extract concessions.

The debt ceiling was an obvious target. Ryan himself lambasted it<sup>22</sup> during the previous increase, which was passed with zero Republican votes and 37 Democrats joining them in opposition<sup>23</sup> (see Table 1). Some Democrats even suggested that it was the job of the Republican House majority to make sure that the country avoided default (Draper, 2012: 56). Ultimately, Republicans were convinced they would come out victorious from this high-stakes game, even if – realistically – it boiled down to a choice between government shutdown and/or default or lifting the debt ceiling (at best, with strings attached). The Young Guns were perfectly cognizant of this fact and proactively discouraged talk of a ‘nay’ vote, in contrast to their otherwise belligerent rhetoric (see e.g. *ibid*: 225).

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.c-span.org/video/?291937-1/house-session>

<sup>23</sup> [http://houselive.gov/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=4317](http://houselive.gov/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=4317)

Table 1 Selected fiscal roll calls in House of Representatives (2010-2014)

Date	Subject	Act name	No.	Dem Y	Dem N	Rep Y	Rep N	Y Total	Note
<b>111th Congress - Speaker: Pelosi (D)</b>									
Feb.4, 2010 <sup>24</sup>	Debt ceiling, PAYGO	Statutory pay-as-you-go	HJ 45. PL. 111-139	217	37	0	175	217	N: Blue Dogs (Giffords)
Dec. 16, 2010 <sup>25</sup>	Tax cuts expiring	Tax relief, unemployment. ..	HR 4853. PL. 111-312	139	112	138	36	277	Y: Cantor, McCarthy, Ryan, Ron Paul N: Bachmann, Gohmert
<b>112th Congress - Speaker: Boehner (R)</b>									
March 2, 2011 <sup>26</sup>	Continuing resolution (4)	Further Continuing Appropriations Amendments	HJ 44. PL. 112-4	104	85	231	6	335	Y: Cantor, Ryan N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Paul; Pelosi
March 16, 2011 <sup>27</sup>	Continuing resolution (5)	Additional Continuing Appropriations Amendments	HJ 48. PL. 112-6	85	104	186	54	271	N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Chaffetz, Labrador, King (IA), Jordan, Mulvaney, Paul N: Pelosi
April 9, 2011 <sup>28</sup>	Continuing resolution (6)	Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Amendments	PL. 112-8	140	42	208	28	348	N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Chaffetz, Labrador, King (IA), Jordan, Mulvaney
Apr. 14, 2011 <sup>29</sup>	Continuing resolution (7)	Full-Year Continuing Appropriations	HR 1473.	81	108	179	59	260	Y: Cantor, Ryan N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members, Pelosi
Aug. 1, 2011 <sup>30</sup>	Debt ceiling, sequestration rule	Budget control	S 365. PL 112-25	95	95	174	66	269	Y: Cantor, Pelosi N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members; McGovern and other

<sup>24</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll046.xml>

<sup>25</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll647.xml>

<sup>26</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll154.xml>

<sup>27</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll179.xml>

<sup>28</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll253.xml>

<sup>29</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll268.xml>

<sup>30</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll690.xml>

Date	Subject	Act name	No.	Dem Y	Dem N	Rep Y	Rep N	Y Total	Note
									progressives
Jan. 1, 2013 <sup>31</sup>	Fiscal cliff	American taxpayer relief	HR 8. PL. 112-240	172	16	85	151	257	S: Only 8 Nays, incl. Rand, Rubio, Lee
<b>113th Congress – Speaker: Boehner (R)</b>									
Jan. 23, 2013 <sup>32</sup>	Temporary debt ceiling	No budget, no pay	HR 325. PL 113-3	86	111	199	33	285	Y: Cantor, Ryan, Scalise, Jordan N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members, Pelosi
October 16, 2013 <sup>33</sup>	Debt ceiling, Continuing resolution	Continuing appropriations	HR 2775. PL. 113-46	198	0	87	144	285	Y: Cantor, Pelosi N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members
Feb. 11, 2014 <sup>34</sup>	Clean debt ceiling	Temporary debt limit extension	S 540.	193	2	28	199	221	Y: Cantor, McCarthy N: Ryan
			<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>275</b>	

Source: Author and <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL31967.pdf> Note: Y=Yea/Aye, N=Nay/Noe, S=Senate

However, some members of the Republican conference did not share this approach of a game of strategy. Political capital was to be accumulated not only by crisis-resolution, but by creative destruction. For these Republicans, compromise on fiscal issues meant antagonizing their dearly held principles *and* guaranteed primary defeat in 2012.

Despite these ominous signs, and in stark contrast to the social conservative-neocon coalition behind the George W. Bush presidency, incoming majority leader Cantor highlighted four issues for his conference: jobs and the economy; cutting spending; shrinking the federal government; and expanding individual liberty (Draper, 2002: 47). During a closed-door retreat in mid-January, Cantor also pleaded with his troops to ‘look at a potential increase in the debt limit as a leverage moment when the White House and President Obama will have to deal with us. (...) Either we stick together and demonstrate that we’re a team that will fight for and stand by our principles, or we will lose that leverage.’<sup>35</sup>

The first application of the general strategy came in March–April, 2011 by which time previous appropriations for the fiscal year October 2010–September 2011 had run out. As no budget had been passed by September 2010, continuing

<sup>31</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2012/roll659.xml>

<sup>32</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll030.xml>

<sup>33</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll550.xml>

<sup>34</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll061.xml>

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/origins-of-the-debt-showdown/2011/08/03/gIQA9uqIzL\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/origins-of-the-debt-showdown/2011/08/03/gIQA9uqIzL_story.html)

resolutions covered expenditure on the general level of the previous fiscal year. And since no grand bargain had been conjured up during the lame-duck session of December (or based on the Bowles-Simpson recommendations) the federal government was now on a ticking clock until March 4. House Republicans kicked the can down the road twice more in exchange for roughly \$10 billion in spending cuts. At this point a government shutdown was scheduled for April 8. A seventh continuing resolution was agreed on just hours before furloughs were scheduled to take place at the cost of an additional cut of \$38 billion from the budget proposal. However, as these, to a large extent, only targeted project or 'conditionally mandatory' expenditures, a CBO estimation put actual savings at a mere \$355 million. For all their negotiations, compromises, and painful votes, Tea Party Republicans felt tricked.

Incremental changes were made to the strategy before the next potential showdown, the August 2 debt ceiling deadline. This included a more concentrated voting procedure, as the previous approach created 'divisions rather than promot[ing] unity within the conference.' Among the ideas floated as preconditions for a potential compromise, the usual subjects came up: repealing Obamacare, a balanced budget constitutional amendment, and caps on mandatory spending. Only a 'dozen or so' members ruled out a deal (Draper, 2012: 226).

In a quest to instill unity in a rowdy caucus a bill was put forth by the majority leadership that embraced a series of popular proposals by the membership in order to 'cut, cap and balance' (CCB) the budget. In exchange for raising the debt limit it stipulated steep cuts in non-military spending, and made future debt ceiling hikes conditional on passing a balanced budget amendment to the constitution. However, as it did not contain provisions to defund Obamacare, and (based on their general anti-increase stance) Reps. Bachmann, Paul, and Jones did not support it (along with 181 Democrats).<sup>36</sup>

With this display of purity most House Republicans were basically done negotiating with the White House - it took a concerted effort on behalf of the leadership of both chambers and the president to reach a last-minute agreement based on a modified version of CCB, a far cry from any sort of grand bargain. Boehner was right to emphasize the similarities between the two proposals, including avoiding tax increases and guarantees of future spending cuts in the form of sequestration.<sup>37</sup>

That said, the vote had ambiguous results as to who won or lost. From the perspective of our research question, the most important development was that it provoked a lasting rift in camaraderie within the Tea Party caucus, and also within the Republican conferences in Congress. Throughout the entire crisis period between 2011 and 2014 the Republican House majority mustered by itself the necessary 218 votes for key fiscal roll calls on a single occasion (on March 2, 2011, see Table 1). It was no different with this first debt ceiling showdown, as - on August 1st, just one day before the shutdown deadline - sixty-six Republicans 'defected' (and the others were accused of defection by Tea Party media<sup>38</sup>).<sup>39</sup>

### 5.1.3 Phase 3: Taking sides (2011-2013)

<sup>36</sup> <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll606.xml#N>

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/08/01/us/politics/20110801\\_BOEHNER\\_DEBT\\_FRAMEWORK.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/08/01/us/politics/20110801_BOEHNER_DEBT_FRAMEWORK.html?_r=0)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/29/allen-west-tea-party-schizophrenia-debt\\_n\\_913283.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/29/allen-west-tea-party-schizophrenia-debt_n_913283.html)

<sup>39</sup> This is telling even as most votes allowed for tactical voting.

The most important takeaway for hardcore Tea Party believers from the events of March-August 2011 was that gratification had been delayed once again. Obamacare was the law of the land; there was no realistic chance of passing a balanced budget amendment; and several compatriots gave in under pressure from party leadership. Along with the impending presidential primaries, the 2012 elections provided a new opportunity for Tea Party strategists to advance their agenda.

Throughout the tense process of the 2011–2013 fiscal crisis, members of Congress repeatedly refused to rule out testing the waters when it came to default. Tim Scott denounced the thought that a deal was ‘a foregone conclusion (...) I’d like to let the proof be in the pudding.’<sup>40</sup> When presented with projections regarding the fallout from default, ‘conservatives like Georgia Rep. Phil Gingrey read (...) emails from banker friends who didn’t buy it.’<sup>41</sup> John Fleming went on the record, stating that ‘nothing happens’ if the debt ceiling is reached.<sup>42</sup> With default, or a protracted shutdown, remaining uncharted territory, some House Republicans were still preparing for a final fiscal showdown.

Yet circumstances somewhat changed for the second half of the period. As opposed to the 2010 midterms, Democrats now picked up eight seats in the House (but remained the minority party), and two in the Senate. President Obama also won a second term against the mainstream Republican Mitt Romney who had previously defeated a number of Tea-Party-backed contenders (including House firebrand Bachmann).

The crisis of 2011 also left the Republicans more divided about and averse to fiscal brinkmanship. By fall the Republican ‘cardinals’ on the appropriations committees were in full revolt over hardliners undercutting their proposed bills (Draper, 2012: 278). Cantor was progressively becoming a main target for the media at large over Republican intransigence. While he was still described by some as ‘the Republican leadership’s tether to the Tea Party,’ in fact he donated money to moderates and never joined the Tea Party Caucus (nor did the other Young Guns). Even ideologues who were otherwise on friendly terms with House Tea Partiers, such as Karl Rove, denounced their slash-and-burn tactics when it came to bargaining with Democrats: he declared that passing a viable measure ‘will require the GOP to accept less than total repeal of the Obama agenda, vote for spending cuts smaller than what they want, and support a debt increase all Republicans wish were not necessary.’<sup>43</sup>

The exemption consensus was now ever powerful, and duly led to compromise (brokered once again in the Senate, with the help of vice-president Biden) on the upcoming editions of the crisis: the ‘fiscal cliff’ of December 2012, and also a temporary debt ceiling increase. The silver lining in all this was the arrival of a new ally for ‘liberty’-focused House members with the 2012 elections: Ted Cruz, the new junior senator from Texas. Along with Mike Lee and Rand Paul from the 2010 intake, he developed a new veto point in a Senate that still retained individual

<sup>40</sup><http://dailycaller.com/2010/12/21/house-freshman-leader-voices-doubts-about-boehners-first-adult-moment-raising-debt-ceiling/>

<sup>41</sup>[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2014/02/debt\\_limit\\_brinkmanship\\_is\\_dead\\_the\\_republican\\_strategy\\_of\\_crisis\\_budgeting.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/02/debt_limit_brinkmanship_is_dead_the_republican_strategy_of_crisis_budgeting.html)

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/house-republicans-government-shutdown-96968\\_Page2.html](http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/house-republicans-government-shutdown-96968_Page2.html)

<sup>43</sup> <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324581504578231672194516556>

members' right to obstruct - or 'filibuster' - proceedings. New methods also took root to persuade members of Congress to engage in responsible fiscal behavior: the next temporary debt ceiling hike was linked to passing a budget within three months. Without this, members of the chamber in question would have their pay withheld: no budget, no pay.

However, the resulting new debt ceiling deadline of mid-May initiated once again a contentious process with the Young Guns now firmly in the leadership camp. Reps. Bridenstine and Huelskamp (along with twenty-eight others) proposed to eject Obamacare from a bill under consideration. This, in turn, 'shocked' Boehner and Cantor who prevented a full-blown revolt by rescheduling related votes.<sup>44</sup> Tea Party activists such as Erick Erickson of RedState, a blog, were unimpressed, announcing that 'House Conservatives Will Prove They Are the Problem.'<sup>45</sup>

Open season was once again declared on the debt ceiling, but with Democrats less inclined to compromise, a sensible exit point was wanting. As Rep. Stutzman, who supported the ensuing government shutdown in October 2013, put it: 'we have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is.'<sup>46</sup> Inside this 'Republican suicide machine' tensions were brewing.<sup>47</sup> As the Treasury announced in late September that extraordinary measures would be exhausted no later than October 17, Cruz prepared to filibuster any legislation that funded Obamacare. In the meantime, the Wall Street Journal, no foe of spending cuts, concluded that 'Kamikaze missions rarely turn out well, least of all for the pilots.'<sup>48</sup>

Unrepentant, the no-compromise wing of the Republican Party crafted a letter to House leadership with eighty signatures demanding that the budget bill 'affirmatively de-fund' Obamacare. Simultaneously, a Tea Party rally ('Exempt America'<sup>49</sup>) was held on Capitol hill, featuring revolting lawmakers from both chambers. The 'Williamsburg Accord' of early 2013, devised to offer a 'unified Republican strategy' that drove 'toward a new debt ceiling standoff with the president,' was now officially void.<sup>50</sup>

When Tea Partiers refused to vote for any debt ceiling increase and continuing resolution that did not defund Obamacare, the government went into a partial shutdown on October 1. The ball was once again in the court of the Senate in terms of coming up with a solution. Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell admitted that 'we were talking in the Senate Republican conference as early as July that (the hardcore strategy) had no chance of success.'<sup>51</sup> Calling the twenty-one-hour filibuster speech on September 24 by Cruz a 'quixotic venture,' he was already busy brokering a deal with Senate majority leader Harry Reid that included the McConnell rule and

<sup>44</sup><http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/10/how-gop-hardliners-hijacked-boehner-debt-ceiling-obamacare>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.redstate.com/2013/03/06/today-house-conservatives-will-corrupt-america/>

<sup>46</sup><http://washingtonexaminer.com/gop-stands-firm-against-funding-bill-will-link-to-debt-ceiling-fight/article/2536750>

<sup>47</sup> In retrospect, Paul Ryan also called it a "suicide mission".

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009>

<http://blogs.rollcall.com/218/paul-ryan-rules-out-another-government-shutdown/?dcz=>

<sup>48</sup> <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323846504579073083671216784>

<sup>49</sup> <http://exemptamerica.com/>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009?page=2>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/us/politics/senate-minority-leader-faces-dual-battles-in-gop.html>

various other stopgap measures in order to avoid a recurrence of a fiscal showdown. Three days later, closure was finally voted on with only eighteen other Republican Senators joining, falling short of a blocking minority of forty.

With the Tea Party losing the Senate front of the battle, House Republicans were once again confronted with the choice of default vs. a debt limit hike. Finally, on October 16, a conference amendment was passed with no Democrats opposed, but only a minority of House Republicans joining Boehner and Cantor in voting ‘yea.’<sup>52</sup> As John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential candidate, observed: ‘It did change the environment when the American people rejected the shutdown.’ He referred to polls conducted during the two weeks of the shutdown showing that 53 percent blamed Republicans for the crisis, compared with 31 percent who blamed Mr. Obama. These also represented the lowest party approval scores for the GOP in twenty-plus years.<sup>53</sup>

In two months’ time, a budget agreement involving Rep. Ryan ended ‘the four year quest for a “grand bargain” by funding the government above the levels set in 2011 and not cutting entitlements.’<sup>54</sup> And with a ‘clean’ debt limit raise passed with mostly Democratic votes in February 2014, a three-year era of fiscal wars was finally over.

## 6. Discussion

In this article, we have argued that the networked, coalition-based and guerrilla approach to manufacturing policy crises represents a unique class of endogenous crisis. In particular, we investigated four aspects of the case at hand: (1) the factors explaining the networked nature of the Tea Party crisis-manufacturing coalition; (2) how political entrepreneurs designed and operated that network; (3) how the dynamic nature of shifting political coalitions offered the possibility for more radical participants to hijack the conservative agenda and to further escalate the situation; and (4) how these three key elements of the case are connected, i.e. whether networks are an especially suitable form of crisis manufacturing via shifting coalition.

From a theoretical standpoint, by tackling these questions we may arrive at a more complete categorization of various types of crisis manufacturing. Here, beyond external factors, such as policy domain and geographic scope (see Conclusion), the key aspect may be related to internal structures of players, the multiplicity of games, and the dynamics of the game over time with repeated games.

As for the first two topics, the fiscal wars of 2011–2013 were not the product of the centralized planning of a coherent player. But they were the product of strategic planning nevertheless: evidence discussed in the previous section points unequivocally towards the premeditated nature of the moves leading to the debt crisis. Republicans had repeatedly voted for clean debt limit increases before, or had invoked the Gephardt rule to the same effect. The way recurring debt ceiling negotiations led to

<sup>52</sup> No surprise, then, that in June 2014 Cantor was ‘primaried’, and suffered a shocking defeat from a relatively unknown college professor backed by the Tea Party.

<sup>53</sup> <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303382004579127571975912810>

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2014/02/debt\\_limit\\_brinkmanship\\_is\\_dead\\_the\\_republican\\_strategy\\_of\\_crisis\\_budgeting.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/02/debt_limit_brinkmanship_is_dead_the_republican_strategy_of_crisis_budgeting.html)



the brink of a ‘fiscal cliff’ in the early 2000s points towards an endogenous, manufactured crisis.

The dynamic of the fiscal wars is key to understanding the consequences of coalition-building. Diverse preferences generate different payouts and exit points for participants. A complete alignment of preferences is not a precondition for success. Rather, this depends on the circumstances. In August 2011, House Republicans reached a deal that contained no tax increases, yet at the same time involved significant spending cuts. It also passed without the votes of Tea Party Republicans. This verged on achieving a maximum ransom without actually shooting the hostage.<sup>55</sup> However, divergent preferences caused tectonic movements in political tactics (i.e. breaking ranks with Cruz in the Senate), without which the strategy might have paid off.<sup>56</sup>

After all, the strategy was based on common ground in terms of *threats* of a default. In this, a coalition-based strategy is analogous to a multi-stage rocket, with each stage consuming a separate propellant: in the case of the establishment the latter was deterrence; for Tea Partiers it was the capability of a first strike. It is also important to note that the dynamic nature of a coalition-based strategy may eventually play into the hands of more radical participants. The latter had a chance to jettison the majority leadership altogether by carrying over their momentum to a new stage with new veto points: Senate filibuster in this case. Escalation strategies may be developed throughout the dynamic game despite constraining initial circumstances.

In light of this discussion, the Tea Party revolt was at its best when forcing temporary unity on the Republican leadership, compelling it to play hardball in the negotiations. At various points until August 2011 they exerted concessions from a president with his sights on a grand bargain that had previously been inconceivable. Congressional Democrats were less impressed, leading in most cases to idiosyncratic agreements involving (for the most part) congressional leadership and ex-Senate stalwart Biden. Throughout the fiscal wars, parallel channels of negotiations were open, with no clear indication of future prospects. Strategy was exerted without the help of a formal organization or central leadership. In the event, it was not so much a fully-fledged strategy as a blueprint thereof. This observation sums up our findings related to our first two questions.

As for the third, network-based crisis-manufacturing had both its upsides and downsides. An unclear and shifting ‘membership’ – without a predefined mission statement – produced slipping towards the most extreme participants, and thus shifting goals. Veto points popped up inside the coalition at various times, undermining the bargaining of the day (along with previously agreed gains). These drawbacks were, however, largely offset by the advantages of network governance: time and time again outside pressure provided impetus for breaking gridlocks, such as threats of ‘primarying’ disloyal members. Moreover, obedience came on the cheap with a handful of blogs and dozens of local activists in each House district playing the role of disciplinarians.

<sup>55</sup> A widely-cited Wall Street Journal editorial quipped: ‘We’ll support efforts to cut spending and reform entitlements, but the political result will be far worse if Republicans start this fight only to cave in the end. You can’t take a hostage you aren’t prepared to shoot.’

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323874204578217912983267062>

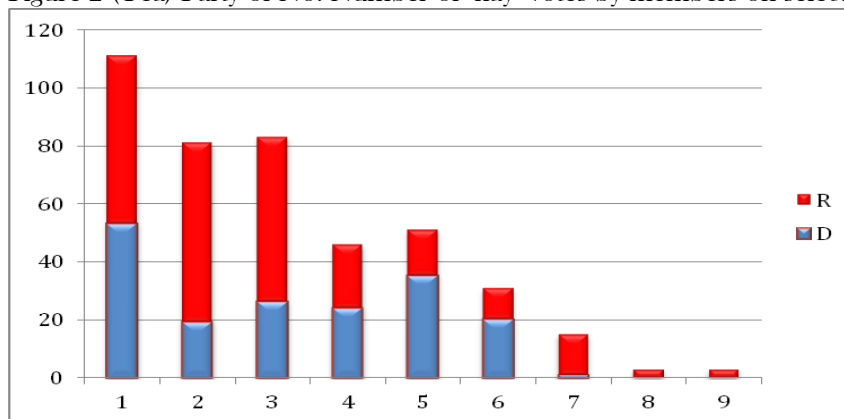
<sup>56</sup> <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/paul-ryan-betrayer-110186.html?hp=17>

Finally, network-based crisis manufacturing proved particularly adept at expanding the conflict from the fiscal policy subsystem to macropolitics and the general political agenda (as described by Baumgartner and Jones, 2010: 21–22). Manufacturing it was: there were no low-hanging fruits in the fiscal wars with entrenched interests (e.g. providers and recipients), the existence of the prevailing ‘exemption consensus’ and – at the end of the line – a progressive president and Senate majority. Just as in 1995, with the previous edition of shutdown politics, it took political entrepreneurship to reap the potential rewards of network-based brinkmanship. This entrepreneurship – on behalf of activists (such as Grover Norquist and Heritage Action, led by ex-Senator Jim DeMint), financiers (see the Koch Brothers) and politicians (Bachmann, Cruz, etc.) – provided the ideological coherence, chain of command, money source, and talking heads) for an improbably successful revolt.

This is related to our fourth point and the overarching question of how we define success (or payout) for political entrepreneurs. Although the quest of the Tea Party to instill a regime of fiscal conservatism was eventually unsuccessful, they did manage to raise their national profile and set the policy agenda for an extended period. Despite being labeled ‘suicide missions’ in hindsight by bona fide conservatives, such as Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell, the insurgency gained maximum leverage with the hand it was given. At the end of the day, it took no more than a nucleus of twenty House republicans to stand up to the powerful exemption consensus and capture a large part of the political agenda for years in a row.

Figure 2 demonstrates that a core group of less than two dozen House members were joined by fellow Conservative Study Group, Tea Party Caucus, and Liberty Caucus members (and from the other end of the ideological spectrum: progressive Democrats) in key bipartisan votes. However, legally speaking, they never constituted a blocking minority in either chamber.

Figure 2 (Tea) Party of No: Number of ‘nay’ votes by members on selected roll calls



Source: <http://clerk.house.gov/>, author’s own calculations

It took a concerted effort by radical fiscal conservatives in both chambers and outside Congress to leverage a relatively weak hand to obtain palpable concessions and create an ongoing struggle that lasted more than three years. Entrepreneurship was present not just in engineering voting blocks for specific roll calls, but also in amassing

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bargaining chips in a highly institutionalized environment. From a complex web of structural constraints on political agency two institutional factors emerged as crucial for Tea Party success: gerrymandering and primary rules favoring more extreme policy positions; and a ban on pork-barrel projects in appropriations bills that served as positive feedback for the emergent fiscal radicalism in the House.<sup>37</sup>

As for the theoretical and empirical relevance of our findings, we have to keep in mind that crises may come in many forms. They are shaped by the nature of the leverage involved; by the might and structure of the opposition; by the extant rules within the institutional arena, and by the allies positioned without; as well as by the dynamics of a protracted period of contention. In this, all manufactured crises are unique.

Yet this is not to say that all manufactured crises are unique in the sense that any attempt at generalization is futile. Quite the contrary, the case of the fiscal wars is significant in that it provides insight into the sub-type of endogenous crisis hallmarked by a disjointed collection of participants with partly overlapping aims. This is something to be expected in a separation-of-powers system powered by large sums of regulated and 'dark' money and partisan media operations. What is less trivial is that such a fragmented selection of players may nevertheless be adept at concocting, revising, and executing strategies over years.

## *7. Conclusion*

In this article, the logic of manufactured crisis was explored through outcome-centric research: our goal was to establish a causal link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables by way of a detailed description of the case at hand. The origins of the fiscal wars of 2011-2013 in the U.S. were assessed, and we put forth an explanation centered around the notion of manufactured crisis. The descriptive study of the factors at play pointed towards a shift in the political understanding of the debt ceiling.

The 'exemption consensus' of the pre-2010s refers to a long series of debates and decisions related to the debt ceiling. Political brinkmanship played a minor role in these negotiations and no actors followed strategies explicitly aimed at defaulting on federal debt as a means of returning to fiscal restraint. The Tea Party template for exerting such a curtailment of deficit spending from an unwilling political establishment, therefore, constituted a new breed of crisis manufacturing. This sharp turn from debt-ceiling politics as usual was intentional, and it made use of the institutional and social setting of the early 2010s. Political entrepreneurs associated with the movement relied on a dynamic, coalition-based approach framed by outside pressure and steered by network governance.

This case of 'politics by hostage taking' may be considered to be one of the best known instances of an endogenously and deliberately created policy crisis. As such, it also serves the purposes of theory development with regard to the role of political entrepreneurship in manufacturing policy crises. In conclusion, we consider how the logic presented in this study may be extended to cases beyond U.S. fiscal policy.

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<sup>37</sup> 'It's made my job a lot more difficult,' Boehner admitted. 'I've got no grease.'  
<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009>

First of all, it is also clear that the debt-ceiling case itself is worth further inquiry. It was not long after the fiscal wars that a new theme emerged linking climate change policies and funding for the Environmental Protection Agency to raising the debt ceiling.<sup>58</sup> Until congressional politics is ‘exempted’ from the debt limit, it is bound to produce new empirical flesh for the study of manufactured crises.

Second, this point may apply to policy subsystems far removed from the domain of fiscal policy. In the U.S. the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to emergence of a surveillance state that in many respects outlasted the immediate threat of Al-Qaeda. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the ‘Patriot Act,’ passed in 2001, ‘amounted to an overnight revision of the nation's surveillance laws that vastly expanded the government's authority to spy on its own citizens, while simultaneously reducing checks and balances on those powers.’<sup>59</sup> This interpretation was reinforced by Edward Snowden’s disclosures in 2013. Yet surrounding the debate about the need to ‘sunset’ certain provisions, a key force in the Senate, Lindsey Graham (R), stated that ‘anyone who neuters this program is going to be partially responsible for the next attack.’<sup>60</sup> The temporal nature of the politics of manufactured crisis is clearly visible in this case, and in other related cases in which political entrepreneurship is aimed at sustaining the perception of a crisis situation for political gain.

Third, this idea also travels well geographically: In Hungary, the topic of illegal migration became a key element in the messaging of Fidesz, the right-wing governing party, even as the flow of migrants approaching the Hungarian border all but stopped. However, this development did not lead to the government lifting the ‘state of emergency related to mass migration.’<sup>61</sup>

A fourth aspect of the politics of manufactured crisis that has a relevance beyond the U.S. polity is associated with the severity of the potential repercussions of political entrepreneurship. Here, the key case appears to be Brexit, which – by 2019 – posed an existential challenge to the United Kingdom and Great Britain. The man-made nature of this crisis situation is well-documented, from the role of former prime minister David Cameron to those associated with the social media and field campaign to leave the EU and beyond.

Finally, the long-term dynamics of crisis manufacturing are also worth exploring, as these may shed light on crucial aspects beyond those that case studies can capture. Changing circumstances may lead to wholesale position shifts for the players involved. This is seen in how Barack Obama, then a junior senator from Illinois, argued on the Senate floor in 2006 that raising the debt limit was ‘a sign that the U.S. government can’t pay its own bills.’ As president, Obama admitted: ‘you start realizing (...) we can’t play around with this stuff.’<sup>62</sup> Or, to cite a convert in the other direction: Mitch McConnell contemplated his short odds of becoming Senate

<sup>58</sup> <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/dc/gop-senators-want-to-block-obamas-climate-rules>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/privacy-and-surveillance/end-mass-surveillance-under-patriot-act>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/privacy-and-surveillance/scaremongering-about-patriot-act-sunset>

<sup>61</sup> [https://index.hu/belfold/2019/08/31/a\\_belugyminiszterium\\_szerint\\_meg\\_kell\\_hosszabbítani\\_a\\_tomeges\\_bevandorlas\\_okoza\\_valsaghelyzetet/](https://index.hu/belfold/2019/08/31/a_belugyminiszterium_szerint_meg_kell_hosszabbítani_a_tomeges_bevandorlas_okoza_valsaghelyzetet/)

<sup>62</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/04/president-barack-obama-exclusive-concedes-senate-vote-against-raising-debt-limit-political/>

Majority Leader in August 2014 by claiming that Obama ‘needs to be challenged, and the best way to do that is through the funding process.’<sup>63</sup> It takes a saint to withstand the lure of crisis manufacturing.

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<sup>63</sup> <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=35E1D6E3-562D-4DB1-ADE3-6376BC656D02>

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**DRAGOȘ CIULINARU \***  
**Brexit and the Borders and Boundaries  
of the European Union**

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### **Abstract**

The article makes the case for the study of borders and boundaries as intertwined concepts that bear multiple implications for understanding the prominence of anti-migration in the public discourse. In this sense Brexit is approached as the epitome of the rebordering of Europe and the analysis' focus falls on the influence on the outcome of the referendum of the discourses of 'invading' Eastern Europeans that burden the British state. The data used includes the declarations of British political leaders, found in media articles and in the official communication of the British Government, over the period of the campaign for the Brexit referendum, as well as in relation to the main milestones of Romania's European integration. The referendum campaign rhetoric is placed within the wider strategy for obtaining restrictions and exceptions from the principles of freedom of movement in order to curb the mobility of the poor and of those perceived as threateningly different. At the same time, the case of Brexit reveals how outsiders are strategically portrayed as invaders and parasites in order to reclaim territorially binding powers.

*Keywords:* EU freedom of movement; Brexit; migration; borders; boundaries; discourse.



## *1. Introduction*

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, the British media brought into the spotlight an event one might have thought unlikely to receive so much attention: the arrival at Luton airport of a Romanian carpenter named Victor Spirescu. There had been much media frenzy around the lifting of restrictions to the British labour market of Romanians and Bulgarians. Claims of an imminent invasion of Eastern Europeans had also been made. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, when journalists together with one Labour Party Member of Parliament went to the airport to witness the arrival of the alleged hordes of migrants, they found only one man from Romania entering the country: Victor Spirescu.

Mr. Spirescu achieved more than fifteen minutes of fame. He was pictured in various newspapers and branded the ‘poster boy’ of Romanian immigration. A year after his arrival a BBC report followed up on his situation (BBC, 2014). In 2018 Mr. Spirescu died in a car crash he caused – an event that was also covered in the media (BBC, 2018). The explanation behind the portrayal as something sensational of the otherwise uneventful arrival of Mr. Spirescu at Luton airport might be found when relating this episode of media frenzy to the media ‘scares’ spurred around Romania’s integration into the European Union. Romanians make up a category of EU citizens in the UK that is more recent, but also second most populous (Office for National Statistics, 2017). As shown above, they are well targeted by the media. As early as 2006, the introduction of low cost flights from Bucharest to the UK was received with newspaper titles such as ‘Get ready for a huge new invasion’ (Daily Express, 2006). More importantly for this research paper, the stories of invading Romanians became an important topic in the debate around Brexit. Although Mr. Spirescu and the other Romanians moving to the UK were EU citizens making use of their right to freedom of movement since 2007, some media and British politicians continued to present their mobility as some sort of a transgression.

In focus of this article is the role played by the representation of an alleged European ‘migration problem’ as an invasion of destitute, criminal, and ill Roma from Eastern Europe (Yildiz and DeGenova, 2017) in the ultimate decision in the Brexit referendum. The article investigates how discourses of invasion and parasitism have reaffirmed a boundary between the wanted and the unwanted migrants and framed the free movement of Romanians as an epitome of the latter. The scope is that of revealing the interweavement of the concepts of boundaries and borders. By approaching the British example, the article makes the case that the social, material, and symbolic screens (van Baar, 2014: 88) that frame the mobility of specific categories of EU citizens, can culminate with the reinforcement of a physical border and the separation from the European Union altogether.

A more detailed coverage of the concepts of borders and boundaries in (anti)migration research is included in the second section of the article. Section three bridges the concepts of borders and boundaries and anti-migration discourse. In order to do so, the analysis method and the data used are also described in this section. Subsequently, the paper covers the representation of the circulation of Eastern European EU citizens towards the UK by British political leaders in the build up towards the Brexit referendum and during the campaign, and how the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ were constructed.

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## *2. 'Borders', 'boundaries' and their significance in studying migration and anti-migration*

The resilience of the mobility of poorer categories of Eastern Europeans despite the symbolic and even institutional hurdles may be considered an argument of cosmopolitanism from below taking place in the EU (Ciulinaru, 2018). At the same time, the symbolic and institutional hurdles set in the path of this mobility seem to challenge the discourse of a cosmopolitan, borderless European Union. As Newman (2006) argues, the borderless world discourse has spurred the study of borders. There is an interest to explain the inter-group and inter-societal difference with the 'us' and the 'here' being located inside the border while the 'other' and the 'there' is everything beyond the border (Newman, 2006: 172).

In a European Union context, (re)-bordering refers rather to social, material, and symbolic screens (van Baar, 2014: 88) that limit specific groups' rights as EU citizens. The British example brings back into the spotlight the physical border. On the other hand, borders, as territorial limits defining political entities and legal subjects, and the social constructs establishing symbolic differences and producing identities, henceforth named boundaries, have to be approached as intertwined concepts in order to grasp how migration is governed and experienced (Fassin, 2011:2014). Social and cultural boundaries are usually important in how states produce and reproduce expressions of territoriality and various forms of inclusion/exclusion (Paasi, 2005). In the case of Mr. Spirescu for example, the physical border can be crossed freely but his belonging in the receiving country is still questioned. Social groupings and distinctions between them are created and maintained through spatial practice and discourses. Practice and narratives of boundaries underpin the constitution and the governance of social groups and of their identities. Hence boundaries are often understood as exclusive constituents of identity and are taken for granted (Paasi, 2005).

The case of the mobility of Eastern Europeans in the EU, especially that of the Roma ethnics, and its significance for the study of borders and boundaries has been approached from a securitization perspective, such as that of Huub van Baar (2014). Van Baar focuses on the proliferation of ambivalent mechanisms and practices of migration management, in the context of the Europeanization of migration policy and the emergence of new practices of crossing and challenging both borders and boundaries (van Baar, 2014: 88). A second stance is that of a subjective collective delineation of whose place is where. Aidan McGarry (2017: 101–104) explains in this sense the difference between citizenship and belonging. According to McGarry (2017: 103) this is the boundary between the minority and the citizens whose presence in the homeland is assumed as rightful because they are part of the homogeneous nation the homeland is inextricably associated with. Minorities such as the Roma migrants from Eastern Europe are not perceived as belonging (McGarry, 2017: 104) despite having the legal status of EU citizens enjoying the right of crossing the member states' borders freely. Beyond the formal recognition by the state of membership to a political community, the majority's recognition of one's belonging is the condition for the fruition of participation, identity, and rights. This notion can further be related to that of moral universe inclusiveness (Schwartz, 2007), which explains the breadth of the

community of people to which one applies the same values of justice, help, and compassion as to oneself. In this way one can explain not just the physical border, or the physical removal through expulsion, or physical isolation outside the community through segregation, but one can also make salient the boundaries separating those for which such exclusive measures are regarded as acceptable or even justified.

Mezzadra and Nielson (2011) acknowledge the potential of the border as not only a site of exclusion, but also as the friction point between processes of reinforcement and blocking and traversing and crossing. Citizenship alone cannot capture the exclusion minorities are experiencing, as these citizens are both under the protection of the law and members of the juridical-political space, but are still not included (McGarry, 2017: 103). The moral ground for restrictive migratory policies is found in an emphasis on the membership, on the duties, on the social ties and on the sense of loyalty that arise from a shared life and history (Sandel, 2009:230–232).

### *3. Data and methods*

Opinion polls among British voters (Khan, 2016) prior to the Brexit vote, as well as opinions from various areas of academia (Kaufmann, 2016; Glencross, 2016; Yildiz and DeGenova, 2017) explain the victory of the ‘leave’ campaign by its ability to emphasize the ‘us versus them’ divide and by stirring the fears of the public towards immigrants. Strategies of positive self-representation and negative presentation of others are the markers of discursive construction of in- and out-groups (Wodak, 2009: 39). The aim of the analysis was to reveal the explicit or tacit arguments employed by British politicians and the *topoi*, or ‘reservoirs of generalized key ideas’ (Richardson, 2004: 230) to which they made reference in order to underpin their arguments concerning migration (Wodak, 2001). Of high relevance for the analysis was the use of metaphors through which social actors were categorized. More specifically, of importance were two metaphors appealing to the imagery of a border that would stand against particular categories of migrants.

The discourse of invasion tends to interconnect with and mutually reinforce the discourse of parasitism, as both are metaphors appealing to the imagery of an infestation. The more radical form of the discourse of parasitism is rooted in the practice to use vermin, disease and decomposition metaphors to vilify Jewish people (Musolff, 2010). In line with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tradition, this paper places the use of the discourses of invasion and of parasitism within the resurgence of far-right and populist discourses across Europe and its aim at determining membership, setting clear borders between those who belong and those who are excluded (Wodak, 2009; 2015). Those perceived as significantly different are the preferred targets of populist discourse which exploits the doubts of the majority towards the belonging of those ‘not-alike’. As well in line with the CDA paradigm that discourse and social practice constitute each other (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999), the analysis assumes a dialectical relationship between discursive events and their respective situational, institutional and social contexts. In this sense the analysis traces the relation between Brexit related discursive events and the wider discourses of British politicians concerning migration in general and the free movement of Romanians in particular.

For selecting the data, it was taken into account that populist discourses on migration and minorities are not to be found only with the overtly right-wing parties and politicians. Political parties across the spectrum have accommodated some of the radical rhetoric (Pohl and Wodak, 2012). The moderate political camp might be attracted rather by the discourse of parasitism, in an attempt to still preserve the advantages of migration, once the alleged free riders and the abusers are excluded. The trademark of right wing populism is the politics of fear. In this sense, appeals to common sense and anti-intellectualism underpin the construction of a scapegoat minority (Wodak, 2015). At the same time, the far-right raises the stakes by pushing more provocative, even scandalous ideas in the public debate, which overshadow the attempts to present other frames, values, counterarguments, and any other relevant agenda (Pohl and Wodak, 2012).

The data include the declarations of British political leaders over the period of the campaign for the Brexit referendum, from March until July 2016, as well as prior declarations in relation to the main milestones of Romania's European integration. The analysis uses written text from two sources: media articles available online and official communication materials of the British Government. In what the texts produced during the Brexit campaign are concerned, the data is comprised of the declarations of Government members and of political leaders of the 'Leave' camp from March until July 2016. The declarations of the Ministers, especially those of the Prime Minister, were collected from the British Government's web portal. All materials under the 'Announcements' section of the portal for the period 1<sup>st</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, were collected. Those who did not mention the topic migration were filtered out. Regarding the 'Leave' camp political leaders, the speeches and declarations of Nigel Farage and of Boris Johnson published in the on-line editions of newspapers in the same period were collected. As a search key the name of the politician and the name of the respective month and the year were used. The first two search results in the list were used. After all search results were collected, those not making any reference to migration were filtered out. In total 9 texts from the Government web page and a sample of 10 media articles were used.

After aggregating the texts, i.e. politicians' speeches and declarations that made reference to migration in the context of the Brexit referendum, a first stage of the analysis identified how the topic of migration was approached: was it referred to extensively, or mentioned as a side issue? If migration was the most covered topic, then which were the secondary ones? The next stage of the analysis focused on the discursive strategies employed in order to depict the migrants in relation to the decision of remaining or leaving the European Union. The discursive strategies used by the Government and by the other political leaders were placed within the historical discourses concerning migration. The references to migration in the context of Brexit were linked to the reactions towards the alleged migration risks of the EU's expansion to the East.

Also of relevance was the interdiscursivity between the Brexit discourse and the discourses around migration policies adopted in the past by the British authorities. Persuasion strategies were of interest, as it might be achieved through sound arguments or by using fallacious arguments that influence the public suggestively and manipulatively (Reisigl, 2014). Of importance was whether the persuasion strategies used by the political leaders engaged the *topoi* which came to be typical of the

migrants exclusionary discourse: the topoi of parasitism, and the topoi of infestation (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001).

#### ***4. A feeling that the border has been breached: anxiety towards migration from the EU's Eastern member states***

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) had been stirring the British public anxiety towards migration for some time before the Brexit referendum. Like challenger parties elsewhere in Europe in the aftermath of the economic crisis in the late 2000s (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016), while the mainstream left and right converged on a policy of austerity and an adherence to the fiscal policy-making guidelines of the EU, UKIP proposed an agenda focusing on the desire to reclaim national sovereignty by controlling immigration and taking back powers from the EU. Farage's preference for depicting the citizens of Romania and Bulgaria as an unmanageable threat has a rather long history, dating back from the pre-accession period. After a visit to Romania in 2006, Farage concluded: 'I spoke to Government officials in Bucharest. They told me 'We have a problem in this country with Roma but soon it will be yours' (Daily Express, 2006).

The UK had not applied transitional restrictions on EU 8 workers. The influx of citizens from the new member states was already at the forefront of the public debate and the dissatisfaction over the handling of the 2004 EU 8 accession amplified the fears towards Romania and Bulgaria joining the Union. Studies of British media coverage of the issue of migration from Romania and Bulgaria, such as that of Light and Young (2009), reveal that a 'scare' preceded every step of the process of EU integration. Discourses of threat intensified (Light and Young, 2009: 287) as British tabloid newspapers announced and imminent invasion of thousands of Romanians and Bulgarians that were expected to raise levels of criminality and trigger an 'explosion' in cases of tuberculosis (TB) and AIDS (The Sun, 2006).

By playing this same card, UKIP managed to establish itself as the party with the third largest number of votes overall (without winning any seats) in the 2015 General Elections. In order to achieve this, the party improved its position among British parties by assimilating Euro-scepticism with anti-migration and adopting a populist critique of the main political parties due to their alleged inability to deal with migration (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015: 172). It capitalized on the public debate over the lifting of transitional measures for Bulgaria and Romania. The party leader, Nigel Farage, predicted that catastrophic numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians would come to Britain starting with 2014.

'This will be the biggest campaigning issue for UKIP in 2013 and one which will influence every local and by-election we fight' (Nigel Farage) (Giannangeli, 2012)

'In Bulgaria, 46 per cent of people are living below the poverty line. This is real poverty - not being able to feed your family - not the relative poverty David Cameron speaks about. If I was Bulgarian I'd be packing my bags now, getting ready to come to the UK on an unrestricted basis, in the secure knowledge that

if I can't get work, I'd get benefits and housing.' (Nigel Farage) (Giannangeli, 2012)

The postponement of free access for Bulgarian and Romanian workers was intended to protect the EU 15 member states from the alleged poor and morally compromised individuals who intended to capitalize on their right to free movement by abusing welfare support and social services (Manolova, 2017). The transitory conditions imposed on the free movement of Romanians were not sufficient to appease the fears of some parts of the British public. The end of transitional restrictions was looked at with anxiety not only by the British Government, but also by the governments of Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. This anxiety was expressed in April 2013 in a common letter of the respective countries Interior Ministers to the then Irish Presidency of the EU Council. The letter stated that 'currently, a number of municipalities, towns and cities in various Member States are under considerable strain by certain immigrants from other Member States' (Letter to the Presidency, 2013).

In reference to the concept of boundaries and borders, the 2013 letter of the ministries of the interior can be seen as a means to draw the line between those considered the real citizens and the wrong kind of people coming from the other EU member states, especially from the new member states (Guild, 2016). According to Guild, the letter discerns between the 'nationals of the Member States and in whose name the interior ministers allegedly are acting, the Union citizens who enjoy that title because they comply with EU secondary legislation as understood by the interior ministers, European citizens who are really immigrants because they fail to meet the requirements and Union citizens and their third country nationals (family members) who are fraudulently using and abusing EU free movement rights to avoid national laws' (Guild, 2016: 55). It is worth noticing that the latter two categories in the letter are not perceived as citizens exercising their rights, but as immigrants abusing the freedom of movement. According to the four ministers, these people are not proper beneficiaries because they, by default, do not fulfil the requirements for the exercise of the right of free movement.

The social security system is the likely domain for drawing the separation line between the desired and undesired migrants. Member States have exclusive competence for the design, organization and funding of their social security systems. Within the overarching EU framework, they are free to decide who is entitled to be insured, which benefits are granted and under what conditions, and how benefits are calculated (D'Angelo and Kofman, 2017). Hence, the social security system becomes a lever at the disposal of national governments to act as a filter of migrants, more specifically of migrants with limited resources. The existence of some level of nationalism in the allocation of welfare benefits is not a novelty. In some cases the creation of welfare entitlements schemes had the defence or promotion of the nation as a reason. Migrant biographies may deviate from expectations of welfare states; consequently, the underpinning assumptions of welfare which applies to citizens can no longer be presupposed in the case of migrants (Bommes, 2000). Though it means comparing two different welfare models (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002), one can extrapolate to the British case Michael Bommes' (2000: 105) observations regarding German migration policies and their aim to reduce welfare provisions for those who



are in a legal position to acquire permanent residence permits. Western European states facing increased migration such as Germany and Great Britain redefine welfare recipients by introducing the criteria of legal residence and participation in the labour market, in order to reduce welfare access for migrants, as well as to keep migration flows under control.

Policy proposals for managing the public discontent at the arrival of poor immigrants from the new EU member states were packaged by British politicians as measures to counter welfare tourism. The idea that the UK was a welfare magnet was common on all sides of the British political spectrum. In 2013, the Conservative Government announced increasing restrictions on welfare rights for EU migrants. The pro-European Liberal Democrats supported limitations on the right to free movement of future entrants as well as limitations for new entrants coming as self-employed. Subsequently, the Liberal Democrats leaders supported Cameron's proposals to restrict access to benefits for Jobs Seekers Allowance, child benefits and child tax credits to three months instead of six months as from November 2014, under the condition that the individual had been in the UK for three months. The Labour Party supported that only those migrants who had previously paid national insurance be eligible for welfare payments (D'Angelo and Kofman, 2017: 188). The inflated figures and scary stories used by the tabloid papers sustained the growing anti-immigration feeling in the mainstream political discourse (D'Angelo and Kofman, 2017: 189).

'So, welfare and training reform are a key part of our approach to immigration. Indeed, one of the problems that the government has had in the past when it comes to immigration is that it's been working in silos. Controlling immigration has been a job for the Home Office, but the reality is you can't control immigration if you have a welfare system that takes no account of who it's paying out to. You can't control immigration if you have a healthcare system that takes no account of the people using it. And you can't control immigration if you have a housing policy that doesn't take account of how long people have lived and contributed to a local area.' (David Cameron's immigration speech) (Prime Minister's Office, 2013)

In the build up to the Brexit referendum, a majority of the British public opinion seemed to favour the proposal to place restrictions on EU citizens claiming benefits. This prevalent attitude might be a good indicator of what the public came to perceive as a main issues of free movement. An IPSOS-Mori poll conducted late June/early July 2016 further confirms this hypothesis, as 60 per cent of the participants in the study answered that freedom of movement should be restricted. 70 per cent of respondents said that their option for restrictions was due to pressure on public services, 59 per cent due to the number coming to the UK to claim benefits, and 55 per cent because of pressure on housing. Support for staying in the Union dropped from 52 per cent to 36 per cent when considering a scenario under which freedom of movement was not limited (IPSOS-Mori, 2016). And it seems that the figures confirm immigration as the single most important factor influencing the decision of voters in the Brexit referendum (Khan, 2016). The same IPSOS- Mori Issues Index followed the public attitude towards migration up to the Brexit referendum and after. In the wake of the victory of the 'leave' camp, an analysis of the statistics concluded that the



outcome of the EU referendum coincided with an increase of ten per cent in respondents saying immigration was the biggest issue faced by the country (Khan, 2016). This peak in May-June 2016 was also the moment when immigration took prominence over all other topics in the referendum campaign, such as the economy.

### *5. The UK Government arguments to strengthen the welfare boundary*

One preliminary observation about the speeches of the Cameron Government in the period March- June 2016 is that they favour to a great extent the topic of the economy. The arguments of the Remain camp, most importantly of the Prime Minister, are built on economic indicators that highlight the advantages of being a member of the EU single-market. As the vote statistics show, these arguments fell short of influencing a majority of the electorate. Hence, the 'leave' camp moved the focus of the campaign away from any facts based arguments. The catastrophic economy scenarios made by experts were likely to be countered by an already existing resentment against experts, as well as against elites in general, be it intellectual or political (Glencross, 2016: 3).

'I don't think we should risk our economy. We shouldn't risk the investment that a company like this brings into Britain. So I think the most important argument in this debate is the one about our economy.'(Prime Minister's Office, 2016a)

Immigration is present in David Cameron's speeches but to a lesser extent than the economy. Free movement is presented as the backside of retaining the advantages of the common market. Free movement is the necessary price even countries that are not EU members such as Norway and Switzerland have to pay in order to have access to the EU market.

'If we chose the Norway option and said we're going to stay in the single market because it's so important for our jobs, we'd have to accept free movement of people. In fact, Norway doesn't even have the deal. I've got to make sure people have to pay in before they get out on welfare. So that's the choice.' (Prime Minister's Office, 2016a)

Though secondary to the economic aspects, the coverage of migration in the Prime Minister's speeches is highly relevant as it underlines that the rights of EU citizens in Britain should be defined by the host Member State in the interests of the protection of its own nationals. For the Prime Minister, the EU citizens are immigrants subject to authorization from state bureaucracies on whether they can enter, reside, work and enjoy family reunion in the 'host' state. The Prime Minister's coverage of the issue of migration marks a transition from entitlement and rights of citizens to precarity and exclusion of foreigners (Guild, 2016).

As free movement was presented as the necessary cost, the Remain camp in the Conservative party emphasized the importance of the renegotiation of access to welfare of EU citizens. What is moreover interesting for this research is that the Government engaged in distinguishing between deserving and non-deserving

recipients of welfare, in ways which bore consequences not only on the entitlement to welfare, but also frames their worthiness as people. The changes to the conditions of welfare entitlement have to be looked at within the intention of keeping the undeserving migrants out, which the British Government set out as early as 2013.

Prime Minister Cameron's intended limitations on access to welfare protection of EU citizens are in line with the Conservative Party's policies to curtail the access of persons from abroad to the welfare state since the 1980s onwards. As a broadly 'liberal' welfare regime (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002), a low support of the British public for redistribution to outsider groups is expectable (Balch and Balabanova, 2016). The UK welfare system has been on the path of restructuring that targeted those deemed undeserving for decades (Sales, 2002: 457). Previous waves of immigration to the UK, from Ireland and the former colonies, had also been enabled by free movement frameworks but were replaced with permission-based frameworks. A retreat from the rights-based migration policy of the 1948 British Nationality Act took place 1962 and 1981 (Dennison and Geddes, 2018: 1140). The major discursive frame in introducing restrictions were welfare abuse and fraud. Claims of abuse, opportunism, and benefit tourism to fraudulent entry were used to justify the restrictions (Sainsbury, 2012) which, in their turn, followed the logic of marginalizing alleged welfare abusers while barring migrants from social integration and ensuring that migration is reversible (Geddes, 2000: 143). For example, in 1996 and 1999 asylum legislation was introduced to restrict welfare benefits in order to deter so called bogus asylum seekers.

After the 1999 Immigration and Asylum act, asylum ceased to be enforced as a human right, but rather was organized as a political discretion (Geddes, 2000: 137) with the purpose of curbing migration flows instead of facilitating the settlement of those allowed to remain (Sales, 2002: 457). The myth of the welfare-scrounging bogus asylum seeker (Geddes, 2000: 137) permeated welfare policy and was reflected into measures that used social exclusion as a means to prevent unwanted migration (Sales, 2002). At the same time, the community of legitimate welfare receivers was reassured and delineated from the category of perceived illegitimate migrants. The welfare state instead of offering the means of inclusion and participation rather marginalized asylum seekers.

As in the case of asylum, welfare control on EU citizens resulted in the construction of different categories of 'EU migrants'. Unlike in the case of asylum seekers, for Eastern European unwanted migrants, barriers could not be set higher by British Government without the interference of the European Union. Hence the complicated negotiation the Cameron Government had to go through. Though the outcome of the negotiations failed to be perceived as a resounding victory, and in the end it did not turn the faith of the referendum, the concessions requested by the British side reveal the fear towards EU citizens. The demands amount to a nothing less than a restriction of EU citizens' entitlement to move and reside in the UK (Guild, 2016: 76).

'But we need to go further to reduce the numbers coming here. As I have said previously, we can reduce the flow of people coming from within the EU by reducing the draw that our welfare system can exert across Europe. So we have proposed that people coming to Britain from the EU must live here and

contribute for four years before they qualify for in-work benefits or social housing. And that we should end the practice of sending child benefit overseas.' (Prime Minister's Office, 2016b)

In the letter to the President of the EU Council in which the demands were set out, the section concerning free movement is entitled 'Immigration'. Under the same optics as in the 2013 letter of the Ministers of the Interior, this is a shift from entitlement and rights of citizens to precarity and exclusion of foreigners (Guild, 2016: 15). It is assumed that it was UKIP that imposed the term 'EU immigrant' so decisively in public debate. By looking at Prime Minister Cameron's choice of terms when referring to EU citizens, it might be assumed that his strategy opened the way for UKIP's success. Referring to EU citizens as 'immigrants' further exacerbated the British self-perception as substantially distinct from Europeans (Dennison and Geddes 2018: 1140). At the same time all Europeans in the UK were placed under an umbrella term with rather negative connotations.

And while UKIP made the gains among British voters, the Cameron Government persuaded the EU Commission to approach EU citizens as immigrants, and to propose a safeguard mechanism that was intended as 'a solution to the United Kingdom's concerns about the exceptional inflow of workers from elsewhere in the European Union that it has seen over the last years' (European Council, 2016). The safeguard mechanism meant that the Commission proposed a roll-back of the protection directive 2004/38 offered to EU citizens against arbitrary expulsion, and of EU citizens' rights overall (Guild, 2016: 79). If applied, the mechanism would have opened the way for discrimination on the basis of nationality. The mechanism proposed a softening of protection against other forms of discrimination, as suspicion and prejudice regarding EU citizens' activities would not have to be confirmed by a court of justice as grounds for expulsion. On the contrary, the fears of administrators regarding an EU citizen would be sufficient to do so.

The recurrent adjustments of social support by the British Government in response to perceived migration pressures, indicates an alignment between the grasp of welfare and the 'us' in-group. The perceived legitimate/ illegitimate divide between welfare receivers, seems to coincide with the border between those considered to have a genuine claim to reside on British soil and those who do not. These changes have intensified differences among the local population and migrants as well as among different categories of migrants, with a widening gap between the rights of the most precarious and the long-term secure residents (Sales, 2002: 461). Aside the formal restriction to social services and, subsequently, to rights, the official discourse of 'illegitimate migrants' likely spurs discriminatory practices and adds institutional informal barriers. Access to rights is dependent not merely on formal status, but on social divisions based on gender, class and ethnicity (Kofman et al., 2000).

## *6. Reinstate a physical border: the rhetoric of the 'Leave' camp*

Though dramatic in its effects over the right of free movement (Guild, 2016), the technical aspects of welfare entitlement renegotiation were unlikely to be of interest for the general public (Glencross, 2016). The so-called success of the negotiations in Brussels helped the campaign of the 'leave' camp, especially that of UKIP. Even if it

was promoted as a major Government achievement that should appease migration concerns, the 36 pages conclusions document of the February European Council became a symbol for the Eurosceptics' message that the EU was 'irreformable' (Glencross, 2016). Moreover, the Government's discourse of the deserving and non-deserving migrants played into the hands of the anti-EU camp.

The Remain lead in the polls gradually vanished as the referendum campaign came to focus on controlling immigration. The Leave campaign chose to counter the pro-European pro-common market arguments by underlining that migration control was restricted by the common market itself. Prime Minister Cameron's attempts to discern among the good and the undeserving migrants were undermined by his own party members. The Leave supporters inside the Conservative Party downplayed the possibility of controlling migration while still an EU member, as well as the role of expert opinions in decision making (Glencross, 2016: 44)

'it is deeply corrosive of popular trust in politics that every year people in power say they can cut immigration' (Boris Johnson) (The Telegraph 2016)

'people in this country have had enough of experts' (Michael Gove) (The Telegraph, 2016)

Overall, the Conservatives' policies during the summer of 2016 were reactions to changes in public opinion that were both reflected and led by the media. Tabloids had gained an influential role in setting the agenda on immigration, and these newspapers reproduced mostly the messages against it. As confirmed by Bennett's analysis of messages on social networks (Bennett, 2016), the Government attempted to stay in tune with the public debate led by the populist UKIP party, which had anti-migration as its focus. UKIP represented itself as the single source of truth in the name of as true, real or unitary popular voice (Freedon, 2017). By this it rejected plurality and exacerbated the fears of an anxious public, which it positioned as the 'authentic' people. With the help of tabloid media, UKIP managed to impose its own electorate as the 'people' and their fear of migrants as the main topic of the Brexit campaign.

In his argumentation, Nigel Farage often uses the topos of cultural difference to equate Europe to failed multiculturalism (Bennet, 2016). Reference to Eastern Europeans is made in order to support the superiority of the more advanced British culture for which the tides and floods of migrants are a threat. Hostility towards migration from (post socialist) 'Eastern European' EU member states in particular was channelled to a politically focused antagonism towards Britain's membership in the EU (Yildiz and DeGenova, 2017). A yearly increase of about 25 per cent or more since 2012 in the numbers of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in Britain (Office for National Statistics, 2017), was exploited as a confirmation that UKIP is the only political player able to anticipate the effects of free movement, unlike the political establishment. Let alone that many of Eastern European migrants did not match Farage's description of welfare profiteers, higher numbers of voters got hope that UKIP's strategy to take Britain out of the EU would protect them against the economic and cultural effects of the demographic change brought about by migration (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015).

UKIP's 'Say No to EU' campaign actually entailed a very calculated and manifold degradation of the EU citizenship of both British and non-British alike (Yildiz and Degenova, 2017). This strategy was underpinned by the conflation of the working-class 'Eastern European' migrants with the more specific abjection of – often homeless – Roma migrants. The success of such arguments stands proof that anti-Roma racism is neither an aberrant relic nor a 'local' peculiarity of Eastern European countries, but rather a potent and viral agent in contemporary European anti-immigrant nativism (van Baar, 2015).

Furthermore, UKIP cast doubt on the credibility of the 'remain' campaign by throwing unlikely but highly unpopular scenarios as the accession of Turkey or that of overflows of refugees into the debate. Despite the gross misrepresentation of the issues, the assurances of the Remain camp were easily linked to the electorate's memory of the Blair Government miscalculations of the influx of migrants post the 2004 enlargement. Unlike the Cameron Government and the other parties that adjusted their message to the shifts in public opinion, UKIP exploited each event and recontextualized it within its message against Europe. The party reacted to the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris by linking Europe, migration, and terrorism (The Independent 2015). For the refugees in Calais, Farage called on the army to intervene to defend Britain. (The Telegraph 2015).

The anti-immigration discourse of the Brexit campaign is also a very good example of what Walters (2010) describes as the depoliticized representation of migration as a chain in which the origins primarily relate to the 'disorderly' regions from which the migrants come. The pro-Brexit camp gave the image of an EU in which immigration and its causes always run in 'from the distant, corrupt, chaotic borderlands of 'failed states' and 'conflict zones', through the weakly-policed borders and cities of transit countries', and into the heart of European territory (Walters, 2010: 89). This image prevailed to such an extent that a majority of the public came to believe as necessary to separate the United Kingdom from Europe through erection of borders even there where an open border has been a factor for peace, namely the Irish border.

The 'leave' campaign's nostalgic arguments for reinstating the British border aimed at defending the superiority of Britishness from a dangerous Europe, makes a good example of what van Houtum and van Naersen name as early as 2002 'a relentless reproduction of mythically imagined borders of the past and scalar fixation of borders of solidarity' (van Houtum, and van Naersen 2002: 128). Van Houtum and van Naersen explain that the liberalization and cross-border integration deliberately sought by the EU, has as a backside the increasing need to protect what is imagined as one's own legacy and economic welfare. The opening of borders spurs the tendency to protect familiarity and certainty.

Amidst the proliferating discourses of 'migrant crisis' and refugee 'emergencies' that have been at the forefront of the European public debate in 2015, the fact that rhetoric of the kind practiced by UKIP took prominence in the 2016 Brexit campaign and ultimately decided the fate of Britain in the EU, points out that at stake was not so much a threat from 'immigrants' as socio-economic competitors, but rather as a threat to the imagined British moral community. In order for the internal sameness, unity, and sense of belonging to be confirmed, the creation of an outsider was necessary. In

this sense, history, ancestry, religion, and morality intertwined in a form of nationalism that creates the outsider (Gullestad, 2002).

## *7. Conclusions*

The Brexit campaign and the build up to it are an epitome of how the outsiders are strategically portrayed as invaders and parasites in order to reclaim territorially binding powers. Through the reinforcement of the discourses of invasion and infestation, the control and containment of local identities is re-strengthened. The success of these discourses is yet another confirmation of the assertion that the post-9/11 world seems to be marked to a large extent by fear (van Houtum et al., 2005). Transnationalism and immigration are perceived as dangerous streams that risk flooding the protective and protected lands of domestic sovereignty (van Houtum et al., 2005).

The discourses associated with Brexit counter those of a borderless Europe and reveal that notwithstanding the growth of mobility across the EU, the number of ordered and bordered identities has not diminished (van Houtum et al., 2005). The multiple layers of possible identification have increased. The extent to which the receiving population is willing or prepared to overcome feelings of fear and exclusivity determine who is permitted to cross the borders and who is perceived as rightfully belonging. The 'here-there' and 'us-them' cut-off points are marked through the construction of mutually reinforcing physical and visible walls and fences as well as by invisible boundaries (Newman 2006: 177). In this context, the desire to control and reclaim space has recently found new political adherents and partisans. The 'leave' campaigners in the UK are examples of neoconservatives that counter the logic of progressive cosmopolitanism and transnationalism by reworking the territorial foundations of national sovereignty through bordering practices (Buck-Morss, 2003).

The chain of negotiations, transitional restrictions, and exceptions from the principles of freedom of movement were legal barriers meant to curb the mobility of the poor and of those perceived as threateningly different. As indicated by Guild (2016), the British Government demands to the EU reduced rights bearing EU citizens to threatening migrants that needed to be filtered out. These legal barriers responded to and at the same time exacerbated the invisible boundaries that separated 'immigrants' from the unmarked citizens who 'belonged' (Gullestad, 2002).

The considerable moral and political weight the issue of migration has had in a major decision such as remaining or leaving the European Union can be explained also by the fact that among of the three pillars bearing on the management of migration, namely the economy, humanitarianism and the police, the latter is taking prominence. The importance of immigration is related to the construction of borders and boundaries, in other words, of sovereignty and identity (Fassin, 2011). Or, according to Etienne Balibar (1998) borders are 'no longer the shores of politics but [...] the space of the political itself'.



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**MIROSLAVA BOZOGÁŇOVÁ  
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**Social and Psychological Factors of Political  
Participation according to Recent European Social  
Survey Data**

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**Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

While people have an influence on current political decisions, and as ordinary citizens represent the basis for political participation, depicting such political engagement in an empirical/practical way creates a concerning amount of methodological questions. Data obtained via the European Social Survey Round 1-7 offers the opportunity to outline and broaden the picture in terms of the personal (demographic and psychological) features of individuals who participate in politics to a greater or lesser degree. Participants from the seven rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) were divided into three groups: higher, medium, and lower political participation ( $\alpha = 0.642$ ). A Scale of Political Participation was created based on 'yes' answers. It was found that those individuals who were female or had a lower level of education participated less, while older people were more politically participative than younger people. The psychological profile of these groups differs in terms of preferred values: attitudes, satisfaction, trust in people, and institutions.

*Keywords:* political participation, European Social Survey Round 1 - 7, values, social trust.

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## 1. Introduction

Almost every discussion on political participation starts with an emphasis on participation's direct link to democracy. But this connection does not seem to be so straightforward (Norris, 2003). Citizens' activities directed at influencing political decisions - the basis of political participation - can sometimes be perceived by political representatives positively, and at other times negatively.

There are many ways to preserve a semblance of *esprit démocratique*, as illustrated by the European Parliament (EP) election rules and turnout in 2014. The original intention, confirmed in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, called for a uniform system and process for electing members of European Parliament (MEPs), but this aim was disseminated only gradually into 'common rules' (for instance, the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 declared only that the electoral system should be in accordance with the principles common to all member states) (EP electoral procedures, 2013). In fact, the EP election system is polymorphic, and electoral arrangements governed by national rules vary to a great extent. In a large number of countries, the right to nominate candidates belongs only to political parties and organizations. There are also huge differences in voting procedures; in some countries, voters can vote only for a list; in others they can express their preference for more candidates; while in others they have semi-open lists. To illustrate the differences, we offer a brief look at two 2014 national electoral systems: the Belgian and the Slovakian. In Belgium, voters in three language communities elected MEPs using a preferential voting system without an electoral threshold through compulsory voting, and with 89.64 per cent turnout; in Slovakia, voters elected MEPs in single national constituencies using a preferential voting system - voters could attribute preferential votes to two candidates from one party or coalition -, a voluntary voting system, and with 13.05 per cent turnout.

These different theoretical perspectives make it difficult to operationalize and construct instruments: the aim of depicting political engagement empirically raises a serious amount of methodological questions (e.g. Lamprianou, 2013). The concept of political participation refers to a wide range of activities, and the necessary operationalization for the purpose of construction of methods of analysis requires some classification. For example, Van Deth (2001) summarized a list of more than 70 activities contained in different studies that were considered forms of political participation. Since the 1970s (Barnes and Kaase, 1979) these have often been distinguished as conventional or formal methods (e.g. voting, party membership, campaigning, contacting politicians personally or via the internet), and unconventional or informal ones (e.g. taking part in demonstrations, boycotting products, signing a petition, blogging). Verba and Nie (1972), authors of a frequently cited typology, identified four categories of the former: voting, campaign activity, contacting public officials, and communal activities. Teorell et al. (2007) in their typology describe five dimensions of political participation: electoral participation, consumer participation (boycotting products, signing a petition, donating money), party activity, protest activity, and contact activity (contacting politicians, officials, or organizations).

Possibly the most complex attempt at constructing a political participation typology was introduced by Ekman and Amnå (2012: 295), in which they distinguished three basic dimensions: i) domain - political participation (manifest political), civil participation (latent political), or non-participation (disengagement); ii)

active vs. passive/formal participation; and iii) individual vs. collective forms of participation.

According to Hafner-Fink (2012: 550) ‘social surveys usually measure three aspects (or levels) of political participation: a) interest in politics, which is not yet real participation, but more a kind of motivational background for real political involvement; b) electoral participation as cyclical and rather “passive” involvement in politics, but nevertheless important for the functioning of a democratic system; and c) active and continuous participation in various forms of political activity.’

## *2. Method*

Our principal aim with this article is to identify potential differences between more and less participative Europeans using a Scale of Political Participation which we have created. Our goal is also to create their ‘psychological profiles’ from the variables included in the ESS questionnaire core module (repeated seven times since 2002 biennially on representative samples of participating European countries). We concentrate on the socio-demographic characteristics of politically participative individuals in terms of: preferred values; level of life satisfaction; trust in people and institutions; and selected attitudes, reflecting to some extent the level of tolerance (attitude to migrants, gays and lesbians) and solidarity (government should reduce differences in income levels).

The European Social Survey Round 1–7 data (ESS 1–7, 2016) offers the opportunity to outline some of the personal (demographic and psychological) characteristics of more and less politically participative individuals. Hafner-Fink (2012) in his analysis of ESS R1–5 data used seven items from the ESS Core module. The core module of the ESS questionnaire contains a set of ten questions which in self-reported answers cover the usual forms of civic political engagement. In our analysis of ESS R1–7 data, we included ten items answered by respondents in the ‘yes/no’ format:

- Contacted politician or government official in the last 12 months.
- Worked in political party or action group in the last 12 months.
- Worked in another organization or association in the last 12 months.
- Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker in the last 12 months.
- Signed petition in the last 12 months.
- Taken part in lawful public demonstration in the last 12 months.
- Boycotted certain products in the last 12 months.
- Voted in the last national election.
- Felt closer to a particular party than all other parties.
- Member of political party.

From the ‘yes’ answers, a Scale of Political Participation was created with a reliability coefficient  $\alpha = 0.642$ . Respondents from seven rounds of the ESS ( $N = 290,757$ ) were, according to their score on the scale, divided into three groups (score ranging from 0 to 1 - ‘lower political participation’; from 2 to 3 - ‘medium participation’; and from 4 to 10 - ‘higher political participation’). According to our results, 16.7 per cent ( $N = 48,546$ ; 51.5 per cent male; mean age  $M = 48.51$ ,  $SD = 15.29$ ) of respondents had a higher level of political participation; 37.1 per cent ( $N = 124,517$ ; 47.8 per cent male; mean age  $M = 50.68$ ;  $SD = 17.11$ ) a medium one, and



35.1 per cent ( $N = 117,557$ ; 42,8 per cent males; mean age  $M = 45.35$ ,  $SD = 18.06$ ) a lower level.

Items from the core model of the ESS (ESS 1-7, 2016) were used to measure different characteristics of respondents. The basic value orientation was measured using the Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2003). Respondent satisfaction was measured using items on a ten-point scale (from 1 = extremely satisfied to 10 = extremely dissatisfied). Trust in institutions and people was measured on an eleven-point scale (from 0 = no trust at all to 10 = complete trust. Attitudes to immigrants were measured using three items on a four-point scale (from 1 = allow many, to 4 = allow none), three items on a eleven-point scale (0 = bad to 10 = good), while attitudes to gays and lesbians and reducing differences in income levels were measured on a five-point Likert-scale (from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly). The full versions of the items are shown in the tables.

A Pearson chi-square test and t-tests for two independent samples were used to compare low and high participative respondents in different areas. When processing the data, we respected the conditions of use of each method (Field, 2017). IBM SPSS v.21 was used for the statistical analysis.

### ***3. Results***

#### *3.1 Countries*

Political participation differs from country to country. Figure 1 shows the proportions of more and less politically participative respondents in European countries. Countries differ in terms of the proportion of more politically participative individuals, with Sweden (37.1 per cent), Norway (35.1 per cent), Finland (30.6 per cent), Denmark (27.2 per cent), and Germany (26.2 per cent) with the most, and Bulgaria (5.0 per cent), Hungary (5.5 per cent), Turkey (5.6 per cent), Russia (5.9 per cent), and Poland (5.9 per cent) at the bottom of the ranking. Non-weighted data were used in the calculation of the proportion of participative individuals in each country.

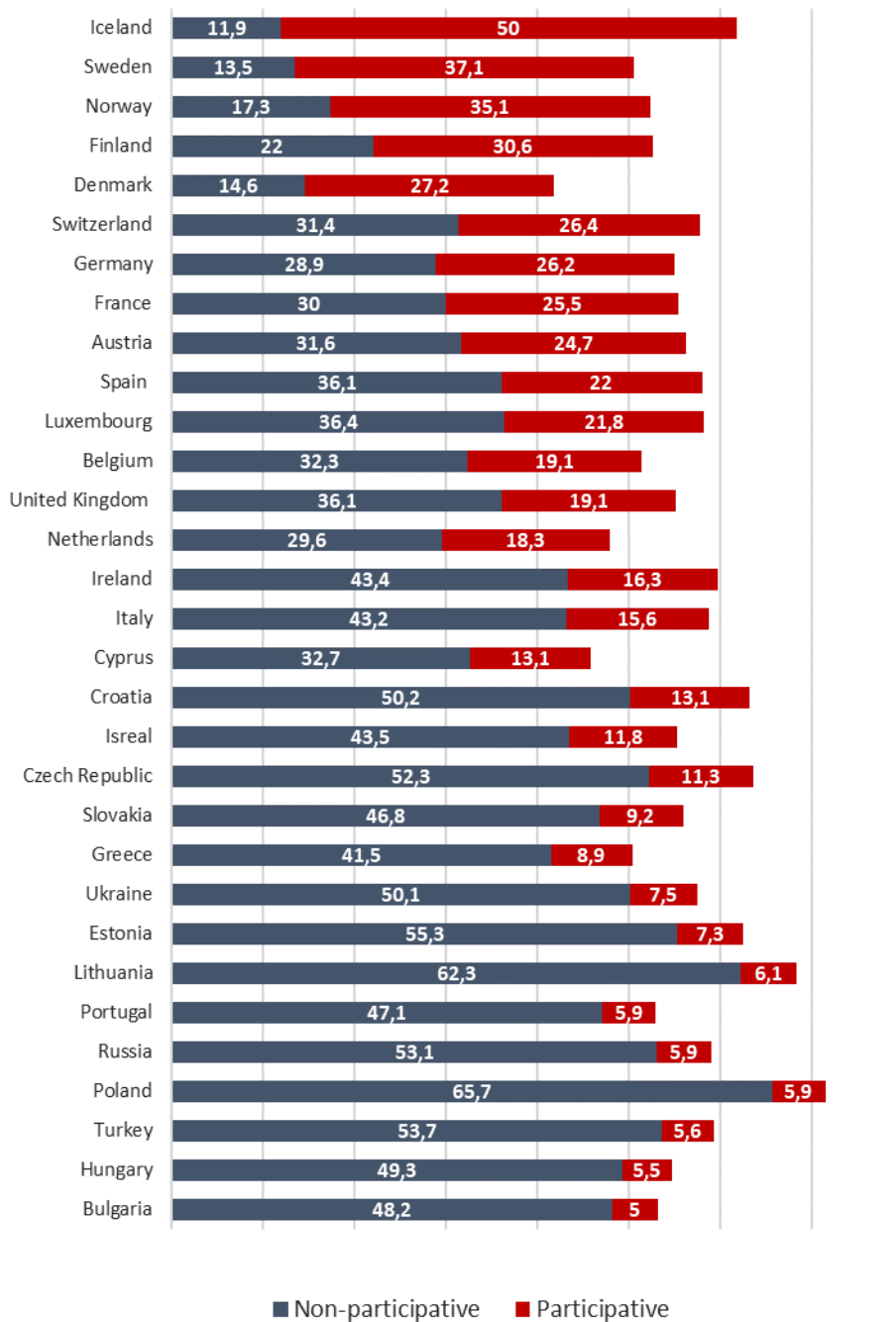


Figure 1 Political participation in selected countries (percent)

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

*3.2 Socio-demographic characteristics and political participation*

Statistical analyses (chi-square) showed significant differences between more and less participative groups in terms of some demographic characteristics. A Pearson chi-square test was performed to determine whether political participation is associated with gender. This found that males (51.6 per cent) are more politically participative than females (48.4 per cent). The non-participative group consisted of 42.8 per cent males and 57.2 per cent females. The result was statistically significant ( $X^2 (1, N = 166\ 103) = 1055.483, p < .001$ ). Less well-educated individuals are less politically participative; respondents with a lower level of education (ISCED 0-2) make up 35.8 per cent of all non-participative and 15.9 per cent of participative respondents. In the groups with a higher level of education (ISCED 3-6), 63.9 per cent may be classified as non-participative and 83.7 per cent as participative respondents. A Pearson chi-square test was performed to determine whether political participation is associated with education. It was found that there is a statistically significant association ( $X^2 (5, N = 165\ 770) = 10618.132, p < .001$ ); more educated respondents are more politically active. The association of age with political participation was also tested; in the younger group (under 37 years old) 38.5 per cent were non-participative and 25.7 per cent participative, while in the older group (over 55 years of age) 30.6 per cent were non-participative and 35.7 per cent participative. Age and political participation are also associated ( $X^2 (2, N = 165\ 488) = 2529.533, p < .001$ ).

*3.3 Values*

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents in terms of the values of power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. The lower the score, the ‘more like me.’

Table 1 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in relation to basic values (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Power	Less	3.495	1.132	-68.631	94 707.454	.000	-.253
	More	3.774	1.046				
Achievement	Less	3.136	1.221	-28.171	160 551.000	.000	-.085
	More	3.240	1.192				
Hedonism	Less	3.123	1.250	27.830	97 573.089	.000	.154
	More	2.936	1.122				
Stimulation	Less	3.522	1.237	22.025	94 863.971	.000	.162
	More	3.327	1.155				
Self-Direction	Less	2.543	1.014	69.662	99 751.039	.000	.381
	More	2.172	0.876				
Universalism	Less	2.299	0.813	75.145	98 824.022	.000	.357
	More	2.018	0.727				
Benevolence	Less	2.186	0.872	57.636	101 011.503	.000	.287

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Tradition	More	1.946	0.747	-36.067	86 846.689	.000	-.243
	Less	2.657	1.028				
Conformity	More	2.909	1.051	-56.954	81 641.872	.000	-.263
	Less	2.790	1.064				
Security	More	3.078	1.158	-68.729	77 353.852	.000	-.393
	Less	2.212	0.982				
OPENNESS TO CHANGE	More	2.615	1.122	48.350	103 608.656	.000	.256
	Less	3.079	0.961				
CONSERVATION	More	2.851	0.813	-68.197	81 955.186	.000	-.380
	Less	2.529	0.816				
SELF- TRANSCENDENCE	More	1.958	0.637	77.483	102 269.759	.000	.410
	Less	2.242	0.743				
SELF- ENHANCEMENT	More	3.549	1.001	-53.501	92 274.095	.000	-.289
	Less	3.252	1.048				

Source: *European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC*

Results show that there were significant differences in the scores for all values ( $p < .001$ ) with small effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.085 - .393|$ ). The psychological profile of two groups differs in terms of preferred values; while more participative individuals favor self-direction (MD = .355), universalism (MD = .308), benevolence (MD = .249), stimulation (MD = .142), and hedonism (MD = .180), less politically participative individuals favor tradition (MD = -.206), conformity (MD = -.359), security (MD = -.409), power (MD = -.411), and achievement (MD = -.188). These results suggest that non-participative and participative respondents clearly favor different sets of values.

Schwartz's model describes ten basic human values in a circular form - neighboring values are associated with similar motivation goals, counter-located values are opposites - organized into four general value orientations: self-enhancement (power + achievement); self-transcendence (universalism + benevolence); openness to change (hedonism + stimulation + self-direction); and conservation (tradition + conformity + security). Statistical analysis also confirmed the existence of significant differences between two groups at this level: while more participative individuals indicate openness to change (MD = .228) and self-transcendence (MD = 0.284), less participative ones prefer conservation (MD = -.325) and self-enhancement (MD = -.297).

### 3.4 Satisfaction

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare more and less participative respondents with regard to their satisfaction with economy, national government,

democracy, education, health services and well-being (happiness and satisfaction with life as a whole). The lower the score, the ‘more satisfied.’

Table 2 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of satisfaction (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
How satisfied with present state of economy in country	Less	3.66	2.35	-50.562	87 288.897	.000	-.444
	More	4.33	2.47	-50.562	87 288.897	.000	
How satisfied with the national government	Less	3.63	2.41	-29.932	89 020.154	.000	-.316
	More	4.03	2.47	-29.932	89 020.154	.000	
How satisfied with the way democracy works in country	Less	4.34	2.47	-66.547	89 876.572	.000	-.464
	More	5.26	2.55	-66.547	89 876.572	.000	
State of education in country nowadays	Less	4.97	2.39	6.400	158 271.240	.000	-.120
	More	4.89	2.29	6.400	158 271.240	.000	
State of health services in country nowadays	Less	4.56	2.63	-51.291	98 212.319	.000	-.295
	More	5.25	2.41	-51.291	98 212.319	.000	
How satisfied with life as a whole	Less	6.22	2.51	-70.009	103 798.512	.000	-.456
	More	7.08	2.18	-70.009	103 798.512	.000	
How happy are you	Less	6.70	2.22	-76.071	113 312.381	.000	-.440
	More	7.48	1.76	-76.071	113 312.381	.000	

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

The results show that there were significant differences in the scores for all areas of satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.120 - .464|$ ). Participative individuals are more satisfied with the state of the economy ( $MD = -.670$ ), government ( $MD = -.400$ ), the way democracy works ( $MD = -.920$ ), and health services ( $MD = -.689$ ), but less satisfied with the state of education ( $MD = .083$ ). Participative individuals score higher on both well-being indicators - they feel happier ( $MD = -.785$ ) and are more satisfied with life as a whole ( $MD = -.863$ ). The results suggest that participative individuals have a higher level of satisfaction.

### 3.5 Trust in people and institutions

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents along their trust in parliament, the legal system, the police, politicians, political parties, the European Parliament, the United Nations and in people. The lower the score, the 'more trust.'

Table 3 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of trust in people and institutions (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d																																																																																														
Trust in country's parliament	Less	3.54	2.60	-92.407	95 625.380	.000	-.559																																																																																														
	More	4.81	2.48					Trust in the legal system	Less	4.26	2.71	-79.049	96 042.755	.000	-.478	More	5.38	2.57	Trust in the police	Less	5.05	2.85	-75.557	105 850.375	.000	-.358	More	6.09	2.43	Trust in politicians	Less	2.69	2.30	-83.995	92 507.982	.000	-.614	More	3.73	2.27	Trust in political parties	Less	2.60	2.26	-86.203	78 736.052	.000	-.499	More	3.73	2.25	Trust in the European Parliament	Less	3.87	2.56	-39.164	94 314.606	.000	-.407	More	4.41	2.43	Trust in the United Nations	Less	4.40	2.67	-63.473	99 393.895	.000	-.568	More	5.30	2.46	Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful	Less	4.21	2.47	-98.937	97 853.179	.000	-.637	More	5.45	2.27	Most people try to take advantage of you or try to be fair	Less	4.97	2.42	-83.012	103 339.990	.000	-.239	More	5.96	2.10	Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves	Less	4.27	2.46	-60.117	101 387.527
Trust in the legal system	Less	4.26	2.71	-79.049	96 042.755	.000	-.478																																																																																														
	More	5.38	2.57					Trust in the police	Less	5.05	2.85	-75.557	105 850.375	.000	-.358	More	6.09	2.43	Trust in politicians	Less	2.69	2.30	-83.995	92 507.982	.000	-.614	More	3.73	2.27	Trust in political parties	Less	2.60	2.26	-86.203	78 736.052	.000	-.499	More	3.73	2.25	Trust in the European Parliament	Less	3.87	2.56	-39.164	94 314.606	.000	-.407	More	4.41	2.43	Trust in the United Nations	Less	4.40	2.67	-63.473	99 393.895	.000	-.568	More	5.30	2.46	Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful	Less	4.21	2.47	-98.937	97 853.179	.000	-.637	More	5.45	2.27	Most people try to take advantage of you or try to be fair	Less	4.97	2.42	-83.012	103 339.990	.000	-.239	More	5.96	2.10	Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves	Less	4.27	2.46	-60.117	101 387.527	.000	-.408	More	5.01	2.19						
Trust in the police	Less	5.05	2.85	-75.557	105 850.375	.000	-.358																																																																																														
	More	6.09	2.43					Trust in politicians	Less	2.69	2.30	-83.995	92 507.982	.000	-.614	More	3.73	2.27	Trust in political parties	Less	2.60	2.26	-86.203	78 736.052	.000	-.499	More	3.73	2.25	Trust in the European Parliament	Less	3.87	2.56	-39.164	94 314.606	.000	-.407	More	4.41	2.43	Trust in the United Nations	Less	4.40	2.67	-63.473	99 393.895	.000	-.568	More	5.30	2.46	Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful	Less	4.21	2.47	-98.937	97 853.179	.000	-.637	More	5.45	2.27	Most people try to take advantage of you or try to be fair	Less	4.97	2.42	-83.012	103 339.990	.000	-.239	More	5.96	2.10	Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves	Less	4.27	2.46	-60.117	101 387.527	.000	-.408	More	5.01	2.19																	
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Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

The results showed that there were significant differences in the scores for all areas of trust ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.239 - .637|$ ). Participative individuals have more trust in parliament (MD = - 1.264), the legal system (MD = - 1.121), the police (MD = -1.047), politicians (MD = - 1.041), political parties (MD = - 1.130), the European Parliament (MD = - .547), the United Nations (MD = - .903) and in people (MD = - 1.244) than less participative individuals. The results suggest that participative individuals express higher trust in people, and also in national and international political institutions.

### 3.6 Tolerance and solidarity attitudes

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents in terms of their attitudes to immigrants, gays and lesbians, and in response to the question whether government should reduce differences in income levels. Attitudes to immigrants were measured by three items on a four-point scale (1 = allow many, 4 = allow none) – a lower score means more a positive attitude; three items on a eleven-point scale (0 = bad, 10 = good) – a lower score means a more negative attitude; while attitudes to gays and lesbians and reducing differences in income levels were measured on a five-point Likert-scale (1 = agree strongly, 5 = disagree strongly) – a lower score means a more positive attitude.

Table 4 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of attitudes (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority	Less	2.30	0.94	83.796	105 240.483	.000	.469
	More	1.91	0.79				
Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	Less	2.63	0.92	94.029	96 599.903	.000	.510
	More	2.18	0.85				
Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	Less	2.70	0.94	86.195	94 687.575	.000	.488
	More	2.28	0.89				
Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Less	4.33	2.49	-98.945	94 966.182	.000	-.525
	More	5.64	2.37				
Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579
	More	6.26	2.54				
Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490



	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
better place to live	More	5.39	2.30				
	Less	2.53	1.28				
Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish	Less	2.53	1.28	95.957	104 933.790	.000	-.198
	More	1.92	1.11				
Government should reduce differences in income levels	Less	2.01	0.98	-31.242	81 006.730	.000	.459
	More	2.19	1.12				

*Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC*

The results showed that there were significant differences in the scores for all attitudes ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.198 - .579|$ ). Participative individuals have more positive attitudes to immigrants of the same ethnic/race group as the majority ( $MD = .385$ ), different ethnic/race ( $MD = .451$ ), and from poorer countries ( $MD = .428$ ). They expressed the view that immigration is good for the economy ( $MD = -1.310$ ), that cultural life is enriched by immigrants ( $MD = -1.486$ ), and that immigrants make a country better place to live ( $MD = -1.149$ ). Participative individuals have also a more benevolent attitude to gays and lesbians ( $MD = .611$ ). Less-participative individuals respond with a higher mean score to the question whether government should reduce differences in income levels ( $MD = -.194$ ). The results suggest that participative individuals are more benevolent and have more positive attitudes to immigrants and to gays and lesbians.

#### 4. Discussion

The data from seven rounds of the ESS that used representative samples of more than 30 European countries (old and new EU Member states and non-members) cover a 14-year period (2002–2016) and thus create a solid basis for opinion/attitudinal analyses. Political participation – the topic of interest in this article – in the ESS data is approached by registering the occurrence of a selected set of ten self-reported activities. Before we discuss the results, it might be appropriate to point out again that the set of items that were used represents standard/traditional, legitimate, and generally socially accepted forms of political activities only. The whole sample was then, according to scoring, divided into three groups: higher; medium; and lower political participation. For the purposes of our study we compared two groups – more- and less politically participative individuals – with a broad set of social and personal characteristics with the aim of outlining the ‘profile’ of a politically engaged European.

The results of the analysis confirmed the known differences (e.g. Karp and Milazzo, 2015; Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014) in civic engagement and political participation between countries; the list is headed by Nordic countries, followed by a group of Western countries, then Southern European countries, and finally a group of

Eastern European countries and non-EU member countries at the bottom of the ranking.

From the group of demographic variables, we concentrate our attention on the differences between more and less participative individuals as regards gender, education, and age. The concept and phenomenon of a gender gap in political participation, frequently used in contemporary political theory and research (Beauregard, 2018), expresses the difference in the 'proportion of eligible men and eligible women engaging in a particular type of activity' (Glatte and de Vries, 2015: 2). Our results confirmed the ongoing (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Beauregard, 2014) higher general level of male political participation.

Regarding education; 'one of the most consistently documented relationships in the field of political behavior is the close association between educational attainment and political participation' (Berinsky and Lenz, 2011: 357). However, Kam and Palmer (2008) have argued that the relationship between education and political participation has not, until now, been tested properly. In reaction to this, Mayer (2011) conducted a study in respect of Kam and Parker's methodological objections. The results provided evidence that education does, indeed, increase political participation. Our results, based on ESS data analysis, also confirmed, as with Brade and Piopiumik (2016), close ties between education and political participation.

The results of the basic human values-political participation relationship analyses support the notion of a fundamental link between the motivational structure of human personality and engagement in political behavior (Hafner-Fink, 2012; DeGolia, 2016). The personal value orientations of participative individuals reflect their motivation to change social arrangements (openness to change) based on independent thought and action, the need for novelty and life enjoyment, and also for improving the welfare of others (self-transcendence) based on tolerance and an understanding of differences in individual needs, a sense of belonging, and meaning in life.

Flavin and Keane (2012), who examined the relationship between life satisfaction and political participation using data from the ANES 2000 (American National Election Study), concluded that this link is confined to non-conflictual forms of participation only; no relationship was found as regards engagement in political protest. Pacheco and Lange (2010) in the ESS 2006 data found that only one kind of political participation activity - membership or collaboration with a political party - has a positive effect on life satisfaction. In our results, not only were the well-being indicators - satisfaction with life as a whole and general happiness - of more politically participative individuals higher, but also satisfaction with different areas of social life (with government, the way democracy works, with the state of the economy and the state of health services). The only exception was satisfaction with the state of education, where the result was more negative. One of the factors that may potentially stimulate discussions about satisfaction-participation and the reverse relation is the cross-sectional nature of the data that was used, which creates a serious hindrance to making causal statements. To overcome this barrier, Pirralha (2018) used data from three waves of the SOEP (German Socio Economic Panel) with the intention of exploring the causal relationship between political participation and life satisfaction. Based on the analyses, the author confirmed the 'extreme stability' (2017: 803) of both variables over time, but found little evidence for the expected causal effect.

The link between social trust and political participation is also still an issue for discussion; while one group expected and found a positive relationship, the other found the connection to be weak, zero, or negative. The results of our analyses show that participative individuals trusted more in national political institutions (parliament, the legal system, the police, politicians, and political parties) than international institutions (the European Parliament and the United Nations) and also expressed a higher level of interpersonal trust than less participative individuals. Studies carried out on large comparative samples (ESS) over the last decade have confirmed close relations between these two complex and multifaceted concepts, but also stressed the role of the situational context (Bäck and Cristensen, 2011) and the need to differentiate the impact of trust on institutional participation (e.g. working for a political party, voting) and non-institutional participation (e.g. signing a petition, boycotting products) (Hooghe and Marien, 2013).

From the ESS Round 1-7 database, we also paid attention to the potential differences between two groups in terms of selected attitudes that reflect tolerance and solidarity. A common understanding of tolerance is willingness to respect individuals who belong to other (usually minority) groups (Finkel et al, 1999). The logic behind this is the nature of the relations between value hierarchy and the attitudinal system; if participative individuals favor values representing self-transcendence, then we are justified in expecting the existence of more positive (in a comparison of the two groups) attitudes in this area. The results we obtained confirmed this assumption; participative individuals expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants, and also towards homosexuals.

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## Book Review

### The Analytical Perspective of Refugee Protection and Civil Society

**Feischmidt, Margit, Pries, Ludger and Cantat, Celine (eds.) (2019) Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe. Budapest and Bochum: Palgrave Macmillan. XX, 399 pages.**

The goal of this publication is to shed light on the vital role of civil society in tackling the global migration crisis of our days. To achieve this goal, the authors use various approaches, each specific to their topic. Through more than 390 pages, this book gives us most complex and much-needed scholarly insight into the field of migration studies. The structure and topics of the book connect it to a previous thematic issue of *Intersections*, published in 2016 with the title *Global Migration Crisis and Europe: Whose Crisis is it?* Back in 2016, Celine Cantat had already called for the rethinking of solidarity and struggles beyond the narratives of crisis (Cantat, 2016: 11).

Understanding the refugee crisis from a transnational perspective has become vital since some 1.5 million refugees entered the European Union in 2015–2016. It became clear then that neither European nation states nor European systems of refugee protection could cope with such a large influx of migrants. As Pascouau stated, ‘the magnitude of migration flows arriving in the EU has reached an unprecedented peak. With more than 1 million people entering the EU in 2015, the phenomenon has been considered and qualified as a “crisis”’ (Pascouau, 2016: 17). In comparison to those refugees who arrived at the borders of Western Europe in the 1990s to escape from the Balkan Wars, the 2015 wave of migrants arrived not only in significant numbers (UNHCR, 2015b: 62–66), but their reception, assistance, and allocation among the Member States of the European Union placed an especially large burden on the state administration of all countries at the receiving end of these migration routes.

The question was not whether the European Union should let these asylum-seekers into the so-called territory of the European Union, but how to manage the process itself while maintaining a sufficient level of human rights and offering accentuated protection to vulnerable people until they were cleared to reach their places of settlement. Volunteers and civil society organizations started working with traditional aid groups such as the Red Cross to decrease pressure, and to offer satisfactory protection, thereby creating linkages between the states and the refugees.

The magnitude of this situation can also be observed through the United Nations calculations regarding the world’s demographic expansion (see Azahaf, Kober and Mayer, 2015), which state that ‘by the year 2050, (wider) Europe’s working age population would decline by 96 million. Conversely, Africa’s working age population

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would increase by 919 million and Asia's population by 517 million' (Mayer and Mehregani, 2016: 35).

In the introductory chapter of this book, Ludger Pries delineates the four main characteristics of the refugee movements (p. 4): the first pillar is public perception and discourse; the second is the utmost importance of civil society as a crucial actor; the third is defined as the meso-level of organizations between individuals and the state (p. 6); and the fourth and final parameter involves seeing the refugee crisis as a learning opportunity. These four factors highlight the importance of civil society. As Pries states, '*...for the first time* in Europe and in refugee movements, civil society was a crucial actor in almost all European societies' (p. 5).

To understand the importance of the connection between civil society movements and refugee protection, it is first imperative to distinguish crucial aspects of civil society itself, primarily within the European Union. Patrick Heller's 'three theoretical strands' (Heller, 2007) is the closest depiction. The three perspectives accord with the current state of civil societies throughout Europe. The liberal or first perspective (1) describes civil movements as 'intrinsically beneficial for democracy and society' (Cohen and Arato, 1992; Hall, 1998; Putnam et al., 1993). This point of view covers those Western-European countries that are the spearhead of refugee protection policies and actions. With a strong civil background, a country can maintain an innate balance between state and society, pursuing reformist motives. The second perspective (2) which can be used to describe most of the Central-Eastern European region is that civil society is a required 'tool' which contributes to regime-change in a specific region or country. The main attribute of this type of democratization is that it can establish more centralized and concentrated political capability (Molnár, 2016) which is discernible through radicalising politics and populist actions, both of which are seen throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The third perspective (3) is somewhat isolable from the two above, mainly because of its critical nature. This perspective is that almost all populist movements (and later, parties) benefitted from the radicalism of their civil societies (Kovács, 1994), and vibrant civic life largely contributed to the rise of right-wing ideas and movements. It is important to mention that this perspective denounces Putnam's social capital thesis and all neo-Tocquevillean theories by claiming that when democracies are fragile, higher levels of democratization can lead to illiberalism (Molnár, 2016). Accordingly, in the case of migration and refugee protection, the three perspectives are adaptable; for example, in the case of post-socialist countries 'civil society has emerged as the main arena in which the symbolic repertoire of a new nationalism is articulated' (Molnár, 2016: 170, quoting Feischmidt et al., 2014, and Trencsényi, 2014). Nonetheless, the aforementioned factors are allied to a country's migration policy, especially in the European Union. The gravity of civil society is recognized as a general connective thread throughout the chapters.

That being said, each part of the book contains a valuable, specific insight from a unique viewpoint in addition. Further on in the first chapter, Pries states that 'the overall framing of refugee protection shifted from "there are problems in the Middle East and Africa" to "we are part of a global constellation where people are forced to flee their homes"' (p. 5). The role of civil society movements was no longer in the second line, but as active participants - and in many cases, local governments and



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authorities were in need of this active participation and recognized the former NGOs as experts with considerable migrant-aid-specific knowledge and infrastructure. The refugee crisis can be considered a trigger for a humanitarian response from which one can learn important information about humanity as a whole. Pries warns us that there is a tendency to marginalize the contribution of civil society (its instrumentalization by governments), but also an inclination to overestimate the role of civil society in refugee protection (p. 18).

In Chapter 2 ('Networks of Refugee and Asylum Related Organizations in the Mediterranean Area of the European Union'), Juliana Witkowski, Ludger Pries, and Anna Mratchkowski highlight the fact that in spite of the development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), its actual implementation has not been successful. Notwithstanding the gestures of welcome from civil society, NGOs, and countries such as Austria and Germany, it has become clear that Europe has struggled with the large number of asylum-seekers and has not been able to cope with the development of events, at least not with the methods and systems that were used before. This assumption is based on that fact that even though the European Union has broadly progressive refugee policies, their implementation is frail and does not match up to reality. In response to this, the MAREM-project (Mapping Refugees' Arrivals at Mediterranean Borders) came to life to act as a 'gap-filler' between local governments and NGOs. The project connected different countries that faced the same, continuous flow of refugees (such as Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, cf. p. 31) and became an example of cross-national and transborder cooperation. International multidisciplinary cooperation in the Mediterranean area is 'the crucial pillar [...] of the management of refugee protection' (p. 51).

The authors of Chapter 3 ('Politics of Care and Compassion: Civic Help for Refugees in Hungary – A Mixed Methods Approach'), Margit Feischmidt and Ildikó Zakariás, focus on the philanthropic aid provided to refugees crossing Hungary between the spring and autumn of 2015. In spite of the governmental discourse that was somewhat distorted into a sense of ambiguity regarding general safety, a humanitarian component was also strongly present. This indicates a strongly opposing relationship between charity and politics; a claim here primarily based on data collected between October 2015 and January 2016 by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (p. 60). Positive affect arose in both those who directly helped refugees (e.g. at train stations, or near the Hungarian border), and in those who were informed of these events from a more distant perspective via so-called 'shared experience.' The overall outcome was generally positive emotions and not only the rediscovery of a sense of humanity, but through this an increasing awareness of political responsibility (p. 89) – which is called the 'politicization of charity.' Under these circumstances, charity can also become an alternate form of public responsibility; this process is known as the 'charitization of politics.'

In Chapter 4 ('Subversive Humanitarianism and its Challenges: Notes on the Political Ambiguities of Civil Refugee Support'), Vandevooordt and Verschraegen emphasize that the professional literature on this subject largely presumes the political nature of the actions it studies, which can lead to the creation of a grey area between politics and morality (p. 102) – mostly because at the time of the 'crisis' there were a vast number of people whose intentions and political beliefs were widely estranged,

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thus creating contradictory phenomena. Also, numerous governments throughout Europe discouraged migrants from entering their countries, but civil workers acted differently by helping those in need, thereby distinguishing themselves from the acting governments. One may draw a parallel here, since one of the critiques of humanitarian aid is that 'it produces a hierarchical, power-infused relation between providers and recipients' (p. 108). This can also be called a 'grey area,' mainly because those who were in charge of letting numerous asylum-seekers into their countries often based their evaluations on intuition.

In Chapter 5 ('Opportunistic Humanitarianism and Securitization Discomfort Along the Balkan Corridor: The Croatian Experience'), Župarić-Ilić and Valenta conclude that during the constant flow of migration Croatia was only a transit country for asylum-seekers on their way to the 'core' of the European Union (p. 130); a claim which resonates with the Croatian government's official rhetoric. The authors clarify that both governmental and civil actors were in constant motion, providing care and assistance for migrants. After the critical events in Paris and Cologne, authorities started to close their border corridors, which gradually led to the work of humanitarian organizations becoming detached from that of the Croatian government. This led to a situation where the latter pro-refugee actors who constantly sought to engage in acts of helping found themselves opposing their own governments. In this chapter, one may notice descriptions of acts of 'civil resistance' against official state approaches.

In Chapter 6 ('Becoming, Doing and Letting Go: (Extra)Ordinary Citizens' Engagement with Resettled Syrian Refugee Families in Rural France'), Schiff and Clavé-Mercier concentrate on the UNHCR resettlement program which helped transport those Syrian families who were placed in various asylum-seekers' refuges in rural France. The authors highlight two important aspects of the former practice: one is the integration of these asylum-seekers into French society, while the second is the success of the resettlement program itself, making cultural integration the most important factor of all. The authors' assumption is that there are specific local dynamics which influence the ways in which people engage with refugees (p. 162). Nevertheless, in many cases the refugees' behavior, culture, religious views, norms about gender equality, and basic education of children and women are completely different from those of their local supporters; many on the receiving end of the integration program called these differences problematic. As one of them stated (p. 190) "we realize that our priorities may not be the same as their priorities - we have accomplished our mission, but have we succeeded?"

In Chapter 7 ('Gender and Intimate Solidarity in Refugee-Sponsorships of Unaccompanied Young Men'), Paul Scheibelhofer focuses on the relationships between the receiving 'foster' families and those young men who were chosen to work / integrate into their new places in 'Western' society. He states that there is a negative discourse about the young male refugees that often claims they are a threat to the safety of women and public order. In spite of the fact that during a sponsorship program the refugees constantly received emotional, material, and social resources, this could not disguise the elementary differences between the host families and those arriving from an entirely different culture. One dilemma is that the whole situation started with a position of dependency on the side of those who arrived, which often

led to the severing of arrangements before they even started. The analysis also states that ‘refugee-sponsorships are a highly dynamic form of civic engagement’ (p. 213), but the former structurally dependent position seems to be especially hard to overcome. Scheibelhofer concludes that receiving refugees is not a ‘toned-down’ experience, as it always ends up in a more personal relationship which represents another aspect of humanity.

Chapter 8 (‘The Welcomers: How Volunteers Frame Their Commitment for Refugees’) examines the political aspects of the volunteering movement. Here, Karakayali argues (p. 237) that helping refugees is an act of political resistance in relation to the general political atmosphere. In 2015, during the peak of events, volunteering and humanitarian activism was undertaken by German citizens who had never participated in these kinds of events before. Closer analysis reveals that the political component of helping refugees refers to that part of civil-society that ‘can use “integration” to connect with segments of the local society [...] which otherwise remain distant from any form of activities in support of migrants’ (p. 238).

Chapter 9 (‘Volunteer, Citizen, Human: Volunteer Work between Cosmopolitan Ideal and Institutional Routine’) describes how the number of refugees arriving in Europe has been steadily increasing since 2015, putting the receiving governments and local public administrations in a difficult position. As the authors Theresia Turinsky and Magdalena Nowicka highlight, the refugee crisis represents a chance to redefine current political and social structures with a ‘gesture of humanity’ (p. 244). As a Neighbourhood Helps (NH) program participant stated, the main hub for migration aid, Berlin, is a cosmopolitan, non-national place that connects people from all around the world, irrespective of their current citizenship. On the other hand, the authors emphasize the fact that the commitment and awareness of their participants is not enough to successfully transform moral assumptions and ideas into an institution-based framework.

As Wyller puts it in Chapter 10 (‘“Something More”: The Citizenship Performativity of Religiously Founded Refugee Projects’), true citizenship comes into existence when people who may or may not hold the passport of a specific country act in a humanitarian way, thereby creating ‘citizenship of the world.’ Wyller explains that in spite of local governments’ attempts to reduce the numbers of asylum-seekers, churches and various religious organizations were amongst those institutions that resisted the restrictions most vigorously. This may be based on the idea that, according to typical religious beliefs, the most common acts of kindness are a means of elevating individuals to a higher level of existence. Humanity, as such, persists because humans offer succor to fellow humans. Events such as Pope Francis’s visit to Lampedusa in 2013, Lund in 2016, and the Bergsjøen Congregation in Gothenburg show us that, irrespective of religion, people always can and will work together for the sake of humanity.

According to Povrzanović and Mäkelä, volunteering can help transcend the limitations of the ego, and thus can represent humanity’s ultimate act. Within the framework of Chapter 11 (‘“Only Volunteers”? Personal Motivations and Political Ambiguities within the *Refugees Welcome to Malmö* Civil Initiative’), the authors analyze volunteers’ experiences with refugees and conclude that the former created especially deep and human bonds with the migrants. Also, as the Civil Initiative

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referred to in the chapter slowly became an NGO, it built bridges between the helpers and asylum-seekers, deepening the bond between them and thus making society more tolerant and open (p. 313).

The local governments of Sweden, the country that received the highest number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and youth in comparison to its population (p. 319), were subject to an especially significant burden in terms of organizing the everyday lives of migrants while striving to continuously uphold their human rights during the asylum-seeking process. In Chapter 12 ('Contestations of the Swedish Deportation Regime: Civil Mobilisation for and with Afghan Youth') Asztalos Morell highlights that the website *Stop the deportation of Afghan youth!* which came into existence brought together volunteers and the youth who were affected by this struggle. She states that the Stop Deportations network is the perfect example of how helpers and those who are in need can be brought together in our 'information age' (p. 346).

As Olivier-Mensah explains in Chapter 13 ('Refugee Social Work Positioned Between Transnationalization, State Services and Volunteering: A Review from the German Context'), since 2015 over one million people have fled to Europe, and multiple strategies have been implemented by the European Union and also by nation states to handle this. In connecting the cooperation between social work and civil society volunteering, Olivier-Mensah colligates those initiatives which helped migrants during the asylum process in Germany. As she states (p. 370), 'volunteerism often converges with political activism, going hand in hand with social development and the transformative power of change' (with reference to Chapter 3 by Feischmidt and Zakariás, p. 60). This transformative potential could be an additional element in transforming a political or societal system into a more humanitarian one in a more hostile environment.

In the last chapter ('Conclusion: Civil Involvement in Refugee Protection—Reconfiguring Humanitarianism and Solidarity in Europe') Cantat and Feischmidt conclude that the power of humanity, diversity, and hope once again brought humans together to help those who were in dire need of help. They claim that it is important to 'identify the criteria to determine who is worthy of protection and care' in line with the necessary norms (p. 397), and to realize that providing guidance for one group does not necessarily mean that others are no longer in need, especially in European cultures (e.g. homeless people, minorities, and the poor, who are currently living at the margins of our societies in Europe).

From the perspective of conceptualization and methodologies, the book occupies a peculiar place in the field of migration-related literature, mostly because it consists of a mix of different but also rather crucial multidisciplinary approaches. The extracted findings were based on several types of data and various research techniques. There were online surveys (Karakayali and Kleist, 2015; 2016), individual and group interviews, and also the direct approach of volunteering initiatives, associations, and organizations. Occasionally, survey statistics were based on two sets of samples which helped the researchers to compare data-sets diachronically (see, for example, the chapter by Karakayali, p. 225).

While Feischmidt and Zakariás focus on a pro-refugee civic initiative in Hungary, the perspective of humanitarianism also appears in the studies of

Verschraegen, Karakayali and Vandervoordt with a special focus on solidarity and volunteering. In the case of highly skilled migrants, Olivier-Mensah and Frykman describe the importance of transnational social work by addressing the current issues of refugee- and labor migration. This issue is also present in Chapter 12, where Asztalos Morell inspects the pro-EU migrant movements and civil mobilization in Sweden, along with Makela in the case of the ‘Refugees Welcome To Malmö’ initiative. Struggles for integration that go beyond the narratives of the crisis specifically appear in a chapter by Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, who address the matter of ethics and solidarity. In connection with this, Cantat, Feischmidt, Nowicka, Mratchkowski and Turinsky not only review intersectional diversity, but engage with the delicate subject of migrant-non-migrant relationships and cosmopolitanism. The interpretation of spatial amplitude in connection with migration ethics, gendered racism, and hate crimes from the perspective of sociology is the specific area of research of Pries, Schiebelhofer, Valenta, Witkowski, Župarić-Iljić and Wyller, with Wyller also expanding his scope to the field of ecclesiology.

As it is perceptible throughout the chapters, we can also conclude that civil society functions at its finest when it becomes collective action (Edwards, 2004). In the case of migration, joint action turned out to be the impact factor of the cross-country support programs that were organized to handle refugee issues and, due to this, civil society represented an important counterpoint to radicalism in the European Union. The lesson here may be that by relying on the common values of humanity – even if they are challenged – one can avoid distrust and doubt. This book is not a mere addition to the vast migration-related literature, but creates a new foundation for this area of research. The broad perspectives and opinions contained herein may serve as a useful starting point for conducting or even starting one’s own projects. Due to its multidisciplinary approach, this book could be especially useful to researchers in the fields of history, sociology, and cultural anthropology, and also to volunteers; further, to anyone seeking to deepen their knowledge and compare different aspects of the related phenomena.

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## Book Review

### Neoliberal order and the collapse of a mixed economy

**Hann, Chris (2019) *Repatriating Polányi: Market Society in the Visegrád States*. Budapest and New York: CEU Press. 388 pages.**

Chris Hann has published a very important book containing writings related to the dramatic social change of the late 1980s and 1990s in Eastern Europe that has had very serious repercussions until now. This selection of pieces of writing fits very well into his long-term work – a huge series of anthologies and articles about the market and society, ownership, moral economy and peasantry – that focuses on Polányi and provides key perspectives for scholars and students of anthropology and sociology who are working on some of the most important economic and social institutions (see, among others, Hann, 2010; Hart and Hann, 2009; Hann and Hart, 2011; Hann, 2006).

Also, there has been a series of excellent publications in the last two years (and many more before) that have focused on reinterpreting and rethinking the works of Karl Polányi from various perspectives. These books include not only brief summaries of topics such as the state, class, money, commodification, international political economy, etc., but also certain ideas about how to apply Polányi's thoughts to the analysis of current affairs (Dale et al., 2019). Actually, Dale is over a huge series of books related to the works of Polányi that have been published during the last ten years, including his biography and various reconstructions of his works (among others, Dale, 2010; 2016a; 2016b; 2016c). The Polányian tide also contains *The Moral Economists: R. H. Tawney, Karl Polányi, E. P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism* by Tim Rogan (Rogan, 2017), which not only contributes to the ongoing debate about the moral economy but also reinterprets new/old angles of the critique of capitalism, but not from the point of view of material inequality that is so persistent today. And this list can be continued with unavoidable, pieces such as those by Block and Sommers, although even if we include these we surely still miss very important pieces of writing (Block and Sommers, 2016).

In this most welcome Polányian wave of the last decade, this book of Hann's is exceptional and should be a basis for very important discussions thirty years after East European societies were exposed to a new cycle of market utopias. Hann 'repatriates' Polányi not only through an extremely insightful anthropological study of contemporary Hungarian and Polish society (thus not simply a discussion about Polányi and a critique of capitalism), but also brings Polányi back through rethinking socialist systems, which turn has been much awaited after thirty years of neoliberal order.

It is important to note here that in certain ways there is no need to repatriate Polányi, as he has always been here. I will never forget the excited discussions we had as students in the early 1980s after reading Polányi at Pécs University, where the later head of the Hungarian Statistical Office, Tamás Mellár, and most importantly, the brilliant economic historian Tibor Tóth (who in a very Polányian way wrote a lot about the complementarity of large-scale landed estates and peasant farms in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hungarian rural history) dropped in the ideas of Polányi (and Malinowski and Thurnwald) again and again during lectures and seminars that were clouded by cigarette or cigar smoke. Furthermore, Mihály Sárkány (the first to understand Polányi's significance for Hungarian and non-Hungarian ethnography) not only translated him, but like Hann used his work in analysis as early as the 1970s. It was the former who translated *Dahomey and the Slave Trade* in 1972, it was he who wrote the first entry on Polányi in the *Hungarian Ethnographic Encyclopedia* in 1981, and continued to reflect on Polányi's work throughout his career (Sárkány, 1981; 1990). Or, like Iván Szelényi and George Konrád in their book *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, who argued when trying to understand the social structure of socialist Eastern Europe that 'in seeking the place of intellectuals in the social structure, we set out not for the category of mode of production, but from Polányi's models of economic integration' (Szelényi and Konrád, 1979: 47). Later, in the late 1980s, the 'third way' advocate Erzsébet Szalai also related the socialist economy to the idea of redistribution as understood by Polányi (Szalai, 1989; 2014). After the change of the regime, Polányi became even more popular and, for instance, József Böröcz started talking about 'simulating great transformation,' stressing longer-term continuity and the role of informality during the restructuring of the property system in Hungary immediately after the political collapse of the socialist regime (Böröcz, 1993). György Lengyel was also a great proponent of Polányian ideas as early as the 1980s (together with Zoltán Szántó), while Polányi was a key part of the economic sociology textbook at the Karl Marx University of Economics). Lengyel also published a book entitled *Small Transformation* that analyzed institutional change in Hungary using some of the ideas of Polányi. The list can be continued with excellent economic sociologists such as Endre Sík, Erzsébet Czákó (using the analytical perspectives of Polányi on informal 'market places') and many other people until the early 2000s when Polányi's book *The Great Transformation* was published due to a push by László Andor, later to become EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (note what a perfect Polányian portfolio he had!). Nevertheless, the EU is not a state to counterbalance the excesses of the free market, as so nicely pointed out by Maria Markantonatou and Gareth Dale in their analysis of the understanding of the state by Polányi (Dale et al., 2019). So, in this sense Polányi is not a 'return migrant' in Hungarian intellectual history, and he was more than a passing issue for historians of ideas such as János Gyurgyák and Erzsébet Vezér, who made important contributions in this respect (Gyurgyák, 1986; Vezér, 1986). We can even say that Polányi has been one the most consensual thinkers to be used to explain the real or imagined specialities of East European and Hungarian economic and institutional change. Even more, he survived well the change of the regime, which unfortunately threw out so

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many key figures from mainstream Hungarian scholarly discussions (the socialist economists, from Varga to Kalecki, and super-important Marxist thinkers as Lukács).

But he has not been here in some other ways, which gap Hann sees with very clear eyes, and feels with great sensitivity. Chris Hann in this book claims that ‘the deeper cause of Brexit is not migration from the Visegrád countries but the institutions of a global neoliberal order’ (p. 321). Even more, he argues, this relationship between the neoliberal order and the rise of nationalism is not only valid in the case of Britain, but in Eastern Europe as well. We should see historical changes such as the rise of authoritarian nationalism as a dual movement against market utopia, especially when we concentrate on the very concrete social arrangements in the Polish and Hungarian countryside that have been put under dramatic stress by the neoliberal turn (p. 321; Polányi, 1986; 2004). This perspective is very much in line with the views of Polányi himself, as in 1945 he also argued that the introduction of a free market would lead to ‘crazy nationalisms’ in Eastern Europe:

If the Atlantic Charter really committed us to restore free markets where they have disappeared, we might thereby be opening the door to the reintroduction of a crazy nationalism into regions from which it has disappeared. (Polányi 2018a)

But the key question remains what exact mechanisms of social change led to the rise of ‘crazy nationalisms,’ as Polányi himself gives just a general blueprint. And it is exactly with this question that Hann repatriates Polányi with his nuanced, careful observations and a unique perspective. The trick is that, with rare eloquence and integrity, Chris Hann has formulated a coherent (non-Eurocentric, plebeian, and Polányian) intellectual and moral-political perspective with which to view the consolidation of the neoliberal era in Central and Eastern Europe. While confirming Polányi’s classic argument of the ‘countermovement,’ Hann urges avoidance of the all too easy political and moral contempt expressed by local and global elite groups for the masses that have been pushed into a new dystopia.

From this perspective there is one very important point at which we need to start thinking together with Hann (and the people he studied in Tázlár and in the Lemko region in Southeast Poland). This is the understanding and the analysis of the socialist system, especially the late socialist system, as a mixed non-capitalist system and mixed economy that served the sociability and material needs of local people rather well. Hann again and again comes back to observations such as that presented in the following quote, in which he is surely supported by historians like Tibor Valuch who documented the development of that time (Valuch, 2001):

I have always viewed this type of cooperative as an exemplar of pragmatic market socialism, epitomizing the willingness of Hungarian policymakers to modify standard models of central planning in the interests of economic efficiency, for the benefit of the whole of society and of rural petty commodity producers in particular. Certainly this very flexible framework allowed villagers

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in places such as Tázlár, through their own hard work, to achieve high levels of material prosperity in the last decades of socialism. Unfavorable comparisons with the neighboring village of Soltvadkert, where socialist entrepreneurs were even more conspicuous, led many members to view the Tázlár cooperative as a socialist imposition and a hindrance to private farmers, even by those who benefited from its services. The ‘symbiosis’ of private and collective can be understood in Malinowskian terms as ‘functional integration.’ (p. 79)

So, there was a very flexible system combining private and collective economies and ownership, in which symbiosis satisfied the conditions of ‘functional integration.’ This meant stability and opportunity. It led to sophisticated forms of sociability. These observations have not been fitted into ideas about socialism, which is most often portrayed as being a homogeneous system in some way. Various authors, often using very good but partial observations, have come up with ideas like state capitalism, the redistributive state economy, state-socialism with a property vacuum, or some form of totalitarian control or fully fledged socialism that surpasses any existing form of capitalist system in terms of development. Hann warns us wisely that the situation is far more complicated, especially on a micro level.

A couple of pages later, Hann comes back with a strong critique of the Douglass North-type analysis that a functioning market economy needs a precise specification of property rights in order to function well and reduce transaction costs (namely, the price of using the market, such as the costs of contracting, etc.) (North, 1990). This institutionalist approach would of course put socialism into a ‘backward category’ (due to very high transaction costs). But Hann argues in the following way:

However, it is very doubtful whether new property relations will be conducive to improving the economic performance of Hungarian agriculture. Collectivization, the forcible destruction of the old property rights system in the countryside, was followed not by rigid adherence to socialist property rights conceptions but by pragmatism and the general downgrading of rights over land as all citizens were forced to embrace an entirely new constellation of property rights. This led eventually not only to a rather successful expansion of production but also to considerable socioeconomic progress, which recent attempts to restore the predominance of private property rights may jeopardize. (p. 97)

Without this point that concerns the collapse of a mixed and balanced economy and the downgrading of the idea of private property involving land, and ideological pragmatism, Hann’s critique of the neoliberal order and the subsequent rise of nationalism would not stand. His view of ‘pragmatic’ socialism is needed to evaluate social change from the perspective of a non-capitalist Polányian system of socialism. As he points out rightly in the introduction to the book, it certainly lacked freedom and democracy in many respects, which made it vulnerable to the attacks of the market utopias which prevailed and caused huge destruction. This new, neoliberal era disrupted many of the local social arrangements that protected the everyday life of

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producers and employees in the countryside, the devastation of which led to a 'jingoist,' authoritarian dual movement and an era of 'crazy nationalism' under the premiership of Viktor Orbán.

In some ways, and I think Hann tacitly teaches us in this respect, this book moves away from the standard critiques of a neoliberal regime and points toward a more general problem. Namely, Hann is working on how Polányi and anthropology can be used to analyze mixed capitalist and, very importantly, non-capitalist systems – e.g. the socialist experiment in Eastern Europe, which has been rarely understood (praised or rejected) on such grounds.

As we can see above, when Hungarian sociologists and economic sociologists wrote about socialism in Polányian terms they mainly picked up on redistribution or (in village/community studies) reciprocity (*kaláka*, etc) as a key form of integration, and largely ignored the ways in which various forms were integrated and/or balanced. This ignorance of scholarship in work on Eastern Europe actually goes against the original intentions of Karl Polányi, who argued that in all historical types of economy, the market and centralized redistributive bureaucracy, household and reciprocity coexisted and were linked to each other. In this context he praised, for instance, the ancient economy of the Roman Empire which was able to balance redistribution and the market in certain periods (Polányi, 1984: ch. 10). So it seems likely that he would have come to similar conclusions if he could have seen the developments, for instance, in the Hungarian or even the Polish countryside where redistribution, market, and household clearly coexisted symbiotically. Actually, the lack of success in Poland in integrating peasant households and so-called 'socialist' agriculture shows that such mixtures could be mismanaged. This mismanagement could be due to some 'minor' mistakes – for instance, setting too low prices for the products of peasants which the state bought (on small producers and farmers see the very interesting anthropological reflections in this book at p. 100), which trap was avoided by Hungarian policy makers (Nove, 1991: 136). The results of such progressive developments just have to be acknowledged, as we can see again and again in this and previous books of Hann.

The lack of attention is all the more surprising as the issue of mixed ownership and mixed economy by sector was the key innovation in the early history of Soviet socialism. Lenin could see early on that the victory of socialist ownership could not be guaranteed without building up a new economic plan that allowed for the coexistence of various forms of private and socialist economics. The new state needed Western technology and industrial culture: a mixed economy based on competition between sectors. Social and communal ownership was to be fostered and the market was to be managed by the state in a 'special' and 'contradictory' way (Krausz, 2015: 311–325). This was an imbalanced system, as we could learn from the debates between Chayanov, Bukharin, and Preobrazhensky, who thought about whether there could be an original accumulation based on the market activities of better-off peasants. This imbalance, and the consequent market shortages due to peasants' economic rationality and overly high wages for industrial workers, formed the basis for the Stalinist counter-revolution and forced industrialization, the era of which, based on the geopolitical defence rationality of one-state socialism, led to the killing of those thinkers who could have answered the above questions. Actually, Alec Nove, who

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wrote one of the best economic histories of the Soviet Union (also focusing on the above-described debates), arrived at a similar conclusion when first in 1983 he wrote that feasible socialism could exist only in the form of a mixed economy (Nove, 1991). According to him, the market was always necessary in many sectors of the economy, but there was also a need for severe control. There were sectors and segments where central control was and should be necessary, while there could also be competitive smaller state enterprises under self-management. Market-oriented cooperatives would also have had an important role and would have owned their own enterprises (like in Hungary), while smaller scale fully fledged private enterprises and competitive individuals would have also been needed. These systems would have corrected and balanced planning, which (especially if dominant) also had immanent problems: namely, investment cycles, and planning difficulties. Of course, we should stress that the lack of dominance of one sector over the other depends on very important structural conditions such as control over capital, financial, and land markets. Otherwise, while seeking to extend accumulation, the market can unstoppably eat up other sectors such as the peasantry, as already pointed out by Rosa Luxemburg (1951).

So, there were not only various types of socialisms - East German (holding-type control), Yugoslav, (self-management) Hungarian (socialist market) and Soviet, Cuban (more centralized control), etc. -but within socialisms there was variety too, which in itself could be seen as a case of *tertium datur* as, for instance, Szalai puts it (Szalai, 2014). I think it was no *tertium*, but actually the development of socialism which historically had to experiment and come to new arrangements in order to achieve 'integrated' functioning; a fact which Hann draws attention to. So, the former needed permanent reform, not opening toward a 'real' and 'fully fledged' market economy, as János Kornai, the renowned Hungarian economist of socialism and, for instance, János Fekete, at that time head of the Hungarian National Bank (and foreign banks and the IMF, then lending to Hungary and Poland) would have demanded. We can only wonder why the reform economists in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia (László Antal, Tamás Bauer, Ota Sik, Attila Chikán, Károly Attila Soós, Balcerowicz, etc. - see for many of them János Mátyás Kovács, 2009, and also the recollection of ideational development by Szalai, 2014) rarely came up with ideas about how to balance the various economic logics instead of saying and repeating all the time that the state 'unfortunately' slowed down market development, or did not allow the full operation of the market. With rare exceptions (like Pál Juhász, who had partial insight into this problem of coexistence) the above-mentioned intellectuals/economists, who had on their desks some of the best empirical materials on the functioning of the socialist economy, 'in reality' could not come up with equilibrium models for what Hann observes, for instance, in his villages as societal development. So most probably before we start work on various types of symbiosis and links that include redistributive state-market-household-cooperative-urban-rural axes (meaning complex embeddedness) we need to ask again the same question that Kari Polányi-Levitt put to us at our last huge Polányi conference in May 2019: Why has Central Europe been the birthplace of market fundamentalism from Mises and Hayek until now? We have some answers from people like Bockman and Böröcz, but we need to continue the work asking which concrete mechanisms and mixed models should have been

analyzed instead (Bockman, 2011; Böröcz, 1999). So, this is the way that we need to repatriate Polányi, and for this intellectual push it is not only critical scholars but also the inhabitants of places like Tázlár and Kiskunhalas that owe Chris Hann a lot.

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