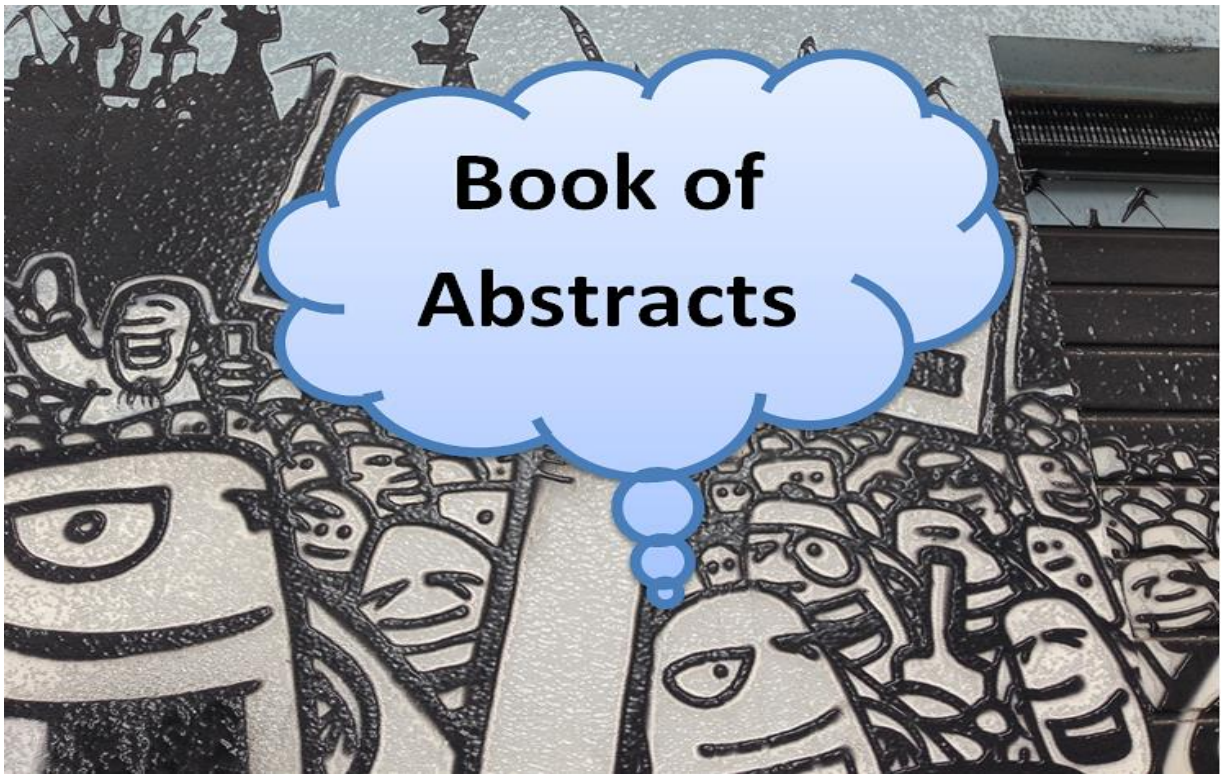
PROMISE

promoting youth involvement and social engagement

European Commission's Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation Programme (GA no. 693221)



Horizon 2020 PROMISE Ethnographic Case Studies

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Introduction

Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement (PROMISE) is a major EU funded research project which aims to explore young people's role in shaping society; past, present and future. The project brings together twelve collaborating centres in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, the Russian Federation, Croatia and the UK. It is funded for three years from May 2016 to April 2019, under the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, Grant Agreement no. 693221.

This document presents the abstracts of 22 individual case study reports completed by PROMISE Consortium partners in 10 countries. The reports present the first stage of analysis of qualitative data produced for PROMISE work package 6. Each case study is assigned to a cluster grouping that will be analysed using meta-ethnographic synthesis for the second stage of analysis.

Each report focuses on a selected group of young people identified as facing conflict with authorities, older generations or social norms, in their particular cultural context. Each case study explores the conflict (and associated stigma) through an analysis of its modes, sites and agents, and explores how young people respond to that conflict (and stigma). The reports reveal a wide range of responses including demonstrations of youth agency through resistance, rejection, adaptation and even apathy. Moving beyond the normatively approved and formally organised youth activities, the collection of case studies includes examples of political, social, civic and community involvement, engagement and activism, creative activities and other forms of innovation.

In the introduction to the individual case study reports we outline the common research questions, selection of cases, ethics, methods, research instruments, data anonymization, storage and management protocols, and data analysis guidelines.

Full reports are available at:

http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/ethnographic-case-studies/

Cluster 1 – Education, Justice and Society

'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities. UK

Aimee Harragan, Jo Deakin, Claire Fox and Becki Kaur
University of Manchester

This report presents the key findings of *'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities,* one of two UK-based case studies conducted for PROMISE. It focuses on a marginalised subset of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth' and seen to be 'at risk' of offending. Their 'risky' label has, disproportionately, made them the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various forms of resistance.

This case study addresses young people's experiences of stigma and conflict, recognising unintended as well as intended consequences of control measures, and explores young people's varied, and sometimes unexpected, responses to their treatment and their perceived label (including withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance). We analysed young people's structural and individual responses to the conflict they experience and, in so doing, highlighted instances that inhibit or enable young people's agency and transformational capacity. We concluded by considering how relationships with key authority actors may be 'recast' to support young people through turning points, moments and processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.

Young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour. Portugal

Raquel Matos, Filipe Martins, Alexandra Carneiro, Luísa Campos, Luísa Ribeiro and Mariana Negrão
Universidade Católica Portuguesa

The Portuguese research team carried out an ethnographic case study on young people who presented life paths with psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour. This particular group of young people presented long paths of conflict with major normative social institutions such as school, the law or the family, frequently leading to delinquent behaviour and/or school dropout.

The case study involved 26 participants aged 15 to 24 (9 girls) who were recruited among youngsters serving non-custodial youth measures and youngsters enrolled in two second chance education (SCE) projects. Data were collected over a period of seven months using semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews, group discussions and participant observation.

This report presents the key findings of the case study emerging from the narratives of the participants. These address the major sites and agents of conflict experienced by young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour, with special relevance to school, family and the justice and protection systems; the ways by which these young people try to respond to and overcome their conflicts; the personal and social changes they recognise as resulting from these responses to conflict and the factors, mostly relational, that supported these changes; and, finally, how could these be transferred to other young people experiencing similar conflicts.

Young ex-offenders and recidivism. Estonia

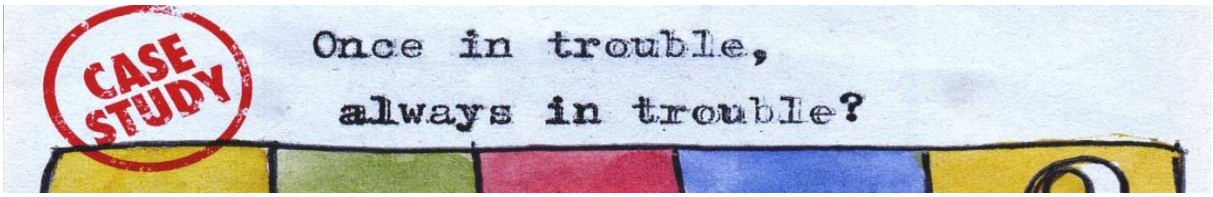
Anna Markina
University of Tartu

This case study looks at young ex-offenders in Estonia. The main focus of this analysis is how and in what domains young ex-offenders experience stigmatisation, and what impact stigmatisation has on their lives. The study also looks at the strategies young people have to avoid the negative impact of stigmatisation, and how stigmatisation affects a person when the label is internalised. The report is based on the analysis of 22 qualitative interviews with 24 young persons (21 male and 3 female), who have been convicted for a criminal offence. A photo elicitation approach as well as a peer-research approach were used to collect data. Fieldwork took place from August 2017 until March 2018.

No NEETS. Spain

Clara Rubio and Zyab Ibañez
IGOP/UAB

The economic crisis in Spain has led to a significant increase in the youth unemployment rate, meaning that many Spanish young people could not find a job (around 59.2% in 2012). The Spanish media in 2014 used for the first time the label 'NEET' to refer to those young people who neither studied nor worked, implying that they were the only agents responsible for their situation since they were too idle to get a job.



We wanted to explore the concept 'NEET' and see how young people from vulnerable backgrounds with irregular trajectories cope with their lives and socially participate through youth organisations. We conducted 21 interviews with young people participating in four youth organisations. All of them have had irregular trajectories in the past two years but at that present moment they were actively participating and taking responsibilities in a youth organisation. This stigma, as well as others we have detected ('too alternative' for young people fighting the system and 'migrants' for immigrants), made them feel like they were outsiders and, sometimes, led them to drug use. However, the young informants declared they have learnt a lot (either technical skills such as how to lead a meeting, or personal and social skills such as getting to know themselves or improving their social interactions) after getting involved in those organisations. These acquired skills empowered them to build their own projects. They also identified another key element in facilitating their involvement; the opportunity of build a relationship with someone else (whether that is a youth worker, a friend or a relative) helped them overcome difficult situations.

The results obtained led us to propose the concept "No NEET" when referring to young people with irregular trajectories in order to avoid the stigma associated with the NEET label and to emphasize young people's active role in society. The informants were not apathetic and passive but actively committed to contributing to society through the organisations they are part of.

Cluster 2 – Culture and Politics

Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities'. UK

Necla Acik and Hilary Pilkington
University of Manchester

This case study explores the stigmatisation associated with being a young Muslim in the UK. Rising anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments together with the securitisation of society, through counter terrorism legislation introduced amidst concerns about 'home grown' terrorism, have contributed to the construction of Muslim populations as 'suspect communities'. Young British Muslims are particularly affected by the UK counter-terrorism Prevent strategy, which brings them into tension with a range of institutional sites that have a statutory duty to deliver that strategy. The findings detailed in this report are based on fieldwork conducted over eleven months including 26 semi-structured interviews (four by peer researchers) and participant observation. The findings suggest widespread negative associations with Islam and Muslims, amplified by the implementation of the Prevent strategy, result in a sense among young Muslims that they are constantly surveilled, scrutinised and silenced. This significantly problematises already complex identity issues young Muslims experience. It also shapes their propensity to engagement and the types of activism in which they participate; it mobilises them to defend the right to express their British Muslim identities. Thus, while social exclusion in general acts to inhibit social involvement, some young Muslims feel their own marginality can *enable* civic and political engagement. Such mobilisations may constitute a positive response to stigmatisation in the short-term. However, this focus on a politics of countering Islamophobia ultimately constrains young Muslims' social involvement within a form of identity politics that fails to reflect their complex subjectivities and denies them the opportunity to make the broader contributions to politics and society that they desire.

No Tav: Stigma as a drive for social change. Italy

Alessia Mefalopulos
Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research (IPRS)

This report presents the findings of a research carried out amongst the young activists of the *No Tav* social movement in Italy. Despite being strongly stigmatised by the mainstream media and the national authorities as highly conflictual youth, they engage positively in society and they become interpreters of instances of social change. The hypothesis that lies behind our research is that the young activists, despite the strong stigmatisation they are subjected to, succeed in interpreting instances of social change by borrowing from the overall movement they belong to the key features that allow them to turn stigma into a positive value. Our theory is that the intergenerational dimension is key to the innovation process the young activists are bringing about. Through the conscious adhesion to the community and the relationship of trust and solidarity established with its members and particularly with the elderly, the young activists are able to convey their innovative potential. They convert such potential into actions that point at consciously boosting a social change, with a view to gradually investing not only in their individual life but that of an entire community – a community whose boundaries start locally but stretch out to reach national and even European ones.

The autonomists: Perceptions of societal change among radical left youth. Germany

Eckart Müller-Bachmann
CJD Nord

This case study tries to summarise perceptions of societal change among a group of young people that, despite being referred to in this report as 'the autonomists', cannot be easily categorised as a single homogeneous group. The focus of study in fact combines a number of scenes and structures of youth and adolescent groups (which include also adults) from different parts of Germany that can be categorised – in accordance with interviewees themselves -- as 'antifascists', 'squatters', 'autonomists' or 'post-autonomists', 'communists' or even simply 'left-wing', 'extra-parliamentary left' or 'emancipatory left'. All of them are in deep conflict with societal norms and values.

The gap in research on the autonomists arises from their portrayal 'as quintessentially violent or ready to use violence as part of a strategy to criminalize them' (Scherr, 2015). Correspondingly, there is still no research on the autonomist or the extra-parliamentary scene which does not prejudge the outcome or are multiperspectival. Almost all academic studies focus on aspects of militancy and violence. This is always the point of departure of extremism research on politically left-wing scenes.

In contrast the key interest in this study centres around: a) contexts of individual motivation or rather socialisation into the formations; b) contexts of conflicts experienced and collective reactions to these in the form of actions and the associated issues of stigmatisation and criminalisation; c) innovations and the effectiveness of personal and group-specific engagement or rather political actions; d) `questions of meaning' with regard to the individual and group-specific added value of the actions and the engagement.

Not in our town – NIOT. Slovak Republic

Alexandra Bitušíková and Ivan Chorvát
Matej Bel University

This PROMISE case study documents the story of the Not in Our Town (NIOT) grassroots movement in the Slovak city of Banská Bystrica that originated as a protest movement against the results of regional elections in Banská Bystrica self-governing region in 2013 when a Neo-Nazi governor was democratically elected. The development of the movement shows various levels of youth engagement in the period from 2013 to 2017. It demonstrates that civil participation can contribute to breaking civic apathy and motivate the wider local/regional community to engage in resistance activities against fascism, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and any kind of intolerance. NIOT is a good example of informal grassroots activism strengthening civil society in a postsocialist city. It can serve as an example of civic self-organisation consisting of collective action mobilised without the involvement of a formal organisation and with more individual civil engagement that constitutes one of the common types of activism in Central and Eastern Europe. The study focuses on the analysis of key findings based on face-to-face interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis of media articles as well as action research carried out by two authors of the case study. The interviews were conducted with young activists who openly presented their negative attitudes against any type of radicalisation and extremism in the society (in this case mainly far right

extremism) and actively joined the NIOT movement to combat these societal challenges. The study demonstrates the profile of these young people, their motivations and experience. It also describes activities of the NIOT movement in the four year period, which resulted in a positive outcome – the defeat of the Neo-Nazi governor in regional elections in November 2017. The story demonstates the importance of civic/youth engagement in contemporary society and its potential to achieve social change.

Struggling against hegemony: rural youth in Seto country. Estonia

Aet Annist
University of Tartu

The young people in the Seto ethnic region in South Eastern Estonia experience conflicts in relation to the hegemonic role that Seto culture has taken in the region and that is felt to have superseded those for whom Seto heritage is secondary or unimportant. The political, cultural and social rejection that the young people report has framed their lives in ways that make them feel unwelcome, and labels them as less valuable, even celebrating their migration. The division between those locals supporting Seto heritage and those indifferent or opposed to its centrality in local life has effects in the economic opportunities (funding and employment) and cultural choice (most, especially the more visible events are Seto heritage related), and the latter choices, in particular, feed into the social division and emerging class lines. The lack of willingness to participate, partly deriving from lack of choice, is carving out a new lower class identity to which the Seto activists allude when explaining the non-presence of many young locals.

For the local youth, the choice is one of non-involvement and removing their more sought after free time activities, and, later, migration. Those who have stayed do make an effort to carve out their own opportunities but have experienced rejection and appear to have resigned to this reality. Together with recent changes and liking the region for its peace and quiet, the potential for retaining the local connections, including with the more Seto-minded peers and sparking a light that would force the Seto heritage activists to reconsider their exclusive policies and discourses, is still there and could possibly increase with the new amalgamated Setomaa municipality even though this could also simply increase the power of the heritage-based Setoness. Awareness arising

from this project might, however, gently coax the key decision makers towards a more inclusive approach.

New pro-citizen activities of young Petersburgers for 'public morals and order'. Russia

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This case comprises two subcases: 'opposition activists'; and 'moral order activists'. These two youth communities (subcases) constitute two types of civic engagement and the empirical data were collected separately by two researchers. The empirical basis of the study consists of 29 in-depth biographical interviews with 19 men and 10 women aged 18 to 39. The interviews were conducted simultaneously with participant observation undertaken during field work (from October 2016 to March 2017).

The analysis shows that the scenes of 'opposition' and 'moral' activism have similarities and differences. Both groups are to some extent in 'conflict' with the current political authorities in Russia. They share a lack of trust in the current regime in Russia and 'moral' activists often criticise the government in a similar way to 'opposition activists'. Regardless of what activists are fighting for, they often share common motivations (professional development, capital accumulation, and social change) and oppose the passive majority. However, it is important to note differences between the groups in terms of their internal hierarchy as well as gender-related contradictions within the groups: the activists' values do not always correspond to what is actually happening in their communities. Participants of each subcase recognise that it is necessary to act today in order to achieve results in the future. And even 'small deeds' prove to be significant for them. The two communities are also not isolated from each other; on the contrary, they display a mutual interest in each other's activities.

People living with HIV and HIV activists (St. Petersburg & Kazan). Russia

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Today, around 36 million people live with HIV. Despite the existence of a global strategy to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, the situation in Russia is critical. By 01 November 2017, officially over 1,193,800 cases of HIV infection had been registered among Russian citizens. Given the moralising discourse created by the state with regard to HIV-positive people and the spread of the virus, HIV activism plays an important role in developing and preventing the epidemic.

Our goal was to study the structure, actors and their strategies of HIV-activism. Two locations were chosen: St. Petersburg; and the Republic of Tatarstan. St. Petersburg is one of the Russian regions most affected by HIV, while the Republic of Tatarstan is recognised as one of the safest regions in the country with regard to the spread of HIV. However, both in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan, there is rapidly developing HIV-activism.

The collected data include 29 semi-structured biographical interviews and 28 days of observation. The study shows that, despite the stigmatisation and high level of and control over the actions of civil society, a heterogeneous but solidary HIV activist space is developing. The structure of the HIV activism field is set by officially registered NGOs and informal network associations, depending on the direction of its activity. Being key figures in the community, activists create a comfortable and safe environment for various groups of people with HIV. Activists organise support groups, individual counselling and support, outreach work, provide medicines in emergency situations, etc. Thus, the emerging HIV community is becoming, in a sense, a communication space, which is important for both activists and community members in maintaining their identity, recognition and belonging.

Cluster 3 – Economy, Leisure and Space

Artistic/Creative Start-Ups in the Suburbs of Naples. Italy

Alessia Mefalopulos and Federica Di Giovanni
Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research (IPRS)

Young people growing up in harsh environments are often stigmatised by society as 'troubled' and 'losers' and this affects their future life. This report illustrates the case of the stigmatised young people from the suburbs of Naples who have instead succeeded to turn the stigma into a positive value and a powerful driver for social change.

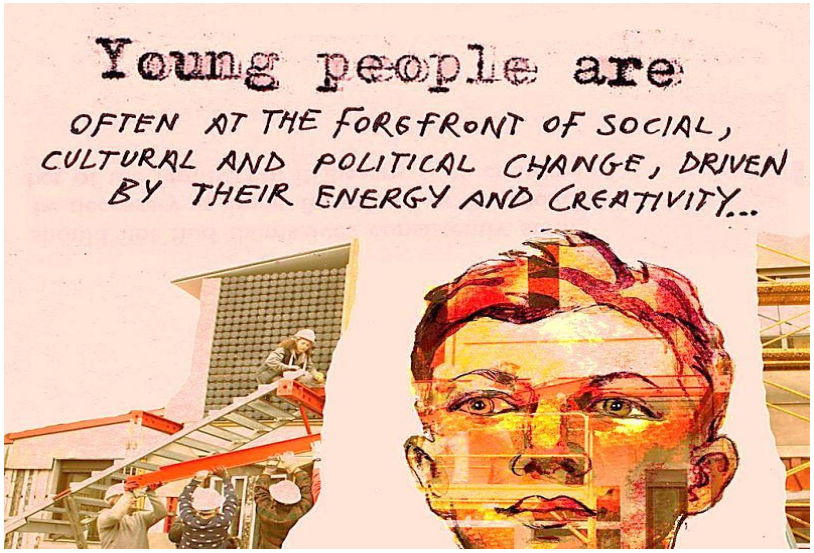
Despite coming from social and economic contexts of hardship and often linked to the environments of organised crime, the youth addressed by our research have found a way to put in place an extraordinary innovative potential, for themselves and the community, through the use of art - in particular, circus and theatre. In the absence of strong reference points to which they can adhere (e.g. family, institutions), the values, role models and negative habits learnt from living in the neighbourhood become the only things 'grounding' the young people, allowing them to develop their individual identities. In this perspective, the conditions of exclusion and marginalisation can lead young people to develop a strong sense of belonging, which is essentially based on sharing a common setting and experience characterised by marginalisation and exclusion from the rest of society.

Albeit a 'negative' one, such a feeling of belonging can be regarded as positive in certain circumstances. Research findings demonstrate that young people from marginalised suburbs can promote innovation and lead social change by 'investing' in their sense of belonging and transferring it, from the street gang they used to belong to, to the local community. The young street artists addressed in this case study, without denying their troubled pasts, have effectively learned to use their street origin as an asset, something they share with the younger generations they wish to involve in their arts projects. They have maintained their marginality but have transformed it into a positive trait, a sort of 'culture of marginality'. In this transformation lies the strong desire for change felt by the young people who are the object of this study.

Self-building, alternative accommodation and public space uses. Spain

Zyab Ibáñez
IGOP/UAB

In recent years, a growing number of young Spaniards have wanted to participate directly in providing for their own futures, and see tangible results in the short, medium and long term. They try more or less collective and non-hierarchical ways of working, they often learn main skills informally, non-formally or are self-taught and they try to avoid bureaucratic constraints. Among these, in our case study we include the following aspects: the self-building of collective or private places; the *masovería urbana* (rent arrangements that include maintenance and restoration work as a partial or total substitute for paid rent); and the involvement in new uses of collective spaces the public/private character of which is unclear.



It is difficult to speculate, at the collective level, the extent to which these initiatives will be able to question, substitute or coexist with other more traditional options. At the individual level, it is difficult to estimate the most relevant effects of these young people's actions. It has always taken decades to translate minority, atypical or conflicting views into concrete actions, influencing political actors in government positions to implement social change.

A key question that remains open is how these participatory, bottom-up, atypical and micro-local initiatives can gain further momentum, be articulated into sustainable proposals and enter into the central political arenas. However, it is already possible to identify in these distrusting, resistant, critical and alternative behaviours, some elements that can contribute to complementing, replacing or revitalizing the usual practices.

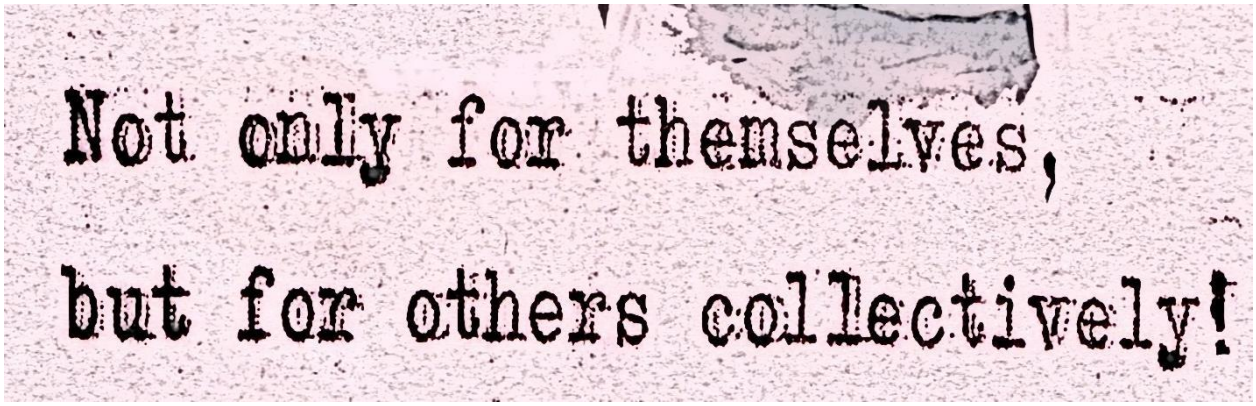
Returning young migrants. Slovak Republic

Katarína Koštialová and Roman Hofreiter
Matej Bel University

Migration is a cyclical process which also involves a decision as to whether to return. The situation in Slovakia is characterized by a high number of young people studying or working abroad. The process of return migration from new member EU states is often studied from an economic aspect.

However, the return migration also presents new themes, some of which we include in our paper. We have focused our attention on the tendencies of returning young migrants to become bearers of change and development in their home country. Therefore, their return migration is not only an economic phenomenon but also contributes to social innovations.

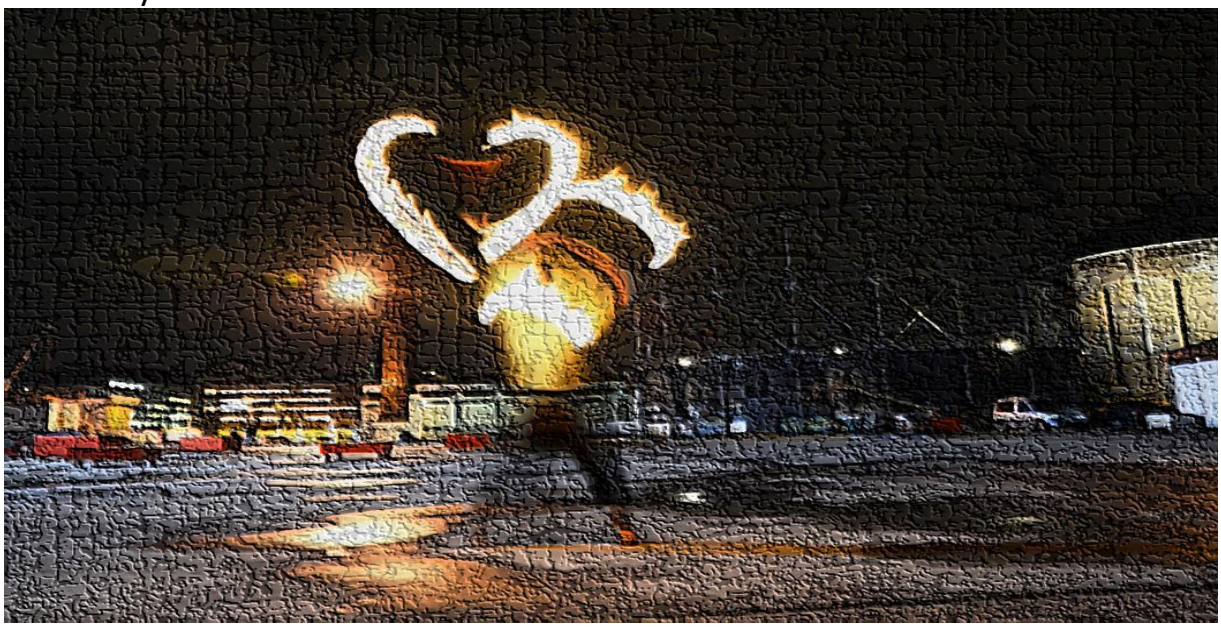
We observed how young returning migrants modify life in their immediate circle, community and even society. The process of returning migration contains an element of active communication with the environment, an element of a certain negotiation and modification which does not have to have a particular goal. Changes can be an unintended consequence of negotiation in the process of reintegration. Innovations can be observed both on the micro level (family, friends) as well as an active function for community and state.



Intergenerational Contests and Spatial Occupations in the City. Finland

Heta Mulari
Finnish Youth Research Society

Young people and young adults' means of occupying urban space are regulated and their creative and/or political activism is often stigmatised in the public debate. Young people negotiate and struggle over their right to the city, through occupying, inhabiting and transforming places with embodied and material means. This case study explored how young people and young adults become active by using different public and semi-public spaces in Helsinki. The key research context was a youth cultural and community centre, which has its roots in underground antiracist and punk movements. Research participants were 16-30-year-old young people and young adults who participated in different activities at the centre, such as doing subcultural circus and queer theatre. While the life situations of the participants differed, they nevertheless shared, firstly, a distrust towards Finnish society and decision-making, which was voiced as explicitly intergenerational. The participants talked about lack of trust in governmental politics, disappointment in recent political decisions, such as cuts in the welfare sector and experiences of stigmatisation on the basis of age, gender or sexual orientation. Secondly, the participants emphasised the importance of *claiming an own space* and *creating communities* as counter-force to the distrust they felt. Thus, free leisure spaces as well as other spatial occupations (such as protests and performances) became important material processes in young people's feeling of 'belonging' in the city.



Supporters' Varteks FC. Croatia

Benjamin Perasović and Marko Mustapić
Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

This is a Croatian sociological research study on a specific social actor - Supporters' Varteks FC, which is a football club founded and owned by its supporters. Old Varteks FC played an important role in Croatian football until its management and local political/football elites changed its name to Varaždin and brought the club to bankruptcy as a result of numerous deals, legal cases and convictions related to match fixing. In 2011, this led the White Stones, passionate supporters of old Varteks, to join with other supporters to found a new football club with the old name – Varteks. Today that club is known as 'Supporters' Varteks'.

This paper is based on 16 months of ethnographic research with members of Supporters' Varteks. This group of supporters is marginalised because of their age, stigmatised and frequently labelled in the media as hooligans and in conflict with the local political establishment and local/national football establishment. However, they did not remain isolated in hedonistic places (parks, pubs etc.) but emerged as a social actor, building their football club on a democratic basis (one member one vote) and fighting for their values despite the hostile social/political environment. Those values align with the Against Modern Football Movement (AMF), which, in the Croatian context, is not only against rigid commercialisation and police repression, but is also a movement against corruption in football and politics.

One of the key findings of this research is the demonstration of the inaccuracy of the stereotype that regularly appears in both the Croatian mainstream media and the academic community concerning supporters – a stereotype of violence and extreme right-wing political orientation. Our respondents represent a social actor that includes both representatives of the ultras subculture and other supporters who share the sensibilities of the AMF movement and who oppose corruption and crime in the Croatian Football Federation. Whilst this stance brings them into conflict with a range of social and political institutions, it also makes them a potential site of social innovation.

Cluster 4 – Gender and Sexuality

'Neo-Muslims'? Social engagement of devout young Muslim women. Germany

Iris Dähnke
CJD Nord

In academic literature and the media a new type of young Muslim woman has emerged in the last 15 years – the so-called neo-Muslim woman. The term was coined by sociologist Sigrid Nökel in 2002 after conducting biographic interviews with second-generation post-migrant women. It described young women who had 'returned' to religious practices and dress codes and at the same time successfully participated in higher education and aspired to a professional career. Being both migrant and German, the young women are holders of hybrid 'this as well as that' identities. Their multiple affiliations are challenged and perceived as mutually exclusive dichotomous identity categories – in particular by the so-called 'majority society'. By wearing the Muslim headscarf they demonstrate belonging to the Muslim side of their identity: a transnational neo-Muslim identity potentially transcending national categories, which can represent a third option beyond the either-or identity dilemma.

We spoke to devout young Muslim women who are actively engaged in society and want to 'make a difference'. They want to co-shape society as visible Muslims and their choice of dress represents an expression of agency. We looked at the wearing of the headscarf as a social practice of identity and investigate contexts of conflict: in school, work and public areas. The young women experience discrimination and stigmatisation on the basis of their clothing practice and alleged ethnic belonging. As 'representatives of Islam' they are subject to stereotypical ascriptions and assumptions of an essentialised and stereotyped collective Muslim identity. These often gendered ascriptions and assumptions are perpetuated by members of the so-called majority society, but also by members of their religious or ethnic community. Their body becomes subject to essentialising discourses.

Against this backdrop we want to investigate their individual and collective engagement: They are volunteers in various fields – youth sports, Islamic girls' groups, religious encounter events, refugee support and poetry slams – to name but a few. Their engagement reflects their wishes for cooperation and

social cohesion, their fight against prejudice and for belonging and for positive identification as Muslims.

Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO. Croatia

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Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

This report gives the results of the ethnographic case study about Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ non-government organization. The objectives of PROMISE are to explore young people´s role in shaping society (past, present and future) and to investigate their responses to these challenges, as well as transform them to positive social achievement. Organization Zagreb Pride was chosen because of the political and social context of LGBTIQ movement in Croatia, which especially refer to years following the campaign for marriage referendum in 2013 when there was an increase of hate speech against LGBTIQ people in Croatia.

Key findings of the ethnography are the existence of stigmatization as well as experiences of violence and bulling for LGBTIQ community in Croatia. Conflicts young LGBTIQ people encounter in school or college is significant problem noticed in this study, having a result in lack of support in recognition and reporting of bullying. Another common example of conflict is within family because of the traditionally shaped gender expectations, which often collides to respondent´s sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, with all the above, most of the volunteers in this year´s organizational committee were young people ranging from 16 to 34 years old. This is one of the example how in 16 years of activities in Croatia, Zagreb Pride March empowered LGBTIQ community by creating positive climate for social and political change.

Young Gender Activists. Portugal

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This ethnographic case study report focuses on young gender activists in Portugal, and presents the main ideas related to this type of activism, as well as its evolution among Portuguese activists. In the study, twenty young gender activists aged between 17 and 32 years old have participated. Participants were recruited from two organisations that are related to gender activism and are part of the Portuguese Promise National Policy and Practitioner Network (NPPN), as well as from initiatives related to gender equality and then through snowball sampling. Participants are from several geographic areas of Portugal. All participants were asked to answer to a semi-structured interview that was voice-recorded, transcribed, anonymised and then analysed with NVivo. The main results highlighted several aspects that are important to better understand the group of gender activists and gender activism in Portugal. It was possible to understand that conflicts experienced by these youth are related to gender, sexuality and activism and that they are often stigmatised for it. Gender activism is a response to gender-based social conflicts that these youngsters perceive in society and they feel that they are somehow effective in promoting social change through their actions. Regarding their relations with older generations, the overall experience is that intergenerational relations have impact in causing, but also in overcoming conflicts. Finally, the gender activists feel that their experience can be transferred to others, namely to other young people, through media, and by avoiding radical views and positions.

Young motherhood in multicultural Finland. Finland

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In the era of 'prolonged youth', young motherhood is subject to many contradictory discourses. While the trend of increasing mean ages of first-time mothers has given rise to societal worries, becoming a mother at an early age is associated in public discussions with many risks and concerns. The case study *Young motherhood in multicultural Finland* studied how young(ish) mothers themselves see young motherhood and how they position themselves

as mothers and as young women. While the research participants – 18–25-year-old young women, pregnant or mothers of one or two children – share a life situation, they neither form a uniform group nor share a self-identity as 'young mothers'. What is shared, instead, is a self-identity of a competent, caring mother; and to claim this position, many emphasise their maturity and adult role. The participants' life situations, with accumulated gendered care responsibilities served to narrow their possibilities – and partly even their desire – for social activities outside of their homes. Yet, the case study shows how important it is that the ideas of citizenship and social participation are not understood *only* as activities taking place outside of the private domestic sphere. While the participants claimed also other identifications besides that of a parent (e.g. that of a young woman, a spouse, a friend, a student, and a worker), their activities in the domestic sphere were, in this life situation, an inseparable part of how they saw themselves as citizens and the kind of contribution to society they wished to make.

Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of LGBTQ scene of St. Petersburg. Russia

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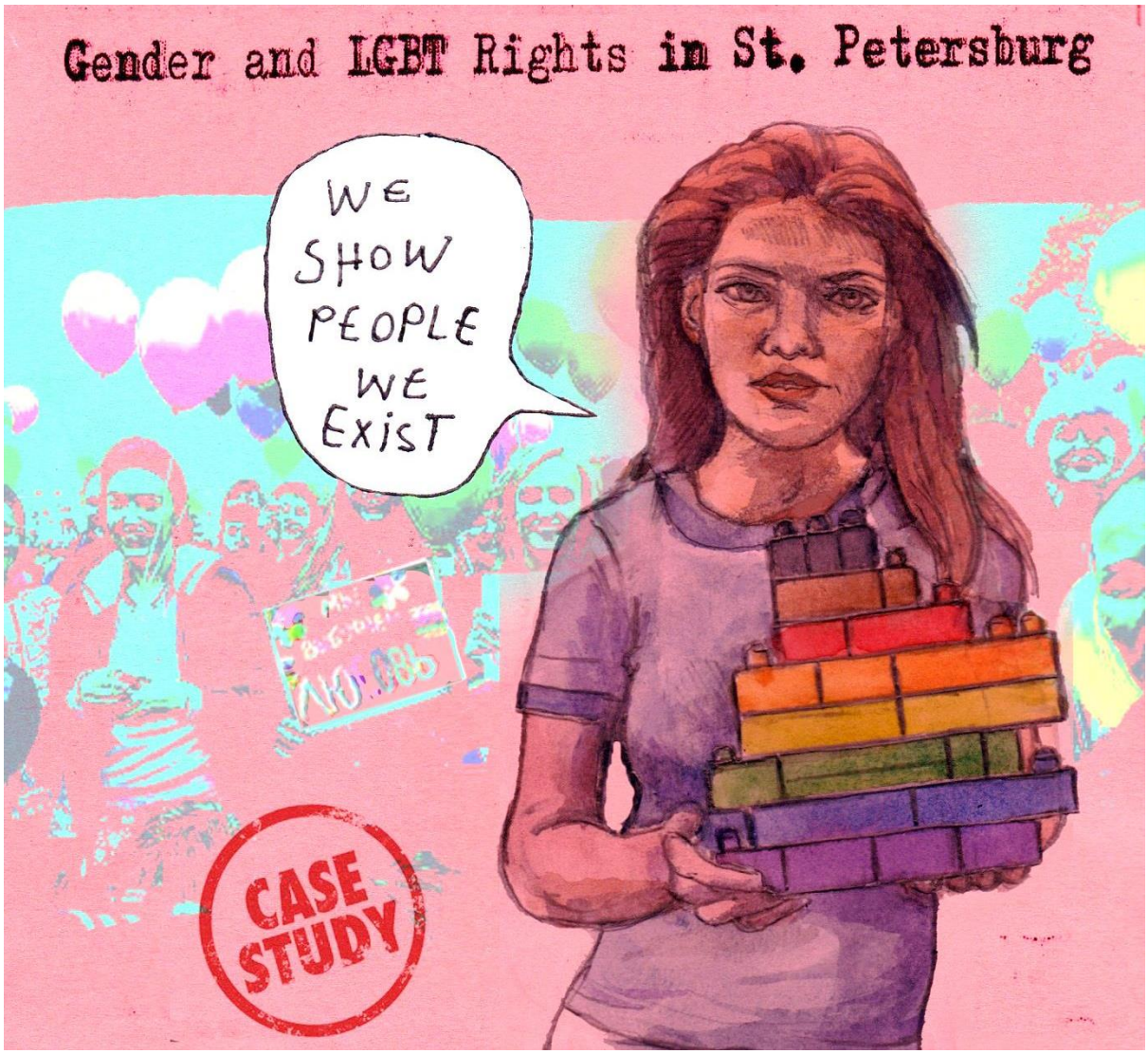
As the aggressive promotion of a conservative ideology in Russia has increased dramatically in recent years, LGBTQ people have been pushed out of the public sphere. The critical discussion of 'different' gender and sexual identities in the mass media has led to the impossibility of public speaking. However, the pressure on non-heterosexual individuals has become also an incentive for the development of LGBTQ activists' associations and initiatives.

Empirical data drawn on in this report are 14 in-depth interviews with LGBTQ respondents and 16 days of participant observations in St. Petersburg. LGBTQ people are fighting against gender-based discrimination by organising protests, educational projects and other activities. The LGBTQ scene is constituted through a reflexive, often conflicting discussion of issues that have fundamental importance for the community such as status of sexuality, public actions, power and hierarchy, as well as new sexual and gender identities. The participants represent a decentralised, informal social movement, interacting in a flexible communication network.

Public actions, and participation in them, become a kind of a coming out both for activists and for the community. Bringing LGBTQ issues into the public space is an important element in the development of civil society, despite all the dangers and risks for participants.

The LGBTQ scene is a heterogeneous space of various organisations, initiatives and places. LGBTQ activists assess the effectiveness of their actions in different ways, depending on the goals and methods of action. The discussion of these topics reveals weak points, for example, risks and security of activism, power and solidarity within the scene, and the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the scene.

Local activities aimed at supporting community members are recognised as most effective at the moment. The possibility of change at the structural level is considered only in the long-term.



Grassroots initiatives, conflicts and solidarities of the feminist scene of St. Petersburg. Russia

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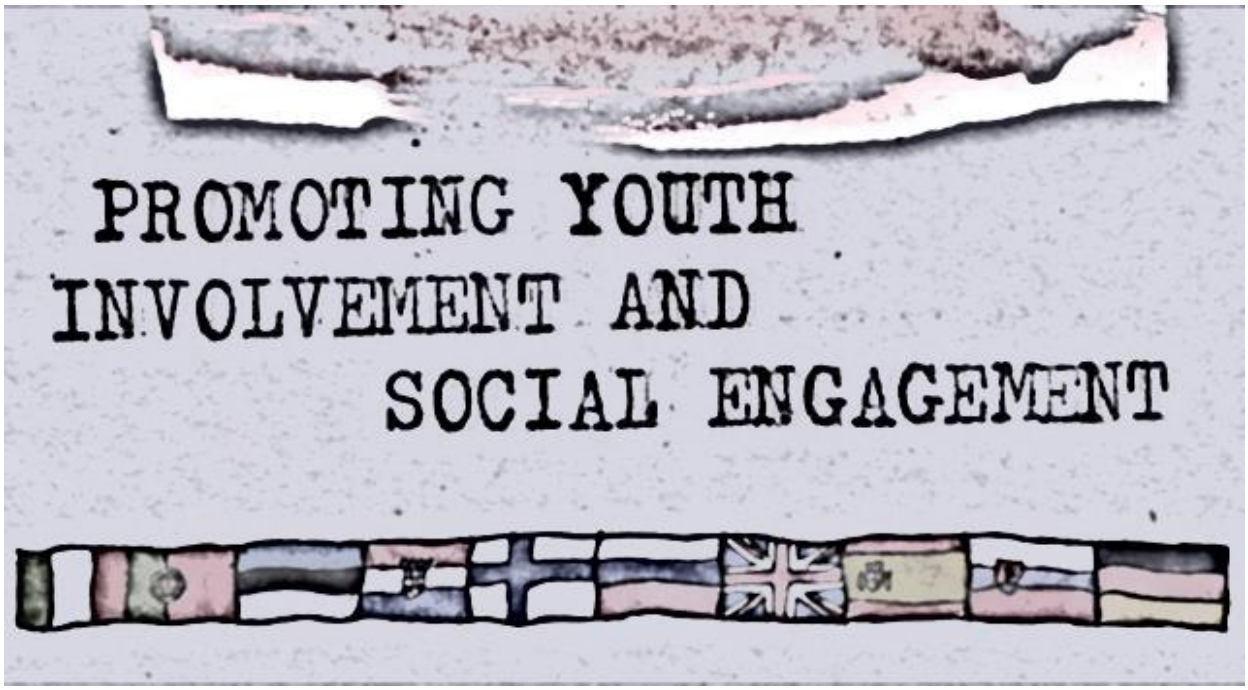
The current Russian social and political conditions constitute an environment unfavourable for the development of feminist activities. More specifically, the conservative discourse designed by the power elites contributes to the formation of a patriarchal political culture, which comprises a serious challenge to the growth of grassroots feminist initiatives and facilitates alienation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation of feminists.

Solidarities among the participants of feminist initiatives emerge through teaming-up to protect women's rights. In this case, women are perceived as a social group of the oppressed in a binary opposition to the dominant group of men constructed as ‘enemies’. However, the fight for the ideas of basic social justice for all, beyond the constructed dichotomy of ‘women's’ and ‘men's’ rights turns out to be no less significant for many informants.

The main vectors of cultural- and values-based tensions among the participants are associated with: acceptance or denial of the dichotomy ‘woman’/ ‘man’ within the framework of building a safe space; polarised perception of commercial sex and LGBTIQ. These vectors allow participants to build the boundaries of feminist initiatives through self-determination with the help of ‘us’ and ‘them’ constructions. Moreover, the emerging lines of solidarities and conflict represent a spectrum of often unstable beliefs, manifested not in dichotomous value oppositions, but in fluid, flexible and heterogeneous semantic continuums of solidarities.

Participants desire to bring feminist ideas to the mainstream public through mass protests as lacking the potential for social change. At the same time, most of the participants believe that tensions and ideological differences among them might be effectively smoothed with the help of constructing feminists’ solidarity over the struggle against the dominant conservative discourse. The solidarity concerns both the level of collective action in the urban space and the level of building and maintaining the ties among individual initiatives.



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