



Trends, Covariates and Consequences of Intergenerational Social Mobility in Post-Socialist Societies

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Abstract

This dissertation studies the trends, covariates and consequences of intergenerational social mobility in post-socialist societies. The existing literature does not provide an answer if cross-national differences in social mobility levels are determined by socialist legacies or by the divergent paths these countries followed in their transition from socialist to capitalist system. In addition to the industrialisation thesis and the role of income inequality, I study the implications of political democracy and economic liberalisation for intergenerational status reproduction. Individual-level consequences of mobility are explored using the social-psychological concept of the self-serving bias in causal attribution, which implies that people are more likely to explain individual success as resulting from their own abilities and efforts. Market-based democratic systems, almost by definition, emphasise the importance of self-determination in shaping an individual's life chances. Thus, upwardly mobile groups are expected to show greater support of unequal reward distribution. The hypotheses are tested using multivariate and multilevel statistical methods based on data from the European Values Studies and Life in Transition Survey. Although I find evidence of the decisive role of social origin in predicting educational and occupational attainment, particularly during postsocialism, cross-country variation in intergenerational social mobility can largely be explained by the institutions that were in place immediately after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The findings suggest that while strong, positive links exist between social mobility and democracy levels in Western Europe, the economic liberalisation that took place in the early 1990s in post-socialist societies is the strongest predictor of why some post-socialist states have higher social mobility rates than others; subjective perceptions of mobility have stronger implications on attitudes than the objective mobility experience; upwardly mobile individuals do in fact demonstrate more support for inequality, democracy and market economy, but the strength of these links is mediated by macro-contextual variables.



Jury: Fabrizio Bernardi (EUI/ Co-Supervisor), Alexi Gugushvili (candidate), Ellu Saar (Tallinn University), Martin Kohli (EUI/ Supervisor), Martin Whyte, (Harvard University) (videolink).

Bio

Alexi Gugushvili holds an MA in International Economic Relations from the Tbilisi State University (2005), an MSc in Policy Studies from the University of Edinburgh (2007) and an MRes in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute (2010). Alexi has been a Hansard Research Scholar at the London School of Economics and a Visiting Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He has worked for various governmental and civil society organisations, including the UK Department for Work and Pensions, and taught courses in Social Policy and Econometrics in several universities in Georgia. Alexi served as an expert for the European Union Democracy Observatory on Citizenship and the Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. His research interests include social stratification, public opinion, democratisation, international migration, post-socialist studies, and quantitative methods in social sciences. In September 2013 Alexi joined the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences as a post-doctoral researcher.