

Migration experience and school-to-work transition in a post-communist setting. A sequence analysis

Mădălina-Elena Manea

Research Institute for Quality of Life & University of Bucharest

Context

Transition to adulthood has long been an intensely debated topic in Western Europe (Rokicka *et al.*, 2018), and as a consequence most studies focus on the older democracies in Europe (Smith, 2004; Aassve, Billari and Piccarreta, 2007; Tagliabue, Lanz and Beyers, 2014). Lately, however, this topic began to constitute the focus of research in the post-communist settings as well (Zupančič, Komidar and Levpušček, 2014), particularly in comparative contexts (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010; Sandu, Toth and Tudor, 2018). The once orderly pattern of transition to adulthood specific to Communist societies, in which full-time employment immediately follows a period of compulsory education, is disrupted not only by macro-economic factors, but also by life strategies that are configured in transnational contexts.

Part of the motivation for this study comes from the life-course approach itself and the cumulative disadvantage theory. From this viewpoint, disruptions in the transition from school to work can turn into disadvantages in the employment trajectory in the long run, with consequences on social inequality. Long term unemployment in youth has a negative impact on their social network which further affects their chances of finding a job and this is particularly the case for youth from more disadvantaged backgrounds (Bolibar et al 2019). Furthermore, vulnerable positions on the labour market or inactivity/ unemployment are also associated with prolonged stay in the parental home and postponement of family formation (Robette 2010).

Transition to adulthood is increasingly recognized as being non-linear or in Billari & Liefbroer's words "late, protracted, and complex" (Billari & Liefbroer 2010) and this development is attributed to process of modernization and individualization. In Romania,

more than a sign of individualization, postponement of transition to adulthood is considered a consequence of precariousness on the labour market (Martínez Martín and Dănilache, 2008). Romania, just like other East European countries, is difficult to classify in terms of "youth transition regimes" (Walther, 2006). On the one hand, it is similar to Mediterranean countries in terms of prolonging co-residence with parents, and prevalence of multigenerational households. On the other hand, youth unemployment is not as severe albeit wages being lower than in Southern Europe. Moreover, it could be argued that the within country heterogeneity is so significant that some regions or cities (particularly the capital city) are more similar to Western countries than to the rest of Romania.

Previous research looks at timing (e.g., age at which an event happens) and sequencing of events in transition to adulthood. Analyses of patterns of transition to adulthood generally concern one life aspect most often connected to transition from school to work (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2014; Gebel and Heyne, 2016; Rokicka *et al.*, 2018), but also with family transitions (Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007), and some studies take into consideration the interplay between different life spheres when studying transition to adulthood, such as Pollock (2007) in the UK and Robette (2010) in France.

However, although such studies cover different contexts,¹ few studies go beyond the classification of transition to adulthood patterns in attempts to identify explanations for different trajectories (e.g., Ferrari and Pailhé, 2017). Moreover, studies on the relationship between migration and transition to adulthood focus on destination countries, investigating differences between migrants and natives (Andersson, Obucina and Scott, 2015; Ferrari and Pailhé, 2017) or only life transitions of immigrants (Kleinepier, de Valk and van Gaalen, 2015) but not of returnees.

The present paper aims to uncover the patterns of transition to adulthood across three cohorts of Romanians in terms of transition from school to work and to investigate the influence of migration experience on configuration of school to work transition patterns. We look at the succession of three types of activities between age 15 and 29: studying, working, not working or studying, in the case of stayers and returnees.

¹ Most common context is that of Western Europe, but research was carried out also using data from Middle Eastern countries (Gebel and Heyne, 2016; Heyne and Gebel, 2016) and there are a few cross-national studies (Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007; Rokicka *et al.*, 2018).

Data & Methods

The presentation will be based on analysis of retrospective survey data collected in Romania in the TEMPER project in 2018. TEMPER data consists of several datasets which record a wide range of information related to socio-demographics, professional trajectory, family status, properties etc. for returnees and non-migrants in two Romanian counties. Given that this analysis focuses on transitions to adulthood and in order to have only complete age sequences, we keep only those events which took place between 15 and 29 years and only trajectories of individuals aged 29 or more.

The methods of data analysis employed in this paper are sequence analysis to identify similarities between sequences of activities, cluster analysis to combine these sequences into types of transitions, and multinomial logistic regression to infer the characteristics of individuals most likely to follow a certain sequence. We use the R packages TraMineR (Gabadinho et al. 2011) and Weighted Clusters (Studer 2013). The clustering of sequences is done using the PAM (partitioning around the medoid) method.

Preliminary results

- Descriptive results suggest that stayers tend to follow trajectories which include high education more often than returnees. Returnees from Germany tend to have more often trajectories which start with employment at 15 years and returnees from Spain have more trajectories with longer periods of NEET.
- Four clusters of trajectories are identified (medium or high education followed by employment; employment starting at the age of 15; and long periods of NEET).
- Results of the multinomial regression suggest that the odds of following these trajectories are different depending on family and personal resources, as well as migration status and country of return.

Bibliography

To be added