Journal of Youth Studies

Concepts of citizenship, social and system integration among young people in post-Soviet Moldova

Pamela Abbott [a] , Claire Wallace [a] , Marianna Mascauteanu [b] &
Roger Sapsford [c]

[a] University of Aberdeen , Edward Wright Building, Aberdeen,
AB51 8YS, UK

[b] OPINIA Independent Sociological Research Institute , Chisinau,
Moldova

[c] National University of Rwanda , Butare, Rwanda
Published online: 02 Aug 2010.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Concepts of citizenship, social and system integration among young people in post-Soviet Moldova

Pamela Abbott[a], Claire Wallace[a]*, Marianna Mascauteanu[b] and Roger Sapsford[c]

[a]*University of Aberdeen, Edward Wright Building, Aberdeen AB51 8YS, UK;* [b]*OPINIA Independent Sociological Research Institute, Chisinau, Moldova;* [c]*National University of Rwanda, Butare, Rwanda*

The paper looks at changing concepts of citizenship among young people in Moldova in a context of social and system disintegration. Due to the protracted economic and political crisis there, young people were disengaged from political, economic and social citizenship but are socially integrated at the level of family and friendship networks, which gives them a sense of belonging in Moldovan society. This led to a particular view of citizenship in the sense of loyalty to the nation but alienation from the formal system and the state more generally. The result was that only a small number saw a future for themselves in Moldova, another group were prepared to try to find ways to survive there and a third, large group preferred to seek their fortunes abroad by migrating either to Russia or to the European Union. Both of these latter two options entailed serious risks and resulted in their further legal and economic marginalisation. The reconstruction of the life course into a fragmented, individualised, risky and highly uncertain trajectory was characterised, like that of the country in general, as an unending transition.

Keywords: Moldova; young people; social and systems disintegration; strategies for survival

Introduction

Debates about youth citizenship have focused upon political, economic and social aspects and how these have been reconstructed in recent decades following rising unemployment and the casualisation of the youth labour market, the recalibration or retreat of the welfare state and awareness of the alienation of young people from conventional politics (Jones and Wallace 1992, Helve and Wallace 2000, Spannring *et al.* 2000, Jones 2005, Reiter and Craig 2005). However, citizenship can also mean a sense of belonging to a particular place or group (Brubaker 1996). Young people are integrated as citizens by their movements through 'normal biography' which is institutionalised by the state and the labour market and reflects the normative assumptions about growing up in different countries and different social groups (Heinz 1991).[1]

Our argument is that Lockwood's concept of social and system integration can help us to understand these different levels of citizenship and belonging (Lockwood 1992, Wallace and Abbott 2009). The political and economic system is one that

---

*Corresponding author. Email: claire.wallace@abdn.ac.uk

integrates young people into the nation state through employment, rights to various kinds of social security, voting and participation in a political system and civil society (for example, through youth or sports associations) and access to social citizenship through welfare and the common accomplishments of growing up – finding partners, establishing a home and starting a family. At the level of social integration, peer groups and family provide social support in ways that are also linked to the political, economic and social system more generally and provide a sense of belonging to a given community (Wallace and Abbott 2009).

In communist countries the life course was shaped even more forcefully by the formal integration of youth into the economic system through the obligation to work, and into the political system through participation in various activities (the communist party, youth associations, festivals, marches and sporting events) and access to various social rights such as housing, pensions and holidays. In turn, these forms of integration supported and validated the communist system. Integration into the system took place at the same time as social integration in the form of peer groups and family relationships that the system engendered.[2] However, in the post-communist era we find different patterns of youth citizenship emerging in different parts of Europe, especially between the European Union (EU; including the increasingly convergent new member states) and the former Soviet Union or Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

In all parts of Europe, the 'normal biography' was ruptured by rising unemployment and the casualisation of youth labour markets, but the extension and diversification of life-course transitions also reflected new kinds of life-style options – the possibility of cohabiting with a partner, travelling the world and pursuing more extended courses of education and training (Leccardi 2006). With the diversification and fragmentation of life-course trajectories, however, came also increasing risk and uncertainty: what was the end point? Would young people manage to find an entry into work and family roles in the way they did in the past? The effect was what Beck originally termed 'individualisation' as young people were left to thread their way through a bewildering variety of opportunities and risks. This reflected the general restructuring of the life course in terms of a 'tourist' (wandering from place to place) rather than a 'pilgrim' walking purposefully towards a known destination (Bauman 1995). Even perhaps this is too luxurious an image since for young people cast adrift in the stormy economic waters of twenty-first century Europe, trying to find the way without a compass might be a better metaphor. This view of the life course challenged the forms of social and system integration that had characterised citizenship in the post-war settlement in Western Europe.

In the post-communist countries the same things happened but in a more accelerated way (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Roberts *et al.* 2000). As the state, that had previously held in place a set of economic and social rights, disintegrated and was unable to deliver many services, so the previously standardised and secure transitions of young people gave way to a new range of pathways through life with increasing risks and insecurities. The extensive communist youth facilities such as sports grounds and summer camps were dismantled or privatised, putting them out of reach for many young people, who were thrown more onto their own resources. Youth unemployment forced many to seek work elsewhere (abroad), to undertaken peddling, trading and other kinds of activities in the informal economy or to seek out more extended education and training without necessarily knowing the outcome

(Roberts *et al*. 1998, 2000). Family formation was postponed indefinitely for large numbers of young people as birth rates plummeted[3] and personal transitions, as in Western Europe, became more protracted, albeit for different reasons. Disintegration at the level of the system led to the exclusion of young people from jobs, from housing (Roberts 2006) and from the forms of participation that previously had been offered by the transmission belt of youth organisations as they fed young souls into the political party system (Riordan 1989). The relationship between young people and state was recast as it no longer provided a set of social and economic citizenship rights and there were widespread distrust and disillusionment with conventional politics more generally (Spannring *et al*. 2000).

At the level of social integration, a number of studies have documented the strong family ties which were able to support young people through troubled times (Roberts and Jung 1995, Wallace 1995) and the role of informal networks of friends and contacts, which helped to provide social support and access to resources for young people (Pichler and Wallace 2007). However, this level of social integration was no longer linked to the system more generally and reflected rather the self-help desperation of families and social networks. Those who lacked even this kind of support were particularly unfortunate (Rose *et al*. 1997). Thus, inclusion in informal networks and the informal economy could happen alongside exclusion from the formal economy and political system (Abbott and Wallace 2009).

While in the post-communist states which joined the EU the hardships of young people were somewhat mitigated by new opportunities to work, study and travel, either at home or abroad, as well as emerging forms of citizenship and participation (even if many were still marginalised; Foti *et al*. 2005), in the CIS countries, the economic crisis was more prolonged and more traumatic, leaving many people very poor (and a few very rich). Politics was more corrupt, authoritarian and distanced from most of the population and young people were even less likely to participate in traditional forms of politics than in the West, although this did not mean that they did not participate in more everyday forms of political engagement (see Tereshchenko 2010).

The collapse of the communist system was generally negative implications for the well-being of the population, as can be measured in terms of the rise in mortality and morbidity as well as widespread emigration (Abbott 2007a, Wallace and Abbott 2009). It has been described by Micheal Burawoy (2000) as 'involution', by Roberts *et al*. (2000) as 'de-modernisation' and by Sztompka (2002) as 'cultural trauma'. These processes are still on-going in Moldova, where many people say that their lives were better than before the 'transition' from communism (Abbott 2007b). However, young people have grown up with this kind of system disintegration as part of their normal life. They are generally more in favour of market and democratic change, being young enough to take advantage of some of the opportunities that it offered (Haerpfer 2002). Hence, young people built their own 'survival strategies' among the ruins of communism and the often unstable, partially reconstructed states that followed it in the CIS region (Roberts *et al*. 2000).

Moldova is in many ways an extreme case of the processes of economic decline and de-modernisation that followed the collapse of communism. Traditionally an agricultural country, many people turned to peasant-style subsistence production when they lost their jobs elsewhere and the number of people engaged in agriculture increased (UNDP 2005). This was helped by the portioning out of the previous

collectivised farms into peasant plots, not big enough to become viable agricultural units, but big enough to offer survival in a fertile and ambient climate. The economic crisis, compounded (as in many countries) by the lack of political consolidation and therefore the inability to implement the systematic reforms that were needed, was compounded in the case of Moldova by the repercussions of a civil war in the early 1990s. Due to the difficult and prolonged transition from communism, Moldova is one of the main sources of illegal workers and sex trafficking for the rest of Europe and the Soviet Union, something which certainly offers one sort of career for young people (International Organisation for Migration [IOM] 2009).

Therefore, many young Moldovans need to look outside their borders for opportunities. Moldova in general orientates itself towards the EU and the West, having strong links with Romania, where they speak the same language. Many Moldovan migrants seek employment in the EU often working in low-status care and other unskilled work, mostly illegally (Wallace and Vincent 2007). Travelling to Russia is also a traditional way of earning money and one which is easier to manage even if it entails the risks associated with being an illegal worker (Wallace and Vincent 2007).

The study on which the article is based aimed to look at the lives of young people (aged 16–30) in Moldova and the changing meaning of citizenship for them as they grew up in the 'transition' from communism, which began to look more like a state of continual crisis or de-modernisation than a transition to market capitalism. Other studies have also observed that the 'transition' to adulthood is increasingly without an end point in Western countries (Cote 2002), but this is compounded in Moldova by an indefinite transition of the whole surrounding system. The study, using qualitative and quantitative methods, was carried out in 2007 as part of an INTAS project representing a Moldovan–British collaboration.

The situation of young people in Moldova

Moldovan young people stand in a special position within the population and the country's development. They have watched the changes during their formative years and been brought up by parents and teachers who themselves had no clear idea of what the future would bring or even whether the country would survive. When young people come to the job market they find that it is weighted against them because newly established market and industrial structures have few places for the less qualified and totally inexperienced. Many have to make a living in the shadow economy of temporary-wage labour, part-time and underpaid temporary jobs, self-employment and perhaps drugs, sex and crime, as is the case in other post-communist societies (Roberts and Fagan 1999, Roberts *et al.* 2000, Kovacheva 2002). Culturally shared templates were no longer appropriate for guiding behaviours in the changed socio-economic contexts so that individual and social expectations became out of balance with reality (Sztompka 2002, Wallace and Abbott 2009). On a regional index of child well-being, Moldova had by far the lowest score, even when compared with other post-communist countries such as Armenia or Kyrgyzstan (Richardson *et al.* 2008).

There had been signs of an economic recovery after 2000, but this was very fragile as it was dependent on migrant workers remittances, representing 36.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank 2008). Economic inequalities and poverty rates also increased dramatically in the 1990s. While both have declined since 2000

they remain substantially above 1989 levels and poverty is a significant problem in rural areas. The Gini Coefficient for gross earnings nearly doubled from 0.25 in 1989 to 0.39 in 1992 and now stands at 0.33 – more unequal than Belarus (0.29) and Romania (0.31) or the Czech Republic (25.4; World Bank 2003, UNDP 2005). Forty-nine per cent live below the official poverty level, 21% on less than $2 a day and 65% on less than $4 a day. Three quarters of the poor live in rural areas (UNDP 2005).

The agricultural sector accounts for 42% of employment, with half of income from the sector being in kind (UNDP 2005). There are very few opportunities for employment *except* in agriculture in most rural areas and a majority of households are dependent on subsistence agriculture, in some cases supplemented by payment for day labour. Employment rates fell dramatically after 1989 (Weeks *et al*. 2005) and there is also under-employment and 'hidden' unemployment where people are without work but not officially counted as unemployed (for example, they are working on family plots), especially in rural areas (UNDP 2005). Official youth unemployment has continued to be high, with about 18% of economically active young people registered as unemployed (UNDP 2005). Where jobs have been created they still do not attract a sufficient rate of pay so that three quarters of those in poverty in 2002 had paid employment.

Moldova has a large 'shadow economy' of people who are self-employed or casually employed and whose income does not appear in fiscal records (La Cara *et al*. 2005, Abbott and Wallace 2009). Many jobs held down by young people, even full-time ones, violate the usual employment standards by failing to provide access to pensions, not making social security contributions on employees' behalf, having no provision for sick leave or maternity leave and giving no guarantee of continued employment, and therefore do not provide access to social citizenship. This was similar to the research by Roberts *et al*. (1998) in Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia which found half of young people working in the shadow economy at some stage.

Working abroad seems to offer an alternative and one third of the able-bodied population emigrated from Moldova between 1991 and 2003, half of them under 30. The number of Moldovans working abroad is well over 600,000 with numbers increasing year on year (UNDP 2005, IOM 2009). Unofficial estimates put the real figure as high as 1,000,000. Migration on this scale grossly reduces the size of the domestic labour force, with a disproportionate loss of the more educated, and leaves many households with no male wage-earner (Chacin *et al*. 2004). The exodus of people has left many children to be brought up by relatives with one or both parents absent for long periods of time, leading to other kinds of social problems. For example, there is strong evidence that the children of migrants who remain at home in single-parent families or in the care of relatives or neighbours are more likely than others to leave school early and more likely to move away from home and end up as street children or prey to traffickers (La Cara *et al*. 2005).

Methods

The research included a representative sample survey of young people aged 16–30 years, qualitative interviews and focus groups with a purposively selected sample, and essays written by school children.[4] The survey was carried out in the spring of 2007 using face-to-face interviews according to European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research Professionals (ESOMAR) standards. The sample was selected

using multi-stage, probabilistic sampling with stratification by region and, within region, by urban–rural divisions and town size. Sixty-eight per cent of the interviews were conducted in Moldovan and 32% in Russian with a total achieved sample of 1961.

The qualitative research with 30 purposively selected male and female respondents was carried out in the summer of 2007 in two locations: Chisinau (the capital) and Cantemir (a poor rural region). Six respondents were interviewed in each of five groups: parents, the unemployed, those in good secure employment, at university and at school. The school pupils were aged 16–18 and the university students 18–22. The other respondents were aged 20 or over. In each group two Russian speakers were included in the sample. Six focus groups were held in each region, two with young women, two with young men and two mixed. The interviews and focus groups were tape recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts and essays were analysed thematically. For the sake of clarity we refer to those who participated in the survey as respondents and those who took part in qualitative interviews or focus groups as informants.

Experiences of citizenship

As argued above, citizenship in the sense of integration into a state system means being a member of a political, economic and welfare system guaranteed by the nation state. We might see this as different facets of citizenship: political, economic and social. Young people in Moldova felt disengaged from all of these at a system level, as we show further.

Disengagement from political citizenship

As can be seen in Figure 1, the vast majority of young people surveyed were not satisfied with the government or with state institutions such as health and education. Few were satisfied with either local or central government and they were critical of the extent of young people's involvement in society or what services the government was offering them.

Trust is essential for the working of an orderly society and important for tolerance of diversity and disagreement (Misztal 1996, Inglehart 1997). Political scientists see trust as important for the working of democratic political institutions (Almond and Verba 1963) and economists as essential for the working of a market economy (Raiser 1997). However, levels of trust were very low (see Figure 2) in Moldova. As has been shown elsewhere, high levels of informal economic activity can lead to the de-legitimation of the political system, which is not seen as being able to regulate economic life (Fligstein 2001, Wallace and Latcheva 2006).

As we see in Figure 2, there was very little trust in Government or other public bodies. As in other parts of the former Soviet Union (Sapsford and Abbott 2006, Wallace and Abbott 2009), there was widespread cynicism about the activities of politicians and a very sceptical view of their concern or understanding of young people's issues.

Ivan: Even if I express my opinion on the radio it will have no impact because the Government pays no attention to young people. The Government is made up of old people who do nothing. (male focus group, rural)
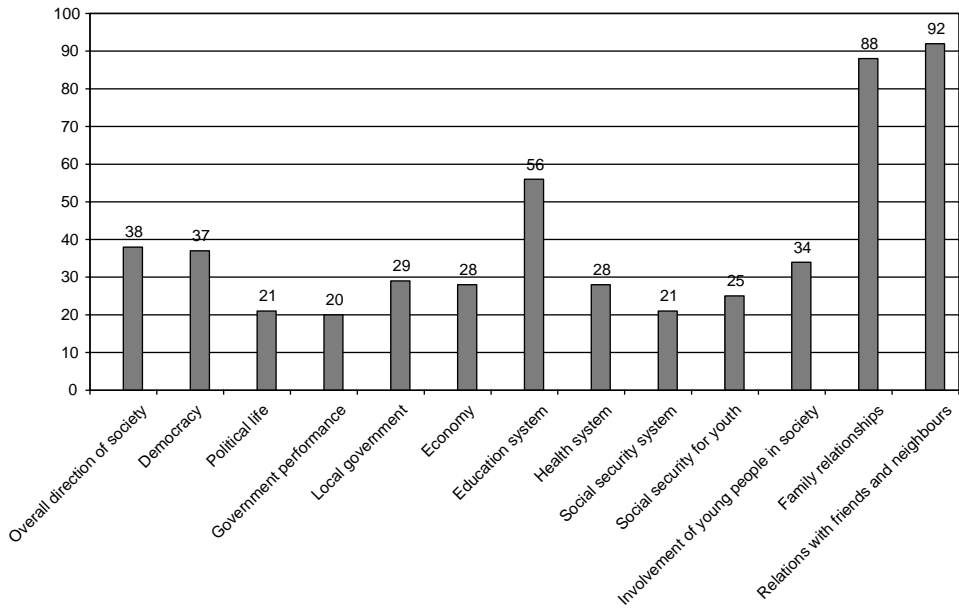
Figure 1. Satisfaction with institutions (per cent satisfied with).

Gheorghe: I want to say that nowadays most things are decided by adults. We, youth, are under their control. And we can't introduce new changes on any scale, because they decide what is happening. We can tell them our ideas, and if they take them into consideration, they will work. But at the moment they do what they please, not what we want . . . in general we must live with the changes that the adults are making. (male focus group, rural)

Figure 2. Trust in institutions (per cent expressing trust in).

Disengagement from economic citizenship

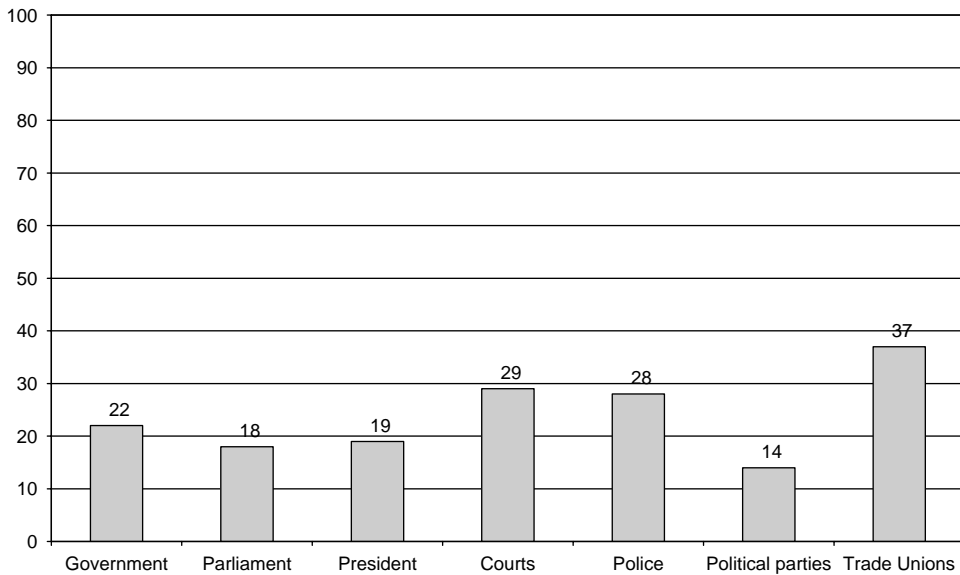There was widespread disengagement from the economic system mainly because young people found it hard to find formal employment. Many were unemployed or under-employed by having to take on casual work or work in the informal economy. Even for those who had found jobs, the pay was usually insufficient to live on and poverty was seen as the most pressing issue for all Moldovans.

Our respondents repeatedly told us that lack of economic opportunities limited their full participation in society (for example, by being able to find independent homes, start families or become consumers) with the result that half lacked confidence in the future and a similar proportion were concerned at their inability to be able to take control over their lives. Our respondents were struggling to make ends meet. Few of them could afford more than basic necessities and almost nobody could afford non-essential activities such as going to the theatre, going on vacation or purchasing books, magazines and newspapers.

Economic citizenship depended upon getting into the labour market and this was regarded as very important by young people in Moldova, with three quarters saying having paid employment is the most important thing in life. For young people, the lack of employment opportunities was compounded by lack of experience, which impeded their employment prospects. Even if they found a job, it did not necessarily pay a living wage. In urban areas employment was scarce and in rural areas our respondents generally relied on subsistence agriculture and poorly remunerated day labouring. Exclusion from the formal labour market means that young people cannot afford to find independent housing either, implying that they could not imagine marrying and starting families of their own.

Alena: It is very difficult to find a place to live and it is not possible to get the money to buy a house. (female focus group, urban)

Ivan: Rent for accommodation is high taking into account our salaries. (male focus group, urban)

Young people were also less likely to own land to use for subsistence agriculture so that they were reduced to hiring themselves out for the day.

Andriy: I meant the young people do not have land. They are working in vain, without any income, they are just working by the day. I think they are the poorest. If you have land, you can at least feed yourself, if you have the means of working it, you can have some hope. (male, rural interview)

Trust in employers and in the economic system was also low. As one of our informants explained:

Maria: My mother-in-law takes care of the kids so I can work in the fields. I want to find another job, because I am only paid 300 lei (€18) and this is not sufficient to raise two kids. I decided to work in vineyards because they promised me a good salary. But two years have already passed, and they haven't paid us ... They lied to us ... For a year they pay us the same as for a month, it is impossible to lead a decent life with such a salary.

Interviewer: What do you plan to do to change your present situation?

Maria: We have to take a decision for a better future. It is impossible to live like we do. At the moment, we have no other choice than to work in the fields in order to raise our kids. Many young people go abroad, in Moscow, but it is risky, you may be deported and they may not pay you. We want to

have jobs in the village. But they [employers] lead us on and don't pay a penny. (female, rural interview)

In urban areas the concern was more about a lack of employment opportunities and the low pay for those jobs available for young people. As one of the members of an urban focus group explained:

Vadim: Right from the beginning we are taught to have a profession, but in our country there are no jobs...As beginners we are not in great demand on the labour market and if we get a job we are paid a very small salary. You want to set up a family but you cannot support one with such a small salary. With the salary we are given we can survive but nothing more. (male focus group, urban)

Disengagement from social citizenship

The sense of social citizenship is based upon the institutional arrangements that embody norms about the relationship between individuals and the state, what it is proper for the state to do and what individuals may expect from it. The rhetoric and much of the practice of communist regimes was that citizens could expect the state to make it possible for them to be fed, clothed, housed and employed, to provide their children with an education, to provide them with support in times of trouble and eventually a pension. The confidence of citizens in basic services, whether through the market or through state provision, may be taken as one measure of a sense of social citizenship and as we saw in Figure 1, this is very low, with less than one third having trust in the social security or health systems, although there was greater satisfaction with the education system.

Again and again both male and female respondents mentioned that they were excluded from social citizenship because their earnings (or lack of them) did not enable them to establish an independent home and start a family.

Vladimir: Now we have problems with finding somewhere to live. In the past you got married and you were given a flat. You had a future and it was much better. (male focus group, urban)
Dorin: It was better (in the past) from the economic point of view because people had more possibilities. If you were working you had the possibility to set up a family and to get a flat. Even if you had no money to buy it at the beginning, you had the chance to buy it over a period of time while working at a factory. (male focus group, urban)

Informants and the members of the focus groups expressed similar views about the quality of society today compared with Soviet times. Generally they thought that people were economically better off and had better access to jobs and housing in Soviet times but that there was more freedom in the present, including the freedom to set up a business. However, greater freedom was seen to be of little benefit if it was not possible to have a decent standard of living. They felt that a small number of people had benefitted from the transformation but that the majority were worse off. They generally did not think that their society had improved:

Olga: I can say nowadays nothing is well organised, neither the health service, nor the education system. (female, urban interview)
Marta: I don't think we can say that we live better...There were places of work (in Soviet times) and people could earn a living...But now a lot of people can't find a job...(mixed sex focus group, urban)

Social integration

Young people had strong informal bonds, especially with family, which helped to pull them through uncertain economic conditions. They were clearly integrated into close-knit social networks of family and friends but less well integrated into society more generally or into vertical networks through civil society organisations (Howard 2003). There was intergenerational reliance on family for economic support and housing, especially in rural areas, extending beyond the age when it might be expected that young people would become independent and establish their own household and family. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows that, in contrast to attitudes to public institutions, young people did have confidence in informal relationships, with 88% being satisfied with their family relationships and 92% satisfied with their relations with friends and neighbours. Moreover, as Figure 3 shows, there were a number of sources of informal support.

Vadim: The family is the only thing that can support me. (male, rural)

Others pointed to the reliance on family for accommodation:

Interviewer: You're a young family; do you have a comfortable place to live?
Clara: Yes, we do. I consider we have normal comforts, like other people. We live in a small house, with two rooms, a kitchen, and a porch. Although it is old, it is very cozy and pleasant. It belongs to my mother-in-law. [. . .] We will never be able to afford to buy a new house, or to build one. My mother-in-law helps us. We don't have our own home, so we are staying at hers. She helps us financially sometimes. She works in Moscow, and is able to help us. My father, who lives in the town, my uncle and my aunt also give us a hand, when they can. (female, rural)
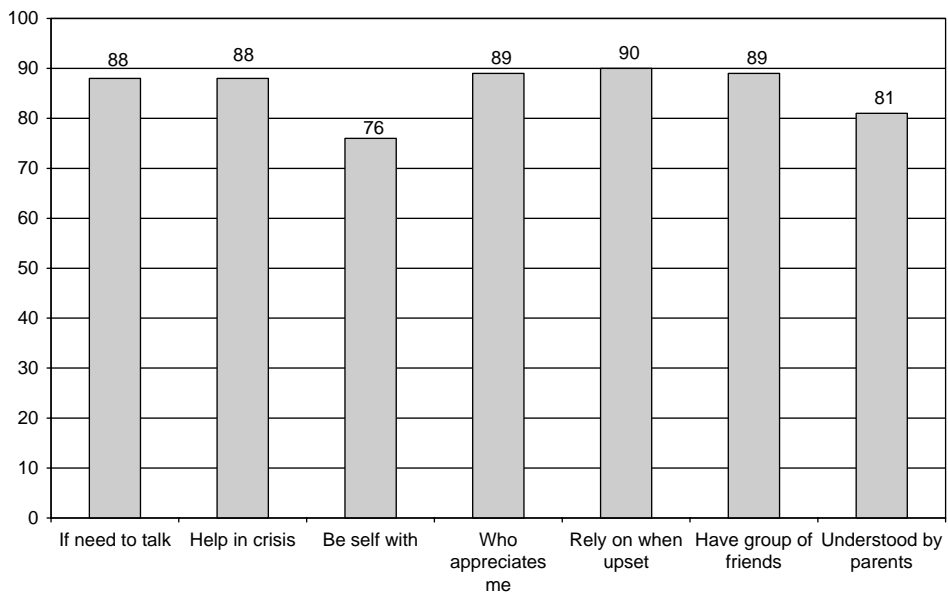

Figure 3.   Informal relationships (per cent having someone to turn to).

In the survey, 80% stated that they cared about their locality and 79% cared about their country. This strong regional and national sense of belonging existed despite scepticism about the government and the state. It is possible therefore that it was the strong informal connections to neighbourhood and family which helped to imbue them with such strong attachment.

Views of the future: to stay or to leave?

The harsh economic conditions meant that many young people turned to migration as a solution. Altogether, 53% stated that they intended to work abroad and 40% had at least one member of the family who was working abroad. In this respect, we can discern three main groups among young people, based upon analysis of the qualitative data. Firstly, a group (the majority) of young people who are not content with things in Moldova see no prospects for themselves and intend to migrate to get employment. A second group, also very discontented with the situation in the country and struggling to survive, intend to continue to live in Moldova. Some stayed out of a sense of duty to their country, others because of family commitments and others because they loved Moldova and could not imagine living elsewhere. The final group, the smallest, had or thought they would be able to secure employment that enabled them to have a decent standard of living. Most in this group thought that if young people put in the effort they could secure good employment and many thought that young people had a responsibility to stay and support the building of their country.

Despite the risk and uncertainty of their daily lives and their disconnection from the political, economic and welfare systems, young people held normative views of what the future should hold for them – a job, a family, a house and a secure future. The majority did not think that they could achieve these modest aims.

> Interviewer: What plans for the future do you have?
> Viktor: I'm staying with my parents at the moment, but I want to have my own family, to have a wife and kids, to earn money, like a normal person. My future depends on what I manage to achieve; if I start some business in agriculture, maybe I will remain here, if not, I'll move. (male, rural)

As one of the respondents in a focus group said:

> Anton: Our country is poor and we have few opportunities and we don't have a way to achieve our goals. But everyone wants to have a future. Young people migrate because there are more chances and choices. (male focus group, rural)

The dilemma facing young people is whether to stay in Moldova and struggle to achieve these ends or to go abroad and earn money. Going abroad was also risky since much of the work was illegal or informal in nature and might therefore lead to further economic, social and political marginalisation.

> Natalia: If we talk about young people of the Republic of Moldova, then we see that our country does nothing to help people to get married, for example. And they cannot see another solution … if we look at what remains in the country – practically all the active population left. If they are in state jobs, young people would like to earn more, they would like to have a house and a family. It is difficult for youngsters nowadays and that is why we have this migration …

Irina: . . . If the state would change, give people jobs or small apartments for people who are recently married but still studying, at least a small assistance or something, I think that would be a hint, a motivation for youngsters to fight and to stay in the country. (female focus group, urban)

The informants in the focus groups and individual interviews were also concerned about migration and its negative impact on Moldovan society. They felt very strongly that the lack of employment opportunities at home forced young people to migrate.

Dorel: People are forced to do that (migrate) . . . the family is destroyed. (male focus group, rural)

A number questioned the benefit of a university education if they would be forced to migrate and take unskilled jobs on graduation. Others pointed to the fact that most of the jobs available to graduates did not pay a living wage any more than manual ones did. However, there was also a lot of concern about the consequences of migration for Moldovan society with remittances fuelling inflation and many key workers being absent:

Victoria: Teachers, doctors, engineers who could work and do something to help Moldova go abroad and build their careers in other countries and we remain with nothing. (female focus group, urban)

Nevertheless a small number of informants did think it was possible for young people to make a successful life for themselves in Moldova. For these young people hard work and planning their future were seen to be the key. A number of the young people who had taken this position had found voluntary work while at university to gain relevant work experience. Others accepted low pay while they gained the necessary experience to get a higher-paid position. The minority who felt able to take control over their lives were mainly young people living in urban areas that had been well educated and in most cases had or expected to have a university degree.

Antonio: I am determined to finish my education, to find a job and set up my own family. (male focus group, urban)

Ludmila: It is something beautiful to be young, but, there are a lot of problems to be faced by the youngsters in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, there is the lack of optimism which can support you to pass every obstacle, but you can try again and reach the goal which you wish to reach. And I think, it is not only the state who can support the youngsters to succeed in the Republic of Moldova, but young people should help themselves, with their own abilities, which they do not even know they possess. They should be more optimistic, more active, and . . . not give up . . .

Anna: . . . As Ludmila mentioned, if it is, well, if young persons want something more than anything else, they can succeed. But they are not persistent in fighting for what they want; they say it is up to others to do it for them – the adults. (female focus group, urban)

Tanya: But, there is a lack of interest. I know that if you knock at a door and it doesn't open, you have to knock at another one. You try to keep knocking until somebody opens the door. If you really want something, you can succeed in this life. (mixed sex focus group, urban)

Conclusions

The study of young people in Moldova, one of the poorest regions in Europe and one of the regions with the highest rates of recent migration has indicated that concepts

of citizenship among young people were being questioned and that we can understand this better by considering the role of citizenship in social and system integration. While Lockwood (1992), in the context of a stable democracy, was concerned with integration, what we see more commonly in Moldova is *dis*-integration. More particularly, we see the disengagement and alienation of young people from three central forms of citizenship: from political citizenship, as they feel that the government is not pursuing the right policies and the level of trust in public institutions is low; from economic citizenship, as they are unable to find jobs or to enter the formal labour market; and from social citizenship, as they feel that the state is not giving them the kind of support through life transitions that their parents enjoyed in the past. Although they retained normative models of what a 'normal biography' should be, involving getting a job, finding an independent home and raising a family, they were unable to fulfil these ideals due to their economic, political and social marginalisation. However, they were socially integrated into informal, particularly family networks, which provided the kinds of economic and social support that was no longer available from the state. This social integration gave them a strong sense of citizenship in the sense of belonging to a community even as they lacked integration into the state system more generally.

This left young people with a dilemma: whether to try to develop their lives in Moldova (which seemed for some hopeless) or to go abroad and look for opportunities there. Either way, they were likely to continue to find themselves politically, economically and socially marginalised, since by staying they were not well integrated into society, and by leaving (probably to become a marginal illegal immigrant), they lost even that level of integration.

The understanding of young people's relationship to citizenship by looking at it in terms of system integration (political, economic and social) on the one hand and social integration on the other can help us to understand not only the situation of young people in Moldova but also broader issues of citizenship as well. The finding that young people are socially integrated but systemically disengaged supports the findings of previous research, which looked at the informal economy as a spiral of downward development; societies where people were more involved in the informal economy were ones where the economic integration of citizens was on a downward trajectory, while in post-communist societies with upward spirals of development, the informal economy was displaced more and more by the formal economy over time (Abbott and Wallace 2009). Moldova would seem to be in the former group in 2007. It also adds empirical detail to the finding from cross-national surveys that post-communist countries lacked formal social capital (participation in civil society) but were strong in terms of informal capital with strong relationships to both family and social networks (Pichler and Wallace 2007). The more detailed study of young people in Moldova helps to illustrate how and why this happens.

Moldova is often described as a 'transitional' society. Yet the transition has brought economic and political meltdown for nearly 20 years, with no good prospects for young people even now. As with the lives of young people, it is not clear when the 'transition' is likely to end or what the outcome will be. Since this research was carried out there has been a general recession throughout Europe which has also taken hold in Russia. This means that the jobs that Moldovans did abroad, mainly clinging to the margins of the economy, have disappeared. The remittances upon which so many families have come to depend are drying up and the reserve army of

migrant casual workers – always first to be dismissed – started to be sent home. The sudden return of migrant workers led at first to political instability in 2008 as angry migrants demonstrated against the lack of reform by the government and it is evidence of the frustration of citizens who are marginalised from their own political, economic and social system and suffer disrupted biographies by not being able to fulfil the kinds of family and labour market integration that they expected to have or imagined existed in the past. However, the Moldovan Government is currently setting out major reforms with financial assistance from the EU, the UN and a wide range of donors (see http://www.allmoldova.com/en/moldova-news/12490467.html) so we may see some improvements in the future.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. For example, working-class young people usually enter the labour market earlier than their middle-class peers who spend longer periods in education, and in Britain the transition to adulthood is more accelerated than in other countries such as Germany (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Leccardi 2006).
2. Social networks were an important aspect of the communist system enabling the mobilisation of resources through complex reciprocal favours (Ledeneva 2006).
3. See World Health Organisation regional data base for Europe: http://www.euro.who.int/hfadb
4. Ethical approval was obtained through Glasgow Caledonian University and all informants gave their informed consent.

References

Abbott, P., 2007a. Cultural trauma and social quality in post-communist Moldova and Belarus. *East European politics and societies*, 21, 219–258.
Abbott, P., 2007b. Cultural trauma and social quality in post-Soviet Moldova and Belarus. *East European politics and societies*, 21, 219–258.
Abbott, P. and Wallace, C., 2009. Patterns of participation in the formal and informal economies in the Commonwealth of Independent States. *International journal of sociology*, 39, 12–38.
Almond, G. and Verba, S., 1963. *The civic culture: political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Bauman, Z., 1995. From pilgrim to tourist. *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie*, 16, 31–49.
Brubaker, R., 1996. *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Burawoy, M., 2000. Involution and destitution in capitalist Russia. *Ethnography*, 1, 43–65.
Chacin, M., Bonila, E., and Nayer, R., 2004. *Education and poverty in Moldova*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Cote, J.E., 2002. *Arrested adulthood: the changing nature of maturity and identity*. New York: New York University Press.

Fligstein, N., 2001. *The architecture of markets. An economic sociology of twenty first century capitalist societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Foti, K., Trbanc, M., and Miroljub, I., 2005. Young people in the labour market in Hungary and Slovenia: problems and perspectives. *In*: H. Bradley and J. van Hoof, eds. *Young people in Europe. Labour markets and citizenship*. Bristol: Policy Press, 115–136.

Haerpfer, C., 2002. *Democracy and enlargement in post-communist Europe. The democratisation of the general public in fifteen Central and Eastern European countries, 1991–1998*. London and New York: Routledge.

Heinz, W., 1991. *The life-course and social change. Comparative perspectives*. Weinhiem, Germany: Deutsche Studien Verlag.

Helve, H. and Wallace, C., 2000. *Youth, citizenship and empowerment*. Basingstoke, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, Gower.

Howard, M.M., 2003. *The weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R., 1997. *Modernization and postmodernization. Cultural, political and economic change in 43 societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2009. *Migration in Moldova: a country profile, 2008*. Geneva: International Organisation for Migration.

Jones, G., 2005. Social protection policies for young people: a cross-national comparison. *In*: J. van Hoof and H. Bradley, eds. *Young people in Europe*. Bristol: Policy Press, 41–64.

Jones, G. and Wallace, C., 1992. *Youth, family and citizenship*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.

Kovacheva, S., 2002. The development of young people's civic participation in East Central Europe. *Slovak sociological review*, 34, 209–222.

La Cara, G., Lyttle, P., and Kolev, A., 2005. *Young people in South Eastern Europe. From risk to empowerment*. Washington, DC: World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Region.

Leccardi, C., 2006. Facing uncertainty. Temporality and biographies in the new century. *In*: C. Leccardi and E. Ruspini, eds. *A new youth? Young people, generations and family life*. Aldershot, Burlington, ON: Ashgate, 15–40.

Ledeneva, A.V., 2006. *How Russia really works. The informal practices that shaped post-Soviet politics and business*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Lockwood, D., 1992. *Solidarity and schism: 'the problem of disorder' in Durkheimian and Marxist sociology*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Misztal, B.A., 1996. *Trust in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pichler, F. and Wallace, C., 2007. Patterns of formal and informal social capital in Europe. *European sociological review*, 23, 423–436.

Raiser, M., 1997. *Informal institutions, social capital and economic transtition. Reflections on a neglected dimension*. EBRD Working Paper No. 25. London.

Reiter, H. and Craig, G., 2005. Youth in the labour market: citizenship or exclusion? *In*: H. Bradley and J. van Hoof, eds. *Young people in Europe. Labour markets and citizenship*. Bristol: Policy Press, 15–40.

Richardson, D., Hoelscher, P., and Bradshaw, J., 2008. Child well-being in Central and Eastern European countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States. *Child indicators research*, 1, 211–250.

Riordan, J., 1989. The Komsomol. *In*: J. Riordan, ed. *Soviet youth culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Roberts, K., 2006. Young people and family life in Eastern Europe. *In*: C. Leccardi and E. Ruspini, eds. *A new youth? Young people, generations and family life*. Aldershot, Burlington, ON: Ashgate, 203–223.

Roberts, K., *et al.*, 1998. Traders and Mafiosi: the young self-employed in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. *Journal of youth studies*, 1, 259–278.

Roberts, K., *et al.*, 2000. *Surviving post-communism. Young people in the former Soviet Union*. Cheltenham, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Roberts, K. and Fagan, C., 1999. Old and new routes into labour markets in ex-communist countries. *Journal of youth studies*, 2, 153–170.

Roberts, K. and Jung, B., 1995. *Poland's first post-communist generation*. Aldershot, Hants, NS: Ashgate, Avebury.

Rose, R., Mishler, W., and Haerfper, C., 1997. Social capital in civic and stressful societies. *Studies in comparative international development*, 32, 85–111.

Sapsford, R. and Abbott, P., 2006. Trust, confidence and social environment in post-communist societies. *Communist and post-communist studies*, 39, 59–71.

Spannring, R., Wallace, C., and Haerpfer, C., 2000. Civic participation among young people in Europe. *In*: H. Helve and C. Wallace, eds. *Youth, citizenship and empowerment*. Basingstoke, Sydney, Singapore: Ashgate Gower, 32–46.

Sztompka, P., 2002. Cultural trauma: the other face of social change. *European journal of social theory*, 3, 441–465.

Tereshchenko, A., 2010. Ukrainian youth and civic engagement: unconventional participation in local spaces. *Journal of youth studies*. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2010.487518.

UNDP, 2005. *Women and men in the Republic of Moldova in 2005*. Chisinau: UNDP and Moldova National Bureau of Statistics.

Wallace, C., 1995. The family and social transition in Poland. *Journal of European social policy*, 5, 97–109.

Wallace, C. and Abbott, P., 2009. The consequences for health of system disintegration in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Paper presented at the European Sociological Association, September, Lisbon.

Wallace, C. and Kovatcheva, S., 1998. *Youth in society. The construction and deconstruction of youth in East and West Europe*. London: Macmillans.

Wallace, C. and Latcheva, R., 2006. Economic transformation outside the law: corruption, trust in public institutions and the informal economy in transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe. *Europe-Asia studies*, 58, 81–102.

Wallace, C. and Vincent, K., 2007. Recent migration from the new European borderlands. *Hungarian review of sociology*, 13, 19–37.

Weeks, J., *et al.*, 2005. *Economic policy for growth, employment and poverty reduction: Moldova in transition*. Chisinau: UNDP.

World Bank, 2003. *Distribution of income or consumption*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank, 2008. *Migration and remittances fact book for 2008*. Washington, DC: World Bank.