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HOUSING AND FAMILY TRAJECTORIES OF YOUNG ADULTS IN FIVE COUNTRIES: SWEDEN, GERMANY, UNITED KINGDOM, ITALY AND SERBIA – SEQUENCE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY DATA

**Stambene i porodične putanje mladih odraslih u
pet zemalja: Švedskoj, Nemačkoj, Velikoj Britaniji,
Italiji i Srbiji – Analiza sekvenci podataka Evropskog
društvenog istraživanja**

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyse housing and family transitions among the young and young adults in five countries: Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and Serbia, representing the Social-democratic, Conservative, Liberal, Mediterranean and (SEE) Post-socialist models of welfare regimes. For the purposes of our analysis, we used round 9 of European Social Survey data. The focus of our analysis was on the rotating module “Timing of life” which aims to capture the views of European citizens about their life courses and their strategies to plan their own lives, as well as measures the timing of key life events. Variables from this module were used to construct life trajectories of respondents which are statistically modelled as sequences. Interpretation of the obtained results leads to two important conclusions. First, the differences in the types of family transitions of young people between countries are significant. Second, these differences can be explained both by individual characteristics and by the social and cultural context that determines the horizon of opportunities for young people. Even after controlling the effects of individual characteristics such as gender, age, education, parental education, religious affiliation, statistical differences between countries persist, indicating that a significant part of variability cannot be explained on an individual-level but exclusively by social and institutional context.

KEY WORDS: Family Trajectories, Young people, European Social Survey, Sequence analysis

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Cilj ovog članka je analiza stambenih i porodičnih tranzicija mladih i mladih odraslih u pet zemalja: Švedskoj, Nemačkoj, Velikoj Britaniji, Italiji i Srbiji, za koje smatramo da predstavljaju socijalno-demokratski, konzervativni, liberalni, mediteranski i post-socijalistički model režim države blagostanja. Za svrhu naše analize smo koristili podatke devetog ciklusa Evropskog društvenog istraživanja, i posebno rotirajućeg modula "Životne putanje" kojim je moguće prepoznati stavove i prakse Evropljana u odnosu na životni tok, kao i strategije kojima planiraju svoje živote. Varijable iz modula su korišćene da bi se rekonstruisale životne trajektorije ispitanika koje su statistički uobličene kao sekvence. Interpretacije dobijenih rezultata upućuju na dva značajna zaključka. Prvo, razlike između tipova porodičnih tranzicija mladih ljudi između analiziranih zemalja su značajne. Drugo, ove razlike mogu biti objašnjene kako individualnim karakteristikama, tako i društvenim i kulturnim kontekstom koji određuje horizont mogućnosti mladih. Čak i nakon kontrolisanja efekata individualnih karakteristika, poput pola, godina, obrazovnog nivoa, obrazovanja roditelja, religijske pripadnosti, statističke razlike između zemalja opstaju, upućujući na zaključak da značajan deo varijabiliteta ne može biti objašnjen individualnim osobinama ispitanika, već isključivo društvenim i institucionalnim kontekstom.

KLJUČNE REČI: porodične putanje, mladi, Evropsko društveno istraživanje, analiza sekvenci.

Introduction

Young people face increasing challenges in the transition from labour market education, from family of origin to independent, partner and/or family life across Europe. Neoliberal trends that have become more pronounced in Europe over the past two decades include welfare state reform and new limitations, labour market flexibility and deregulation, growing labour market demands for skills and knowledge, and increasingly difficult access to affordable housing, aggravating youth independence. These trends are general, but given the different starting positions of young people living across Europe, adjustments differ in relation to the opportunities and obstacles of the context – that is, the institutional, family, and personal resources available.

The transition to adulthood is most often seen in the sociological literature as going from dependence to independence in two key areas: housing (moving away from parents) and economic (financial independence) (Iacovou, 2002). Researchers usually start by identifying events that they consider crucial for taking on the responsibilities and roles of adults (moving, employment, marriage, having a child, etc.) as well as the timing of these events. The analysis includes the study of the sequence of key events and their timing, i.e. the time spent in each phase between two events. In this way, it is possible to determine the pace of transition and if there are standard paths (shared by most populations and generations) and non-standard and diversified paths.

Family transitions are observed in two ways, either through monitoring longitudinal changes or comparative differences. In the first case, the subject of study is related to the historical changes brought about by new generations, such as the timing of leaving the parental home, starting an independent or partner life, starting a marriage, and having children. Research gives us enough material to be able to claim that since the second half of the twentieth century, each new generations have brought some changes, especially when it comes to the timing and pace of family transitions. The framework that explains these changes is related to the processes of modernisation, secularisation, and most often to the theory of the second demographic transition (SDT).

In the second case, the subject of the study is the difference in the abovementioned patterns in the present historical moment between individual societies or regions. In providing explanations of these differences, researchers point to the factors such as institutional support for young people, the education system, the development of the labour market, and the culture of intergenerational relations. These specific configurations, which represent a context that may be more or less stimulating or limiting for family transitions, are called regimes. Transition regimes can be ways of describing individual societies, but they are more often analytical tools for grouping more of them into a kind of cluster.

Billari and Liefbroer (2010) analysing five ten-year cohorts on ESS data recognised that the patterns of partner and family transition have undergone certain changes. Marriage and parenthood are increasingly shifting in all countries to later years (joining the union is not significant), and this trend is most pronounced in the countries of the north, west, and somewhat less in the south and east of Europe. The share of women who leave home and live without a partner (phase of independent living) has also become more common and again according to the same pattern in which this process historically began earlier in the countries of the north and west (where the participation of those living alone is higher). Following the same pattern, the share of cohabitations increases over time. The timing of leaving the household has undergone only minimal changes, mainly due to extended education. Although the general trend is similar, the analysis confirms the existence of distinct patterns that do not allow us to talk about the convergence of transition paths in Europe.

The subject of the paper are family transitions among the young and young adults in five countries: Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and Serbia, representing the Social-democratic, Conservative, Liberal, Southern (Mediterranean) and South Eastern Europe (SEE) Post-socialist models of welfare regimes. The societies we have chosen appear in the analyses within the cluster of specific welfare/transition regimes, so in this paper, we treat them as typical examples. Although the social and institutional context is an important factor in explaining differences in transition paths, it should be borne in mind that these are also certain values and cultural patterns, which may be related to individual characteristics (e.g. level of education, parental education). Thus, the influence of religion or education can have independent effects, and countries that have more young people with higher education, or where specific values and behaviours are nurtured within families with high cultural capital, can be significant factors in explaining path types.

In this paper, we will try to recognise the effects of both the institutional and social context, and the effects of individual characteristics of young people on the types of their family transitions, and the aim is to test differences between states/regimes when these individual characteristics are under control or to isolate the effects of the regimes. Buchman and Kriesi (2011) recognise the lack of macro and micro linkages in the current analyses, which is precisely the intention of this paper. Thinking about transitions in the family domain, we will try to answer the following two research questions: What is the order of sequences among young adults across different transitional regimes in Europe – the question of the social context, and how are individual characteristics associated to family trajectories – the question of socioeconomic status (SES) and cultural background of young person.

Longitudinal Changes

The broadest theoretical framework within which historical changes in the family sphere are analysed is the second demographic transition which implies that modernisation processes lead to a decrease in the universality of marriage, an increase in cohabitation, more frequent opting for independent living (temporary or permanent), and delays in starting a family and giving birth (Van de Kaa, 2002; Lesthaeghe, Moors 2000). Research shows that the processes that led to continuing education influenced the shift of all transitions to later years. Later entry into the labour market led to later financial and housing independence and consequently to later marriage/partnership and having a child. Bruckner and Mayer (2005) link these changes to the processes of (de)institutionalisation, destandardisation, differentiation, and individualisation. Institutionalisation refers to the process in which institutions organise or support the clear shaping of life paths by structuring the separation of individual sequences (e.g. education does not involve work and/or parenting). Deinstitutionalisation implies changes in which “states, stages, events, and transitions, which at earlier times were clearly differentiated, are being reintegrated or fused” (Bruckner, Mayer, 2005: 32) so that education can include work, but also a professional career at later stages may include education. Standardisation means that there is a unique sequence of events and timing of events that is universal, while destandardisation means that “life states, events and their sequences can become experiences which either characterise an increasingly smaller part of a population or occur at more dispersed ages and with more dispersed durations” (Bruckner, Mayer, 2005: 33). Differentiation refers to the complication of trajectories, and to the increase in the number of life stages. Steps to marriage used to include dating and then getting married, and now it can include phases of changing partners, dating, living apart together, cohabitation, and only then possibly marriage. Individualisation occurs in two keys – as an increase in control over one’s own life and the possibilities of choice offered to new generations (Beck, 2001), but also as pressure in a risky context to make decisions in accordance with current circumstances. Labour market risks (precarious jobs, labour flexibility) make it difficult to predict and make long-term decisions, so the (young) person is forced to short-term strategies that are a product of necessity rather than desire. Trends have been

observed in all regions of Europe, but they are still not uniform, so they are most pronounced in Scandinavia and Western Europe, and somewhat less in Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe.

Comparative Differences – Welfare Regimes

Welfare regimes refers to the specific configurations of labour market, welfare state and family support. The basic assumption is that transitions to adulthood, including family transitions, are seen as adaptive mechanisms to the structural and cultural context in which the young person lives. The degree of variation in the transition paths in a country, as well as the timing of events, will depend on the development and functions of these institutions (Vogel, 2002). Although there is almost no doubt that there are certain differences in the paths of young people to adulthood between European countries, the way in which these countries will be grouped into certain regimes is a significant part of contemporary debates.

There are two axes around which cross-country and cross-regional differences are formed that can explain different paths to adulthood. The first highlights the importance of institutional arrangements, such as the level and scope of social benefits, education system, labour market structure (Buchman, Kriesi, 2011), and the importance of the intergenerational transfers. The second points to cultural patterns associated with expectations of entering into certain roles, such as timing related to education, marriage, having children, etc. The analysis of institutional arrangements, and their grouping into certain clusters – regimes, has a three-decade long tradition. Drawing on Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology based on the role of the state in redistribution, the importance of the family, labour market characteristics and labour trajectories, which distinguishes three welfare state regimes – liberal, conservative, and social-democratic³, authors are developing new typologies including a wider range of countries. Thus Leibfried (1992) adds the countries of Southern Europe, which he singles out in a special cluster (Latin rim), and Ferrera (1996) makes a similar classification: Anglo-Saxon, Bismark, Scandinavian and Southern models⁴. Castles and Obinger (2008: 336) analyse the historical changes of (re)grouping of states into different regimes in relation to the social policies they pursue, so that in the first decade of the twentieth century their cluster analysis shows the existence of five distinctive patterns: Post-communist, Nordic, English – Liberal, and Continental which consist of North, and South⁵. Walther et al. (2009) create a typology of regimes keeping in mind the specifics of youth transition. Based

3 *Liberal*: Australia, Canada, Ireland, UK, New Zealand, USA, *conservative*: Finland, Germany, France, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, and *social-democratic*: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands.

4 *Anglo-Saxon*: Ireland, UK, *Bismark*: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Netherlands, *Scandinavian*: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and *Southern models*: Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

5 *Post-communist*: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia, *Nordic*: Finland, Sweden, *English – Liberal*: Netherland, UK, Ireland, Cyprus, Portugal, and

on the significance of the welfare state and family, structure of education and training, labour markets barriers and opportunities, policies related to education system, labour market, against youth unemployment, family and children, and mechanisms of doing gender (Walther et al. 2009: 16) the authors differentiate five regimes: Universalistic, Employment centered, Liberal, Subprotective, and Post-socialist⁶. Although other studies show some differences in the grouping of countries, there is more or less a consensus that there are five zones within Europe: liberal, Scandinavian, Mediterranean, post-socialist, and continental, and that within these zones countries like the UK, Germany, Italy, Sweden appear consistently within the same clusters. Therefore, in this paper, we decided to analyse and compare typical cases of welfare and transition regimes rather than all countries.

Characteristics of Transitional Regimes

In this paper, we look at transition regimes over three dimensions: 1. work transition, 2. housing policies, and 3. family support system (table 1). Esping Andersen's (1990) central thesis is that the welfare regime is based on the relationship between the role that the state plays in the labour market, i.e. the degree of decommodification⁷ of labour and social stratification⁸ that stems out of it. In those societies where the state gives fewer incentives to those who are not on the market (unemployed, inactive), there are higher risks of being unemployed. Perceptions of these risks affect long-term decisions in life, such as the timing of independent household and family formations. Independent housing is related on the one hand to the state policies and on the other to the way of regulating the real estate market, which affects the degree of affordable housing and thus the speed of acquiring independence. The family support system includes different mechanisms: cash benefits, tax policies, paid leaves, childcare institutions, etc., and the decision to start a family may depend on the scope and availability of different measures. When the support system is developed, young people can harmonise family and other transitions in accordance with the norms and their wishes. But when the support system is not developed, they either delay starting a family, get support from the family of origin and network of relatives, or women (partially) withdraw from the labour market.

Continental which consist of *North*: Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, and *South*: Malta, Greece, Italy, Spain and Czech Republic.

- 6 Universalistic: Denmark, Finland), Employment centered: Austria, Germany, France, Netherlands, Liberal: Ireland, UK, Sub-protective: Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Post-socialist: Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.
- 7 The term refers to the degree to which individuals and families can maintain the quality of life regardless of the labour market, i.e. the degree of risk that comes if someone does not have or leaves the job.
- 8 These two concepts – stratification (which may depend primarily on the market, or on the state that can encourage existing inequalities, or seek to reduce them) and decommodification, are key in forming its three-member typology.

Table 1: Transition regimes in selected countries⁹

Regime	Country	Work	Housing	Family support
Social-democratic	Sweden	Open, low risks; flexible work; low precarious work;	High regulation, High rent control, high access to credits, and public housing.	Focused on individuals; high benefits.
Conservative	Germany	Closed, risks at the margins; flexible work; low precarious work;	High regulation of market; High rent control.	Focused on families; High benefits.
Liberal	United Kingdom	Open, high risks; flexible work; moderate precarious work;	Low rent control, moderate access to public housing; a few affordable housing	Focused on individuals; limited benefits
Mediterranean	Italy	Closed, high risks (Informal work); flexible work; high precarious work;	Low rent control; low market regulation.	Focused on families; Low benefits.
Post-socialist (SEE)	Serbia	Closed, high risks; flexible work in increase; high precarious work;	Low rent control; low market regulation.	Focused on families; Low benefits.

Liberal transitional regime rests on the minimal role of the state, which shifts its positioning on the labour market to individuals. Although the market offers enough options, it also carries a lot of risk in the form of flexible and uncertain arrangements. The UK labour market has become even more flexible over the last decade with much more precarious work, and zero-contract hours. Although young people still leave their parents' homes relatively early, the effects of the crisis are reflected in the fact that unemployment and insecurity bring fewer chances for independence, especially for those who perform temporary jobs and those with lower education (Gousia, 2017). Women's share in the labour market is high, but the jobs they perform are more often precarious jobs (Walther et al., 2009). Housing market is not highly regulated. Although there are significant subsidies to housing, rent control is low, housing supply is also relatively low, which has led to a drastic increase in real estate prices, which means that fewer and fewer young people can buy or rent an apartment (Gousia, 2017; Inchauste, et al., 2018). Early leaving of the parental household, rapid entry into the labour market leads to high variations in family transitions, which on average occur somewhat earlier than in the Scandinavian countries. Family support system is underdeveloped with very low accessibility and high cost of childcare institutions for children up to 3 years of age. For mothers, having a child most often means transferring to part time jobs (Walther et al., 2009).

Social-democratic model characterise early leaving of the parental household, high participation of young people living alone or with friends, early starting of partner life, and significant participation of cohabitations, actually the existence of a period of independent life between independence and marriage

⁹ The model is based on findings in several operationalisations of regimes (Walther et al., 2009; Inchauste, et al., 2018; Buchman, Kriesi, 2011).

and parenthood (Iacovou, 2002). This model implies greater importance of individualism, so social rights are focused on individuals rather than families (Walther et al., 2009). Individual experimentation leads to earlier separation from the family of origin and a high degree of variation in partnership arrangements (Buchman, Kriesi, 2011). Sweden still represents an example of significant decommodification,¹⁰ with clear goal of giving people a chance to work. That is why there are fairly high employment rates, balanced gender relations in the labour market, but also employment incentives and significant benefits for the unemployed (Dølvik et al., 2015). The system of social protection and support to parenthood has been developed, with high coverage and relatively low costs of childcare services. The benefits that parents have during parental leave, but also after that, are among the most generous in Europe. The housing market is highly regulated, with high rent control, favourable loans, and relatively affordable public housing (Inchauste, et al., 2018), which, with access to various benefits during their studies, gives young people a chance for faster housing independence.

In **conservative** regime the education system is highly differentiated and selective and in the service of the labour market, with the aim of preparing them for work. The labour market is clearly structured, selective but with relatively low risks, although the entry of young people into the labour market usually involves temporary jobs. Youth unemployment rates in Germany even fell during the economic crisis (Marelli et. al., 2012), but flexibilisation increased market risks. The social protection system in Germany is selective and favours those who are part of the labour market and/or education process (Walther et al, 2009). Compensation for job loss is very low, which carries significant risks, especially for those who have temporary jobs (Gebel, 2017). Social benefits are related to the family field, which does not encourage the rapid acquisition of autonomy of young people from their parents. Childcare institutions are relatively underdeveloped, with moderate costs, and regionally uneven. While in the east there is still a socialist legacy of full employment of women and a high share of children up to 3 years in kindergartens, in the west a significant number of women switch to part-time work after having a child. The housing market is highly regulated and based on renting rather than ownership. A significant number of young people fail to achieve housing autonomy due to high costs (Wind, et. al., 2017). Labour market entry and economic independence do not lead directly to family transitions, but most often imply a period of experimentation (Buchman, Kriesi, 2011).

Mediterranean (sub-protective) regime implies low benefits for young people during education, employment, and lack of housing policies. Education is on average longer than in other countries, and thus implies later entry into the labour market, which is very selective. Due to the less developed labour market in relation to the countries of Western and Northern Europe, there is a long period of dependence on parents and delays in partner and family transitions, and therefore low share of young people living alone, late beginning of joint life with a partner, and low participation of cohabitations, as well as a direct path from the family of origin to the family of choice (Walther et al., 2009). The

10 Even though debates and research (e.g. Lundahl, Olofsson, 2014) indicate that reforms in Sweden are moving in the direction of neo-liberal policies.

key transition is professional, on which the family also depends since once the person gets a job, the family transition takes place according to a more or less standard pattern in a very short period of time (Buchman, Kriesi, 2011). The labour market in Italy is underdeveloped, with large regional differences, and a significant share of young people who are unemployed or doing precarious work. High work flexibility, precarisation and atypical work affect all young people regardless of education and especially young women (in the south). Already low, state support is primarily aimed at older cohorts. Analyses indicate that young people are less likely to leave the parental home (alone or with a partner) if they are inactive and unemployed (Bertolini, et al., 2017) and that there is a positive correlation between permanent employment and childbirth (Barbieri, 2010). Also, the birth of a child is a significant predictor of withdrawal from the labour market for women (León, Migliavacca, 2013). The coverage of childcare institutions for children up to 2 years of age is very low, with great regional inequality. For children aged 3 to 5, coverage is significant but many institutions do not allow for adequate work-life balance, and service costs are high. Income replacement for parental leave is low (Naldini, Jurado, 2013). Italy does not have specially designed broad housing programmes to support young people's independence.

The **post-socialist** regime is similar to the sub-protective with the legacy of the socialist variation of the welfare state. The system of social protection and support for educational, work, and family transition is insufficient and with very low coverage (targeting primarily marginal groups) and often unreliable. Due to the underdeveloped labour market, most young people rely on the family of origin in all transitions (Walther et al., 2009: 18–21).¹¹ The work transition is often prolonged due to high unemployment rates, but as in the case of the Mediterranean countries, the family transition takes place very quickly after getting a job. The labour market in Serbia is quite underdeveloped and very selective, favouring those better educated and men, reproducing the gender gap. Over the last decade, unemployment rates have declined but at the expense of a drastic increase in flexible forms of work that involve little or no protection of labour rights, and rather low wages. Youth employment programmes are underdeveloped, the first job is long overdue, and often depends on participation in clientelist networks. There is no specially designed housing policy for young people, and the real estate market is unregulated. Real estate prices are very high, and a relatively small number of young people can use their funds to rent or buy real estate (not even to take out a loan) leading to significant housing dependence of the young people on their families of origin (Vujović, Petrović, 2006). The most common way of housing independence is through education, or after providing optimal and secure income. The childcare institution system developed during socialism has not been improved, and has a relatively low coverage. Although the cost of services is low, the public pre-school system is quite selective – focused on working parents. Parental leave is relatively long, and during this period income replacement is high but is selective for those who work. Reconciliation of work and parenthood implies the withdrawal of women

11 Although there are clear differences between post-socialist countries, in this paper we refer to the countries of South East Europe, and assume that Serbia represent this regime.

from the labour market temporarily or permanently, especially those with lower qualifications (Tomanović et al., 2016).

Differences Between Countries

The data in the table 2 indicate significant contextual differences between countries. Macro indicators show that the unemployment rate in the general population is significantly higher in Serbia and Italy and that it is very low in Germany, the UK, and Sweden. Income inequalities are most pronounced in Serbia, and least in Sweden, while other countries are in between and at a similar level. The risk of youth poverty is most pronounced in Serbia, then in Italy, and least in Germany.

Table 2: Main indicators related to transitional regimes in five countries

		Germany	Sweden	United Kingdom	Italy	Serbia
Labor market and SES	GINI	31.1	27.0	33.5	33.4	35.6
	Unemployment rate	3.4	6.4	4.0	10.6	12.8
	Youth employment – females (15–29)	57.6	57.2	61.6	27.3	31.1
	Youth employment – males (15–29)	63.0	57.6	64.4	35.9	42.5
	NEET – females (15–29)	9.5	6.6	13.1	24.3	20.9
	NEET – males (15–29)	5.9	6.0	9.8	20.2	17.1
	Part-time employment / Involuntary	23.0 / 8.8	33.9 / 30.2	26.4 / 19.2	24.9 / 78.1	9.4 / 39.3
	Temporary employment	35.8	35.9	9.0	42.0	44.6
	Age 30–34 with tertiary education: Female / Male	35.4/34.5	59.0/45.0	52.0/45.5	34.0/21.7	39.4/26.4
Housing (in) dependance	Average age of young people leaving the parental household: Female / Male	22.9/24.4	17.6/18.0	23.8/25.4	29.1/31.0	28.4/33.7
	Share of young adults aged 18–34 living with their parents	67.4	40.6	56.6*	85.4	83.1
Family formation	Total fertility rate	1.57	1.76	1.68	1.29	1.49
	Mean age at first marriage – males	34.0	36.6	33.4*	35	31.1
	Mean age at first marriage – females	31.2	33.8	31.5	32.2	28.2
	Mean age of women at birth of first child	29.7	29.3	29.0	31.2	28.1
	Children less then 3 years old in formal childcare	29.8	49.7	38.6	25.7	13.2

Data are for year 2019, * data are for year 2018.

Source: EUROSTAT

The structure of youth education (shown here through the participation of young people with a university degree of 30–34 years, because by then most of the cohort has completed the education process) indicates that Sweden and the UK are countries with about half of young people with tertiary education, while other countries have about a third. Only Germany has a relatively equal share of young men and women with higher education, while in others the gap is significant and in favour of women.

Youth (un)employment rates follow general trends in the labour market, so the lowest unemployment rates are for both young women and men in Italy and Serbia, and the highest in the UK, Germany, and Sweden. It is also interesting that the gender gap in employment rates in the latter countries is smaller (in Sweden 0.4, UK, 2.8, and Germany 5.4 percentage points) compared to the former (in Italy it is 8.2 and in Serbia 11.4 percentage points). Young NEET (not in education, employment, or training) rates are also, for both young men and women, very high in Italy and Serbia, significantly lower in the UK and Germany, and very low in Sweden. The type of work engagement indicates the degree of labour market flexibility, but also the potential risks that come with part-time and temporary employment. About a third of young people in Sweden work in part-time arrangements, while only one in ten young people in Serbia and about a quarter in other countries. Of those who work part-time, those Italian residents are the most dissatisfied with this arrangement, followed by Serbia, slightly less in Sweden and the UK, and the least dissatisfied in Germany. Temporary employment, as a type of employment contract, is most present in Serbia and Italy, slightly less in Germany and Sweden, while it is least represented among young people in Sweden.

The average age when young people leave the parental household varies significantly between countries and between boys and girls. The lowest is in Sweden, where young people start independent living at the age of 18, then in Germany, UK, while in Serbia and Italy, independence occurs around the age of 30. Again, the relationship between the pace of independence for boys and girls is interesting, and it points to two interesting facts. First, in all countries, men become independent a little later than young women, and the gap in the years when independence occurs is increasing from Sweden, through Germany, the UK, Italy to Serbia. That the family home remains a very important place for a long time in the life of young people in the south of Europe and the Balkans, is evidenced by the fact that as many as 85.4% of young people in Italy and 83.1% of young people in Serbia live with their parents, while this percentage is somewhat lower in Germany and the UK, and lowest in Sweden.

Fertility rates are relatively low in all countries (below population reproduction levels). Although known as countries with distinct familial values, Italy and Serbia have among the lowest fertility rates in Europe, and also in this group of analysed countries. Entering into marriage has been moved to the thirties in most European countries, but there are differences between the countries. Young people in Sweden, then Italy, Germany, and the UK, get married the latest, while slightly earlier in Serbia, where women get married on

average before the age of 30. The birth of the first child takes place at the latest in Italy, followed by Germany, Sweden, the UK, and the earliest in Serbia. The ratio of the average years of leaving the parental household and giving birth for young women is interesting, given that in Serbia these events are almost perfectly coincided, while in all other countries there is a significant difference between these two events. That indicates that moving away from the parental home in most of the analysed countries means shorter or a longer period of independent living, while in Serbia for young women it usually means the transition from a family of origin to a family of choice.

Data

For the purposes of our analysis, we used round 9 of European Social Survey data. The focus of our analysis was on the rotating module “Timing of life” which aims to capture the views of European citizens about their life courses and their strategies to plan their own lives, as well as measures the timing of key life events. Variables from this module were used to construct life trajectories of respondents which are statistically modelled as sequences.

For the purpose of further analysis, we utilized data from core modules “Gender, Year of birth and Household grid”, “Subjective Well-Being, Social Exclusion, Religion, National and Ethnic Identity” and “Socio-demographics”. We used information about the respondent’s age, gender, highest level of education, religious affiliation, and highest level of education of mother and father.

For sequence construction following survey questions were utilized: “Year first left parents for living separately for 2 months or more”, “Ever lived with a spouse or partner for 3 months or more”, “Year first lived with spouse or partner for 3 months or more”, “Are or ever been married”, “Year first married”, “Ever given birth to/ fathered a child”, “Year (first) child was born”¹². These survey questions are the primary variables of interest in our analysis and the years of key life events are used to reconstruct a family and housing sequences of any given respondents.

Secondary variables of interests include answers on following questions: “Gender”, “Year of birth”, “Highest level of education (ISCED classification)”, “Father’s highest level of education”, “Mother’s highest level of education”, “Belonging to a particular religion or denomination”, “Religion or denomination belonging to at present”.

Since the focus of the analysis is on the young respondents, we have recoded their highest level of education into a binary variable which denotes if the respondent has completed higher education (minimal ISCED level 5 or greater) or not. Higher education of the respondent is indicative of completion of an important life stage, as well as indicator of specific value pattern (such as post-

12 Detailed information about each variable, including the wording of the question, coding of missing values and scales of measurement is available on ESS website (<https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/themes.html>).

materialistic values). For parents' education we recoded the education variable into an ordinal variable with three levels: "Elementary education" (ISCED levels less than 2), "Secondary education" (ISCED levels less than 5) and "Higher education" (ISCED levels 5 or greater). Parent's education level is indicative of the cultural background of the respondent which can also be connected to social value patterns obtained in childhood through family education and socialization.

Given the composition of the analysed sample we have also recoded the variable referring to religion or denomination which respondents belong to, with the intent to capture fewer categories in order to make the resulting variable suitable to multivariate analysis. The resulting categories are: "Roman Catholic", "Protestant", "Eastern Orthodox", "Islam", "Not belonging" and "Other". Category "Not belonging" captures all respondents who gave a negative answer to the question "Belonging to a particular religion or denomination". Category "Other" encapsulates several original answers: "Jewish", "Other Christian denomination", "Eastern religions", "Other Non-Christian religions". Religious affiliation is an indicator which can be connected to the cultural framework of the respondent which can be influential in determining the basic values related to the family life.

Additionally, we utilized the "Country" variable to select respondents from five countries: Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and Serbia. After sequence construction we obtained a dataset containing 1751 respondents' sequences (age between 20 and 35) with 424 respondents from Germany, 313 from United Kingdom, 463 from Italy, 283 from Serbia and 268 from Sweden. In total, there were 884 male and 867 female respondents. Median age of the respondent at the time of the interview was 28 and we had 982 respondents who do not have college-level education and 769 respondents who do. Due to the incompatibility of statistical methods with weighted survey data, raw data was used and survey weights were not utilized.

Methods

Formally, we can define life course trajectory as a sequence of transitions over time. Life course transition is a discrete life change within this trajectory. These changes are defined as switches from one discrete state to another, e.g., switching from "Cohabitation" state to "Marriage" state. Quantitative life course or sequence analysis is focused on several aspects of sequences: timing (at what age transitions happen), quantum (how many transitions happen), sequencing (which transition comes first and which after) and clustering (similarity of sequences between different individuals) (Barban and Sironi, 2019).

In statistical terms, individual life course trajectory can be represented as a time series of categorical data, which is also called a sequence (Elzinga, 2010). Sequence can be viewed as an array of predefined states, where each element in an array represents the state of the individual at a given age (Abbott 1995; Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007; Gabadinho et al., 2011). For each individual we construct a sequence whose length corresponds to the age period we are analyzing. In our analysis, we are focusing on young respondents who are between 20 and 35

years old and therefore we have a sequence of 16 states denoting the state of the respondent at a given year of their life.

Following previous research (Barban and Sironi, 2019), we define 7 states which represent different combinations of marital status, independence and childbearing attributes of respondents: "Single living with parents", "Single left parental home", "Single parent", "Cohabitation", "Cohabitation parent", "Married", "Married parent". These states were reconstructed using respondents' answers in the "Timing of life" module of the European Social survey. It's important to note that the distinction between living in parental home or away from parental home is given only for respondents whose state at a given year of life was "Single". For other, states we do not differentiate between those who are still living in a parental home and those who are not, as the main idea is (as in previous research) not to introduce a large number of different states as that would exponentially increase the potential number of possible sequences and therefore reduce the possibility of aggregating similar sequences into typical clusters.

The first part of the data analysis strategy is to construct the state distributions in different countries. This type of descriptive analysis will show the absolute and relative frequencies of different states at a given year of life in five different countries. The results will be displayed as chronograms showing occurrence, timing and order of states in different countries (Barban, 2013). First inferential task of the analysis is to determine if there are statistically significant differences between these distributions in different countries. This result will serve as an indicator of possible differences in life transitions in different welfare regimes as different state distribution (given the year of life of the respondent) indicates different timing, quantum and sequencing of life trajectories.

Second part of data analysis provided a more in-depth analysis of the differences and similarities between individual sequences in the entire dataset consisting of all respondents from 5 countries. The goal of the analysis is to identify similar patterns of life course transitions using cluster analysis. By grouping similar sequences into clusters, we obtain information about typical life courses across different countries. Cluster membership variable is then analysed as a dependent variable in a multinomial regression model in order to explain the influence of different predictors (country, religion, education, age) on the individual's cluster membership. In other words, we will explore the potential socio-demographic effects which shape the individual's life course trajectories which results in that trajectory's membership in a certain cluster.

Taken together, the first and second part of the analysis are aimed towards the main goals of this paper: the differences between life trajectories in different states/regimes, the influence of individual characteristics in shaping these trajectories and the influence of the regime type after these individual characteristics controlled for.

First step towards cluster analysis is the quantification of similarity between two sequences. Given the type of data and the goals of our analysis, we have chosen optimal matching distance, which is a well-known similarity metric for qualitative time series data in sociology (Abbott, 1995; Abbott, Hrycak, 1990). Optimal matching distance is obtained by utilizing optimal matching algorithm

(OM). This algorithm returns distances between distances represented as the minimal number of changes needed to convert one distance into another. In other words, how many changes in how many stages of life trajectories need to be made in order to transform the life sequence of one respondent into a sequence of another respondent. Fewer changes lead to smaller distance and vice versa. Since respondents are of various ages at the time of the survey, by consequence of the algorithm itself, respondents of the same age should have smaller distances in sequences. Although several other measures of sequence similarity are found in the literature (Studer, Ritschard, 2016), we opted for optimal matching distance given its large utility and application in sociology.

Once the matrix of OM distances has been computed, we performed classical Ward clustering algorithm to identify clusters and respondents' cluster memberships. In this context, cluster analysis implies classification of respondents (their sequences) into typologies where distances with smallest distances from one another. Formally, cluster analysis is used to iteratively merge sequences in groups that reduces the number of groups and increases dissimilarities between groups. Difference clustering techniques differ by their definition and operationalization of the linkage algorithm, the way that individual observations are grouped and merged together. In our analysis, we use Ward's hierarchical clustering method (Kaufman, Rousseeuw, 2009; Murtagh, Contreras, 2017).

The result of clustering analysis is a variable denoting each respondent's cluster membership. This variable is used in the final part of the analysis as a dependent variable in a multinomial logistic regression model. The main outcomes of the regression model are exponentiated coefficient beta coefficients for each predictor variable. Since the interpretation of beta coefficients in complex logistic regression models is hard and sometimes ambiguous, we utilize state-of-the-art methods to transform beta coefficients into predicted probabilities. First of all, logistic regression coefficients are always interpreted in relation to a reference category, which is difficult with different predictors and non-obvious reference categories. For each non-reference category of a predictor, we can calculate predicted probability by dividing the exponentiated beta coefficients with the sum of coefficients from all non-reference categories. Once these probabilities are calculated, we can calculate the predicted probability of a reference category by subtracting the sum of these probabilities from 1. Predicted probabilities represent conditional probabilities of cluster membership of a respondent given their categorical attribute (from a predictor variable). For example, we may derive a result where the respondent whose father has elementary education has 60% probability of belonging to a cluster "Married with children". These probabilities can be standardized for categories of a single predictor variable and across different predictor variables and in that way their influence on cluster membership can be easily compared and interpreted (Gonzales, 2020). Data analysis was performed using open-source R computing environment (R Core Team, 2020) and sequence analysis was performed using R package TraMineR (Gabadinho et al., 2011).¹³

13 R code with commentary is available at https://osf.io/2hmq6/?view_only=bc26da1518484478a1d3112f951563bb

Results

Figure 1 – Sequence state distribution in selected countries: Germany (DE), United Kingdom (GB), Italy (IT), Serbia (RS) and Sweden (SE).

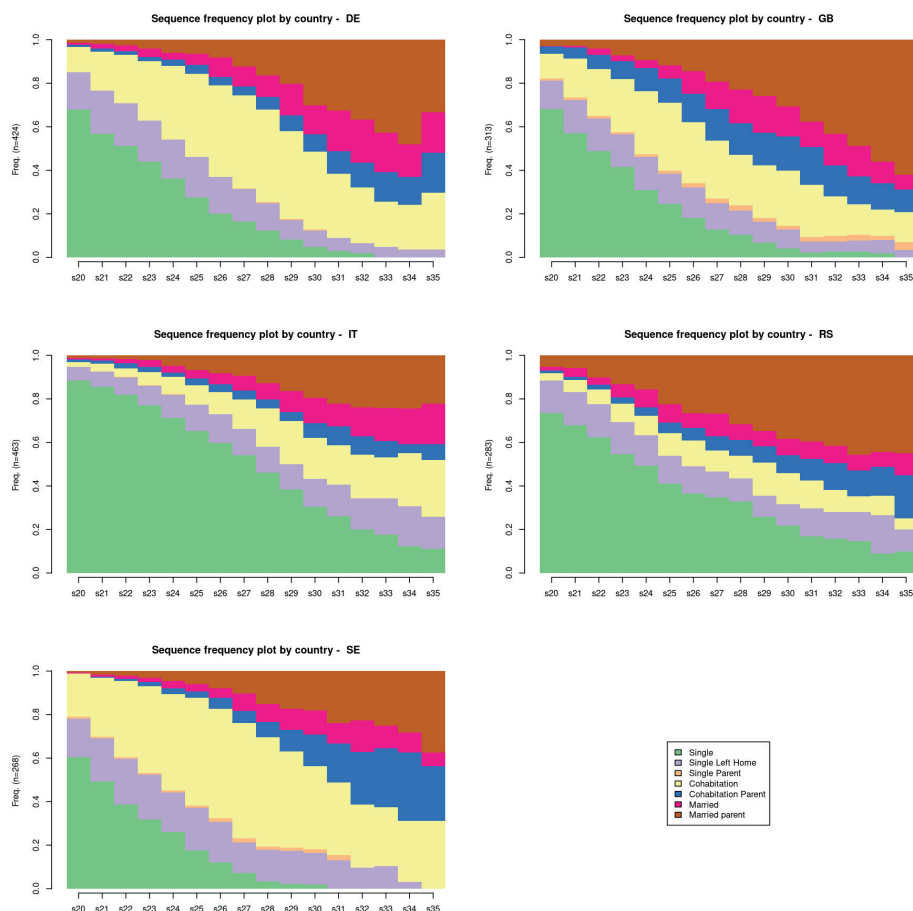
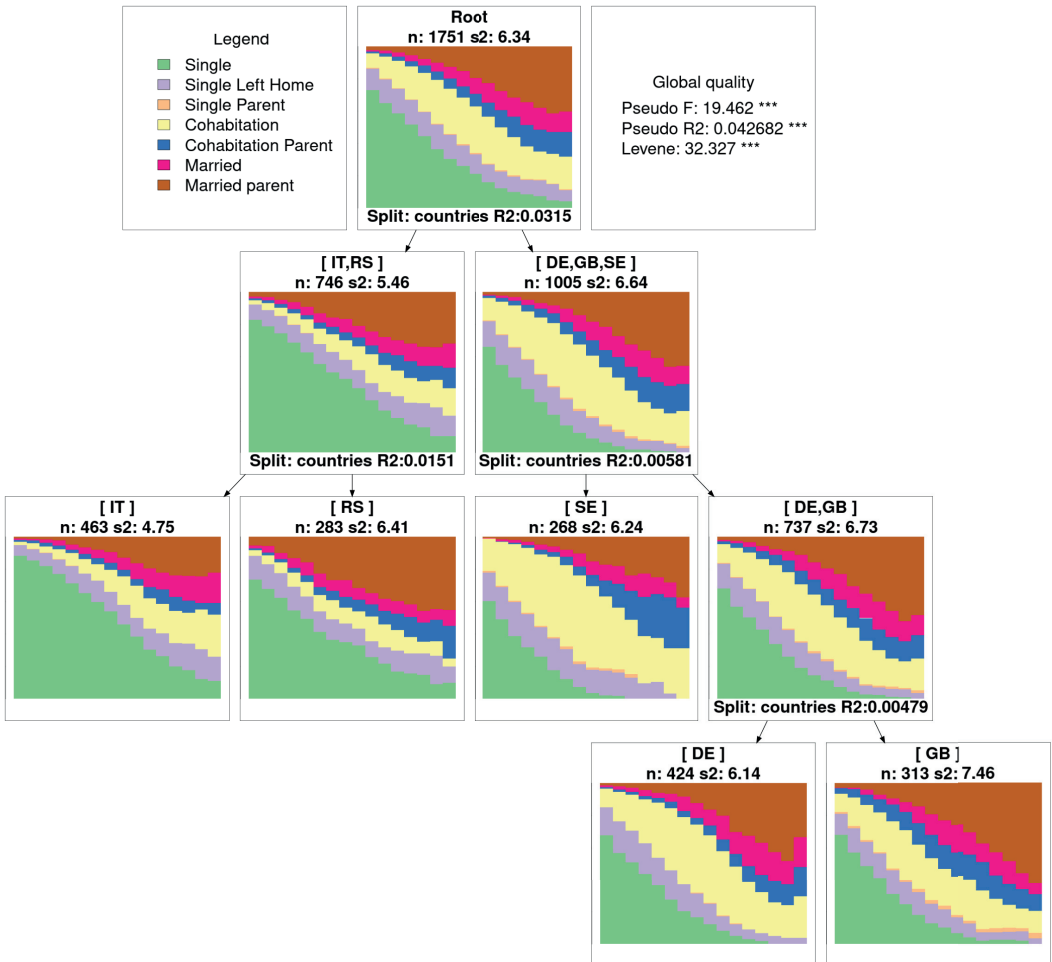


Figure 1 shows the distribution of states per year of life in different countries with different colors designating the share of a given state according to figure legend in a given year of life (20 to 35 years of age). The vertical axis shows the frequency of a specific state at a given year of life and as different colors indicate different states, the area of the graph represented by the same color shows both the longevity and frequency of each state. Notable differences are seen in Figure 1, mainly the unequal distribution of cohabitation state (yellow), where in the case of Sweden this area is dominant on the graph, while it's barely noticeable in the case of Serbia. Likewise, the shape and the area of the single state (green) which represents single respondents living in a parental home differs between countries, as well as the shape and area of married parent state (brown).

Distribution of states shown in Figure 1 also shows information related to the speed of the transition to life autonomy, which is fastest in Sweden, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany and slowest in Serbia and Germany. In the case of Sweden, we have the largest share of young respondents living alone. There is also a notable difference in distribution of states which are between living with parents and entering a marriage and having children. Youth in Serbia and Italy is characterized by a relatively small proportion of respondents who are in this transitional stage (“Left Home”, “Cohabitation”), while Sweden has the largest proportion. Young respondents in Serbia have the fastest and most differentiated transition towards family life, followed by youth in Italy, while in the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden we have higher levels of differentiation and variability in these transitional states.

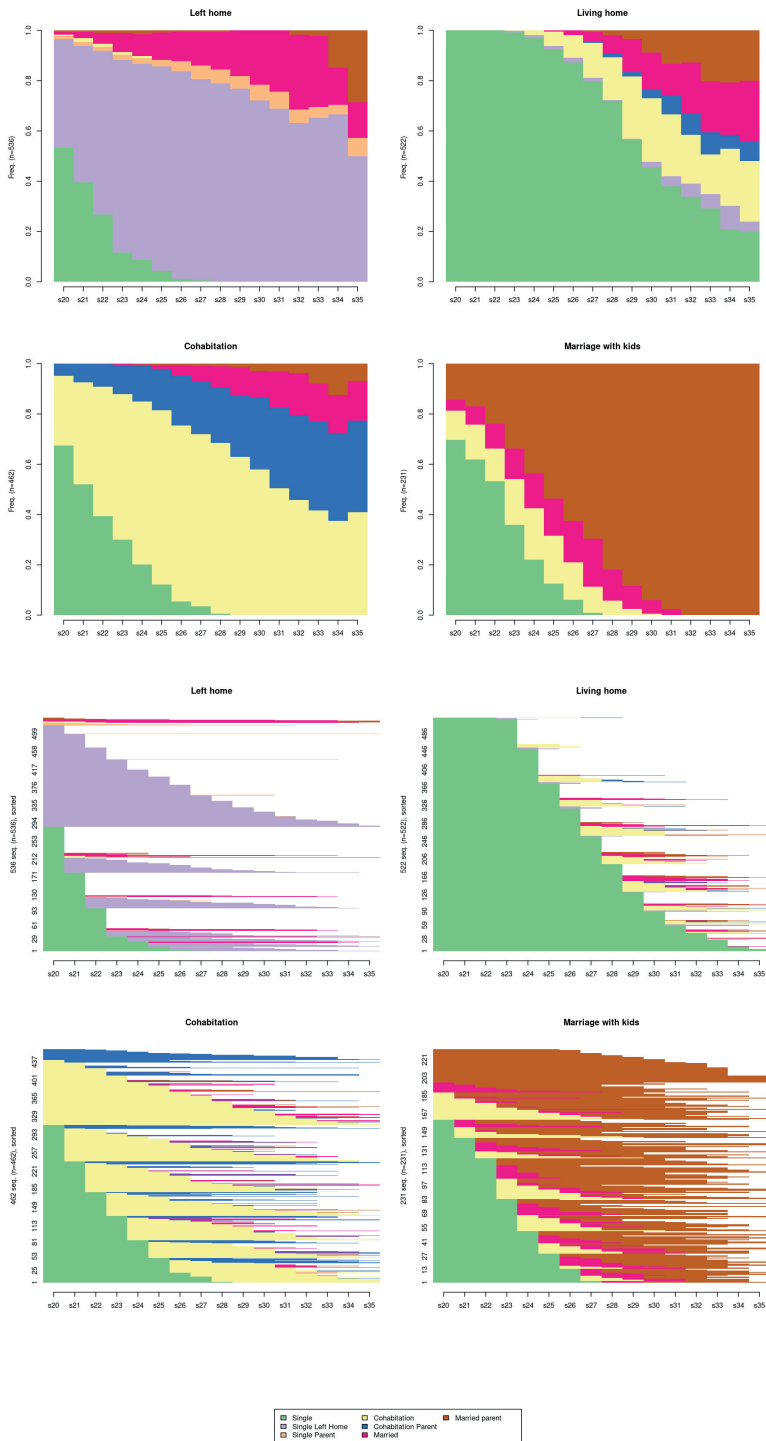
Figure 2 – Regression tree showing statistically significant ($p < .01$) differences between sequence state distributions in selected countries: Germany (DE), United Kingdom (GB), Italy (IT), Serbia (RS) and Sweden (SE).



These visual differences seen on Figure 1 were tested using a regression tree model which aims to identify the largest differences between the sequences in analysed countries. This approach utilized distances or discrepancies between each pair of sequences in the analysed sample as a dependent variable and in this case categorical variable denoting the country of the respondent is the only covariate or independent variable in the model. Regression tree is grown in such a manner that non-overlapping subsets of categories yield the largest differences in levels of dependent variable are the largest between those groups. These differences are quantified with a novel form of pseudo R squared metric developed for this type of sequence analysis (Studer et al., 2011). In our case, on global level the model is statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ level, which means significant differences in country-level distribution of sequence states exist, although the absolute levels of pseudo-R squared are low, meaning that country level differences do not explain much of the variance in life trajectories, which is expected for such a complex dependent variable.

As Figure 2 shows, the first branch in the regression tree shows the differences between two groups of countries: (1) Serbia and Italy and (2) Germany, United Kingdom and Sweden. Again, this difference is mainly due to area differences in cohabitation and single state as seen on Figure 1. Lower branches of the tree show that there exist differences between Italy and Serbia as well and that the second group can be decomposed into (3) Sweden and (4) Germany and the United Kingdom. Finally, the last group can also be split and we have significant differences between Germany and the United Kingdom. This model shows that significant differences exist both between groups of countries and between the countries belonging to the same group which may be seen as evidence in favour of the hypothesis stating that different welfare regimes lead to differences in life trajectories.

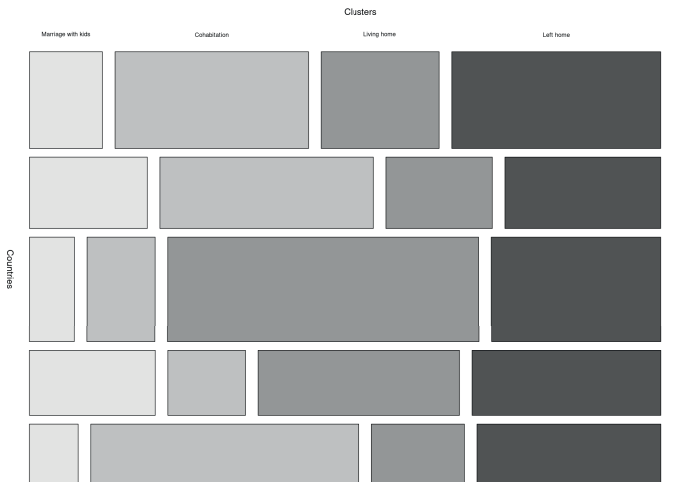
Figure 3 – Sequence state distributions (up) and most frequent sequences (down) in 4 identified clusters



Moving the focus from a country-level analysis to the individual-level leads to cluster analysis and identification of patterns of life trajectories between the individuals in the entire sample. Using Ward’s hierarchical clustering on optimal matching distances between the respondents lead to four cluster solutions shown in figure 3. We named these clusters according to the key event or state that defines it based on the results of the analysis: (1) “Left home” (536 respondents), (2) “Living home” (522 respondents), (3) “Cohabitation” (462 respondents), (4) “Marriage with kids” (231 respondent). “Left home” cluster represents respondents who left their parental home between age 20 and 27 and the majority of them didn’t enter cohabitation or marriage afterwards. This makes the event of leaving parental home the key event for this cluster of respondents. “Living home” cluster represents respondents who have for the majority of the analysed period been living with their parents and only a smaller percentage of them have entered cohabitation or marriage in later years. On the other hand, a third cluster, named “Cohabitation”, represents respondents whose key event in life trajectory was entering cohabitation state, sometimes leading to parenthood within cohabitation, but rarely marriage. Finally, the final cluster represented respondents who married young, some after a brief cohabitation period, with the majority of them becoming parents in later years. These trajectories in different clusters can also be observed as sequences of different states, which is shown on the right side of figure 3.

After cluster detection procedure, it is possible to investigate differences between distributions of cluster membership between countries. These differences are shown on mosaic plot in figure 5 indicate that in different countries there are different patterns of life trajectories. Differences are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 285.35, d_f = 12, p < .001$). It is noticeable that in some countries we have dominant clusters, such as the “Living home” cluster in Italy or the “Cohabitation” cluster in Sweden, while in other countries we have a more equal distribution of cluster membership. Smallest differences between countries are observed in the “Left home cluster”, while the largest ones are observed in “Cohabitation” and “Living home” clusters.

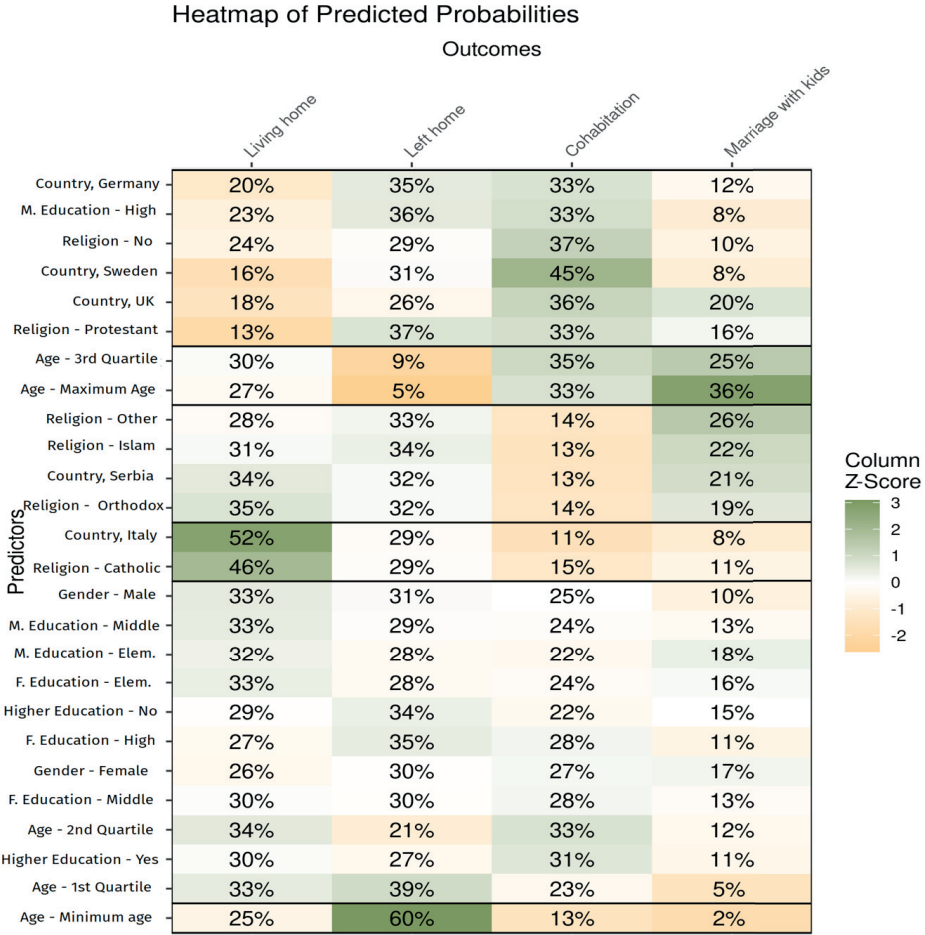
Figure 5 – Mosaic plot showing the relative frequency (rectangle size) of each cluster in selected countries: Germany (DE), United Kingdom (GB), Italy (IT), Serbia (RS) and Sweden (SE).



Therefore, we can conclude that country respondents live in is associated with the patterning or clustering of their life trajectories. However, to further investigate this association, we constructed a multinomial logistic regression model with following predictors of cluster membership: (1) country, (2) gender, (3) age, (4) higher education of the respondent, (5) mother's education, (6) father's education, and (7) religious affiliation. All predictors are categorical, with age being transformed to categorical variable with following levels: (1) minimal age (20 years), (2) less or equal than 1st quartile, (3) less or equal than 2nd quartile, (4) less or equal to 3rd quartile, (5) age maximum (35 years). Age was included as a control predictor because some of the clusters are age-dependent as for respondents who are 21 years old (at the time of data collection) is far more likely that they belong to the "Living home" cluster rather than "Marriage with kids" cluster.

The output of the model are conditional predicted probabilities of belonging to a certain cluster given a specific category of predictor variable. The model converged after six iterations and resulting Nagelkerke's R-squared is 0.448, while McFadden's R-squared is 0.201 suggesting that likelihood of our model given the data is moderately higher than the null model (containing only intercept and none of the predictors). In sum, these measures justify the inclusion of these predictors in the model. Instead of assessing the absolute significance of the predictors, because of multiple testing problem we opt for relative comparison through the model results, the associated predicted probabilities. Following the new approach to reporting the results of multinomial logistic regression (Gonzales, 2020), we row-standardized the predicted probabilities of the predictor categories so the resulting Z-scores can be interpreted in comparative perspective across different clusters, which is shown on Figure 6. Only largest standardized values are relevant for our analysis and will be included in the interpretation of the results.

Figure 6 – Heatmap of predicted probabilities resulting from a multivariate logistic regression model. Absolute values of predicted probabilities for each predictor are given as percentages, while the colour indicates row-standardized Z-scores for each cluster.



Note: M. Education refers to education level of the mother, F. Education refers to the education level of the father (Elementary, Middle, High) and variable Higher Education refers to the binary variable denoting whether the respondent has higher education or not.

Interpretation is most meaningful in this case when we look at probabilities of belonging to each cluster. For the “Living home” cluster, the strongest predictors (in comparison with all others included in the analysis) are living in Italy and belonging to Roman Catholic denomination. For the “Left home” cluster, strongest predictors are: minimal age (20 years) or age below the 1st quartile of the respondents, belonging to Protestant denomination, living in Germany and having a highly educated mother. For “Cohabitation” cluster strongest predictors are: living in Sweden, United Kingdom or Germany, having no religious affiliation, belonging to Protestant denomination and age between

the 3rd quartile and maximum age (35 years). Finally, for “Marriage with kids” cluster, strongest predictors are: age between 3rd quartile and maximum age, living in Serbia and religious affiliation to Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy or other denominations.

The most important conclusion based on this model is that given different socio-demographic indicators such as education, religious affiliation or gender, country variable appears still as an important predictor of membership to each of four identified clusters.

Conclusion

Analyses give us enough material to be able to draw two important conclusions. First, the differences in the types of family transitions of young people between countries are significant. Second, these differences can be explained both by individual characteristics and by the social and cultural context that determines the horizon of opportunities for young people. The analyses confirmed the already existing knowledge about the differences in the sequence and pace of family transitions in these contexts, while the contribution of this paper is to the attempt to establish micro-macro linkages and isolate, as far as possible using ESS data, the effects of social and institutional context. Even after controlling the effects of individual characteristics such as gender, age, education, parental education, religious affiliation, statistical differences between societies persist, indicating that a significant part of variability cannot be explained on individual-level but exclusively by social and institutional context. From individual characteristics, it is evident that a higher level of parental education is associated with a longer living with parents, mainly due to longer education, so that the transfer of cultural capital on average leads to slower independence. Higher education of young people is associated with somewhat more frequent opting for cohabitation, indicating that the deinstitutionalisation of married life and individualisation are related to the educational process. The effects of religion are evident, as belonging to the Catholic religion is associated with living longer with parents, belonging to Islam and Orthodoxy with marriage and family, and Protestantism and the absence of religious affiliation are associated with cohabitation.

When it comes to the influence of context on the type of transition, the effects are evident. Sweden represents one end of the continuum characterised by the highest degree of differentiation. The institutional and social context strongly stimulates young people towards cohabitation, with or without children. Young people in Germany are characterised by relatively fast leaving of the parental home and relatively long cohabitation, while the UK context stimulates both cohabitation and married life with children. Young people in Serbia have been dependent on their families for a long time, and for many, leaving means entering into married and family life. Young Italians spend most of their time during the transition within their parents' household and leave all transitions for later years.

These results indicate that transition regimes, which include both the support of the social system and the characteristics of the labour market, affect family transitions by creating structures of opportunities and barriers and by making those opportunities part of the value and normative patterns and consequently behaviour. In Italy and Serbia, the relatively underdeveloped labour market, slow entry into the labour sphere, insufficiently developed and reliable social support for young people lead to long and high dependence of young people on family of origin and reproduction of family ideology which implies highly valuing family life and intergenerational exchange. In these countries, the transition from the family of origin to the family of choice is more present than in other contexts, with the fact that in Serbia it takes place even earlier, probably due to more pronounced traditional and patriarchal values. At the other end is Sweden, where social benefits target individuals and where both the education system and the labour market emphasise individualism. Significant state support for education and housing of young people leads to rapid housing independence from the family. Biographies of young people in Sweden are the most differentiated because they imply a high degree of choice and deinstitutionalised family paths. That is why there are few who opt for married life and a high share of cohabitation. Interestingly, Germany and the UK show the highest degree of similarity, although in the former the state retains a significant role in the regulation of social life while in the latter the market plays a major role.

Analyses confirm that, despite the convergence that is taking place with the switch to neoliberal public policies, the legacies of societies have a very important role in predicting the pace and manner in which young people will become independent of their parents and eventually start a family. This paper represents a small step in an attempt to differentiate individual and contextual factors in explaining family transitions in Europe. The next steps could involve the interaction of individual and contextual characteristics and thus recognise the effects of specific contexts on specific social categories such as gender and class.

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