Do Transitions to Adulthood Converge in Europe? An Optimal Matching Analysis of Work-Family Trajectories of Men and Women from 20 European Countries

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Key words

Life course, sequence, optimal matching, Europe, welfare regime

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Abstract

This paper addresses the question of the convergence of transitions to adulthood in 20 European countries using data from the third round of the European Social Survey (2006). Pathways are derived from five events – employment, leaving-home, union formation, marriage and childbearing – retrospectively observed for men and women over 35 years old (N = 26,351), over four birth cohorts and described with optimal matching and cluster analyses. Using correspondence analysis, we find a convergence between male and female patterns in the passage to adulthood in Northern and Western Europe. Despite some convergence, the transition to adulthood in European countries remains marked by their historical family systems.

Introduction

The transition to adulthood in Western countries has undergone significant changes in recent decades (Corijn and Klijzing, 2001). In the 1950s and 1960s, the end of adolescence in industrialized countries was marked by three key life events that were rapid, ordered, and early (generally occurring before the age of 25): school-leaving, access to gainful employment and family formation (Modell, Furstenberg and Hershberg, 1976).

Numerous studies have shown that the transition to adulthood changed considerably from the 1970s onwards (eg. Billari, 2004; or Corijn and Klijzing, 2001). The different life events traditionally used to define the passage to adulthood began to occur later in life, became less connected to each other, and no longer necessarily happened in the same order. Yet very few studies have documented these work-family changes cross-nationally for both

men and women. It remains largely unknown to what extent these changes are common to all industrialized countries in the 20th century and if they lead to de-standardisation as the theory of individualization suggests. Yet, empirical studies (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010; Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007), on the contrary, hint at the emergence of new models of transition to adulthood. Indeed, at the same time as norm withered, another major social change was taken place in many developed countries: the greater access of women to the labour market. Such change could foster the similarity of women's and men's transition to adulthood. Thus, in the absence of a multi-cohort, large scale, comparative analysis of the work-family transition to adulthood for both men and women, the question of whether or not industrialized countries are converging towards a new model – and if so how this is happening – remains unanswered.

This article sets out to address this issue for 20 European countries using the third round of the European Social Survey (2006). To do this, we analyze work-family pathways of European men and women born between 1905 and 1971 using optimal matching and cluster analyses to build an empirical typology. Finally, we use correspondence analysis to simultaneously describe how the different types of transition to adulthood have changed over time for women and men, and how they converge or vary across European countries. The regional similarities and differences among North, West, South and East European countries are analyzed according to their historical family systems, political and economic context, and within the welfare regime framework proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990).

Theoretical Background

Some changes in the transition to adulthood are common to all European countries. Marriage and the birth of the first child are occurring later across Europe, and some life events (leaving home and first union; first union and marriage) are less connected than before (Corijn and Klijzing, 2001). However, these common trends do not seem to outweigh national

differences – especially the strong North/South opposition in family transitions (Fussell and Furstenberg, 2005) which confirms the path dependency hypothesis (Mayer, 2001).

Historically, countries in North-West Europe have differed from the rest of the continent in the unusually high age at which individuals marry and their high proportion of single people (Hajnal, 1965). This marriage pattern is congruent with the history of household formation in Northern and Western Europe observed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Before marriage, young people in rural areas often worked and lived outside the parental home as servants. After marriage, the couple formed a separate household, distinct from their family of orientation. On the contrary, Eastern Europe and Asia had a tradition of joint households in which young people got married early and continued to live with other relatives (Hajnal, 1982). On the contrary, Southern Europe is characterized by later home-leaving and high familial solidarity (Reher, 1998). In Italy, the role of the family is to be an economic unit as well as the main source of care: the family is defined in the constitution as a "natural society" and a "natural right" (Saraceno, 1994: 62). To which extent do these strong family traditions still carry weight in the work-family pathways of young adults in Europe in accordance with the path dependency hypothesis? Indeed, if family traditions were still to prevail for the young generations then no convergence would be possible.

Another factor could explain national differences. Indeed, despite social trends common to all major industrialized countries (expansion of secondary and tertiary education, growth in women's participation to the labor force, increase in non-marital cohabitation, marriage later in life, fewer children, easier divorce, higher unemployment rates), institutional arrangements and social policies, as observed through welfare regimes, still appear to be effectively shaping pathways to adulthood (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills and Kurz, 2005). In particular, welfare regimes may or may not be a buffer against uncertainty, depending on how generous and universal they are, and thus influence the postponement of the transition to

adulthood (Mills and Blossfeld, 2005). To which extent do the differences observed in the lengthening of the transition to adulthood among European countries can be attributed to the characteristics of the different welfare regimes?

Besides, other works have underlined the declining influence of tradition in the ordering and timing of life events because of the individualization process (Giddens, 1991). For instance, it has been argued that a new stage, often referred to as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2000), has appeared between adolescence and adulthood. In this stage, young people experiment with their lives before taking on all the responsibilities of adult life. To which extent this new destandardized stage could be observed in Europe?

Descriptive comparative research has been conducted to investigate these issues since the end of the 1990's. However, most of these studies have focused on single countries and sometimes on either men or women but not on both genders at the same time as well as across many countries (eg. Aassve, Billari and Piccarreta, 2007; or Robette, 2010). If these studies provide unprecedented insights into the complexity of the life course, their use of various methodologies to focus on single countries makes any comparative attempt challenging.

The only true comparative sequence analysis of the transition to adulthood (Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007) reveals that North and Western Europe seems to be converging towards two new and very similar standards: "modern" and "alternative late motherhood", whereas "traditional late motherhood" and "singlehood" prevail in South Europe. The first two standards are both characterized by a delayed first union, a long period of non-marital cohabitation followed by the birth of the first child, which occurs after marriage for the former (modern) and out of wedlock for the latter (alternative). Elzinga and Liefbroer consider the similarity of youth trajectories in Northern and Western Europe as their most surprising result. This suggests that phenomena that have been interpreted as evidence of de-standardization could in fact be linked to a change of standard. This change would necessarily

involve a transition period during which the new standard is gradually adopted, to the point of becoming the predominantway to become an adult.

In their study of women's transitions to adulthood in 25 European countries, Billari and Liefbroer (2010), using a percentage- and median-based approach, found that, on average, women increasingly delayed their entrance into adulthood: if the median age of parental home departure remains unchanged, family events (union formation, marriage and parenthood) occur later. They also stressed that the diffusion of "new" behaviors such as leaving home prior to union formation, cohabitation before marriage, children out of wedlock led to a "late, protracted and complex" pattern (p. 60) in Europe, that occurred first in Northern Europe, then in Western Europe, and more recently in Southern and Eastern Europe. As a result, they do not find a convergence in Europe because of this temporal diffusion.

However, these two studies focus only on women's family trajectories. They do not take into account the first job nor men. Do men's family trajectories also converge towards the same new models? Does the convergence underlined for family pathways can still be observed when the first job is introduced in the analysis? In France, Winkler-Dworak and Toulemon (2007) suggest that it is the massive entry of women into the labor market that explain the growing similarity between male and female transitions to adulthood, hence the partial convergence that can be observed.

This calls for more comparative studies on work and family pathways that take into account men and women simultaneously. In this paper we address this issue for 20 European countries using the European Social Survey.

Data and Methods

Data

Created in 2002, the European Social Survey (ESS) is conducted across Europe every two years. Interviews are conducted face to face with participants who form a random sample

representative of the residential population aged of 15 years and over. We used the third round of the ESS (2006, N = 26,351) in which one rotating module was about the timing of life events.

The countries included in the analysis are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. We restrict the sample to respondents aged 35 years and over, in order to observe complete life courses between ages 0-35. As data were collected retrospectively, the life course is observed for respondents born between 1905 and 1971. We defined four cohorts based on sample size considerations and historical periods that are likely to have had a significant impact on life experiences (Mayer, 2001).

The first cohort consists of Europeans born before 1935 and brought up in the historical context of the Second World War; the youngest were 11 years old in 1945, and those born in 1925 started adult life in the context of war. Most of the Southern European countries became dictatorships at that time: Italy (1922-1943), Portugal (1926-1974), Spain (1939-1975), and Greece (1936-1946, 1949-1967, and 1967-1974). Individuals in the second cohort (born between 1935 and 1944) turned 20 between 1955 and 1964. Northerners and Westerners experienced a social and economic golden age, but not the freedom brought about by social movements throughout developed countries at the end of the 1960s. Individuals of the third cohort (1945-1959) were 20 years old between 1965 and 1979, in a period marked by economic prosperity and liberal morals in Northern and Western Europe. The post-war years were very different for Easterners who lived in communist countries in which they did not experience such an economic growth. On the other hand women were incited to enter the labour market. For the Southern countries, the second and third cohorts of young adults grew up in conservative totalitarian states.

The fourth cohort gathers individuals born in and after 1960 and were 20 years old between 1980 and 1991. In Western and Northern Europe, they reached adulthood in a period marked by economic deregulation and rising unemployment, but also by the expansion of education. In Portugal and Spain, they experienced the transition to adulthood in democratic countries. However, Spain and Portugal joined the European Union in 1986 that boosted economic and societal change. In Eastern European countries, only the youngest individuals became adult in post-communist countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union (see Table 1).

Table 1

Work-family trajectories are based on five questions:

- Year of first job of 20 hours or more per week for at least 3 months (J);
- Year of first parental home departure for 2 months or more (S);
- Year of first cohabitation with a spouse or partner for three months or more (P);
- Year of the first marriage (M);
- Year the first child was born (C).

These events are only recorded the first time they occur, making it impossible to explore their possible reversibility, an issue that is all the more important as unemployment, separation and divorce rates have dramatically increased since the mid-1970s. With these five events, we build simplified trajectories to adulthood that describe the events the respondent has experienced so far with each year of life. For instance, if at age 25 a respondent has experienced the events “first job” (J) and “first time living separately” (S) then the 25th episode of her simplified life course will be coded JS, whether or not she got her first job before leaving home for the first time. In other words, event order is not taken into account in the coding of states, but emerges from the succession of episodes. If the first job occurred at

age 18 and the first independent housing at 20 then the trajectory for ages 18-25 will be coded J-J-JS-JS-JS-JS-JS-JS, whereas if these two events were reversed it would be coded S-S-JS-JS-JS-JS-JS-JS.

Optimal Matching and Cluster Analyses

We use optimal matching (OM) analysis and cluster analysis to build an empirical typology of these trajectories. OM is increasingly used to study the question of the transition into adulthood since the 1990s (Settersten and Mayer, 1997). OM is a family of dissimilarity measures adapted to sequence data introduced to the social sciences by Andrew Abbott and his colleagues (Abbott and Forrest, 1986). Since we do not have precise expectations in terms of differences between states, we use a single substitution cost. As we want the algorithm to be able to shift sequences a bit, so as to identify identical but slightly shifted sub-sequences, but we do not want to warp time too much, we decided to use the Levenshtein I distance (both *indel* and substitution costs are set to one).

Hierarchical clustering (beta-flexible linkage) is then applied. We used the elbow criteria to determine the number of clusters. A spike is evidence that two very dissimilar groups have just been merged and suggests that the cluster solution just before is optimal. We opted for a 14-cluster solution. Clusters will be described using state distribution graphics and median ages.

Correspondence Analysis

To assess how the transition to adulthood has changed over time and varies across countries, we apply correspondence analysis (CA) to the cross tabulation of types of transition to adulthood and country-cohort. CA is a variant of factor analysis that represents contingency tables in low-dimensional spaces, where the distance between categories is proportional to their chi-square distance (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2004). If two country-cohorts are close on a given dimension, it means that the distribution of types of transition to adulthood is very

similar. If a country-cohort is close to a type of transition to adulthood, it means that this type is overrepresented for this country-cohort. CA makes it possible to visually explore the association between two categorical variables. The closer items are on a given space, the more statistically associated they are. Each dimension represents a part of the association (chi-square statistics) between the two variables. The dimensions are ordered according to the value of the chi-square statistics.

We apply SA and CA to male and female trajectories combined because we want to see the extent to which they converge towards the same patterns. However, the resulting axes could be gender specific. In order to test for this, we performed gender restricted CAs.

Results

Fourteen types of transition to adulthood

Optimal and cluster analyses reveal a great variety of family-work pathways in Europe that it is very difficult to describe with less than 14 types (see Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 1). In hopes of addressing this lack of parsimony, we have manually grouped these types of pathway into five major categories, based on the duration of the transition to adulthood (Hogan, 1981: 61), and the order and timing of the five life events. These categories are as follows: Early Bird, Intermediate, Independent, Family, and Other.

In the *Early Bird* group (Type 10) the transition to adulthood happens early, rapidly, and in the standard order. Women are overrepresented in this group. In the *Independent* group (31, 32 and 33) young adults have a two-step transition: a first transition in the labor market and outside of the family of origin then, much later they form their own family. In Type 31, first child occurs very late whereas in Types 32 and 33 union formation (respectively partnership and marriage) occurs very late, if at all. The *Intermediate* group (21, 22, and 23) is halfway these two types. In Type 23 marriage is not experienced.

Figure 1

If the Early Birds, Intermediates and Independents differ mostly in terms of the timing of the five events, the two other groups are very different. In the *Family* group (41, 42, 43, and 44) there is no gap between the families of orientation and procreation. When there is transition to the labor market (41, 43, and 44) it does not trigger living independently. Young adults in Type 41 form a family without leaving the parental home. In Type 42, in which three-quarters are women, there is no first job experience.

The remaining major group brings together two very small clusters and a larger one. The latter (Type 53) is composed of the trajectories that were not similar enough to be allocated to the other clusters, but which have little in common. Type 51 is characterized by a very early departure from the parental home and a late first partnership, followed rapidly by marriage and children. Type 52 brings together individuals who marry directly and have children without ever living with a partner.

A three-dimension map of the changes in the transition to adulthood across Europe

The first three dimensions of the correspondence analysis of the contingency table (country-cohort by type, see in appendix Table A) explain almost three-quarter of the chi-square statistics. The first dimension (42% of the chi-square statistics), also observed in separate analyses for women and men, is related to a division between the youngest cohort of North and Western Europe and other cohorts and European countries (see Figure 2). On the left of this first dimension are Family types of transition to adulthood, associated with the oldest cohorts: 41 (Family – no parental home departure), 42 (Family – no first job), and 43 (Family – late parental home departure). On the right, we find all Intermediate and Independent types of transition to adulthood, which are related to the youngest cohort of North-West Europe: 23 (Intermediate – no marriage), 33 (Independent – very late/no

marriage/ first child), and 32 (Independent – very late partnership). There is a precise time element associated with the first dimension, given that for almost all countries the four cohorts are ordered from the left to the right (except for Slovakia or Bulgaria). The first dimension is thus the condensed history of the transformation of the passage to adulthood in Europe, from familial to individualized forms.

The second dimension (16% of the chi-square statistics) is gender specific (i.e only observed the separate analysis for women). It contrasts the youngest cohorts of women from Eastern Europe countries and the oldest cohorts of Nordic ones with the oldest cohorts of Southern Europe (see Figure 2). The former group of country-cohorts is associated with types 10 (Early Bird) and to a lesser extent 41 (Family – no parental home departure), and the latter with types 42 (Family – No first job) and 53 (Other – unusual pathways). In other words the second dimension mostly contrasts transitions to adulthood of women that happen quickly and early, with those that remain incomplete.

Figure 2

Considering the first two dimensions, almost all countries have a kind of reversed U-shape trajectory. This means that for all European countries, old cohorts of women tended to have slow and incomplete familial transitions to adulthood (family formation without a job experience, late or no parental home departure, etc.), whereas subsequent cohorts were likely to have quicker and earlier passages to adulthood (Early Bird). However, the youngest cohorts seem to have moved back to slower and more incomplete transitions (Intermediate or Independent). For Western Europe, these are of a completely different nature to the transitions of their elders, however, being much more autonomous from their family of orientation: early job experience and departure from the parental home, but late or no marriage, and late or no birth of the first child.

The third dimension is also gender-specific and accounts for 13% of the chi-square statistics (see Figure 3), this time it applies only to men.

Figure 3

Combining dimensions one and three reveals three regions: (1) Type 41 (Family – no parental home departure) and the older cohorts of Eastern Europe (2) Type 23 (Intermediate – no marriage) and the youngest cohort of France and Nordic countries (3) Types 31 (Independent – very late first child) and 43 (Family – late home departure) and the oldest cohorts of North-West Europe. This highlights the heterogeneity of the transition to adulthood of the oldest cohorts of men. It also mitigates the convergence towards individualized pathways previously observed for women between North and Western Europe as the Scandinavian countries and France converges towards an Intermediate pattern (Type 23) whereas for the UK and other Western countries it is the Independent patterns (Types 32 and 33) that predominate for the youngest cohort.

Taken together, these three dimensions provide a map of the historical changes in male and female transitions to adulthood across Europe over four cohorts. Because the first axis, is common to both genders and explains the most important part of the khi-square test, it means that the convergence of the trajectories of men and women towards late, protracted and less traditional patterns is the most important result. However, this overall convergence hides some specificities related to gender.

A partial convergence between Nordic and Conservative Countries

The most homogeneous cluster of countries and cohorts is the Social-Democratic one (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden). This is the group of countries for which the reversed U shape is the least pronounced, because the oldest cohort of women was already quite different from the Family types, and already experiencing rapid transitions to adulthood

at a relatively young age (Type 10). Subsequent cohorts then took progressively more time to complete the different stages after gaining their first job and leaving the parental home; delaying partnership, marriage, and having children (Intermediate types 21 and 22). The youngest cohorts of women in Social-Democratic countries experienced reasonably similar transitions to previous cohorts, although perhaps more slowly and with an increasing tendency to skip the marriage stage (Types 23 and 33).

Conservative countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland) and the UK demonstrate rather similar trajectories, except that they begin more often with the Family types of transition to adulthood for the oldest cohort of women (except for Type 41 – intergenerational family), followed by passages to adulthood that happen earlier and quicker for the baby-boomers, and which then become progressively longer for the last cohort born after 1960, until they correspond to the Intermediate and Independent types of transition. On the basis of the first two dimensions of CA, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, in which the youngest cohorts of women appear very similar to those in Nordic countries in terms of work-family pathways, could be considered as frontrunners in Western non-Nordic Europe. Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain are tending in the same direction, but more slowly and either with very late first marital life experiences (Types 31 and 32) or parenthood that occurs very late (if at all). All in all, the UK, Conservative, and Social-Democratic countries seem to converge towards what appears to be the new European model of transition to adulthood for women characterized by a reasonably early and synchronized first job and departure from the parental home, followed later by cohabitation, then by children (Types 23 and 33).

Less delayed than Type 33, Type 23 is more characteristic of Social-Democratic countries. In both cases, marriage comes (at best if at all) after the birth of the first child, suggesting that marriage no longer appears to be a necessary step in the transition to

adulthood for young women (born after 1960) in Northern and Western Europe. As a result, although Conservative countries and Great Britain are moving in the same direction as the Social-Democratic group, they are taking a different path, with first partnership, marriage and childbirth occurring later for men. This is what the third dimension of the correspondence analysis shows. Of the three-frontrunner Conservative countries, only the youngest French male cohort seems to really move towards the Social-Democratic model. On this third dimension, Switzerland is on the other side, and the Netherlands is in between.

The persistence of Family patterns in Southern and Eastern Europe

On the first two dimensions, Portugal and Spain cluster together with Ireland. Despite its Liberal welfare regime, Ireland is not at all like Britain, but instead very close to Southern European countries. This suggests that the welfare regime framework proposed by Esping Andersen is not the only one to compare European societies and that for the question of the transition to adulthood culture and traditions do also matters. Indeed, these three countries have in common a strong Catholic church. Compared to the rest of Western Europe, Family types are much more common in this cluster (except for Type 41 – intergenerational family) for the oldest cohort of women, but also for subsequent cohorts. It is only with the youngest cohort of women born after 1960 that Spain and Portugal move towards Independent transitions to adulthood, suggesting a possible accelerated convergence towards Conservatives countries that bypass the quick and early stage (Type 10).

Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) is also characterized by the predominance of family types of pathways for the cohorts born before 1945 and especially by the intergenerational family (Type 41), which is hardly found anywhere else. Cohorts of women and to a lesser extent of men born after 1945 and growing up in communist countries tend to converge towards the quick and early transition to

adulthood (Type 10), however, which is not the case in Southern Europe. This suggests that communism enabled, to a certain extent, young adults to create their family without relying on their parents (Type 10). However, this model coexisted with more traditional models (Type 41), where two generations of families lived in the same home. The youngest cohorts of women and men in Eastern countries delay their transition somewhat, pushing further towards the longer transitions (Types 21 and 22), as if they were experiencing with a time lag similar changes that women and men in Western and Northern countries had already been through. However, the youngest cohorts in Bulgaria and Slovakia even seem to go backwards toward the Family patterns of transition to adulthood. The collapse of Soviet Union experienced by the youngest cohort disrupted the transition to adulthood in Bulgaria, Slovakia, and to a lesser extent Hungary, bringing about unusual combinations of life events (Type 53, see Table A in the Appendix). Young adults living in Estonia, Slovenia and Poland seem to have been less affected by such a historical event.

Discussion and conclusion

Our results show dramatic changes in the transitions to adulthood in Europe for the four cohorts studied, which cover almost all of the 20th century. Even though they are based on limited information that does not take into account reversibility, work-family pathways showed a great deal of variety captured by a 14-group typology. The different groups vary according to whether the transition to adulthood is completed, and the order and timing of events. The Family group fits the description of the traditional pre- and early-industrial life-course regime quite well (Mayer, 2001), in which young adults stay in a "semiautonomous state" for some time before completing all the other transitions (Modell et al., 1976). The characteristics of the Early Bird group bear a striking resemblance to the accelerated transition to adulthood pattern first identified in the US postwar boom (Hogan, 1981; Modell et al., 1976). Lastly, the Independent and Intermediate types of transition to adulthood echo the

writings on the de-standardization of the transition to adulthood (Corijn and Klijzing, 2001), but mitigate them by illustrating the emergence of two new standards, both characterized by an early independence from the family of orientation and a low rate of marriage, and more (Type 33) or less (Type 23) delayed couple formation and birth of the first child.

These types of transition to adulthood can be found in almost every European country for every cohort. Even though some of them are more common in some countries for some cohorts, there is never only one single life-course pattern. Even during the post-war boom (1945-1975), when rapid transitions to adulthood at a young age were indeed the most common pattern in Europe, they were not the only one. Yet, for the first time it is possible to accurately measure how widespread the different types of transition to adulthood were at different periods of time.

Our results are consistent with the history of household formation and family systems in Europe (Hajnal, 1982): Family group patterns are much less common in Nordic countries, even for the oldest cohort, in accordance with the historical tendency of early home leaving. Moreover, countries in Southern Europe are still marked by strong family ties characterized by late or very late parental home departure (Types 43 and 44). Finally, we also find a strong and persistent association between joint households (Type 41) and Eastern Europe countries.

The correspondence analysis of the distribution of these different types of transition to adulthood across cohorts and countries gave new insights into the partial convergence between countries (Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007). To begin with, it provided direct evidence for the first time, that the transition to adulthood moved from models of transition that were initially semiautonomous (Family type) and gendered for the oldest cohort; to transitions that started to happen faster and earlier in life (Early Bird for women, Intermediate for men); before once again becoming incomplete and delayed, but now with greater emancipation from the family (Intermediate and/or Independent) and more similar trajectories for men and

women with the greater access to the labour market for the latter. This confirms and extends in a comparative context the results obtained for France by Winkler-Dworak and Toulemon (2007).

Yet if our results provide a stronger basis for this long-term view of the transformations of the transition to adulthood, they also mitigate it to a certain extent. First of all, the degree to which this single overarching story represents an acceptable summary varies across cohorts. Rather than an absence of convergence of transitions into adulthood across countries, our results confirm an historical convergence for baby-boomers followed up by increasing divergences for the youngest cohort. Indeed, it was Northern and Western Europeans born just after the Second World War who experienced the most similar passage to adulthood. This cohort entered adult life in the context of strong economic and welfare state growth that enabled most young adults to rapidly become independent from their family of orientation. The transition to adulthood is a period of uncertainty for young people in all societies, and this cohort found unprecedented buffers in the public policies and institutions and in the economic prosperity of the 1950s-1970s. Probably for the first time in history, life was less dependent on one's family of orientation.

Our results also echo previous theoretical and empirical writings on the impact of welfare regimes on youth trajectories (Mayer, 2001). The first dimension of the correspondence analysis fits with some interpretations of theories of individualization (Giddens, 1991), showing how, overall, life courses have evolved towards more autonomous forms (except in some Eastern European countries) at different paces for both men and women. However, as the Intermediate and Independent patterns suggest, welfare states still continue to shape the life course by shortening or lengthening the duration of transitions to adulthood (Blossfeld, et al., 2005). If the transition to adulthood took longer for the 1960-1971 cohort in Northern and Western Europe than for previous ones, the duration of the

transition to adulthood was greater for Conservative countries and the UK than for France and Social-Democratic ones. Independent life course patterns are indeed much more common in the former than in the latter. The globalization process produces more uncertain youth trajectories in employment transitions and in family formation. Generous welfare systems reduce the duration of transition to adulthood and provide a buffer against globalization (Aassve, Davia, Iacovou and Mazzuco, 2007) compared to countries with scarcer policies (Liberal and Southern countries). This supports the importance of nation-specific institutions in shaping individual life courses (Mills and Blossfeld, 2005) even if the proximity of Ireland with Portugal and Spain suggests that other factors can strongly affect transition to adulthood.

Taken together, these changes and patterns point towards the emergence of two similar but distinct models of transition to adulthood: the Intermediate and Independent patterns, and more specifically types 23 (Intermediate – no marriage) and 33 (Independent – very late/no marriage/first child). These two emerging standards bear striking resemblance to the "Traditional Late Motherhood" and "Modern/Alternative Late Motherhood" ideal-types described for women by Elzinga and Liefbroer (2007). These two models seem to be the new reference for both women and men in Europe. They are clearly linked to the fact that women and men have increasingly symmetrical positions in the family and on the labour market (Young and Willmott, 1973). Even in countries like Spain, a country with a strong Catholic culture that endured a conservative dictatorship for years, these new models are observed for the youngest cohorts. Indeed, in Portugal and Spain, the labour force participation of women soared since the 1980s, leading them to achieve economic independence and to enter into cohabitation rather than marriage (Dominguez-Folgueras and Castro Martin, 2008). This could be evidence of a new kind of transition to adulthood that no longer includes marriage as a necessary step (Kiernan, 2004). Furthermore, they also have in common an early

independence from parents and delayed family formation, but the postponement of the first marriage and the first child is much more pronounced for the Independent pattern (Type 33).

Nowadays, having children remains the only life event that is irreversible and has undergone huge changes since the 1960s. The strong support families receive from the state in Nordic countries and in France, might reduce, both subjectively and objectively, the risk that having children represents, especially in difficult economic times. This is because welfare states provide general frameworks in which individuals can live and make plans for their lives (Mayer and Schoepflin, 1989). If childbearing is postponed in Scandinavian countries and in France, usually occurring in the last stage of the transition to adulthood, this is not as pronounced as it is in other Conservative countries and in the UK, where having children entails more changes and risks for couples, especially for women.

During the post-war communist era, Eastern Europe countries also converged towards the quick and early transition pattern, along with the North-Western European countries. Communism marked a clear rupture in the tradition of joint households frequently observed in the oldest cohorts, in particular by promoting the participation of women to the labour market. This historical period confirms the strength of the birth cohort in shaping an individual's life course. The collapse of the Soviet Union had varying consequences on countries in Eastern Europe, some tending to return to Family life-course patterns (Bulgaria or Slovakia), whilst others continued to exhibit a high proportion of quick and early transitions into adulthood (Poland or Hungary), and still others moved towards slightly more delayed patterns (Slovenia or Estonia).

Overall, our findings reveal the influence of the political and economic context, historical family systems and welfare regimes on the entry into adulthood. Despite data limitations, they show that this convergence was particularly prominent for the cohorts born after the end of the Second World War, especially for those who grew up in a favorable

economic context, but that it slowed to a large extent afterwards. This convergence could be linked to the participation of women in the labour force, hence to the growing equality between women and men. These trends could only be seen by analyzing the family-work trajectories of women and men across cohorts and European countries. In fact, the accelerated transitions to adulthood experienced by the cohorts born after the Second World War in all Europe except the South part of it can be seen as a historical digression rather than the norm when compared to the slower and incomplete pathways of the oldest and youngest cohorts. Furthermore, the transition to adulthood remains marked by historical family systems: tradition of early parental home departure in Northern Europe, of late parental departure in Southern Europe and of joint households in Eastern Europe. Our results also confirm the buffer effect of generous welfare regimes, which prevent the transition to adulthood from being too delayed during periods of economic stagnation or depression. The fact that the trajectories of the European countries globally come together along the lines of the classical welfare regime typology suggests that, institutions and policies still leave a clear mark on the different stages of the path towards adulthood (Blossfeld, et al., 2005). However, these descriptive results need further investigation and require using other methods to unravel the institutional, policy, economic, cultural and individual factors that lie behind these different ways of becoming an adult. In particular, the role of education that usually leads to higher participation rates to the labour market for women should be examined very closely (Sobotka, 2008).

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Tables

Table 1 – Samples size by country and cohort (unweighted Ns, respondents aged 35+)

Country	Before 1935	1935-1944	1945-1959	1960 and after	Total
Austria	175	234	558	641	1,608
Belgium	195	210	431	416	1,252
Bulgaria	168	248	391	244	1,051
Denmark	171	223	428	318	1,140
Estonia	184	227	346	286	1,043
Finland	241	266	511	339	1,357
France	231	239	524	459	1,453
Germany	303	435	722	682	2,142
Great Britain	361	326	567	515	1,769
Hungary	235	255	401	244	1,135
Ireland	163	189	356	384	1,092
Netherlands	225	239	480	465	1,409
Norway	172	177	462	399	1,210
Poland	150	168	450	311	1,079
Portugal	361	344	493	410	1,608
Slovakia	133	154	414	349	1,050
Slovenia	154	194	376	270	994
Spain	220	210	375	422	1,227
Sweden	209	247	503	382	1,341
Switzerland	241	268	448	434	1,391
Total	4,292	4,853	9,236	7,970	26,351

Table 2 – Basic characteristics of the 14 types of transition to adulthood

Type of transition to adulthood	Size			1st job		1st time living separately			1st time living with partner		1st marriage		1st child		Duration of the transition to adulthood			Complexity		Women
	Freq.	% (unweighted)	% (weighted)	Median age	Never (%)	Median age	Never left parental home (%)	Never lived with a parent (%)	Median age	Never (%)	Median age	Never (%)	Median age	Never (%)	Age at first event (p25)	Age at last event (p75)	Duration	H (mean)	T (mean)	%
Early bird 10	**4 875**	**18.5**	**17.6**	**18**	**0.0**	**19**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**20**	**0.0**	**21**	**0.0**	**22**	**0.0**	**16**	**23**	**7**	**0.31**	**6.21**	**70.5**
Intermediate	**5 950**	**22.6**	**21.7**	**19**	**0.0**	**20**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**24**	**0.0**	**26**	**10.9**	**27**	**0.0**	**16**	**30**	**14**	**0.35**	**6.85**	**50.3**
21 Late marriage	1 743	6.6	6.0	17	0.0	18	0.0	0.0	25	0.0	25	0.0	27	0.0	15	28	13	0.37	**6.64**	42.7
22 Late 1st job	3 339	12.7	12.6	21	0.0	22	0.0	0.0	24	0.0	26	0.0	27	0.0	18	30	12	0.34	6.60	52.9
23 No marriage	868	3.3	3.0	18	0.0	20	0.0	0.0	22	0.0	37	74.4	26	0.0	16	30	14	0.34	6.78	55.5
Independent	**5 050**	**19.2**	**19.6**	**18**	**0.0**	**20**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**25**	**11.5**	**28**	**30.5**	**34**	**52.1**	**16**	**32**	**16**	**0.32**	**6.64**	**44.5**
31 Very late 1st child	1 807	6.9	7.9	17	0.0	21	0.0	0.0	23	0.0	24	0.0	33	49.9	15	31	16	0.33	6.77	50.2
32 Very late 1st partnership	1 753	6.7	6.3	18	0.0	19	0.0	0.0	32	33.3	34	51.5	35	56.6	16	33	17	0.30	6.46	39.9
33 Very late/no marriage/1st child	1 490	5.7	5.5	18	0.0	20	0.0	0.0	23	0.0	32	43.0	33	49.5	16	32	16	0.33	6.69	42.8
Family	**7 079**	**26.9**	**29.0**	**16**	**21.8**	**22**	**9.7**	**0.7**	**23**	**7.0**	**23**	**8.3**	**25**	**9.1**	**15**	**28**	**13**	**0.31**	**6.57**	**54.3**
41 No parental home departure	623	2.4	2.3	17	0.0	39	82.7	6.7	22	0.0	23	0.0	24	0.0	15	27	12	0.32	6.42	48.3
42 No 1st job	1 942	7.4	6.6	40	79.6	20	0.0	0.0	22	0.0	22	0.1	24	0.0	18	27	9	0.26	5.60	76.1
43 Late parental home departure	2 983	11.3	13.6	16	0.0	22	0.0	0.0	22	0.0	22	0.0	25	0.0	14	26	12	0.35	7.04	52.3
44 Very late parental home departure	1 531	5.8	6.5	17	0.0	29	26.9	0.7	30	32.5	30	38.4	32	42.2	15	32	17	0.29	6.95	33.1
Other	**3 397**	**12.9**	**12.1**	**20**	**37.3**	**21**	**11.1**	**1.5**	**26**	**39.4**	**25**	**21.5**	**27**	**21.3**	**16**	**31**	**15**	**0.28**	**5.98**	**55.6**
51 Very early parental home departure	443	1.7	1.6	19	5.9	12	0.9	0.0	24	5.6	25	8.8	27	12.2	9	30	21	0.38	7.67	48.1
52 Marriage without partnership	450	1.7	1.8	17	0.0	22	0.0	0.0	39	93.8	23	0.0	25	0.0	15	28	13	0.33	6.61	60.0
53 Unusual pathways	2 504	9.5	8.7	24	49.6	23	36.5	2.0	27	35.7	27	27.6	28	26.7	18	32	14	0.25	5.57	56.2
Total	**26 351**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**18**	**10.7**	**20**	**7.0**	**0.4**	**23**	**9.2**	**24**	**13.3**	**25**	**15.2**	**16**	**29**	**13**	**0.32**	**6.50**	**54.7**

Figures

Figure 1 – State distribution of the 14 types of transition to adulthood (simplified state space)

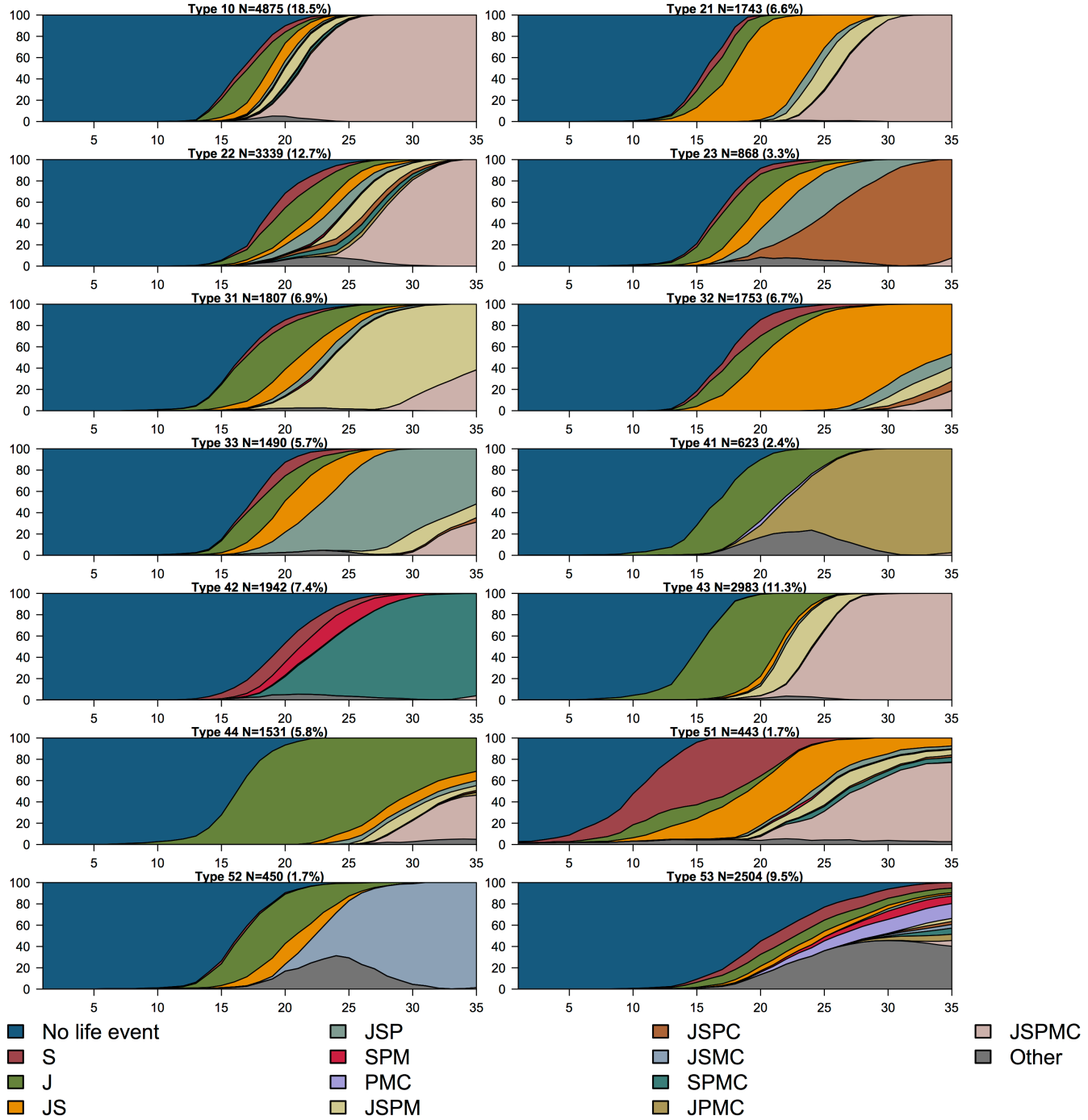


Figure 2 – Correspondence Analysis, dimensions 1 and 2 (14-cluster solution and country-cohort)

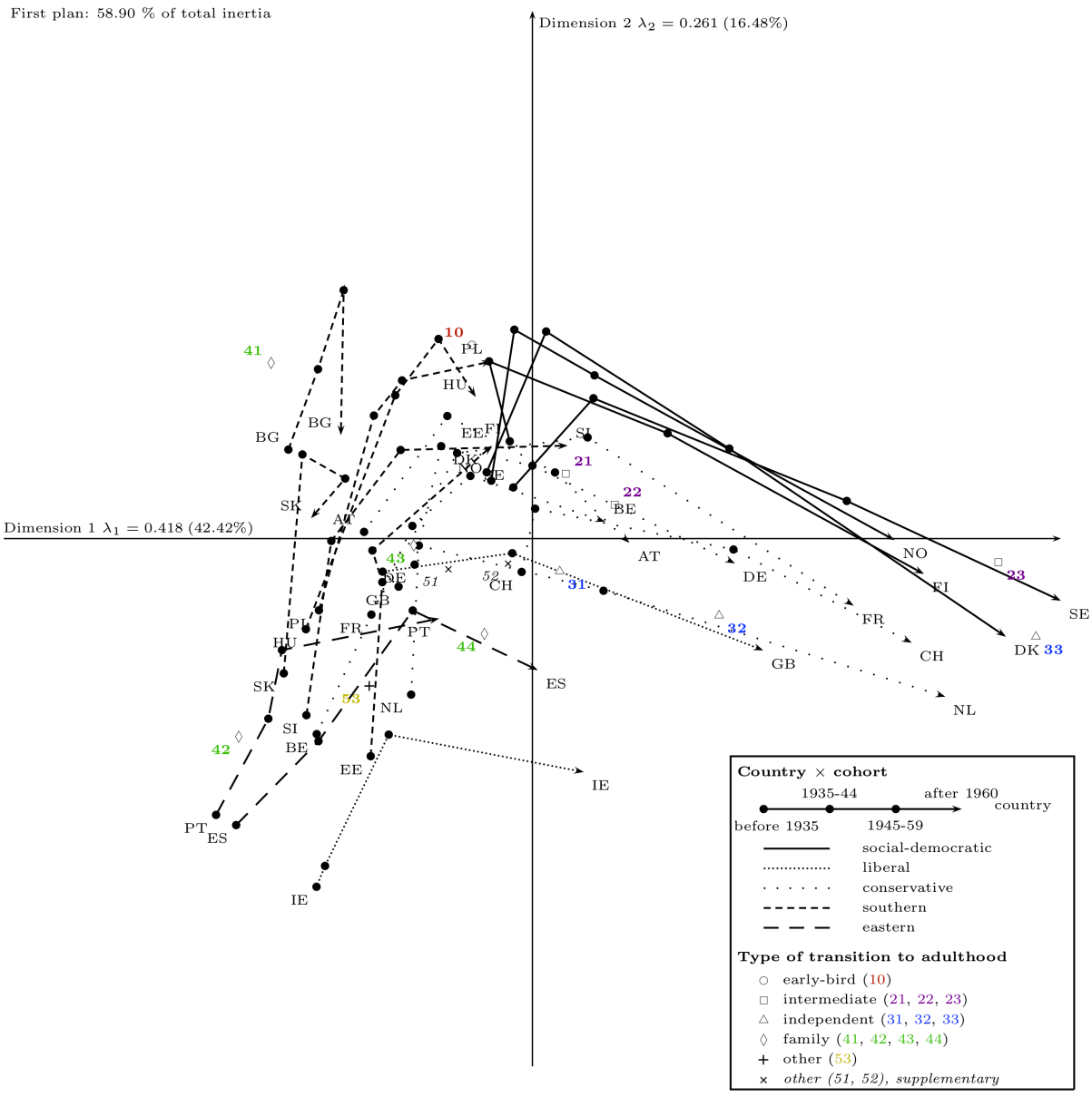
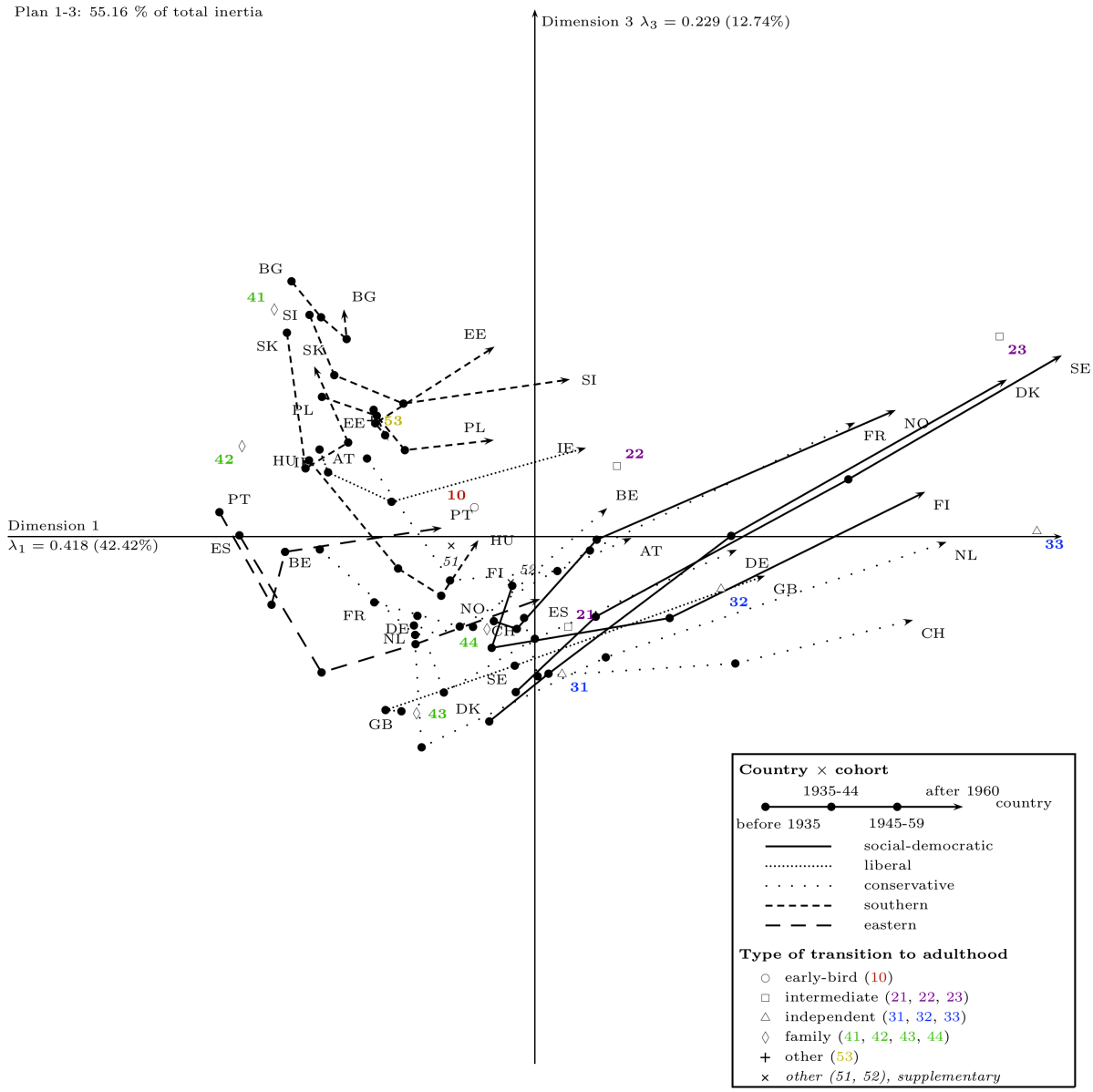


Figure 3 – Correspondence Analysis, dimensions 1 and 3 (14-cluster solution and country-cohort)



Appendix

Table A –Distribution of the types of transition to adulthood by country and cohort

		Type of transition to adulthood														
Country	Cohort	10	21	22	23	31	32	33	41	42	43	44	51	52	53	Total
Austria	Before 1935	14.9	10.3	12.6	0.6	8.0	4.6	0.6	8.6	9.7	10.3	2.9	1.1	0.0	16.0	100
	1935-1944	27.8	7.3	12.8	0.4	7.7	6.0	1.7	3.0	3.8	15.0	3.8	0.4	0.0	10.3	100
	1945-1959	21.9	4.5	12.4	2.2	10.2	5.7	7.5	4.3	2.2	12.9	6.3	1.1	0.0	9.0	100
	1960+	18.7	4.4	13.6	3.6	8.7	6.6	10.5	2.2	1.7	9.0	8.6	0.3	0.3	11.9	100
Belgium	Before 1935	8.7	0.5	12.8	0.5	10.3	2.6	0.0	1.5	16.4	14.9	10.8	0.0	5.1	15.9	100
	1935-1944	18.6	1.4	16.2	1.0	11.4	3.3	0.5	1.0	7.6	21.0	4.3	0.0	4.8	9.0	100
	1945-1959	21.1	1.4	19.7	0.7	12.5	1.2	2.6	0.2	5.1	17.4	4.6	0.0	6.5	7.0	100
	1960+	17.5	1.7	26.4	3.1	8.7	3.6	7.2	0.5	5.0	9.6	6.3	0.2	2.9	7.2	100
Bulgaria	Before 1935	25.0	1.8	14.9	0.0	3.0	1.8	0.0	12.5	9.5	6.0	3.6	1.2	1.2	19.6	100
	1935-1944	27.4	5.2	13.7	0.0	4.8	0.4	0.4	11.7	7.3	5.2	1.2	5.2	2.0	15.3	100
	1945-1959	37.6	2.6	13.8	0.3	4.6	1.5	0.3	10.5	7.2	4.3	3.1	2.0	2.0	10.2	100
	1960+	28.3	3.7	11.5	0.8	2.5	4.9	0.4	9.8	7.8	4.1	3.3	2.5	1.2	19.3	100
Switzerland	Before 1935	12.4	18.3	6.6	0.0	5.0	16.6	1.7	2.5	5.4	4.6	8.7	2.1	5.8	10.4	100
	1935-1944	17.5	12.3	7.8	1.1	7.1	12.7	3.0	0.7	3.7	14.6	3.7	1.9	6.0	7.8	100
	1945-1959	14.3	10.5	9.2	3.1	10.0	10.9	13.4	0.7	1.3	10.3	6.3	2.9	2.7	4.5	100
	1960+	8.1	9.0	12.4	1.6	8.8	15.4	25.6	0.9	1.2	5.3	5.1	0.9	1.6	4.1	100
Germany	Before 1935	13.2	9.6	11.2	1.3	6.6	4.3	1.0	3.0	3.6	20.1	7.3	1.0	0.7	17.2	100
	1935-1944	18.9	8.5	9.7	1.1	10.1	4.4	1.1	4.4	1.1	22.8	6.0	2.5	1.1	8.3	100
	1945-1959	23.3	4.7	8.7	2.4	10.2	6.8	5.3	2.4	1.9	16.6	6.1	1.1	2.5	8.0	100
	1960+	15.1	5.0	12.5	6.2	8.8	10.0	12.5	1.9	1.3	7.3	8.8	1.0	2.5	7.2	100
Denmark	Before 1935	18.1	25.1	4.7	2.3	9.9	6.4	0.6	0.0	7.0	14.0	3.5	2.3	0.0	5.8	100
	1935-1944	31.4	21.1	7.2	1.3	9.9	5.8	3.6	0.4	3.1	9.0	3.1	1.8	0.0	2.2	100
	1945-1959	22.4	9.6	16.8	6.5	6.5	9.1	10.7	0.5	1.9	9.3	0.9	0.9	0.2	4.4	100
	1960+	5.7	7.2	23.9	13.8	3.1	8.5	23.3	0.0	1.3	3.1	1.3	0.9	0.0	7.9	100
Estonia	Before 1935	9.8	7.1	13.0	1.6	4.3	11.4	1.1	1.6	26.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	0.5	11.4	100
	1935-1944	19.8	11.5	9.3	3.1	4.8	5.3	0.4	2.6	19.4	4.0	4.8	4.4	0.9	9.7	100
	1945-1959	26.6	9.2	9.0	3.2	2.9	5.8	1.2	1.4	22.3	6.9	1.2	1.4	0.0	9.0	100
	1960+	30.8	6.6	14.7	6.6	3.1	2.8	2.4	2.4	9.8	2.8	3.1	1.4	0.0	13.3	100
Spain	Before 1935	2.3	3.2	8.2	0.0	8.2	2.7	0.0	4.1	25.0	16.4	11.8	2.7	0.5	15.0	100
	1935-1944	3.3	3.8	11.0	0.5	4.8	5.7	0.5	2.9	20.0	25.2	13.8	2.4	1.0	5.2	100
	1945-1959	12.0	5.6	13.1	0.8	5.3	5.1	2.4	1.9	11.2	21.1	9.9	3.5	0.5	7.7	100
	1960+	9.7	3.1	15.9	2.1	8.8	6.4	6.2	0.5	6.4	11.6	16.1	0.7	0.5	12.1	100
Finland	Before 1935	22.8	10.8	7.1	5.0	7.5	11.2	0.0	3.7	5.0	12.4	4.6	3.3	0.8	5.8	100
	1935-1944	25.9	13.5	9.8	2.6	3.8	7.5	1.1	4.1	3.4	18.0	6.0	2.3	0.4	1.5	100
	1945-1959	25.0	9.2	11.9	4.5	8.2	9.8	8.6	1.0	1.4	10.8	6.7	0.6	0.0	2.3	100
	1960+	12.7	6.8	19.5	9.7	6.8	10.0	20.6	0.0	1.2	4.4	4.7	0.0	0.0	3.5	100
France	Before 1935	14.7	8.7	10.0	0.4	7.4	6.1	0.4	0.9	13.9	16.5	4.8	2.2	2.6	11.7	100
	1935-1944	24.3	8.4	14.2	0.8	5.4	4.6	2.1	0.4	7.1	17.2	5.4	2.1	2.1	5.9	100
	1945-1959	27.5	5.9	13.4	4.2	5.9	6.3	7.4	0.8	5.9	13.2	2.3	0.6	1.7	5.0	100
	1960+	11.1	3.3	20.5	12.9	5.2	10.7	14.2	0.4	3.7	5.4	5.0	0.7	0.7	6.3	100
Great Britain	Before 1935	15.2	9.1	4.7	0.0	10.5	10.2	0.3	1.9	11.6	18.6	8.0	2.8	0.8	6.1	100
	1935-1944	19.0	5.8	6.4	0.6	10.1	5.5	0.9	0.3	12.6	22.1	8.6	2.1	0.0	5.8	100
	1945-1959	20.1	6.2	8.6	0.7	13.8	7.1	6.7	0.4	9.9	15.0	4.9	0.9	0.2	5.6	100
	1960+	8.9	7.2	9.9	7.4	12.4	11.1	14.0	0.6	4.9	7.8	5.6	2.1	0.6	7.6	100
Hungary	Before 1935	14.5	2.1	14.5	0.0	8.1	2.6	0.0	5.1	15.3	12.3	6.4	1.3	1.3	16.6	100
	1935-1944	27.5	3.1	14.9	0.4	5.9	2.7	1.2	5.1	5.5	20.0	4.3	0.8	1.2	7.5	100
	1945-1959	35.2	3.2	12.5	1.2	6.7	2.2	2.0	3.5	4.5	16.5	8.7	0.2	0.5	3.0	100
	1960+	30.7	2.5	15.6	2.5	4.9	3.7	2.5	2.5	4.1	13.9	8.2	1.2	0.8	7.0	100
Ireland	Before 1935	3.1	6.1	3.7	0.0	6.1	9.8	0.0	1.2	13.5	3.7	14.1	1.8	3.1	33.7	100
	1935-1944	2.1	7.9	7.4	1.1	4.2	10.1	0.5	0.5	21.2	10.1	6.9	2.1	1.6	24.3	100
	1945-1959	8.7	7.0	6.7	1.7	5.1	8.4	2.8	2.0	15.2	12.4	4.8	3.1	2.8	19.4	100
	1960+	5.5	3.4	10.9	4.4	6.8	14.8	6.8	1.3	7.8	3.9	8.1	1.0	3.4	21.9	100
Netherlands	Before 1935	7.6	6.2	8.9	0.0	5.3	6.7	0.9	0.0	5.3	13.3	11.1	2.2	15.1	17.3	100
	1935-1944	11.7	6.7	7.9	0.4	6.7	3.3	0.8	0.4	2.9	21.8	6.3	3.8	18.4	8.8	100
	1945-1959	12.7	5.2	11.0	1.0	8.8	9.2	8.5	0.4	3.1	14.0	6.7	1.7	9.2	8.5	100
	1960+	4.5	1.9	18.5	5.6	9.9	11.4	24.9	0.0	1.5	5.4	6.0	0.4	3.9	6.0	100
Norway	Before 1935	23.8	14.5	6.4	0.0	4.1	16.3	1.2	1.2	8.7	8.1	5.2	3.5	1.7	5.2	100
	1935-1944	32.2	17.5	11.3	0.6	4.0	6.8	2.8	0.6	5.1	10.7	3.4	3.4	0.0	1.7	100
	1945-1959	29.9	14.1	14.9	3.0	3.9	6.3	6.7	1.3	4.5	7.6	3.5	0.4	0.0	3.9	100
	1960+	13.8	7.0	21.8	13.8	4.5	10.5	14.3	0.5	1.5	3.5	3.0	1.0	0.0	4.8	100
Poland	Before 1935	18.0	11.3	9.3	1.3	4.0	2.7	0.0	4.0	16.0	5.3	4.7	0.7	2.0	20.7	100
	1935-1944	26.8	10.1	10.1	0.0	3.6	5.4	0.6	8.3	5.4	6.0	4.2	1.2	1.8	16.7	100
	1945-1959	28.2	5.1	17.8	1.3	3.6	2.9	0.2	6.7	5.8	11.3	5.1	1.1	1.1	9.8	100

		Type of transition to adulthood														
Country	Cohort	10	21	22	23	31	32	33	41	42	43	44	51	52	53	Total
	1960+	29.9	4.5	16.7	3.2	3.5	4.8	1.9	6.1	2.9	6.4	8.7	0.6	3.2	7.4	100
Portugal	Before 1935	5.3	4.2	2.8	0.8	6.4	1.4	0.3	3.6	22.4	18.0	8.3	5.3	0.3	21.1	100
	1935-1944	8.4	4.4	7.6	0.3	5.2	2.6	0.3	2.0	19.8	23.0	6.4	8.1	0.0	11.9	100
	1945-1959	13.6	3.9	7.7	0.2	8.1	1.6	1.0	3.9	18.1	19.7	4.1	4.5	0.2	13.6	100
	1960+	14.9	1.7	14.4	2.9	9.0	3.9	2.2	1.7	8.0	14.1	8.5	1.7	0.2	16.6	100
Sweden	Before 1935	18.7	14.4	8.1	1.9	7.7	9.1	1.9	1.4	4.3	13.9	10.0	3.8	0.0	4.8	100
	1935-1944	24.7	14.2	13.0	6.1	6.5	5.3	3.6	0.8	2.8	13.8	5.7	0.8	0.4	2.4	100
	1945-1959	16.9	8.9	19.5	11.5	3.6	10.5	13.3	0.2	1.0	7.4	3.4	0.4	0.0	3.4	100
	1960+	8.4	7.9	17.0	22.5	4.5	14.7	17.3	0.3	1.6	1.3	1.3	0.5	0.0	2.9	100
Slovenia	Before 1935	11.7	5.8	15.6	0.0	1.9	3.9	1.3	3.9	18.8	3.9	3.9	3.9	0.6	24.7	100
	1935-1944	20.6	7.2	17.0	0.5	3.1	2.6	0.0	4.6	17.0	5.7	3.1	5.7	0.0	12.9	100
	1945-1959	27.4	5.1	14.4	2.9	4.8	2.7	0.8	5.1	9.8	8.0	3.5	2.4	0.3	13.0	100
	1960+	26.3	3.7	15.6	10.0	2.2	4.1	3.0	3.7	5.2	7.4	7.0	0.7	1.1	10.0	100
Slovakia	Before 1935	18.8	5.3	12.0	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.8	2.3	15.8	5.3	5.3	0.8	1.5	29.3	100
	1935-1944	27.3	4.5	11.0	0.6	1.9	0.6	0.0	5.2	13.6	14.9	4.5	3.2	2.6	9.7	100
	1945-1959	29.2	5.6	15.0	0.2	3.1	2.4	0.2	1.9	15.2	8.7	3.9	0.7	2.9	10.9	100
	1960+	30.9	2.0	10.6	1.1	2.3	2.9	0.6	3.7	17.2	6.6	4.9	0.6	0.9	15.8	100
Total	Before 1935	13.5	8.6	8.9	0.8	6.6	6.7	0.6	3.1	12.6	12.2	7.2	2.4	2.2	14.7	100
	1935-1944	20.4	8.6	10.7	1.2	6.4	5.0	1.3	2.9	8.8	15.9	5.4	2.8	2.1	8.6	100
	1945-1959	22.6	6.3	12.7	2.7	7.2	5.9	5.4	2.3	6.8	12.4	4.8	1.4	1.7	7.7	100
	1960+	15.4	4.7	15.9	6.7	6.8	8.5	11.3	1.7	4.3	6.8	6.4	0.9	1.2	9.4	100
Grand Total		18.5	6.6	12.7	3.3	6.9	6.7	5.7	2.4	7.4	11.3	5.8	1.7	1.7	9.5	100