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Coming of Age in Europe Across Generations

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Anne Berngruber

- Youth researcher at the German Youth Institute (DJI), Munich, Germany
- Main Work with the DJI-Survey AID:A („Growing Up in Germany: Everyday Worlds“)
- Doctoral thesis about leaving and returning to the parental home (boomerang kids)

- Research focus:
 - Transition markers from youth to adulthood
 - Life course research
 - Life situations and lifestyles of young people (also during COVID-19)
 - Time use and time perception of young people (e.g. time pressure)
 - Self-perception in the context of emerging adulthood

Motivation to use the SHARE data as a youth researcher

SHARELIFE

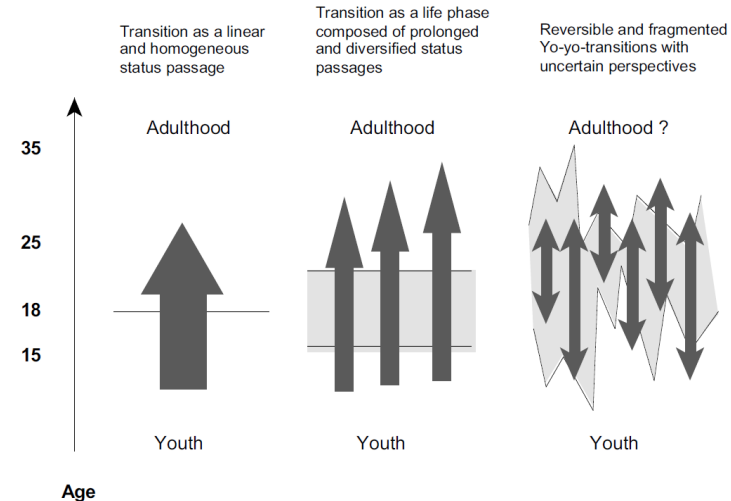
- Retrospective questions about several life course transitions
- Most transitions already experienced in life or never (less right-censored data)
- First transition markers are well remembered
- Large sample for various regions in Europe
- Unique harmonized data basis for such questions

Becoming an adult from a life course perspective

- Youth is a life stage, kind of a ‚moratorium‘ (e.g. Erikson 1988), phase of identity development, exploration
- Becoming an adult is marked by several biographical ‚first time‘ transitions (e.g. Shanahan 2000)
- Classical biographical steps are school-to-work transitions, housing transitions, steps to family formation
- Indicators for social change: Shifts in the age at which these milestones are usually experienced
- Classic goal of life course research: mapping social patterns in the timing, duration, order of and distance between individual life events (Elder, 1978, p. 21)

'De-standardization' of the life course?

- 'De-standardization' process: Changes in patterns of status transitions during the life course across several birth cohorts (Brückner & Mayer 2005)
- Orientation towards the male standard biography from the 1950s and 1960s
- 'De-standardization' of the life course is often taken as a fact, but also critically discussed (Buchmann & Kriesi 2011, Brückner & Mayer 2005, Nico 2014)
- Also debates about increasing 'standardization' of the life course
- Prevalence, timing, spread, age-congruity, integration, reversibility (Modell et al. 1976)
- No methodological consensus for measuring 'de-standardization'



Biggart & Walther, 2006, p. 42

Social conditions for growing up in Europe in the last century

- Multitude of social-structural, political, cultural, and economic events as well as technological innovations (see e.g. Liefbroer, 2009, pp. 30)
- Events have affected European countries differently and thus can be hypothesized to influence young people's life courses in different ways
- Economic recessions, for example, can lead to later economic and spatial independence from the parents
- Fundamental change which influenced all European countries since the 1950s and 1960s was a general expansion of education (for an overview see Ballarino et al., 2013) → prolonged stay of young people in the educational system

Previous research of social change in European countries

- Substantial body of previous research on the comparison of European countries on the ‘de-standardization’ process, but most of them focus on single transition domains
- Common research themes:
 - Family formation patterns (e.g. Elzinga & Liefbroer 2007, Hofäcker & Chaloupková 2014, van Winkle 2018, Zimmermann & Konietzka 2018)
 - School-to-work transitions (e.g. Kogan & Müller 2003, van Winkle & Fasang 2017, Möhring 2016)
 - Leaving the parental home (e.g. Schwanitz 2017, Angelini & Lafferrère 2013)
 - A more holistic view in the last years (e.g. Nico 2014, Lesnard et al. 2016, Schwanitz, 2017)
- More studies have looked at Central and Eastern or post-socialist European countries (e.g. Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Lesnard et al. 2016; Möhring 2016)
- Studies considering the Balkan countries and Baltic countries separately are widely lacking
- Less studied are cohorts older than the 1940s and younger cohorts born later than the 1960s (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011, p. 484)
- First (important) relationship as a further step in the family formation context is missing in European cohort studies

Aim of our research

- Providing a more holistic and nuanced look at the transitional patterns from youth to adulthood
- Comparison of timing, ordering and linkage of social, spatial and economic transition markers across different European regions, birth cohorts and among women and men

Data & Method



- Life History Data in wave 3 (2009) & wave 7 (2017)
- Areas: Life history of relationships, work, accommodation, children...
- Retrospective questions
- Data pooled, n = 88,776

Method:

- Kaplan-Meier estimates (see e.g. Blossfeld, Golsch, & Rohwer 2007)
- Advantage of a survey using 50+: no problem with right-censored data



Sample

Birth Cohorts

- <= 1935** Prewar generation
- 1936-45** Second World War generation
- 1946-55** Postwar generation
- 1956-67** Babyboomer generation in most countries

Country Groups

- **Nordic countries:** Sweden, Denmark, Finland
- **Western Europe:** Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg
- **Eastern Europe:** Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia
- **Southern Europe:** Spain, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Greece, Cyprus
- **Balkans:** Slovenia, Croatia
- **Baltic States:** Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia

Focus on several transition markers

1st important relationship (for at least 6 months)

1st cohabitation with partner

1st marriage

1st childbirth

1st own household







1st start of full-time employment

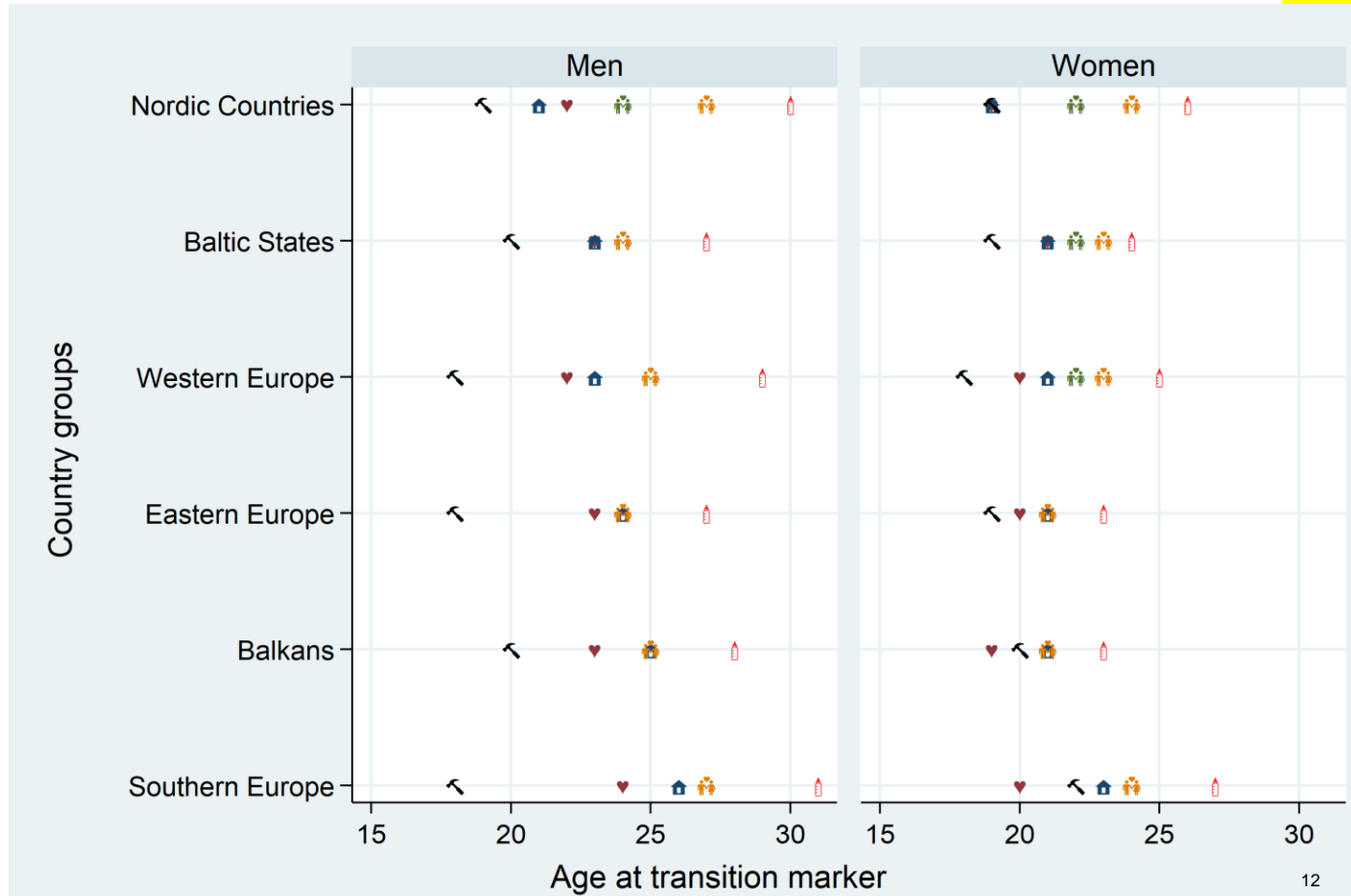
Social transition markers

Spatial transition marker

Economic transition marker

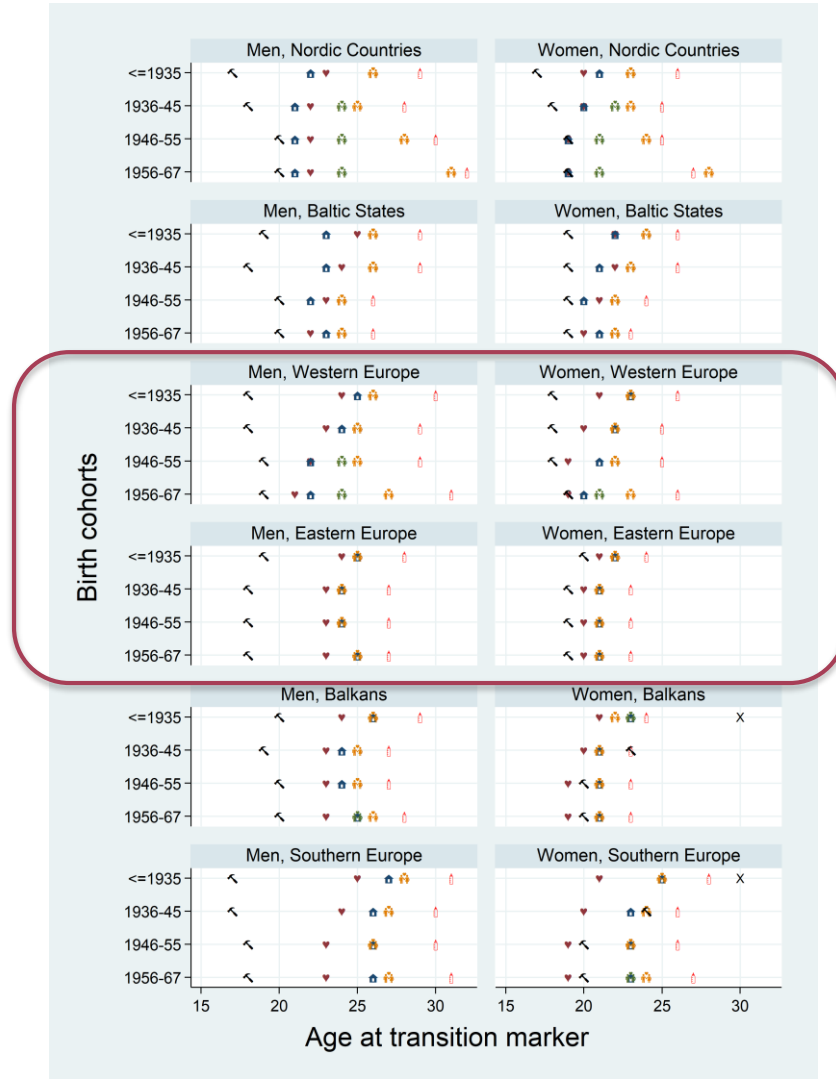
Median age at different transition markers by European region and gender

-  First full-time employment
-  First important relationship
-  First own household
-  First cohabitation
-  First marriage
-  First childbirth

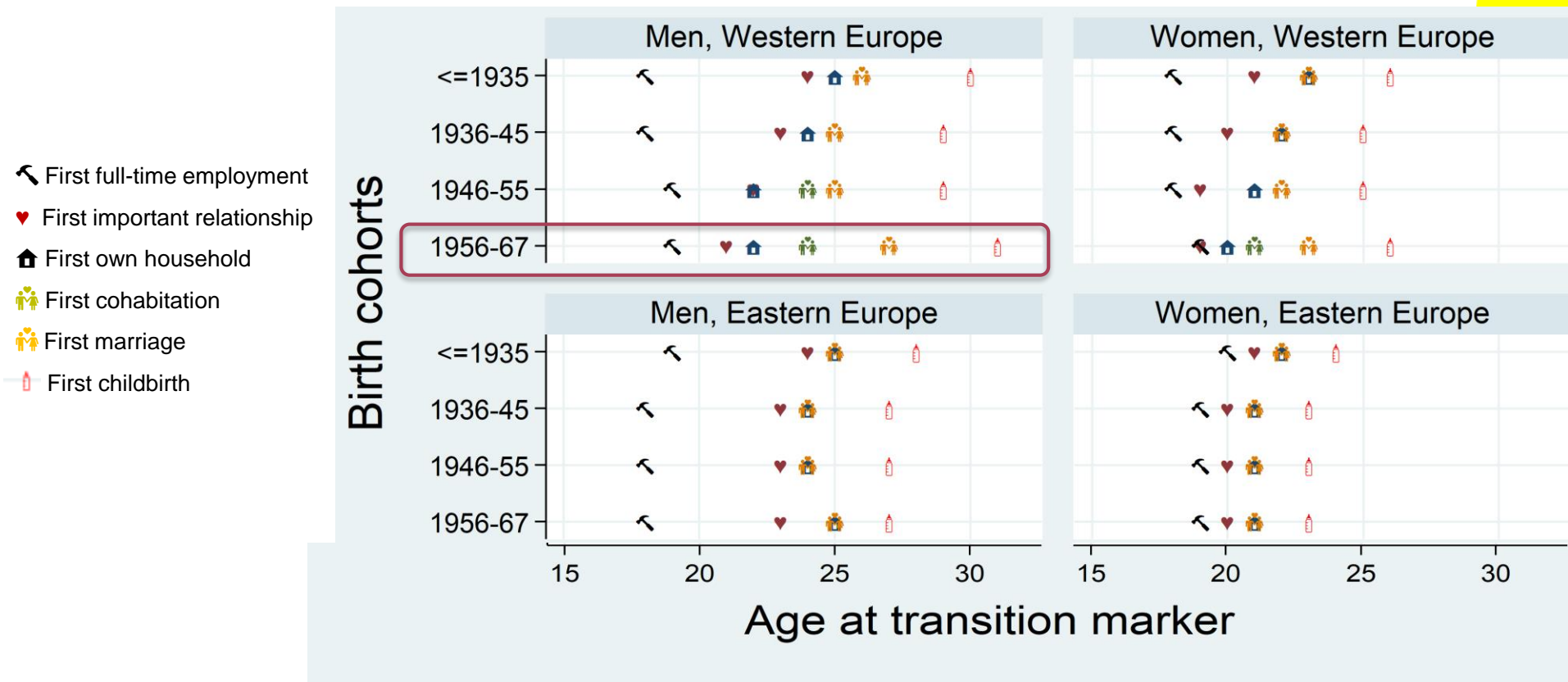


General timing, ordering and (de)coupling of transition markers

- First full-time employment
- First important relationship
- First own household
- First cohabitation
- First marriage
- First childbirth



General timing, ordering and (de)coupling of transition markers

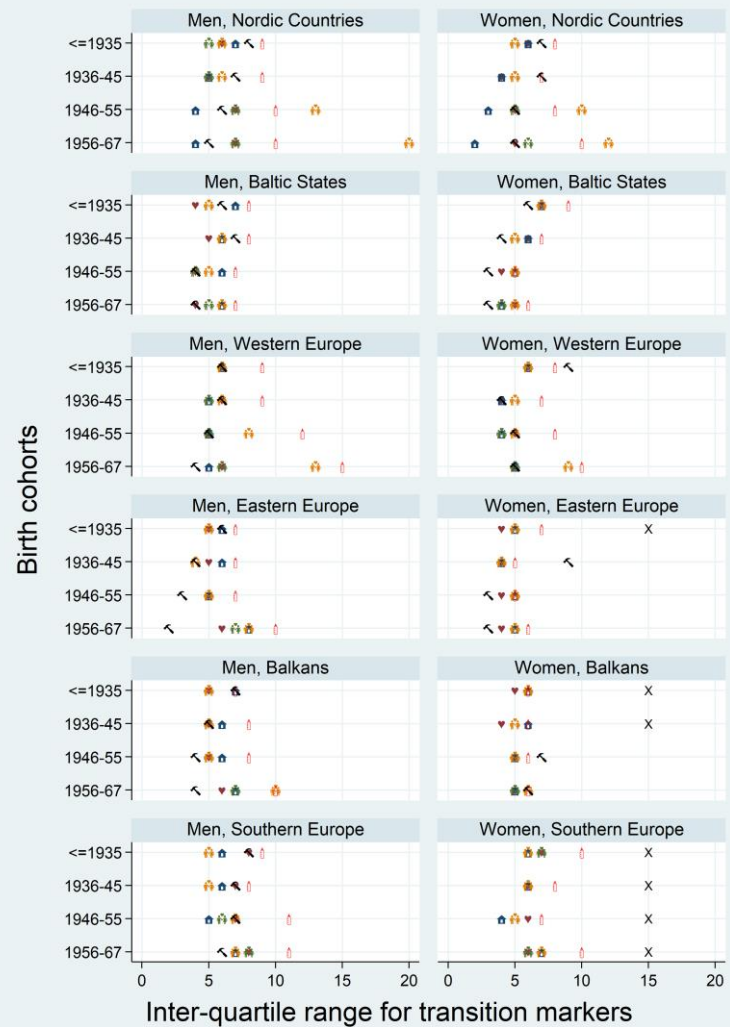


Western Europe: Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg







Eastern Europe: Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia

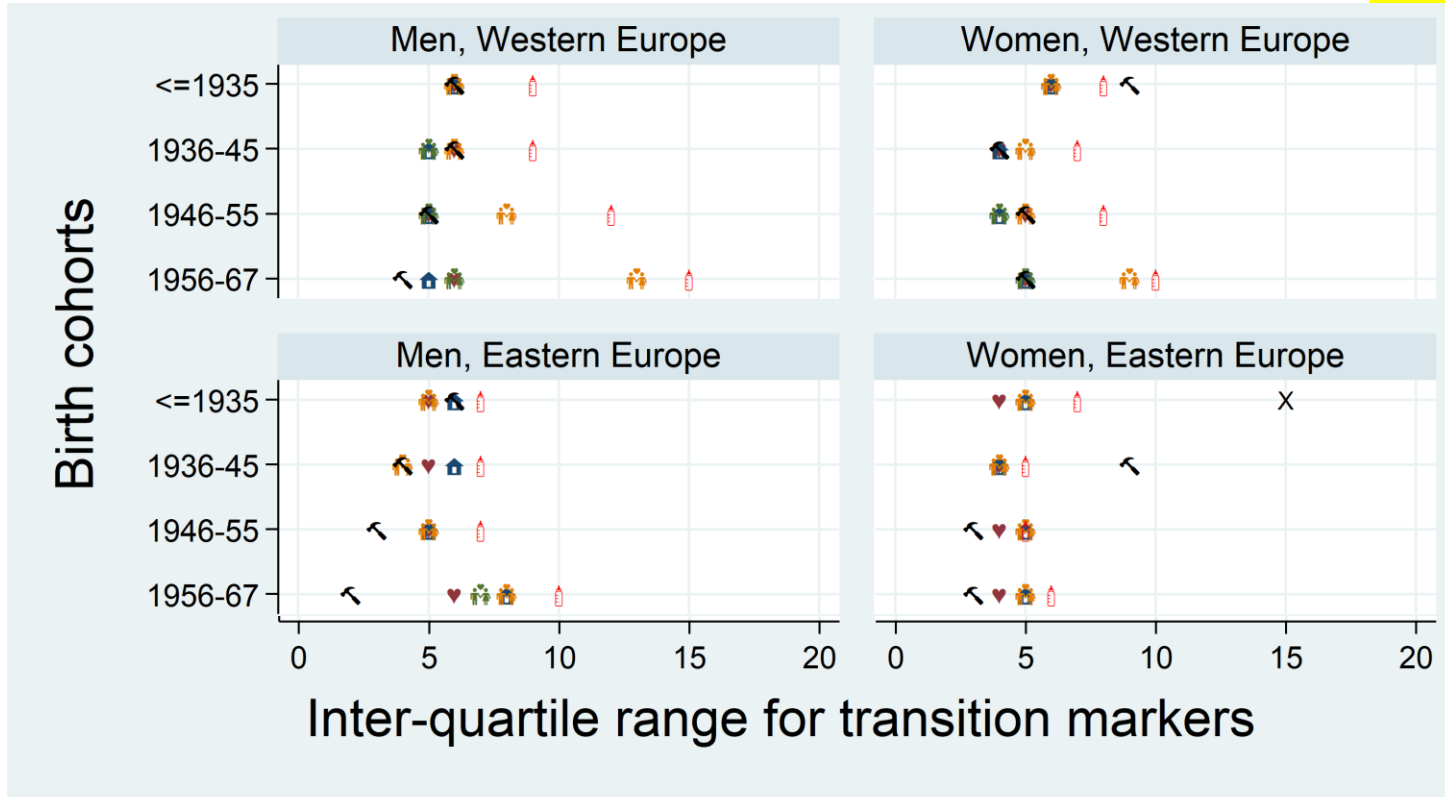
Inter-quartile ranges for age at transition markers

- First full-time employment
- First important relationship
- First own household
- First cohabitation
- First marriage
- First childbirth



Inter-quartile ranges for age at transition markers

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Conclusions & Discussion

- No consistent pattern found for the whole of Europe
- Common practice to use the Western standard male biography as a comparative baseline falls short
- Transition patterns are more dense for women than for men
- In some aspects and regions a higher standardization of transitions observed, in some aspects and regions de-standardization processes

Limitations:

- School-to-work transitions are missing (so far)
- Observation problems in single countries has led to the necessity of the grouping of countries

Future research:

- Using data which considers younger birth cohorts could be helpful to describe these patterns in the longer run
- Analyses on the individual level and more interpretation of country policies might be of further interest

Thank you for your interest!

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Download SHARE Working Paper:

„Generational Patterns of Transitions into Adulthood across Europe – It's Complicated“

http://www.share-project.org/uploads/tx_sharepublications/SHARE_WP_80-2022.pdf



Appendix

Table 1: Cases per country group, cohort and gender

	Birth cohorts								Total
	<=1935		1936–1945		1946–1955		1956–1967		
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Nordic Countries	732	885	1,345	1,451	1,667	1,843	945	1,264	10,132
Baltic States	341	793	797	1,504	1,091	1,605	1,091	1,543	8,753
Western Europe	2,047	2,712	3,306	3,793	4,409	5,178	2,089	3,147	26,681
Eastern Europe	802	1,122	1,742	2,298	3,114	3,839	2,159	2,988	18,057
Balkans	218	388	655	814	1,100	1,250	633	1,002	6,059
Southern Europe	1,563	1,981	2,334	2,548	2,903	3,350	1,325	2,318	19,094
Total	5,734	7,925	10,292	12,525	14,425	17,232	8,285	12,358	88,776

Appendix

Table 2: Percentage of right censored cases for first employment (weighted)

	Birth cohorts								Average
	<=1935		1936–1945		1946–1955		1956–1967		
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Nordic Countries	0.43	2.99	0.32	1.25	0.5	0.51	0.29	1.35	0.9
Baltic States	0.07	1.43	0.3	1.66	0.76	0.36	1.45	0.35	0.86
Western Europe	1.24	15.68	0.31	5.65	0.46	2.32	1.25	2.53	3.66
Eastern Europe	4.15	17.31	1.59	11.34	1.52	5.33	2.06	5.43	5.61
Balkans	5.73	48.02	5.73	29.58	3.03	12.28	2.7	10.56	12.41
Southern Europe	1.9	45.02	2.05	34.79	1.71	22.06	1.62	18.83	16.99
Average	1.76	25.11	1.03	15.36	1.03	8.49	1.49	8.11	7.93