

CHANGES IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SERBIA BETWEEN 2003 AND 2011²

Promene u tranziciji u odraslost mladih u Srbiji između 2003. i 2011. godine

ABSTRACT *The paper deals with transition to adulthood of young people in Serbia through analysis of findings of the two surveys from 2003 and 2011. The aims are to explore the changes in pace, as well as in transitional trajectories that could indicate their de-standardisation and individualisation. Some of the debatable issues related to the transition to adulthood approach are presented in the framework and discussed further in relation to the results of the analysis in the concluding section. The findings indicate that there exists some acceleration in the pace of transition, mainly due to increased financial independence of young people. The trajectories, however, are still standardised, while transition is postponed and prolonged. The comparative analyses of some features of young people's transitions to adulthood in the Balkans led to the conclusion that an alternative conceptualization is needed.*

KEY WORDS *transition to adulthood, pace of transition, transitional trajectories, de-standardisation, Serbia*

APSTRAKT *U članku se razmatra tranzicija u odraslost mladih u Srbiji poređenjem nalaza dva anketna istraživanja iz 2003. i 2011. godine. Cilj analize je da se ustanovi da li postoje promene u tempu, kao i putanjama tranzicije koje bi mogle da ukažu na njihovu destandardizaciju i individualizaciju. U postavljanju okvira analize se prikazuju neka od problematičnih pitanja vezana za pristup tranzicije u odraslost, koja se potom u završnom delu članka dalje razmatraju u odnosu na rezultate analize. Nalazi istraživanja ukazuju na postojanje izvesnog ubrzanja u tempu tranzicije, koje je mahom rezultat veće finansijske nezavisnosti mladih. Prelazak u odraslost je odložen i pr odužen, ali su putanje prelaska i dalje standardizovane. Upporedne analize nekih obeležja tranzicija mladih na Balkanu vode*

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zaključku da je potrebna alternativna konceptualizacija koja bi odrazila društveno-kulturne specifičnosti regiona.

KLJUČNE REČI *tranzicija u odraslost, tempo tranzicije, putanje tranzicije, destandardizacija, Srbija*

Framework

Transition to adulthood became a prominent topic in contemporary youth studies due to profound changes in young people's lives related to the change of values, as well as to the changing patterns of employment, education, family formation and gender identities, which have been emerging taking place in the last three decades (Walther, Stauber, Pohl, 2009). Within life course analysis, transition to adulthood is used to denote the processes of changing the statuses and roles associated with education, employment, housing, and family formation (Corijn, Klijzing, 2001) and more recently political (citizenship) domain (Walter, Stauber, Pohl, 2009). It is also associated with the concept of "youth as a stage of transition" in youth sociology (Bendit, 2006: 57), with the focus on social structuring and individual decision making, thus providing a useful tool for linking structure and agency (Cote, Bynner, 2008). The interdependence of institutional structural contexts and individual transitions has been introduced by the concept of *transitional regimes* (Walter, 2006; Walter et al. 2009), besides the three models of transition (Northern, Southern – "Mediterranean", and the intermediate – Galland, 2003), and the three models of family formation (Nordic, Southern, and Northern - Iacovu, 1998; 2002). The model of *transitional regimes* is based on typologies of welfare regimes of Esping-Andersen (1990), and it distinguishes five types of institutional and policy frameworks that serve as markers of biographical orientation of individuals: social democratic / universalistic, conservative / corporatist / employment-centred, liberal, Mediterranean / sub-protective, and post-socialist (Walter et al. 2009).

There are several unresolved issues within studies of transition to adulthood which contribute to perceiving it as a highly debatable concept today, and I will mention three of them.

The first issue is related to the assumption that current global society changes are leading towards heterogenization of life trajectories and de-standardisation of life courses, which have been diffusely spread from developed countries to developing countries, including also post-communist societies (Fussel, Gauthier, Evans, 2007: 391). The assumption of a global trend towards life course de-standardisation has been tested and contested both in developing African and South-American countries (Grant, Furstenberg, 2006), in developed Western countries (Bruckner, Mayer, 2005), and in post-socialist countries (Kovacheva, 2001; Roberts, 2003). The data on some countries from former Yugoslavia (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006a; Ignjatović, 2009; Lavrič, 2011; Kuhar, Reiter, 2012) do not provide evidence

on heterogenization of life trajectories of young people, but on postponement of finishing education, independent housing and family formation, shaping transitions marked by “cultures of postponement” (Reiter, 2009), sometimes referred to as “frozen transitions”³. If we consider de-standardisation of transitions to adulthood as decoupling of leaving parental home and getting married, and decoupling of marriage and parenthood (Corijn, Klijzing, 2001: 6), then we would not find heterogeneity in Serbia, but high standardisation and synchronisation of life events. Previous studies pointed to primary relevance of family transitions for young people in Serbia both on the normative and practical level (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006a; 2006b; 2010).

The trends of prolonged and de-standardised transitions to adulthood are producing “the hiatus in the life-course” (Cote, Bynner, 2008: 251) referred to as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2006), which is seen as “post-adolescence” characterized by the postponement of commitments, as well as by identity exploration, trying out possibilities of love and work, instability, self-focus, and feeling in between (adolescence and adulthood) (Cote, Bynner, 2008: 251). Nevertheless, this period could be more accurately defined through the concept of “young adult” (EGRIS, 2001; Bynner, 2005) and “can be better explained in terms of changing economic conditions leading to a lowering of the social status of the young that is contributing to increasingly precarious trajectories, and in terms of the decline in the social markers of adulthood associated with the individualisation process” (Cote, Bynner, 2008: 251). De-standardised life course trajectories associated with individualised self-reflexive “do-it-yourself” biographies (Beck, Beck-Gernshaim, 2002) are producing “yo – yo transitions” (EGRIS, 2001; Walter et al. 2002) with return to previous life arrangements (e.g. “new boomerang generation” that leaves home but then comes back time and again; France, 2007: 60).

Detraditionalisation of life course trajectories related to transitions has been contested by numerous studies, providing evidence that individualisation is fundamentally constrained by social, cultural and structural forces (Roberts et al., 1994; Furlong, Cartmel, 1997; Evans, 2002; Cote, 2002; Bynner, 2005; Brannen, Nielsen, 2005). Detraditionalisation and individualisation of young people’s biographies is highly problematic when there exists a strong dependence on family resources (Biggart, Kovacheva, 2006), both material and psychological, which is particularly prominent in southern European post-socialist countries with sub-protective transitional regimes (Tomić-Koludrović, Leburić, 2001; Kovacheva, 2004; Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006a; Ule, Kuhar, 2008; Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2010).

Detraditionalisation of young people’s biographies has also been contested by findings on normative models of *invented* adulthood, which point to the strong

³ See Kuhar, Reiter, 2012, and Kuhar and Reiter in this volume.

heteronormative model of “settling down” – getting married and having children by the age of 35 (Thomson, Holland, 2002; Thomson et al. 2004; Ule, Kuhar, 2008; Tomanović, 2010).

The third issue is related to the outcome of transitions – the concept of adulthood itself. Namely, since they witness the decline in the social markers of adulthood, young people begin to question the relevance of both concepts: transitions and adulthood. There is evidence that young people do not give that much importance to independence understood as related to financial, housing and emotional autonomy, but they stress subjective (psychological) independence; they see themselves as adults irrelevant of their status (Lavrič, 2011: 71)⁴. This trend indicates that young people seem to be going towards the concept of “young adult” (EGRIS, 2001; Bynner, 2005; Cote, Bynner, 2008) rather than the post-adolescence in Arnett terms (Arnett, 2006).

Having in mind the above outlined limits of transition to adulthood approach, we have nevertheless undertaken the analysis with the goal of detecting whether there are changes in transition to adulthood among young people in Serbia between 2003 and 2011. We aim to explore the changes in the pace of transition and to detect if there has been an acceleration in transition between the two observed periods. We also aim to explore whether there are changes in transitional trajectories that could indicate their de-standardisation and individualisation.

Methodology

The analysis is based on comparison between the two surveys on national representative samples. The first survey from 2003 was carried out on the national representative sample of 3180 young people aged from 17 to 35, when quotas were set for age, gender and activity status: secondary school pupils, students, the employed, and the unemployed. The second survey was carried out in the spring of 2011 on the national representative sample of 1627 young people aged from 19 to 35, which was random within selected age cohorts: 19/20, 24/25, 29/30, and 34/35. In order to draw comparison, we had to rearrange the samples: secondary school pupils from 2003 survey (one quarter of the sample) were omitted from the comparative analysis. The Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by activity status in the two surveys after sample adjustments⁵.

For the purpose of detecting the sequences in young people’s biographies, we designed a “Life events chart” – table recording the respondent’s age when certain

⁴ See also articles from Kuhar and Reiter, and from Dragišić-Labaš and Ljubičić in this volume.

⁵ While in 2003 survey quotas were set for four activity statuses, in 2011 survey, in the category „employed“ we have included all the young people who stated they were working, either in formal or informal sector. The unemployment of young people aged from 15 to 34 was 37.5% (15-24 51.9%; 25-34 32%) in 2011 (Statistical Office of Serbia).

events concerning family life, education, employment, housing (e.g. when they ceased receiving parents' support or began renting an apartment) have occurred.

Table 1 Activity status in 2003 and 2011 surveys in %

		Year	
		2003	2011
Activity status	Students	33.7	26.3
	Unemployed	31.5	23.8
	Employed	34.8	49.9
Total		100.0	100.0

The same methodology was applied in both surveys – 2003 and 2011, which gave us an opportunity to detect the changes in the two dimensions of transition to adulthood: the pace of gaining independence, and the transitional trajectories of young women and men.

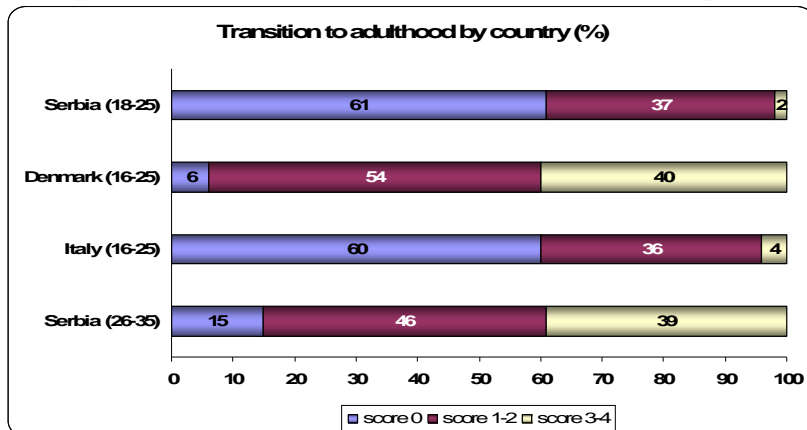
Pace of gaining independence

The assessment of the pace of gaining independence in the 2003 survey was based on the timing of four life events: leaving home, marriage/cohabitation, financial independence and employment⁶. To each of the events one point was attributed and the total score (from 0 to 4) indicates the independence level. This gives us a means of comparing different countries. According to Galland's findings, three types of countries could be identified: Northern, Southern ("Mediterranean") and the intermediate.

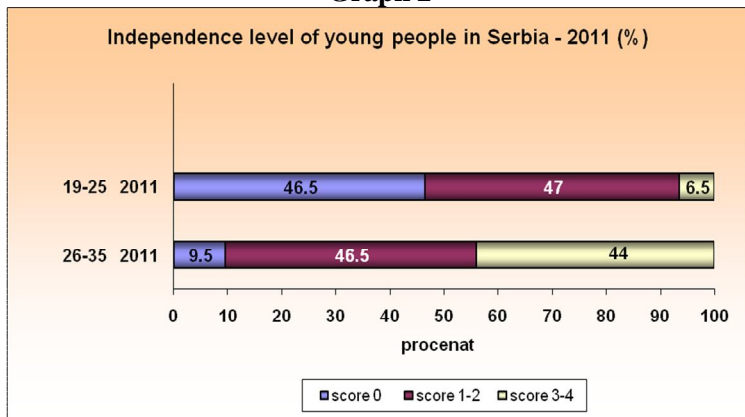
Serbia belongs to the Southern ("Mediterranean") cultural pattern of transition to adulthood that is characterized by leaving parental home late, by prolonged financial dependence of young people on their parents and by strong emotional relations. For example, Italy is considered to be a typical Southern model country (60% of the young aged 16 to 25 with a score of 0). On the other hand, Denmark, Great Britain and the Netherlands are considered to be countries of "fast" transition ("Northern circle"). Almost 40% of young Danes have all four characteristics of adulthood at the age of 25.

As evident from the graph 1, our findings of 2003 survey show that Serbia and Italy are comparable with regard to the age group under 25. The data also show that young people from Serbia have experienced a ten year lag in transition to adulthood, compared with "fast" transition countries such as Denmark, resembling slow transitional countries such as Italy for the age under 25.

⁶ Our analysis draws on Galland's model of gaining independence that was applied to young Europeans aged 16-25 (Galland, 2003).

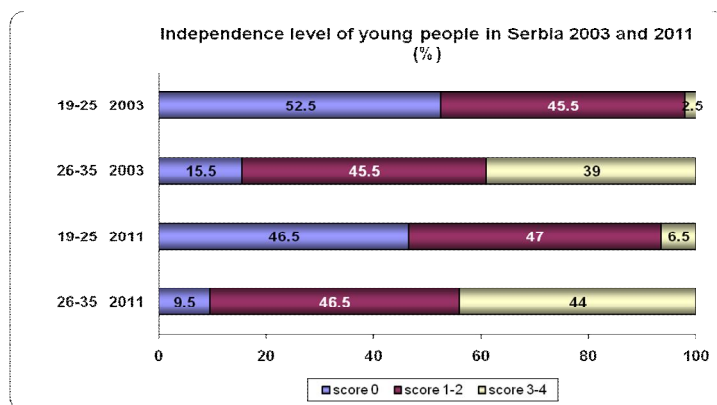
Graph 1 Transition to adulthood – Serbia 2003 in comparison

We have applied the same methodology to 2011 survey. Graph 2 presents the distribution of scores and independence level of the two age groups: 19-25 and 26-35.

Graph 2

The comparison of the level of independence in 2003 and 2011 presented in the graph 3, shows that the scores are higher for both age groups in 2011.

We have detected some acceleration in the pace of transition: more young people in both age groups (19-25 and 26-35) accomplished the score of 3 or 4, and consequently, fewer of them did not accomplish any key life events in 2011 compared to 2003, while there is the same proportion of those with medium results (1 or 2 “milestones” achieved).

Graph 3

Since any combination of the four life events could be included in the score, we could not attribute higher scores in the independence level to any single one. Therefore, we have decided to look at changes in different aspects of the status within three groups of young people: students, the employed and the unemployed between 2003 and 2011.

With regard to the pace of gaining independence in total, we found no significant differences in any of the groups by activity status, although in the older age group (26-35) there are more scores of 3 or 4 among students and the unemployed in 2011.

Since employment was a discriminatory variable for groups, we searched for changes in financial independence, housing status and marital/partner status within the activity groups.

Table 2 Financial (in)dependence by activity groups in 2003 and 2011

	Year	maintained by parents	with personal income (salary, payment)
Students	2003	84.8	14.4
	2011	76.4	25.1
Unemployed	2003	63.9	13.2
	2011	50.7	24
Employed	2003	0	100
	2011	0	100

As for financial independence, we have detected some changes: in all three groups, the share of young people who do not receive any support from their parents has increased in the older age group. In the sample as a whole, the share of young

people who are completely financially dependent on their parents has decreased, while at the same time the share of those with personal income has increased between 2003 and 2011 (Table 2).

On the other hand, data on housing status of young people in Serbia in 2011 portray another unfavourable picture, since 57% of the whole sample still live in their parents' households (from 37% of 34-35 years old to 72% at the age of 19-20; see Table 3).

Table 3 Housing status of young people in Serbia 2011 (in %)

Age	Housing status										
	Parental home	Inherited apartment	Apartment bought by parents/relatives	At my cousins'/friends'	Apartment bought on my own/with partner	Rented apartment – I pay	Rented apartment – others pay	Student dormitory	Property of spouse/partner	Other	Total %
19-20	72	2	3	2.5	0	1	8.5	10.5	0	1	100
	32	4	13	33	0	3.5	38.5	64.5	2.5	9	25
24-25	65	7	4	1	2.5	4	8	5.5	1.5	1.5	100
	30	16	20.5	17	15.5	16	37.5	35.5	18.5	20.5	26
29-30	51.5	13	6	3	4.5	11.5	3	0	4	3.3	100
	22	28	29	37	28	41	14	0	42	38.2	24
34-35	37	24.5	8	1	9	11.5	2	0	3.5	2.9	100
	15.5	52	37	13	56	39	10	0	37	32.4	24
Total%	57	11	5	2	4	7	5.5	4	2.5	2.1	100
	100	100	100	100	100.00	100	100	100	100	100	100

Comparison indicates that there were no significant changes in the housing status of young people from 2003 to 2011: there were no changes among students and the employed, while there was a slightly better housing status of the unemployed in the older age group.

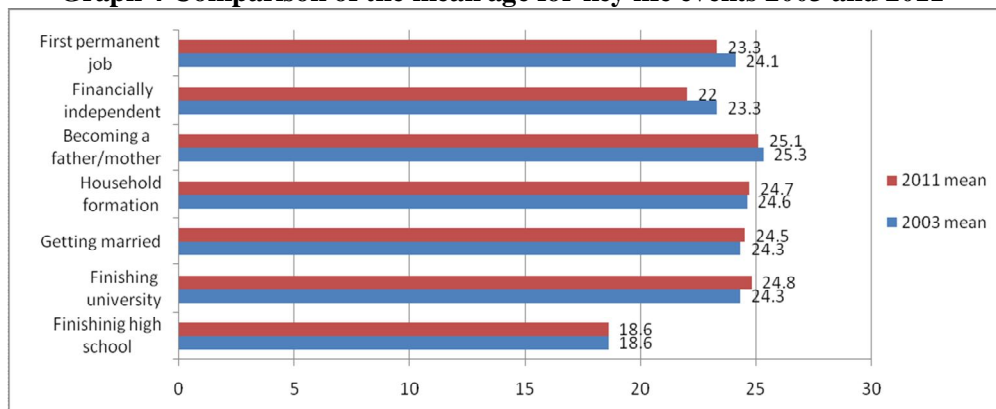
When marital/partner status is concerned, among young people aged 17 – 35 in 2003, there were 76% single, 19% married, 2.5% divorced (and widowed) and 2% cohabiting. Among 19-35-year-olds in our 2011 sample, 66% of them were single, 25% were married, 5.7% lived in cohabitation, and 3% were divorced (and widowed)⁷. By comparing marital/partner status of the three groups of young people, we found out that there were no changes among students and the unemployed, while the share of the married/cohabiting decreased among the employed in the older age group between the two observed periods.

The conclusion that financial independence is the feature contributing to slightly “faster” transition to adulthood has been supported by comparing the mean age for the key life events (“markers of adulthood”), since they have been

⁷ The share of cca 10% more married/cohabiting young people as compared to 2003 is due to the older age of our sample in 2011.

accomplished 1.3 years earlier in 2011 than in 2003 (see Graph 4). Financial independence is not associated only with a permanent job, which has also been obtained at an earlier age in 2011, since it has been accomplished 1.3 years prior to getting the job (see Graph 4). The assumption is that more informal and irregular ways of income earning have become available to students, the unemployed as well as the employed young people, contributing to their financial status.

Graph 4 Comparison of the mean age for key life events 2003 and 2011⁸



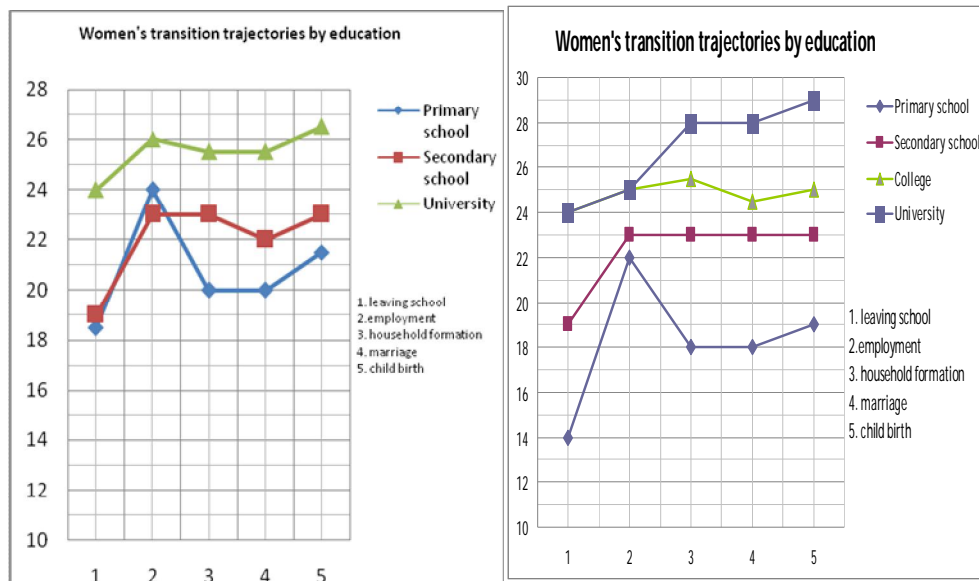
Transition trajectories

Variations among young people concerning trajectories of transition were measured through two categories: synchronisation of the key life events (“milestones”) and the order of their occurrence. The more desynchronised the milestones are, the higher level of individualisation is achieved. Consequently, the more de-standardised the trajectories – the stronger the individualisation.

The data from 2003 survey have presented highly standardised and non-individualised trajectories in terms of timing and the order of key life events (transitional milestones) for all young women and young men irrespective of their educational level (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006a; see graphs 5 and 7 bellow). It seems that education does not influence the form of the trajectories, but only the “length” of the lines (more years of schooling means later transition), which is especially noticeable when it comes to women. Young men usually experience their milestones later than women (except for employment), and their phase of transition is more extended.

⁸ Our findings resemble the data presented in the study on Slovenian youth, also pointing to the trend of postponing transitions, but ages of marriage (26.4) and parenthood (27.8) are considerably higher in Slovenia (Lavrič, 2011: 74), and do not coincide with leaving parental home (24.3) as in the case of young people in Serbia.

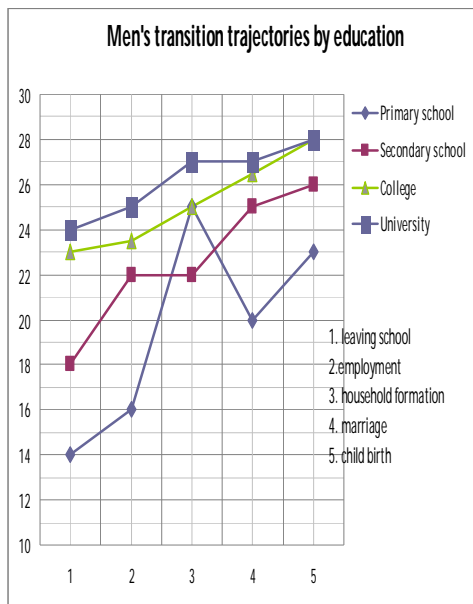
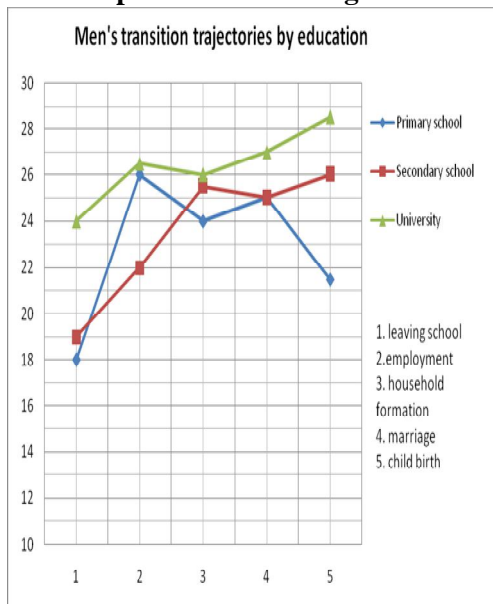
Graphs 5 and 6: Young women's transition trajectories in 2003 and 2011



Comparison between the 2003 and 2011 transitional trajectories of young women indicates that there are no significant changes; these are still standard biographies with synchronicity of household formation and marriage followed by childbirth within a year. The data from both surveys show that young women with primary education are the exception; they have more traditional trajectories, with family formation preceding employment. The form of transition for other groups of young women by educational level are similar. The timing of milestones varies by education: longer education is associated with the later timing of family formation. These data show some changes: young women with primary education have given birth earlier in 2011: at the age of 19 instead of 21 in 2003; while childbirth has been postponed to the median age of 29 for young women with university degree in 2011, compared to 27 in 2003 (graphs 5 and 6). The duration of transition also varies by education – the lower the level of education, the longer the transition: 7 to 9 years for young women with primary education, 3 to 5 years for young women with university degree.

According to 2003 survey data, young men have experienced two subtypes of transition: those young men who attained at least the secondary level of education had almost the same path as their female peers. On the other hand, both low-educated men and women had one characteristic in common in 2003 – getting a formal job after they got married, establishing their household and having their children.

Graphs 7 and 8: Young men's transition trajectories in 2003 and 2011



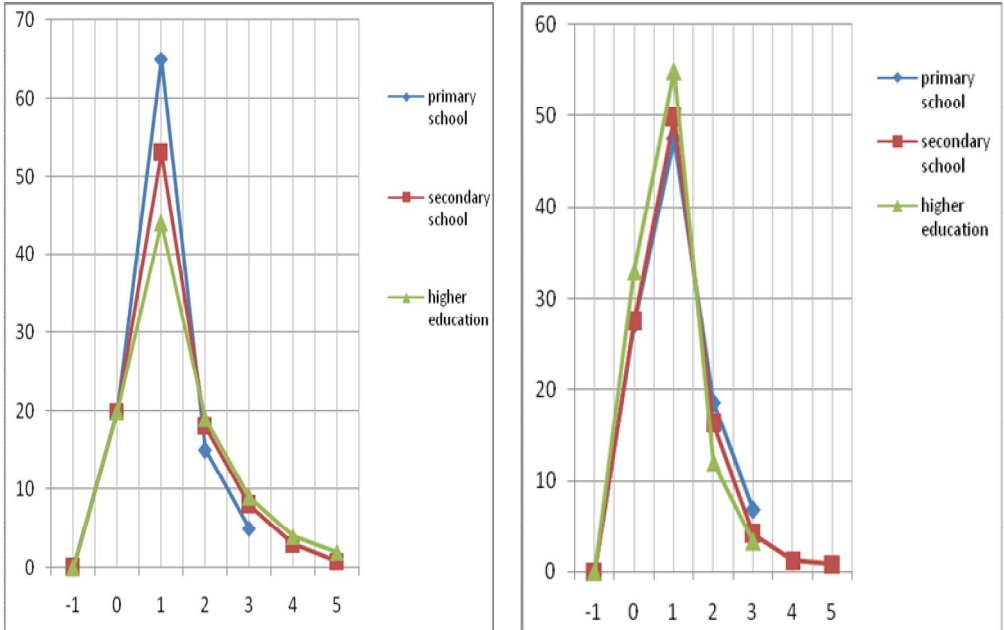
Comparison between the 2003 and 2011 transitional trajectories of young men indicates that there are no significant changes; these are still standard biographies with synchronicity of household formation and marriage followed by childbirth within a year for those with secondary, college and university education. Young men with primary education are again an exception – they start working earlier, having a child precedes getting married, and having an independent household comes much later (they start a family in a parental, patrilocal household). The difference in timing of the employment of young men with primary education comes from the difference in methodology: in 2003 only formal employment was taken into account (median age 26), while in 2011 any employment was counted (median age 16). This indicates that young men with low education have been employed long term in the informal sector. The duration of transition varies by education for young men too – the lower the level of education, the longer the transition: around 11 years for young men with primary education, 4 to 5 years for young men with a university degree.

Both young women's and young men's trajectories reveal synchronicity of marriage and childbirth. This is also evident from the data on life span between marriage and birth of the first child (graphs 9 and 10).

As evident from the graph 9, there was a significant time proximity (synchronisation) of marriage to childbirth in 2003. The most common option was to have a child after one year of marriage (between 42% and 63% of young parents, depending on the educational level). There are even less differences between young

parents according to the educational level in 2011 than in 2003, since between 48% and 54% of children were born around the first year of marriage.

Graphs 9 and 10: Time span between marriage and childbirth in 2003 and 2011



Concluding discussion

The analysis in this paper aims at exploring the changes in the two dimensions of transition to adulthood of young people in Serbia between 2003 and 2011: the pace of gaining independence, and the trajectories of transition. We have detected some acceleration in the pace of transition: in 2011 there were higher scores of accomplished key life events (“milestones of transition”) in both age groups (19-25 and 26-35) than in 2003. The exploration of possible factors which could have contributed to such a change showed that the only status that have changed to a certain degree in eight years was the financial independence from parental support. This indicates that both students and unemployed young people could find certain income sources outside formal work, while employed young people could find additional sources of income besides their formal job, which all contributes to their better financial status. Nevertheless, better financial status does not contribute to better housing status since only 4% of young people have bought their housing property and another 7% are renting. Only small number (one tenth) of young

people who have acquired their own living space have used subsidized mortgages provided by the state from 2005 onwards, while the others mostly rely on their own resources and their families' resources.

Better financial situation is also not related to changes in the patterns of family formation. There is no pluralization of family forms - marriage is still the most common form of partnership, with slight increase in cohabitation and low prevalence of divorce, while formation of the family is postponed to late twenties or early thirties, depending on the educational status.

Transitional trajectories of young women and men do not indicate a heterogenization but a postponement of milestones to a later age. The trajectories follow the standard form with more or less synchronised life events taking place in the standard order: finishing education, getting a job, getting married and having a child in a certain period of time. The duration of transition – from 2 to 9 years is related to a gap between some events, such as finishing education and family formation for young people with secondary education, and family formation and employment for young people with primary education.

Compared to youth transitions in the socialist period, which had features of standard biographies – standard order of key life-events happening in a relatively short period – transition is now prolonged, since accomplishment of “markers of adulthood” is being postponed. No significant changes occurred in the young people's life trajectories in the eight-year period, since they are still similar in their standard form regardless of young person's social status, which indicates homogeneity rather than heterogeneity. In these aspects, Serbia resembles other post-socialist former Yugoslav countries, where youth transitions are prolonged but not de-standardised, i. e. with little evidence on pluralisation of life trajectories (Kuhar, Rieter, 2012).

De-standardisation of transitions to adulthood as decoupling of leaving parental home and getting married, and decoupling of marriage and parenthood (Corijn, Klijzing, 2001: 6), is not present in Serbia yet. There is still a high synchronicity of the events related to independent housing and family formation, indicating that Serbia clearly belongs to the Southern European family formation model, where young people remain in the parental home for a longer time and leave it mainly in order to form a family – when they get married (Iacovu, 1998; 2002). With this pattern, Serbia is again no exception among the countries of former Yugoslavia, characterized by low prevalence of cohabitation⁹ and synchronicity of marriage and child-birth, and extra-marital births preceding formal marriage. The exceptions to this pattern, with high prevalence of young people cohabiting with

⁹ For instance, the data on young people in Croatia show that only 2.1% of those aged 15 to 29 lived in cohabitation in 2004 (Ilišin, Radin, 2007: 295).

their partner with or without children, are found in Slovenia and Bulgaria among the Balkan post-socialist countries¹⁰.

The enduring situation of young people in Serbia relying highly on family resources (material, cultural, social) for housing, employment, transition to parenthood, etc., has been supported by the state policy mechanisms producing a combination of sub-protective and post-socialist transitional regime (Walther et al. 2009). The similar situation of high reliance on family resources for finances and housing, transition to employment and to parenthood, has also been found in other Balkan countries (Tomić-Koludrović, Leburic, 2001; Kovacheva, 2004; Ule, Kuhar, 2008). This situation is making expected detraditionalisation and individualisation of young people's life-trajectories problematic (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2010).

The situation of prolonged dependence on family resources and support is also related to questioning of the concept of adulthood and its milestones by young people. Independent housing seems to be particularly questionable, since the prolonged co-residence with their parents is a common feature of young people from all the countries of former Yugoslavia, where approximately two-thirds of 18 to 34-year olds live in a parental household whether single, cohabiting or married and with children (Kuhar, Reiter, 2012). The prolonged stay with parents is even more pronounced now than ten years ago among young people in Slovenia¹¹. The trend is due not only to material (unemployment) and structural (housing shortage) factors, but it is also related to cultural patterns of increased permissiveness in family relations (Lavrič, 2011: 379), which also produce high quality intergenerational relations and emotional bonds (Ibid.; Ule, Kuhar, 2008). We have found a similar situation in Serbia, where strong emotional bonds with parents result in emotional dependence of some young people, which is, as evidence provided in our study shows, strongly correlated with living with parents¹².

Young people in Slovenia postpone transition to parenthood to their early thirties, since an independent household seems to be a crucial condition for family formation¹³. Moreover, the share of young people living with their partner has decreased over the years (Lavrič, 2011: 386). The situation of postponed transitions described above has reflected the perceptions of adulthood and autonomy: only one fifth of young people from Slovenia see either marriage/cohabitation or parenthood as important markers of transitions to adulthood, and one fourth state independent housing, while more relevance has been given to full-time employment, which half of them stress as the marker of adulthood¹⁴.

¹⁰ See Kuhar and Reiter and Siyka Kovacheva in this volume.

¹¹ The percentage of young people aged from 25 to 29 who live in a shared household with their mother increased from 45.4% to 66.8% between 2000 and 2010 (Lavrič, 2011: 369).

¹² See the article from Dragišić – Labaš and Ljubičić in this volume.

¹³ Among young people who live independently at the age of 29, 50% have child/ren, while among those of the same age who live with parents, only 15% have child/ren (Lavrič, 2011: 388).

¹⁴ The European Social Survey 2006, quoted in Kuhar and Reiter's article in this volume.

The evidence from surveys in Serbia indicates a rather different trend, since 33% of young parents lived in parental household in 2003 and 25% - in 2011. The prolonged living in a parental home even when married and when they are parents reflected the perception of adulthood and independence: besides “good income”, “having one’s own place to live in” and “marriage”/“living with a partner” were stated as important prerequisites for independence (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006b). Moreover, 43% of young people perceived family formation as a marker of adulthood (“that is a sign of being an adult”; Ibid.: 65) in 2003, and even more – 51% in 2011 survey.

Self-perception of young people in Serbia indicated that only one sixth of respondents in the middle age group (25-30), and just over a half of older respondents (31-35) considered themselves to be completely independent in 2003, which was related mainly to their housing dependence (Ibid.: 64). The situation did not change considerably, since only 38% of 29/30-year olds and 56% of 34/35-year olds considered themselves to be completely independent from their parents in 2011, while around one quarter of all respondents did not want to become independent or considered it to be irrelevant at the moment. As for reasons for not feeling independent, the respondents mainly stated the lack of work and finances, while the reasons for not wanting independence were related to the need for help from parents or with the situation that suits the respondent.

On the one hand, low participation in economic and social reproduction, due to high unemployment and postponement of parenthood, together with low political and civil participation¹⁵, which hinder social integration of young people, seems to be common features in all the Balkan societies. On the other hand, it seems that the country-specific features of young people’s postponed transitions that are path-dependent and culturally and socially diversified surpass even the concept of transitional regimes requiring alternative conceptualizations.

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¹⁵ See for instance Korunovska Srbijanko et al. in this volume.

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