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Transformed Institutions – Transformed Citizenship Education?

The Current Situation of Citizenship Education in Southwestern, Southeastern and Eastern Europe

Theoretical Concept for an International Conference: Setting the Stage for an International Research Consortium

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1. Research Impetus: The Scope of Democratization in Southern and Eastern Europe

In the last 30 years, the process of institutional democratization prevailing in Western Europe since at least the end of World War II has spread to Southwestern, Southeastern and Eastern European countries. However, the establishment of liberal institutions alone is only a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the durable maintenance of democracy. Democratic institutions cannot function appropriately without a corresponding political culture, i.e. democratic convictions and identities of political elites and citizens (Rosa 2005, 8 f.). A basic democratic citizenship identity committed to the humanistic values of peace, human dignity, plurality, liberty and justice is the central cultural bedrock of the project of European integration and an important precondition for the mutual understanding between European nations with different historical trajectories (ibidem, 13). So, is there a common political culture based on liberal-democratic citizenship emerging across European countries?

Rapid cultural transformations are by far more difficult to achieve than already established institutional transformations, because modernization, i.e. political democratization, economic liberalization and cultural individualization is an ambivalent process which can cause anomie (Durkheim 1977), i.e. deep-seated feelings of confusion, anxiety and uncertainty. These feelings may be intensified by increasing economic polarization, widespread unemployment, political and economic corruption and the emergence of the ‘three industries of death’, i.e. human, weapon and drug trafficking (Lazerova 2005, 52).

Anomie, in turn, may lead to a populist cultural backlash disparaging out-groups and heralding societal conformity, authoritarian order and security, nationalist uniformity, etc. (Heitmeyer 1997). For example, while only 3.2% of Russian citizens in 2001 regarded the guarantee of civil liberties as an important pillar of a future Russian society, almost 80% of them claimed that their country needed an ‘iron hand’ to restore security and order (Volk 2006, 169 f.).

If successful, authoritarian backlashes are likely to jeopardize a sustainable process of European integration and mutual understanding between European nations because authoritarian citizenship conceptions entail negative evaluations and notions of (Western) Europe and the European Union. This can be seen for instance by the following quote from the national-conservative magazine ‘Polish Thought’, where Europe and its central values are denigrated in favor of an implicitly authoritarian citizenship conception: “Our contemporary Europe is a Europe of legal homosexual marriages and pornography, killing of unborn children, and defending murders against capital punishment, rap-music and hamburgers, the cult of earning money at any cost and empty churches, contempt for national traditions and
developing preferences for the New Age, for sects and Judaism in Christianity, `children`s rights´ and parents deprived of power over their own children.” (cited in Krzeminski 2001, 64).

Authoritarian political conceptions like these are not restricted to the political margin, but may play an increasing role in official policy and politics. According to Aleksander Smolar (2006), political scientist at the CNRS in Paris, the policy of the currently governing national conservatives in Poland represents nothing less than an anti-modernist “attack on the foundations of liberal democracy in Poland”. Denigrating human rights as opium for the people, the national conservatives have begun to restrict freedom of speech, to herald traditional values, to constrict freedom of assembly, to erode parliamentary control and to undermine the independence of the press, the legal authorities and the administration.

Another example is represented by the 10th World Russian People’s Council in April 2006 which took place under the clear patronage of state authorities and has worked out - on the request of Russian Orthodox Church - a document where it expressed its so-called ‘Christian´ point of view on human rights. This stresses alleged differences between the common concept of human rights and those suitable for Russian Orthodox culture. The congress statements appeal to elaborate a new human rights conception for Russia, principally based on Orthodox Christian morality, which opposes some basic human rights (f.e. not being discriminated according to sexual orientation).

2. Research Frame: Institutional Democratization = Cultural Democratization?

Therefore, we aim to investigate to what extent a genuine democratic citizenship identity is emerging in those European countries which were subjugated by authoritarian regimes (Portugal, Spain, Turkey) or communist dictatorships (Bulgaria, Croatia, East-Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Ukraine) for a much longer time than the core members of the European Union. How deep does democratization in these countries go? Does democratization remain on the institutional surface or does it gradually percolate into the cultural fabric of these countries? To what extent are these countries with an (to a different extent) authoritarian history committed to fostering democracy not only by establishing a minimal set of democratic institutions, but also by promoting a corresponding basic democratic mentality including an open, critical historical consciousness of the totalitarian past among its citizenry?

1 http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/103235.html (in Russian, 16.08.06)

2 Relevant formulation states: „We see as dangerous the elaboration of “rights”, legitimating behaviour patterns which are condemned by traditional moral and all traditional religions“(ibid.)
Instead of restricting our investigation to post-communist and EU accession countries in the east, we extend our analysis to Southwestern countries because there are some indications questioning the notion of Spain and Portugal as textbook models of successful democratic cultural transformations. Rather, the institutionally quite modernized country of Spain can serve as a striking case exemplifying the protracted difficulties of cultural democratic transformation.

According to the historian Carlos Collado Seidel (2002, 73), the current Spanish youth is to a large extent oblivious to the authoritarian regime under the former dictator Franco and its ramifications. This is not surprising as the two major political blocks had concluded a long-lasting `agreement of silence’ (Schulze 2006) regarding the authoritarian past. None of the former regime members responsible for uncountable violations of human rights were brought to justice (Wandler 2006). An open political examination of the civil war in the 1930s and the crimes of the Franco regime has only begun very recently, with the new social-democratic government under Prime Minister Zapatero initiating a law providing the descendants of the regime’s victims with a compensation of round about € 70 mio.

However, this new governmental approach towards the authoritarian past of the country is heavily contested in Spanish politics and society. Even the removal of the last Franco monument in Madrid (enacted as late as in March 2005) was far from being undisputed in the political debate. The chairman of the conservative opposition party, Mariano Rajoy, considered the removal `an undue break with the spirit of the transformation´ which according to him prescribes `looking forward without churning up the past´ (Dahms 2006). The conservative opposition also opposed the new law concerning financial compensation as “rouvrir inutilement les plaies du passé” (La Libre, 26.07.2006), asserted that “nobody will benefit from this quarrel about the past” (Kahl 2006) and maintained that the law will divide and polarize the Spanish society. The opposition’s stance must be seen against the sociocultural backdrop that 81% of the Spanish population are proud of the way in which the transition towards democracy has been accomplished (Wandler 2006).

Thus, in order to calm down the surging opposition in a country in which no less than 30% of the population (openly) consider Franco’s insurgency against the democratically elected government of the second republic as legitimate (La Libre, 26.07.2006), the government had to temper its ambitions: the judicial condemnation of former regime opponents by Franco’s military tribunals will not be declared invalid, and the maintenance of the colossal mausoleum

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3 We take Spain here as an example. It is not our intention to suggest that public life in other European countries assumes a superior democratic quality.

4 To be translated as ‘needlessly opening the wounds of the past’. 
in Madrid where Franco and the founder of the Spanish fascist movement, de Rivera, are
buried – erected by 14000 forced laborers within 18 years under extremely inhumane working
conditions (Wandler 2006) – is out of question.
Furthermore, Seidel (2002) asserts that the majority of the Spanish public still acclaims the
Spanish colonization of American tribes in the 16th century as a “positive cultural
achievement of uppermost importance” (ibidem, 80). He discerns enduring, though subtle
forms of a “colonial mentality” and a hidden “disparagement of Latin American people”
(ibidem, 94). Hence, the Spanish central bank had no qualms to put new bank notes with the
countenance of the colonial conquerors - and mass murderers - Hernan Cortés and Francisco
Pizarro into circulation in 1992, as the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America was
celebrated (ibidem). At the same time, prejudices against foreigners are widespread: more
than 60% resp. 40% of the Spanish youth is convinced that north-african immigrants are
`dirty` respectively `naturally born offenders` (ibidem, 98). Feelings of racist hatred like these
culminated in pogrom-like encroachments on Moroccan work immigrants near the city
Alméría in 2000.

3. Democratic Citizenship - the Central Research Term

Our theoretical premise is that the distinctive feature of a democratic citizenship identity
cannot be adequately captured if it is merely defined as an array of social skills, as the
acceptance of some individual rights & responsibilities and/or as the disposition of some
declarative knowledge about how the current political system, the economy and the society
works. Such a non-theoretical approach would oversee that a lot of these social skills and
virtues and declarative knowledge may also be well suited to please semi-authoritarian
political leaderships and bureaucrats merely interested in conserving the veneer of democracy
and shrouding the not so democratic fabric of actual political practice.
Instead, we resort to the theoretical conception of Kahnsnitz (2005) who has worked out a
basic theory of social science education. Following his conception, we see the distinctive
feature of democratic as opposed to authoritarian citizenship education in the promotion of
impartial, critical, i.e. post-conventional deliberation about current social institutions as
opposed to the promotion of biased, uncritical, conventional acceptance of current social
institutions (Kahnsnitz 2005, 131 ff.). Of course, these two concepts have to be regarded as the
two extreme ideal-type endpoints of a continuum.
Whereas authoritarian education aims at making citizens believe that currently prevailing
political institutions and social norms are legitimate so as to stabilize the contemporary order
and its power relations (conventional, affirmative reasoning, i.e. passive and uncritical acceptance), democratic education aims at enabling citizens to independently examine and discuss whether currently prevailing political and societal structures are really just, legitimate and efficient in order to improve institutions (post-conventional, impartial and evaluative reasoning, i.e. active and critical deliberation) (Kahnsnitz 2005, 131 ff.; Klafki 1996, 63 f.). Democratic citizenship means that people should be able to independently, impartially, critically (i.e. without a bias in favor of the status quo) and with reasonable empathy for all concerned social groups examine whether prevailing societal institutions, structures and processes are in accordance with principles of justice and efficiency so that the dignity of all groups is respected and all justified interests are reasonably balanced. This can be done for example by using the well-known `original position´ with its `veil of ignorance´ as delineated by John Rawls (1971). Critical, post-conventional deliberation as proposed by Kahnsnitz (2005) corresponds to the conception of the `ability to make appropriate political judgments´ which is a central aim in German concepts of political education (e.g. Massing & Weisseno 1997).

Why do we use this definition of democratic citizenship identity? Besides its sound theoretical basis, it is because critical citizens (Geißel 2006) in this sense are an important resource for the political culture of open, democratic societies as critical citizens in this sense are better informed about policy and politics, exhibit more political participation, and - most important - are more willing to defend basic democratic ideals than non-critical citizen. This was recently empirically demonstrated in political science by Geißel (2006). Therefore, a citizenry endowed with the ability and willingness of post-conventional, critical deliberation represents an important foundation for the sustainability and the further development of European democracy. In line with the basic idea of our approach, the Eurydice-Report of the European Union defines citizenship education as guiding people not only towards political literacy, but also critical thinking and active participation (Eurydice European Unit 2005, 10).

The approach chosen here makes it possible to distinguish between different, i.e. authoritarian and democratic ideal-types of citizenship education in a comparative study and to locate empirical cases, i.e. country-specific conceptions and realities of civic education, on the continuum between `education as pure promotion of uncritical acceptance´ and `education as pure promotion of critical deliberation´.
4. Research Field: Citizenship Education and Its Relation to the Political Culture

Civic Education in schools represents an important possibility to foster the development of liberal-democratic citizenship identities. This is of special importance for the transformation process in Southwestern, Southeastern and Eastern European countries which cannot count on such a long tradition of democracy as many western European countries. Correspondingly, the resolution adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education in the European Union (Cracow, 15-17 October 2000) has stressed the crucial role of civic education in fostering democratic societies in Europe.

However, it is unclear to what extent (explicit and implicit) concepts of citizenship prevalent in civic education in these countries are in accordance with the model of post-conventional, critical deliberation or whether there are still tendencies to cater to subtle forms to promote conventional, uncritical acceptance – even if under the ideological cover of democratic conceptions of citizenship (education). This is so because old authoritarian trends may still exert influence and/or because of economic disappointments with liberal conceptions of society in the aftermath of the political transformation. Hence, didactic concepts of citizenship (education) as expressed by institutions for teachers education, in curricula, in textbooks and in daily classroom teaching represent an important category showing to what extent formerly authoritarian countries are committed not only to erect formally democratic institutions but also to promote a democratic culture.

Didactic concepts of citizenship education are more or less influenced by and have to react to their surrounding political culture as expressed in public debates in politics and media and their explicit or implicit concepts of citizenship. For example, the content of schoolbooks is strongly linked to notions of citizenship prevailing in society (Baumann 2004; Radtke 2006). Therefore, we are especially interested whether and how the authors of curricula and textbooks as well as teachers and institutions of teachers’ education are a) influenced by, b) react on and c) deal with the surrounding political culture as expressed in public discourse and its explicit and implicit concepts of citizenship. We are particularly keen on finding out how actors and institutions of civic education are shaped by and deal with the enduring incidents and structures of the public discourse and society which are still not in line with a liberal-democratic notion of citizenship (f.e. gender discrimination, discrimination of out-groups, concealment or whitewash of the totalitarian past, etc.) - exemplarily delineated above with regard to the cases of Poland and Spain.

Hence, an important question is to what extent civic education in transformation countries has become an autonomous, independent social system which functions according to a genuine
pedagogical professional ethos (committed to promoting the values of freedom, equality, solidarity and peace (Breit 2000)) and which is thus able to critically reflect – and, if necessary, defy – more or less subtle attempts of other social systems and their elites (e.g. politics, religion, economy,…) to influence or even misuse education for the sake of the different goals (system stability, national conformity, power, moral ideology, etc.) of these subsystems. Take the example of recent political developments in Poland outlined according to Smolar (2006) above. How is citizenship education affected by those political developments? Do political movements in transformation countries like these also aim at undermining the autonomy of the professional pedagogical ethos? Or has citizenship education reached a degree of professional autonomy which hinders or even prevents possible encroachments of those anti-modernist political actors and their ideologies on the pedagogical process? Or is democratic citizenship education and pedagogical autonomy even subverted from within because a considerable part of the pedagogical elite responsible for civic education shares anti-modernist, anti-democratic values?

Besides possible open, outright rejections of democratic concepts of citizenship (education) like those in Poland or Russia, one must also take account of more hidden processes, i.e. possible differences between ‘Talk´ and ‘Action´. Even if the political discourse and official didactical concepts for citizen education dovetail with the concept of post-conventional political consciousness, these may be not more than lip-services fulfilling the function of ‘window dressing´ (for example in order to placate international actors like the EU) or they may be undermined because convictions of actors at the local level deviate from these purposes. First, concepts of citizenship as expressed in curricula (Action) may more or less subtly diverge from concepts of official citizenship promulgated in the political discourse (Talk). Second, concepts of citizenship as expressed in textbooks or furthered in teachers´ education may not be in line with those prescribed in curricula. Third, even if official concepts of citizenship education as expressed in curricula and textbooks may be coherent, they may be eventually (informally) impeded or subverted. Possible reasons for the subversion of educational practice compared to officially proclaimed aims of citizenship education could be…

− discordant informal political pressures exerted by questionable ideologies prevalent in the public and/or by the school bureaucracy

− discordant belief systems supported by teachers, by the teachers´ profession and/or by the authorities for teachers` education. For example, with regard to civic education in Hungary, Mátrai (1999, 362) cite a survey of Hungarian civic education teachers which
found that the latter strongly prefer the treatment of topics related to social cohesion (family, nationality) but staunchly avoid issues related to social conflict (ethnic minorities, social inequality). According to Mátrai (ibidem, 366), the central problem in Hungary is that civic education teachers “are socialized into avoiding problems. Most teachers, even today, believe that sensitive issues should be kept out of the school.”

- discordant values ingrained in the hidden curriculum.
- discordant (conventional) convictions and values defended by local social communities (f.e. parents) so that schools or teachers fear tackling certain topics

Therefore, possible differences between ‘talk’ and ‘action’ necessitate investigations concerning the relationship a) between public discourse and curricula, b) between official curricula and textbooks, c) between official curricula and teachers’ education, d) between official curricula and educational practice in the classroom and e) between textbooks and the educational practice of teachers. These investigations should be conducted in order to compare proclaimed / adopted educational aims with actual practice.

To summarize, our aim is twofold: 1) to investigate the democratic quality of national concepts of citizenship education in formerly authoritarian countries and 2) to examine the relationship between civic education and the surrounding political culture, i.e. the public discourse explicitly or implicitly resorting to or based on certain concepts of citizenship.

5. Existing Research: Gaps Left Behind by Former Studies on Civic Education

Recent research (Eurydice European Unit (2005) on citizenship education in European countries does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question whether a genuinely democratic citizenship education in the sense outlined above is emerging in European transformation countries. This is so because, firstly, it is not based on a theory of social science education (like the one of Kahsnitz (2005) to which we resort) and, secondly, it has largely narrowed itself on questions relating to the institutional frame of citizenship education, i.e. whether the subject is compulsory or optional, whether it is a separate subject or an integral part of related subjects, to what extent pupils and parents are involved in consultative or decision making bodies of schools, to what extent schools involve political/societal organizations in their teaching activities, whether pupils’ and schools’ performance concerning this subject is systematically assessed resp. evaluated, whether Europe is an issue in curricula and teacher education and so on.
Likewise, the `All-European Study on Education for Democratic Citizenship Policies´ (Birzea et al. (2004) is also not based on a theory of social science education and mainly described the institutional and organizational frame of civic education, i.e. the actors concerned with civic education, the politics of civic education implementation (especially the gap between officially proclaimed goals on the one hand and the insufficient financial and organizational resources provided as well as the lack of democratic structures in schools and in policy formulation on the other hand), school organization, the various denominations of the subject, the time scale of the subject, etc.

Both reports have hardly touched on the specific contents of civic education. To be sure, the regional reports of the `All-European Study on Education for Democratic Citizenship Policies´ (AESEDC) asked for the definition of civic education and provided the reader with more or less comprehensive enumerations of seemingly well-sounding, but very broadly defined sub-units and goals of citizenship and citizenship education as defined in the respective constitution and curricula like e.g. “human rights and responsibilities” (Albania), “intellectual and social skills for active and effective participation in democratic processes” (Croatia) etc. (Harrison & Baumgartl 2002, 29). Similarly, the Eurydice report briefly examined whether national curricula prescribe the conveyance of political literacy, democratic attitudes and values, and the stimulation of active participation (Eurydice European Unit 2005, 22). However, nothing was said about how all these well-sounding, but very general - and therefore ambiguous - contents are educationally constructed and construed in textbooks and actual teaching practice. But it is crucial to precisely examine what sort of political literacy, what sort of democratic values, what sort of active participation is taught:

Does conveyance of knowledge and political literacy just means to learn how political institutions function - thereby implicitly creating the impression that they function well and need no reform? Or does it also mean to critically examine possible defects and disadvantages of existing political institutions? Does it also mean learning that existing institutions are often contested? Does it also mean examining the potential gap between how institutions should function according to constitutional theory and how they actually function in political reality?

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5 But this is indispensable especially because one of the main results of the AESEDC study was that there exists an organizational compliance gap between official educational aims on the one hand and financial and organizational resources provided on the other hand. Therefore it seems reasonable to suppose that one will find similar compliance gaps in terms of educational content, i.e. between officially proclaimed well-sounding goals and actual educational practice (textbooks, teaching).
Does it also mean to compare controversial scientific theories according to which existing political institutions need reform or should be conserved? 

Does stimulation of active participation just means working together with and in companies and social organizations? Or does it also mean critically assessing the motives, objectives and means of these companies and social organizations?

Does conveyance of democratic attitudes and values mean conveying the notion that values have a certain, fixed meaning with benevolent political elites acting accordingly? Or does it mean pointing out that the exact meaning and implications of general democratic values are often fiercely contested in politics? Does it also mean making pupils aware of the fact that political actors may misuse democratic values as a mere pretext legitimizing their actions in order to disguise particularistic or even anti-democratic interests?

In contrast to the AESEDC and Eurydice studies, the comparative study concerning civic education in 24 countries performed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA 1999) posed detailed and intriguing questions delving much more into the specific sense attached to general themes in civic education. For example, it asked (IEA 1999, 611 ff.)…

- which are the historical role models chosen in civic education
- how much and what kinds of criticism of or skepticism about monarchs or national leaders are thought to be appropriate
- under what conditions are young persons expected not to question the military and the police as opposed to learning ways to deal with perceived misuse of power by them
- what are young people expected to have learned about those belonging to minority groups
- (if differences exist between men and women in the society in actual levels of political leadership or if there are very few women in positions of national leadership) whether these matters are discussed as problems or whether they are largely ignored
- whether young people are expected or likely to learn mainly about only one particular conception of democracy
- if there is attention to children`s rights

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6 A corresponding example with the aim of promoting active and bright European citizens would be to help pupils not only to understand the mere functioning of the polity of the European Union but also to evaluate it with resort to scientific theories asserting a democratic deficit in the EU (e.g. Follesdal & Hix 2005) and others repudiating this claim (e.g. Moravcsik 2002).
− what sort of understanding of the law, the constitution, the legislature etc. are young people expected to achieve – one that is largely limited to memorization of facts or one that is analytical in addressing questions of how well these structures and processes operate

− whether there are certain topics or opinions which students are discouraged from discussing in their classes

It goes without saying that these questions touch on issues which are of great importance for a democratic culture. But unfortunately, the result of the study is an unrelated assembly of national case studies and lacks a general chapter which in our view should provide a thorough, systematic comparative assessment directly relating the national answers to these questions to one another. This lack of rigorous comparative assessment stems from the fact that most transformation country chapters of concern for us (with the exception of Portugal) hardly or only very patchily answer the posed questions cited above.

Only the Portuguese chapter serves as a paragon in that it often goes below the surface of proposed, well-sounding general concepts and contents of civic education by showing that Portuguese textbooks tend to overlook the analysis of controversial national events, that they occasionally present gender stereotypes, that they give the impression that citizen participation is limited to voting, that they omit means of civic participation besides voting, that problems are frequently posed without recognizing their controversial nature, that polarizing events are sometimes glossed over and made less controversial, that the way in which various issues are approached in civic education reveal a tendency towards emphasizing compromise and consensus, that issues of social cohesion are analyzed without reference to the growing multicultural characteristics of Portuguese society and so on. These results show how important it is to go beyond the harmonious surface of civic education.

In contrast, the chapters portraying the situation in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Russia most of the time give only a rather general description of the issues taught (speaking f.e. of “types of social order, legal institutions, election principles and procedures, human rights, political parties” etc. (IEA 1999, 197)). They neither touch on the crucial question how all these well-sounding themes are exactly construed, constructed and framed nor do they systematically refer to the intriguing research questions outlined above.

For example, the chapter on Russia describes a textbook used in Grade 9 emphasizing that “in accordance with the Constitution, the sole source of power in Russia is its multi-national

7 Sometimes one encounters even almost meaningless phrases like “Teachers do their best to encourage respect for ethnic-cultural diversity and for the traditions of ethnic minorities.” (IEA 1999, 99).
people. The people are the only bearers of sovereignty; they ensure the country’s independence.” (IEA 1999, 535) Strikingly, nothing is said about to what extent (if at all) this textbook encourages Russian students to examine possible differences between constitutional talk and political reality, to take account of different interests of social groups within ‘the’ supposedly uniform people and their differing political power, to reflect about principal-agent problems in politics etc...

6. Research Questions

The lack of a systematic, genuinely comparative assessment of citizenship education in transformation countries and its interplay with the surrounding political culture which goes below the surface of pedagogical institutions and listings of well-sounding, general educational contents in order to delve into the exact social constructions of these contents necessitates a new research approach. Therefore, we aim to investigate – in a genuinely comparative, standardized manner – the following issues:

(1) The significance of democratic, i.e. post-conventional concepts of citizenship in civic education

To what extent are the didactic models and realities of citizenship education in Southeastern, Eastern and Southwestern Europe directed at enhancing an activating, critical concept of citizenship based on post-conventional deliberation instead of a passive, uncritical concept of citizenship based on conventional acceptance? In order to analyze this, we propose to distinguish four dimensions of citizenship each to which we have assigned detailed research questions in order to operationalize the conventional and post-conventional conceptions of citizenship in these dimensions. The four dimensions and the related questions are to be found in the appendix. These questions should also be used to investigate the dominant structures of the national political culture as expressed in the public discourse.

(2) Determinants of prevailing citizenship conceptions

Citizenship identities are not fixed features of a political community but a variably configured and continuously contested political field charted and claimed by political actors who seek to represent competing interests (Brusis 2001, 195). So, to what extent are specific citizenship conceptions shared or contested? Which social, cultural and political actors, forces, traditions, interests and ideologies in a country shape the contents of the political debate about
citizenship? Which issues concerning citizenship are debated, which are neglected? How does the political culture and the related public discourse shape official concepts and actual practice of civic education? How do those responsible for civic education deal with those issues of the political culture and the public discourse which are problematic seen from a liberal-democratic point of view (gender discrimination, discrimination of out-groups, concealment or whitewash of the totalitarian past etc.)?

(3) The degree of professional autonomy of democratic civic education
To what extent has citizenship education become an autonomous societal domain with an independent profession willing to defend a democratic educational ethos and that has the power and competence to critically assess dominant mainstream thoughts and structures in public debates and public life? Is the profession able to successfully insulate itself from possible problematic political or societal pressures trying to influence citizenship education for questionable aims (f.e. furthering rosy national identities by euphemistically distorting the past)?

(4) The relationship between Action and Talk
To what extent does the process of democratizing notions of citizenship remain at the level of official `talk´ (documents, speeches, etc.) or impact on educational `action´ (textbooks, teacher education, classroom practice), too?

(5) Conceptions of Europe
Which notions, conceptions etc. of Europe and the European Union are coupled with the prevailing national citizenship (education) conceptions?

To investigate these questions, we plan to analyze
a) the national didactic concepts for and the actual practice of civic education, via the examination of relevant curricula, textbooks, notions of teachers and their educators (via interviews) and classroom teaching in a selected sample of the transformation countries mentioned upon
b) the surrounding national political culture and related public discourses and political debates explicitly or implicitly concerning models of citizenship in these countries and its impact on civic education
7. An International Conference Setting the Stage for the Proposed Research Concept

In order to get a better understanding of the current situation of citizenship concepts and civic education in European transformation countries and to set the stage for an international empirical research consortium concerning a well-selected sub-sample of round about 4 countries, we intend to organize an international conference concerning civic education in European transformation countries with scientific experts from [countries of participants] on the weekend of June 8-10, 2007 at Bielefeld University.

Besides enabling us to reinforce our contacts to the foreign experts and to gather the countries best suited for our research aims, the conference is meant to further elaborate our research concept in the light of the special, country-specific knowledge to be presented on the conference in order to establish a standardized, genuinely comparative research framework. Thus, the conference is meant to enhance our knowledge particularly concerning

a) the institutional frame of civic education in the respective countries and related recent changes (subject, legal responsibility for the contents and teaching material, time scale, exams, organization of teacher training, etc.)

b) the most important issues concerning civic education currently debated in politics / the public / the profession of the respective countries,

c) explicit and implicit aspects of and possible contests concerning country-specific notion(s) of citizenship formerly and currently prevailing in the public and their relation to and impact on civic education in schools,

d) what contents concerning civic education are given priority and whether there are possibly certain topics unduly neglected, problematically conceptualized or taught, especially issues concerning the authoritarian past, the situation and discrimination of minority groups, gender discrimination, and the political system,

e) whether the conception of civic education in the country rather follows the principle of &lsquo;manufacturing consent&rsquo; (stressing conformity with the current order) or whether it rather follows the conviction that democratic societies are in need of sophisticated dissent (Sunstein 2005) (via stressing open and balanced discussions of advantages and disadvantages of theories, political institutions, societal structures, etc.),

f) what sort of understanding of the law, the constitution, the legislature etc. are young people expected to achieve – one that is largely limited to memorization of facts or one that is analytical in addressing questions of how well these institutions operate
g) which social, cultural and political actors, forces and traditions shape the contents of citizenship conceptions and civic education

h) how the European Union is discussed in civic education and which notions of the European Union are conveyed by civic education and how these relate to the notions of the European Union prevailing in the public discourse in the country

As the contributions of the participants and results of the conference are to be published in a corresponding anthology, the interested European public will for the first time receive an overview of the situation civic education in European transformation countries which goes beyond mere institutional issues and delves more deeply into the specific meanings of citizenship actually conveyed to pupils. Hence, some hints will be given concerning the state of the political culture in these countries and consequently the future prospects of a deeper, i.e. cultural integration and democratisation of European countries in the East and West.

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Appendix:
A First Proposal to Operationalize Authoritarian and Democratic Ideal Types of Civic Education / Citizenship

We propose to distinguish four dimensions of citizenship and have assigned the following questions in order to empirically operationalize the two theoretical ideal types of 1) authoritarian citizenship/authoritarian civic education as promotion of uncritical acceptance of current social institutions and 2) democratic citizenship/democratic civic education as promotion of critical deliberation about current social institutions.

a) Political and Legal system

− Do concepts of citizenship prevailing in the political culture / civic education rather stress the importance of conformity with current rules and traditional national value systems in order to legitimize current power structures or do they rather promote an open, critical discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of political and economic structures as well as societal rules and values currently prevailing in their country?

− Do they rather promote the abstract idealization of institutional governance (e.g. by merely claiming that current institutions would serve the needs of ‘the’ people and that power would allegedly be in the hands of ‘the’ people) or do they rather stress concrete, critical investigation of institutional governance (e.g. by openly discussing whether some social groups can exert undue power and benefit from certain institutional structures at the expense of other groups)?

− Do they rather stress the description of the formal functioning of institutions according to the constitution or do they rather direct attention to the fact that the reality of politics may differ from the formal ideal?

− Do they rather depict discussions and contentions between different political actors in the public and in the parliament as a hindrance to effective problem solving and as a threat to stability and order or do they rather approve pluralism as a mechanism to ensure that all social groups are appropriately considered in decision making and as a mechanism to make misuse of power more unlikely?

− Do they rather tend to neglect or downplay critical issues like environmental degradation in their country or do they rather strive to focus pupils’ attention on these problems?

− Do they rather prevent the critical discussion of possible derogations from democratic principles by political actors or do they rather further these?

− Do they rather construct a fiction of a nation with a uniform interest or do they rather point out national diversity and critically examine the consequences of steep cultural and socioeconomic inequalities with regard to the ability of equal participation of different social groups in the political process?

b) Role of Citizens

− Do they rather depict the political elite of their country as benevolent actors whom one should trust or do they rather point out possible principal-agent problems and stress that citizens’ vigilance and control is indispensable for democratic systems to function appropriately? Do they critically discuss to what extent the current institutional order enables citizens to sufficiently fulfill this function?

− Do they rather stress the importance of citizens’ duties or do they rather promote a balanced thinking concerning citizens’ rights and duties?
− Do they rather create the impression that citizen participation is limited to voting in elections or do they also acknowledge the possible importance of other political activities like f.e. peaceful demonstrations as legitimate and important ways to express one’s opinion in a democracy?
− Do they rather tend to ignore the possibility of reasonable co-determination by pupils at the school level or do they rather promote initiatives to further democracy in schools?

c) National Culture
− Do they rather put an undue accentuation on the worth of secondary virtues (’character education´) as such or do they rather further a critical discussion about the relationship between secondary virtues and legitimate purposes which they serve?
− Do they rather construct a fixed and uniform national identity or do they rather promote the recognition of cultural differences within the country?
− Do they rather tolerate or even buttress a notion of patriotism according to which citizens have to support the particular interests of one´s own country in international conflicts and should them give precedence over foreign interests regardless of their legitimacy or do they rather promote non-nationalistic, i.e. impartial thinking in international affairs?
− Do they rather one-sidedly stress the glory days of the history of their country in order to eschew a thoroughly critical examination of their totalitarian past and deny possible continuities until today or do they rather examine the dark sides of their national history and possible related path dependencies openly and critically?
− Do they rather depict imperialist/colonizing actions of their countries in the past as heroic times supposedly bringing culture/freedom/order to other people or do they rather critically examine the afflictions that their supposedly ’famous´ ancestors often caused in foreign countries in the past?

d) Human Rights
− Do they rather tolerate or even further the construction of national / societal ‘In-Groups´ versus national / societal ‘Out-Groups´ (even if just by constructing taboo subjects) or do they rather promote the recognition of all humans as equals irrespective of severe illnesses (e.g. HIV, mental or physical handicaps), their religion, provenance, nationality and sexual orientation, and critically discuss existing discriminations against societal minorities and their causes?
− Do they rather neglect the various existing societal discriminations against women (e.g. concerning time spent for household chores, opportunities on the labor market, etc.) or do they rather critically examine these discriminations and the outdated gender stereotypes on which they are based?
− Do they rather tend to ignore the issue of equal economic opportunities for citizens coming from different socioeconomic strata or do they rather treat this theme?