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8. Post-Socialist Transformations in Comparative International Education: Monuments, Movements, and Metamorphoses

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Lenin Lived, Lenin Lives, Lenin Will Live Forever! (Mayakovsky, 1985, p. 101)

In Yerevan, Armenia… those who took down Lenin's statue placed it on a truck and drove it as they might the body of a deceased person, round and round the central square, as if in an open coffin. Bystanders tossed onto it pine branches and coins, as they would for the dead. Still other deposed statues were placated just like newly dead persons. (Verdery, 1999, p. 12).

Abstract

The fate of the monuments to Soviet political leaders offers an ironic portrayal of educational research examining post-socialisttransformations. In this chapter, we connect the movements and metamorphoses of supposedly immortal political leaders across different former socialist contexts with the perspectives on educational research. Our aim is to trouble – and make strange – dominating knowledge, while opening spaces for knowing otherwise. This chapter offers a decolonial reading of academic interpretations that positioned change as the removal of socialist ideology in the early 1990s and attempted to de-ideologize education as an inevitable convergence to Western systems through neoliberal education reforms. Such reforms (and research) have positioned the former socialist education systems on a linear path to Western modernity, while overlooking the diverse trajectories of post-socialist transformations. By carefully re-examining the historical and colonial legacies of post-socialist education, we offer comparative and international education researchers an alternative framework from which different education imaginaries become visible.

Keywords (5-10): post-socialist, post-communist, educational transformations, Soviet legacies, decolonial, educational borrowing

Introduction

Throughout history, images of political leaders have served as powerful symbols of the stability or change of the political, economic, and social order. Their bodies – monuments and murals, "bones and corpses, coffins and cremation urns" (Verdery, 1999, p. 27) – constituted material objects, which could be easily manipulated to signal political transformations. As Verdery (1999) explains, "a body's materiality can be critical to its symbolic efficacy: unlike notions such as 'patriotism' or 'civil society,' ... a corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places" (p. 27). Throughout this chapter, we will use the symbolism and irony that accompany the movement of political (dead) bodies to cut across

dominant – and dominating – knowledges by creating a distance from the field's most familiar categories, making them strange and treating them as contingent. Following Haraway (1991), "irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true" (p. 149). Thus, we will connect the movements and metamorphoses of supposedly immortal political leaders across different former socialist contexts with educational research to trouble – and make strange – dominating knowledges, while opening spaces for knowing otherwise.

Since the late 1980s, the statues of Soviet political leaders have been on the move. Similar to the public event of removing the statue of Lenin in Yerevan in the early 1990s, which was captured so vividly by Verdery (1999) in the epigraph, many other former Soviet Union republics proceeded to remove the statues of Lenin and other socialist leaders from their previous centrally displayed sites – some statues being enthusiastically torn down by crowds and eventually replaced by new symbols, while others being moved only a little bit further away and out of public view. The fate of these (dead) political bodies uniquely captures the complex, unpredictable, symbolic, and sometimes paradoxical and ironic nature of post-socialist transformations in a multitude of ways. It is as if some of the complicated history of post-socialist transformations could be told by the statues themselves.

History told by Lenin statues
Losing his appeal
Lithuania forgets Lenin.
In Ukraine,
In embroidered folk shirt he remains.
His steel shoulders in Osh
Still carry his heavy coat.
In Georgia, it seems
He has missed his opening scene.

In Bishkek,
Lenin watches the government building.
In the history museum of Yerevan,
visitors great him.
In Grutas and Memento Park,
in heroical pose still he stands.
While in Georgia
his headless body rests
in backyards and abandoned storage places.

A patch of green grass, flowerbed, or
a fountain mark his absent presence.
His pedestals in Yerevan
waiting for their new heirs.
In his place in Tbilisi
Saint Georgia weaves peace.
Personating Frank Zappa

in Lithuania he sings.[1]

The movement of Lenin statues symbolize different freedoms after communism in the face of current political powers and as part of complex post-socialist transformations. "But what does this all have to do with education?" a reader may be wondering. Just as "statues participate in stabilizing particular spatial and temporal orders" (Verdery, 1999, p. 7), so do education researchers also contribute to sustaining, challenging, or overhauling different political, economic, and social processes. Having personally experienced post-socialist transformations in Armenia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, and Ukraine, and drawing on our professional experiences in the broader region of Southeast and Central Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, it seems the fate of the statues of Soviet political leaders offers an ironic portrayal of educational research depicting post-socialist transformations. In this chapter, we will 'follow the leader' (Lenin) – using a skill most of us learned through our socialist schooling – to trace the different trajectories of research on post-socialist education transformations.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will approach 'post-socialism' both as an intellectual space and a conceptual category and a human condition, which goes beyond the geographical boundaries of the countries in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, but instead captures the region as both a geopolitical and epistemological construct. As a geopolitical construct, the term 'post-socialism' is rooted in the historical legacies of the Cold War, reminding of the artificial division of the world along the so-called 'three worlds ideology,' while also signaling the ambiguities of geopolitical boundaries and the coexistence and relatedness of "multiple post-socialist spaces, places, and times" (Silova, Millei, & Piattoeva, 2017, p. 76) based on various political, geographical, economic, or historical commonalities. As an epistemological construct, the term 'post-socialism' echoes the notion of the 'South' in 'Southern Theory' reflecting the persisting "consequences of colonial [and post-socialist] legacy in culture, subjectivity and knowledge," while pointing to the potential of the region to serve as "a source of unique but often un- or misrecognized knowledge developed through layered and localized experiences of socialism and coloniality" (Silova et al., 2017, p. 77). Post-socialism as a condition refers to a shared experience by millions of people "who are still inhabiting this symbolic East which is fragmenting today under the pressure of new geopolitical divisions and North/South axes" (Tlostanova, 2017, pp. 1-2). Such an approach helps disrupt the hegemony of dominant globalization narratives while enabling us to see and interpret ongoing post-socialist education transformations through the lens of pluralities (Silova, 2010).

After providing a short historical overview about research on 'socialist' education during the Cold War, we will trace its movements (and metamorphoses) in various post-socialist contexts.[2] n particular, we will focus on two dominant theoretical responses that seek to understand changing post-socialist education conditions. The first theoretical response is the interpretation of the disappearance of socialist ideology in the early 1990s as de-ideologization

[1] When the statue of Lenin was torn down in Lithuania, it was replaced by a monument to Frank Zappa, an American roll and roll musician, composer, and bandleader. Ironically, it was built by a 70-year-old Konstantinas Bogdanas, a sculptor famous for making the statues of Soviet political leaders in Soviet Lithuania. This poem was written by Zsuzsa Millei with contributions by other authors of this chapter.

[2] Cowen (2009) used the phrase "as it moves, it morphs" to engage with a theoretical *problematique* of "the international mobility of ideas and discourses, institutions and practices across international boundaries" (p. 315). We will pay particular attention to the "metamorphoses" of education policies and practices across time and space.

(paralleling the removal of monuments), which tended to overlook the emergence of neoliberal education policy scripts as an active process of re-ideologization (a new form of colonization). Second, neoliberal education reforms were often interpreted from the perspective of global convergence, assuming a linear journey toward liberal democracy and market economy in different post-socialist times and spaces. After the analysis of these interpretations, we discuss how comparative education and international (CIE) research about post-socialist education transformations could be approached differently making visible alternative education imaginaries through an approach that brings into conversation post-socialist, postcolonial, and de-colonial perspectives to decenter dominating knowledge production.

The Creation of Socialist Myths and Rites: A Historical Overview

> In the end, to construct a building is first of all to foresee how it will be demolished so that, as a result, you will have the kind of ruins that a millennium later will inspire thoughts just as heroic as did their ancient prototypes. (Yampolsky, 1995, p. 99)

Nations feed on myth (Cummings, 2013). Socialism, as an ideological system, was "based on various myths, connected with rites, shrines and icons" (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 70). Following the establishment of the Soviet regime in the 1920s, the government launched a rite of honoring objects and spaces of celebrations: "the socialist 'gods' had been produced, together with all pantheon of socialist heroes, celebrated according to ritualized cult" (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 70). Of all socialist 'gods,' Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) received the central status of worship – a "prophet of genius," "the friend of the poor peasant," "genuine leader of the working class" (Tumarkin, 1997, p. 98). His cult was created during his active rule: "'Illich', as the Communists lovingly call him … is the mortal man and Lenin is the immortal leader and universal symbol" (Tumarkin, 1997, p. 84). His immortality (even after his death) became "a pledge of faith and loyalty to the party and government" (Tumarkin, 1997, p. 166), and his visibly incorruptible remains proved him immortal.[2]

The institutionalization of the cult of Lenin was accompanied by mass literacy campaigns and the establishment of a mass schooling system, aiding the Soviet government to spread 'the word of socialism' and gain legitimacy among people as quickly and as widely as possible. Viewing literacy as a path to communism, the Soviet government made schooling available to almost every child, compared to only seventy percent of boys and forty percent of girls in pre-revolutionary Russia (Brooks & Brooks, 2000). School enrollment increased rapidly across the Soviet Union, especially in Central Asia where mass schooling was not available before the Soviet regime. Since the October revolution, Lenin had entered practically every school in a form of portraits, and later as statues, textbooks, and posters. For elementary school children, he usually appeared as a friendly child with wavy blond hair, while older children encountered Lenin as a determined youth or a disciplined young adult through textbooks images and stories, as well as numerous artifacts (e.g., pins, postcards, medals, or even wall decor). The cult of Lenin was used to convey to children the revolutionary ideas of and a universal dream for a society of equality and peace. At the same time, it was used to legitimize the new regime by

[2] On January 9, 1925, the Soviet government launched the first round of competition to construct a monument to Lenin that would contain his remains (Tumarkin, 1997). It was completed on November 1, 1930.

promoting the vision of Soviet exceptionalism, further sacralizing the state and its leaders (Brooks & Brooks, 2000).

While schools were mobilized to put revolutionary socialist visions into practice, childhood was viewed as "a powerful icon of revolution" (Kirschenbaum, 2001, p. 159). Children were expected to continue "the project begun by the older generation of builders of Communism" (Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1952, p. 134). Teaching became a direct expression of ideology and was used to "convey to students, on the one hand, an image of the enemy and on the other a sense of national superiority" (Karp, 2006, p. 23). Through official curriculum and various extra-curricular activities, schools aimed "to develop social consciousness, loyalty to the Soviet regime, and the virtues of initiative, activism, discipline, and cooperation" among children (Matossian, 1962, p. 76). Over time, Soviet schools were expected to homogenize children's behaviors, actions, and appearances, ultimately resulting in the formation of an ideal Soviet citizen (Silova & Palandjian, 2018).

However, it was not until the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and Yurii Gagarin's successful space mission in 1961 – which came as "a severe shock to the United States' self-image" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006b, p. 9) – that the Soviet education system became widely referenced internationally. For comparative education researchers in the United States, the Soviet education system was first an object of admiration, prompting the US government to increase spending on education, especially in the areas of mathematics and science, in order to compete in the 'space race' with the Soviet Union. In the 1960s, however, Western researchers began to point to the authoritarian nature of Soviet education, including its uniformity and ideological indoctrination (Bereday, Brickman, & Read, 1960; Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Meanwhile, the Soviet accounts of American education became equally condemnatory, criticizing American schools for their emphasis on 'play' rather than serious study, "lack of universal access to education, and particularly the inability to deal with racism and school segregation" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006a, p. 21). References to bourgeois education were used to "sharpen one's own Marxist-Leninist position" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006a, p. 38) and further distance the Soviet education from the political West. As Sanders (1997) pointed out, ''comparative education on both sides of the Iron Curtain was deeply involved in a sordid and ruthless propaganda war serving wider purposes of the Cold War policy'' (p. 3).

The dichotomous approach to comparative education research – codifying divisions between East and West, socialism and capitalism, authoritarianism, and democracy, racism, and egalitarianism – spilled over into the international development efforts as both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to establish spheres of influence in nonaligned countries of the so-called 'third world.' Both superpowers used education as a vehicle for international development. In particular, the US model emphasized economic growth, decentralization, a decrease of public expenditures, and privatization, whereas the Soviet model focused on human capacity building, centralization, an increase of public expenditure on education, and collectivization (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006b). Without getting into the analysis of advantages and disadvantages of each approach, the most severe consequence for the field of comparative education was a reproduction of spatial partitioning of the world according to 'the three-worlds ideology' in educational research. As a direct outcome of the Cold War politics, this logic shaped mutual perceptions and research practices among scholars on both sides of the Iron Curtain in far-reaching ways, perpetuating into the post-Cold War era (Silova, Millei, & Piattoeva, 2017).

Erasing the Past: The Disappearance of Socialist Symbols

> The act of destruction of a monument, a mimetic symbol of the past and reviled power, was a particular act of catharsis, a way to start from the 'new beginning. (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 72)

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After the dissolution of the socialist bloc in the late 1980s, familiar socialist symbols, which formerly represented greatness, had to be actively removed – both figuratively and physically – from pedestals, textbooks, and institutions. Were these deliberate acts aiming to destruct symbols from the past (Czepczyński, 2010). How was the 'new beginning' understood by education research within the now post-socialist educational spaces? In general, the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s was interpreted within the dichotomous framework inherited from the Cold War. Post-socialist states were depicted as 'collapsed' systems ridden with 'crises,' which entailed an almost immediate removal of socialist ideologies and required a radical change of economies (from state to market) and, in some cases even a 'shock therapy' (Griffiths & Millei, 2013; Silova, 2010). The expectation was that post-socialist states had to 'catch-up' with Europe and the rest of the 'Western' world in order to transform into fully functioning democracies and market economies (often taking extreme forms) - always with the help of Western sciences and scientists (Silova et al., 2017).

In this context, post-Cold War political narratives introduced a critique of the Soviet educational system as overtly ideological, positioning Western education policies and practices as ideals to emulate (Perry, 2009; Silova et al., 2017). Reflecting on the educational reform movements from the 1990s to the early 2000s, Fimyar (2010) described the educational reform atmosphere in Ukraine capturing two significant themes: 'educational crisis' and "an attack against the postcommunist state" (p. 64). Criticism ranged from the political leadership's "lack of commitment, expertise, vision, and strategy" but also the 'slow' pace of adopting due to the institutional practices that were perceived as being 'too Soviet' (Fimyar, 2010, p. 5). Similarly, education policymakers and scholars across the post-socialist education space were often positioned as 'incapable' and 'unqualified' (due to their training in ideological institutions during socialism) in Western academic scholarship and policy documents (Silova, Millei, & Piatoeva, 2017). In this context, it is not surprising that the underlying purpose of the national development projects was legitimized through the 'rationalities of catching-up Europeanization' (Fimyar, 2010; Silova et al., 2017). In Ukraine and the Baltic states, the 'catching-up' language was used to demonstrate progression towards Europeanization and a move away from Russia (Fimyar, 2010; Silova, 2006).

Through international development assistance, post-socialist countries became the recipients of 'best practices' - delivered as 'educational reform packages' – ranging from new textbooks and curriculum to teacher training and finance reforms. For example, the World Bank has been using its power of political conditionings to promote neoliberal education reform packages, containing outcomes-based performance standards, accountability systems, decentralization of education management and financing, among other reforms (Mundy & Verger, 2015; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). OECD left a strong mark by introducing education policies associated with 'governing by numbers' from Europe and beyond, including a culture of large-scale student achievement tests accompanied by prescriptive reforms (Grek, 2009). Many international development agencies (e.g., United States Agency for International Development, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, etc.) use the achievement gaps identified by OECD Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) to propose wide-scale

programs, which promote market ideologies, competition, and other neoliberal reforms, often presented as 'best practices.' Yet, it was unclear how the interventions of international development agencies in post-Soviet education reforms were legitimized (Takala & Piattoeva, 2012). Takala and Piattoeva (2012) offer three possible explanations to explain the legitimization of international development assistance in the post-Soviet space, including: (i) resetting the mindset from totalitarian ideology to new Western scripts, (ii) introducing new systems and training professionals, (iii) decreasing budgets for reform seen as justification for assistance.

In the case of ideological replacement, textbook reforms replaced 'old' Soviet practices with Western ones. The textbook climate of the 1990s was described as having "democracy and market fever" where teachers desired reforms in textbook publishing practices; however, there were "no established rules in emerging textbook markets" and "there were no established mechanisms (and very often no funds)" (Kovac & Sebart, 2004, p. 43). This led to the mediating role of international NGOs and development agencies such as the World Bank and Open Society Foundations to play an important role not only in the production and funding of new textbooks, but also in addressing "crucial textbook publishing issues such as state monopolism and decentralization" (Kovac & Sebart, 2004, p. 44). In addition to textbook reforms, international organizations also offered assistance through training professionals as in the case of Armenian policymakers who were recommended to adopt modernized curriculum and teaching practices, to help facilitate Armenia's transition to what experts suggested a 'modern' (capitalistic) knowledge-based economy (UNESCO, 2014). And yet, while these transformations were implemented, Khachatryan, Petrosyan, and Terzyan (2013) claim that there was no concrete understanding of the reform: "no valid evidence indicating the education system is moving toward a specific well-defined goal, and … no priorities identified that would result in improving the overall system" (p. 6). Such critiques reflect the logic of coloniality present in post-Soviet knowledge production, or the post-Cold War East/West binary, where post-socialist reforms were expected to conform to "singular Western models, and abstract global universals ... for understanding post-socialist transformations" (Silova et al., 2017, p. 82).

From an outsider looking in, post-socialist education reforms were thus often interpreted in terms of global convergence (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). For example, scholars using world culture theory suggest that a global convergence implied a pattern of *one* global culture of schooling (Ramirez, 2006; chapter 12 of this volume).[3] In CIE, the discussion of global educational trends has been polarized into either convergence or divergence – both perspectives taking for granted the assumption of global 'sameness' – and thus implying that Westernization is the only trajectory available in post-socialist education contexts. In this context, world culture theorists understood the global convergence trends in education based on a narrow interpretation operating through a Western/North American approach, reproducing the idea of a homogenizing world society and setting forth only one trajectory for post-socialist education contexts. Such a dominant and dominating analytical approach omits – and often silences – the local interpretations and nuances, blocking the possibility of alternative understandings and interpretations of post-socialist education transformations (for critique, see Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012). Moreover, it cancels historical continuities or changes that have started well before the so-called 'transition' (Bockman, 2011; Millei & Imre, 2010), and disregards complex local conditions directing post-socialist transformations into many directions.

[3] For a critique see Silova & Rappleye, 2014 and Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012.

Contesting Westernization Blueprints: Divergence and Difference of Post-Socialist Education Transformations

> The old landscape is being re-interpreted and de-contextualized, while the newly constructed scenery answers new intentions and is continuously being constructed, both physically and mentally. (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 129)

When "statues began falling from their pedestals" (Verdery, 1999, p. 5), their spaces opened up to new ideological projects brought by a variety of international development agencies, ranging from large international organizations (e.g., OECD, European Union, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations agencies) to smaller non-governmental organizations (e.g., Save the Children, Chemonics, Mercy Corps, etc.). Although the involvement of these organizations in education policy and practice was frequently presented as resembling almost a complete takeover of the former socialist space by the Westernization project (see the section above), there are alternative interpretations. Just as in the case of empty pedestals, the post-socialist education space became equally highly contested, which is reflected in two important dynamics. First, international development agencies – and the education reform agendas they promoted – were not as uniform as they may have appeared from the outside; instead, they were rife with conflicting and competing ideological projects. Second, many international development initiatives were strongly contested by local education stakeholders who skillfully redirected, modified, and sometimes subverted outside reform efforts.

While the presence of neoliberal education reforms in the post-socialist education space has been strong, it is not entirely omnipresent. In addition to Western neoliberal projects unfolding in post-socialist education spaces, we also see the attempts of non-Western donors competing for the sphere of influence in the area of education, including Asian donors (e.g., China, South Korea), Russia, and Turkey among many others. Niyozov and Dastambuev (2012) describe them as globalizers with intersecting interests: hardcore neoliberals, disguised anti-neoliberals, negotiators, and genuine anti-neoliberals from everywhere. Governments of Turkey, China, Russia, India, as well as Aga Khan Foundation, and Gülen Islamist Movement have been acting in a capacity of both channeling and contesting neoliberalism in Central Asian countries and the Caucasus. For example, with their strong presence in these post-Soviet countries, Aga-Khan Foundation and Gülen Islamist Movement tried "to reshape neoliberalism through their particular Islamic ethical frameworks of dialog and synthesis of Islamic, Western, and socialist discourses" (Niyozov & Dastambuev, 2012, p. 7-8). Seeing their educational activities as the means for retaliation against the missionary activities of 'others,' Gülen foundation has been actively expanding the number of Turkish schools both in Central Asia and beyond (Silova, 2009a; Yanik, 2004).

Parallel to the Western efforts to erase everything Soviet in post-Soviet countries, Russia has been re-emerging as a donor organization in the field of education. As one of the new donors of World Bank's Fast Track Initiative (FTI),[4] Russia has opened discussions for its role in future development assistance in post-Soviet countries. Russian Education Aid for Development (READ) Trust Fund has already appeared in various low-income countries, including Tajikistan

[4] Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched in 2002 as a partnership between 'donor' and 'developing' countries to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education (World Bank, 2005). FTI is now serving to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

and Kyrgyzstan with the ambitious goal to improve the quality of schooling (Takala & Piattoeva, 2012). Mkhoyan (2017) also writes about Russian 'soft power' has come to play in Armenia since 2000. Through opening various educational centers, offering school textbooks, and promoting Russian as one of the main languages of instruction, the Russian government has aimed to strengthen its ties and expand its role in the post-Soviet educational space. Its relationships with the Baltics states and Ukraine, however, are more complicated because of military concerns and political tensions.

Policies of the global and regional donor organizations are not taken at face value at the local level by the national governments. Given the diversity of sociopolitical and economic contexts in the former socialist spaces, education trajectories have differed significantly. The countries joining (or aspiring to join) the European Union tried to position themselves within European education spaces by aligning their education institutions with the European frameworks and therefore radically restructuring the Soviet foundations of their education systems. Other countries, such as Central Asian republics, insisted on maintaining many Soviet practices along with the creation of their new systems (Silova, 2009b). In addition, as the case of Tajikistan suggests, there is a substantial ideological divergence in how international agencies and local actors perceive schooling. Unlike the neoliberal approaches proposed by the World Bank and other international organizations, local policymakers, educators, and parents in Tajikistan and other countries see schooling more in social, spiritual, and cultural terms (Niyozov & Bahry, 2006; Szakacs, 2018) about the paradoxes of the institutionalization of new educational tropes in the post-socialist Romanian education context). As far as Kazakhstan is concerned, it has managed to become a donor-free country with its reform agenda, while pursuing international cooperation on its terms (Kalikova & Silova, 2008).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the post-socialist countries responded differently to the 'reform packages' offered to them by various global and regional donor organizations. In some cases, cultural legacies clashed with the expectations of the donor organizations and only those policies were borrowed, which resonated with the interests of the local actors, or suggested policies were translated and adapted to the local contexts from the very beginning, or changes were introduced at a later stage of the reform sometimes resulting in the full reverse of certain reforms. As Niyozov and Dastambuev (2012) point out, Central Asian policymakers and practitioners are not "helpless victims, but exhibit agency in reshaping what globalization offers" (p. 4). And finally, one could find the noticeable difference between the adoption rhetoric and actual implementation of these travelling policies, revealing the political nature of the education borrowing processes and the power of local actors in determining the outcomes (Djerasimović, 2015; Gurova & Piattoeva, 2018; Silova, 2009b; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004).

An excellent illustration of how differently countries respond to seemingly identical reforms is the case of per capita financing reforms in two post-Soviet countries - Georgia and Latvia. As Janashia (2018) argues, while adopting the same financing policy, the two countries had different needs and priorities on their agenda. Georgia saw the new funding system as an effective instrument to promote transparency, effectiveness, and fair distribution of funds, while Latvia was trying to address its financial crisis by attracting international donor funding. As a result, both countries reframed the financing reform depending on their local needs. In this context, Western 'best practices' are not the only powerful drivers behind the post-Soviet reforms; instead, local priorities and power dynamics play an equally if not more decisive role in shaping post-socialist trajectories. These dynamics have been widely captured and analyzed in

several edited volumes, further revealing complex dynamics, contestations, and ambiguity of the post-socialist transformations (Chankseliani & Silova, 2018; Griffith & Millei, 2013; Silova, 2010; Silova & Niyozov, 2019). More importantly, this research has directly challenged neoliberal globalization and world culture frameworks, while "critically interrogating the nature of divergence and difference in the study of globalization in comparative education" (Silova, 2010, p. 4). Paying attention to the contestations of Western education reforms within the post-Soviet spaces thus enables us to create plural explanations for education transformations.

Beyond Singular Interpretations: (Re)writing Pasts, Presents, and Futures

> The leftover landscapes of emptiness or silence, such as empty pedestals, can be meaningful only for those who dare or care to remember. (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 74)

While monuments may come and go as geopolitical powers shift over time, the landscapes around them keep memories - "mythologies, genealogies, as well as cultural, community, and personal histories" (Holtorf & Williams, 2006, p. 237) - which are inherited and passed down from one generation to another. Unlike monuments, memories cannot be easily removed, destroyed, or replaced by those in power, because memories are usually kept at home, rendered in folk songs and stories, or performed in rituals. We only need to "dare or care to remember." Shifting the focus away from globalization and neoliberal education reform packages and their contestations in different local contexts, some scholars have focused on what lies *outside* of the global reforms in order to bring into focus a wide range of histories that enable us to see and (re)imagine education. As Silova, Millei, and Piattoeva (2017) note, "rethinking and rewriting the socialist past(s) through new and multiple frames" - as opposed to the singular history constructed from the Cold War binary frameworks - reveals potential possibilities for imagining multiple futures (p. 85). This brings a post-socialist approach in conversation with the post- and decolonial research, both aiming to decenter Western hegemony in knowledge and subjectivity in an effort to produce a different 'horizon of expectations,' one that is not dictated by a single way of life or a single political principle — whether progress, emancipation, or world culture expansion — but as a coexistence of different and non-hierarchical worldviews and experiences rooted in local and personal histories (Millei, Silova, & Piattoeva, 2018, p. 246).

Building on the work of Walter Mignolo, Madina Tlostanova, and other decolonial scholars, Silova, Millei, and Piattoeva (2017; 2018) outline three possible strategies of delinking from the hegemonic knowledge production about education in post-socialist spaces. The first strategy aims to overcome singular histories constructed from the Cold War binary frameworks of the East/West divide in order to disrupt the linearity and singularity of post-socialist trajectories present in some comparative education research. This strategy entails 'posting' socialism, that is, a rethinking of the socialist past through new and multiple frames that contribute to writing histories that run against the grain of the Cold War binary framework (Silova et al., 2017). This strategy is skillfully used by Yurchak (2006), which reveals the paradoxes of Soviet life through the eyes of the last Soviet generation. Drawing on ethnographic material (including personal diaries, memoirs, letters, interviews, photographs, jokes, and musical recordings as well as official publications of speeches, documents, newspaper articles, fiction, and film), Yurchak (2006) provides a compelling alternative to binary accounts of youth lives in the Soviet Union, showing how Soviet youth genuinely valued the ideals and realities of socialism but at the same time routinely transgressed the norms and reinterpreted the rules of the

socialist state. In this context, youth acted as "the system's authors" (Yurchak, 2006, p. 290) in their own right, creating their reality alongside the official authoritative scripts. In CIE and childhood studies, recent efforts of 'posting' socialism include Millei's (2013) research on teacher subjectivities in Hungarian preschools under socialism, Tesar's (2013) analysis of children's magazines published in Czechoslovakia, or Silova's (2019) research on temporal and spatial socialization of Latvian children before, during, and after the Soviet regime, among others. Combined, these attempts of 'posting' socialism avoid the stereotypical images of the socialist child as 'an icon' of revolution or the subjectivity of a "traumatized victim of a repressive regime" (Silova et al., 2017, p. 87). They give way to more complex depictions of diverse childhoods, a richer understanding of educational settings and how children were fashioned and exercised various subjectivities and agencies with/in and against dominant discourses.

The second strategy entails unsettling the established spatial partitions of the world through a careful re-mapping of the relations and highlighting the intertwined histories of 'different worlds' (Silova et al., 2017). In the field of sociology, Bockman (2011) offers a fascinating example of neoliberalism not as a hegemonic project of the West, which was simply diffused into post-socialist societies, but rather as a hybrid body of knowledge, rationalities, and policies that developed through a decades-long, but quickly forgotten, transnational dialogue in heterogeneous networks of economists from West and East. In CIE, an example of this strategy could be found in Tröhler's (2013; 2014) research on the Cold War legacy of the OECD and its central policy trends (e.g., standardization, statistical planning, educational accountability, large-scale comparative assessment), pointing to surprising similarities of these trends to the main pillars of socialist educational planning. His research shows how policies commonly perceived as emanating from the West developed in a "symbolic relation to the parts of the world that since 1989, ironically, have been relocated to the receiving end of the global politics of educational borrowing and lending" (Silova et al., 2017, p. 90). Similar entanglements of the different 'worlds' are also examined in Millei's (2011) comparative research of early childhood education in socialist Hungary and neoliberal Australia and Piattoeva and Takala's (2015) research on Russia as a new knowledge broker that moves education policies and practices from West to East and South, among others. Overall, such a relational approach to CIE research blurs the boundaries between different 'worlds,' thus contributing to its "central intellectual project, that is, to explore the interconnections and transfers of educational ideas and ideals across spaces and times" (Silova et al., 2017, p. 90).

Finally, the third strategy aims to reclaim our positions as "epistemic subjects who have both the legitimacy and the capacity to look at and interpret the world from our origins and lived realities" and methodological tools (Silova et al., 2017, p. 86). This includes recent biographic, autoethnographic, and collective biography research about socialist childhood and schooling by several comparative international education scholars (Bodovski, 2015; Fimyar & Kurakbayev, 2016; Silova et al., 2016). This research examines how childhood and schooling were constituted and experienced in different socialist contexts by discussing the complex subject positions that the authors themselves - as children under socialism - fashioned, inhabited, and exhibited. By using memories to foreground their personal lived experiences under socialism, these scholars speak against both scientific and political master narratives that dominate the space of post-socialist childhoods and effectively multiply the accounts of socialist childhood and history more broadly.

Combined, these three strategies of delinking from the hegemonic knowledge production in comparative education – 'posting' socialisms, highlighting relationalities between different 'worlds,' and reclaiming authority as epistemic subjects – open spaces that are more inclusive of different perspectives, experiences, and voices in comparative education (Millei, Silova, & Piattoeva, 2018, p. 236; Silova et al., 2017; Tlostanova, 2012; Tlostanova, Thapar-Bjorkert, & Koobak, 2016). It is thus a move from Western universality to new horizons of *pluriversality* where multiple worldviews - and worlds - can coexist on a non-hierarchical basis.

Conclusions

> Tearing down and erecting statues goes on all over the world, in times past as well as present; there is nothing specifically postsocialist about it. Because political order has something to do with both landscape and history, changing the political order, no matter where, often means changing the bronzed human beings who both stabilize the landscape and temporally freeze particular values in it. (Verdery, 1999, p. 6)

As we conclude this brief 'tour' of post-socialist spaces, we would like to draw the parallels - and further complicate the connections - between the movement of monuments and the shifts in comparative international education research. As Verdery (1999) argues, there is 'nothing specifically post-socialist' about erecting and tearing down monuments during the periods of significant political change. While monuments temporarily fix particular political ideologies and cultural values in time, enabling researchers to quickly and superficially interpret official education policies and practices, what is going on in the liminal spaces around the fallen 'bronzed human beings' often goes unnoticed by researchers. The intellectual space created by a post-socialist approach draws attention to these liminal spaces, bringing into focus multiple histories and complex conditions that extend beyond the dominant narratives. It also captures "the cultural interaction of the place, time, and society," thus serving as "a litmus paper of the transformations" (Czepczyński, 2010, p. 67). Dwelling in these liminal spaces – and carefully observing both the movements of 'bronzed human beings' and the landscapes around them – effectively disrupts the perception of linearity and singularity of post-socialist education transformations, revealing multiple metamorphoses that create splintering effects.

So why has not this depth and diversity of understanding post-socialist education transformations been more visible in comparative education research? Why has it been so readily subsumed by dominant globalization frameworks that view post-socialist transformations as simply residual? Here, we bring post-socialist studies into dialogue with post- and decolonial research to argue that much research about post-socialist education transformations has been framed in the colonial matrix of power, which continues to reify the symbolic foundations of Western (neo)liberalism through singular history writing and binary frameworks - East/West, socialism/capitalism, authoritarianism/democracy - while simultaneously erasing difference and divergence that lies outside these binaries. When the West is used as a single yardstick for measuring post-socialist education transformations, it is not surprising that we can only see familiar patterns that immediately meet the eye, just as the Lenin monuments direct the attention of the onlooker. Yet, it is precisely in such very moments when our gaze becomes fixated on the elevated 'monuments' that we need to pause and consider what may remain invisible (Carney et al., 2012; Silova, Rappleye, & Auld, 2019; Silova & Rappleye, 2014). By (re)focusing our gaze on the liminal spaces around the 'bronzed human beings,' we can begin to see multiple post-

socialist education trajectories crisscrossing the landscape (Massey, 2005; Sobe, 2018) – mixing, fusing, contesting, energizing, or canceling each other.

Further Reading

In an effort to introduce readers to a broad range of scholars researching post-socialist education transformations, we only include edited volumes and special issues of journals, which have a compilation of multiple authors covering the breadth of research both geographically and thematically.

- Gawlicz, K., & Marcin Starnawski, M. (2018). Educational policies in Central and Eastern Europe: Legacies of state socialism, modernization aspirations and challenges of semi-peripheral contexts. *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(4). [special issue].
- Griffiths, T. G., & Millei, Z. (Eds). (2013). *Logics of socialist education: Engaging with crisis, insecurity and uncertainty*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Huisman, J., Smolentseva, & A., Froumin, I. (2018). *25 years of transformations of higher education systems in post-Soviet countries: Reform and continuity.* New York: Palgrave Studies in Global Higher Education.
- Oleksiyenko, A., Zha, Q., Chirikov, I., & Li, J. (Eds.). (2018). *International status anxiety and higher education: The Soviet legacy in China and Russia.* Hong Kong: CERC/Springer.
- Silova, I., Sobe, N., Korzh, A., & Kovalchuk, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Reimagining utopias? Theory and method for educational research in post-socialist contexts.* The Netherlands: Sense Publishers-Rotterdam.

Mini Case Study

Mongolia's Post-Socialist Journey

We would like to finish this chapter by presenting the case of Mongolia with its interesting post-socialist journey skillfully captured by Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe in their book *Educational Import: Local Encounters with Global Forces in Mongolia*. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and break up with the 'older brother' Russia, Mongolia engaged in transformation conversations with IMF, ADB, World Bank, and quite a few NGOs. In this process, Mongolia was exposed to several educational reforms to which local authorities responded differently.

Three structural adjustment reforms imposed by ADB are perfect examples of different policy encounters. Tuition-based higher education reform fully replaced Mongolia's socialist practice of free education. In subsequent years, it was further strengthened by such follow-up reforms as deregulating higher education sector, reducing state involvement, and attracting the private sector. These reforms had sustained effects and fully changed the landscape of the higher education system in the country. Unlike this, the second ADB-recommended policy on decentralization of educational finance and governance did not live long.

As a consequence of an unspoken disagreement about the definitions of democratic governance among the international donors and the Mongolian government, the latter "drove a thick nail through the coffin of the decentralization policy" (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 100) by adopting a re-centralization law in 2002. Optimizing schools in rural areas (i.e., terminating grades 9 and 10 in small rural schools and placing continuing students in regional schools) was another dismantled reform. Although imposed as a 'rationalization reform' aimed

to use state funds more efficiently, the government had to respond to the boycott of parents, teachers, and principals and reverted to the previous practice.

Mongolia's import of learner-centered teaching and learning is an excellent example of the hybridization of the Western reform in local practice. Mongolian teachers, class monitors, and regular students indigenized Western student-centered approaches by adding hierarchical features to it. Also, their cultural constructions of 'good teachers,' which were not necessarily aligned with the Western beliefs, countered the neo-institutionalist assertion about the final destination of de-territorialized universal schooling.

Finally, teacher voucher reforms for in-service education made a perfect case of strategically speaking the language of the donors and creating the illusion of implementing a non-existent reform. Although the teacher voucher decrees contained the language of choice and marketization and encouraged the participation of non-governmental and international organizations along with the public ones, the original intent was watered down at the implementation stage. Rather than allowing teachers to have a choice of professional development programs, the reform preserved the socialist practice of teacher education and created a nepotistic system for the benefit of principals, methodologists, and directors of educational centers.

To sum up, Mongolia's diverse and complex journey is a good illustration of post-socialist transformation shaped both by the active engagement of Western and non-Western donor organizations and local-level resentment and recontextualization. Most importantly, the case of Mongolia shows that post-socialist transformation, even in the context of a single country, is not a linear process headed towards a single world culture. Instead, it is unique to the country's political, cultural, and economic contexts in the pre- and post-socialist period.

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