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Childhoods and Politics in (Post)socialist Societies

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The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War (1945–1989) and the subsequent disappearance of the so-called ‘Second World’ along with the socialist states and the project of socialist modernity that belonged to them. Overnight, the ‘Second World’ became associated with the Global South and was displaced to the periphery of Europe. Many Western researchers then went on to place the former socialist states on to the trajectory of Western modernity, with the expectation that these states would eventually catch up with the West (Silova, Piattoeva, & Millei, 2017; Tlostanova, 2017). In this chapter, however, we complicate this taken-for-granted trajectory of ‘postsocialism’ by focusing on the spatiality and the legacies of the ‘Second World’ with its complex and changing economic, political, and social conditions. While sharing the same roots and some common features of modernity (e.g. progressivism and Orientalism), socialism had nonetheless significantly deviated from Western modernity (Tlostanova, 2017). For many people in the region who associated socialism with more progressive societies, neoliberal capitalism thus appeared as a movement ‘backwards’ when compared to socialist modernity. These socialist societies were most clearly characterized by a developed welfare state, including socio-economic rights for women, depatriarchization, and well developed kindergarten and other services for families and children (Burcar, 2012; Griffiths & Millei, 2013). While many

people and children living in the ‘Second World’ did not really share the ideals of socialist modernity, they nevertheless had to adapt to it.

Being the object of the dominant ideology, socialism operated as a powerful political culture enveloping the whole society, including children. Studies of political socialization have explored the ways in which state and political culture are passed on to children either through implicit or explicit socialization and teaching. Educational scientists from the ‘Second World’ (see, for example, the pedagogical work of Kairov, Krupskaya and Makarenko)¹ considered political education as crucial for the transformation of their societies. By teaching a practical and collective life – such as working in socialist factories during the summer, picking fruit or vegetables, or participating in pioneer groups or demonstrations – they focused on developing politically aware socialist individuals (Aydarova, Millei, Piattoeva, & Silova, 2016). Due to this explicit focus on political education, research focusing on political socialization during the Cold War has often concluded that children learned to be subservient to the state and its ideals. Even today, some observers claim that this type of socialization and teaching stood in the way of learning a democratic culture (e.g. Csákó, Murányi, Sik, & Szabó, 2010).

Being the object of the state and political culture, however, is not dissimilar to how children in Western countries have been viewed in terms of their political development (Connell, 1987). Studies from the 1970s onwards have acknowledged that children are part of the political fabric and are immersed in large scale power struggles. Indeed, during the past few decades new studies have also shifted their focus on to how children understand and respond to these power struggles as active subjects rather than as the passive objects of political socialization (first studies were Coles, 1986; Stephens, 1995). There is a rich body of work exploring

children's political subjecthood today, both as part of macropolitical processes attached to the state and in terms of children's mundane politics (see e.g. Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Kallio & Häkli, 2011; Nolas, Varvantakis, & Aruldoss, 2016; Millei, Piattoeva, Silova & Aydarova, 2017).

Conceptually, we contribute to this body of work by bringing more focus on the children's mundane politics and its affective dimensions. Methodologically, we approach research from this perspective by examining past experiences about children's political worlds through the analysis of selected memory stories of childhood experiences in the Soviet Union, socialist Hungary, and in the former Yugoslavia.

Affective Dimensions of Children's Politics

When considering children and politics, we often see children's political engagement within a rather narrow conception of 'the political'. Because children are not able to vote, or are considered to be innocent or ignorant in relation to politics, the political role left for them is often seen in minimalist terms: it is restricted to being socialized into political culture and practice. To move away from this view, earlier research re-defined politics in terms of macro- and micropolitics (O'Toole, 2003) or as politics with a large 'P' and a small 'p' (Painter, 1995). Macropolitics, in these researchers' view, is directly connected to children's everyday lives in terms of official, state or world politics, and refer 'to the institutions and processes of the state, government and formal political organisations' (Painter, 1995: 3). Bringing children's engagement with macropolitics into focus, studies richly demonstrate that children do understand at least certain aspects or manifestations of macropolitics, and they re-interpret, respond to or subvert its effects in their own lives (see e.g. Hörschelmann, 2008; Skelton, 2010).

Micropolitics are conceptualized here as being embedded in children's mundane lives where children make issues political and act agentially, instead of remaining within the signified codes of the adults. Micropolitics may encompass any issues that children feel strongly about and that might connect in/directly to macropolitics. For example, children can take issue with not being asked about school rules, and when children come together to demand children's right to be heard, this action becomes politicized, calling on the need for democratic decision-making in schools. What ties macro- and micropolitics together, and what differentiates them from the concept of political socialization is that the understanding of 'what political' is not predefined. Departing from 'what is political' to 'when' or 'how' things become political, opens up a different perspective on children's participation in macro- and micropolitics.

Critics point out that separating the political into macro- or micropolitics risks relegating children to a space separated from that of adults and where micropolitics take place independently of the world of adults, and thus reproduces children as minors and not yet as adults participating in political life. In contrast, we want to emphasize that when we pay attention to 'when' and 'how' things become political, we do not make a separation between adults and children, as anything in an adult's or a child's life can be politicized. From this perspective, we aim to expand the notion of the political and to also consider micro- and macropolitics as an analytical division rather than as separately existing spaces of the political.

To further conceptualize micropolitics and its entanglement with the macropolitical, we draw on affect theory as developed from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984). We see the political not only as an aspect of an overarching social structure and/or power relations, but also as an affective, bodily experience.

Utilizing Deleuze and Guattari's notion of microperception and micropolitics, McKim and Massumi (2015) claim that 'even in the most controlled political situation, there's a surplus of unacted-out potential that is collectively felt' (2015: 58), which they identify as micropolitics, or affective politics. Micropolitics, in this understanding, operates outside discourse or language since it is not consciously understood. Instead, it is bodily felt. Locating affect outside of discourse has been widely critiqued from both social science and poststructuralist positions (see Hemmings, 2005; Papoulias & Callard, 2010; Leys, 2011). Furthermore, there is a body of scholarly work within affect theory itself that tries to evade the axiomatically assumed binary between the cognitive and affective (especially Blackman, 2012). In this context, and following Olsson (2009: 44–45), micropolitics is the vitality of thought and event in which the child is emerging within a 'continuous and continuously transforming relation with the [political] world in a process of becoming'. It is therefore crucial to recognize that there is an *affective* aspect to, or dimension of, the political, and which ties macro- and micropolitics together. Any attempt to understand politics needs to account for this.

For the purposes of our particular analysis here, the acknowledgment of affect is important for two reasons. First, given that children may have less experience or competencies in politics (Kallio and Häkli, 2011), they can be oblivious to the nuances of the political system, the particular historical moment, and the relationship between political causes and effects. Yet, they also do understand and reinterpret events as they – whether directly or indirectly – manifest themselves in their own lives (Hörschelmann, 2008). According to Theresa Brennan's work on affective transmission, the individual is never affectively self-contained and 'there is no secure distinction between the "individual" and the "environment"' (2004: 6).

She invokes sociological, psychological, and neurological scholarly work in order to explain ‘how we “feel the atmosphere” or how we pick up on or react to another’s depression when there is no conversation or visual signal through which that information might be conveyed’ (Brennan, 2004: 9). While Brennan’s work on affective transmission focuses mainly on its neurological aspects, some other authors, such as Blackman (2012), focus more on the psycho-social processes through which affect is mediated as it can be, for example, through the category of suggestibility. From this perspective, we can extend the work on the transmission and the mediation of affect into the political sphere to suggest that children can attune to macro- and micropolitics through an affective atmosphere in a classroom or teachers’ dispositions towards particular issues or events (Millei, 2019).

Second, since our examples are coming from memory work, and because of the role of collective and personal memories in one’s actions, it is crucial to recognize the affective dimension of memories themselves, both when it comes to the content of the memory and when it comes to the way memories of the past are recalled in the present. In their work on the materiality of affect in relation to memory, Fox and Alldred (2019) treat memories as affective forces that shape the present and the future, while at the same time cutting across the still persistent binary of the individual and the collective. Their approach also attempts to work around the binary of cognition/affect, by claiming that ‘personal memories encompass cognitive reactions to events, emotional responses and corporeal sensations such as pleasure or disgust, as well as habitual memory’ (Fox & Alldred, 2019: 32). Our approach in this chapter is one that also tries to account for these aspects of memory work.

Methodologically, the four memory stories analyzed here were created during the collective biography workshops (Davies & Gannon, 2006) of our research project Re-Connect/Re-Collect: Crossing the Divides through Memories of Cold War Childhoods. Upscaling and mixing the research tradition of a poststructural version of collective biography with artistic forms of inquiry, the project explores childhood memories to learn about societies from the analysis of micro-moments of subjectification, discursive effects, relational, affective, embodied, and material entanglements. From more than 200 memories produced by 77 participants from 35 countries during the five workshops, we selected four memories. Memory stories were collectively created, explored, and rewritten during the workshops to include emotional, embodied, and material aspects of lived experience.

We created stories about children's experiences of their political worlds through a contested process of memory work. We acknowledge that adults cannot have direct access to how they perceived, understood, felt, and acted in the world when they were children. A collective biography method, however, can help us to intimate this world by 'thinking through' memories of childhood (Millei, Silova, & Gannon, 2019). By analyzing memories, we consider the complex and relational engagements of children against unfolding social change in their respective historical contexts, and also during societies in upheaval and war. Collective memory stories produced during workshops offer rich descriptions of an event, including embodied sensations, actions, feelings, wishes, and thoughts. The aim of collectively working on memories is to reach this richness by asking clarifying questions from the person remembering, connecting memories, and by removing sentimentalism, conceptualizations, and adult type of explanations from the memory stories. We take these stories as 'data' and proceed to collectively analyze

them. In the following sections we draw on four memories in which children are affected by and/or engage with the political world in different ways.

Running for Shelter

It is a beautiful day – warm and sunny. His mum picks him up from the kindergarten. First, they go to the market to buy some groceries and then head home where his sister is waiting for them, after she returned home from school. However, the second they leave the grocery store they hear sirens – the ones that indicate an air attack. They run to the closest shelter, according to the usual drill. The shelter is basically a fire station – huge, but dark and quite stuffy, because of the people crammed inside. It is the boy’s first time in this shelter – usually they go to the one next to their house – he does not like it at all. He appreciates some attempts by the grown-ups to calm him down by offering biscuits, but all he really wants is to leave this terrible place. His sister is at home alone. He is listening as his mother consults with other grown-ups about what to do next. Some people advise her to stay here with the boy, because they would be safe and the daughter is probably already at the shelter next to their house. This does not seem to satisfy the mother as she turns to him and asks: ‘Do you mind staying here while I go home to check on your sister? And one of these ladies from our neighborhood will bring you home after the attack is over?’ He immediately refuses this with an unhinged fear and panic that leaves no space for negotiations. His mum leans over, puts her arms on his shoulders, looks him in the eyes and says: ‘In that case, we run’. And then she does something that, for the boy, marks the seriousness of the situation: she takes off her heeled shoes. This strange act confuses him

deeply. 'This way I will run faster'. It makes sense, but in his mind the whole situation is just not right. His mum is taking off her shoes in public? Running barefoot? On a dirty road? He has never seen her doing something like this before. 'Ready?', she asks. He nods. They start running. All he sees is the beige heeled shoes dangling in his mom's hand. All he hears is the sound of her bare feet hitting the asphalt.

Within the context of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, the one in Croatia lasting from 1991 to 1995, this memory reveals a young child searching for understanding amidst the immensity of the situation surrounding him. The macropolitical context of the war, including air raids, enters into the child's meaning making through the affective dimension. The child fears being separated from his mother and the prospect of being left alone with strangers in a dark, stuffy, and crammed bomb shelter. The offer of biscuits does not ease the fear. The sound of sirens, waiting for the bombings, the mother's firm look, hold and question, and the removal of her shoes, create affect that is enveloping the child. The silent run punctuated by the bare feet hitting the asphalt sustains this atmosphere. War is not happening in this specific moment, but its memories are present, supplying 'a capacity to materially affect the world' (Fox & Alldred, 2019: 21). In the child's memory story, tropes of war are not remembered, but his and others' memories of war operate in the background to the event otherwise foregrounding the shoes.

The child does not imitate the behaviour of the mother. Instead, emotions and affective states outside of spoken language are communicated as an 'affect attunement' (Stern, 1998: 142) in which the performance expresses 'the quality of feeling of a shared affect state'. Although Stern is focused on the relationship

between mother and infant, this concept of the affective attunement, if understood in a broader and more flexible way, can be used for affective politics, reflecting the ‘complexity of collective situations’ rather than the ‘transmission of the “same” affect’ (McKim & Massumi, 2015: 56). The boy in the shelter finds himself in an ad-hoc collective situation the atmosphere of which is felt as being full of fear. It is through his mother’s gesture of taking off her shoes that he realizes the ultimate seriousness of the situation and even though, simultaneously, he does not necessarily understand the historical moment and geopolitical constellations he is a part of or possibly even the direct danger he is in. He feels this as affectively transmitted from the adults and from the atmosphere surrounding him. Furthermore, the boy’s own affective state has an impact on the adults as well: his mother’s decision to take the boy out of the shelter during the raid – a decision that may be considered irrational by some observers – has to do with the affect emerging from the boy’s own bodily engagement.

The memory reveals individual and, at the most, family identity. But the larger ethnic, national, and therefore collective identities of both the self seeking safety and the military foe carrying out the attack are not mentioned. Thus the micropolitics of the child are not connected to the macropolitics of ethnocentrism and nationalism. Indeed, as such larger collective identities may demand that either sacrifice or murder be committed in their name, micropolitics can thus be a form of declaring autonomy from such macropolitics. In addition, in multi-ethnic societies, naming the enemy ethnically and/or nationally (rather than in terms of social function or political ideology) can imply Othering members of a given group the individuals of which may also constitute a minority on your own side of the frontline as it were and who are thus stereotyped and produced as the potential

targets of retribution. Last but not least, such naming can also be a form of promoting essentialist and homogenizing narratives of collective guilt that can obscure both more politically nuanced understandings of the war as well as post-conflict reconciliation. In the next memory story, another social upheaval and school holidays are taking place and a girl from Kazakhstan visits her parents' friends in Moscow.

The Ultimate Moscow Solo

It is the second day of being left alone in a huge flat in Moscow. The living room is the girl's favorite because of a high shelf full of books about art and artists. She is reading a biography of a Renaissance painter. She spends hours looking at the painter's work and reading about his life. She feels tired. What to do next?

The TV in the middle of the room is useless. The girl tried it the other day, and then again this morning. It shows Maya Plisetskaya doing fouetté after fouetté. The girl's mother commented earlier that every time something happens in this country, they show a ballet on TV. Now Swan Lake is broadcasted non-stop even though the TV programme in the newspaper has other programmes scheduled in it.

During the first day when the events started unfolding, her mother gave the girl the passports, the money, and the tickets to get back to their hometown in case something would happen. Taking the documents, the girl was wondering what she is supposed to do with them if her mother did not come back to the flat that evening.

The flat is quiet during the day. Radio Echo Moskvy reports from the square in front of the White House every hour or so. It does not make much sense to the girl.

This is the second day and she is making rounds between the sunny kitchen through the corridor to the darkness of the living room while spending several minutes in front of the entrance door hoping her mother would come back. Her mother told her earlier about the meetings that were taking place, about the barricades people were building in the square, the speeches, and the importance of 'saving democracy,' as she put it. The girl knows her mother is doing something useful. She feels hot, tired, and annoyed from the long wait, from being left alone, from being unable to join everyone else outside, from not knowing what will happen next.

On 19 August 1991, a group of Soviet leaders attempted a coup d'état against the government of Mikhail Gorbachev. The child's mother is participating in the protests preceding a significant political change. The mother's long absence creates an emotional atmosphere in the flat: a suspense. The mother leaves the child alone with her documents and the child is uncertain about the situation – she does not know how to understand and act in the situation that might unfold next; a feeling of uncertainty pervades the waiting. The child follows the events through her mother's explanations and news on the radio. The continuous broadcasting of the ballet *Swan Lake* on TV suggests to the child the significance of the events which, according to the mother, is best for the child not to participate in. The mother is physically absent, but this absence does not produce a lack in the memory. Instead it creates the very center of the memory, an affective abundance: resentment, feelings of abandonment, and burden of

responsibility for the documents. This affective dimension is her way of understanding what is taking place in macropolitics.

The protection of the mother and the protective space of the flat, and the agency entrusted to the child by handing her the documents and the money, run hand in hand. The child stays inside the flat for three days and causes no concern for the mother. Waiting indirectly supports the democratic revolution. Waiting and the dim rooms, the TV, the radio, the books act as social ‘agents’ (Fox & Alldred, 2019: 23) producing an affective atmosphere of suspension, being on the ‘threshold, between knowing and unknowing’, while the atmosphere is not ‘recuperated as knowledge’ (MacLure, 2013: 228). The uncertainty of the child assembles with the uncertainty of the revolutionary situation.

The broadcasting of *Swan Lake* and the radio reports are understood by the child. In this memory story, the ways and means of resisting the political regime come from the inside, the room, from the knowledge on how to decode the media, what to be alert to, why the demonstrations are important. This knowledge is the result of familial transmission and not of the child entering out into the public sphere and engaging directly with the macropolitical. In the next story, the child participates outside of home in macropolitics.

The Poem

Hungary in the 1980s. She leaves home wearing a blue skirt and a white blouse with a red pioneer scarf. Her mum has prepared her uniform with care, so it looks proper for this special day. The child loves reciting poems and as she had previously won competitions for doing this, she was chosen for this occasion too.

After one of the lessons, a grey Volga arrives at school to pick up her and another girl and to take them to the party building. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is celebrating with a great feast. She has learned the poem by heart, though she did not like it. It was chosen by her Hungarian literature and grammar teacher who made the girl practice the poem over and over again in preparation for this big event. The girl liked teasing her teacher by accentuating the poem in the wrong way. This made her teacher angry.

In the party building, which is in the very centre of the town, there are many men wearing dark suits present. Their singing of The Internationale fills the hall. Flags and photos of important party members hang on the wall and the tables are covered by red tablecloths. The girl does not feel nervous reciting the poem. She enjoys having the audience paying attention to her. She recites the poem about building communism and a better future with the right accent. As the poem ends, the whole great hall claps for her. The girls are invited for some snacks, 'pogácsa', and juice. She is proud of her performance and imagines her parents being proud too when she will tell them about her recital. She also feels happy to miss some lessons in school and looks forward to publicly reciting a poem again – whatever it will be about.

The girl participating in a macropolitical event understands the event in her own way and according to her own interpretations. She feels proud of her act and it is important for her that her parents might also be proud of her when they hear about her performance. She performs her act well, without mis-accentuating the lines. She understands that this is not a situation where she can misbehave. The knowledge of the Party and its importance, the affective atmosphere created by the arrival of the exclusive

car, the set tables, the dressed up party members singing, and the immensity and decoration of the space, envelops the child and elevates her performance.

On the level of the collective, we can recognize some kind of affective attunement (Stern, 1998; McKim & Massumi, 2015) and even assume some level of affective transmission, resulting in a specific atmosphere (Brennan, 2004) that sets up ceremonial expectations that are supposed to communicate a broader political message. On a very individual level, however, we can also recognize that enjoying the performance is complimented by the happy feeling of missing lessons at school. This feeling relativizes the political importance of the girl's act. It reveals an ironic situation in which what might seem the passive reproduction of dominant ideology is, in part, a chance for the child to escape the everyday reproduction of another dominant ideology, i.e. that present in the pedagogical institution of the school. The child is emotionally invested in the practice of reciting poetry, but possibly with different emotions than those expected or assumed within the dominant ideology of the country. She does not care about the political content of the poem as long as she gets to enjoy the spectacle of the performance and the opportunity to miss school. This memory story thus points to how opposition and resistance can also be self-generated by the child's emotions to some extent. The initial subversion of practicing the recitation does not seem to be motivated by any external factors or examples. Later on, the child performs well but not to support party ideology but to reap her own returns, these contained in the enjoyment of being on stage and missing school.

The child also realizes that she has the capacity to make the party celebrations run smoothly or to disturb them. In this situation, her act becomes a part of 'big' politics, even though this is actually done in relatively small ways. If she 'messed'

with the poem, an ideologically charged poem, she would ‘mess’ with the party event and thus with party politics proper. While practicing for the recitation in front of her teacher, creating such a ‘mess’ became an opportunity which the child seized upon by mis-accentuating the poem and enjoying the process. But for the celebrations proper, this agentic act – knowing that the opportunity for subversion exists but deciding not to act on it – contributes to the affective experience and enjoyment of the situation. The child is proud of making the ‘right’ choice which, this time around, consists of supporting party politics by reciting the poem with correct accentuation. In the last memory story, even more conscious politics is enacted by the child.

Radio Študent

In 1981, while fiddling around on the FM scale of his Soviet made Selena radio set, the boy discovers Radio Študent from Ljubljana. There is no hit parade pop and rock music on Radio Študent, but a lot of contemporary independent and alternative rock and as well as punk, reggae, ska, electronic music, and avantgarde jazz; a lot more than on any other domestic or foreign stations the boy has listened to so far.

He also records songs on the mono Grundig portable tape recorder. He promptly starts and stops the tape machine between songs, writes down the names of the bands and songs, and swaps tapes in between so that the tapes are more consistent in terms of the individual genres or the bands recorded on them.

Punk attracts him the most. It seems to address him directly, the raw and fast music excites his body, but his mind is engaged as well: punk has opened up

a whole new reality to him. He has definitely outgrown his otherwise small record collection of the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Santana, the Bee Gees, Abba, and the Yugoslav rock stars Bijelo Dugme; all these are a part of what he now knows is 'The System'.

Friends are made and unmade on the basis of their relationships to punk. He soon swaps a Discharge tape he has made for a Dead Kennedys one made by a schoolmate who also lends him two Ramones LPs. He thinks those schoolmates of his who do not listen to punk are missing out on something really crucial. He feels special with his privileged access into the world as it really is: profoundly wrong and in need of change.

He writes to his father in England asking him to send him punk records from there. This the father does and so the boy's collection is enlarged by the Dead Kennedys, Anti-Pasti, and the UK Subs but not by the explicitly anarchopunk band Crass which the boy specifically asked for.

He now lends even more records to, and borrows from, the community of punks in Ljubljana he is now a member of. Sometimes the police harass the punks by stopping them in the street and taking down their particulars. He becomes very tense and apprehensive every time this happens to him. Some of his friends have had their flats raided. He lives in constant fear this will happen to him one day too. But it never does.

The young adult in this story is actively engaged in searching, recording, and sharing music. This is not necessarily an experience that is specific to socialism. Growing up in England, for instance, the novelist and poet Lavinia Greenlaw recalls listening to radio under the blankets clandestinely. She first listened to BBC Radio 1 but then

moved on to Radio Luxembourg which, because it was foreign, made her ‘feel like a member of a more exclusive club’. She then moved even further on to the illegal pirate radio station Radio Caroline which was ‘like eavesdropping on the world of older teenagers’. Later she became a fan of the radical DJ John Peel on Radio 1 and started taping his programmes and making notes to them (Greenlaw, 2007: 73). In a similar manner, the boy in the above story listens to the radio with excitement; there is always the danger of being found out, but there is also the enjoyment of discovering new (musical) worlds on his own.

One set of records (representing officially sanctioned music) is being replaced by another: independently produced, broadcast, and distributed music. This music, the selection of friends based on it, and the new community thus formed through all these factors, become part of the young adult’s political becoming and his conscious macropolitical stance. The music and the cultural styles, practices and ideologies disseminated through radio and other media, especially records and tapes, engender micropolitical opposition to the immediate environment in which they are located but also have the potential to relativize the macropolitical differences between the West and the East. That is to say that such music could also give its subjects a feeling that they were not only in a generational opposition per se but also in a more principled political opposition to the official structures and ideologies of both the West and the East. Significantly, one of the first punks in the Soviet Union, Yevgeny ‘Yufa’ Yufit, remembers first listening to the Sex Pistols in 1977 on the shortwave radio transmissions of the BBC and telling one of his friends ‘In England there are idiots just like us!’ (Herbert, 2019: 17).

Thus, both Eastern and Western audiences could be listening to the same music, be thus part of a common transcultural subculture and hence formative of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1993) that traversed the boundaries and borders of the specific cultures, nation-states or opposed geopolitical blocs in which these audiences were otherwise located.

The material interactions of the closed room, the radio, its different stations, the tape recorder, music, tapes, and tape labels produce affect and the world ‘away from structural or systemic “explanations” of how societies and cultures work’ (Latour, 2005: 130 in Fox & Alldred, 2019: 23). The everyday act of listening to the music and its lyrics politicizes the youth’s being, simultaneously forming oppositional stances in his immediate social world and in the world at large. His father helps him along on his quest for music. Punk music becomes a medium through which his new community is generated. Affect and materialities connect him to macropolitics and his knowledge and resistance emerge in partly sanctioned ways; this being a resistance that is both affective as well as rational against the dominant ideological frames.

Politics and Childhood in Post/socialism

Our overall aim in this chapter was to introduce and illustrate how childhood and politics take different shapes and modes in the particular timespaces and socio-material conditions of socialism and postsocialism. We paid special attention to the diversity of experiences that were partly related to these spaces, as well as to assembled materialities, affect, and emotions that conditioned, enabled, and facilitated children’s actions, political or otherwise, and their becoming. The variety of political acts and becomings took different forms, such as watching, deciding and following, waiting,

willing and pleasurable subjectification, and explicit resistance depending on the situations, the children's own competencies and agendas, and the system itself and its infrastructures. Children's politics in the first story remained unaffected by ethnic and nationalist ideologies; served revolutionary struggles in the form of active passivity in the second story; seemingly supported official ideology through the recital of a communist verse in the third story; and grew into stronger generational and political resistance in the final story.

Macropolitics emerge in the last memory story, and its possibility in the story of 'The Poem', and they take form in the mundane acts of collecting and spreading the music through private recordings or a recital of a poem. In these stories, and in 'The Ultimate Moscow Solo', the child gathers her or his interpretation of macropolitics surrounding them and their families, and also fashions his or her actions in relation to this understanding. The affective dimension of these acts, what Deleuze and Guattari term as micropolitics, thus join or support macropolitics. The understanding of macropolitics, affect and children's actions are produced in tandem with the affective atmosphere of the events. The materialities in all the memory stories discussed – shoes, the TV, the radio, a poem, the car, tapes and records, etc. – produce affect and connect micro- and macropolitics. They assemble different 'signals', relations, bodies, and emotions, which are carefully interpreted by these children who become attuned to the sounds, messages, and affect as they listen or watch. Political subjectivities and acts are thus produced through these materialities and affective states and atmospheres. By the cultural alignment between micro- and macropolitical autonomy, new forms of politics emerge. Micropolitics in children's everyday life connect with macropolitics through affective and material assemblages and rational elements while entangling public

and private places with their different understandings of, and engagements with, politics on a societal or official level.

The experiences described in our memory stories took place during state socialism and within the contexts of large scale political events. In these societies, macropolitics appeared in a very explicit manner in stated ideological domains, be that of socialism or ethno-nationalist ideals, and while children were actively socialized into these political cultures, they also had a role in rewriting these cultures from their own standpoint. Therefore, and if we are to take children's politics seriously, our analysis shows at least two things that open up spaces for further research. Firstly, there is a need to take into account that 'totalitarian ideologies are [also] subject to active consumption, excorporation and interpolation' (Balockaite, 2011: 409) by children as well. While not stated explicitly as such, further research could explore children's understanding and active engagements with populist and conservative ideals of recent politics in many places and online spaces around the globe, that eclipse alternatives.

Secondly, instead of recreating divisions following ideological lines (socialism versus liberal capitalism or so), and besides looking at state socialization efforts, it is very fruitful to further explore children's politics by highlighting its affective dimensions, as it merges, meets, troubles, cancels, silences, contests or recreates official politics. For this work, memories of childhood also offer rich bases from which to explore mundane politics and its affective dimensions, and is an underutilized methodological resource in childhood studies (Kraftl, 2017). By focusing on children's everyday contexts, and by showing how micropolitics might have been shared across geo-political divisions, we wished to show the relevance and importance of studying childhood and politics for social analysis and for

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theorizing in general. However, this line of inquiry is far from complete and in mainstream sociological and political theorizing a ‘child’ perspective is still largely missing (Stanbridge, 2011). In mainstream theorizing, children have a taken-for-granted position and the universality of childhood is assumed. A ‘child’ perspective in theorizing should debunk normative conceptions of childhood and cater for a variety of childhoods, and the historicity and situatedness of the ways in which politics and the political are re/produced by children, and how in relation to those their political agencies are generated.

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Note

¹ For more on this, see Sáska, 2008.