

Editorial

In his magnum opus entitled “Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes”, in the section on totalitarian systems, Juan Linz discusses how the ruling parties in such regimes succeed in bringing about collective commitment and a sense of participation on the part of their citizens. In such systems, cadres played a central role, like opinion leaders in democratic systems, in getting people to participate enthusiastically. In passing, he addresses the subject of voluntary associations: ‘Many of those who in pluralistic societies devote their time and energy to diverse voluntary associations do so in totalitarian societies in the activities of the party and its affiliated organizations, often with the same motivation and sincerity. Their actions contribute to the efficacy of the system and through it to its legitimacy.’¹

Despite this lucid observation going back to 1975, when the main part of this study was first published, research has not given much attention to voluntary participation under dictatorships. Especially in the consideration of state-socialist regimes, a sort of ‘façade’ or ‘sham’ theory has long hindered differentiated studies. An independent, ‘real’ agency has been denied more or less across the board regarding all state and social institutions outside the Communist Party and secret police (and apart from the churches), whether parliaments, the so-called ‘block parties’, trade unions, courts, professional associations or other mass organisations are concerned, and on all levels down to the local residential area committees and school parents’ collectives. The potential of voluntary participation that both stabilised the system and qualified the Communists’ claim to total domination (and thereby indirectly stabilised the system) thus remained beyond the horizon of knowledge, as did the importance of this participation for transformations following the end of the Communist dictatorships.²

In presenting three empirical studies on the social-historical relevance of this subject,³ Ana Kladnik and Thomas Lindenberger are not merely endeavouring

1 Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. With a major new introduction, London 2000, p. 85.

2 See also the conceptual critique of talk of ‘sham’ or ‘façade’ in reference to the parliaments in the Soviet Zone and GDR by Edith Schriefl, *Versammlung zum Konsens. Der sächsische Landtag 1946–1952*, Ostfildern 2020, pp. 19–25.

3 The studies are based on lectures given at the conference on ‘Volunteering and Civic Engagement in Co-Transformation. Perspectives from Eastern and Western Europe, 1970–2000’, held in January 2020 at the Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung e. V. an der Technischen Universität Dresden. The conference was part of the project, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and running from 2017 to 2021, on ‘Volunteering in Local Communities between Late Socialism and Liberal Capitalism: The History of Volunteer Fire Departments in Germany and East Central Europe, 1980–2000’. See the project description at <https://hait.tu-dresden.de/ext/forschung/forschungsprojekt-3135/>; 11.11.2020; cf. also Ana Kladnik/Thomas Lindenberger/Mojmír Stránský/Steffi Unger, *Weder Ost noch West – Zentral!(Europa)!. Freiwillige Feuerwehren als nachhaltiges Muster der*

to fill one of the many remaining gaps in research addressing the Communist regimes and their consequences. ‘Volunteer’ and – often mentioned in the same breath – ‘honorary’ work has for many years stood at the head of the socio-political agenda. They are no longer innocent and somewhat old-fashioned-sounding everyday labels. They form on all levels of the body politic, from the federal government down to municipal voluntary agencies, the object of a distinct political field, namely engagement policy.⁴ The omnipresence of unquestionably good volunteer and honorary work is manifested in sanguine slogans like ‘Volunteering expresses a vigorous civil society and a functioning democracy’.⁵ The objectives associated with engagement policy are quite ambitious, far-reaching and comprehensive. In sociological jargon:

‘With respect to governance, modern societies [...] are obliged to tackle the issues of social and system integration. Viewed vertically, they are required to integrate individuals into organisations, and the latter into the corresponding systems. Integration then occurs in both a bottom-up and a top-down sense: on the one hand, modern societies afford opportunities for participation to organised citizens, while on the other hand these societies must ensure the stability and effectiveness of systems. Added – from a horizontal perspective – is the necessity of coordinating the diverging systems of modern societies whilst those systems latently drift apart.’⁶

The target variable today is accordingly the ‘organised citizen’, empowered for political integration in everyday life by the state through its engagement policy. The system-theoretic language suggests a sort of naturally necessary constructive role of civic engagement rendering the latter ineluctable. Everyday language offers a further concept for signalling the essentially democratic quality of volunteering: that of civil society and ‘its’ organisations, a way of speaking hardly related any longer to those debates over a sphere strictly distinguishable from the state and which promulgated this topos after 1989, owing not least to the impression of ideas from Eastern and East Central European dissidents.⁷ This discourse

lokalen Selbstregierung. In: *Zeitgeschichte-online*, March 2019 (<https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/themen/weder-ost-noch-west-zentraleuropa>; 11.11.2020); as well as the theme issue edited by Ana Kladnik: *Volunteering and Voluntary Associations in the Post-Yugoslav States*. In: *Südosteuropa*, 68 (2020) 2.

- 4 Cf. Thomas Olk/Ansgar Klein, *Engagementpolitik – ein neues Politikfeld und seine Probleme*. In: Ingo Bode/Adalbert Evers/Ansgar Klein (eds.), *Bürgergesellschaft als Projekt*, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 23–54.
- 5 Federal Minister for Family Affairs von der Leyen, quoted in Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (ed.), *Monitor Engagement*, Issue No. 1: *Nationaler und internationaler Stand der Engagement-Forschung*, with the collaboration of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Berlin 2009, p. 2 (<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/94374/eb46a3dc0cdcd8336a45d3735ce40603/monitor-engagement-stand-der-engagementpolitik-data.pdf>; 11.11.2020).
- 6 Karsten Speck/Holger Backhaus-Maul/Peter Friedrich/Maud Krohn, *Freiwilligenagenturen in Deutschland*, Wiesbaden 2012, p. 19 (<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-531-94306-0>; 11.11.2020).
- 7 Cf. Dieter Gosewinkel/Dieter Rucht/Wolfgang van den Daele/Jürgen Kocka (eds.), *Zivilgesellschaft. National und transnational*, Berlin 2004.

and its transformation, seemingly paradoxical today – namely, the empowerment and promotion of civil society as a direct duty on the part of the state, with its own federal office⁸ – should be regarded as a framework when we address ‘voluntary engagement’ in the post-Communist world.

Déjà Vu: ‘Volunteer’ and ‘Honorary’ Work under State Socialism

In view of the GDR and the general history of Communism, the rhetorical and government-related boom in volunteer and honorary work and in civic engagement seems déjà vu. Researchers in GDR history as well as former GDR citizens are quite familiar with ‘volunteer’ and ‘honorary’ work, but also with the frequent use of ‘Citizen’ as a form of address employed in public life in the GDR. The emphatic use of this terminology was an integral part of the SED’s discourse of legitimation. The activities designated as ‘voluntary’ were intended to attest the close connection between party, state and citizenry and to underscore the claimed democratic substance of the SED’s rule. At the same time, this terminology expressed the expectation that each citizen would render services for the benefit of the community, in addition to his or her gainful employment in the sense of ‘social activities’, and thereby participate in that community’s development. Once articulated, this inviting offer to participate also grounded a moralising demand to participate. Honorary and voluntary engagement was a fixed element in the relations between state and citizen that emulated the social logic of exchanging gifts.⁹

Besides this ideological demand, a field of ‘social activities’ going beyond mere existence on paper and calls to action can therefore be reconstructed for the GDR in which the exercise of rule and the multifaceted *Eigen-Sinn*¹⁰ of millions of GDR citizens constantly yielded new symbioses to be negotiated.¹¹ ‘Social activities’ formed a mode of action permeating all social relationships. Participating

8 Reference is being made to the Federal Office for Families, belonging to the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and whose duties include organising the federal volunteer service created following the termination of compulsory military service and alternative community service; cf. Rupert Strachwitz, *Der neue Bundesfreiwilligendienst. Eine kritische Bewertung aus Sicht der Zivilgesellschaft*. In: *Opusculum*, 48 (2012) (<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-319117;11.11.2020>).

9 Cf. Sandrine Kott, *Le don comme rituel en R.D.A. 1949-1989*. In: *Le Mouvement Social*, 194 (2001) 1, pp. 67–83.

10 Cf. Thomas Lindenberger, *Eigen-Sinn, Domination and No Resistance*. In: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 3.8.2015 (https://docupedia.de/zg/Lindenberger_eigensinn_v1_en_2015;27.11.2020).

11 On the idea of single-mindedness in the context of contemporary historical research on the GDR, see Thomas Lindenberger, *SED-Herrschaft als soziale Praxis, Herrschaft und „Eigen-Sinn“*. In: Jens Gieseke (ed.), *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft, Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 23–47.

were several hundred thousand honorary supervisors and group leaders among the Young Pioneers and in the party-aligned youth organisation, but also tens of thousands of helpers in Social and Youth Welfare, and around 1.5 million honorary low-level functionaries in the trade union federation concerned with occupational safety, holiday packages and company sports activities. Numerous other examples exist.¹² Most state-run facilities had their own voluntary, non-professional ‘helpers’ – including, of course, but not limited to, the security forces and functionaries of the legal system. Local preservation and nature conservation organisations as well as cultural activities also had ‘helpers’.¹³ Participants took such ‘voluntary’ activities quite seriously as dedication to local concerns, and they existed often, but in no way merely ‘on paper’, as this participation would be reported to those above. They served as points of crystallisation for local sociability, which – as in the case of the ‘voluntary helpers of the People’s Police’ in the GDR, whom I have studied – extended beyond the strictly political competence of the particular organisations.¹⁴

Regardless of how we may assess these many different activities individually, two things should be kept in mind: the scope and ordinary relevance of activities classified as ‘honorary’ and ‘voluntary’ in everyday life under state socialism cannot be disputed. ‘Ordinary relevance’ here also means, above all, that most of these citizens were interested not only in documenting obligatory ‘social activity’ to their cadre leaders – often formal membership in the German-Soviet Friendship Society, for example, sufficed for this purpose – but actually did ‘engage’ themselves: whether for the sake of their own cultural and social affairs, those of their immediate surroundings or in pursuit of ‘superordinate’ goals, such as those of environmental protection, international understanding, justice, etc., that is, for rather the same motives they had or would have had and continue to have today in a democratic society. These organisational structures for voluntary engagement were generally removed at a certain distance from the arcana of the SED’s exercise of power – namely the full-time apparatuses of the party and state leadership. They offered GDR citizens the opportunity, within the limits set by the dictatorship, to pursue their own *Eigen-Sinn* motivated ideas of social cohesion and to take care of local matters, organise shared cultural and social affairs and not least to connect to just those networks that were indispensable for more or less coping with the shortage economy.¹⁵

12 Cf. Thomas Lindenberger, *The Fragmented Society. “Societal Activism” and Authority in GDR State Socialism*. In: *zeitgeschichte*, 37 (2010) 1, pp. 3–20.

13 On local preservation and nature conservation in the GDR, see in particular the pioneering study by Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–90*, Cambridge 2009.

14 Cf. Thomas Lindenberger, *Vaters kleine Helfer: Die Volkspolizei und ihre enge Verbindung zur Bevölkerung 1952–1965*. In: Gerhard Fürmetz/Herbert Reinke/Klaus Weinbauer (eds.), *Nachkriegspolizei. Sicherheit und Ordnung in Ost- und Westdeutschland 1945–1969*, Hamburg 2001, pp. 229–253.

15 Abundant evidence in this regard comes from Jan Palmowski’s study, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*.

Secondly, these activities were accompanied by the constant promulgation of the exalted principles of honorary and volunteer work. Regardless of how ‘voluntary’ these activities in fact were – it must be assumed that in very many cases a sort of conditional voluntariness existed as it always had in decisions based on compulsory choice – we must keep in mind that the official discourse on the relationship between state and citizenry was governed by the ideal type of an active, engaged and consequently also ‘organised’ citizen. The SED considered the incessant participation of citizens in public affairs in these forms as proof of the democratic character of its rule, on a level higher than the ‘mere’ representative democracy of the West apparently reduced to compliance with formal procedures.

‘Volunteer’ and ‘Honorary’ Work: a Case for (Contemporary History) Transformation Research?

From the perspective of transformation research interested in rapid transition to liberal democracy and market economy, the following questions arise: Can such participatory practices in the GDR, for example, but also in other Eastern Block states, be usefully described by means of the concepts drawn from the civil society debate? Following Jörn Leonhard, we can say this is so only if this conceptual apparatus sheds its normative and idealistic exuberance and ‘civil society’ is employed as a ‘descriptive-analytic’ concept.¹⁶ In this sense, we could certainly speak of the existence of elements in the realm of civil society that in a more or less rudimentary form, in the form of substitutes or as germinal forms pointing beyond the system that belong to social reality under state socialism. But can the areas of activity located below or on the lowest levels of the official institutions with their limited and increasingly precarious self-organisation and socio-cultural autonomy be interpreted as functionally equivalent to practical life in civil society?

Scattered research results point to the plausibility of this hypothesis.¹⁷ But the question becomes more pressing once we leave the temporal horizon of state-socialist dictatorships and turn to the issue of their dual transformation into liberal democracies and market economies. How does practised participation under Communist rule and the transfer and rapid implementation of Western models

16 Jörn Leonhard, *Gewalt und Partizipation: die Zivilgesellschaft im Zeitalter des Bellizismus*. In: *Mittelweg 36. Zeitschrift des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung*, 14 (2005), pp. 49–69, here 50 (<https://freidok.uni-freiburg.de/data/3399>; 11.11.2020).

17 Cf. for example Anja Schröter, *Frühe Partizipation in Erfurt*. In: Stefanie Eisenhuth (ed.), *Die DDR im Jahr 1987. Mangel und Größenwahn, Verheißung und Verfall*, Erfurt 2018, pp. 57–64; as well as papers presented at the international conference on ‘Volunteering and Civic Engagement in Co-Transformation. Perspectives from Eastern and Western Europe, 1970–2000’.

of civil society relate to one another during the establishment of the ‘new order on the old continent’ (Philipp Ther)? Can continuities and institutional transitions be observed in addition to the many discontinuities and to fully winding-up basic institutions like ‘state ownership’ and the ‘plan’? In other words, what did ‘transformation’ mean on the lowest level of the social networks that had previously operated in the patronised participatory structures of the SED state during the ‘Wende’ and unification?

For years, transformation research on civil society in formerly Communist states and in Eastern Germany came more or less uniformly to the conclusion that the ‘civil society’ measured in percentiles of the ‘active’ and ‘engaged’ population was poorly developed, with Western societies such as the US, UK and Scandinavia serving as the benchmark. Ultimately the picture became somewhat more differentiated, however.¹⁸ On the other hand, we find far fewer remarks about the course of development preceding 1989, as viewed in this way the question of civil society before 1989 can yield only a nil return – if we disregard radical and minority dissident groups and the glaring exception of Solidarność. What occurred in the mass organisations and basic units of the state-socialist institutional landscape had to be exclusively attributed to the totalitarian state.

What traditions and experiences from the period of Communist rule enter into the development of ‘civil engagement’ to be observed today in the post-Communist countries? What happened to them at the breakdown of the system and during the transformation? As an initial thesis, we may conjecture that many of the institutional players (re-)appearing in the realm of civil society in post-Communist countries did not start fully at scratch. This could also apply to the newly created players, as the individuals constituting them after all brought along their personal social capital (Robert Putnam) from the period before the system’s breakdown. Historical research has sufficiently shown that formal and informal networks were enormously important for preserving economic, social and political processes in everyday life in state-socialist societies – the question therefore arises of whether this social capital has gone, especially pertaining to the base of the society. Even if we may suppose that this capital was in part destroyed through institutional change, economic downturns and last but not least through emigration, we must still consider the possibilities of transfer at the time of system change, the strategies of persistence and of waiting out accelerated change in order to rescue and later continue utilising the existing social capital even under the new conditions. In other words, we need to investigate how traditional forms of voluntary engagement and honorary work found their way into the mainstream of civil societies.

18 Cf. Thomas Gensicke, *Entwicklung der Zivilgesellschaft in Ostdeutschland. Quantitative und qualitative Befunde*, Wiesbaden 2009; Finn Heinrich, *What Makes Civil Society Strong? An innovative approach to conceptualising, measuring and analyzing the strength of civil society in 43 countries*, Hagen 2010 (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:708-25755>; 11.11.2020).

At this point we should take a brief look at the conceptual history of voluntary and honorary engagement. Nowadays these two concepts occur like terrible twins: where one is to be found, the other is not far off, and usually the two are used interchangeably. This was not always the case, however. In earlier times, the phenomena they designated belonged to different spheres of reality, apart from a few but quite significant exceptions, such as local volunteer fire brigades.

In the GDR the traditional constellation of meaning was preserved (compared with the FRG) in furthering a characteristic and traditional distinction: volunteers originally and primarily belonged to military and military-like group formations prepared to 'sacrifice' themselves in performing a 'service' that was otherwise to be provided professionally or through conscription. This fact ties in with the long line of tradition of voluntary military commitment: In the German-speaking region too this has become part of the national vocabulary ever since the wars of liberation and their *Freikorps* (volunteer corps).¹⁹ It lay on the long line of development of early nation building, in the extension of civil liberties and citizen status above all through participation in warfare, whether on a voluntary or mandatory basis. Jörn Leonhard (2005) has drawn attention to this relationship between the organisation of violence and civil society, so counter-intuitive in light of late-modern theories of civil society, and I regard it useful also to consider this relationship when investigating the current semantics of 'voluntary'. We still find this to be the prevailing meaning in dictionaries towards the end of the 19th century. They also add 'voluntary nursing' as a feminine supplement expressly restricted to the context of war, namely the Red Cross, an institution originally also attached to the military organisational structure. There is no talk of 'honorary' activities in this particular regard.²⁰

The use of the term 'voluntary' for military activities occurs throughout the 20th century and its great conflicts: Volunteers fought in the First World War, of course, but also afterwards, in the conflicts of the 'European civil war': the *Freikorps*, volunteers in the Spanish Civil War (on both sides), in the Second World War with volunteer *Waffen SS* divisions in Germany and voluntary combatants among *émigrés* and in underground armies. In the second half of the century and in the course of the lengthy peace of the Cold War, voluntary deeds lost their primarily military purpose. At the same time, voluntary service projects with civil content arose²¹ – also, but not only, as substitute forms of service for the conscientious objectors being increasingly recognised in the democracies. Of course, the organisation – as a 'service' in a hierarchical larger-scale organisation, often housed in barracks – and the target group – young people, primarily

19 Cf. Christine G. Krüger/Sonja Levsen (ed.), *War Volunteering in Modern Times. From the French Revolution to the Second World War*, New York 2010.

20 Cf. 'Rotes Kreuz' and 'Freiwillige Krankenpflege' in *Brockhaus Konversationslexikon*, 14th edition, 1894–1896.

21 Cf. Christine Krüger, *Dienstethos, Abenteuerlust, Bürgerpflicht. Jugendfreiwilligendienste in Deutschland und Großbritannien im 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2016.

men, of military service age – of these voluntary services indicate their derivation from military associations. And with this origin they also share an immediate institutional proximity to the state.

Things have since changed. While the state continues to serve as the main sponsor for time-limited voluntary engagement, especially in the case of young people, numerous private supporters also actively contribute to this sector (though their activities are in turn circumscribed by governmental control), and include in particular the new type of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in which people can actively participate. That is, apart from the officials and managers of such NGOs, these activities do not constitute people's actual professions. The distinction between 'voluntary' and 'non-voluntary' work accordingly does not refer merely to the opposition between agreed and forced work, but also designates a boundary within the employment systems of highly differentiated (post-)modern societies. Besides gainful employment primarily serving the purpose of earning a living and realising a life's plan (with respect to family, housing, adequate old-age benefits), there are now numerous alternative forms of organised participation outside the home in the social reproduction process, including activities as a 'volunteer'.

In contrast to 'voluntary', 'honorary' refers to a formal responsibility assumed by an individual and not a member of a social association. Honorary duties are of course also performed in associations, but the semantics of the term originates in the opposition not to an inescapable duty, but to a paid office. While volunteers may be fed by the organisation which and in which they serve, people with honorary positions are not. The latter rather provide their own means of subsistence, ensured elsewhere, when performing their duties. Voluntary service could in the past and today certainly can amount to a form of subsistence in a tight labour market, and in its civil version was and continues to be conceived as such, unlike honorary work in the classical sense. Moreover, in its origin and its connotations honorary work is remote from military aspects and more closely related to citizenry and civilian life.

We return now to the question of the meaning of volunteer and honorary activities during the post-Communist transformation, which were basically intended by their protagonists as a catching-up measure in an accelerated imitation of the institutional organisations of Western societies.²² As in other sectors, such as the financial system and social policy, we must also consider here that this 'sector' of voluntariness in the West has undergone tremendous structural and ideological changes since the early 1990s. The pertinent key phrase is 'structural change of honorary work',²³ which usually refers to individualisation of the

22 Cf. Raj Kollmorgen, *Postsozialistische Transformationen des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*. In: id./Wolfgang Merkel/Hans-Jürgen Wagener (eds.), *Handbuch Transformationsforschung*, Wiesbaden 2015, pp. 421–440.

23 Cf. Karin Behr/Reinhard Liebig/Thomas Rauschenbach/Wiebken Düx, *Strukturwandel des Ehrenamts. Gemeinwohlorientierung im Modernisierungsprozess*, Weinheim 2000.

engagement and pluralisation of the corresponding institutional constellation. Newly arising types of organisations (NGOs, self-help groups) also brought forth a new type of engaged citizen and challenged the responsibilities of traditional major associations and the basic understanding of the engagement they represent. In this sector, the goal of a transition away from Communist models to a society patterned on the West was therefore itself a moving target. Undergoing crisis and transformation, ‘voluntary’ and ‘honorary’ work had to compete with new and especially internationally operating models of volunteering. In the meantime, a combination of traditional forms of engagement organised as associations on the one hand and post-conventional engagement according to event logics on the other hand developed, under the careful choreographic direction of state agencies and a few major sponsors.²⁴

About the Essays

The first two essays on the main subject are devoted to the history of voluntary organisations steeped in tradition and operating under the conditions of Communist rule. In her comparative study of the Red Cross organisations in the Polish People’s Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, *Maren Hachmeister* operates with the analytical concept of ‘self-organisation’ in order to capture the social logics and the persistence of this institution and its extreme popularity even under the rule of the Communist party-state. She considers what segments of the population – namely, women and young people – especially devoted themselves to Red Cross affairs and what opportunities voluntary engagement afforded them particularly in this area of activity indispensable to health care and social welfare. Different emphases reveal themselves within the same major organisation: For women, the Red Cross provided a channel for autonomous commitment recognised under the Communist hegemony both by society and in the single-party state. For young people, on the other hand, this type of commitment afforded alternative pathways beyond the official youth organisation and its impositions.

Mojmír Stránský’s essay on youth employment in the Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic ties in with the eminent importance of civilian associations for nation building in the late Hapsburg Empire and the inter-war period. The organised design of young people’s recreation across all party boundaries remained a task of national importance also after the Communist takeover. This general acceptance in particular afforded an opportunity to

24 In particular, the Bertelsmann Group, whose foundation activities express a highly active engagement policy; cf. Rudolph Bauer, Die “Bertelsmannisierung” der Bürgergesellschaft. In: Ernst Jürgen Krauß/Michael Möller/Richard Münchmeier (eds.), *Soziale Arbeit zwischen Ökonomisierung und Selbstbestimmung*, Kassel 2007, pp. 485–501.

the Czechoslovakian fire brigade movement: Its essential contribution to services for the public – preventive fire protection and fire-fighting – crucially relied on the sustainable mobilisation of junior members, while at the same time affording the opportunity for youth work firmly integrated in the system and yet conducted with great verve, and even surviving the transition to the post-Communist transformation without significant losses.

Julia Nietsch presents the results of her ethnographic study of a group of secondary school students in Kosovo who in the 1990s ironically called themselves 'Post-Pessimists'. Engaged in the democratic rejuvenation process in a former member republic of Yugoslavia, these young people stood for the new type of post-traditional commitment: The elementary issue is the organisation of the local public in the context of trans-national networking as well as the space for self-realisation within structures newly to be established. Such young people are thus both the targets and players of those international aid organisations and sponsors acting as the engines of the 'NGO-isation' of voluntary commitment also in the post-Communist societies.

Thomas Lindenberger