IVETA SILOVA

THE INTERPLAY OF "POSTS" IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

Post–Socialism and Post–Colonialism after the Cold War

The most sublime image that emerged in the political upheavals of the last years. .. was undoubtedly the unique picture from the time of the violent overthrow of Ceauşsescu in Romania: the rebels waving the national flag with the red star, the Communist symbol, cut out, so that instead of the symbol standing for the organizing principle of the national life, there was nothing but a hole in its center. It is difficult to imagine a more salient index of the 'open' character of a historical situation 'in its becoming'. .. of that intermediate phase when the former Master–Signifier, although it has already lost the hegemonic power, has not yet been replaced by the new one... The enthusiasm which carried them was literally the enthusiasm over this hole, not yet hegemonized by any positive ideological project; all ideological appropriations (from the nationalistic to the liberal–democratic) entered the stage afterwards and endeavored to 'kidnap' the process which originally was not their own.

—Slavoj Žižek (1993), *Tarrying with the Negative*

The enthusiasm over the openness of post–socialist transformations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was powerful, but short–lived. Perhaps momentarily, it was associated with "modernity's final bankruptcy as an intellectual and political project," holding the promise of new forms of social and political organization (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005, p. 99). For many, the "miracle year, 1989" (Latour, 1993) represented not only the acknowledgement of different historical pasts but also the possibility of new futures – whether alternative socialisms, capitalisms, or other utopias. Yet, this historical "hole" – and the radically open futures it symbolized – became quickly filled with new ideological projects. Increasingly, the "post–" in "post–socialism" came to be associated with the rejection of the preceding political order and the valorization of the transition "from plan to market," including its logic of deregulation, privatization, and liberalization. At least rhetorically, capitalism became "the only game in town," while the second world was hastily proclaimed "non–existent" and "almost nowhere at all"[1].

Notwithstanding the proliferation of claims about the "closure of the second world" (Marcianiak, 2009, p. 174), a growing body of research on post–socialism is

a powerful reminder that "socialism is not dead" and that the post–socialist region continues to defy and evade Western neoliberal ideologies (Silova, 2010; Silova, 2011). In this context, research on post–socialist transformations has intersected with post–colonial studies, challenging dominant meta–narratives – ranging from globalization to capitalism and neoliberalism – and revealing ambivalences, contradictions, and uncertainties inherent in post–socialist transformation processes. Similar to post–colonial studies, post–socialism has come to signify a critical standpoint: "critical of the socialist past and of possible socialist futures; critical of the present as neoliberal verities about transition, markets, and democracy were being imposed upon former socialist spaces; and critical of the possibilities for knowledge as shaped by Cold War institutions" (Chari & Verdery, 2009, p. 11). In a way, research on post–socialist transformations has joined "a larger group of 'post' philosophies reflecting the uncertainties of our age" (Sakwa, 1999, p. 125).

This chapter examines emerging efforts of bringing the categories of post–socialism and post–colonialism together – what Chari & Verdery (2009) call "thinking between the posts" – and discusses their relevance for comparative education. By locating the discussion of the "posts" in the context of globalization, the chapter aims to interrogate the politics of knowledge production after the Cold War and reassert the place of difference and divergence in debates about education and globalization. In particular, the chapter outlines common epistemological foundations between post–colonial and post–socialist research, including questioning historically generated geopolitical partitions of the world (or the so–called "three worlds' ideology") and critically interrogating globalization meta–narratives in order to offer an alternative account of complex reconfigurations of educational spaces in the globalization context. By joining forces, I argue, research on post–socialism and post–colonialism has the potential to collectively challenge the established frameworks of Western modernity and critically interrogate dominant globalization frameworks.

Although such a collective statement is critical, it is equally important to acknowledge the geopolitical diversity of the region and the variety of socialist and post–socialist experiences among different countries of Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will use the term "post–socialism" as a broad discursive category to examine the social construction of Southeast/Central Europe vis–a–vis the West after the fall of the socialist bloc. Approaching "post–socialism" from a single analytical perspective would thus allow us to draw parallels between post–socialism and post–colonialism, highlighting the ways in which conceptualizations of East and West are mutually constituted (Owczarzak, 2009). Furthermore, this approach would also open an opportunity to examine post–socialism as a part of broader phenomenon of globalization and, perhaps, as a challenge to (neo) liberal globalization.

While drawing primarily on an extensive literature review, the main arguments in this chapter also stem from my personal experience with socialism, post–socialism, and post–colonialism. I was born and raised in Soviet Latvia and witnessed Soviet colonialism first–hand as a school student during the Soviet period. After the collapse

of the Soviet Union in 1991, I experienced "post–socialism" as a university student, academic, and professional in such diverse post–Soviet contexts as the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Belarus. I also studied in the United States at the time when post–Soviet republics were receiving most of their Western development aid. At some points of my academic and professional life, I was on the receiving end of Western educational reforms when I worked as a teacher educator in Latvia and a professor in Kazakhstan. At other points, I was a facilitator of educational policy borrowing in the post–socialist region when I worked as a consultant for Western NGOs and international development agencies in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Repeatedly, I found myself in a boundary zone where global, national, and sub–national imperatives have constantly collided and become (re)negotiated. In this chapter, I draw on some of these experiences in the context of broader literature on post–socialism and post–colonialism in order to reflect on the interplay of "posts" in comparative education.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AFTER THE COLD WAR

Regions are invented by political actors as a political programme, they are not simply waiting to be discovered.

(Newman, 2001, p. 58).

In *What was Socialism and What Comes Next?,* Verdery (1996) convincingly argues that the Cold War was "a form of knowledge and a cognitive organization of the world" (p. 330). It shaped mutual perceptions and research practices in far–reaching ways, laying down "coordinates of a conceptual geography grounded in East vs. West and having implications for the further divide between North and South" (Verdery, 1996, p. 330). These coordinates were primarily based on dichotomies – such as capitalism/socialism, religious/atheistic, imperialist/liberationist, or good/evil – that affected both public perceptions and academic research. While capturing the confrontational nature of the Cold War discourses, these dichotomies also revealed how "Cold War definitions of the self, nationhood, and state were shaped by reference to a dangerous 'other'" – either within or outside the homeland (Folly, 2000, p. 508).

Even though the Cold War is over, these dichotomies – and the conceptual geography partitioning the world into East vs. West (and North vs. South) – perpetuated into the post–Cold War era. For many academics from post–socialist countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet empire, the intellectual critique did not exclusively focus on analyzing the former relationships between the colonizer and the colonized (Bhabha, 1994; Memmi, 1965) or interrogating the effects of the Russian colonial culture on newly independent societies. Rather, it revolved around national identity questions vis–a–vis the West, especially Western Europe or the United States. As Chioni Moore (2001) observed, "post–colonial desire from Riga to Almaty fixate[d]

not on the fallen master Russia but on the glittering Euromerican MTV–and–Coca–Cola beast that broke it" (p. 118). In other words, the East vs. West dichotomies not only outlived the Cold War, but also assumed new characteristics in the post–Cold War context, wherein the former socialist bloc has emerged as the West's "other." Finally independent from the influence of the Russian empire, the newly independent states of former Soviet Union thus found themselves to be a part of the new imperial project – that of Western (European) democracy and market– economy.

Scholars analyzing post–socialist transformations through the post–colonial lens have drawn on Said's (1978) concept of orientalism to explore representations of the region as the West's "other." Said (1978) defined orientalism as the interplay of three interdependent concepts, including an academic field of study, a discourse based on distinctions between "the Orient" and "the Occident," and "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 2–3). This multi–dimensional conceptualization allows us to see both the dominance of Western conceptual paradigms in constructing representations about the non–Western "other" as well as the presence of self–orientalizing patterns in academic scholarship within the post–socialist education space itself. Drawing on the concept of orientalism, the sections below examine three dominant themes that shape research on post–socialist education transformations, including the narratives of (1) crisis, (2) the "return to Europe," and (3) the project–driven nature of the post–socialist transformations (or what I refer to as "project societies"). These narratives are not mutually exclusive and often circulate simultaneously, revealing the multidimensional politics of knowledge production in the context of globalization.

<div align="center">LIVING IN "CRISIS"</div>

While focusing on post–socialist geopolitical transformations, it is important to acknowledge that the narratives of "crisis" and "danger" provided the main lens through which the countries behind the Iron Curtain were knowable to Europeans and North Americans during the Cold War and earlier (Heathershaw and Megoran, 2011)[2]. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, the narratives of "crisis," "danger," and "decline" have spread beyond the politics and the concerns over the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In part, these narratives were triggered by harsh post–socialist realities associated with "political muddling, weakened state institutions, nascent civil societies, and downward spiraling socioeconomic decline" (Bain, 2010, p. 40). Approximately one third of all countries in the region experienced armed conflicts throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, further intensifying the devastating effects of the "transition"[3]. Is it not surprising, perhaps, that the rhetoric of "crisis" found its way into academic and policy discourses as clearly reflected in the titles of reports that discursively construct the region as rife with conflict and danger: *So What Did Collapse in 1991? Reflections on Revolution Betrayed* (Jacobsen, 1998), *Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localized Poverty and Social Unrest* (International Crisis Group, 2001), *Failed Transition, Bleak Future?*

(Peimani, 2002), *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Rumer, 2002), *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State* (International Crisis Group, 2005), *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty* (International Crisis Group, 2007), *Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure* (International Crisis Group, 2009), *Central Asia: Decay and Decline* (International Crisis Group, 2011), or *Balkan Volatility: The Deepening Crisis in European Super–Periphery* (Bartlett, 2013).

In the area of education, the effects of the post–socialist transitions brought their own "crisis," which was primarily associated with the rapidly declining funding for education, decreasing student populations in the context of the broader demographic crisis (especially in the Baltic republics), HIV/AIDS epidemic among youth, the declining status of the teaching profession (Eklof & Seregny, 2005; Silova, 2009; Niyozov, 2004), and growing socioeconomic stratification of society through education (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 2001; Bodine, 2005). Notwithstanding a relative stabilization of the post–socialist societies in the late 1990s and 2000s, the narrative of "crisis" has persisted as education sector reviews and research studies continued to point out the alarming statistics, including falling expenditures, declining literacy rates, decreasing enrollment, rising student dropout, deteriorating capital infrastructure, outdated textbooks, stagnated curricula, and a shrinking number of qualified teachers. Many studies concluded that educational systems had become less equitable and more corrupt (Hallak & Poisson, 2007; Heyneman, Anderson & Nuraliyeva, 2008; Johnson, 2008).

The theme of "crisis" proliferated in all genres of education literature, including policy reports, education sector reviews, ethnographies, qualitative case–studies, and quantitative cross–national comparisons. International academics, experts, and agencies have insisted almost unanimously that education systems in the region (especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus) were approaching a "crisis situation," highlighting the urgency of immediate reforms through research studies and reports with such titles as *A Generation at Risk: Children in the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan* (Asian Development Bank 1998), *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation* (International Crisis Group 2003), *Education and Fragility in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (UNESCO IIEP, 2010), *Public Spending on Education in the CIS–7 Countries: The Hidden Crisis* (World Bank, 2003a), among many others. Commenting on education in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, for example, Johnson (2004) concluded that public education systems were reaching a "tipping point," a point at which institutional and professional capacity drain away so that education systems are no longer capable of regenerating themselves:

> The public or secular educational systems in Azerbaijan and post–Soviet Central Asia are clearly failing, particularly in the poorest regions and for the most disadvantaged elements of the population.... the situation — while perhaps salvageable — is rapidly approaching the "tipping point" of systemic failure, especially in the poorest nations such as the Kyrgyz Republic (or Kyrgyzstan) and Tajikistan. (p. 7)

Similarly, Rust (1992) described the "chaos" surrounding post–socialist education reforms in Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland:

> Today, the teaching staffs of schools are unstable, school programs are going through chaotic transitions, acceptable teaching materials are unavailable, and old norms of defining appropriate behavior and values have disappeared. Add to this the fact that there has been a psychic breakdown on the part of the young people – who sense instability, who are unable to cope with the new freedoms given to them, who are aware of the spiraling unemployment rate, who live in an environment where both parents and teachers appear to be in a state dislocation and high anxiety – and one may have some sense of the problems with which schools must cope. (p. 387)

Although the perception of "crisis" has been at least partially rooted in post–socialist transformation realities, it has also been actively constructed by Western scholars and policymakers. In Central Asia, for example, the discourses of "crisis" and "danger" were primarily associated with potential Islamic extremism and terrorism in the context of the "war on terror" and repeatedly reported by international agencies despite the lack of evidence to support such claims. In 2005, *Central Asian Survey*[4] devoted an entire special issue of the journal to examining "the discourses of danger" in Central Asia, pointing to the tendency of "the researchers, the development agencies, the experts" to discursively construct the region as rife with conflict and danger (Thompson & Heathershaw, 2005, p. 4). Drawing on critical theories in international relations (Campbell, 1992), the editors argued that the "danger" is not an objective condition; rather, it is inherently subjective and historically constructed. In Campbell's (1992) words, "danger is in effect an interpretation. Danger bears no essential, necessary or unproblematic relation to the action or event from which it is said to derive" (p. 1). Looking from a variety of research foci – for example, small arms proliferation or trafficking of narcotics, arms, and humans – the contributors to the special issue acknowledged the permanent presence of the discourses of "danger" and "crisis" in the region, but they also highlighted the lack of empirical evidence for claims made about danger by various international development agencies. Collectively, they argued that "danger" was in fact discursively constructed.

The outcomes of such particular discursive constructions of the post–socialist region as being in "crisis," "danger," and "decline" are multiple and varied. In contrast to the Cold War period, the discourses of "crisis" in the post–socialist context are no longer exclusively used by (Western) outsiders to understand the region, but they have also become internalized by the post–socialist subjects themselves. For example, Bain (2010) explains how some educational policy experts use the narratives of "crisis" and "decline" for domestic consumption to purposefully exaggerate crisis in order "to reach newspaper headlines, stir public opinion, and influence national policy–makers" (p. 40). Similarly, local educators may invoke the discourses of "crisis" to secure funding for their schools from non–governmental organizations (NGOs) and international development agencies. For example,

Barsegian (2000) describes how Armenian teachers selectively invoked the image of "starving Armenians" for sometimes local, sometimes foreign audiences:

> After returning from a research trip in Armenia, Nora Dudwick described to me the differences between group self–representations in a public forum and individual self–representations that emerged after the public meeting. She had attended a meeting at a school at which teachers, feeling they were particularly badly paid, discussed whether to go on strike. During the meeting, they described their everyday difficulties: ridiculously low salaries that left them unable to afford heat in winter, buy decent clothes, or even maintain adequate nutrition for themselves and their families. They spoke movingly of standing in front of their pupils to teach while almost fainting from hunger. After the meeting, when Dudwick chatted informally with the teachers, they took pains to assure her that in fact, they were well able to provide their households with food, and they stressed their ability to cope and survive. They had adjusted their collective public performance, with its political goal, to the image of starving Armenians, while privately and in interaction with a foreigner they readjusted individual images to show themselves as resourceful and fully capable of hospitality (p. 126).

This example illustrates how "crisis" becomes normalized and used creatively by local educators to deal with the post–socialist realities. Reflecting on the state of "permanent crisis" in post–Soviet Russia, Shevchenko (2009) argues that the narratives of "crisis" have become routinized in the post–socialist space by providing a broader framework for "forming alliances, building a sense of community, and maintaining moral boundaries" among post–socialist subjects (p. 174). Similarly, Bain (2010) describes various ways of coping with everyday crisis such as "laugh–at–it" and "laugh through tears" mechanisms as reflected in educational folklore, where, for example, the drastic shortage of funding for education is captured as "new freedom, freedom from financing" and the constraints in innovation presented as "necessity is the mother of invention"[5] (p. 40). In a sense, "crisis" becomes a worldview, providing a new framework for dealing with post–socialist change in both public and private spheres of life.

While shaping everyday lives and experiences of people in the post–socialist region, the routinization of crisis has broader implications as well. It is a powerful mechanism through which the post–socialist region becomes embedded in (Western) public consciousness as a place of insecurity, uncertainty, conflict, crisis, and even danger. Writing about the discourses of "danger" in Central Asia, Heathershaw and Megoran (2011) argue that the region is thus "written into global space as the object of multiple and intersecting formal, practical and popular geopolitical discourses which imagine and inscribe it as a particular locus of danger" (p. 589). Notwithstanding the variations of the orientalist theme within the region – what Bakic–Hayden (1995) calls "nesting orientalisms"[6] – the post–socialist region is generally portrayed as a place incapable of independently overcoming the "crisis" and therefore in need of "rescue" and "reform" from the West.

RETURNING TO (OR CATCHING UP WITH) EUROPE

The orientalizing narratives of "crisis," "danger," and "decline" have highlighted the dominance of binary conceptual frameworks used to understand post–socialist change (Silova, 2010). In comparative education, the emerging rhetoric of "crisis" has meant that education needs to be normalized (or reformed) against the prevailing Western models. In this context, the West has been uncritically presented (and sometimes accepted) as the embodiment of progress, providing "the normative affirmation of the Western modernity project" in academic terms (Blokker, 2005, p. 504). For example, the enlargement process of the European Union has been understood as an "external anchor" for Eastern European societies, implying the end of the post–socialist "transition" and offering specific steps to move away from the socialist past (Blokker, 2005, p. 504). Similarly, the joining of the Bologna process has signified the "modernization" of the higher educational systems for the post–socialist policymakers, realigning "old" systems with the "new" European standards. In other words, association with Europe (and the West more broadly) has had a "powerful legitimizing and mobilizing effect" for post–socialist reforms (Bechev, 2006, p. 8).

By referencing both the past and the future of education at the same time, policy documents and research studies focusing on post–socialist education transformations have tended to reject everything "old" (or Soviet) and embrace everything "new" (or Western). Based on an analysis of education policy documents in post–Soviet Ukraine, for example, Fimyar (2010) explains how education policy documents make use of "traditional binary oppositions such as authoritarian/humanistic, state/civil society, industrial/information–technological [knowledge] society, national nihilism/self–identification, monopoly/decentralization, and totalitarian/democratization to emphasize the differences between the communist and neoliberal systems of rule and approaches to government" (p. 82). In this context, the "old" system has been characterized by "authoritarian pedagogy," a "totalitarian state," and a system of "state governance," which needs to be eradicated in order to become truly "modern." Similarly, Ozolina's (2010) study of accountability reforms in post–Soviet Latvia illustrates that the term "Soviet" has carried connotations of the outdated, the undesirable, or simply the "old," which could potentially "threaten the 'Westernization' of Latvia" (p. 573)[7].

Such dichotomous representations of the post–socialist education transformations have not been limited to particular countries, but have rather been attributed to the whole post–socialist region of Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. For example, Perry's (2003) analysis of 220 policy documents and research studies in 13 countries[8] of the post–socialist region reveals that most documents portray post–socialist education systems as inferior to Western ones. She explains that policy documents present the West as "tolerant, efficient, active, developed, organized, and democratic, and the East as intolerant, corrupt, passive, underdeveloped, chaotic, and undemocratic" (Perry, 2009, p. 177). As such, these binary constructions reorient the post–socialist education space within the post–Cold War East/West conceptual map,

contributing to the perception of the region's marginality vis–a–vis Europe and the West:

> The logic of progression embedded in such "maps" builds upon oppositions between communist and neoliberal systems of rule. Conceptual binaries, which present two poles in the map of transition, give the actors a sense of direction and infuse a readily digested meaning into the process of educational reformation. (p. 82)

Reliance on these binary frameworks reveals a very particular way of conceptualizing post–socialist transformations and social change more broadly, treating non–Western societies as residual and portraying "Western societies as the seat of historical change and the apex of social development" (Outhwaite and Ray, 2005, p. 201; Silova, 2010). Within this logic, the post–socialist region emerges as "in between" east and west, while the direction of education reforms becomes inevitably linked to Europe and the West. As Fimyar (2010) notes, the idea of "catching up with Europe" (or "returning to Europe," depending the country in question)[9] becomes "a grand purpose of national development projects and a mantra of political and policymaking discourses" (p. 65). Whether faithfully implementing education reforms or simply speaking "the language of the new allies" (Silova, 2004), these narratives reaffirm a predetermined, Western–oriented future of education reform in the post–socialist region. This logic is clearly demonstrated in Tibbits's (1994) optimistic predictions about post–socialist education transformations, where democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are exclusively associated with the West:

> As Central and East European countries roll unevenly forward, the hope is that there will be ever–increasing evidence of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, and that educational reform efforts will enable classrooms to reflect this... perhaps in the long run, such successes will provide classrooms flying further West with fresh insight about education for democracy and human rights. (p. 11)

Using such catchphrases as "democracy" and "human rights," many Western scholars have thus been able to avoid post–colonial charges of imperial imposition and domination in the academic field. According to Perry (2003), "democracy then becomes the vehicle by which many Western scholars assert their schooling is superior" to that in the post–socialist countries (p. 159). Meanwhile, the Western concepts of "democracy" and "market economy" are presented as the only viable options for post–socialist education reforms, while alternatives are largely overlooked. The binary constructions of East versus West have thus constrained possibilities for imagining any other futures. As Bain (201) convincingly argues, this logic marginalizes local innovative capacities and restricts educators in the region to following narrow Western reform pathways: "follow others' footsteps, fall into similar traps, and transplant remedies and solutions developed in other contexts, cultures, and traditions in their historical sequence, no matter how inadequate these could be" (p. 50).

BUILDING "PROJECT SOCIETIES"

As the preceding discussion illustrates, the underpinning binary of East versus West has firmly "inscribed its logic onto educational reforms of the region" (Griffith & Millei, 2013a, p. 14), while producing ready–made templates for education reform in the post–socialist region. This logic is, perhaps, most visible in the emergence of the "post–socialist education reform package" across the region – a set of globally "travelling" policy reforms symbolizing the adoption of Western education values. In some cases, this reform "package" has been imposed through the structural adjustment policies introduced by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In other cases, however, it was voluntarily borrowed by policymakers in the former socialist state out of fear of ''falling behind'' internationally (Steiner–Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 189). Reflecting global neoliberal imaginary, the reform "package" includes such policies as student–centered learning, introduction of curriculum standards, decentralization of educational finance and governance, privatization of higher education, standardization of student assessment, liberalization of textbook publishing, and many others (Silova & Steiner–Khamsi, 2008)[10]. Although the features of this "post–socialist education reform package" vary from place to place, they do exist (at least discursively) in most countries of the region.

The emergence of the new education reform "package" has been accompanied by the arrival of international experts, projects, and loans to expedite the reform process. Backed by "scientific" quantitative data from empirically validated studies and cross–national student achievement studies (e.g., PISA and TIMSS), international transfer of (Western) "expert" knowledge has become instrumental in solving national educational problems. Typically, the transfer of knowledge has been facilitated through "projects" – initiated either by international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, international or local NGOs – quickly becoming the panacea for solving all problems in the post–socialist context. Sampson (2003) refers to the proliferation of projects in terms of the formation of "project societies," which involved a unidirectional traffic of resources, people, and ideologies from West to East/South (p. 313). He argues that resources, people, and ideas do not simply "flow" – "they are sent, directed, channeled, manipulated, managed, rejected, monitored, and transformed on their journey eastward by the myriad of middlemen at the sources, on the way, and in the local context" (p. 316). In other words, projects are not just about the movement of resources; they are, in fact, about control over the future direction of post–socialist transformations.

Meanwhile, many international agencies present Western "solutions" to educational problems as scientifically proven and value free. Elliott and Tudge (2007) highlight this dynamic in their discussion about the "pervasive influence of western ideas and practices" in Russian education the 1990s and 2000s:

  Despite a long history of high educational standards, largely superior to those in many Anglo–US contexts, it was not long before Russian schools and universities were playing host to teachers, academics and assorted education

consultants from the US and Western Europe, all eagerly promulgating their theories and practices in respect of educational reform. In addition to small–scale partnerships, western–inspired reforms were also advocated by major international bodies such as the World Bank, the Soros Foundation, the British Council, the Carnegie Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development... Such initiatives, often presented by international aid agencies as value–free, technical approaches applicable to any context, in actuality reflect a particular political worldview in which democratic pedagogy, learner–centredness, and individual autonomy are seen as necessary prerequisites for full participation in a capitalist society (p. 98).

While contributing to the global dissemination of neoliberal ideology, the emergence of the "project societies" in the post–socialist region has inadvertently reinforced the power of international "experts," enabling them to speak for those who supposedly lack expert knowledge to independently determine their own futures (Silova and Brehm, 2013). For example, numerous country reports and research studies produced by Western "experts" have explicitly identified the lack of local capacity in formulating policies or implementing reforms. Whether commenting on education reforms in Latvia, Albania, Kosovo, or Tajikistan, the verdict has been the same: local policymakers and educators are incapable of independently initiating education reforms. A cursory examination of regional and national reports by OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the World Bank clearly illustrates this point:

[In Kosovo], there is a lack of professional capacity in, and strategic vision of, curriculum reform. (OECD, 2003, p. 337)

[In Albania], there is a lack of knowledge and skills to aid the reform in the governance of education. (OECD, 2003, p. 52)

[In Albania], there is a lack a meaningful educational research and policy development capacity important for improving the quality of teacher education. (OECD, 2003, p. 67)

[In Bosnia and Herzegovina], policy leadership capacity, i.e. policy development, legislative work, performance monitoring and evaluation, and information management is lagging behind development elsewhere. (OECD, 2003, p. 161)

[In Latvia] the OECD team is concerned that the MoES [Ministry of Education and Science] is seriously challenged in its capacity to accomplish its current legal mandate. The MoED is not well positioned to make the transition to the more strategic leadership role that is required to move education forward. (OECD, 2001, pp. 168–169)

> [In Tajikistan], management and planning capacity in the MOE [Ministry of Education] remains very limited for supporting tasks such as policy development, long–term planning, monitoring and evaluation system, and the assessment of the performance of the education system and reforms undertaken. (World Bank, 2003b, p. 5)

Rather than pointing to the challenges of post–socialist transformations, these reports incapacitate local efforts to engage in education reform. These reports explicitly position post–socialist policymakers and educators as passive, ignorant, and incapable of meaningful thought and action. They also lack critical reflection on the donors' policies, external financial flows, and coordination that push ministries in confusing and sometimes contradictory directions through various political conditionalities and completing mandates. By implication, the "know–how" rests with the Western "experts" who are readily available to offer (and profit from) technical assistance and facilitate the spread of "best practices" across the vast array of countries in the post–socialist region. Generating particular epistemological "rationalities," such research contributes to the production of educational knowledge that not only attempts to explain education phenomena but also constructs "norms" embedded in education theories, policies and practices. In this context, as Escobar (1998) explains, "the forms of power that have appeared act not so much by repression as by normalization; not by ignorance but by controlled knowledge; not by humanitarian concern but by the bureaucratization of social action" (p. 92). As an example of knowledge/power in operation, education reform – and the multitude of projects designed to facilitate it – can be understood as a "disciplinary technology," that is as an important tool for "managing crisis" in the non–Western world (Tikly, 1999, 2001; Samoff, 1994). In other words, these new forms of power set the contours – and the limits – of possible trajectories of post–socialist transformations.

More broadly, these dominant discourses also imply that "the core can learn little from the periphery, so that local knowledge and experience from CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] is irrelevant" (Domanski, 2004, p. 378). This process of marginalization sidelines work produced in the post–socialist region or by non–Western researchers. Such work is often perceived as add–on case–studies, which are used to either interpret or affirm existing Western theoretical frameworks, rather than to contest them. What we see is a hierarchically organized set of ideas and knowledge, which is based on the belief that Western theories are valid in another country until proved otherwise, while "other theories are seen as limited, parochial, and only local" (Stenning & Horschelmann, 2008, p. 315). In addition to silencing the multitude of local voices, these results in the ongoing (and uninterrupted) process of collapsing difference and divergence found in the post–socialist experiences into the universalizing accounts of educational convergence.

CONCLUSIONS: THE INTERPLAY OF "POSTS" IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

The questions raised by the examination of post–socialism through the lens of post–colonialism have important implications for comparative education. First and foremost, they reveal that "versions of orientalism" continue to operate in both Western and Eastern European epistemologies (Cernikova, 2012) – whether in anthropology, sociology, political science, or comparative education. In fact, some scholars suggest that the concept of post–socialism itself could be perceived as an "orientalizing" category through which western scholars have constructed post–socialist Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As Cervinkova (2012) explains, post–socialism is "essentially a western concept that grew out of the Cold War tradition of studies of socialism in the Soviet Empire by west scholars" and gained momentum in the context of cultural hegemony following the political, economic, and ideological defeat of socialist regimes in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union:

> The Cold War had its victors and losers; communism had lost, and the defeat of its political regime shifted into the historical disintegration of people's work and life worlds under communism. Caught in the tumult of changes that condemned the past and celebrated the future, we bought post–socialism together with neo–liberalism and other western products. (p. 159)

From this critical perspective, academic scholarship and policy research on post–socialist transformations has undoubtedly contributed to the project of epistemological dominance, setting the terms through which post–socialist countries, people, and their experiences have been defined. As this chapter illustrates, this epistemological dominance becomes clearly visible in the discursive practices through which the West constructs the post–socialist region in both real and imagined terms. Building on binary constructions, the post–socialist region emerges as "monolithic," "undemocratic," "chaotic," "dangerous," and "unable to change" (Buchowski, 2006; Owczarzak, 2009). At the same time, the West is positioned as a model for emulation, bringing "hope," "progress," and "salvation" to the post–socialist region. As Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) explain, these modern narratives of "salvation" invoke "social obligation to rescue those who have fallen outside the narratives of progress" (pp. xx–xxi). For post–socialist schools and societies, the promise of "salvation" is thus primarily associated with abandoning the socialist past and embracing the Western future – one project at a time.

In comparative education, the study of post–socialist education transformations has largely focused on tracing the complicated trajectories of global (or Western) reforms (such as outcomes–based education, privatization, decentralization, child–friendly schools, etc.) as well as broader concepts circulating internationally (such as education for democracy, equality or civil society) in post–socialist contexts. While effectively disrupting the notion of a "linear" transition, such studies nevertheless privilege the global (and the West) by identifying a "global" reform and tracing its

complicated trajectory locally (Silova, 2012). Even if the focus is on the "local" visions of education, it is always compared – whether implicitly or explicitly – against the global, further strengthening the established conceptual binaries. We end up, in Cowen's words (1996: 167), "reading the wrong world" – a world governed by Western (neo) liberal rationalities – while further stabilizing dominant education models as valid, compelling, and meaningful in comparative education research. The emphasis on the dominant ideas and ideologies makes what is outside the global (or the West) impossible to imagine, producing political and theoretical effects of closure (Silova, 2012). As Mehta (2009) observes, "there is the erasure of voices as stories struggle to become part of a dominating discourse and the loss, or translated versions of those stories as they become part of the visible discourse" (p. 1193).

It is at this juncture that post–socialist research converges with the agenda of post–colonial studies. As Chari and Verdery (2009) explain, post–socialism has come to signify a critical standpoint similar to that post–colonialism: "critical of the present as neoliberal verities about transition, markets, and democracy were being imposed upon former socialist spaces; and critical of the possibilities for knowledge as shaped by Cold War institutions" (p. 11). Notwithstanding differences between the "posts," both post–socialism and post–colonialism focus on periods of major political change (whether the collapse of the socialist bloc or the granting of independence from colonial power) and both "posts" critically interrogate the complex outcomes of these dramatic changes forced on those who underwent them as they become "something other than socialist or other than colonized" (Chari & Verdery, 2009, p. 11). In other words, both "posts" provide political, cultural, and epistemological "emancipatory inspiration" aiming to disrupt global capitalism, while envisioning alternative futures (Cernikova, 2012, p. 159; see also Stenning & Horschelmann, 2008; Chari & Verdery, 2009; Owczarzak, 2009; among others). In Žižek's (2009) words,

> What if today's global capitalism, precisely insofar it is "world–less," involving a constant disruption of all fixed order, opens up the space for a revolution which will break the vicious cycle of revolt and its reinscription, which will, in other words, no longer follow the patterns of an eventful explosion followed by a return to normality, but will instead assume a *"new ordering" against the global capitalist disorder*? (p. 130, emphasis in the original)

Collectively, thus, post–socialism and post–colonialism offer a powerful challenge – perhaps of a revolutionary potential – to dominant narratives of (neo) liberal globalization. As Chari and Verdery (2009) suggest, the interplay of "posts" enables us to make comparisons and connections between different forms of imperialism across time and space, thus offering a better understanding of contemporary forms of global imperialism in the post–Cold War context. It also inspires "action as counter–cultural and counter–hegemonic movements critiquing inequalities and advancing more just and egalitarian alternatives" (Griffith & Millei, 2013b, p. 163). With their emphasis on contradictions and complexities, the interplay of "posts" not only

further complicates our understanding of ongoing reconfigurations of educational spaces in a global context, but also opens opportunities for us to engage in theorizing globalization and its effects on education in refreshingly new ways.

NOTES

[1] For example, see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's (1994) argument that the Second World is "now non–existent" (p. 26), Zygmund Bauman's (1997) claim that the Second World is "no more" (p. 51), Michael Hart and Antonio Negri's (2000) statement that the Second World is "almost nowhere at all" (p. xiii).

[2] For an interesting historical discussion about the narratives of "danger" in Central Asia see Heathershaw and Megoran (2011).

[3] Following the collapse of the socialist bloc, armed conflicts broke out in the Caucasus (including Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1988–94 and Georgia in 1990–94), in Central Asia (including in the Ferghana Valley in 1989–1991 and Tajikistan in 1992–93), the former Soviet republics (including the northern Caucasus of the Russian Federation in 1992–2001 and Moldova in 1992), and the former Yugoslav republic (including former Yugoslavia in 1991–95, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1997–99, and FYR Macedonia in 2001).

[4] *Central Asian Survey* is a peer reviewed, multidisciplinary journal concerned with the history, politics, cultures, religions and economies of the Central Asian and Caucasian regions).

[5] Russian proverb is "голь на выдумки хитра" [gol' na vydumki khitra], which is literally translated as "hunger is clever at thinking things up."

[6] Bakic–Hayden (1995) argues that the countries of Eastern Europe are fully aware of their own image in the "West" and play off "Eastness" against Europeanness, where Central Asia appears as more "East" or "other" than Eastern Europe or the Balkans.

[7] At the same time, however, there is also "the traditional, the intimate" – often associated with Soviet experiences – that continues to form the sense of national identity and hence cannot be easily dismissed simply as "old," further complicating our understanding of post–socialist transformation processes (Ozolina, 2010, p. 590).

[8] Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.

[9] For example, the ideas of "returning to Europe" dominated the education policy space of Eastern/Central European countries in the early 1990s and 2000s, especially in the context of the EU accession. In the non–EU accession countries, however, the rhetoric has focused on the idea of "catching up with Europe."

[10] The features of "the post–socialist education reform package" are unique in that they combine (1) elements common to any low–income, developing country that implements the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) recommended by the international financial institutions (e.g., decentralization and privatization), (2) education reform aspects specific to the entire former socialist region (e.g., market–driven textbook provision, increased educational choice, standardized assessment systems), and (3) country– or region–specific components (e.g., conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia and gender equity reforms in Central Asia). (Silova & Steiner–Khamsi, 2008, pp. 19–22).

REFERENCES

Asian Development Bank. (1998). *A generation at risk: Children in the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan* [Report by A. Bauer, N. Boschmann, D. J. Green, & K. Kuehnast]. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

Bain, O. (2010). Education after the fall of the Berlin Wall: The end of history or the beginning of histories? In I. Silova (Ed.), *Post–socialism is not dead: (Re)reading the global in comparative education* (pp. 27–57). Bingley: Emerald.

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture.* London and New York: Routledge.

Bakic–Hayden, M. (1995). Nesting orientalisms: The case of former Yugoslavia. *Slavic Review 54(4),* 917–931.

Barsegian, I. (2000). When text becomes field: Fieldwork in "transitional" societies. In G. DeSoto & N. Dudwick (Eds.), *Fieldwork dilemmas: Anthropologists in postsocialist states* (pp. 119–129). Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Bartlett, W. (2013). *Balkan Volatility: The deepening crisis in european super–periphery.* Retrieved from http://www.acus.org/files/Bartlett.pdf

Bauman, Z. (1997). The making and unmaking of strangers. In P. Werbner, & T. Modood (Eds.), *Debating cultural hybridity: Multicultural identities and the politics of anti–racism* (pp. 46–57). London: Zed Books.

Bechev, D. (2006). *Constructing southeast Europe: The politics of regional identity in the Balkans.* [RAMSES Working Paper 1/06]. Oxford: University of Oxford.

Blokker, P. (2005). Post–communist modernization, transition studies, and diversity in Europe. *European Journal of Social Theory 8*(4), 503–525.

Bodine, E. F. (2005). Radical decentralization and the role of community in Polish educational reform. *European Education 37*(1), 83–102.

Buchowski, M. (2006). The specter of orientalism in Europe: From exotic other to stigmatized brother. *Anthropological Quarterly 79(3),* 463–82.

Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Cernikova, H. (2012). Postcolonialism, postsocialism, and the anthropology of east–central Europe. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing 48*(2), 155–163.

Chari, S., & K. Verdery. (2009). Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, postsocialism, and ethnography after the Cold War. *Comparative Studies in Society and History 51*(1), 6–34.

Chioni Moore, D. (2001). Is the post in postcolonial the post in post–Soviet? Notes toward a global postcolonial critique. *Publications of the Modern Languages Association 116*(1), 111–128.

Cowen, R. (1996). Last past the post: Comparative education, modernity and perhaps post–modernity. *Comparative Education 32*(2), 151–170.

Domanski, B. (2004). West and east in "new Europe": The pitfalls of paternalism and claimant attitude. *European Urban and Regional Studies11*(4), 377–381.

Eklof, B. & Seregny, S. (2005). Teachers in Russia: State, community and profession. In B. Eklof, L. E. Holmes, & V. Kaplan (Eds), *Educational reform in post–Soviet Russia* (pp. 197–220). London and New York: Frank Cass.

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Elliott, J. G., & Tudge, J. R. H. (2007). Change and resistance to change from the West in post–Soviet Russian education. *Comparative Education 43*(1), 93–112.

Fimyar, O. (2010). Policy why(s): Policy rationalities and the changing logic of educational reform in postcommunist Ukraine. In I. Silova (Ed.), *Post–socialism is not dead: (Re)reading the global in comparative education (*pp. 61–91*)*. Bingley: Emerald.

Folly, M. H. (2000). Cold war dichotomies. *Journal of American Studies 34(3),* 503–508.

Griffith, T. G., & Millei, Z. (2013a). *Logics of socialist education: Engaging with crisis, insecurity and uncertainty.* New York, NY: Springer.

Griffith, T. G., & Millei, Z. (2013b). Education in/for socialism: Historical, current and future perspectives. *Globalization, societies, and education 11(2),* 161–169.

Hallak, J., & Poisson, M. (2007). *Corrupt schools, corrupt universities: What can be done?* Paris: IIEP/UNESCO.

Heyneman, S. P., Anderson, K. H., & Nuraliyeva, N. (2008). The cost of corruption in higher education. *Comparative Education Review 52*(1), 1–25.

Heathershaw, J., & Megoran, N. (2011). Contesting danger: A new agenda for policy and scholarship on Central Asia. *International Affairs 87*(3), 589–612.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

International Crisis Group. (2011). *Central Asia: Decay and decline* (Asia Report No. 201). Brussels: Author.

International Crisis Group. (2009). *Tajikistan: On the road to failure* (Asia Report No.162). Brussels: Author.

International Crisis Group. (2007). *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and uncertainty* (Asia Report No. 67). Brussels: Author.

International Crisis Group. (2005). *Kyrgyzstan: A faltering state* (Asia Report No. 109). Brussels: Author.

International Crisis Group. (2003). *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the new generation* (Asia Report No. 66). Brussels: Author.

International Crisis Group. (2001). *Incubators of conflict: Central Asia's localized poverty and social unrest* (Asia Report No. 16). Brussels: Author.

Jacobsen, C. G. (1998). So what did collapse in 1991? Reflections on a revolution betrayed. In M. Cox (Ed.), *Rethinking the Soviet collapse: Sovietology, the death of communism and the new Russia* (pp. 251–265). New York, NY: A Cassell Imprint.

Johnson, E. (2008). *Out of control? Patterns of teacher corruption in Kyrgyzstan and their implications for the study of street–level corruption control*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Johnson, M. (2004). Trends in secular educational development in Azerbaijan and Central Asia: Implications for social stability and regional security. *National Bureau of Asian Research Analysis 15*(4), 7–58.

Latour, B, (1993). *We have never been modern.* Cambridg: Harvard University Press.

Lindblad, S., & Popkewitz, T. S. (2004). *Educational restructuring: International perspectives on traveling policies*. Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.

Lisovskaya, E., & Karpov, V. (2001). The perplexed world of Russian private schools. *Comparative Education 37*(1), 43–64.

Marciniak, K. (2009). Post–socialist hybrids. *European Journal of Cultural Studies 12*(2), 173–190.

Mehta, S. (2009). Big stories, small stories: Beyond disputatious theory towards 'multilogue.' In R. Cowen, & A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (pp. 1289–1208). Dodrecht: Springer.

Memmi, A. (1965). *The colonizer and colonized.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Neumann, I. (2001). Regionalism and democratisation. In J. Zielonka, & A. Pravda (Eds.), *Democratic consolidation in Eastern Europe* (pp. 58–75). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Niyozov, S. (2004). The effects of collapse of the USSR on teachers' lives and work in Tajikistan. In S. P. Heyneman, & J. DeYoung (Eds), *The challenges of education in Central Asia* (pp. 37–64). Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.

OECD. (2003). *Reviews of national policies of education: South Eastern Europe* [Vol. 1&2]. Paris: OECD.

OECD. (2001). *Reviews of national policies of education: Latvia*. Paris: OECD.

Outhwaite, W., & Ray, W. (2005). Social theory and postcommunism. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Owczarzak, J. (2009). Introduction: Postcolonial studies and postsocialism in Eastern Europe. *Focaal 53*, 3–19.

Ozolina, L. (2010). Raspberries, tablecloths, and critical thinking: Accountability reforms in post–socialist Latvia. *East European Politics and Societies 24*(4), 572–594.

Peimani, H. (2002). *Failed transition, bleak future? War and instability in Central Asia and the Caucasus.* Westport: Praeger.

Perry, L. (2009). American academics and education for democracy in post–communist Europe. In N. Sobe (Ed.), *American post–conflict educational reform: From the Spanish war to Iraq* (pp. 169–188). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Perry, L. (2003). *Talking democracy, making empire: Western discourse of post–communist European schooling.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Chicago, IL: University of Loyola Chicago.

Rumer, B. (2002). *Central Asia: A gathering storm?* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Rust, V. (1992). Educational responses to reforms in East Germany, Czechoslovakis, and Poland. *Khi Delta Kappan 71*(5), 386–389.

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Sakwa, R. (1999). *Postcommunism*. Oxford: OUP.

Samoff, J. (1994). *Coping with crisis: Austerity, adjustment and human resources.* London: Cassell.

Sampson, S. (2003). "Trouble spots" Projects, bandits, and state fragmentation. In J. Friedman, *Globalization, the state, and violence* (pp. 305–338). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Shevchenko, O. (2009). *Crisis and the everyday in postsocialist Moscow.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Shohat, E. & Stam, R. (1994). *Unthinking eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Silova, I. (2012). Contested meanings of educational borrowing. In G. Steiner–Khamsi, and F. Waldow (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2012: Policy borrowing and lending in education* (pp. 229–245)*.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Silova, I. (2011). *Globalization on the margins: Education and post–socialist transformations in Central Asia.* Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.

Silova, I. (2010). *Post–socialism is not dead: (Re)reading the global in comparative education.* Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Silova, I. (2009). The crisis of the post–Soviet teaching profession in the Caucasus and Central Asia. *Research in Comparative and International Education 4*(4), 367–384.

Silova, I. (2004). Adopting the language of the new allies. In G. Steiner–Khamsi, (Ed.), *The global politics of educational borrowing* (pp. 75–87)*.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Silova, I., & Brehm, W. C. (2013). The shifting boundaries of teacher professionalism: Education privatization(s) in the post–socialist education space. In T. Seddon, J. Ozga, & J. Levin (Eds.), *Educators, professionalism and politics: Global transitions, national spaces, and professional projects* (pp. 55–74). New York, NY: Routledge.

Silova, I., & Steiner–Khamsi, G. (2008). *How NGOs react: Globalization and education reform in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia.* Bloomfield, NJ: Kumarian Press.

Steiner–Khamsi, G., & Stolpe, I. (2006). *Educational import in Mongolia: Local encounters with global forces*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stenning, A., & Horschelmann, K. (2008). History, geography and difference in the postsocialist world: Or, do we still need post–socialism? *Antipode 40*(2), 312–335.

Tibbits, F. (1994). Human rights education in schools in the post–communist context. *European Journal of Education 29*(4), 363–76.

Tikly, L. (1999) Postcolonialism and comparative education. *International Review of Education 45*, 603–621.

Tikly, L. (2001). Globalisation and education in the postcolonial world: Towards a conceptual framework. *Comparative Education 37*(2), 151–171.

UNESCO (2010). *Education and fragility in Bosnia and Herzegovina.* Paris: UNESCO IIEP.

Verdery, K. (1996). *What was socialism and what comes next?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Academic Press.

World Bank. (2003a). *Public spending on education in CIS–7 countries: The hidden crisis.* [Report by N. Burnett, & R. Cnobloch.] Retrieved from www.cis7.org

World Bank (2003b). *Project appraisal document for an education modernization project in Tajikistan* [Report No. 25806]. Washington DC: World Bank.

Žižek, S. (2009). *First as tragedy, then as farce.* London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (1993). *Tarrying with the negative.* Durham: Duke University Press

AFFILIATIONS

Iveta Silova
College of Education
Lehigh University