***Que reste-t-il nos amours?* The expectations of 1991 revisited**

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Is the 1989-1991 frame of understanding still relevant? Did history already throw away the empty bottles of the 1991 celebrations? *Que reste-t-il de nos amours?* With this series of articles and a comment, we set out to explore the ways in which European societies, and Europe itself, differ from what had been hoped and designed in the years 1989–1991. The contributions included put the emphasis on the different horizons of expectation and realms of experience that have their roots in 1989–1991, exploring whether this period continues to define individuals, societies and historical representations of Eastern Europe and beyond. We thus reflect on the relevance of the study of past expectations in order to understand what has happened during the last decades around us, promising new directions of research regarding social transformation, political rhetoric, collective memory and how historical and personal narratives match or contradict.

While reviewing articles and books from the late 1980s, we had the impression of practicing a sort of emotional archaeology – so far, so close. One would say that those texts aged rather badly; or was it ourselves who did? There are dozens of books and articles on the topic; yet the year 1991 has not had the attention it deserves, being most often reduced to two ideas: ‘return to normality’ and the ‘end of History’. 1991 has often been associated with endings, collapse and revolutions; however, the break-up of the USSR did not bring about a stable (political, economic and military) order, but a different sort of instability. However, the sense that we are leaving behind a certain regime without entering a new one –in fact, still very much enmeshed in it– is giving post-socialism an unexpected relevance for

understanding global penetration into localities and how national identities are not relics from the past, but being reshaped reconciling unity and diversity in new ways.

Post-socialism is now twenty-five years old, an appropriate milestone to reflect on this social phenomenon and the multidimensional processes that were set in motion by the break-up of the Soviet Union. It is time then to ask about the lessons of the post-Soviet period; to examine the triumphalist rhetoric of the early 1990s; to attest how those expectations were articulated, conveyed and reconstructed. At first glance, post-socialist processes appear as a successful story: The countries of Eastern Europe are nowadays members of the EU and NATO, these societies reorganised as liberal democracies and market economies, no border controls inside Europe and a single currency were established. Expectations of an era of peace, co-operation and progress emerged from the break-up of the Berlin Wall, the USSR and state socialism. However, a taste of bitterness is extending across Europe today because of the increasing difficulties of social integration, xenophobia and delusions, putting the achievements at risk and turning the expectations into a conjunctural mirage (Garton Ash 2017).

What epoch are we in now?

The theme issue presents a selection of recent research on the changing mood of the period 1989-1991 and its legacies examined retrospectively by researchers with a different background, combining therefore theoretical discussions with autobiographical insights, survey data and ethnographic findings. Current developments in the continent are putting pressure on the possibilities for accommodating social and cultural differences, deploying the past to reinforce antagonisms and resentments, including the return of nationalism and the construction of cultural 'others' (Fabian 1983). The stateless, the unwanted, the superfluous... Zygmunt Bauman presented the production of 'wasted humans' as an inescapable side-effect of order-building, modernity and of economic progress (2004). One of the differences with

previous modernisations, however, is that during colonial times our 'waste' was shipped abroad to newly colonised areas. In contrast to those times, contemporary European countries have to deal with the 'problem' within their societies without such empire-driven possibilities. This results in a large number of people who are living in a global borderland and temporal marginality. Also it undermines the EU claim to represent and to spoke with one voice on behalf of ideals such as freedom, prosperity, peace and tolerance (see Deriglazova).

Europe is distinctive because of the various ways of dealing with the past, or even disputing it, yet also because of standards of living, which create the expectation that routines are unalterable and unshakeable (Schlögel 2007). European design is a transcendental measure of other things – predictability, comfortability, accountability, tolerance. After twenty-five years, not only do Western and Eastern European assessments of the socialist experience differ, the approach towards the recent past among the former members of the socialist block is not homogeneous either. Some East European countries are regressing to a policy of strident nationalism. This leads us to also ask if current ideas of Europe clash with the political imagination of Russia? Also of what is composed the actual ideology of Europeanism? The idea of Europe has a long history of producing Others, as well as distinguishing Europeans from non-Europeans and establishing cores a hierarchy of belonging. In the actual picture, stateless refugees appear as the central outsider or pariah, the exemplary opposite of the European citizen that cannot participate in public space and do not belong to any political community (see Kattago).

Feelings of belonging fluctuate, and might be used politically, as points out Larisa Deriglazova in her study of the *involution* during the last twenty-five years of the attitude towards Europe by Russian people. Moscow's staged confrontation with the West has made the increase of nationalist feelings necessary for Putin's regime at the expense of a cultural European identity. The paradox, however, is that the European and Russian societies are becoming closer again, not because of Russia's approximation to EU political values and

economical criteria, but because Europeans themselves have been losing confidence in the capacity of the EU to put these ideals in practice. This leads Deriglazova to conclude that for the Russian people the EU hardly represents anymore the partner that will help Russia to become a part of 'ideal Europe'.

If assuming that the institutional idea of Europe has been manufactured for decades too, we can start asking if the continent is politically in need of reworking its togetherness, global vision and the actual ideology of Europeanism (based on the production of new figures of otherness). The impression of something being broken floats in the air since the financial meltdown, the Brexit, the refugee crisis, and the conflict in Ukraine. 'It was not meant to be this way', stresses Tom Frost in his article about the Brexit. Looking back, Frost hesitates whether, in fact, there were any 'ideals' or bonds of solidarity and insists not to forget that the current situation of the EU is due to myths of exceptionalism and wrong decisions such as prioritising the single market, instead of favouring a deeper political and fiscal union. Frost concludes that as a result of the increasing technocratic organisation and democratic deficit of the EU, people demand to take back control (as they did in 1989-1991).

We replaced solidarity for fear

The seed of this special issue was the First Tartu Conference on Russian and East European studies (June 2016), organised under the title 'Europe under Stress: The End of a Common Dream?' Tiina Kirss, who acted as a discussant in our panel, assesses the degree to which the dark past is considered best forgotten, or if the non-acknowledgment of past darkness leads to an underestimation of the human tragedies of the present. In her comment, Kirss highlights the need to work for the generational transmission of social achievements and shortcomings, and the importance of instilling values in the upcoming generations, in order that the new generations may do better. Symptomatically, the number of European citizens dwelling on the

negative is increasing, manifested in a resentment of cosmopolitanism and an entropic accumulation of fears.

Even so, contemporary populist movements are gaining its strength not just by appealing to nationalist sentiments but by engaging in a politics of (re)distribution and (re)presentation too. Twenty-five years ago, civic activism and solidarity were mobilising mantras in East and Central Europe, spiced with different nationalist claims; nowadays only the spices remain, clouding the continental atmosphere and turning the concepts and categories to which we have adhered increasingly inoperative. As an answer to the increasing condition of anger within European societies, Kattago proposes to substantiate practices of solidarity and reinvigorate communal European bonds (which already shows distinct signs of fatigue after decades of marriage). The idea of linking solidarity with a sense of commonality appears as an invitation to dialogue in order to foster mutual inspirations and to challenge our ways of thinking.

We draw on the assumption that both Anthropology and Area Studies have to yield interdisciplinary synergy and renew the comparative endeavour for strengthening their critical, theoretical and methodological basis. In this theme issue, we chose to explore the intersections between anthropology, philosophy and political science, to put different regions in one frame, and to correlate diverse temporal regimes for the understanding of the contemporary bewilderment and for imagining new ways of being together at a global scale. An example of this effort is the contraposition of a politics of resentment with a politics of hope, underpinned by Kattago to describe the new political schisms that separate the advocates of open economies and societies from those who defend a retreat to national organisation and closed values. Both predispositions, resentment and hope, contribute to mobilise politically and create community, yet one of the differences between them is the integration or rejection of pluralism while defining 'the people'. Further on, whilst hope appears as a mood oriented towards the future, a demand that represents an imaginative way

to a new beginning (Liisberg *et al.* 2015), resentment is a reactive feeling that sets affective delineations of difference, a self-deceiving revenge once individual expectations and experiences fail to converge (Brudholm 2008).

Our interdisciplinary study is meant to clarify actual noises and clouds by looking back (without nostalgia) at the days of hope and Revolution. From post-socialist societies we try to scale up our attention to Europe in order to open up the categories of analysis, define terms of comparison and perceive the inter-relation of the different sets of problems. Local and global dimensions acquired new meanings, and therefore require new analytical tools, challenging national parameters and traditional disciplinary divisions. The transformations unfolded after the break-up of the Soviet Union profoundly altered the study of Europe at large as well as anthropological thinking about social changes and their relation to the experience and representation of time (see Martínez). Eastern Europe as a region is gathered still under a geopolitical vocabulary and a former ideological system, yet nations persist, in some cases astray in the introspective doubts of the post-Soviet maze.

This issue combines an empirical and interpretative approach with a work of re-conceptualisation to explore different aspects of the afterlives of the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and beyond. It is in this sense a conversation between past and present, expectations and delusions, life of the contributors and life of Europe, personal new beginnings and political endings (see Farias Ferreira). 1989-1991, so had to remember after all? The fall of the Berlin Wall was televised amid street partying; expectations without borders; we were young; we had the future before us; time was on our side, infused by a sense of history in the making. Farias Ferreira remembers how debates around 1989–1991 were related to civil society, human rights, authenticity and responsibility. He muses about the fragility of cosmopolitan ideas, confronted with the walls and fences being erected in the name of fear and difference. Personal biographies are constantly reconstructed so that our pasts become coherent life stories that help us to understand and explain our present

circumstances. Yet the Soviet Union and its end represent a powerful landmark still in personal narratives of growing up and giving meaning to the world, concludes Farias Ferreira.

The accelerated post-wall world

One of the aims of this issue is to shed light on the limitations of post-socialism as a theoretical framework, while drawing attention to how useful the concept is, even twenty-five years after the breakdown of state socialism. The analytic and descriptive value of post-socialism enables meaningful comparisons and juxtapositions among diverse societies spreading across the former Second World and beyond. In a narrow sense, the term post-socialism affects 25 states, more than 30 percent of the world land mass and more than 50 percent of the human population. However, it is not only a regional or transitory issue. After all, these processes not only altered the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Eastern Europe, but also the lives of those beyond that world. Post-socialism is a framing, and as such it is not incompatible with other contemporary frames; in most cases, all these paradigms complement each other. Unsurprisingly, post-socialism has been linked to wider theorisations and phenomena such as globalisation (Bodnár 2001), neo-liberalism (Smith *et al.* 2008), postcolonialism (Chary and Verdery 2009), post-modernism (Hirt 2012) and late-modernity (Martínez 2014).

We can hardly explain actual political processes without being aware of post-socialism. The break-up of the Soviet Union was a critical juncture that opened a window for expanded social choices; and yet, the possibilities of transformations were nonetheless bounded, conditioned by different interests, factors, and the persistence of the past (Johnson 2001). Transformations occurred within a frame and a repertoire of possibilities, partly shaped by active choices and agencies, partly conditioned by social and material legacies, and the obduracy of existing structures. There was thus an organic interplay between different scales

and legacies, and transformations took place asymmetrically. Hence, we claim for paying attention to trajectories of change, making us aware of the ambiguities and contradictions of the journey: 'If postsocialism does indeed continue to exist, we need to think about it not as following a trajectory toward market capitalism, but backing up, fast-forwarding, simultaneously cancelling itself out, slowing down and then speeding up again in completely renewed and reassembled cycles of development' (Materka 2012: 141). Also, geographer Alison Stenning (2005) suggests investigating post-socialist aspects through the study of the contours and boundaries of the concept, exploring differences and commonalities and interrogating its connections to other worlds. As Stenning puts it, 'post-socialism cannot be reduced to neoliberal economic restructuring, nor just to the legacies of socialism (or pre-socialism), nor indeed to the passage of "transition". It is all of these' (ibid: 124).

Post-socialist transformations cannot be reduced to a 'sum of "positive changes", inspired and evaluated from the West' (Lauristin 1997: 25). Changes were rather contradictory and ambiguous (Berdahl 2000), characterised by insensitive policies of limited success (Pickles and Smith 1998), and by a situation of uncertainty (Humphrey 2002b). The study of the dialectic between the Old and the New allows us to reflect on the existence of ambivalences, ironies and sources of tension in these rapidly changing societies, as well as to dig into the relationship among legacies, global processes and political regulations. It also confirms that the outcome of 'transition' has been shaped not only by the design of the policies and the opening up to the international market and finance capital, but also by the actually existing high expectations and the abject rejection of the past. The focus on journeys and trajectories stresses therefore the eventful process of becoming –with its unexpected outcomes and incongruities– instead of the linear direction of change. It also takes post-socialism as a distinct condition, spatially and temporarily hybrid, drawing attention to continuities alongside changes, and also to wider scales and connections. Post-socialism resonates

therefore with global changes and the neoliberal restructuring of societies, making this concept applicable to broader debates.

Caroline Humphrey (2002a) justifies the use of the term 'post-socialism' by arguing that socialist related practices were deeply embedded in these societies and could not be replaced by new ones overnight. But for how long will it still be tenable to speak of post-socialism? Humphrey proposes to take post-socialism as a non-homogeneous experience, while Chris Hann asserts that the concept will remain relevant as long as ideals, ideologies and practices of socialism serve as a reference point for the evaluation of the present (Hann 2002). As my ethnography in Estonia shows (Martínez *forthcoming*), the descriptive and conceptual value of post-socialism is unequivocally tied to generational change, hence showing a decreasing analytical functionality, as young people already demonstrate a more neutral and practical approach towards the Soviet world. New generations are making the relationship between past, present and future less unidirectional and ordered than the previous ones. They are blurring the strict delineation between past, present and future, approaching them in a more porous and situational way. The riddle here is to figure out how present-day expectations and experiences might invest the past with novel meaning.

Originally, post-socialism is an anthropological comparative term coined in the West to study what followed the break-up of the Soviet Union, namely the privatisation of the means of production and public goods, the discredit of critics of capitalism, the dismantlement of the Cold War geo-political barriers and the reduction to zero-value of the remnants from the past world. But even if the concept is first of all associated with East-Central Europe, the experience has had several collateral effects on the world as whole as, for instance, an increase of labour and economic inequality; a growing vulnerability for individuals (discrediting of collective thought); a rise in the transnational circulation of capital; a technological shift which accelerates everyday life; an escalation of production (correlated by one of consumption); the incapability to verbalise political alternatives; and an extensive de-

synchronisation of temporalities. It is in this sense that Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008) argue that we are all post-socialist now, i.e. as a boomerang effect, in the same way post-colonialism was not external to the societies of the imperial metropolis, but instead inscribed within.

The integration into the EU of countries East of the Iron Curtain was not perceived as a source of critical insights; on the contrary, they reinforced the emerging neo-liberal hegemony. Processes of privatisation and dispossession were not simply contemporaneous in different parts of the world but also justified by parallel arguments and ideologies, pursued by interrelated groups of elites, personally and corporately linked to each other. Global and post-socialist processes are taken here as reciprocal processes, in an approach acknowledging the effects that the ‘collapse’ of the USSR have produced beyond the borders of the former Tsarist Empire. Anthropologist Zsuzsa Gille has presented the break-up of state socialism as ‘the corollary of globalisation’ (2010: 13), which led to the effect of over-valorising everyday quietness and calculability. Post-socialism, globalisation and late-modernity can be analysed thus as over-lapping processes that in their interplay have generated new opportunities as well as novel structures of inequality and exclusion.

Also in this vein, Thomas Hylland Eriksen describes the last twenty-five years as a period of ‘overheating’ (2016), calling attention to the accelerated change and the heightened level of activity in the realms of economy and communication. Such overloading, as we call it here referring to the difficulty in apprehending these changes, is not only affecting global processes unevenly, but reshaping also the temporal regimes within particular localities. As a result, feelings of temporal marginality are being intensified, with more people perceiving that their expectations are casted aside, living toward a future that differs from the one envisioned by societal discourse (Frederiksen 2013).

Overall, transformation in the experience of time has been one of the most important areas of change since the collapse of socialism across the region between 1989-1991. As Liviu Chelcea (2015) shows in his ethnography of bank workers in Romania, post-socialist transformations also meant the acceleration of the experience of time. This acceleration was accompanied by the installing of new routines, disciplines and standards, and a diffuse long-term future where meaningful plans appear as fantasy or daydreaming. This has led to significant changes in the organisation of economy, culture, space and time, manifest in discourses of flexibility, the demand of 'self-regulating selves', and the creation of a new category – the 'old timers' (those who stick to prior skills and temporal regimes). The introduction of computers also contributed to making previous routines and jobs obsolete, and intensifying time planning. For instance, in her ethnography of an Estonian oil shale mine, Eeva Kesküla (2016) notes that the introduction of new technology was just as significant breaking point in the history of the miners as was the year 1991.

The need to establish something durable

The volume *A History of Eastern Europe* presents crisis and discontinuity as a long-term condition in the region (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007). East-European societies have been ever transforming systems, living in a constant process of change, making the familiar unfamiliar and vice-versa –incorporating rupture and discontinuity eventually into the structures of society. This condition has been intensified by global circulations and technological shifts, which brought new forms of separation and extended a need for constant adaptation. The continuous changes experienced in the region, overlapping with global and technological shifts, have increased the perceived uncertainty and de-synchronisation within these societies, making the effects of late-modern phenomena more radical. In the course of a prolonged experience on the edge, the logic emerging from the suspension tends to be incorporated into

the very structure of society (Martínez 2014). Eastern Europe has been in an adjusting mood for a century. A specificity regarding the year 1991 is the developed competence by local people to cope with uncertainty, a sort of ‘thick skin’ that allowed for a certain distance toward change. As noted by Karl Schlögel, a ‘new urban society is built on previous experiences of crisis’, which is not totally new in Eastern Europe, whereby this experience ‘has been stored across generations ... fatally exhausted by the catastrophes of the century’ (2012: 29).

For Schlögel, 1989-1991 was the result of a long incubation period; and yet it was also a time of iconoclasm, historic moments and emerging spaces. For instance, it was the beginning of a tempestuous re-evaluation of the past, re-ideologisation and new myth-construction. We can recognise diverse forms of retrofitting the past within the post-Soviet societies, depending on the *mise-en-scène*, utilitarian goals, and cultural specificities (see Martínez), yet as Kirss notes institutional efforts of ‘retrofitting’ the past ‘hardly shut the genie into a bottle’.

‘Revisiting the expectations of 1989 is a bit like walking into a history museum... one remains highly aware of the passing of time’, Kattago observes. The 1990s were days of deeply voluntaristic change, in which most of the previous political frames, vocabulary, and symbols were overthrown, discarded and wiped out by shock ‘therapies’ in economic and nationalistic agendas. Eventually, discourses of normality created the impression that socialism was a non-real condition, something unnatural and caricaturesque.¹ Indeed, post-socialism was not simply driven by convergence with Western values, but also by revenge and dismantlement (see Martínez). 1989-1991 marks a break in historical continuity, in the sense that part of the known world not only changed; but also disappeared.

Paradoxically, the practices and policies of post-socialism, as well as its disappointments were directly inflected distinctively by the past (Creed 2002). Facing the paradox that the Soviet ‘collapse’ was completely unexpected, but simultaneously unsurprising, anthropologist Alexei

Yurchak (2001) has noted how quickly some people were able to operate a profit-making business, even before the break-up of state socialism. This was due, in his view, to the Soviet ‘entrepreneurial governmentality’, which comprised a particular form of knowledge, skills and ways of thinking capable of distinguishing between formality (abstractions and rituals) and practice (day-to-day experimentation).² The anomaly, as Aet Annist reminds us (2014), is that entrepreneurial success was in many cases derived not from hard work, but from social capital accumulated during the Soviet period. For Annist, the failure of post-socialism lies in the lack of equal opportunity, being the burdens of change have been most often unequally distributed.³

The dust of memory

David Berliner (2005) explains that the success of memory among anthropologists resides in its conceptual efficiency to understand continuity – persistence of representations, practices, emotions and institutions. Yet, as Johannes Fabian noted, ‘an overextension of the concept of memory will make it indistinguishable from either identity or culture’ (1999: 51). In this vein, historian Lee Klein asserts provocatively that memory is ‘replacing old favourites’ such as ‘nature, culture, language’ (2000: 128), in connection with retro-mania and the reassessment of national identities in Europe. Zsuzsa Gille (2010) claims that memory has replaced ‘society’ as the primary focus of scholarship, fusing class and identity politics after state socialism. Other critics go so far as to assert that ‘memory has become the discourse that replaces history’ itself (Kansteiner 2002: 180).

For Nietzsche, the need to forget is a mandatory complement to remembering. That approach takes forgetting not as a failure of memory, but as an affirmation, a way to fix our hauntings up.⁴ Further on, the German philosopher believed that nations might get intoxicated with an overdose of history; indeed, the politicisation of past experience is very much connected with

modern perceptions of time and identity. Otherwise, forgetting can also be approached as a faculty and as a symbolic expenditure; liberating negativism, accessing to other ways of knowledge (Forty and Küchler 1999). A precedent to this was the first postwar Europe, built upon forgetting as a way of life. However, ‘since 1989, Europe has been constructed... upon a compensatory surplus of memory: institutionalized public remembering as the very foundation of collective identity. The first could not endure—but nor will the second’ (Judt 2005: 829). Further on, historian Jeremy Black points out that empowerment through historic grievance is a source of division, as well as a reluctant sign to search for compromises. ‘It focuses on where one comes from, and not what one can do, on an incapacity, and not an active potential’ (Black 2008: 227). Likewise, he notes that past ‘wrongs’ cannot be put right by generations not responsible for them, and the result of that approach can only generate new ‘wrongs’. The right to memory might be turned into an oppressing tool if used to create further exclusions within our societies, essentialising roots and enhancing xenophobic discourses based on othering and the institutional articulation of a supposed pure past. In this sense, contemporary memory discourses in Europe should avoid the reefs of ossification, fall in the populist trap, and repeat the ‘grand narratives’ of the past and the success-story of one group only (Martínez 2016).

When looking back to those events today, they appear increasingly as a bunch of decoloured images losing their caption. Things have not played out exactly as might have been intended. In some cases, expectations were used for particular political agendas, in some others, the hope turned into disappointment once it was realised. In this issue, we reflect on how different experiences in political perspective have been reconstructed in light of the outcomes, from the vantage point of the present moment. Twenty-five years on we look back and realise that the past is not what it used to be and the future is not what most of us expected. We can even talk of the ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant 2011) produced by 1991, the high expectations of a good life

whose outcome was instead a ‘fantasy bribe’, making it impossible to attain the very transformations people strived for.

The way the world is now is not the way it has always been, nor the way it will always be. We believe that delving into these expectations opens up the door to understanding better the aspects of change such as uncertainty, inequality, the clash of solidarities and how personal and societal time diverge. Still any attempt to comprehend ongoing phenomena in Europe has to consider representations and values that refer to the past, specifically to the landmark 1989-1991. And, even so, the yesterday just helps partially to contextualise the existing practices and the imaginable normalcy.

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¹ Already since the Perestroika, normality appeared associated with 'success', 'happiness', 'comfort', 'order' and high material standards. In that logic, transformations were simply a transitional phase towards 'normality'. Shock therapies were legitimised by the eagerness to become 'normal', according to which the socialist countries were 'delayed' in relation to the achievements of the West. Convergence then became the primary concern and repeated mantra of shock therapies the promotion of a neo-liberal agenda, which culminated with globalisation as the ultimate disembedding of economy from society.

² In Yurchak's framework, norms and utterance do not appear in opposition, but tangentially connected, allowing a margin of creativity and adaptation. In this sense, he describes the post-socialist societies in terms of hybridity, where rules do exist and yet different spheres get layered one onto the another.

³ In her work on how communities in rural regions of Estonia are negotiating convoluted changes, Annist demonstrates that the transition caused many people to lose the means of production, so they could no longer remain self-sufficient in the face of dispossession and precarity. This phenomenon was accompanied by a 'hands-off strategy' by the state, forcing citizens to individually assume public responsibility.

⁴ Nietzsche (1874) depicted three modes of approaching the past, questioning the instrumentalisation of history by the institutions of memory. The most common approach was the monumental, whereby great leaders and events are mythologised. The second one was the antiquarian, in which history is documented and revered. The third one, and most uncommon, is the critical, condemning the past and aiming at leaving history behind (as if it were a burden).