

**PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for
conflicted young people across Europe.**

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

<http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/>

Transnational Case Study Report

General Introduction

Hilary Pilkington
University of Manchester

Executive summary:

This report provides a general introduction to the detailed transnational case study reports completed for each of four clusters of cases. It sets out the composition of clusters and the rationale for the clustering. It explains the common methodology – meta-ethnographic synthesis – applied to draw conclusions from across countries. It details the research questions agreed across clusters and within clusters to guide the synthesis of data. It also reflects on the advantages and limitations of the methodology employed.



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1. Introduction

PROMISE is a 'Research & Innovation Action' collaborative research project funded under H2020. It involves 12 partners in 10 countries and runs from 01 May 2016 to 30 April 2019.

The objective of PROMISE is to explore the role of young people (aged 14 to 29 years) in shaping society. The project addresses young people's engagement with social, environmental, cultural, and political issues as well as the challenges they face that affect their participation in society. The PROMISE project aims to investigate how young people's responses to these challenges can constitute positive social engagement but also, especially where responses are non-normatively approved, can create, or re-embed, conflict and stigmatisation.

The PROMISE research is conducted through a number of different Work Packages (WPs). This report introduces research conducted as part of WP6 'From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies'. This WP adopts a qualitative, case study approach where the aim is not to study young people's experiences and actions because they are 'representative' of their cohort but, on the contrary, to capture the significance of the 'particular' chosen cases. Central to the qualitative case study is the recognition of the fundamental importance to understanding social phenomena of the *context* of social research. As Burawoy (1998: 13) puts it, qualitative research is based on the epistemological premise that 'context is not noise disguising reality but reality itself'. The principle of reflexivity embedded in qualitative social science, moreover, assumes that social research is the product of the interaction of externally produced theory and internal narratives (indigenous narratives, respondents' interpretations of the social world etc.) that are profoundly *located* in time and space. Although PROMISE is a large transnational project, it starts from the premise that these locations are not limitations on, but central to, the knowledge produced through social research.

This approach is reflected in the two-stage analytic process embedded in the research design. First, the data generated in each of the 22 individual ethnographic case studies included in WP6 were analysed in local languages by Consortium member teams on an individual case study basis. The individual reports (Deliverable 6.1) based on the findings of the analysis of data within in each case study were completed first and are available at:

<http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/ethnographic-case-studies/>. At the second stage, additional knowledge and new insight was sought through cross-case analysis employing an adaptation of the meta-ethnographic synthesis approach (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Britten *et al.* 2002; Pilkington, 2018). This synthesis of data was conducted for four 'clusters' of cases emanating from different countries (see Table 1).

This deliverable report (Deliverable 6.2) consists of four reports each detailing the findings of the meta-ethnographic synthesis of findings of the studies in the respective cluster. In this general introduction to the transnational case study reports, the composition of, and rationale for, the four clusters are outlined as well as the research questions and the common methodological approach for the synthesis of data employed.

2. Clusters: composition and rationale

Indicative case studies had been proposed in the PROMISE Description of Action and a provisional clustering devised at the point of finalisation of the research proposal. On commencement of WP6, consortium partners revisited their initial suggestions and provided details of their final proposed cases for study using a common 'case study template' to ensure all cases met the required criteria for inclusion. All partners proposed two case studies with the exception of P11 (HSE) whose particular funding conditions meant that they proposed four cases. For this reason a total of 22 cases (rather than the anticipated 20 case studies) were completed for WP6. As the case studies developed, the scope and composition of clusters were revisited a number of times. The finally agreed selection of cases and their clustering is detailed in Table 1.

The rationale for this clustering is based on the agreed criteria for case study selection. Thus, all cases were selected on the premise that the groups or individuals studied are 'in conflict' or stigmatised (by authorities, public opinion, media) to some degree but that, notwithstanding this discursive positioning, the researchers anticipate the study would reveal responses – including non-normatively sanctioned responses – to this conflict or stigmatisation, which may be socially innovative or contribute to social change. The clusters group those responses by their spheres or sites of action. Thus, for example, Cluster 1 brings together groups whose responses pertain to the educational, justice or social services system. In Cluster 2, we find groups who are actively responding to conflict in the fields of culture and politics. In Cluster 3, young people carve out pockets of contestation in the economic sphere or leisure spaces. Cluster 4 consists of groups that are resisting stigmatisation on the terrain of gender and/or sexuality. In practice, a number of different ways of clustering would have been possible and any chosen clustering would have made some cases more central, and others more marginal, to the cluster. We sought, through the clustering arrived at, to find not a perfect resolution but a 'best fit' for the majority of cases. It was agreed to include two cases in two clusters for analysis given that the cases were highly relevant to more than one cluster. These cases are indicated by use of italics in Table 1.

Table 1 Clustering of individual case studies

	Education/Justice/Society (Cluster Synthesis Lead: UCP)	Culture/Politics (Cluster Synthesis Lead: CJD)	Economy/Leisure/Space (Cluster Synthesis Lead: IPI)	Gender/sexuality (Cluster Synthesis Lead: HSE)
P1: UNIMAN (GB ¹)	Criminalised youth	Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities'		
P2: IPRS (IT)		No-TAV (anti-high-speed rail track movement)	Youth activities at leftist/ex-squat social centre	
P3: CJD (DE)		Autonomists <i>Young Muslim women</i>		<i>Young Muslim women</i>
P4: UAB (ES)	No-NEETS		Young people involved in alternative building practices	
P5: UCP (PT)	Young people with risk and deviance pathways			Young gender activists
P6: UMB (SK)		Not In Our Town (NIOT)	Returning young migrants	
P7: FYRN (FI)			Intergenerational contests in the media city	Young motherhood in multicultural Finland
P9: UTARTU (EE)	Young ex-offenders and recidivism	<i>Rural youth in Seto heritage region</i>	<i>Rural youth in Seto heritage region</i>	
P11: HSE (RU)		New pro-citizen activism in St Petersburg HIV activists in St. Petersburg and Kazan		LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg Feminist scene in St Petersburg
P12: IPI (HR)			Varteks and White Stones (football supporters' club)	Zagreb Pride- LGBTIQ NGO
Total no. of cases	4	8	6	6

¹ Here, and throughout the reports, ISO 3166-1 country codes are used to signal which country a case is from.

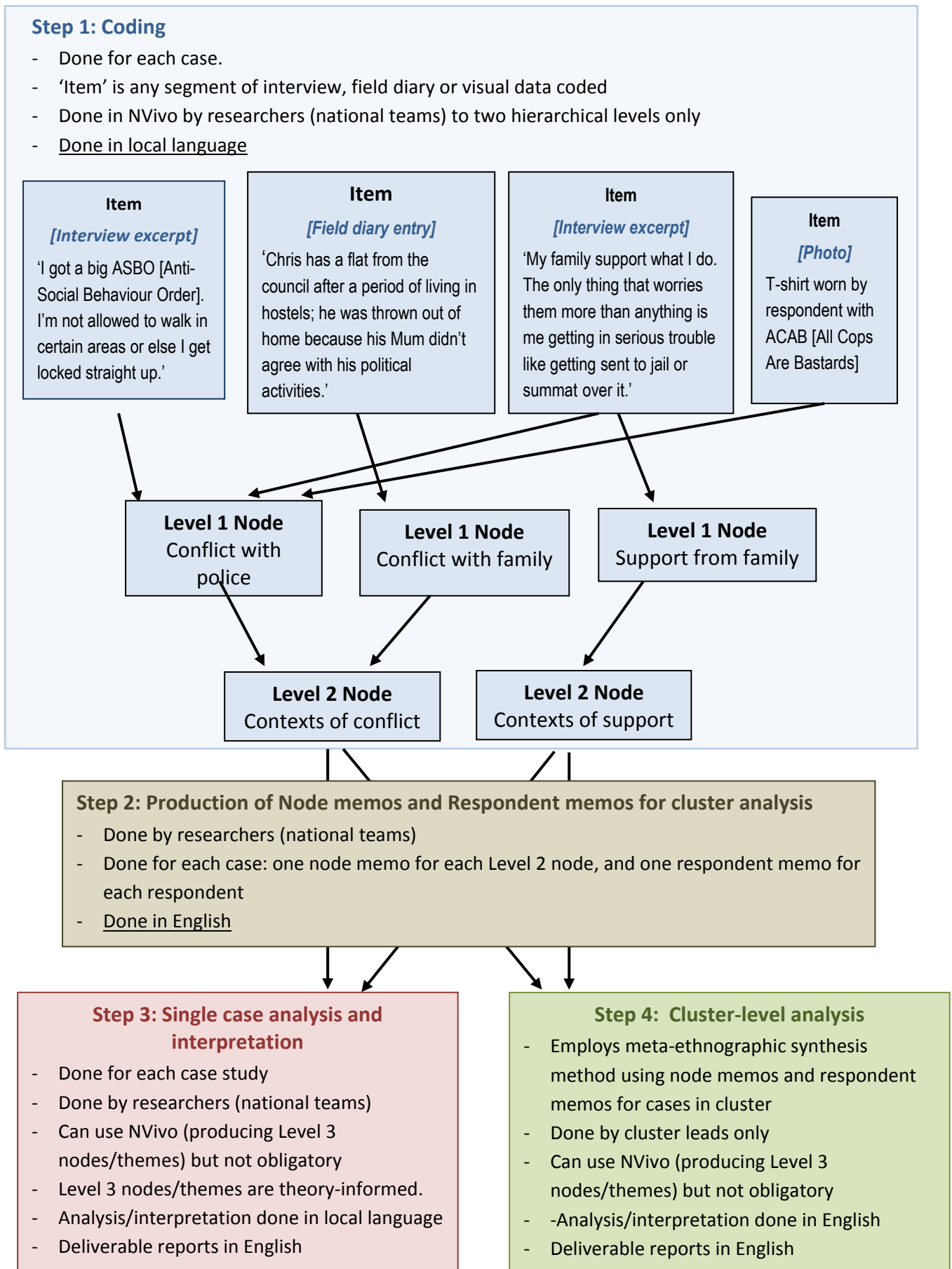
3. Methodology: meta-ethnographic synthesis

As noted in the Introduction, WP6 is designed on the basis of a two-stage analysis process. The first stage - single case analysis - is described in the introduction to D6.1 (<http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PROMISE-introduction-and-methodology-for-the-case-study-reports.pdf>) and is depicted figuratively in Steps 1-3 of Figure 1 (below). Following the coding of data in individual case studies, researchers produced two sets of documents: 'node memos'; and 'respondent memos' (Step 2 in Figure 1). These documents, along with the single case study reports, were used for transnational cluster analyses.

For the transnational cluster analyses, a meta-ethnographic synthesis approach was applied. This involved the adaptation of classic meta-ethnographic synthesis (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Britten *et al.* 2002) to allow for the synthesis of not published studies but transnational qualitative empirical data. This adapted method has been used previously to study cross-European case studies of young people's activism (Pilkington, 2018). It constitutes an alternative to comparative approaches which pre-determine the parameters for comparison and often translate into a common language only 'indicative' interviews or interview summaries, which tend to lose the 'outliers' or refutational cases, the inclusion of which is crucial to the principles of qualitative research. It combines context-sensitive coding of data in original language (see Step 1 in Figure 1) with the production of detailed primary data summaries ('node memos') and respondent profiles ('respondent memos') in English, which are used as the objects of synthesis. In this way, the synthesis approach retains a level of closeness to context that is lost when the object of meta-ethnographic synthesis is restricted to published studies (in this case the individual case study reports). The synthesis approach thus facilitates the construction of a 'bigger picture' from profoundly contextually embedded data and allows for not only commonalities but also differences to be elucidated and for the retention of a significant amount of contextuality.

While, in principle, such a synthesis could have included all 22 ethnographic case studies conducted in the PROMISE project, previous experience has shown that this adapted method (given it draws on extensive primary empirical material) is best suited to the synthesis of a small number of cases. Thus, for PROMISE, the synthesis was conducted at cluster level where the number of cases in each cluster ranged from four to eight (see Section 2).

Figure 1: Data Analysis Flow Diagram



The synthesis was conducted as a five stage process in which first the data set was constructed (Stages 1-3) and then the synthesis process conducted (Stages 4-5).

- Stage 1: Constructing the data set
- Stage 2: Scoping the data
- Stage 3: Determining research questions
- Stage 4: Translating the meanings of one case into another
- Stage 5: Generating 'third-level' interpretations

These five stages were undertaken as step 4 of the data analysis flow diagram (Figure 1, above).

In a traditional meta-ethnographic synthesis the researcher, first, has to scope the potential range of published studies to be included in the synthesis. In this case, the data set for each synthesis was pre-given, consisting of those cases included in each of the WP6 clusters and included the following data from each case study in the cluster:

- 'node memos'
- 'respondent memos'
- individual case deliverable reports

Node memos are thematic memos generated in the form of simple Word documents for each Level 2 node and consisting of the descriptions of the content of Level 2 nodes and their constituent Level 1 nodes as well as illustrative quotes for each Level 1 node. The node memos also included a summary of the context of the generation of the Level 2 node (including particular theoretical paradigms or historical or political events important to its understanding) as well as detailed descriptions of the range of content of Level 1 nodes. These node memos were written in English and constituted the primary objects of synthesis. In addition, 'respondent memos' were generated in English for each individual respondent, providing a quick reference point for the main socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and other contextual information of relevance to the interpretation of the data. Both sets of memos were produced following anonymisation guidelines that ensured all names used were pseudonyms and any other identifying material was removed.

The data for each cluster are summarised in Tables 2.1-2.4 (see below).

The final preparatory stage (Stage 3) was to determine research questions to guide the synthesis. Three research questions were agreed for each cluster analysis: the first two were questions common across all four clusters; the third question was cluster-specific and proposed by each cluster analysis lead. The research questions guiding the synthesis are detailed in Section 4.

Table 2.1: Data summary for Cluster 1: Education/justice/society

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
Young ex-offenders and recidivism (Ex-OFF², EE)	24	13	60	Heterogeneous group of young people who are ex-offenders and on probation. These young people are in conflict with the criminal justice system and feel that they are treated with injustice, disrespect or disproportionately harshly compared to other people in similar situations. As a result, they experience significant criminalisation and stigmatisation.
Criminalised youth (CYI, GB)	21	26	151	Young people whose identities are shaped as ‘criminalised’ not least due to their strong awareness of how others perceive them. These young people feel misrepresented by authorities, older generations and media and experience multiple forms and sites of stigmatisation.
No-NEETS (NoNEET, ES)	21	21	195	Young people from organisations founded and run by young people in vulnerable situations but who seek ways of managing successful transitions into adulthood. As a consequence of being out of work and education, these young people feel stigmatised and face challenges - such as access to housing – that make their situations even more vulnerable.
Young people with risk and deviant paths (RISK, PT)	26	29	237	Young people with paths of psychosocial risk and deviant behaviour who are in contact with Youth Justice Teams and/or enrolled in second chance education projects. As a result of their vulnerable situation they experience stigmatisation by society in general, authority figures and older generations.
Total	92	89	643	

² Here and throughout the reports, cases are referred to using agreed acronyms/short forms.



Table 2.2: Data summary for Cluster 2: Culture/Politics

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
Autonomists (AUT, DE)	22	24	201	Heterogeneous extreme-left youth scene whose members are in conflict with the political and economic order and are overtly politically engaged and protest against this order. As a result they experience significant criminalisation and stigmatisation.
HIV activists (HIV, RU)	26	33	202	Young people – many HIV positive themselves - engaged in emergent HIV activist scenes in two Russian cities (St Petersburg and Kazan). These activists work in the context of a highly moralising public discourse about HIV, high levels of social stigmatisation of those living with the illness and legal constraints on the functioning of civil society organisations.
No-TAV (No-TAV, IT)	20	17	92	Young people participating in the No-Tav movement, which opposes the construction of a high-speed railway between France and Italy. In public discourse No-Tav activists are represented as anti-progress ‘primitives’, Nimbies or, in the case of young people, as terrorists, Black Blocs or professional orchestrators of violence.
Not In Our Town (NIOT, SK)	19	15	152	Youth participating in the Not in Our Town (NIOT) grassroots movement active in resisting racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance. This movement emerged locally to fight against the election of an extreme right wing regional governor but in the context of rapid social change in Slovakia more widely.

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
New pro-citizen activism (NPCA, RU)	29	23	120	Youth active in St Petersburg in two broad civil society movements: 'oppositional' and 'moral order' activism. The former support a liberal, progressive opposition to the government. The latter conduct culturally conservative campaigns for 'moral order'. While active at opposite ends of the political spectrum, young people in both movements are in 'conflict' with the current political authorities in Russia and subject to hostility and abuse from media and the general public.
Rural youth in Seto heritage region (SETO, EE)	20	17	208	Young people in the Seto ethnic region in South Eastern Estonia who experience stigmatisation resulting from their lack of recognised cultural identity in a newly emerged, hegemonically Seto-heritage oriented region. Their consequent disengagement results in negative stereotyping by authorities, media and the general public.
Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities' (SC, GB)	27	28	287	Young people who are Muslim or of Muslim heritage and actively engaged in countering misrecognition and stigmatisation of Muslims in the context of the implementation of counter-terrorism legislation that contributes to the construction of Muslim populations as 'suspect communities'.
Young Muslim women (YMW, DE)	15	26	236	Young Muslim women who, as 'representatives of Islam' are subject to, gendered, assumptions about an essentialised collective Muslim identity. Contrary to these stereotypes, the young women are all actively engaged in society and choose to be so as visible Muslims – symbolised by their choice to wear the hijab.
Total	152	183	1498	

Table 2.3: Data summary for Cluster 3: Economy/leisure spaces

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
Varteks and White Stones (football supporters' club) (VS, HR)	25	24	211	A homogenous group (mostly) of young people under 29 who are members of FC Varteks Varaždin and White Stones ultras groups. Most are members of the subcultural scene as football supporters and are 'labelled' accordingly in both local and national contexts. These young people are also in conflict with the local political elite and the local and national football establishment.
Intergenerational contests in the media city (HSO, FI)	20	27	176	Young people (subcultural groups) who feel marginalised in Finnish society. They negotiate, and struggle to secure, their right to the city, through occupying, inhabiting and transforming urban space in Helsinki with embodied and material means. Respondents have low trust in politics, especially because of cuts in the welfare sector and experiences of stigmatisation on the basis of age, gender or sexual orientation.
Rural youth in Seto heritage region (SETO, EE)	20	17	208	Young people in the Seto ethnic region in South Eastern Estonia who experience stigmatisation resulting from their lack of recognised cultural identity in a newly emerged, hegemonically Seto-heritage oriented region. Their consequent disengagement results in negative stereotyping by authorities, media and the general public.
Youth activities at leftist/ex-squat social centre (NSA, IT)	20	20	119	Young people in one neighbourhood in Napoli. They are growing up in harsh environments are often stigmatised by society as "troubled" and "losers" and this affects their future life. Despite coming from social and economic contexts of hardship and often linked to the environments of organised crime, the youth addressed by our research have found a way to put in place an extraordinary innovative potential, for themselves and the community, through the use of art - in particular, circus and theatre.

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
Young people involved in alternative building practices (AAS, ES)	23	26	194	Young people in five youth activist groups in Spain (four in Barcelona and one in Madrid) involved in: the self-building of collective or private places; the <i>masovería urbana</i> ; and new uses of collective spaces (the public/private character of which is unclear). These groups are participatory, bottom-up, atypical and micro-local initiatives in conflict with various levels of the political establishment.
Returning young migrants (SRM, SK)	26	15	86	Heterogeneous group of young people who are young return migrants to Slovakia. This sub-group of Slovakian youth is in conflict with the mainstream population and local and national political establishments and experience 'double stigma' in that they experienced labelling as migrants abroad, but also upon return home.
Total	134	129	994	

Table 2.4: Data summary for Cluster 4: Gender/Sexuality

Case studies	No. respondents	No. Level 2 nodes	No. Level 1 nodes	Case study description
Young motherhood in multicultural Finland (FI)	18	28	196	The experience of 18-25-year-old young women, pregnant or mothers of 1-2 children in Finland. Despite Finland's active promotion of gender equality, discrimination and stigmatisation of those who violate the conventional gender expectations persist. Thus, childbirth at a relatively early age is problematised in the public debate, and young mothers experience stigmatisation in everyday life.
Feminist scene in St. Petersburg (RU)	15	20	73	Young people engaged in a range of groups and organisations that make up the very diverse feminist scene in St Petersburg. All those involved identified themselves as feminists.
LGBTQ scene in St. Petersburg (RU)	14	19	52	Young people engaged in a range of different groups and organisations associated with the LGBTQ scene in St Petersburg.
Young Gender Activists (PT)	20	26	184	Young women engaged in gender activism either through organisations, single initiatives or as independent activists.
Young Muslim women (YMW, DE)	15	26	236	Young Muslim women who, as 'representatives of Islam' are subject to, gendered, assumptions about an essentialised collective Muslim identity. Contrary to these stereotypes, the young women are all actively engaged in society and choose to be so as visible Muslims – symbolized by their choice to wear the hijab.
Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO (HR)	31	20	100	Young people active in the Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ organisation which advocates for equality for LGBTIQ people. Besides the organisation of the Zagreb Pride march, the organisation engages in legislative initiatives and organises support groups for teenagers.
Total	113	140	859	

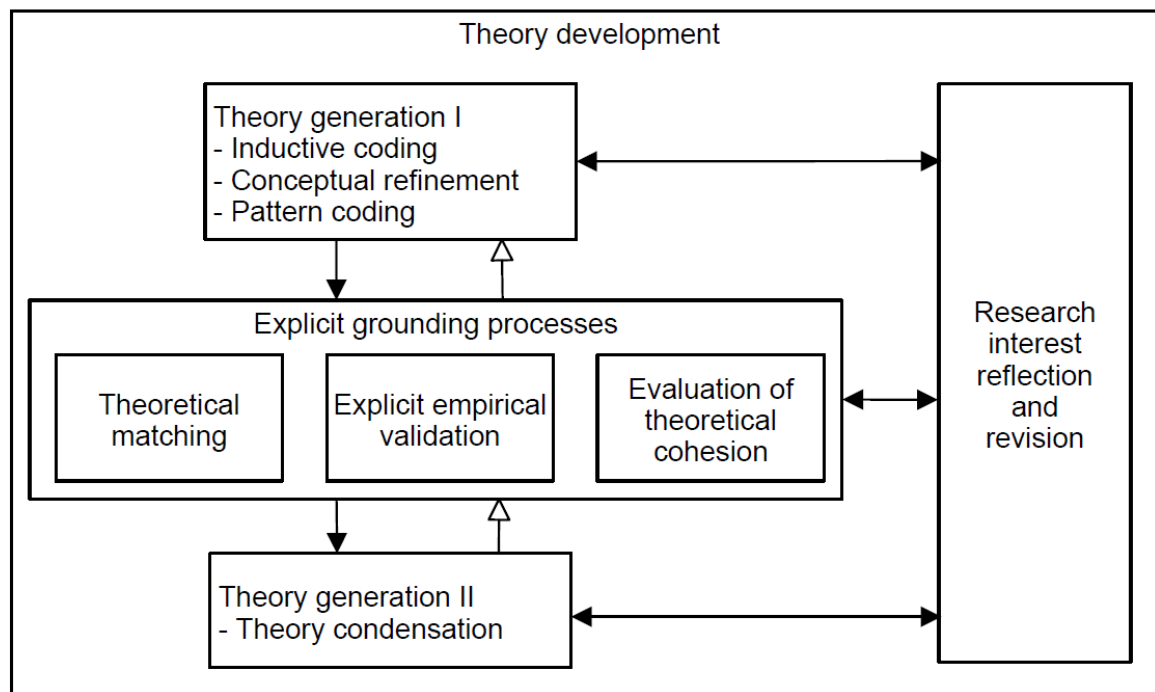
The building blocks of the meta-ethnographic approach are the generation of ‘second-order’ concepts and metaphors (Stage 4) and ‘third-order’ interpretations (Stage 5) (Britten *et al.*, 2002: 213; Lee *et al.*, 2015: 347). Definitions of first, second and third-order constructs differ in the published literature (Malpass *et al.*, 2009: 158) although there is consensus that the underlying process involves ‘identifying key concepts from studies and translating them into one another’ (Thomas and Harden, 2008: 5). The term ‘translating’ in this context refers to the process of taking concepts from one study and recognising the same concepts in another study (*ibid.*). Explanations or theories associated with these concepts are employed to develop a ‘line of argument’, which pulls these concepts together and provides insight beyond that gained from the original studies.

The translation process in PROMISE was not of concepts extracted from published literature (as in a classic version of meta-ethnographic synthesis) but respondents’ own interpretations coded, categorised, contextualised and interpreted in node memos, respondent memos and case study reports. These materials were read repeatedly in the process of the translation of the meanings of one case into another, where necessary clarifying context and interpretation with the field researchers. There are three forms of translation envisaged in the meta-ethnographic synthesis method: cases are directly comparable as ‘reciprocal’ translations; cases stand in opposition to each other and are thus ‘refutational’; cases are diverse but, taken together, represent a ‘line of argument’ rather than a reciprocal or refutational translation (Noblit and Hare, 1988: 36). In practice, a single meta-ethnography may include all three types of translation (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 24; Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006:103). Given the diversity of cases in the PROMISE clusters we anticipated that the end product would usually be ‘a line of argument’ developed on the basis of the reciprocal translation of cases but taking account of refutational or partially refutational cases.

The second-order concepts that emerged were recorded and described in a table that sought maximum reciprocal translation but recorded also any refutational cases. It also recorded illustrative quotes for both reciprocal and refutational cases in relation to that concept. The use of the term ‘translation’ indicates that, at this stage, the synthesiser is comparing concepts, each infused with its own interpretation, and thus is engaged in an interpretive ‘reading’ of meaning, but not further conceptual development (Malpass *et al.*, 2009: 158).

The final stage of analysis was the generation of ‘third-order’ interpretations. This stage involved determining what additional insight is brought to the research questions through the synthesis of cases and is least open to procedural systematisation. The aim is to generate a qualitative synthesis that extends knowledge over and above the sum of the individual case studies included in the study whilst recognising that it may also be that no new insight emerges (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 119). In a further amendment of classic meta-ethnographic synthesis, at this final stage in PROMISE we did not aim to induce new (‘grounded’) theory (as envisaged by Noblit and Hare’s original meta-ethnographic model) but to revise, refine or reconstruct theory. This approach is based on a critical approach to the presumption in the ‘grounded theory’ approach that entirely new theory can be induced from data analysis. Rather it recognises that theory is essential to interpretation and knowledge production and thus the ‘necessity of bringing theory to the field’ (Burawoy, 2003: 647) with the aim of revising or refining theory rather than generating it anew. In PROMISE therefore we used, rather, Goldkuhl and Cronholm’s (2010) explication of a ‘multi-grounded theory’ approach to guide the practical process of bringing theory back in (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Multi-Grounded Theory approach (taken from Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010: 199)



Following this model, and the two stage analysis strategy illustrated in Figure 1, the research teams in PROMISE employed inductive coding as well as a shared skeleton coding tree to code data at the first level of analysis followed by a process of ‘theoretical matching’ and validation against both data and existing theoretical frameworks at the third or interpretative level. This third level of interpretative analysis was applied also to the synthesis process where theory is explicitly engaged in the final stage of the elucidation of ‘third-order’ interpretations.

4. Research questions

As noted above, three questions guided each transnational case analysis. These questions were agreed by all cluster leads and designed to capture the most important elements of the PROMISE research. The final research question in each case was specific to that cluster and designed to capture issues emerging from the data that were relevant to that particular cluster of cases.

The research questions employed were:

Q.1 How do young people respond to conflicts they experience and with what outcomes?

Q.2 What enables and what inhibits the social involvement of young people?

Q.3 Cluster-specific questions:

- Cluster 1: How do interventions (voluntary or statutory) enhance or inhibit youth social engagement/participation?
- Cluster 2: How are (aspirations for) (political) participation and (political) agency expressed by conflicted young people?
- Cluster 3: What is the role of space in different forms of social activism of youth?
- Cluster 4: How do young people experience (understand, imagine and shape) their involvement in (activist) communities and networks?

5. Reflections on the synthesis method: advantages and limitations

The meta-ethnographic synthesis approach was developed by those engaged in ethnography themselves in order to facilitate the generation of strong interpretive explanations by deriving understanding from multiple cases while retaining the sense of the original accounts (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 10).

Of course, the synthesis process is a ‘triple hermeneutic’ in which the meta-interpretations of the synthesiser are added to those of the original researcher and the research participant (Weed, 2005: 22) and it is inevitable that some of the ‘thickness’ embedded in individual cases is thinned out in the process. However, in PROMISE, the two tier analysis and interpretation process outlined above aimed to ensure that the ‘vitality, viscerality, and vicariism of the human experiences represented in the original studies’ (Sandelowski *et al.*, 1997: 366) was retained in the individual case study reports (D6.1) while genuine new insight might be gathered through the synthesis of cases through the cluster analysis. Moreover, by using the adapted meta-ethnographic synthesis approach outlined above, we sought to retain as much of the original context and richness as possible by using primary data (in the form of ‘node memos’) as the main unit of synthesis. This allowed concepts to be derived directly from the articulation by respondents of their experience and significant detail and differentiation contained in the original studies to be retained well into the analysis process. Examples of such concepts derived directly from respondents’ accounts include ‘doing something’ (Cluster 2) as a response to stigmatisation and ‘feeling good about myself’ as an outcome of that response (Cluster 4).

Another strength of the synthesis method – over, for example, a more traditional comparative method, is that cases are retained in their entirety rather than data being gathered only on pre-selected parameters or dimensions that allow neat comparison. Moreover, by retaining a commitment to including contradictory or ‘refutational’ data in the synthesis, cases that are ‘exceptions’ or ‘outliers’ can be used to enhance understanding rather than excluded because they lack ‘fit’. Indeed the refutational synthesis acts as a powerful reminder not to allow the synthesis method to seek similarity alone and to question why some concepts ‘work’ (in terms of reciprocal translation) better than others. These ‘exceptions’ or refutations were employed in the development of ‘line of argument’ syntheses.

Thirdly, meta-ethnography did not substitute ethnography but added to it by extracting the general from the unique over and above the contributions made by individual case studies. The PROMISE research design was premised on an inductive selection of cases that prioritised the importance of contextual validity. While analysis protocols provided a systematic process of coding to two levels, this was completed in the language of the interview, to avoid the loss of linguistically expressed difference. After the initial two-level coding, each team was able to further refine their coding (and interpretation) of data to produce third-level interpretations and published their findings as a discrete project. Thus, this method (unlike a strict comparative design) allowed the synthesis of findings alongside the production of unique case studies that can be interpreted in context.

Fourthly, this inductive approach meant that the concepts that emerged from the synthesis were not pre-defined by parameters for comparison rooted in the research design (and thus on secondary literature rather than primary data). While a skeleton coding tree was employed to assist the synthesis process, the idea of the ‘skeleton’ was that the coding tree could have flesh put on its bones by the addition of codes reflecting particularly rich data in any one case. To ensure these specificities were not lost at the synthesis stage, the third of the research questions was left open to be decided at cluster level; in each cluster a question dedicated to synthesising the particularities of cases in that cluster was selected.

The application of meta-ethnographic synthesis to primary data nonetheless presents some major challenges. First, although all cases synthesised in this study were drawn from a common research project (supported by cross-project guidelines and protocols) differences between data remained. This was partially a result of the inductive rather than deductive process of selecting cases. which meant that the clusters included a broad range of groups of young people experiencing different levels and forms of stigmatisation or conflict? In each cluster, therefore, some cases were more central and others more marginal to the synthesis. For example, in Cluster 2, the case of young people culturally marginalised in the Seto region of Estonia proved refutational or had missing data in relation to a number of emergent concepts. However, in no cluster did any case defy any form of reciprocal translation. Rather than excluding cases that appeared not to add value to the synthesis (Weed, 2008: 18; Campbell *et al.*, 2003: 671; Toye *et al.*, 2014: 7; Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 64), in this study, such cases were retained and recorded as 'missing' in relation to those aspects of the synthesis where their 'lack of fit' excluded them from synthesis.

A second challenge lies in the unevenness of cases inherent in any multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 2011: 21). While some studies were deeply ethnographic, including extensive field diaries, visual data and 20-30 semi-structured interviews, others were based on the same substantial interview material but afforded less opportunity for ethnographic observation.

A third challenge in conducting the synthesis was pragmatic. The process would have benefitted from more time for team reflection and the sharing of practice in the course of synthesis. The benefit of team members conducting different meta-ethnographies simultaneously and sharing reflections on the process is noted by Lee *et al.* (2015: 340). Although in this study such collective reflection took place during the process of the design and following a preliminary scoping of the data, the opportunities were limited by the transnational nature of the wider team and the reporting deadlines of the project.

6. References

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Project Identity

PROJECT NAME	Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement (PROMISE)
COORDINATOR	Jo Deakin, University of Manchester, UK. Jo.deakin@manchester.ac.uk
CONSORTIUM	Raffaele Bracalenti, <i>Istituto Psicoanalitico per le Ricerche Sociali, Italy.</i> r.bracalenti@iprs.it Eckart Müller-Bachmann, <i>Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands e.V., Germany.</i> eckart.mueller-bachmann@cjd-nord.de Zyab Ibanez, <i>Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.</i> zyab.ibanez@eui.eu Raquel Matos, <i>Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal.</i> rmatos@porto.ucp.pt Ivan Chorvát, <i>Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, Slovakia.</i> Ivan.Chorvat@umb.sk Kaisa Vehkalahti, <i>Finnish Youth Research Network, Finland.</i> Kaisa.Vehkalahti@oulu.fi Annett Wiedermann, <i>YES Forum (Youth and European Social Work), Germany.</i> annett.wiedermann@yes-forum.eu Anna Markina, <i>University of Tartu, Estonia.</i> Anna.Markina@ut.ee Markus Quandt, <i>GESIS - Leibniz Institut für Sozialwissenschaften E.V., Germany.</i> Markus.quandt@gesis.org Elena Omelchenko, <i>National Research University, Russia.</i> omelchenkoe@mail.ru Ben Perasović, <i>Ivo Pilar Institute, Croatia.</i> ben.perasovic@gmail.com
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WEBSITE	http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact: Hilary Pilkington (Hilary.Pilkington@manchester.ac.uk) or Jo Deakin (Jo.deakin@manchester.ac.uk)