Introduction
Youth (Bulges) and Conflict

On 8 April 2011 I received a call from Dushanbe. A young colleague excitedly told me that he was on the way to a demonstration in front of Barki Tojik, headquarters of the state energy supplier, to protest at its inability to provide a reliable service. He intended to watch from afar at first, and only join in after gauging the state's reaction. The flash mob that eventually took place, involving about thirty young people from Dushanbe, lasted no more than twenty minutes and my colleague had no time to join in. The participants carried posters with words of mourning (in Russian). They lit candles and laid flowers at the main entrance in a 'symbolical funeral for the Tajik energy system'.[1] Thanks to the presence of a couple of journalists, this flash mob – the first of its kind in Tajikistan, according to the news report – was brought to the attention of the international press.

The young men who participated knew each other well, and belong to a group of well-educated urban youth who prefer communication in Russian to Tajik. They criticize the regime and its politics, not only concerning energy but also education, labour and the economy. Usually they do not appear collectively, yet they share many ideas and frustrations in personal communication and on internet platforms. My colleague, for instance, had been handed a note about the planned event at Barki Tojik, but he also spends a good deal of his day moving among internet cafés to participate in virtual discussions. The young activists are all known to the government, which keeps a close watch on them, and some are regular visitors to the offices of the secret police (formerly the KGB). Under such circumstances, participation in the flash mob took courage, and those in it wondered what might happen if others chose to join them in a spontaneous protest. While the activity in the end was too brief and small to attract the masses or security officers, it nonetheless alarmed the regime. These young men believe themselves to be the vanguards of a movement towards democracy for Tajikistan, but they have yet to connect with the great majority of the deprived countrymen they claim to represent.

Similarly critical of the regime, but drawing upon a different source of influence, is Eshon Nuriddinjon, one of the most popular religious authorities, who has caught the ear of large groups of young people. In 2010 it was not uncommon to hear his recorded sermons playing from the mobile phones of Tajiks in Tajikistan and in Russia as they lay idle from lack of work. For almost a decade

religious practices had become a central topic to many young people. On Fridays the mosques were packed, often causing roads and even neighbourhoods to be closed to traffic because of the crowds. In villages the small mosques erected during the perestroika period (1986–1991) were being replaced by cathedral-like mosques that still failed to accommodate the masses of the faithful.

The mosque headed by Eshon Nuriddinjon held several thousand young men who arrived from distant villages and towns. While some saw this as a normalization of religious life in post-Soviet Tajikistan, the regime was very concerned by these large religious gatherings. Thus it came as no surprise that at the peak of this enthusiasm for Islam, the state passed a law restricting youth participation in live religious events. At the sight of these large congregations of young believers, the state feared that it was losing control over the religious sphere. The goal of the Law of the Republic Tajikistan on Parental Responsibility for the Education and Upbringing of Children passed in 2011 is to call upon parents – who represent a generation that tends to view the Soviet era as a relatively prosperous and stable period – to help the state regain its hold over the nation's youth.[2]

It is not clear to what degree such religious gatherings were and are capable of being mobilized for purposes of violence, and there is no reason to assume that believers in Tajikistan tend to be more violent than believers in other countries. And yet, the anti-Islamic politics of recent years, including the bans on youth attending mosque prayers until the age of eighteen and restricting Eshon Nuriddinjon from leading prayers, reflect the anxiety of the regime in light of the demographic potential of the country's youth. Today there is no subject more capable of bringing together youth than Islam. At the same time there has been no religious leader who has used this demographic potential to bring about a violent confrontation, either because they want to avoid bloodshed (such as the Islamic Revival Party) or because they do not have the necessary charisma to rally the large plurality of believers (such as various youth movements). Yet, there is no doubt that competition over youth is a key factor in recent political developments and that demographics play a major role in shaping the dynamics of Tajik society.

What is the role of demographics in political and social change? Tajikistan is in the midst of a demographic transition, experiencing a youth bulge vis-à-vis other age groups, due to a decreasing birth rate and the postponement of marriage, which has freed up a substantial amount of young people of working age from family obligations. Along with this demographic change we can observe youth groups that challenge ways of categorizing and organizing youth. This is most visible in politics, like the young men in the flash mob mentioned above, but such engagements are not restricted to politics and equally affect social relations within the community and family. Attempts at domesticating youth by elders, traditions, community, parents and the state are rejected by certain young people, who crystallize in groups through which they articulate their resistance to political and social pressures. These groups, which claim to represent large

segments of youth, or even large segments of the overall population,[3] call upon other youth to join them in taking action.

Under what circumstance do categories of youth crystallize into active groups? What is the relation between demography and the mobilization of youth? This study seeks to examine closely the relation between a 'youth bulge' and conflict within society.[4] Thus far, social anthropology has generally neglected to address the impact of population pressure on social change, and in particular the presence of youth bulges as a possible cause of social conflict. For the most part, this topic has been discussed from a political perspective; my intention, however, is to approach the issue from an anthropological viewpoint. In this study, I examine the concept of 'youth' in Tajikistan, focusing on how it has been used, shaped and modified over the last two decades. In order to bridge the abstract concept of demographic youth bulges and the reality of active young people, I intend to present 'categories' and 'groups' (which I will define shortly) as two distinct but related entities out of which the dynamism of youth bulges evolves.

It is the contention of this study that the tendency to see youth bulges as a source of conflict is related to the widespread perception that youth must be 'domesticated'. Domestication suggests that the lives of young people are manipulated, controlled and modelled by means of defining, shaping, negotiating and evaluating their roles at the political, community, family and ideological levels. Thus, I argue that what is meant by 'youth' is constantly being renegotiated. Out of such negotiation processes emerge various definitions of youth, each representing a socio-biological category during a certain historical period, under a specific political regime, and within a particular established society.

Jean and John Comaroff (2000, 2005) have asserted that the category of youth is socially constructed and politically shaped. They have raised the important question of how youth have entered public perceptions and discussions, concluding that 'youth, as we speak of them here, are the historical offspring of modernity' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 20; cf. Bourdieu 1993: 137). In their study, they indicate that there has been much scientific discussion on the relationship between 'youth' and unrest, as contrasted with the relatively harmless connotations of 'teenager' – a term that is reserved for white (civilized) adolescents.[5] 'Youth' seems to simultaneously suggest mistakes in the past, terror in the present, and a vision of hope for the future.[6] Hence, the Comaroffs remark that youth is now viewed as a more distinct, independent group than ever before. This has become possible due to the marginalization of youth, they argue, referring to numerous studies on the difficulties experienced by young people in their attempt to enter into traditional economic arenas, and an eventual perception among youth that they lack future prospects. The position of youth in society thus becomes a matter of situational interpretation, shifting unpredictably from young people as vanguards to young people as vandals. I believe that this has less to do with their biological maturity than with the way in which the

socio-demographic category of youth is constructed, shaped and used, and to what degree young people participate in political activities.[7]

Terms such as 'group', 'cohort', 'category' and 'collective' have different implications and lend themselves to various interpretations. In order to use these terms analytically, I adhere to a precise distinction: While the concept 'group' in this study refers to individual members who remain in a specific relation to one another as defined by the group's identity, 'categories' are used to order society and classify people by age, sex or other markers that are independent of their personal relation to each other. In demography, the term 'cohort' is commonly used to refer to individuals of the same age, sex and so on, whereas the term 'population' embraces a larger entity, usually including people of all ages. In this study, I use 'cohort' only in a demographic context. Regardless of how society constructs youth categories, young people can be part of different groups at the same time; they can be highly active as individuals but still be denied the role of agency due to the categories to which they belong. In this sense, youth are no more of a category than adults are; hence the concept of youth suggests that 'young people are perched on the brink of an equally promising adult life, and all they have to do is to make the right choices for themselves' (Wyn and White 1998: 318).

Youth is sometimes a category of analysis, sometimes a category of practice; it refers to groups, cohorts, conditions and so on. In short, youth as a category is malleable and context dependent. In Tajikistan we find different ways to think of youth. All of the terms suggested below not only describe young people under certain conditions but also in relation to other age groups and society. While the terms provide a basic idea of how age is constructed in Tajikistan, throughout the book we will see the malleability of the concept of youth and the consequences that this can have in situations of conflict.

Tajik Life-stage Categories

Those aged approximately between 14 and 25 are in their youth (*davrai javonon*, sing. *javon**), and this phase is followed by what is called the period of maturity (*davrai kamolod*). By this stage, a man should have spent much time learning everything and should marry. His life changes considerably: he now starts thinking about starting a family and about the future; gradually the person gains maturity. Then at around the age of 29, his behaviour changes completely, and he begins to care about his family's future. This period continues until the age of 40 or 50, when he attains maturity. During this period, he gains further knowledge and starts to make plans for his future. It is believed that in the period of *kamolod*, people work until about the age of 60, after which their life changes drastically due to old age.[8]

S.R.: Until what age do you consider someone 'young'?
Umar: From 18 to 25.

S.R.: Why?
Umar: As a youth, you tend to think only of yourself, but once you have passed the age of 25, you are married.
S.R.: Once you have married, are you not young anymore?
Umar: You then move to *mardak**. At the age of 25 years, you are still young, but differently.
S.R.: Could you give me an example?
Umar: As a young boy, you think of nothing but other young people and hanging out. Once a boy becomes *mardak* [married], he does not indulge in the acts that he used to in his youth, and he begins to think of how to improve his life. He then has to fulfil many responsibilities.
S.R.: Would a young man prefer youth or *mardak*?
Umar: Being young is good.
S.R.: Why is being young good?
Umar: A young man can do as he pleases and go wherever he likes. After marriage, you cannot continue to go everywhere; you stay at home for the sake of your wife.
S.R.: From what age do you call somebody *miyonsol** [middle aged]?
Umar: From 35 to 60 years of age. At the age of 60, you become *oqsakol** [elderly man].
S.R.: What is the role of *miyonsol* in the family?
Umar: He stays at home and works, if there is any, not difficult work, only in the house.
S.R.: So work is divided?
Umar: For example, my father says: 'My son, do this work, go there, and say that'; then he prays his *namoz** and sits at home.

S.R.: What age group do you consider as youth (*javon**)?
Tohir: From the age of 18 to 30 years.
S.R.: Why until the age of 30?
Tohir: Because until the age of 30, a man is young; after 30, committing mistakes is shameful.

The most widely used term for young people in Tajikistan is *javonon* (sing. *javon** – young). It is often used interchangeably with the term *bachaho*,[9] yet *javonon* has more of a political connotation and hints at youth as a social category rather than at the relative status of young people within their families. Although *bacha** is correctly translated as 'unmarried boy', it may also be used to describe young married men behaving in a 'wild and undomesticated' manner, and even more often refers colloquially to 'guys' (several more or less young people).

The next step is the intermediate stage, *mardak**, which emphasizes both a young man's marital status and his subordinate position to elders; it is the period

of gaining psychological maturity (*davrai kamolod*). During this period, young men are at the peak of their physical power and are expected to use their labour to serve the family and community. They may try different jobs and take chances, without the risk of being judged, because mistakes are considered a part of maturation. Hence, it is only much later that full maturity is acquired – somewhere between the ages of 35 and 50. While those *mardak*s are no longer *javonon* in the same sense as a *bacha* (unmarried man), they are still *javon* in terms of social conceptions of maturity.

Old age is marked by withdrawal from physical work and the attainment of a new position: as a wise and oft-consulted person. Older people are expected to dedicate their time and effort to a religious life as they slowly approach death. Sometimes the term *miyonsol* bridges the period between the ages of 35 to 40 and 60. In the psychological construction, changes occur smoothly during old age – *mūisafed** or *oqsakol** (white-haired men); *kampir** (elder women).

The short description of the linguistic terms provided above shall suffice for now. The following chapters will provide not only a much wider scope of concepts and categories but will also link them to social and political changes.

This study seeks not only to examine the role of youth in Tajikistan, but also, more generally, to determine how this social category itself was and continues to be shaped and reshaped. The Central Asian republic of Tajikistan provides an ideal arena for such a topic, because it has gone through a civil war, has a high proportion of youth, and is beset by problems related to a scarcity of resources. As part of the former Soviet Union, Tajikistan was previously integrated into a larger political, scientific and economic system and profited from well-structured educational and medical systems. Hence, we should not forget that scientific and political discussions regarding youth have developed differently in the former Soviet Union than in Europe and the United States. All of these factors make Tajikistan an interesting arena for research with respect to competing categorizations and the crystallization of groups emerging from such categories.

To date, there have been numerous anthropological studies in the field of youth and violence (social and political violence), some of which have mentioned the problems associated with youth bulges; however, to my knowledge, very few studies in this field have addressed the complex issue of a 'youth surplus', both as a social category and social group. For the purposes of this study, I have relied upon literature from various fields in order to determine how problems pertaining to youth bulges, population and conflict have been discussed in security demography and social anthropology.

Since this study is based on first-hand information and observation, and supplemented by the available literature, it does not claim to represent the whole of Tajikistan, but rather only phenomena that have been encountered by the author in certain areas of Tajikistan. My interest lies solely in investigating the

negotiation of relationships between individuals and groups and the construction of categories, not in judging and arguing about the value of certain political practices or the accuracy of various historical representations. Nevertheless, I believe it is often impossible to consider my field sites in isolation from the political context and historical events, mainly because the influence of politics and historical events are strongly felt at the local level and play significant roles in contemporary constructions of relations and social groups. For this reason, the present study ranges beyond the restrictive compass of contemporary local villages to include a larger political framework and historical period.

The Emergence of Youth Concepts

The research problem addressed by this study is located specifically within the field of theoretical debates on the subject of youth and conflict. It is beyond the scope of this book to deal with the varied discussions within youth studies that have taken place over more than a century. However, I consider it necessary to explore the youth bulge argument as it has evolved with regard to youth concepts in the social sciences and psychology. Youth bulges suggest a demographic approach to society, but at the same time it provides links to various categories of actors and groups. I am aware when using the term that, throughout the Islamic world, societies are experiencing youth bulges. That these youth bulges have been accompanied by social and political change (such as the 'Arab spring') is of interest, yet it is not necessarily a causal result. How socio-political changes link to the demographics of a population demands careful investigation, and that is the intent of this book with regard to Tajikistan.

Concepts of Youth and Generation

Let us begin the discussion with the most obvious questions: What is youth? Should it be constructed based on age, rituals, psychological stages, economic success or biological maturity?[10] Age in many societies is understood not in terms of chronological age (that is, simply the number of years lived) but rather in terms of relative age, measured by the individual's position within society.[11] Abbink contends that since age limits, for pragmatic purposes, cannot be set, 'the category of "youth" in Africa [is limited] to the 14–35 age bracket' (Abbink 2005: 5). Furthermore, demographers as well as politicians create age groups for practical reasons. In this sense, Cincotta, Engelman and Anastasion (2003) refer to youth bulges as comprising people between the ages of 15 and 29, while Heinsohn (2006) limits youth to 15 to 24 years. These varying definitions indicate that there is a basic uncertainty regarding what comprises youth as an analytical category, in comparative studies as well as in local contexts.

A closer look at the history of the concept 'youth' will clarify its contemporary use. According to some authors, youth culture in Europe and the United

States can be said to have begun in the nineteenth century (Gillis 1974; Wyn and White 1997: 21).[12] At that time, youth was identified as a socio-demographic category and became the subject of study during the course of industrialization and urbanization in England; thereafter, the concept of urbanization has remained central to the emerging category of youth. It was in urban centres that differences and clashes between classes and social groups over ideas were most apparent; articles of that time already dealt with issues related to the loss of parental control over children (Fortes 1933: 15). Youth, or to be more specific, single groups of youngsters, mainly males, were portrayed as a category of people who experienced difficulties in achieving a smooth transition to adulthood. 'The history of youth studies is replete with case studies of (usually) male "delinquent gangs" and student "resisters"' (Wyn and White 1997: 78; cf. Chicago School).[13] Increasingly, youth became the creators of a so-called 'subculture' by demonstrating youth-specific consumption behaviours, as in the work of those associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham. The concept of 'subculture' entailed that the category of youth was seen as subordinate to the dominant culture.[14] However, these ideas regarding dominant culture and subculture were subsequently contested by the study of subculture as a source of creativity in youth (Wulff 1995).[15]

Other schools have developed youth concepts based on consumer behaviour, such as the Frankfurt School. Strongly influenced by Stanley Hall's (1904) study of adolescence, discussions of 'youth' began to revolve around the idea of a psychological stage (which a person usually enters and leaves by way of certain rites of passage). From this social Darwinist perspective, adolescence is seen as a period of emotional storm and stress, representing a passage from 'stone age baby' to the rational and enlightened state of 'modern man' (Cohen 1999: 184). Cohen concludes that, 'In this view the youth question is by definition diversionary, deflecting public attention and resources away from what can and should be changed (political and economic conditions) and towards something which is essentially unchangeable (adolescent behaviour)' (ibid.: 192). Thus, the concept of youth in the social sciences came to be discussed in relation to the problem of adolescence.[16] In this way, youth first emerged as a socio-demographic group in social science studies, constructed as a phenomenon that occurred in industrial societies.

The generation concept has been another approach toward structuring society and creating arbitrary youth cohorts.[17] Mannheim (1970) suggests that societal generations are conceptualized in relation to specific 'breaks' in history; in other words, shared experiences separate one generation from the next. In the social sciences, as well as in popular parlance, this is often indicated by adding qualifiers to the word 'generation' – for example, first-, second-, or third-generation migrants, the last Soviet generation, the postwar generation, generation X and so on. In contrast to Mannheim, the communist approach constructs a theory of continuity across generations, oriented around the concept of progression rather than breaks or ruptures.

In the context of the former Soviet Union, the concept of generation was based on Leninist interpretations: 'The entire purpose of training, educating, and teaching the youth of today should be to imbue them with communist ethics . . . the generation of those who are now fifteen will see a communist society, and will themselves build this society. This generation should know that the entire purpose of their lives is to build a communist society' (Lenin, quoted in Pilkington 1994: 46). Every generation was to absorb only the best traditions from the older generations, providing a sense of forward movement, which would then be transferred to the new society, complemented by new practices and ideas. Based on a materialist conception of history, Elster in his study of Marx claims that, 'History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which uses the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity' (Elster 1986: 182).

Pilkington explains that youth in the Soviet Union emerged as a socio-demographic group in the social sciences only in the 1970s – not as a 'problem group', as labelled by the 'bourgeois approaches' of the West, but as a problem rooted in class divisions. It is against the backdrop of this ideology that we should analyse the youth question in contemporary Tajikistan. Therefore it is not unusual for Poliakov to state that: 'it must be stressed that no "youth problem" exists in Central Asia. Young people are always controllable' (Poliakov 1992: 91; cf. Harris 2006; Stephan 2009). Rather, he writes firmly within the Soviet tradition that regards youth problems as an issue of the West (Europe and the United States); as per the Soviet definition, there is no rupture between generations. Pilkington explains that this assumption comes from the emphasis of Soviet scientists that, 'Soviet society [is] free of generational conflict' (Pilkington 2004: 120). In this light, it is not surprising that youth were put forward as vanguards and as builders of communism: 'From the hands of the old generation our youth takes the great and precious legacy. Entering life, boys and girls of the country of Socialism must remember that their sacred duty is to carry on the cause of the older generation' (Anon 1950: 7). The Komsomol, the youth organization of the Soviet Union, was crucial in the early years of establishing the Communist Party's authority within industry and the military and among the rural peasantry (see Chapter 3).

The Tajik discourse on youth has remained within this interpretative framework. However, when civil war broke out in Tajikistan in 1992, analysts appeared to agree that high fertility (rising birth rates and a population explosion) and economic problems had fuelled the conflict.[18] In other words, population pressure was seen as one of the main causes of the social unrest that had dragged the country into a civil war (that lasted until 1997), and youth were regarded as the principal troublemakers during the war.

The concept of generation therefore should be regarded as vague, because it mixes categories and groups (distinctions that are essential for the discussion of youth as a demographic factor) – that is, family relationships and politico-historical groups (Abbink 2005: 3–5). While domestication largely concerns groups, it is also based on categories that are shaped through domestication processes. 'Generation' says little about the people themselves, whether they are a social, political, biological or religious category or part of a concrete group in opposition to another group (such as pupils and their parents). In Tajikistan, for instance, people believe that the parent–child relation is, by definition, conflict free; however, the 'civil-war youth' is said to be a problematic generation (*nasli javonon**). Since the concept of generation is more confusing than clarifying, I will not make use of it here.[19]

In effect, the notion of a predictably constructed world, in which youth pass through adolescence to adulthood guided by rite and tradition, appears to be endangered today, and not merely due to globalization.[20] For instance, Abbink mentions that, 'Being young in Africa is widely and consistently perceived as problematic in essence' (ibid.: 2). Politicization of the topic has compelled researchers to revise the term 'youth' as a constructed category, replacing the more psychological approaches to the discussion on adolescence with economic, historical or political approaches.

Conflict Studies and Youth

We can see that, from the beginning, youth studies focused on the deviant and troublemaking tendencies of youth.[21] Thus, a specific socio-political problem gave rise to a distinct socio-demographic group. In line with this view, young people were seen as needing guidance and attention, so they were analysed either as psychological subjects or as the producers of a subculture. It should be noted that in both cases, however, they were regarded as marginal people in need of special treatment. This perception of youth, however, did not exist in non-Western societies. For Margaret Mead (1973) and many anthropologists thereafter, youth, in opposition to Western concepts, represented a more or less well-integrated social group that was able to move smoothly from one social status to the next. Young people's use of violence was portrayed as part of culture, and anthropologists interpreted the extent of institutionalization and social embeddedness of young people in terms of the idea of the 'noble savage'. Violent conflicts were organized along social rules such as those characterizing feuds or warfare. Age-grade systems or generation-set systems were portrayed as structuring society and restricting the use of violence to a specific time in life.[22] Thus, warfare provided youth with a space in which they could be active and learn skills that were considered important acquisitions on their way to adulthood. This transition – or at least the way it was portrayed in many African societies – was controlled by the elders, who retained the right to allow youth to enter adulthood formally.

Conflict studies represent a wide field that includes the entire range of non-violent to violent clashes between groups with differing opinions.[23] While this study considers the term 'conflict' in all of its implications, there is one specific type of conflict that is central to my argument: civil war. The civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s will be analysed with regard to how young men engaged in it and how it affected youth concepts. This study does not focus on the cause of the conflict; rather, it seeks to determine the ways in which the civil war moulded the socio-demographic category in question (youth).

Agadjanian and Prata argue that: 'few demographic studies have been conducted in [war-torn countries] and the literature on the demographic consequences of wars is relatively scarce. Fertility responses to wars in developing countries are especially rarely studied' (Agadjanian and Prata 2002: 215). Certainly, the key reason for this scarcity is the inaccuracy of demographic censuses in times of civil conflicts – that is, when such censuses are possible at all – and the necessity of using different methods to collect data or statistically model the available data (Li and Wen 2005: 480).[24] Agadjanian and Prata's claim regarding fertility in the context of conflicts is also applicable to many other aspects such as gender constructions, youth concepts and rituals.

In conflict studies, the main focus has been on leadership approaches. Hence, according to some authors, such top-down approaches miss the dynamics in the field.[25] 'It is important to point out, however, that top-down (para) military orientations do not control the character of the war as it is played out on the ground' (Nordstrom 1999: 167).[26] The idea that behind every conflict exists a (super)power that is pulling the strings derives from cold war perceptions, Waldmann (2002: 370) explains.[27] The leader approach overshadows the common person's participation in a conflict. Therefore, this study concentrates on the role of ordinary youth rather than on biographies of exceptional leaders. In fact, every young man with whom I have talked seeks social recognition in some way, and many are determined to engage actively in gaining such recognition. Keeping the issue of social recognition in mind, I look at the ways in which Tajik society structures the passage through one's life; how it shapes, negotiates and deals with categorizations of ages; and how it identifies group formation processes out of these categories. What is important for young men (and women) is access to social status and positions that are accepted and recognized within their social context.

In order to mobilize and motivate young people to join combatant groups, their roles and positions are redefined in such a way as to legitimize the use of violence. A relevant example has been given by Lamphear (1998) in his work on the Maasai. Lamphear shows how the age system of the Maasai changed due to the external intervention of the so-called *Laibons* (chief prophets) and became a source of organized violence. 'It was the centralized leadership of the *Laibons* which provided the means of maximizing the demographic potential of the

synchronized age-class system and the *manyatta*s, and of transcending the inherent limitations of the old concepts of warfare' (ibid.: 88). Later, the *Laibons* were co-opted by the colonial regime. While the domestication of young people seems to have failed at the community level, it was achieved at the societal level, in that the restructuring of youth was successfully realized by politically motivated leaders (or leading groups) who transcended the limitations of local concepts.

One central problem in youth studies has been the mixing of two distinct entities – social group and demographic, political or analytical categories – which has led to a conceptual confusion. This problem has been previously mentioned only for ethnicity; however, it also applies to youth. Jenkins, discussing ethnicity, writes, 'Social groups and social categories are different kinds of collectivities existing in the social world' (Jenkins 2003: 61–62).[28] The study of social movements has been a field in which the borders between categories and groups have become blurred, to the point where they are often regarded as congruent. By accepting and uncritically reproducing modes of categorization, we overlook the nature of such categories – for instance, the state as a strong identifier, psychological categorization, traditional constructions of the life cycle, and so on. We also fail to notice the shift from a mere category to concrete movements or groups. The matter becomes even more complicated with the distinction between relational and categorical modes of identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Transferring this to youth, we need to distinguish between, on the one hand, young people living in relational webs such as kin, friendships and classmates, or in groups such as combatant groups and peer groups, and, on the other hand, young people subsumed into social, political or religious categories. Out of these two modes of identification emerges the dynamic of youth as a demographic factor.

Youth Bulges as Security Problem

The concept of youth bulge developed out of the debate in social science circles regarding delinquent youth, as well as from the Malthusian idea of ecological (im)balance; today it is used exclusively as a politico-demographic term, connoting a (male-dominated) security problem. The debate over 'youth bulges' (a relatively recent coinage) as a source of conflict has developed only in the second half of the twentieth century. The French conflict researcher Bouthoul (1968) is sometimes cited as the first researcher to explicitly discuss the connection between youth bulges and violent conflicts. Through the concept *le Complexe de l'Encombrement*, he argues that while the French population underwent only a moderate increase in the 1950s, the number of students tripled a decade later, giving rise to enormous competition for the same resources. 'For the *Complexe de l'Encombrement* leads to impatience and furore; those who suffer believe themselves to be "surplus men"' (ibid.: 16).[29] For them, everything becomes an obstacle, but first it is other men who block their way. Bouthoul's approach to

youth is psychological, thus corresponding to anthropological and sociological discussions of youth and adolescence. According to Bouthoul, conflicts are an inevitable fallout of the destruction of the demographic–economic equilibrium: 'Until recently, men were in natural equilibrium with their environment. This equilibrium increasingly crumbles in front of our eyes' (ibid.: 18).[30]

A similar approach was taken by Moller (1968) in his analysis of European revolutionary movements, the driving forces of which he attributed to youth. In this regard, we should also consider Goldstone's *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (1991), where he examines four aspects that he believes are responsible for state crises as well as revolutions: the problem of taxes and severe financial crises in the state; the inter-elite conflicts that arise from these state crises; the increasing population pressure and competition for land; and the emergence of ideologies of 'rectification and transformation'.

Goldstone limits his definition of youth – and this supports the discussion in this study – to the ages of 10 to 30 (though in his analysis of England, he uses the age cohort 25 to 35, thus indicating that youth as a socio-demographic group is also a cultural category). His approach is the most complete to date; however, like most other approaches, he assumes that 'youthfulness' (that is, youth bulges) is a demographic concept and that young men are naturally aggressive. Such an approach makes it unnecessary to explain why violence emerges in some 'youthful' societies and not in others. Nevertheless, the author does remind the reader that population growth alone explains little about population dynamics.

In this context, Tiger and Fox deny a causal relationship between population density and male violence: 'Man was violent *before* he had dense populations . . . Density is not a basic *cause* of violence, but it remains a possibility' (Tiger and Fox 1992: 224, original emphasis). The question of violence and demography then has been considered in previous studies, which have discounted a linear causality. Rather than asserting a connection between density and violence, Tiger and Fox suggest a closer look is needed at the conditions of density for humans, who create and shape their own social environment.

There continues to be much discussion regarding a causal relationship between youthfulness and competition or conflict. Mesquida and Wiener have further developed Bouthoul's approach, suggesting that male age composition is a decisive factor in civil conflicts: 'competition for mates is greatest just before the usual age of marriage; young males must compete for connubial resources among themselves, and also with older males who control the political and economic resources of society' (Mesquida and Wiener 1999: 183). Collective violence happens against a background wherein young people feel they have nothing to lose. Mesquida and Wiener suggest looking at male population ratios (for the ages of 15 to 29) as a variable to be plotted against the severity of conflicts. Apart from their attempt to classify the 'severity' of a lethal conflict, their argument is similar to later youth bulge approaches.

About thirty years after Bouthoul and Moller, studies of Arab countries have presented the situation of the 'deadly impasse between demography and history' (Ajami, quoted in Vakil 2004: 45; cf. Winckler 2002). Vakil refers to Iran as 'a pressure cooker ready to blow off steam' (Vakil 2004: 53). In addition, Fuller's (2003, 2004) analysis of the Middle East brings together the factors developed thus far: high fertility levels ensure the continuation of conflicts associated with competition over resources and with the grievances of young people against their state or the international community.

According to the sociologist and genocide researcher Gunnar Heinsohn (2006: 14), youth bulges provide the impetus for civil war.[31] His research, based on historical studies, led him to conclude that if a society has young people (aged 15 to 24) constituting more than 20 per cent of its population, it will probably experience a civil war. One of his central arguments deals with inheritance patterns. If a father has more than one son, he may be headed for trouble if his wealth is not sufficient to satisfy all of his sons' needs and their demands for a decent future. As a result, the dissatisfied sons will begin to stir up conflict within the household and eventually in the world outside the household. Although this idea appears to be based on European inheritance practices, it invites discussion on how other societies with high fertility rates regulate inheritance.

Recent studies by Henrik Urdal, moreover, claim the presence of a 'clear statistical relationship between youth bulges and the increased risk of . . . internal armed conflict, terrorism, and riots' (Urdal 2007: 91). The demographers Cincotta, Engelman and Anastasion (2003), in their study of civil conflict, present youth bulges as one of three stress factors that make civil conflict more likely (the other two factors being the rapid growth of large cities and conflicts over cropland and water).[32] Here, we see a parallel development in conceptualizing the youth problem as an urban economic one resulting from the inability of society to domesticate young men.

Some analyses blame religion for the problem. Huntington (1998) and Heinsohn (2006) explicitly formulate a connection between youth bulges and Islam.[33] However, such a connection necessitates a cautious approach, particularly when it suggests the possible conceptualization of youth as troublemakers. Most other authors distance themselves from such a linear correlation. For instance, the Middle East Youth Initiative has suggested an 'inclusionist' approach to youth. They argue that in most Middle Eastern countries (basically meaning all Muslim countries in the dry belt), birth rates have considerably decreased in the last decade, creating large youth bulges with a low dependency ratio (Dhillon and Yousef 2007).[34] Historically, this has been identified as a chance for the accumulation of wealth; therefore, the organization suggests that the '100 Million Youth Challenge' should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat.

The so-called 'greed and grievance concept' has gained popularity as a measurable politico-economic approach to young people's violent expression of political

dissatisfaction (Collier and Hoeffler 2001).[35] However, upon empirical testing the concept has proven not very useful since it ignores the specific context that shapes each conflict (Collier and Sambanis 2005). What all of these studies have in common is that they view youth as a group that seems to exist outside culture and social norms.

The mono-causal approach to youth bulges and conflict has also been refuted more recently in a statistical study by Stephan Kroehnert (n.d.) of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development. Based on data from 156 countries, Kroehnert has shown the total absence of any exponential correlation between population growth and violent conflicts; he has also demonstrated that the rate increases linearly – which means that the proportion of six to seven conflicts per million people has remained constant during the last fifty years.

Kroehnert has presented a critical analysis of the apparent correlation (youth bulges and conflict), finding that the probability of having a conflict rises linearly and peaks when youth comprise 19 to 21 per cent of the population, while again showing a sharp decline for countries with a youth bulge (defined here as from 15 to 24 years) of over 21 per cent. This leads to speculation that it is not merely the quantitative aspect of youth that gives rise to unrest. Urdal (2006: 615) has recognized the problem of correlating youth bulges to the total population, and instead suggests that in order to gain reliable data, youth bulges (ages 15 to 24) should be measured in relation to the total adult population (ages 15 years and above), along with the addition of the dependency ratio measurement.

Urdal (2004, 2007) has provided the most detailed approach to this problem, taking into account numerous factors. He makes an important point – namely, that 'identity groups are necessary for collective violent action to take place' (Urdal 2004: 2). In other words, a large category of youth in and of itself is not sufficient to declare youth a risk factor; for this to occur, young people must first collectivize, crystallize and form groups around identities. This study departs from the assumption that youth categories serve to domesticate youth, and also provides the necessary collective reference to allow for the crystallization of groups around vanguard identities.

A central problem in the youth bulge discussion is the incongruence of categories of practice and categories of analysis. Similar to the approach taken by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in their discussion of ethnicity, the study of youth needs a serious re-examination of categories of analysis (usually derived from Euro-American historical analysis) and categories of practice (which are constantly reshaped, transformed and negotiated). The mixing of various categorizations and classifications leads to confusion and imprecise assumptions about the role of youth in society. Categories do not act, they create social order – and youth groups use categories to change, negotiate and contest social order. That is to say, we should not lose sight of the actors behind the events, and we should continue to question how categories and groups are used as identifiers.

Youthfulness in Context

'Youth bulges' or 'youthfulness' is considered to be a source of insecurity in countries in transition – that is, moving from a developing to a developed state. 'Several researchers have argued that a "youth bulge" of unattached, unemployed men encourages generalized violence and terrorism because they are easily recruited by radical causes' (Jenkins, Crenshaw and Robinson 2006: 2011). Similarly, a report on the security dynamics of demographic factors argues that 'unemployment rates tend to be higher in developing countries' which can pose a security risk to the concerned population (Cincotta, Engelman and Anastasion 2003: 41).[36]

Urban studies claim that the presence of a distinct political, demographic, economic and social group of youth can be responsible for destabilizing entire political systems. According to this argument – which also exists in social anthropological approaches – young people who are excluded from legitimate economic activities may either turn to illegal activities or become easily mobilized by opposition parties.[37] When discussing youth and war in Sierra Leone, Maxted writes, 'The marginalization of youth was a key factor in the causes and modality of the civil war in Sierra Leone' (Maxted 2003: 69). The concept of educated young people lacking opportunities to join the job market is also a theme of research on the Asian continent. Mahmood (1996), writing about Sikhs in India, states that many young people who experienced exclusion from the mainstream job market were either pushed into the informal sector or drawn toward more radical movements. An inflexible social structure with regard to upward mobility, and scant options for entering the mainstream job market and thereby attaining respectable social positions, are certainly among the most critical issues existing in present-day Tajikistan. However, if we accept the literature, the economic situation was less dire before the civil war – at least for young people – than it is today.

Abdullah coined the term 'lumpen youth' to describe 'the largely unemployed and unemployable youth, mostly male, who live by their wits or who have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or underground economy . . . [T]hey are to be found in every city in Africa' (Abdullah 1998: 207–8). Initially, these 'lumpen youth' mainly consisted of youth from the lower classes, who began to be noticed as distinct youth cultures following the end of the Second World War; this changed in the 1970s, as discussed by Marguerat (2005) in his project on street children. He contends that the urban youth problem is much more class independent than has come to be expected or usually assumed.

Despite the popularity of the urban unemployment argument among conflict researchers, this theory is not adequate to explain why in some urban centres young people become violent while in other contexts it is rural people who are blamed for behaving in a 'wild and uncivilized' manner, as in Tajikistan. The urban argument that figures prominently in youth bulge approaches has been explicitly criticized and deconstructed by Sommers, who, in his comparison of

Somalia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa, argues that those wars 'have been largely rural-based conflicts at their roots' (Sommers 2006: 141). Hence, it is not necessarily urban youth 'losing' their traditional ties who are at the root of conflicts; conflicts are equally likely to be started by rural young people who apparently are well established in their own communities. This is also true for Tajikistan. Thus it must be kept in mind that approximately three-quarters of the population in Tajikistan – about 5.5 million out of 7.5 million people – reside in rural areas, 97 per cent of which is mountainous (Olimova 2000: 60), and the country has very few urban centres. The majority of educational institutions and political activities are concentrated in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, which therefore also has a significant concentration of young people.

While Malthus doubted in the late eighteenth century society's ability to adjust to new situations and predicted that humanitarian catastrophes and wars would result from population growth (see Malthus 1999),[38] Boserup (1965) showed that a certain population density and population pressure were prerequisites for the acceleration of technical development (cf. Bengtsson et al. 1998: 70). Applying this insight to youth bulges, we might ask whether, in various countries, an overabundance of youth provided the necessary social pressure to push through social, political and technological developments.[39] However, anthropologists tend to avoid macro approaches and prefer more precise and detailed micro-analyses. Although many scientists have complained about the lack of micro-analyses in the field of social pressure and change – especially in the study of conflicts (see Macfarlane 1968; Lang 1997; Agadjanian and Prata 2002; Li and Wen 2005) – some aspects have been studied by social anthropologists.[40]

In this context, the anthropologist Hartmut Lang proposes that population growth by itself does not necessarily lead to a drastic change in society; rather, it is the relationship between population increase and the society's resources – that is, population pressure – that provokes changes (Lang 1997: 17).[41] Lang, relying on ethnographic material, discusses how changes in population size appear to exert a considerable influence on cultural features: 'demographic sizes act upon the formation of cultural entities' (ibid.: 18). This leads to the question of population size and specific 'cultural types'; further catastrophic events may have an important role to play in the regulation of these relations (Lang 1982).

The possibility of a connection between the size of (kinship) groups and the level of available economic resources as sources of conflict has also been addressed by Günther Schlee (1989, 2006, 2008). He develops Hechter's (1988: 37) idea of cost-sharing as a principle that can be used to create group solidarity and restrict size. Schlee (2006, 2008) has applied this rational-choice-theory approach to conflict studies. He argues that ethnic and other forms of collective identification are shaped by economic considerations of sharing costs and benefits. Although his argument does not take into account demographic composition, it hints at the importance of intra-group social stratification and the role of resources and

the consequences of limited access to them; it can therefore be applied to demographic cohorts and age structures.

As can occur within linguistic, ethnic or religious groups, the concept 'youth' can be modified either to maximize the demographic potential by including as many (young) people as possible (inclusion strategy) or to minimize it by emphasizing an elite status (exclusion strategy). An example of such strategies can be found in the Soviet youth organization Komsomol (see Chapter 3). The more limited the resources, the larger the youth category becomes in local constructions.[42] Hence, once the notion of 'youth' is accorded value in the marketplace, the other boundaries become blurred and everyone gains potential access to 'youth' as a conceptual resource.

In this regard, the more interesting phenomenon is not the way in which the Tajik population has progressed far beyond its economic resources but rather its social responses to this progression and the consequences in terms of redefining social positions, work divisions and the use and shaping of categories such as youth. As long as the elders and the Soviet state controlled the attributes of status and resources in Tajikistan, and as long as the state was able to provide mainstream positions of some status in the job market and successfully excluded non-conforming young people, youth remained in a subordinate position. Demographically speaking, even though young people constituted a large majority, they were, nonetheless, a liminal, powerless minority (Sommers 2006: 155). However, much seems to have changed during and after the civil war. Today, many young men are the main breadwinners of their extended family (siblings, parents and children) and therefore their power within the community has increased, as compared to their prior situation under Soviet rule.

Returning to my earlier statement of purpose, this study is less concerned with the origin of conflict than it is with the transformative power of conflicts themselves. Youth concepts are created and shaped by conflicts which, due to their disruptive nature, provide the necessary foundation for the radical transformation of concepts. This study considers youth as individual young people, as a socio-demographic group, and as a political, religious, biological, demographic and, most important, cultural category. How these categories have been framed and redefined, co-opted and rejected, over the last twenty years in Tajikistan, and how they continue to relate to group formation processes, will be the central themes of this study.

Domesticating Youth

At this juncture, having shown how youth has been conceptualized as a source of social pressure in conflict studies and security demography, it is helpful to advance the discussion by introducing the concept of 'domestication'. The term 'domestication' is used here in a metaphorical sense, as a process, alluding to the ways in which authority views and deals with youth. However, the structural

and authoritative domestication of youth at the same time suggests that people – unlike animals – negotiate positions and may reflect upon how they are treated by those in authority. Consequently, the domestication of youth refers to a process that is contested by young people. Domestication is, first and foremost, a top-down perception of the problem, and this approach is useful because it mirrors the way in which young people are believed to grow up, namely under structural and authoritative control and guidance. It is also how politicians and scientists tend to approach the socio-demographic group (the concept of liminality, discussions on subculture, adolescence and so on).[43] The approach reflects the difficulties inherent in controlling and shaping youth, because they are social actors who act, not as a unified category, but as different groups and individuals who thereby shape as well as challenge the top-down constructions. Thus, domestication is not an emic but an analytical term that I use to capture complex processes. We may differentiate between authoritative domestication, in which a (numerically small) social group controls the process of maturation of the large socio-demographic group 'youth', and structural domestication, which refers to institutions that are said to guide youth in their socialization and maturation (such as kinship and the education system).

To accompany this concept of domestication, I have adopted a holistic approach to youth that reflects these domestication processes. Various distinct processes (such as socio-political, religious and economic ones) influence these domestication processes; therefore, domestication processes are not static but are constantly remoulded by way of shifting local and global contexts (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006). In this sense, studies engaging with the subject of 'conflicts and youth' must first contextualize young people and specify those different contexts (kin, economic, religious, political, urban, rural and so on).

Assuming that conflict can alter group composition (Schlee 2008), I argue that changes within a population and its age composition are the result of domestication processes that, although primarily authoritative in nature, have to be negotiated between respective age groups on different scales – that is, between individuals and collectivities. Often this is an asymmetric relationship, with negotiation processes occurring between an authoritative minority and a subordinate majority, which means that any interaction within domestication takes place between unequal partners. Much of the strength of youth in structural and authoritative domestication then must lie in its relative demographic size. How demographic size is manipulated through negotiations of categories defines the dynamics of domestication processes. In other words, I use youth bulge not only as a demographic phenomenon but in its political sense, as a specific condition of youth mobilization. This is independent of the actual number of youth vis-à-vis other age groups but depends on how individuals or groups use 'youth' as a social and political term to generate categories. Youth groups that translate categories into action play a central role in transforming 'youth' into a vanguard identity.

Domestication is not necessarily a face-to-face process; it simply describes what happens between individuals and/or social groups when they redefine their positions in asymmetric relations. This redefinition can, in some cases, be violent and involve conflict, but it can also occur peacefully, democratically and even through mediators.

Whether perceived as aggressive due to psychological causes (adolescence), a structurally defined period (for instance, warrior age), a natural characteristic (according to local concepts), a demographic risk group or a political source of grievance, youth are constructed as wild and potentially violent actors in a very destructive sense. In this study, I wish to approach the question of youth from many different angles, including the different interpretations of youth in modern society. In this context, I am interested in how individuals as well as groups of young people become collectives and representatives of categories. I believe that psychological local constructions of youth, their role in political discourses, and demographic pressures influence each other in the creation of youth concepts with which young people themselves (as individuals or groups) need to negotiate. Note that a purely top-down approach can never do justice to this issue. Youth concepts and identity have to be negotiated with respect to – or at least adapted to – the concerned social group, which may then accept, reject or reshape the suggested concept. This process often takes place between economically and demographically unequal partners and therefore resembles authoritative domestication. However, any domestication process in this context will provoke a more or less strong counter-reaction by some young people and thus force the adaptation of domestication strategies, even when the overall process is presented as successful authoritative domestication.

In this sense, the term 'youth', as it is used in this study, is a collective reference to which society has accorded certain values and expectations. The category of youth is ascribed an identity by external actors – it is this ascribed identity that is internalized by individuals or groups of young people. Being a collective term, it is open to manipulation, which can be used by other actors to organize and mobilize young people for collective (violent) action.

Youth as Vanguards

The concept of youth as a vanguard is accorded a key role in opposing domestication attempts. Large groups of highly motivated young people can be mobilized by the prospect of becoming a vanguard group in society.[44] The vanguard concept pits youth against the existing order and systems, and places them in a position to oppose or challenge local constructions of youth. Although most vanguard groups strive for the transformation of society, vanguard status, as a whole, is lost as soon as the vanguard group becomes a mass organization and rises to the level of a national ideology or is transformed from a group into a category.

These vanguard concepts relate to what Eisenstadt (1988) has described as the development of a specific generational consciousness. The emerging of a revolutionary movement, argues Eisenstadt, is a process of 'the growing impingement of the periphery on the centre, by incorporation of orientations of protest into the centre' (ibid.: 101). He identifies generational consciousness as the driving force behind historical changes and the cause of ruptures. Yet, for him, youths are not initiators; rather, revolutionary movements emerge when new ideas undergo a process of crystallization, often finding expression in (youth) movements and youth groups.

I argue that categories of youth matter when looking at how young people are mobilized in a violent conflict; in this way a 'vanguard' can be viewed as a concrete group in which concepts of youth crystallize and generate strong identities. Domestication in this context refers to the concrete practices used to create and maintain categories that allow a minority (elders, the regime and so on) to exert control over young people so as to avoid vanguard groups from challenging existing youth categories. I believe that categories are malleable, and thus youth groups are able to claim to be representative and challenge existing categories, even if numerically these groups are a small minority. That is to say, I am interested in the capacity of youth movements to create strong identities by manipulating youth categories in order to mobilize the masses. This refers to the concept of inclusion and exclusion, as discussed by Günther Schlee (2008), because these strategies elevate a youth movement to vanguard status. What Schlee has suggested for ethnic and religious identities, among others, also applies to classifications of youth – namely, that strategies for regulating the size of groups make use of inclusion and exclusion methods. Categories of 'youth' behave like ethnic groups because they have the same potential to be mobilized. When we distinguish between categories and groups as interdependent entities, we can see that category definitions precede group formation. To put it another way, strategies of inclusion and exclusion are used to maximize the demographic potential of the category 'youth'.

For example, Roy shows that Al Qaida represents itself as the 'vanguard of the Muslim Umma', but since few Muslims share this perception, the group has so far remained a relatively liminal group with regard to their success demographically (Roy 2004: 69–72). In other words, not all vanguard youth movements are able to mobilize the demographic potential of youth by skilfully balancing inclusion and exclusion strategies. Thus, Roy suggests that what matters most to the young men joining such a group is not ideology but rather the need to participate in revolutionary activities. Twenty years ago, these activities would have taken the shape of leftist movements. In this way, Roy's suggestion supports the more general concept of vanguard that will be explained in the course of this study, and the difficulties faced by vanguard youth movements in their attempts to manipulate youth concepts and regulate membership and access to resources.

Turkey's history presents a successful example of how a new status for youth had been created by reformulating negative concepts of youth into positive political vanguard identities of a new social system. 'Single young men tended to circulate in Ottoman society as seasonal workers, apprentices, and students. Unlike householders, single young men (like roaming nomads) were viewed as a potential threat to organized society. Young men formed the backbone of revolts that broke out in Anatolia from the 16th century' (Neyzi 2003: 362). At the end of the Ottoman Empire, the concept of the 'Young Turk' was fostered during student movements. It became a symbolic image of the new generation – the 'Young Turks' – who were expected to revolutionize the system and replace the old generation. (By the time the revolution had succeeded, some twenty years later, those who attained influential positions had already reached the age of 40; nevertheless, they still held on to the label of 'Young Turks'.) 'However, what seems true is that the revolution of the young Turk has given the necessary signal to provoke a renewal (and juvenescence) of the leading classes, even if it did not happen at once' (Georgeon 2007: 160).[45]

Georgeon (ibid.: 155) describes the importance of introducing early schooling and age-based classes in universities, which allowed young people to form a common spirit and group identity. Although Koranic schools had been age-based as well, the *madrasa*s* (schools for higher education) were composed of students from a wide range of age groups, with older people having the dominant influence. It is through the use of youth at the political level, he argues, that 'the notion of "youth" (*genç*) suddenly became popular in discourses . . . Indisputably, the young people and youth assume a new position within the society and politics' (ibid.: 161).[46] In other words, it is through organizing systems of education according to age groups that the youth of Turkey could be mobilized on such a large scale.

Şenı has added to this discussion an analysis of the writings of Agâh Sırrı Levend (1894–1978), who actively created a youth model to fit Turkish national propaganda. The youth of the 1930s were perceived as something that could be moulded and formed (*infiniment malleable*, Şenı 2007: 243) in accordance with the needs of the country. This example from Turkey most clearly reveals how youth can be formulated as a separate generation in its own right and converted into a strong force that can be politically co-opted. In schools and through the discipline of sports, both of which were within the control of the state, the youth, including the country's children, could then become the 'beautiful generation' in a militaristic sense. This does not imply that concepts of youth did not exist beforehand in Turkey, but there was no systematic organization at the national level, and individuals interacted in terms of patron–client relations – for instance, young people were regarded as apprentices and students (*shogird***) (cf. Dağyeli 2008). Thus 'youth' changed from being a pejorative term implying a subordinate position in the older system to representing the driving force and vanguard behind the emergence of the new system.

The history of Germany also provides examples of the highly strategic use of youth to accomplish political goals. Sternberg, in the context of Nazi Germany, mentions that, 'the second and third sons of peasants were often enlisted in the SS and SA' (Sternberg 1981: 152).[47] At that time, there was much social unrest due to laws that aimed at proletarianizing villages by declaring the eldest son as the only heir. Younger sons were forced to find work, but there was not enough land to accommodate them, unless they were willing to work for the large landowners (*Großgrundbesitzer*), whom the Nazi state preferred to leave untouched. In this way, young people were obliged to engage in farming 'voluntarily' (*freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst*), most often on the farms of large landowners, who profited from the arrangement. 'It (Fascism) received the support of the first-born peasant sons by forcing the process of proletarianization on the younger peasant sons' (ibid.: 153).[48]

Sternberg's analysis is noteworthy in that it reveals the state's specific strategy to gain the loyalty of the elder brother at the expense of his younger brother(s), who later joined the SS and SA (*Sturm-Abteilung*, the Nazi's paramilitary force) en masse. This highly strategic use of siblingship may be a specific Germanic occurrence, but it still fundamentally adheres to the idea of youth bulge – namely, that a military structure can profit from the inability of parents to provide all of their sons with an adequate inheritance (Heinsohn 2006).

Similarly, Thomas Zitelmann (1991: 269) has shown that the violent rebellions of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Ethiopia were due to familial tension. He finds in those activities, on the one hand, recognition for acting in accordance with traditional male life-cycle activities (violence) and, on the other, the opportunity to fight for their own position, which they define by reviving old myths and combining them with new ethno-political symbols. The expansion of the Oromo since the sixteenth century, he argues, is grounded in status and resource conflicts within the household and the extended family, whereby inheritance patterns, access to women, and the taking of power from the elder generation, politically as well as economically, played a major role.

In the African context, it has been argued that the status of youth changed from that of freedom fighters (vanguards) to troublemakers because of their inability to enter the job market and hold respectable social positions. In Kenya and many other African countries, young people secured various positions for themselves by carrying out wars for independence (d'Almeida-Topor et al. 1992; Kagwanja 2005; McIntyre 2005).[49] Nevertheless, as Kagwanja (2005) has shown in the case of Kenya, the very generation that secured those positions was then unwilling in turn to make those positions available to the younger generation succeeding them, hence creating enormous social pressure. In the traditional *ituika* system, political leadership would be handed to the next generation every thirty or forty years, thus ensuring that the younger generations would eventually succeed to the positions of preceding generations. However, the change in

political circumstances during the colonial period (for instance, the banning of certain key rituals) and the introduction of central regimes meant that the ruling generation could refuse or abolish (informally) the traditional handing over of power, thus intensifying social pressure that in turn would be politically exploited by opposition groups.

To conclude the discussion, the concept of a 'vanguard', in this context, implies that a small group claims to represent a majority and is ready to fight for the future of those they have included in their category as disadvantaged. The existence of such youth movements has been responsible for the distorted view of youth in many contexts – due to the aggressive or dominant public posture of such movements, the majority of more compliant youth are ignored (Wyn and White 1997: 19), and those movements are accorded the categorical identity 'the youth'. Hence, in the course of this study, we will see the extent to which these vanguard youth movements are important in mobilizing youth through negotiating, challenging or replacing category definitions.

Research Methods

Qualitative Research

Participant observation is a central tool in social anthropology, and if done systematically and properly, it is considered to be of high scientific value. Unlike the use of the interview method to understand a society, participant observation allows the researcher to experience people's activities firsthand. Although every foray into fieldwork should be guided by the primary inquiry of the researcher, an inductive approach can open up additional avenues through which to investigate central aspects of social life. This is especially significant in the field of youth. Thus far, very few anthropologists and sociologists have written about youth in Central Asia.[50] Most commonly the topic is dealt with as a subordinate subject or treated with an ideological focus. The aim of this study has been to allow youth to take part in the discourse while engaging in their own activities, whether work or leisure. In this sense, I mostly interviewed people informally, while joining them in their activities.

Georg Elwert (1994: 7) has mentioned the importance of conflicts in the study of society, as it is in the breaking of rules that rules are revealed. However, in the case of Tajikistan, previous studies have mentioned the desire for harmony that is not only expressed towards outsiders but also internalized as a value (Stephan 2008).[51] Therefore, conflicts are often perceived as negative and not fitting to discuss with an outsider, and even someone who participated in a conflict and is willing to discuss it may not be reliable when relating their individual motivations for joining the conflict and the role(s) they played during it.

It benefited this study that I was able to listen to different narratives from many segments of society. Men and women, for example, express their memories

in different ways and thus follow different narrative paths. Every history is shaped by and reflects gender roles within society. In Tajikistan, a man is a political entity – even if he refuses to actively engage in politics, he still is regarded and treated as such. Male accounts lay claim to a certain 'objectivity', distancing themselves from the 'subjectivity' of the female narrative, or in the words of Bjerg and Lenz (2008), men are believed to retain factual knowledge while women recall everyday stories (cf. Jonker 1997: 192–93). As a Tajik saying goes, 'Men are the clothes one wears outside the house, while women are the clothes one wears at home'. Thus, men fulfil this expectation of their role in society by providing more chronological and often politicized accounts of events, whereas women are neither expected to be political subjects nor are their accounts, by definition, considered true or relevant in political discourse.

I recorded more than four hundred conversations, including casual conversations, interviews that ranged from a few minutes to several hours, and oral records of genealogies (census data). I recorded the stories that were told during discussions of genealogies because they help to explain and add important details to the technical data. Of these, I have transcribed 107 interviews and conversations; the genealogies, to a large extent, have been used as statistical data. In my view, the observations and experiences, casual talks – whether occurring on the street or at an informal occasion – which have been documented in the form of field protocol and field notes (presented also under the summary heading of 'fieldwork experiences'), and group discussions are as important as classic interviews for the gathering of information.[52]

For the interviews, I have tried to retain the use of local symbols to express ideas and thoughts. The glossary explains selected terms and provides their linguistic origin. Most words, whether Arabic or Turkic in origin, have been influenced, however, by the Tajik language, especially with regard to the vocals. The words that can be found in the glossary are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Quantitative Approaches

I have included quantitative analysis at a basic level, extrapolated from the genealogical census data. Although demographers claim that statistical data on Tajikistan is reliable, this is only partially true. In Tajikistan statistics are politics and hence do not necessarily reflect social practices in all their variations; an example is the change in marriage patterns that accompanied change in the law on marriage (Roche and Hohmann 2011).

Although there were detailed censuses of Tajikistan during the Soviet era, it was very difficult to get access to them. I tried to obtain some very basic data (birth rates from the 1980s to the present) at the *rayon* (district) centre archives, but was refused. Furthermore, many families do not register their children until they need the necessary documents (for schooling), after which the children may be registered under the name of any relative; hence, the official data may differ

from that which I have gathered on my own. Children can only be registered under their parents' name if the parents have been married according to state law, the Record of Civil Status Act (*Zapis Aktov Grazhdanskogo Sostoyaniya*, ZAGS*). If this is not the case, for instance in the circumstance of a second wife, her children would be registered as those of any other relative (such as the mother's parents, her husband's first wife).

Censuses and Genealogies

Hans Fischer (1996, 1997) discussed the historical evolution of the terms 'census' and 'survey'. As components of demographic anthropology, both census and survey methods have been used rather indiscriminately and, at times, even interchangeably. While a census refers to the systematic collection of data from a clearly defined locality, the survey method is less territorially bound.[53] The survey method was rejected by van der Geest because it is based on closed questions and 'does not lend itself to the complexity of the respondent's own ideas and experiences and thus escapes the correction of its wrong presumptions' (van der Geest 2004: 43).[54] I have followed Fischer's suggestion and concentrated on the census method; however, since I chose to use genealogies, territorial boundaries are blurred because many children today settle outside the census area where their parents were registered. This study is based on three neighbourhood (*mahalla**) censuses that I took through the collection of genealogies during 2006 and the beginning of 2007.

Genealogies can be used to collect different types of data such as names, kinship, history and demography. Each of these types demands a slightly different procedure as well as its own group of questions. Apart from data on entire kinship genealogies, I mainly collected information regarding sets of siblings. The older the data, the greater the chances that my informants would not be able to remember accurately; hence, in my view, reliable demographic data do not include any information earlier than the twentieth century. Also, the quality of the information varied according to the willingness of people to talk candidly. Often, it was necessary to leave the defined locality in order to visit an interview partner's sibling who lived in another area, in order to improve the quality of the quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative data I have attempted to collect systematically can be classified as basic data (items 1–7) and supplementary data (items 8–12).

1. Sex
2. Date of birth
3. Date of death
4. (Name)
5. Data regarding children
6. Date of marriage(s)

7. Household units
8. Type of marriage (state registration, traditional marriage, religious marriage)
9. How the marriage was managed[55]
10. Education and profession
11. Date of moving out of the parents' house
12. Migration data

In the course of analysis, I have maintained the links between the census data and individual information; thus, it is possible to see who produced the data and in what way. Through this approach, it is interesting to note how different strategies, ideas and ways of life may still produce the same result – for example, a delayed marriage, economic difficulties, housing problems and birth order may all influence fertility decline.[56]

In this study, I have presented only portions of my quantitative results, instead relying mainly on the qualitative data for the presentation of the argument. It should be noted, however, that quantitative procedures and approaches helped me to identify key questions such as how and why marriage behaviour has changed in society over the years, and to understand the idea of a youth bulge in the Tajik context and how it relates to groups of young people, life-course constructions and various discourses.

As Bernardi (2003) mentions in the case of fertility, abstract models and questions do not possess the necessary reach and flexibility to capture the social influences of decision-making. In open interviews and unstructured discussions, people are given the chance to return to certain points in order to explicate them further, thus providing additional clues into the factors influencing their decision-making (such as the experiences of their friends and family members, and how these experiences influence mutual relations).

In this study, I would like to elucidate what Bernardi (ibid.) calls these 'channels of social influence'. This aspect will be covered in the course of this study, which deals with the situation of young men in Tajikistan, who find themselves torn between parental expectations, community pressure and their experiences during labour migration to Russia.

Reflections on the Study

Conflicts occupy an intermediate position between public denial and public fascination, and it is the extremity of these two positions that makes it difficult to conduct research into them. While some sciences claim 'objectivity' by letting the numbers talk and thereby escape individual responsibility, this is not possible for an anthropologist. Anthropologists have a heightened sense of responsibility towards the people about whom they write, because they work closely with the people who are willing to share their knowledge and because they are allowed to take part in their lives – very often the anthropologist's most significant

breakthroughs in awareness emerge from participation in daily activities (Elwert 1994).

Each person who has shared some of their intimate life expects me to treat those confidences appropriately. However, there is no single 'correct' manner – otherwise there would be a total coherence of views and an absence of argument. Nevertheless, throughout this book, I have made every effort to be as accurate as possible. That being said, this book does not claim to present an authoritative political analysis, and any discussion related to political situations is limited to information gathered during my fieldwork.

Unlike in countries such as Sierra Leone, the subject of civil war is considered taboo in Tajikistan, and the state has used repressive methods to control the spread of individual versions of the event. In light of this situation, I greatly appreciated people's courage in telling me the version of events they believed to be true. Due to several incidences involving the secret services, I have exercised caution when providing individual accounts and have made every effort to preclude any possible identification of an account with a particular individual.

At times, I was asked why I was so interested in conflicts (which were understood as negative events), and why I didn't choose instead to write something 'nice' about Tajik culture. The idea of folklore in the study of *ethnografia* in the Russian tradition had a very different purpose from that of social anthropology today. Hence, while (older) people were eager to help me gather information on 'ancient rituals' and encouraged me to collect cultural information, they became uncomfortable when asked questions dealing with contemporary problems. I have attempted herein to describe the rich and diverse culture of the villages I visited, but for theoretical purposes I have also included sociological interpretations of social interactions. In the last decade, the term 'conflict' has become irrevocably associated with politics, making analytical approaches increasingly problematic. Therefore, I have referred to Elwert's (2004) definition of conflict, wherein he correlates the grade of institutionalization and the relative use of violence to identify four general types of conflicts: legal proceedings, wars, shunning and genocide.

Route Map of the Book

Following the introduction and theoretical outline of the argument and the discussion of research methods in this chapter, Chapter 1 presents my research locations and their demographic developments. Although Tajikistan's mountain areas have not always been as densely populated as they are today, economic conditions seem to have forced a large part of the population to remain mobile over the centuries. In relation to these demographic developments I present some statistical data for the villages being studied, and describe fertility and mortality patterns, particularly in connection with the civil war as a 'break' in Tajik history. Further I

have included a statistical presentation related to the youth bulge, so as to introduce the concepts of population composition and dependencies between generations and to provide a numerical overview of the actual dimension of the youth bulge. To illustrate how youth bulges are not solely a demographic problem for social scientists, an interview with a teacher is included to reveal not only the changes that have occurred since his youth but also his insight into a solution to the density and youth bulge question in Tajikistan.

Chapter 2 discusses Tajikistan from a historical perspective. Various examples from Central Asian history aptly demonstrate the relationship between cultural youth categories and the emergence of vanguard groups. I have used the *jadid*s*, the Komsomol and the *mujohid*s* to advance my argument that domestication efforts by society and the political leadership motivates youth movements to redefine themselves as vanguards. This has demographic consequences, which can be observed in the minimizing and maximizing of the size of the youth category.

Chapter 3 engages with domestication within community and family. Starting with the developmental cycle of domestic groups the chapter identifies the position of youth within the household. It is by moving out of the parental home that a young man becomes a full member of the community – and in that way domestication is fully achieved. The chapter continues with siblingship as one of the central cultural institutions through which young people's scope of choices is negotiated. Within youth bulge discussions, Heinsohn sees siblingship as a key factor for civil unrest – namely, that in high-parity societies the birth of many sons results in a male surplus. When fathers are consequently unable to provide all of their sons with an adequate inheritance, the surplus sons look for alternatives, which often lay in violent and/or expansive activities, such as military conquest, colonization or migration. Although Heinsohn's thesis sets forth some interesting points, it fails to analyse sons within the family context. In this sense, Tajik families perceive brothers as the strongest social unit, which does not exclude individual paths. The diversification strategy captures best how high-parity families deal with many sons, a practice dependent on culture and politics throughout history.

Against the background of youth within the family, Chapter 4 suggests a closer analysis of three different ways of categorizing youth: work, religion and migration. Youth is the physically strongest segment of society and hence the struggle over youth is also a struggle over the society's workforce. Categories and terms used to denote youth thus capture these specificities of youth. Similarly, local religious authorities praise the physical ability of youth to fulfil God's duty. Yet, these ideas of youth domestication are challenged by new movements which suggest that Islam liberates youth from community domestication and family bonds. Youth here is an individual chance to become active in society and engage with other young people as 'brothers'.

Today, migration also strongly influences parental and the community's domestication of youth. This has led young people to increasingly decide to postpone marriage in favour of greater freedom in Russia (the European idea of youth) and greater respect as the primary breadwinners (the local perception of adulthood). This leads to strongly diverging discourses on the role of youth within the local community. The elders argue that it is neither appropriate nor dutiful for young people to migrate to other regions and that this hardship overburdens them; instead, they should remain at home and serve the family and community. The relative freedom that young men experience in Russia and their changed status back home, however, appears to be very attractive to hundreds of thousands of young men every year – even though the kind of work that most Tajik do in Russia is certainly not among the easiest.

With Chapter 5 we move to a classic topic of anthropology – marriage – which is often perceived as the key event marking the passage from youth to adulthood. Marriage in Tajikistan, however, is only one step on the path towards maturity, albeit an important one. Whereas during the Soviet period the life course of young people became more or less standardized, the legal vacuum of the civil war made it possible for young people to adapt nuptial rituals to their own needs. Rituals are central to domestication, and thus their analysis is a case in point. The increasing postponement of marriage in the post-civil war period is the result of this manoeuvring with regard to marriage rights and wedding practices, which has considerable effects on demographic developments and the negotiation of youth concepts. The relevance of studying rituals in order to understand demographic processes can be seen in the adaptability of life-course constructions and thus in the formation of youth categories.

Chapter 6 deals with the state's interest in youth. Adhering to the Soviet definition of youth, the Tajik state today continues to treat young people in a paternalistic way. I have attempted to determine the sectors (military, education, criminal) in which the state can directly influence youth and show how this is done. The example of the failed Arash concert demonstrates how young people can, within a single evening, be transformed from representing the hope of the country to being feared as a threat – that is, in psycho-cultural terms, being perceived as unruly and uneducated. Hence, this chapter discusses how groups must crystallize around identities to transform a youth bulge from a cultural or political category into an active movement.

In the Conclusion, I discuss how the previous chapters have illuminated the question of whether a demographic bulge of young people increases the likelihood of violent confrontation. Instead of taking a detached approach based on abstract statistical analysis, I have pursued the issue in the contexts of history, terminology, kinship, politics and culture. To demonstrate that a youth bulge is a cultural concept that relates to kinship structures, economic conditions and political claims, I assert that it has yet to be proven that the identification of a

large youth bulge necessarily places a society at a higher risk of experiencing a conflict than a society without one. Here the categories that define the life course of people relate to individual socio-political groups. These groups transcend the negative connotation of youth by assuming a vanguard status – an exclusive status – the ideology of which aims then to recruit as many people as possible, that is, to mobilize the demographic potential through inclusion and exclusion strategies. In other words, the demographic argument around the concept of youth bulges needs to be analysed in its social, cultural and political contexts in order to understand the dynamics of youth.

To conclude, youth concepts are the result of different perceptions and practices within the family, community and state. Different categories have come to be shaped over many decades (centuries), and they continue to be shaped and reshaped even today – through domestication processes that, while remaining authoritative and top-down, have to take into consideration, and in some cases adapt to and incorporate, the demands and needs of young people. From the demographic point of view, the youth constitute a large majority of people who are either placed in unsatisfactory positions or experience problems of social mobility after completing school, thus creating the risk of being co-opted by political groups who seek to maximize their potential in professional organizations. While youth typically constituted the workforce that was subordinate to the elder generation during the Soviet era, the newly emerging concepts of youth accord young men a high level of responsibility. Domestication is a concept that suggests looking at youth not only as a concept but also as individuals. In successful structural and authoritative domestication, young people internalize the roles dedicated to youth. Hence, young people often reject top-down domestication and increasingly take charge of their own lives, resulting in changing concepts of youth.

Notes

1. See: http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan_flash_mob_energy_shortages/3553230.html; http://www.avesta.tj/main/8058-fleyesh-mob-po-tadzhikski-ili-kak-v-dushanbe.html.
2. In 2011 the government passed the Law of the Republic Tajikistan on Parental Responsibility for Education and Upbringing of Children (*Qonuni Jumhurii Tojikiston dar borai mas'uliyati padaru modar dar ta'limu tarbiyai farzand*). The law holds parents responsible for, among other things, educating their children and restricting them from attending illegal religious lessons and praying in mosques.
3. One of the posters at the Barki Tojik protest was a collage stating 'nepotism + tribalism = corruption – the people oppose' (*narod protiv*).
4. A 'youth bulge' is generally understood to refer to a demographic phenomenon in which the proportion of youth has increased significantly when compared to other age segments in a given population. It is a characteristic of a society in demographic transition such as the majority of Arab and Central Asian societies.
5. Gillis (1974: 170–1) argues that the concept of adolescence emerged as distinct from the concept of juvenile delinquent at the end of the nineteenth century. Hence, the adolescent,