

Rolling Youth, Rocking Society

*Youth take part in the post-modern
debate on globalization*

Jean-Charles Lagrée, editor



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P R E F A C E

This publication is the outcome of a study undertaken over two years, conducted by Jean-Charles Lagrée, French CNRS researcher and specialist in the sociology of youth. The study falls within the framework of the European Commission on Youth and Public Policy (*Commission Jeunes et Politiques publiques*) established by the Plan's General Commissariat on the instruction of the Prime Minister.

In February 1998, the General Commissariat of the Plan called on UNESCO to participate in the work of the International Mission of the Commission which was being established, entitled "Youth and Public Policy".

The failure of public policy on youth was clearly visible, on the social level, in the rising unemployment....consumption). The Commission was assigned the task of undertaking a critical examination of the concepts and images that until then had been the basis for public policies and to propose new approaches which would take account of the socio-economic and cultural transformations taking place not just in Europe but the world over.

The approach adopted was based on the following premise: with the development of the globalization process, policies are deemed inadequate if the evolving global context is not taken into account in the drafting of national policies. The inter-penetrability of geographic, economic, cultural and symbolic frontiers which has reached a climax through information and communication technologies, today dictates that thinking should be global when designing the basis for action.

The "youth" problematic is also global and for some ten years has been the subject of growing interest on the part of the international community. In 1995, the United Nations adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. This implies that young people across the globe are perceived as a living social entity, despite their differences and the diversity of their circumstances, situations and similar problems. Beyond the frontiers separating them, they share a common culture and common values that set them apart not only from other generations who are their contemporaries but also from earlier generations of young people.

For UNESCO, youth enjoy a central position both in its programmes and in its action policy as they embody the creative and innovative forces of society as a whole. Since 1995, UNESCO has adopted the attitude of listening to young people so as to understand their real needs, their points of view on problems relating to them, their hopes and their vision for the future, in order to develop appropriate programmes and policies.



For the UNESCO Programme “Management of Social Transformations” (MOST), research on young people is particularly significant in that it aims to question the ideas and paradigms on which some sociological definitions and theories are based and to identify what is changing or emerging at the very core of society.

The traditional official line on young people is challenged by those same young people who accuse it of not taking their reality into account. They claim the right to express their own points of view and to take an active part in the development of policies concerning them. It also fails when it sets an action policy that comes up against an unprecedented reality requiring new concepts to think it through.

That is what the author of this publication brings to light through studies and research carried out in various countries in Asia and Western and Eastern Europe. The concepts of age, of life cycle and even of transition, have become invalid for defining young people. It is more in terms of “generation” or rather “symbolization of a process of change” that the issue of youth seems to be addressed. Unemployment, intensification of the race for work opportunities, uncertainty with regard to the future, loss of confidence in traditional institutions (State, family, school, political parties, Church, etc.), increased dangers and also the demand for personal responsibility in building their own life - all these are shown as being universal concepts that allow for the realities of young people today to be thought in an adequate way.

In addition to the pragmatic objective of developing a truly efficient public policy, rethinking the “youth” question must also enable us to inform the role and the position held by youth in the globalization process taking place and to point out the changes and social transformations of which young people are both the actors and, at times, the victims.

Alya Saada



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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Background and aims

There seems to be nothing new about saying how times change, that history is accelerating or that modernity is upon us. Throughout the twentieth century experts, specialists and élites lulled us with a music that, like a reliable metronome, beat with the rhythm of each generation. Some bemoan these changes and the uncertainty they create while others rejoice in the hope that the future will see improved living conditions, greater opportunities and more freedom. While it is changes in the socio-economic context that make generations, it is equally true that the twentieth century was full of hiatuses and discontinuities, radical changes in the means of production and the ways of existence. Unchecked capitalism generated human misery just as much as an ongoing industrial revolution, inventing the consumer/producer while creating mass consumption in a Fordist regime, developing the welfare state, in European countries at least, deregulating and reconstructing labour markets; throughout the century the different stages of capitalism's development succeeded each other at breakneck speed generating, with each new generation, anxieties and hopes about the future of society and its young members in particular.

At the turn of the twenty-first century this succession of changes is still continuing. After the Fordist regime we now have the post-Fordist production regime, propelling developed industrial societies into an era qualified by a variety of adjectives or expressions such as: 'post-modern', post-industrial', post-traditional or latter-day modernity. Each term refers to a specific perspective but, their differences aside, they all point in the same direction, indicating that modern societies have entered an era of radical transformations where the future is no longer linked to the past or the present. These terms show that a new society is being built and none of its prophets, exegetes or experts is in a position to map out the exact forms that it will take. All that can be said is that it will be profoundly different from what we have known until now. A new societal model is being produced and it will require a new paradigm and new tools for reflecting upon it.

What are the main factors of this development? For the time being we can list four: globalization; the knowledge and information society; the transformation of regu-

latory and socializing institutions; the weakening of the socializing institutions and frameworks.

Globalization

The first factor of all is undoubtedly the set of problems relating to globalization that, apart from the work of economists and some political scientists, is barely taken into account in sociology. However, for several years now an increasing number of researchers have agreed that societies – and French society in particular – are undergoing overwhelming changes on an uncommon scale, affecting every pillar of society.

The primary reason for reaching this conclusion is the restructuring of the production apparatus. The long list of evils found in our societies – whether concerning employment or active life – are effectively forcing us to reconsider our observations in a more global fashion. Unemployment, long-term unemployment, marginalizing unemployment, flexibility, mobility and relocation are all new features of employment (which may be considered as evils or as possible positive factors) and merely the outward signs of a profound transformation of the production apparatus, calling for new forms of regulation.

The knowledge and information society

In the United Kingdom and the United States, but also in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands or even, quite often, in Germany, the analysis of the transformations affecting our societies, namely current transformations, is related explicitly and very directly to the process of globalization, not only from the obvious economic perspective but also in terms of its politico-institutional and cultural components. Globalization is indeed a market phenomenon. Have people not predicted the end of history, heralded by the victory of the law of the market alone?! But it is also a media phenomenon. Not only, as Marshall McLuhan foresaw, are the new technologies turning the world into a village, speeding up the circulation of messages and enabling exchanges to take place in real time practically throughout the planet, but above all they are introducing into every economic area a radical transformation of the means of producing wealth, whether it be the transformation of matter or the management of information and its employment in virtual areas, albeit with a very real efficiency.

The advent of the information society is a key component, both decisive and unavoidable, of the globalization process. It is also a vital component of the switch from an industrial society to the new society, variously called post-Fordist, post-industrial or even post-modern according to the theoretical viewpoint.

This post-whatever, part of the globalization process, is undoubtedly the dimension with the greatest potential for overturning approaches to and perspectives of analysis. At the risk of overdoing it we might adopt a somewhat provocative position and suggest that thanks to habits and customs, and also the principle of legitimization, we often end up comparing the social change gradually taking place before us with conceptual

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tools, with theoretical frameworks and with references that are already a thing of the past. Backing themselves up with theories intended only to point out that things are changing and that frameworks for analysis inherited from the industrial society are no longer operational, some people, especially in The United Kingdom, the United States and the Nordic countries go as far as to forge new concepts that are more in sync with the emerging reality.

The transformation of regulatory and socializing institutions

It has also been noted that the major institutions in our society are losing their effectiveness. Family, school, company, army and church, the great pillars on which our societies are built, are being eroded, cracking, splintering and being recomposed. The same is true of the socializing frameworks that ensured the coherence of the industrial society. Socio-political movements and the organizations that they gave rise to are suffering from a widespread feeling of disillusionment, which has gathered pace in recent decades.

The result is an ever more vociferous questioning of the ways in which citizenship is exercised, of the type of democracy used in our modern societies and, last but not least, of the content of today's concepts of civil society and social cohesion.

Faced with this ever lengthening list of trends, transformations and possible mutations, some people go so far as to debate the fragmentation of identities (be they vocational, local, regional, national or European), depicting them as individual or collective challenges to the future of our societies.

Not all researchers go along with this diagnosis. None the less it is gaining wider and wider ground in the academic community, especially in northern Europe, where it is increasingly common to link these transformations to the process of globalization currently sweeping across our societies.

The weakening of the socializing institutions and frameworks

The themes of globalization and the fragmentation of society offer up some pointers guiding the research and thinking of the tenants of post-modernity. Let us mention them without dwelling on them.

Awareness of the loss of efficiency of the institutions and the dislocation of the regulatory frameworks releases us from the shackles inherited from often centuries-old traditions. As modern beings we are rid of the straightjackets of the past, becoming more autonomous and demanding not only autonomy but also greater responsibility. The dismantling of traditions and the weakening of the great institutions make the emergence of a new individualism possible – not that of the Age of Enlightenment nor that of the neo-liberal market but that of individuals liberated from the bonds of community and possibly also from societal commitments, left to face 'alone' a broader horizon of opportunities to be seized and therefore of decisions or choices to be made.

By corollary, the domain of socialization also calls for new approaches. The theories of modernity, post-modernity and the post-industrial society are founded on a

threefold awareness – that of a loss of influence of the socializing institutions, a loss or transformation of the control that they might exert and, consequently, a radical transformation of the socializing contexts. The latter is also accompanied by a greater openness, a greater diversity and, ultimately, a greater inequality. Increasingly school – an apparatus whose purpose was to socialize, bring about conformity and pass on knowledge – faces competition in all its functions from the family network, the network of peers, the media and the expanding information society. The passing down of knowledge and the inculcation of standards took place, supposedly at least, in a behaviourist way and through a vertical relationship. In the emerging society, learning is no longer inculcation but acquisition and is carried out in an increasingly horizontal rather than vertical relationship, thanks, above all, to a more marked and sustained participation in a multitude of networks. Through networks and their participation in face-to-face or virtual interactive systems individuals have once again become the protagonists of their own socialization.

Taken to their final conclusion, these theories would therefore lead to a growing complication and an equally growing diversification of the ways and means of socialization. A large share of the process is taking place increasingly outside or independently of the institutions and an increasingly sizeable share has been taken over by the social players.

For the tenants of post-modernity, Anthony Giddens is again the reference. In the era of the industrial society individual careers or trajectories were guided along very clearly marked ‘highways’ allowing very little leeway for individual free choices, other than at a few highly critical forks or junctions along the way. That was highlighted, for example, by the extremely eloquent title of the work by Catherine Gokalp *The Age of Choice*. Nowadays, in the emerging post-industrial society, choices are ever present. Every moment of our existence calls for choices to be made, and individual players are now required to take their own destiny into their hands. The post-industrial society emphasizes to an even greater extent the fact that individuals’ socialization trajectories are the complex product of the interaction between individual acts and social structure. A new order of inequalities naturally results from this. The institutions (including the socializing institutions and the institutions that convey knowledge) are the guarantors of the social order and social cohesion and peace because they restrict and limit the impact of unchecked inequalities. If their effectiveness breaks down, that will bestow upon or restore influence to powerful individuals in control of their own destiny and bring them into competition with one another.



Debates, controversies and disagreements are not absent from this analysis and reflection by experts in their attempts by trial and error to decide how tomorrow’s society will look. We shall not mention them all here but in this introduction it seems enough to recall that these four points or marked trends are broadly agreed upon by researchers and experts concerned by or interested in the current transformations and working in countries with strong economies.

What will tomorrow’s society be comprised of? What embryonic society can be

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found in the current social and economic recompositions? When the great pillars of traditional societies are pulled down, on what basis will social cohesion be founded? In other words, how will we manage to live together? So far no answer has been given to these questions. Only a sketchy reply supplied by the identification of these four heavy-weight tendencies: (a) globalization; (b) knowledge society; (c) a transformation of our societies' major institutions; and (d) more fragile socializing frameworks.

This is probably not the whole list. Mentioning these four tendencies merely allows us to hint at great continents still to be explored where research, investigation and analysis need to be developed if we are to be able to pierce the thick mist that prevents us from seeing the possible, potential or probable future of our societies. Already, given the state of our knowledge at present, we can state that these heavyweight tendencies are defining a new context, a new reality, a new system of constraints, risks and opportunities that young people will have to confront.¹

Against this new background and in this framework will societies pose the question of youth? How then, in this new emerging context, facing these new trends that are overturning the existing order, can we address the 'youth issue', for young people themselves but also for society and draw conclusions with regard to framing 'public policies'?

Going beyond merely piling up objective data about the system of training, employment or unemployment, the supply of training, access to autonomy or services offered by welfare institutions or bodies, we wished to approach the way in which the social issue is addressed in different societies in different continents. The specificity of the social constructions of youth comes from arbitration carried out, knowingly or unwittingly, in a particular form of social training.

Each country, each culture, each tradition and each history creates its own representations of youth and, as sociohistoric realities, these are closely attached to national territories.² Comparing these representations revealed the wide variety of societal choices made in Europe and the rest of the world and, by deduction highlighted the special example of France in terms of how the youth issue is addressed.

Method

To achieve these aims, mobilizing a network of international experts whom we asked to draft a report on the way in which, in their opinion, the issue of young people was posed in their country,³ gathering together articles and reports supplied by international organizations,⁴ reading or rereading publications produced by European researchers,⁵ we set out to track down the differences in the way in which the youth issue is formulated in each country.

The initial hypothesis was plausible. Each country, according to its history, level of development, culture and the challenges facing it, along with the societal choices that it must make, has its own way of formulating this issue.

We deliberately brought into this endeavour countries with widely contrasted cultures and situations. The Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China were compared with Bulgaria, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the countries of northern

1. *European Youth Trends*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1998 (mimeo).

2. Jenny, Jacques 'Circulation des discours sociaux sur la jeunesse', *La jeunesse en questions*, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1982. See also Gérard Mauger (*Les jeunes en France. État des recherches*, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1994) who also follows this approach but chose to restrict his investigation to debates labelled 'scientific' only.

3. Here we mobilized experts belonging to the research network Youth and Generation in Europe, of the European Sociological Association. <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/esa-youth>

4. In particular the reports submitted to us by Irena Guidikova of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre.

5. CYRCE, 'The Puzzle of Integration', in Walter de Gruyter (ed.), *European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research*, Vol. 1, 1995; 'Intercultural Reconstruction', in *ibid.*, Vol. 2, 1999; Lynne Chisholm, Peter Büchner, Heinz Herman Krüger, Manuella du Bois Reymond, *Growing Up in Europe. Contemporary Horizons in Childhood and Youth Studies*. Berlin/ New York, De Gruyter, 1995.

Europe, such as Norway, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands, or even with southern European countries like Spain.

We disseminated a call for contributions over the Youth and Generation in Europe website, under the auspices of the European Sociological Association (ESA). Some ten researchers responded to this appeal and agreed to draft a specific report on this theme. Some of these documents form the core of this publication.⁶

Others supplied us with articles, reports and papers delivered at international colloquies or seminars.⁷

We also used the reports and notes from the activities of the Council of Europe or networks of social scientists working on youth, such as Research Committee 34 Youth Sociology of the International Sociological Association and the Youth and Generation in Europe research network of the European Sociological Association. Concurrently, we have made use of the publications on youth sociology which, with ever greater frequency, bring together contributions by researchers throughout Europe. One example is the two-volume *European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research* (Vol. 1: *The Puzzle of Integration*, 1995; Vol. 2: *Intercultural Reconstruction*, 1999), published by CYRCE (Circle for Youth Research Co-operation in Europe) or the work published by Lynne Chisholm, Peter Büchner, Heinz Herman Krüger and Manuella du Bois Reymond, entitled *Growing Up in Europe: Contemporary Horizons in Childhood and Youth Studies* (1995), or *Youth Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context* (1997) compiling contributions by researchers from the whole of Europe.

Three key ideas

1. The emergence of a community of researchers, in response to a community of debate. We set out to look for differences but also the reports of experts and documents gathered for this analysis showed us that there is a very strong similarity in how the youth question is approached in the various countries.

In Europe, but also in the United States and on other continents, there is a consensus among experts and specialists of all kinds, of every origin and representing every culture on relocating the youth issue around common referents and concepts relating to the emergence of post-modernity. This is borne out in the contributions by the international experts.

Only fifteen or twenty years ago the theoretical frameworks or concepts around which the corpus of youth-related social sciences was constructed were very deeply rooted in national situations. Nowadays that is no longer the case. Globalization, the mobility of experts, the growing dissemination of ideas and themes and, of course, for what concerns us here, the process of Europeanization, are such that this situation is being radically altered. Representations ricochet off each other, debates interweave with one another, analyses overlap and realities and the way they are interpreted are dislocated to accede to a greater generality. That would appear to be the prime lesson to be learned from our process of gathering different experts' reports, articles and other works depicting each in their own way the situation facing young people in various countries around the world.

The youth question is both being Europeanized and globalized. It crosses bor-

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6. The main experts who contributed to this work are: Natalia Alves (Portugal); Martin Criado (Spain); Shao Goyang (China); Helena Helve (Finland); Siyka Kovatcheva (Bulgaria); Yih-Lan Liu (Taiwan); Ladislav Machacek (Slovak Republic). Although the contribution by Massimiano Bucchi (Italy) portrayed Italian youth rather than putting into perspective the way in which Italian society is constructing the youth issue we decided to include it in this publication owing to its wealth of information and considerable interest.

7. Manuella du Bois Reymond (Netherlands); Sibylle Hübner Funk (Germany); Andreas Walter (Germany); Ken Roberts (United Kingdom); Ola Stafsend (Norway).

- ders to express the tendencies and challenges that are no longer rooted in given territories or in a local context. Describing their countries and the way in which the problems facing young people in their regions are addressed, these national experts tell us quite a different story. What they tell us is that they are rooted in an international community.
2. In Europe and Asia alike the youth issue is addressed from a generational perspective. Change of values, more pragmatic and even utilitarian behaviour patterns, the rise of individualism, the enhancement of liberal attitudes – as demonstrated by a recent opinion survey conducted by the Council of Europe⁸ – are some of the concerns raised in the experts' reports.
 3. Change of context. Alongside these comments on the changes in axiological orientations, attitudes and behaviour patterns of the young generations, there is also a broad consensus on the changes of context in which the up and coming generations are being formed. Fundamentally, researchers agree on emphasizing sociopolitical changes that they regard as so far-reaching that they even use expressions like 'break-off' or 'change of paradigm' to denote them. Indeed they stress those changes affecting the family structure, its role and more broadly the impact of the family in the global socialization process. They recall that parents' knowledge, skills and abilities are becoming increasingly obsolete or useless and that the socialization process is increasingly facing competition from peer groups and the media, which disseminate new values, knowledge and behaviour models, more in sync with the new sociocultural context of the era. The experts also agree on an exchange of arguments on social fragmentation, de-institutionalization and the breakdown in traditional regulatory frameworks. They ask about the implications of the rise of a risk society and the socialization processes. In brief, they posit the question of young people with regard to the change of paradigm that the analyses are gradually uncovering as research continues.

8. Questionnaire, Youth Assembly, May 1999. European Council.

1. Youth and post-modernity: a political issue

Jean-Charles Lagrée

Youth: first and foremost a generation

Regardless of the contexts, the remoteness of the country or the difference in situations involved, the experts' reports demonstrate a considerable convergence in their analyses of how the youth issue is addressed. We must therefore ponder the basis of this likeness or consensus. Whereas it is legitimate to cite the construction of an academic community in the case of Western Europe, that cannot be the case when the corpus of expert reports also includes those not only from the countries of Eastern Europe but also from China. Is it that the globalization of theoretical schemes and analytical perspectives is making itself increasingly felt or that a relative poverty of concepts and theories or fundamental observations favours agreement over many issues? This question will not be debated here, but we shall merely take note of the existence of this basic general consensus around which the differences and particularities relating to national contexts can be fitted.

In other words, whereas the experts had been asked to examine only the issue of youth in society, most of them addressed the theme of 'young people' from a generational viewpoint.

In their writings, youth automatically becomes an issue of generation. In some ways there exists a very broad agreement that youth is a specific and unique stage in existence that can only be understood with reference to the succession of generations and, therefore, the process of social change. Understanding individual temporality means mobilizing History, referring to the events that make a generation. In one case it will be the death of a dictator and the beginnings of the democratization process, while in another it will be the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist regimes; in France May 1968 is seen as one of the founding events of a generation.

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Taiwan, China

According to Yih-Lan Liu, it was the abolition of martial law in 1987 that introduced a 'generation marker' into Taiwanese society. This event signalled the end of a period during which the whole of society mobilized to construct, maintain and reinforce social order and the entry into a society where the main question was 'How can people's well-being be promoted?' All the features and factors that help to characterize today's youth in Taiwan, China, can be referred to what our expert calls 'this societal change'. Thus, the considerable improvement in the economic situation should not be regarded as the only factor of this transformation. Political change and the growing appeal for more democracy are considered as vital components of the advent of this new era too, in which a new generation of young people has been socialized. This has resulted in a no less significant change in the system of values of young people, their attitudes towards existence or authority and their expectations of society.

Eastern Europe

To a large extent, the situation is very close to that reported to us from the countries formerly under the yoke of communist governments. The fall of the communist regime triggered a radical change seen by all the experts specializing in youth issues as the key factor in the process of forming the new generation and the emergence of a generation gap.⁹

Bulgaria

From this point of view, it is worth reading the argument put forward by Siyaka Kovacheva in her analysis of the process of Construction and Deconstruction of youth in Bulgaria.

In the social turmoil of the transition, continuing for a decade so far, all social bounds are being restructured. Age relations, just like class or gender relations, are being constructed in a different way and the groups they elicit are losing their formerly established status. As elsewhere in Europe there is a new alignment in the relationship between generations, especially as contributors to and beneficiaries from contracting welfare budgets. The position of youth in particular seems to be destructured and undermined by the combined influences of post-communism and postmodernity. Several processes are shaping this tendency to deconstruct youth: the growing autonomy, pragmatism and individualization among the first post-communist generation.¹⁰

Romania

The issue of spectacular changes triggered by the political upheaval is also at the centre of the paper by Octav Marcovici depicting the situation facing young people in Romania.

The transition towards a new kind of social, economic and political organization in Romania has had far higher social costs than was at first expected and the standard of living has been affected by a marked process of deterioration which has rendered ineffective the functioning of social welfare intended above all to protect less favoured groups and individuals. Of all the social categories variously hit by the far-reaching restructuring processes that most affected is the younger generation and social evolution is posing the issue of youth in new terms.¹¹

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9. Chisholm, et al., op. cit.

10. This argument echoes the paper by Yih-Lan Liu, not only with regard to the radical transformations brought about in the social climate by political change but also by the explosion of what is usually presented as "postmodern" and presented in the paper as "resisting authority", pragmatic and utilitarian attitudes and, above all, the rise of individualism. But we shall take up this issue again later in the chapter.

11. Octav Marcovici, *The Problems of Young People Seen by Society and the Young Themselves*, Expert report, No. 24, October 1999 (mimeo).

Once again, this text is full of comments that together form the consensual debate on young people. Spectacular changes affecting every area of social life have given rise to a new generation resolutely turned towards the promotion of individual values. These upheavals were crystallized by a single political event: the fall of the communist regime.

Slovak Republic

To back up this point with some supplementary arguments, we could look at the report on the Slovak Republic by Ladislav Macháček. After having depicted the overall change which has taken place in Slovak society and emphasized the need to construct a new state, Professor Ladislav Macháček stresses the existence of a *process of individualization* taking place in civil society, making felt the overriding need for a *political response*. 'At present, according to Professor J. Cecetka, new youth needs have arisen in connection with the process of individualization under the conditions of the market economy'.¹² In another text, written some time later, he resumes this argument, clarifying and specifying it.

There is a typical tendency among the youth of Europe, into which we are subsequently integrating, towards individualization. This does not mean a growth in egoism among individuals or their unwillingness to cooperate in a group. It is rather a gradual decline from the previously strictly State-planned orientation of personal objectives, as was the case in Slovakia. Adolescents must focus more on their own personal development and self-achievement, and bear responsibility for a potential failure of the consequences of their resolutions. This may apply to their vocational orientation or to their choice of a partner. This may still not hold true to a full extent in the European countries in transition.¹³

Western Europe

In Western Europe, too, youth is presented as a generation. In fact, just as in the countries of Eastern Europe or certain Asian countries, there are plenty of historical events, which are strong enough to act as reference points, markers or tags in the formation of various generations. Successive wars and dictators have punctuated the process of societal renewal. The issue of generations is constructed by reference to the wars or struggles against dictatorships in all the countries that have been or continue to be affected by such national traumas. This is the case of Spain, a country we shall return to at far greater length in the following pages but also of Germany. There the problem of generations is a political challenge that could not be better expressed than in the words used by Sibylle Hübner-Funk: 'An interesting phenomenon is that the majority of political – and economic – representatives in West Germany now responsible for managing the unification process belong to the generation of the Hitler Youth'.¹⁴

Between the Hitler or wartime generation and the present-day generation, living in a democratic country free from the 'German question', the divide is huge. The year 1945 is therefore the reference date for each generation.

In other countries of Western Europe, where the trauma is less strong or the relationship with history, a painful history none the less, has been resolved, the issue of generations is simply addressed in terms of change or the process of transformation, one

12. Macháček, Ladislav, (1998) *Youth in the Processes of Transition and Modernization in the Slovak Republic*, Bratislava, mimeo, p.6.

13. Macháček, Ladislav, 'Youth and Citizenship in Slovakia', 34th World Congress of the International Institute for Sociology, Tel Aviv, Israel, 11-15 July, 1999.

14. Sibylle Hübner-Funk, 'La génération des Jeunes hitlériennes. Transitions, transformations, transmissions', in Raymond Hudon and Bernard Fournier (eds.), *Jeunes et Politique*, pp. 163-83, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1994.

that is supposedly speeding up. This is the stand taken by Carmen Leccardi in Italy, for example, when she deals with the issue of youth from the perspective of generational change within the family and the family relational system. Alessandro Cavalli adopts a similar position when analysing the transformation in the system of values of young people. He emphasizes, on the basis of theses defended by Inglehart and Abrahamson, the gradual switch from materialist postures to orientations qualified as post-materialist. Perhaps because the context lends itself – gliding history without major lurches – it is a gentle approach that prevails putting emphasis on generational continuity. This continuity is definitely not exempt from in-depth work on the distancing of generations. This is the lesson that can be learned from the Portuguese report. Times change, society undergoes profound transformation and the generations become alien one to another. They coexist for longer, as Massimiano Bucchi reminds us, but they either make no contact or do it badly. Alongside the political events that mark the succession of generations, changes in societal paradigms blur the representations made by the older generations of those that follow them. Just because they reflect, characterize or express the changes under way, young people appear as a ‘threat’ to the social order.

Generations are ‘political’ generations

In all these contributions two points should be highlighted:

1. Youth is considered from a *generational perspective*. Youth may be a stage in a person’s existence, a period of transition, a period of socialization and maturing, exposed to a variety of hazards. But, above all else, youth is a generation. It embodies a process of change characterized by the abandonment of the vestiges of the older society and the rejection of obsolescence of traditions, institutions, standards and cultural models inherited from the past and the entry into a new society that sets more store by individuals. It is the vehicle by which new values are established.
2. But youth as a generation, that is, as the symbolization of a process of change, is also – and perhaps primarily – specified as the place it is given with regard to the *political issues at stake*. Youth as a generation is constructed with regard to politics. This point can be easily illustrated by all the reports that we have received from experts. But the most enlightening on this score is undoubtedly the Spanish report. Whereas he had been asked to describe the components of the way in which the youth issue is formulated in his own country, the Spanish expert, Martín Criado, presented a history of the youth issue broken down into three periods:
1960-74 – the youth issue is defined by reference to the Nationalist-Catholic ideology;
1974-82 – the main concerns refer to the appropriate political socialization of young people in the framework of the advent of a new democratic framework;
1982-89 – youth unemployment becomes a major problem.

Once again, but in a completely different way, changes in the political context appear to be the main markers in the construction/identification of a new generation.

Thus, in East as well as in the West, in Europe as well as in Asia, wherever human rights cannot be exercised, wherever democracy is under way or evolving, the theme of youth is rooted in the collective memory in the form of a succession of gener-

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ations, each characterized by the political context in which they will move and by the political role that they are supposed to play.

From this perspective, the *generations are 'political' generations*, or more accurately they are 'generations' whose context and issues highlight specifically their political component. In the reports and texts that we have encountered, two ways of inscription in the political can be picked out: (a) promoting a new social order, and (b) promoting a new society.

Young people responsible for a Promethean mission

The generational aspect of the youth issue establishes a link between individual history and collective history. It also makes it possible to build a bridge between the history of an age group and the history of society as a whole. From this point of view, building the youth issue from the generational reference point means placing it in a fundamentally historical perspective. It is tantamount to turning it deliberately towards the past that fashioned it. But, at the same time, youth representing the coming of the future is invested with a Promethean task. From this viewpoint we could take up the words of the Taiwanese expert: 'In the eyes of the Taiwanese young people are the builders of the future'. Youth is simultaneously the future in motion and the future still awaiting its making, a challenge to be met or a project to be realized.

The messianic mission of young people from the Eastern countries

This point never appears as clearly as in the reports by the experts from the Eastern European countries. Under communist rule and thus following the teleonomic vision of the Hegelian Karl Marx, the Promethean task youth were entrusted with consisted essentially in bringing about a truly communist society, which the older generations reputedly had been unable to bring about.

The young were in charge of a 'major ideological mission', writes Siyaka Kovacheva with regard to the communist period in Bulgaria. This theme is also to be found in all the countries where a communist regime exerted its pressure. But perhaps the clearest expression of this point is provided by Octav Marcovici in the contribution which he has conveyed to us in the framework of this debate:

Before 1989, youth had its own place within the political debate and its structure was standardized by the system specialists, such that each class and social category could find its place. At the time, youth was defined as: tomorrow's generation, a revolutionary force, the beneficiary of a shining future, etc. Immediately after the revolutionary change that took place in December 1989, young people was presented as the authors of the revolution and the future beneficiaries of the reforms to be carried out but in a short time, as the first free elections approached, the political debate placed the emphasis instead on special protection of the young, a principle also inscribed in the new Constitution which had been adopted. I was able to note an interesting change of angle in the speech delivered by the President of Romania at the 'youth forum' organized last

year: youth must be seen as 'today's generation' and treated as such by the ruling forces.¹⁵

Youth is presented not as a legitimate category of state policy but as a political actor to be constructed. When the Iron Curtain crumbled and fell, the main change with regard to the young was not so much the entry of this segment of the labour force into the then emerging market economy,¹⁶ it was not even the entry into a modern or post-modern society,¹⁷ but the fact that they lost their Promethean political status to become merely socio-economic agents whose initiatives, entrepreneurial activity and dynamism along with their individualistic orientations are supposed to generate the development of democratic attitudes at the heart of civil society and thus to construct the base on which democratic society can be built.

In eastern European societies, after the fall of communism, the status of youth was radically transformed. During the communist era, it was set in a political representation of a new emerging history. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it became a civil actor in a new democratic society, a liberal society turned towards the market. But in both cases, at least during the early stages of this change of direction, the youth preserved its messianic mission that society had entrusted it with.

In both cases, societies over-invest in youth as a promoter of a better future. But we are currently witnessing a depoliticization of the youth issue and its reformulation from the viewpoint of a social agent still to win a citizenship that has still to be invented.

Beyond politics: promoting tomorrow's society

A comparison with Taiwan, China, will offer very similar results. The new generations, whether those of the past or those of today, have been or are overburdened by an ideological messianic mission. Yih-Lan Liu sums up the context that is now forming before his eyes as 'from how to promote social order to how to promote social welfare'.¹⁸

In the past the task before youth was also a political one: one of constructing a new society, fighting for their country, strengthening the social order to found a new fatherland and developing a new identity. It was then a task of constructing social cohesion mobilizing all actors, with young people at the forefront. The priority task was to sustain and reinforce community values, collective orientations, institutions and traditions, all elements that might bring the new society into line with the reference points inherited from the old society. The political task that the young were entrusted with by the national collectivity as a whole was to reassert the relevance of the past. The young were brought back into line with history in order to reassert the traditional values and ways of life in a new context. As of 1975 or 1987, they were meant to build the future by extricating the new society from the constraints of traditional Taiwanese society.

After the political turmoil, the messianic role of youth is secularized

Thus a common point unites the former communist countries of Eastern Europe with Taiwan, China: *the messianic and political role youth were entrusted with*. But a yawning gap

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15. Marcovici, op.cit., p. 4.

16. Cf. Kovatcheva, op. cit.: L. Machacek, 'Slovak Youth Attitudes toward Market Challenges', *Sociologica*, No. 7/8, 1995.

17. Cf. Kovatcheva, op. cit.

18. Liu Yih-Lan, (1999) *The Youth of Taiwan in the 1990s*, Expert report (mimeo).

divides them. In the case of the former, this mission was clearly and explicitly a political one. In that of the latter, it was society working upon itself, the quest for an identity, a quest to make society everlasting.

With the abolition of martial law in 1987, the younger Taiwanese generation turned to the future. But while it remained peaceful and calm, criticism was radical. The main pillars of the old society, its values, the most customary behaviour, all that was accepted as normal and beyond all public debate, became a problem. Breaks in family ties became increasingly acceptable as separations and divorces were on the increase. In the field of family education, *the traditional strict and severe discipline* was gradually abandoned. Over-investment – albeit customary – in education increasingly became a social problem and not only an individual difficulty. While society as a whole adhered to the principle of collective and community solidarity and with reference to common traditional values, Taiwanese society is increasingly split by a generational divide affecting the sense of family, sexual behaviour, kinship, education and cultural transmission in a society confronted with a process of far-reaching transformation, and so forth.

In this sense, as the experts like to recall, the young are the builders of the future. *Yet this construction takes place regardless of the political scene.* Building a truly democratic society is still on the agenda of the new generation. But in the words, and eyes, of the experts and those in a position of responsibility the main task is to carry out a genuine transition of traditional Chinese society towards a new society possibly founded on traditional values but one that is likely to correspond to a modern or post-modern era. From this point of view, the end of martial law marks the *secularization* of the role and task of the younger generation in Taiwanese society.

Spain: from youth under Franco to youth unemployment

The Spanish presentation of the situation of young people and their evolution will not contradict the remarks and observations made on the previous pages. Youth is referred back to the historical context, the struggles and political manoeuvres to maintain civil peace. From this point of view, youth is at once seen from the generational angle. In the same vein, it is at once apprehended as potentially the bearer of a new era, of new ideologies and new behaviour patterns.

Youth of the dictatorship: an immediate political issue

Of course in the context of the Franco dictatorship, youth immediately, consubstantially one might say, comes within the political domain. Indeed, it is a potential political threat in that it makes itself part of the balance of political forces that primarily structures the balance of national forces. It is from this point of view that public opinion tackled the youth issue, searching for signs that the reproduction process might be harmed. The question of youth was thus constructed with reference to a National-Catholic ideology that cemented and bolstered the Franco dictatorship. In the 1960s political opposition grew and this phenomenon was regarded once again as a vital dimension of the upheavals that were to take place.

'Youth' becomes more and more central in sociological explanations of social change. Generational change, however, is conceptualized in a very different way according to the ideological affiliation of authors.

One extreme is represented by Juan Gonzalez-Anleo's articles on youth and religion. This sociologist, who took part in the survey's elaboration, is concerned with 'the negative dimension of religious fact' among young people, i.e. 'juvenile rebellion', 'anti-Church attitudes', 'religious crisis', etc. These 'new symptoms' are explained by a youth culture centred on present and pleasure - which is responsible, as well, for sexual freedom, drugs, pop music, new dances, etc. The youth problem is defined as a 'loss of values' problem - though the author appears at the end relieved because most of the responses are 'adequate' to Catholic doctrine. This author's articles are also interesting because youth is defined - despite the data he offers - as a homogeneous group, where social class distinctions would not have any effect.

The other pole is represented by J. R. Torregrosa's *Spanish Youth. Generational and Political Consciousness*. This author endeavours to prove - also against the data he offers - a generational consciousness among young people. Class differences are unimportant to explain youth's opinions: the whole of Spanish youth - which forms a consistent generation - wants to see political change towards 'modernization'.

Although politically opposed, both publications share three important points. In the first place, both of them speak in terms of generations: age would be much more important than social class to explain behaviour and attitudes. In the second place, social change is viewed as generation change. Besides, both authors think of a very definite sector of the young population when they speak of 'youth': university students; precisely those who, with their street demonstrations, inspired the fears of those who commanded the survey.¹⁹

Any distancing from traditional Catholic values may therefore be interpreted as a threat to the social order established by Franco. *Youth is a political actor but only by delegation or by proxy*. In the mid-1970s, when the political protests movements developed and the grip of the dictatorship was loosened, 'the construction of the youth problem received a major fillip during these years. Youth act as a *living metaphor* of political, economical and social changes'. In support of this argument the author quotes the preface to a national survey on Spanish youth:

The recent raise of the voting age to eighteen years, which has increased the number of voters by 1,800,000, will necessarily result in more attention being paid by politicians to Spanish youth problems. A recent poll revealed that among young people there was a higher rate of rejection of the Constitution, and a high level, far higher than national averages, to extremist and extra-parliamentary political positions. This is a clear consequence of the scant attention that they are paid by society.

During this period of transition from dictatorship to democracy, the main concerns are political. But they are expressed in terms of a 'social youth problem'. To the extent that the young are deprived of the means of taking a stance directly as political or social actors, the intervention by the new generation on the political scene will remain implicit.

After politics, economics

Democracy was installed in Spain immediately after the death of Franco. Society was pacified. Spain then turned towards economic problems and the social challenges along the road to progress. The political dimension of the youth issue, which had been highlighted throughout the previous decades, then was put on the back burner. 'The problems of Spanish youth' became joblessness, illiteracy, drug addiction and delinquency.

This change in direction is quite striking. But from many viewpoints it is similar to what happened in the countries of Eastern Europe. In both cases it can be stated that youth and/or the young generation were constructed in their political dimension. Formally in the countries of Eastern Europe, by default and in accordance with the political challenges placed on their shoulders in the case of Spain. But in both cases, the political dimension of youth decreased when society was or was about to be pacified and a catch-up process began. *When a minimum of democracy and social order is achieved the daily problems of individual existence become priorities once more.* A similar story may be described with regard to Portuguese youth. It was first and foremost the vehicle of protests against the totalitarian dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. Universities were hotbeds of adolescent political opposition. With the return of democracy in 1980 the difficulties professionals found in getting jobs became the main consideration. To use Natalia Alves's expression, youth became an 'economic category'. The concern then is that of the 'depoliticization of young people and their withdrawal from politics'.

An encounter with post-modernity

This remark brings us to the final point identified as a marker of new generations: the encounter with post-modernity. The current generation is moulded in a context that, to a certain extent, may be characterized as post-modern. Some avoid the use of this term since it is overloaded with connotations. But everywhere in the countries of Eastern Europe the word is used as a reference to qualify the present time and to identify the current context of socialization of the new generation. In these countries the debate is especially lively since the fall of the Berlin Wall made the virtually total upheaval of society something concrete and tangible. But three processes come together in the same movement:

1. The discovery or invention of the market in the framework of a neo-liberal economy.
2. The emergence of a post-modern society with all the features usually associated with this concept, such as individualization, individual freedom and responsibility, choice, opening of opportunities, the collapse of traditional ties, etc.
3. Last but not least, an imperialist situation where, whether voluntarily or not, intellectuals and social scientists impose their own theories and reference frameworks on societies and economies which have never experienced the modern industrial age and which therefore enter the 'post-modern era' straight from a communist context.

The debate in the countries of Eastern Europe is therefore particularly lively. Siyaka Kovacheva, for example, defends the idea that, for Bulgarian society, the essential problem, the vital feature of the current context, is the emergence of a market economy whereas the question of the advent of a post-modern society is not yet on the agenda.

On the contrary, Ladislav Machaček, reading the work of Slovak colleagues in the light of the debates held in Eastern Europe on post-modernity or advanced modernity, reveals in his country a conjunction of ingredients usually characterizing the post-modern age: joblessness, flexibility and precariousness, individualization, the rise of a risk society, more 'liberal' modern values (in the ethical sense of the term), the destructuring of contexts of socialization of the young generation, the opening of possibilities, freedom of choice, a new form of threats and constraints, the unpredictability of the course of existence, the irrelevance of traditional normative expectations, etc.²⁰

But when we take a look at the present situation in Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria or in other countries recently having thrown off the shackles of Communism, these debates seem rather artificial, not to say odd, as they appear to be directly imported from more (post-) modern and wealthier countries and quite out of kilter with the actual economic and social situation found in Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, the existence of such a debate among academic experts is significant on more than one score. First of all it indicates that the youth issue is the sign of a process of change affecting society as a whole. It also shows that the direction taken by that transformation is clear to nobody – but this observation also holds for the Western societies which, albeit richer and more developed, have none the less lost their sense of their future and the direction taken by their transformation. Authors merely emphasize a few key points that they feel mark the way down which their society is headed. Economic development, the search of increased productivity resulting from greater market competition but also democracy and individual freedom are some of the points that shed light on the plight of young people.²¹

In this uncertain context (or perhaps because there is no analysis of it) it is hardly surprising that academic experts stress the threats, danger and risks that are supposedly the fate of the next generation.

A European process

At best it might be considered that the tendencies pushing societies towards post-modernity are worldwide or at least Europe-wide, crossing all the countries of the old continent since they are now caught up in the development of a market economy. It may therefore be deduced that the experts of the countries of Eastern Europe must logically depict the plight of young people in the same way, following the same repertoire, making the same observations as the experts in Western societies.

In fact there perhaps exists a certain similarity of tendencies between what we know in Western Europe and the highly industrialized countries, and what we observe to be happening in the former communist countries. Claire Wallace and Siyaka Kovacheva, thus identify four trends which refer to the development of a market economy:

1. A shift from public to private sector employment and service provision
2. A shift from entering work towards continuing education
3. A shift from production-led social life to consumption-led social life
4. A shift towards informal economic activities and as an aspect of the switch to a market economy

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20. Ladislav Machacek, *Individualization Theory in Youth Sociology: An Overview*, Bratislava, Institute for Sociology, Slovak Academy of Science, <http://www.coe.fr/youth/research>

21. I. Richter, 'Nové epochy sa nezačínajú prvý raz', in *Individualizácia mladeže a modernizácia spoločnosti*, pp. 7-22, Bratislava, SU SAV, 1995, quoted in Machacek, op. cit.

Yet does that really mean that it is worth carrying out an analysis in the same terms for both halves of Europe, based on the implicit reference of the increase in individualism, the risk society and to some extent post-modernity?

On this score, a reading of Ken Roberts' article 'Individualization and Risk in Eastern and Western Europe'²² is extremely enlightening with regard to current tendencies in the European academic community. This short fourteen-page essay contains the vital points lying at the heart of the European debate on young people. The following are its main arguments:

1. *Transformation of the economy* is at the heart of the youth issue and of the mobilization of the labour force, including the new labour force. If the policies pursued over the past twenty years have failed it is probably because the subject has been badly addressed. But a welter of research and studies has brought forward new ideas and concepts, leading to a redefinition on a new basis of the youth issue: namely the 'reconceptualization' of the models and forms of transition.
2. *Prolongation of transitions.* The economic crisis, unemployment and renewed competition for access to jobs, the devaluation of qualifications and their loss of effectiveness in their ability to ensure access to employment all foster the prolongation of the studies and a delay in gaining autonomy, with an (adjacent) consequence: age as a normative reference, marking the passage to adulthood, becomes increasingly unimportant.

Whether it is most appropriate to speak of youth having been prolonged or the creation of a new young adult life stage is beside the present point (see Roberts, 1985).²³ There is no natural age for social adulthood to commence. Twenty-six can become as normal as sixteen as the most appropriate age for first obtaining a job with terms and conditions capable of supporting an adult lifestyle.²⁴

3. *Individualization.* The prolongation of transitions goes hand in hand with an individualization of trajectories, due to the increase in and growing diversification of the opportunities for post-school training and entry into employment. The age for leaving training, career courses, the age for entering employment, the age and means of gaining access to independence are becoming increasingly varied, and revealing by comparison with the peer group the growing individuality of CVs. This in turn leads to a growing exacerbation of the sense of individuality and the acceptance of or demand for personal responsibility for one's own trajectory and destiny.
4. *Structured fragmentation.* Here we embark on the debate between the various schools of post-modernity. The transformations of transition lead to a growing individualization. Should we conclude that individuals have been freed from ancient 'determinations' organization by industrial society? Let us read the response to this question by Ken Roberts:

Some writers have associated individualization with a destructuring of young people's situations. They have argued that longer transitions have created a 'moratorium' during which young people can escape from the old determinants of their life chances – gender, social class origins, and achievements in secondary education for instance. Having recognized their autonomy young people are then supposed to decide the types of adults that they wish to become, control their own subsequent socialization and build preferred futures accordingly (Zinnecker, 1990).²⁵

In practice, however, the old social predictors remain in sound working order. Young

22. Ken Roberts, 'Individualization and Risk in Eastern and Western Europe', in Helena Helve and John Bynner (eds.), *Youth and Life Management. Research Perspectives*, Helsinki University Press 1996.
23. Roberts, Ken, 'Youth in the 1980s: A new way of life?', *International Social Science Journal*, 37, 1985, pp.461-478.
24. Roberts, Ken. op. cit., p.228. On the situation in the United Kingdom cf. Gill Jones and Robert Bell, 'Defining Youth: Age and Capacity in UK Policy Construction', European Sociological Association, Fourth Biennial Congress, Amsterdam, 18-21 August 1999. ESA Research Network: Youth and Generation in Europe.
25. J. Zinnecker 'What does the Future Hold? Youth and Sociocultural Change in the FRG', in L. Chisholm, P. Buchner, H. H. Kruger and P. Brown (eds.), *Childhood, Youth and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective*, Basingstoke: Falmer, 1990.

people's situations and future prospects continue to be governed by their family origins, school records, gender and places of residence. Individualization is not a product of these divisions dissolving or losing their influence. Rather individualization arises through structured fragmentation. The old determinants of life chances continue to operate but in a variety of individualized configurations.²⁶

Here we are close to the theoretical positions developed by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck bringing into play in the field of youth actors such as Andy Furlong and Fred Carmel,²⁷ for example, or even L. Siuralla, in the case of Finland.²⁸

5. *Uncertainty over destinations.* Individualization goes hand in hand with a growing uncertainty about how one's life will end up. The future individual could be guessed at by comparison with peers in the same group, sharing the same assets and the same handicaps while faced with the same situation. Yet individualization renders obsolete the terms of comparison with peers. And when this is done it reveals a very broad *unpredictability* over routes taken. It is not only the distant future that becomes uncertain but also the sequence of stages that punctuate the transition path. We should speak of transitions, in the plural, which are neither linear nor one-directional and decreasingly organized in models.²⁹ To convey this increased uncertainty highlighting the role of the individual, Anthony Giddens uses the metaphor of *the Navigator who must find his way on a sea of uncertainty*.³⁰ As is indicated by the report by Massimiano Bucchi, young people then reserve the right to change their minds about the decisive choices they have made. Choices are reversible. The paths are translated on a daily basis through submission to the tyranny of micro-decisions.

Quite surprisingly, attitudes that Italian researchers have described as 'presentification' and 'choice reversibility' (i.e. a day-by-day attitude that avoids any long-term plan or involvement, deeming each choice as something that can always be amended and corrected) are not only more and more widespread, but increase rather than decrease with age: 60% of subjects aged 29 think that all crucial choices can be changed at any time.³¹

6. *Risks.* This implies that the risks incurred by individuals have increased considerably. Lack of qualifications, training or apprenticeship bars the road to the exercise of a qualified job. On the other hand, having those qualifications does not necessarily guarantee success.

A British employer-based training scheme may lead to a job offer or back to unemployment. A university degree may lead to a high rising professional or management career but an entrant to higher education today would be unwise to rely on such a future. In a similar way marriage may usher lifetime domestic security but it may also lead to personal despair. There is simply no way in which today's young people can avoid risk taking.

Of course, the future has never been 100 per cent predictable. The key changes are that uncertainty has increased and in individualized societies it is individuals who have to take the crucial risks with their own lives.³²

7. *From the concept of life cycle to that of course of existence.* The predictive virtue of events marking life cycles is being undermined. Old certainties over life paths are diminishing.³³ Yet it cannot be stated that the concept of 'sociobiographical trajectories' must be revised on the grounds that they are already destandardized. There is a process of destandardization, it is true, but the succession of events that punctuate people's lives

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26. Roberts, op. cit., p. 229.

27. Andy Furlong and Fred Carmel, *Young People and Social Change. Individualization and Risk in Late Modernity*, London, Open University Press, 1997.

28. Lasse Siuralla, 'Holes in the Black Box of School Experience. Studies on Youth and Schooling System in Sweden', *Young. Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, Vol. 4: pp. 60-4; cf also Helena Helve, *What happened to Young 'Humanists', 'Individualists' and 'Traditionalists'? A Comparative Study of Changing Value-Worlds of Young People in the Framework of Post-Modernity*, 1998 (mimeo).

29. Cf. Jones, Gill, Robert Bell, op. cit.

30. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991.

31. Massimiano Bucchi, 'Trends in Youth Condition in Italy', *IARD Surveys on Italian Youth*, 1983-96.

32. Roberts, op.cit., p. 231.

remains deeply ordered, in particular when they are part of a strategy of professional promotion, upward social mobility or integration.³⁴ Completing studies, finding a job, leaving home, marrying or forming a partnership, starting a career, having children, etc. – arranging the events is still a strong predictor of the orientation of people’s trajectories. Age is also still a strong factor of discrimination in most situations, in the field of leisure and on the job market. What has changed and what is changing is the reproduction, cohort after cohort, of the organization of these events in normative models.

What has disappeared is not the life course but the traditional life cycle in which successive cohorts followed each other through the same predictable and familiar sequences. These cyclical patterns have been replaced by a life course through which individuals take varied routes. Each step influences future possibilities, but often in ways that could not have been predicted usefully in advance even in terms of statistical probabilities.³⁵

8. *Normalization of risk and uncertainty.* This is probably the widest generation gap. The older generations have been socialized, have lived and have developed strategies in a universe whose reference frameworks were relatively stable and evolutions broadly predictable. The development of strategies then arose from a calculation of probability. Members of that generation observing the current situation may be filled with ‘disappointment’ or deep commiseration. This is probably not true of those primarily faced with changes of living conditions. A new normality arises, requiring people to live in uncertainty and risk and turning adversity to advantage.

Uncertain futures and risk taking are also just parts of life for today’s youth. In individualized societies people cannot have clearly bounded reference groups, but all young people know that most members of their own generation share similar uncertain situations. Recognition that this condition is normal is all that is required to prevent individuals worrying that their own lives are in a hopeless mess. Uncertainty can be threatening but it can also be challenging. The security of guaranteed futures can be comforting but also constraining. . . .³⁶

In these eight points we have depicted the framework of analysis that might be applied to European youth, North and South, East and West. In his short article, Ken Roberts relies on examples from the United Kingdom, his country of origin, but also studies conducted in Germany and Poland. He also draws upon analyses made in Finland and Sweden. Other research has been conducted in a similar vein in Central Europe. All in all, the theoretical framework and the accompanying debates seem to hold true throughout Europe, accounting for the change that is taking place before our very eyes.

Might we be dealing with a process of civilizations and cultures, in the meaning given it by Norbert Elias? This strong reference, omnipresent in individualization, risk, uncertainty, the destandardization of paths and the questioning of norms, this reference to post-modernity or late modernity for qualifying the current transformations mainly serves to demonstrate the loss of traditional references and the gradual undermining of the statutes that governed society in the past.³⁷ At the centre of the concerns: the decline in tradition and the emergence of new attitudes.

Portraying a recent period of our social history, these themes’ overvaluing reflects, within the Portuguese scientific community, society’s concerns with the ‘decline’ of tradi-

33. Peter Laheit, ‘The Biographical Question’ as a Challenge to Adult Education’, *Scottish Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, Vol. 2, 1995, pp. 75-91.

34. Karen Evans and Andy Furlong, Metaphors of Youth Transition: Niches, Pathways, Trajectories or Navigations’, in J. Bynner, L. Chisholm and A. Furlong (eds.), *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context*, pp. 17-41, Ashgate, 1997.

35. Roberts, op.cit., p. 232.

36. Ibid.

37. Ladislav Macháček, *Youth in the Process of Transition and Modernization in the Slovak Republic*, Bratislava, n.d. (mimeo).

tional family and the proliferation of new ways of living conjugality and sexuality where religion still remains as one of the most strongly explicative variables to understand juvenile attitudes and behaviour.³⁸

A worldwide process

Germany

The process can be identified in the countries of Eastern Europe. The fall of the communist regimes has swept away established hierarchies and traditions created over fifty years. It can also be detected in Western European countries. One quotation is neither proof nor a demonstration but, by way of illustrating this suggestion, let us examine a short passage from an article written by three researchers at the Deutsches Jugend Institut, Munich, one of the most renowned German research centres on youth matters:

In this paper, we shall describe the major contours of the demands and opportunities that young Germans face in education and training, in employment and in housing. Contemporary developments in each of the spheres of life can be usefully placed within a wider theoretical framework in which the terms individualization and pluralization/social differentiation play key roles as analytic descriptors of German society. . .

On the one hand they enjoy greater freedoms, on the other hand, they are increasingly compelled to take decisions – and the responsibility for dealing with both freedoms and decisions is of an individualized nature. Beck's individualization thesis describes long-term processes of social change in terms of a decline in the normative power and salience of social milieux and cultural traditions that accompanies socio-economic and technological development. These processes question established, taken for granted social biographical life course patterns, leading to expanded opportunities to construct life plans and futures autonomously. Individual decisions about educational participation, choice of occupation, family/household arrangements and consumption preferences shape the personalized life style people see as appropriate for them. Young people too must take on this responsibility for failures along the way.³⁹

The Netherlands

Here the approach is identical, based on the same theoretical framework offered by U. Beck and/or A. Giddens. In this paper from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (Youth Policy Directorate) we can simply note perhaps a slightly greater emphasis on the rise in inequalities and the widening of the gap between 'winners' and 'losers', those able to manage the risks and confront the uncertainties regarding their futures and those without the resources to do so. The former act to control their destinies while the latter are swept away by the increased risks and uncertainties.

Modern society and large-scale change (modernization) put demands upon young people and the environments they grow up in, family, education, employment and leisure. Young people growing up are facing new challenges and new risks. There are signs of this leading to a reduction in well being and to trouble. A different approach to young

38. Natalia Alves, *The Juvenile Crisis and the Social Construction of Youth in Portugal*

39. René Bendit, Wolfgang Gaiser and Ursula Nissen, 'Growing up in the Federal Republic of Germany: Chance and Risk in a Modern Sozialstaat', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 8. No. 1, 1993, pp. 43-59.

people is needed, with more scope for their own input and creativity, in order to prepare them for the new demands being put upon them. Modernization may lead to a bigger gap in future, a divide emerging between winners and losers between young people who do manage it and those who do not. It is to be expected that losers originate especially from the lower strata of society. The social position of young migrants and of Dutch-born youth growing up in disadvantaged conditions requires more attention from this point of view. But it will become more and more difficult to predict whether a child will develop in a problematic fashion. Modernization urges reconsideration and/or extension of the usual risk concept, because young people sometimes have to accept challenges and run risks.⁴⁰

In the Netherlands, the concept of risk society has descended from the stratosphere of theory to invade politics and to be applied to politico-institutional actions by governments and implemented by public administrations. The risk society is taken into account as a reality that has already come about.

Finland

These theoretical theses and orientations can also be found in the framing of youth policies in Finland. International experts mandated by the Council of Europe to examine the policies implemented in that country stress the close links between the theses and debates of researchers and the guidelines and recommendations contained in the official texts disseminated by the government. Research shows that risk and uncertainty are on the increase and that young people should therefore be given the means, resources and structures to be able to 'manage their lives', to 'realize their potential', to 'avoid being the playthings of uncontrollable situations and events and to be able to adapt to the surrounding reality'. There is a switch from a sectoral approach relating in particular to questions of socialization to a global approach no longer relating to a given aspect of youth but to the 'living conditions' offered to them.

Globally, there is a whole series of reasons (mere justifications based on reality or more theoretical principles) for going from a narrow conception of youth policy (one limited to action for young people) or a broader model, taking 'youth questions' into account and also for going from state, centralized management to a decentralization and a delegation of powers to the commons – who then acquire a certain autonomy.⁴¹

This change of direction is based on a principle explicitly mentioned in the national report of the Finnish Education Ministry (1997): 'The young are entitled to build their own future and are also responsible for it'.⁴²

The link between these theses and the framing of policies can also be found at the European Commission which in 1991 had a study carried out with an evocative title: *Young people in the European Community: Towards a Programme for Research and Policy*.⁴³ It comes as no real surprise that it depicts the move towards a society founded on individualism, destandardized paths and behaviour patterns and risk-taking. The tendency is presented as general, global, even if the heterogeneity of European youth linked to the different cultures cannot be concealed. This is a general process inscribed with irreducible specificities. One of them is pointed out and specifically refers to the rise of the individual as the central value of society:

40. *1997-2001: A View of Young People: Young People on their Way to the Future*. Interdepartmental Youth Research, Rijswijk, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, Youth Policy Directorate, September 1997.

41. *Report on the Review of National Youth Policy in Finland*, Strasbourg, European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Field of Youth, and the Consultative Committee of the EYC and EYF, 15 October 1997.

42. *National Report*, p.64, Helsinki, Education Ministry, 1997.

43. Commission of the European Communities, *Young People in the European Community: Towards a Programme for Research and Policy*. Brussels, Commission of the European Communities, Task Force on Human Resources, June 1991.

In Ireland, for example, to quote those with whom we discussed these subjects, the basic community of social life is where social problems are resolved. But whereas in Denmark individualization is regarded as the result of participation in the collectivity traditional Irish culture tends to oppose individualism and collectivity.

Specificities resist in cultures and ways of life but also in the ways of managing transitions towards adulthood: no preparation in Greece, overlapping between different statuses in Italy, a fairly abrupt switch in France and the United Kingdom. But the nine national studies reveal a by now familiar table inspired by theses relating to post-modernity or advanced modernity:

The general impression is that temporal relations between the completion of studies, marriage or conjugal life, de-cohabitation and entry into the labour market are far more diversified and have become problematic for many young people. . . .

In this way, it may be considered that youth transitions undergo a certain *destandardization* while *lengthening*.

... However, the prolongation and destandardization of the youth phase are not accompanied by only greater possibilities of choice and expression of life projects but also an increase in risks of failures linked to the negotiation of 'successful' transition personally and socially. *Social risks* have never been distributed equally. Certain groups of young people have always had the possibility to choose; ...

Firstly, the difficulties in negotiating with success the transitions of youth are experienced and considered as an obvious *personal disability*.

Secondly, in the framework of a highly competitive and extremely individualized society nearly everyone runs the risk of failure especially since they are encouraged to do the maximum to enhance their potential.

Thirdly, a bigger and bigger set of activities and potential skills is intensely sought, both for personal achievement and to face tough competition on the market of transitions. (pp.29-30).

Numerous sociologists from Eastern Europe and Western Europe alike carrying out research into young people in countries behind the Iron Curtain use conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks that are now usually labelled as 'post-modern' (though the same term is applied to different theses or politico-theoretical options).

We have just seen, briefly, that the analysis of the situation of young people in the countries of Western Europe is based on the same theoretical references. Of course, certain national differences persist. It would be wrong to look at Denmark and Greece as if they were the same place. But all European countries are or would be affected by the same process of individualization related to a double tendency to a destandardization of trajectories, behaviours, cultures, ways of life, systems of regulation, etc. and a co-related rise of the risk society. We shall not examine further the analysis of the factors supposed to be at work in activating this process: the transformation of the productive apparatus and the search for maximum flexibility in the economy, at least, the development of a knowledge society and a revolution in information technologies, the winding down of the social institutions and the emergence of a network society. These various points are abundantly and brilliantly developed by Manuel Castells in his trilogy: *The Rise of the Network Society; The Power of Identity; End of Millennium*.⁴⁴

As we have reiterated throughout these pages this perspective of the analysis is anything but monolithic. It is less a school of thought (or *école de pensée* in the French or Parisian sense of the term) than an approach giving rise to debates, discussions and exchanges of arguments.

Let us recall *pro memoria* that the analyses of changes under way within this viewpoint could be sorted under three different headings: (a) the tenants of extreme post-modernity who support the hypothesis that we are already living in an entirely new era (Lyotard, 1984); (b) theorists who refuse to accept that a radical break has taken place and who on the contrary stress that there is a process of change in continuity (Habermas, pp. 84-97); and (c) those who argue for a dialectic between continuity and discontinuity, endeavouring to theorize the cuts and links with modernity.⁴⁵

But behind this diversity, as for the appreciation of the extension of the transformations under way, it remains that these divergences rely on the same theoretical posture, a same agreement of principle, on the causes, orientations and tendential implications of these processes.

A number of societies, far removed from the European context, are subject to these same trends even where they are operating in radically different sociocultural contexts.

Asia undergoing change

Young people in the Republic of Korea

This is the case of the Republic of Korea such as it is presented in a series of communications at a conference on the theme of globalization.

On the basis of American studies, the communicants recalled the existence of seventy-four trends affecting countries as part of the *globalization processes*. They mention fifteen of them, as follows:

1. Growth of the information society and emergence of a knowledge society.
2. Professional and geographical mobility affecting individuals' personal lives.
3. The growing role of technologies in the economy and in society.
4. Technological research and development will play a growing role in the economy.
5. Mass telecommunication will continue to unite the nations of the world.
6. Growing demand for lifelong education and training.
7. Family and school are endeavouring to bring about global socialization while mobilizing totally parents and teachers to secure full self-development.
8. More women will enter the labour market
9. Two-income couples will become the norm.
10. Societal values will rapidly be transformed.
11. In year 2000 the youth culture will become widespread, without a generational conflict.
12. The emergence of a world market.
13. Fear of infectious diseases, especially AIDS.
14. Movements for women-men equality will become less vehement but more efficient.
15. Equity and the fight for democracy will be enhanced.

45. Pävi Pöntinen, 'Moral Panics Revisited', in Helena Helve and John Bynner, (eds.), *Youth and Life Management. Research Perspective*, p. 213, Helsinki University Press, 1996.

These trends, whose presence may be detected in numerous societies in various continents, have thrown Korean society into turmoil. They affect it, first of all, at the heart of the socialization process by profoundly modifying family structures and their stability but also the gender division of labour between parents. They then affect it at an essential point, in the opinion of the experts, by altering the process of transmitting the values of obedience, discipline, filial respect, and submission to the family and social order. Under the action of macro-societal tendencies – tendencies that find their source in globalization – the transformation of family structures makes it possible for people to demand family democracy – whose analysts suspect that it might also have direct consequences not only in the socio-economic field in terms of industrial relations but also in the more specifically political field.

At the heart of the issue of the transformation of frameworks and means of socialization lie the questions of generations considered, yet again, as the vector of societal transformation, the abandonment of values, virtues and lifestyles of traditional Korean society and the entry into a society that specialists yet again do not balk at describing as 'post-modern'.⁴¹

Older generations sense the new generations' culture and accuse them of being the perverters of traditions while squandering the fruits of prosperity harvested by them. The new generation adheres to values and lifestyles that are quite different from the older generation. Part of the explanation of the generation gap lies in the pace of social change. In a dynamic society such as Korea, one can easily find the imbalance of perception and behaviour patterns between the generations. Today Korea is embracing a rapidly changing society. The turnover of technological and social innovations is rapid enough to create a social surrounding for new generations notably different from that of the older generations. Therefore, a cultural conflict is experienced by parents and youth. Parents can rarely keep up with new knowledge in many areas of modern life, for they are preoccupied with making a living and providing their children with education. When children realize that their parents are lacking in cutting-edge technology and knowledge which they can understand, they often look down upon them particularly when they are too authoritarian to them. Today's youth defines authority based on knowledge as 'rational' and authority based on merely position and power as 'irrational' and unacceptable. Parents need to learn from their children. In a rapid changing society, the knowledge, skills and ideology are often obsolete.⁴⁷

This offers up the initial elements of the 'youth' issue as it can be depicted in the context of Korean society. The key terms are: the development of the knowledge society and information society, the potential obsolescence not only of old skills but also of cultural referents inherited from the past, the widening gap between the generations and, consequently, the questioning of the principles of submissions to authority, be it institutional authority (police, teachers, law enforcers, etc.) or statutory authority, especially that linked to age (parents, neighbours, etc.).⁴⁸ Whereas authority, discipline, submission and the acceptance of traditional conventions and statutes are the pillars of society, the widening of the gap between generations is perceived – often with some alarm – as the precursor of a far-reaching upheaval of the social order.

Everything sets the Republic of Korea apart from industrialized European countries. Cultural, ethical and moral references, conventions, traditions, usages, organ-

***Rolling Youth,
Rocking Society***

46. Sok Beom Choi and Sallie Yea, 'Korean Youth and the Crisis of Globalization: Alternative Perspectives on Identity and Modernity', *The 1995 World Youth Leaders Conference, Seoul 31 May-2 June 1995*, pp. 391-401.
47. Jasoon Koo, 'Changes in Family Structure and Reinforcement of Education Function of Family', *op. cit.*, pp.38-40.
48. Myung-Ja Song, 'Korean Adolescents' Reasoning on Convention and Authority Conflict', *Korean Social Science Journal*, Vol. 22, 1996, pp.73-93.

ization of statuses and, above all, the place of age in the system of strata, in the means of social regulations, in the legitimization of the principle of authority and obedience not only within the family but also in civil society and with regard to politics, too. Everything differentiates this country from what we observe in Europe. Seldom has the *dépaysement* or sense of the exotic, of which Georges Balandier invoked the heuristic virtue to stake out the necessary distance between the observer and the observed subject, been as immediate and as powerful. Yet, when we look at the way in which the specialists examine the question of the young, in particular with regard to the challenges raised by the transformations under way, we must note that there is a certain similarity between the two countries. The young seem to share a common asset: being the force of change. Simply, by distancing themselves from the established traditions, the new generations call the social order into question. In the Korean context, this dialectic of reproduction and change is crystallized around a cardinal value of 'Asian' culture or Confucianism: respect for authority.

Asking questions about what authority is, calling into question the legitimacy of the principle of predominance, simply considering that it is something that is not automatic, considering that age is not a virtue *per se*, especially in a context of growing competition and the perpetual acquisition of new knowledge, is calling into question what makes the consensus-based social covenant of Korean society. The implications of that attitude should and could be felt in the short term, in many other domains other than family relations or daily interactions and also concern the ways of transmitting knowledge at school and university, submitting workers to consortia or even participation in politics and the support tacitly or explicitly accorded to leaders and the political élite. Ethics, morals, values are closely connected with what underlies politics and beyond that what makes the social contract. The young generations pushed by post-modernity accompanied and strengthened by globalization, setting themselves apart from the earlier generations call the latter into question. That is the problem of youth, or, more accurately, this is the problem of society with regard to youth. For young people are the players of change but they are also, and above all, propelled by changes in a world that is becoming more and more unpredictable and more and more difficult to think since it has nothing in common with the past. As Professor Byong-Sun Kwak emphasized, considering the relationship of young people with the future that cannot be thought – that is why we need a *new paradigm*.⁴⁹

The experts on the situation of young people call for the elaboration of a new paradigm to reflect upon the new reality of young people and at the same time the new reality that young people must confront. At present society is still fence sitting. The young are caught between the past and the future, still to be built. They are in a confused situation where traditions and conventions from the past are still present, albeit increasingly seen as old-fashioned or obsolete. They face this challenge and this ambiguity where, under the cover of globalization the march towards post-modernity is similar to a guardianship of traditional values and identities by the values, ways of life and identity norms and references imported from an imperial United States and a no less powerful Europe. The march towards post-modernity – nourished from not only individualism, freedom of choice, democracy, equity and justice but also leisure time – might be likened to an identity suicide, by allegiance to the values of developed Western soci-

49. Byong-Sun Kwak, *Educational Reform towards the Twenty-first Century. Direction and Task*, p. 71.

eties.

The youth issue is the issue of a generation caught between a history that does not belong to them and a future that is confused with their own destiny.

Should society's future necessarily feed on its past, as the experts, educationists, élites and dignitaries in a dominant position in Korean society today would wish? Must every break in this temporal chain of reproduction necessarily end up in a loss of identity and a submission to Western imperialist models? Is it not possible to imagine a generation that, born in another age, in a period of breaking with the past, cannot invent not only models that are more appropriate to the constraints and imperatives of the moment but which also bear 'new' values promoting human freedom and democracy to which the citizens of these new times increasingly aspire?

The texts written by experts on youth issues suggest that the rise of a new generation raises this type of issue referring directly to 'politics'. On the fence it is all values and codes in traditional society that are called into question: the code relating to communitarism challenged by the rise of individualism, the ethical code between 'Asian' values and the values promoted by the 'West' and inevitably as an expected result of these upheavals, calling into question engagements towards nation, fatherland and politics, and so forth.

Young people in Taiwan, China

We shall not dwell on the case of Taiwan, China, as we have already used it as the starting point of our considerations. The sociopolitical contexts are radically different. The national histories are different. The places occupied by these societies respectively with regard to the development of modernity are also different. However, the same threefold societal challenge stands in the way of the new generations:

1. Abandoning a traditional society marked by communitarism and the submission to statutory authority (institutional or not), and ensuring the switch to a more individualistic, freer society giving more place to choices and individual responsibilities;
2. Strengthening the democratization process while ensuring and encouraging social peace;
3. 'Developing their own individual style in the shadow of conformity with the fashions and tastes found in the West'.⁵⁰

The report by the Taiwanese expert thus bears deep-rooted similarities between what happens in that country and the formulation of the 'youth issue' in the Republic of Korea. We shall simply recall the most salient terms:

The youth question is a *question of generation*, that is, a process.

The rise of the new generation refers immediately and directly to the transformations under way in daily life, in the private domain, in the way that civil society functions. Individualism takes hold of daily life ranging from economic activity to relations in couples or the way of bringing up children. New attitudes come into being, backed by new values, more liberal ones affecting every domain of social life: the attitude towards work, family, education, sexuality, etc.

It is in this sense that the rise of the new generation constitutes or poses a political challenge. 'In the eyes of the Taiwanese the young are the builders of the future.' But

the future proposed is tainted with a strong ethical liberalism. Already they must ensure that the Taiwanese people, in the deepest depths of civil society, goes beyond its own past and preserves its own identity that is equidistant from American and European identities. In doing so it poses and re-poses the question of the march towards political democracy.

According to Inglehart and Abramson,⁵¹ socialized in a context of opulence and well-being, modern youth has every chance of promoting liberal attitudes detached from material constraints, a mindset qualified as 'post-materialist'. This promotion should have immediate consequences in political terms. Not only are the young seen as 'individualist', seeking first and foremost their full happiness or that of their nearest and dearest, before any idea of patriotism or nationalism, but above all they also are seen as more and more disrespectful of authority. Maintenance of social order is no longer ensured by discipline based on a principle of authority whose legitimacy is beyond all discussion: parents, elders, the community, the nation, but precisely by persuasion and individual adherence on the basis of negotiation.

In Taiwan, China, as in the Republic of Korea, members of the young generation are potentially the bearers of these innovative attitudes. Not only do they pose the problem of the switch from a traditional society to a new society capable of rebuilding its own identity but they also and perhaps above all pose the question of the *reformulation of a social contract* between society and the individuals comprising it, in a radically new framework, characterized by the market, globalization, post-modernity, the rise of individualism and the inscription of democracy as the ultimate purpose of managing public matters.

Young people in the People's Republic of China

As in the earlier cases, the perspective adopted from the outset to present the situation of young people in the People's Republic of China is that of *generation*. Consequently they are *ipso facto* faced with challenges connected with societal changes accompanying the rise of this new generation. Generation is difference, difference of spirit, of mentality, of aspiration, of behaviour patterns, but also of the likely role played with regard to the political process and the future of the nation, or the social and psychological situation of young people. Dr Shao Goyang's report is of enormous interest in that it specifies the three images of the rising generation: those of the public, the government and experts. Of course, the three representations are not exactly superimposed. They are articulated with each other, thereby indicating that the question of generation concerns all players, all lobbies and pressure groups and all bodies.

The representation of experts is the most 'professional' or the most technical and consequently the least liable to reveal the challenges lurking behind the analyses periodically carried out on what might be called the moral state of youth: its initiative, its competitiveness, ethics, self-esteem, etc. But even behind this dehumanized list of the features of youth it is possible to detect the challenges met by such surveys. They can be summed up in one phrase: not losing touch with the grassroots, not losing contact with the living forces of the nation, those that are liable to renew the country's dynamic. Government plans always incur the risk of being out of sync with present-day reality.

51. Paul Abramson and Ronald Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective*, Lansing, University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Thus we must 'learn from youth' and in doing so provide the appropriate tools for providing a better education. There it seems that teachers, parents, politicians and experts reach a consensus that cannot be extinguished: 'children and young people are for ever to be educated'. But the reasons are not necessarily the same for each of them even though, as in the cases of the Republic of Korea and Taiwan, China, they are similar. If complaints about the rise of individualism and rejection of all authority are so numerous it is perhaps because society is not yet ready to enter a new stage in its history.⁵²

Individualism and rejection of authority mark the advance of a new society modernized even in interpersonal relations. Personalities are liberated but to the detriment of this cardinal virtue in 'Asian values': the sense of discipline and submission to different forms of established authority.

With regard to government and, more generally, to politics, youth is seen as 'the future and hope of the country'. This, then, is very similar to the position found in Taiwan, China, where young people are 'builders of the future'. In that, they have been the subject of close attention, as socialization and education of the new generation are principally state responsibility or that of governmental or paragonovernmental bodies. It is also for them and in particular the 'Chinese Communist Youth League' to perform the task of *social control* over that youth to be educated so that it could fulfil the role to which it was destined: building a better future. Today, once more, it is the case that times change! In economic terms and with regard to ways of life but also in terms of politics through a wider opening and a speeding up of the march towards democratization of society. Youth's role in this new emerging context could not therefore be conceived in exactly the same way. Youth is a historic force. It is a force that must and can bring about a transformation of society. Government bodies must reassess their mission with regard to this rising generation. Would serving its interests not to a certain extent be the same as serving the country's interests?

Yet, in all cases, this dynamism attributed to the new generation and this capacity to bring about or achieve the possible are regarded as positive. Youth is a positive social force.

That, it seems, is the backdrop on which the youth issue in China is inscribed and expressed: a declared optimism towards young people and the political, social and/or economic future they are likely to bring with them.

It is on the basis of this position of principle that it can be understood how youth problems are posed. Let us say at once that these are not so much problems posed to the young as problems that the young, through their behaviour, their poor socialization or quite simply the new context they are confronted with, pose to society. The young are a vital, fundamental and priority challenge affecting the economic, social and political development and, more generally, social progress in the country.

First, it is in this way that the question of education will be examined. It lies at the heart of youth policies in China. The argument is simple and cannot be denied:

- ◆ China needs more qualified people to modernize society, and education is the only way of achieving that aim.
- ◆ Yet at present the government is doing its utmost to bring down the illiteracy rate from 10 to 5 per cent by the year 2000. The university student rate is only 3 to 5 per cent compared with as high as 40 per cent in developed countries.

- ◆ It is therefore important to develop schooling to increase the chances and possibilities of acquiring knowledge even if, to do so, schools have to be funded from own resources.

Education has made great progress since the reform and opening up due to the following achievements such as economic development, the strengthening of the national power, the wide application of information technology and the government policy of encouraging NGOs and individuals to set up schools at their own expense. More opportunities of learning are provided for the younger generation than ever before.

Youth related challenges thus justify the development of a private sector within the education system!

Second, the issue of *youth unemployment* throws considerable light on the issues connected with youth's relationship with employment. They can be summed up as follows: young jobless people are a potential threat to social order and peace, especially young graduates. It is not so much a case of not profiting from invested human capital or the human suffering and human or financial cost that the state and families must bear when jobs are taken from candidates. The question is rather that of the frustration felt when someone who has studied for several years to get a 'good' job and a satisfactory salary has his or her hopes dashed. They may also turn against the government and the political system. Youth unemployment – especially among young graduates – is a time bomb that would blow up the whole country as demands go far beyond the field of employment and economic activity and may affect more markedly political fields.

Third, marriage and personal relations are another apparently equally sensitive area which is just as revealing in the opinion of the Chinese. There is no guide or introduction to modern China or magazine that fails to mention the liberation of mores in China and its consequences on marriage and family life. In this area, China is on the same road as industrialized European countries. Marriage is being privatized. It is losing its institutional nature and becoming a matter of sentiments, a personal commitment or interest. That is the modern side to the new couples. This in turn leads to a significant increase in the divorce rate. 'Private' marriage and divorce are never a truly personal and intimate matter since they are the expression of a demand for ever greater autonomy and personal freedom. The problem faced by the state on this score is that of managing this silent demand so as to advance the values of individual freedom and autonomy while ensuring that family remains a pillar and guarantor of social order.

The analysis of the issues of crime and juvenile delinquency is based on an even more crystal-clear argument. No developing country can do without foreign investment to ensure rapid and sustainable economic development. This investment only comes when guarantees of stability are given. The rise in juvenile delinquency is harmful to that stability and the country's credit. Delinquency thereby harms the social and economic progress sought by all partners. The issue of real or potential victims, the issue of physical insecurity and the very economic cost of crime, and the very common issue the treatment and punishment of the offender come in second place to the essential priority of preserving social stability in the security field and all others in order to ensure social progress.

Young people committing crimes not only create trouble for themselves but also harm their family and the society. When the youth crime rate goes up, the sense of public secu-

rity decreases. This goes against the goal of modernization which promises a better quality of life for the public. Besides, we know that China has absorbed foreign capital for its modernization strategy. Apart from the government's preferential policy towards foreign enterprises and the potential capacity of China's market that appear attractive to foreign investors, the social environment for investment is an important factor. If China's crime rate remains high, this will deter the investors from continuing to invest in the country. For these reasons, youth crime has become a great concern for both the government and the public.

As in the other countries that we have reviewed in this brief study China is caught up in a process of change. As Dr Shao Goyang points out everything began when the People's Republic opened up and thus exposed itself to the processes of globalization with market, competition, consumption and to a certain extent individualization, aspects of which can be found, for example, in the transformation of the meaning given to marriage or the importance attached to personal relations chosen on a sentimental basis. In China, too, globalization is at work. With globalization – if we believe the experts' analyses – it is the characteristics of this new era qualified as post-modern that are brought into motion. The young are supposed to be the players or initiators of that movement. In the analysis proposed to us, at no time were we told of the fear of or defiance towards the new generation, nor the encounter that it is supposed to bring about. On the contrary, behind the words and phrases we can detect the existence of a deep-seated, yet virtual, consensus among protagonists who agree unanimously on overseeing the march towards social progress and modernization. But the young, the frontline players in this process, may also be its victims, which would call into question both the order and the cultural, social and political stability without which no progress and no march ahead could achieve its aim. This is the essential aim that is hidden, or half-hidden, in the youth issue. But we should let Shao Goyang express his views on this score. He comes straight to the point:

Striving to solve these youth problems accords with the public interests. A survey shows that the greatest concerns of the Chinese public are: public safety, a happy family and healthy growth of the younger generation. Their concerns are closely related to the four youth problems. In China, the three parties of government, public and experts have come upon the same opinion: China must maintain a stable and safe environment for the modernization progress. The four proposed problems faced by youth show, on one hand, the great concern of the government, the public and experts for the progress of modernization and, on other hand, for maintaining social stability which has become the priority of China's agenda. It is concluded that youth problems are not only the problems of youth, but also the problems that the whole society has to deal with. 'Development and stability' could be the correct words for a general description of youth social problems.

Approaching the youth issue in terms of the interaction between civil society and politics

China is a one-off case, with regard not only to the countries of Western and Eastern Europe but also to the countries of South-East Asia. Despite this glaringly obvious singularity – even though not all the components of the formulation of the youth issue could be mentioned in the space of a short report – we have found all the ingredients that the experts proposed as accounting for the way in which the youth issue is defined in their own country.

The countries of South-East Asia

China

In China as elsewhere, youth is a generation. It is dynamism and movement. It is the harbinger of change and bearer of progress. This progress is brought about by the forces of ‘globalization’ and is turned towards individualism and post-modernity. In this regard, as Dr Shao Goyang says so clearly and so eloquently, youth problems are not so much youth problems as society problems with regard to youth, the very youth moving society towards social progress.

We have chosen here to terminate this report on the situation in China because this country enables us to example clearly, and almost inevitably, the challenges and components of the construction of the youth issue in many countries, even though the socio-economic-political contexts differ immeasurably.

Might we be touching upon the kind of invariant that anthropologists delight in? Probably the data at our disposal would not allow us, in such a short time, to refine the analysis in order to give the tiniest detail of these variations and differences about the way in which the youth issue is formulated. These are the ingredients of the recipe. But it was not possible to obtain clues as to the special touch needed for the dishes to have a different flavour from one country to the other, from one culture to another, from one economic or political context to another.

But, before concluding this report, we should mention some major differences that our insistence so far on accounting for similarities and likenesses has prevented us from stressing.

Apart from the exoticism into which it is easy to fall when describing far-off countries, one of the most interesting aspects of Dr Shao Goyang’s report is the fact that it says loudly and clearly what also applies to the French case but what it probably would not be politically correct to mention in a debate or an expert report.

For society, youth unemployment is a problem not so much because of what it costs in terms of lost production and wasted human capital but because it is a threat. Juvenile delinquency is mostly of interest because it tarnishes society’s image and that in turn is important for economics. Divorce is only of interest as an indication of the rise of an individualistic modernity working at the heart of old society, a rise which could be slowed down, put out of sight or even forbidden for a while but cannot be stopped.

The Republic of Korea

What about the Republic of Korea, 'the country of the quiet morning', where conflicts are all the more violent in that they reflect a far-reaching but slow transformation of the private domain, customs and mindsets and more generally of civil society? We are told that now the *paradigm must be changed* if we are to understand what is at play in the current upheaval. Globalization is not only affecting financial flows, bringing an economy to its knees, but it is also a generation lifting up its head to change a way of being and a way of doing that are no longer operational – or at least not efficient enough to avoid disasters.

Taiwan, China

Globalization and post-modernity enable us to enter the 'knowledge society' or at least the 'society of ongoing lifelong apprenticeship'. But in Taiwan, China, Yih-Lan Liu tells us that one of the most patent points of conflict between the generations is precisely the refusal to over-invest in the education system. At the same time, she tells us, schools must or should take an interest in more than just transmitting knowledge. In the modern or post-modern era, it must carry out a task of socialization.

Eastern Europe

Romania

This would probably be the viewpoint of Octav Marcovici, the Romanian expert who hints that the main challenge with regard to education and the education system in general is primarily that of reconquering a national identity and the link to be reassessed with Europeanization and globalization processes. The scientific issues fashioned by developed European countries pose the question of the appropriateness of the relationship between education and employment. But how can that relationship be instrumentalized when there is no longer a job market, when university professors only eke out a living by doing extra work and qualifications have less value than being streetwise or having a sense of initiative? How can we think about investing in human capital when economic investment is weak and the prospects for economic development are, well, pessimistic? Above all the challenge is that of *reconquering an identity*. Before all else, we must reconquer a national identity. Then we can make economic progress and make progress to democracy and Europe.

Bulgaria

On this score, Siyaka Kovacheva, our Bulgarian expert, would probably not beg to differ. The young generation in her country is very 'European'. In any case, it is very much interested in Europe in so far as it might open up far greater prospects. But the 'political' question is to ensure that the young have a sense of civic duty in order to *participate* in the development and reconquest of their country. This is a considerable challenge going far beyond the mere issue of 'youth'. What is at stake is the identity, enhancement and relaunch of the country and the advent of democracy. But also at stake is the role that the élite – especially the young élite – can become active, full-blown participants in the public arena that is being constituted.⁵³ Should state aid take on the form of a spe-

53. Siyaka Kovacheva, 'Keys to Youth Participation in Eastern Europe', European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), twenty-fourth meeting, Budapest, 13-15 October 1999, Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

cific policy concerning the young or taking note of the fact that these countries, in post-communist transition, have entered a post-youth era, where the issue of youth is no longer posed in a particular way but may and should be addressed by taking a global approach?

Slovakia

Kovacheva poses the question of *civic duty* among youth as a political challenge in Bulgaria. For Slovakia, Ladislav Machacek, replies by referring to the theme of youth *citizenship*, placing the 'youth issue' in a directly and immediately political viewpoint. 'New needs have arisen for young people thanks to the process of individualization and in the context of a market economy'. How can this be addressed so that young people can become active, full-blown participants in the public arena that is being constituted?⁵⁴ Should state aid take on the form of a specific policy concerning the young or taking note of the fact that these countries, in post-communist transition, have entered a post-youth era, where the issue of youth is no longer posed in a particular way but may and should be addressed by taking a global approach?

Western Europe

A 'post-youth' era is probably the term that best characterizes the contributions and articles that we have mobilized from the countries of Western Europe: the United Kingdom, Finland, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany. In these contexts it is simply a question of the rise of individualism, the development of a risk society and the gradual switch to a post-modern epoch.

The United Kingdom

Each country insists on a particular aspect of the phenomenon. It is the case, above all, of the British presentation: increased equalities and the rise of vulnerability translated by an increase in the risks of social exclusion.⁵⁵ The absence of a 'youth' policy and the weakness of the welfare state undoubtedly explain why these concerns are being expressed more and more loudly there. Yet the same concern can also be detected in countries where the social protection system is still very effective. Might this be a preemptive fear that post-modernity is nothing other than the hidden face of market domination?

Finland

Finland takes a manifest interest in questions of social exclusion as if the recognition of excluded persons as a legitimate category for state intervention were a precursor of an erosion of the welfare state. It must be stated that the youth issue in that country is less about problems to be solved or addressed than a general line of policy aimed at improving everyone's well-being and increasing state power to protect all citizens and ensure economic and social development for all.

54. Ibid.

55. Bob Coles, (1997) 'Vulnerable Youth and Processes of Social Exclusion: A Theoretical Framework, A Review of Recent Research and Suggestions for a Future Research Agenda', in Bynner et al., op. cit.

Spain

Martín Criado's report is an excellent demonstration of the link between developments in the political context and the formulation of the youth issue in Spain. It shows quite brilliantly exactly how the youth issue becomes a political issue in the political domain. But the discussion opened by another Spanish expert, Roger Martínez Sanmartí, enables us to throw light on another aspect: the lack of any real research on young people's real-life universe.

The articles and reports examined here have shown that the alchemy bringing the youth issue into the political sphere entails a dialectic between past and future, between the continuity of traditions, conventions, norms, regulations and an emerging context imposing change. This is in particular the contribution of the work on Italy. This dialectic concerns the deepest level of socialization contexts – in the private sphere, in values, mentalities, aspirations and tastes – and the institutional and regulatory frameworks commanded by what might be called politics. A dialectic between individualism and communitarism, between tradition and (post)modernity, between security and risk-taking, between civic duty and citizenship, between private sphere and public arena. The youth issue only exists because and when young people become an element of change, but a change that – as Shao Goyang says so eloquently – intervenes on the basis of a stability needed for not holding up the march towards progress.

The youth issue cannot be dissociated from current changes. It is their expression, their product. It is fundamentally related to politics in that it concerns the choices of a society undergoing change or resisting changes. But it also poses a real question of a political nature regarding the essence of the way in which young people take part in the functioning and life of the *polis*. Youth movements of political protest have become less frequent. They are no longer interested in the traditional way of exercising a 'democracy', giving politicians and political parties a free rein to play out their strategies. That leaves the major causes, sometimes radical ideologies on the left and right, bringing with them all kinds of racism and violence.⁵⁶ All that remains is to invent or reinvent the forms of participation in the *public arena*, making it possible for a debate to take place among young citizens, between young people and adults, between citizens and the authorities and their institutions.

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2. The youth question in Spanish sociology: youth as a generation, a political stake

Martin Criado

In this chapter, I shall try to give a brief account of how the 'sociology of youth' in Spain has defined the 'youth problem'. This approach, which only covers a small part of the process of social construction of the 'youth problem' in social discourses, is of particular interest for the following reasons:

- ◆ Most of the research on youth has been demanded and financed by the state. This means that sociological research on youth in Spain can serve us in analysing how the state has perceived and defined the 'youth problem'.
- ◆ Most of the research has consisted of surveys with questionnaires and sampling. This means that there has been a considerable effect of 'imposition of problematic', not only in the formulation of questions, but also in the very process of interpreting the (closed) responses. Surveys on youth in Spain can thus be treated as a 'catalogue of preoccupations of the dominant class' (Champagne, 1990, p.193⁵⁷).
- ◆ Sociology in Spain has been, till recently, very weak in resources and production. That means that this field's 'autonomy' in Spanish sociology has historically been much weaker than in other European countries. This fact is closely related to the former points: we cannot look at sociological production on youth as a product of an autonomous field of research as it is always a derivative of the political and the state problematic.
- ◆ There exists, as we will try to show, a close relation between sociological surveys on youth and political events. The construction of the 'youth question' is closely related to the political preoccupations of the moment: questioning young people is, in most cases, questioning the future of the social order. We cannot understand sociological research on youth in Spain without taking into account the big political, social and economic changes which took place over the last four decades.

57. Champagne, Patrick, *Faire l'opinion, le nouveau politique*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1990, p.193.

The First National Survey on Youth (1960)

The year 1959 was decisive in the contemporary history in Spain. It marked an important transition in the political configuration of the State.

After the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 Franco's regime was structured through a configuration of political powers, the main organizations being the army, the Catholic Church and the Falange (a fascist organization created in the 1930s by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and which, after the Civil War, with the name of Falange Española de las JONS, had integrated several traditionalist movements). The Falange, with the Church, was the ideological support of the new political order.

During the 1940s, the political power was consolidated by means of extensive police repression: everyone suspected of being 'red' was prosecuted and jailed or executed. Economically, the country – internally devastated after the war and internationally isolated – was extremely impoverished. In 1953, thanks to the new Cold War climate, international isolation diminished. US President Eisenhower visited Spain and signed a co-operation agreement with the regime. The government opened up to 'liberal' ministers and the political weight of the Falange started to weaken. There was an initial, very weak, economic recuperation, slowed down by the protection of agricultural interests.

After some minor political reforms in the second half of the 1950s, the government was completely restructured in 1959. The political language of the time spoke of a 'technocrats' government': most of the new ministers belonged to the Opus Dei and represented the interests of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie. The Falange, which represented mostly the landowners' interests, was relegated to a minor role. The new government launched the Stabilization Plan, which set the basis of the spectacular economic development in the 1960s.

As regards youth policy, two main issues framed the birth of the First National Survey on Youth:

First and foremost were the street demonstrations against Franco's regime in the second half of the 1950s. The most remarkable events took place at Madrid University in February 1956, during which the students – children of the generation who won the war – went on strike and demonstrated against the regime. Two years earlier, in 1954, a survey on university students in Madrid showed that most of them declared themselves to be republican, socialist and non-believers. Despite the fact that it represented at the time only a minority of young people, the government started to perceive a 'youth problem'.⁵⁸

Second was the restructuring of youth policy. During the 1940s and 1950s the leading organization for youth policy was the Frente de Juventudes (Youth Front), a paramilitary organization shaped upon the model fascist youth organizations in Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. At the end of the 1950s a slow restructuring of the Delegación Nacional del Frente de Juventudes began, which culminated in the creation, in 1961, of the Instituto de la Juventud (Youth Institute). This restructuring was due in part to the general loss of power of the Falange in the state, but also responded to the government's perception of a growing youth problem which could no longer be managed by the formula of the Frente de Juventudes. The Institute's inauguration document

58. Here we see a feature that will remain in every construction of the youth problem: a small proportion of young people becomes the 'metonymical model' (Lakoff) of the whole of young population.

affirmed: 'The Institute feels the urgent need to dispose of all concrete techniques applied to youth, in order to find the clue which will solve every one of the multiple youth problems that are arising.'

The creation of the Youth Institute thus responded to the crucial changes in state structuring. The fascist organization of the state was gradually replaced by the new governance techniques imported from European capitalist countries. The Spanish population was no longer an unanimous *patria* – fatherland – but something problematic which had to be surveyed and researched: the 'public opinion' needed to be known. Such developments reached an important turning point in 1964 with the creation of the Instituto de Opinión Pública (Public Opinion Institute) renamed at the end of the 1970s as the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

This was the context of the First National Survey on Youth, the first national survey in Spanish sociology. The Delegación Nacional de Juventudes put the Departamento Nacional de Formación in charge of its elaboration. For the conception of the questionnaire, this department asked every service of the Delegación Nacional de Juventudes for a list of the topics that interested them. The point of departure of the research was the 'youth problem' such as perceived by State institutions: this remained unchanged throughout the entire official sociology of youth in Spain.

The questionnaire was structured on two main sets of topics. First, the economic and employment situation of young people and their families. Second, the attitudes, opinions and behaviour of young people on three subjects:

1. *Family relations*. The interviewees were questioned about their parents (Did they obey their parents? Did they think the same way? Did they have a good relationship with them?); about family values, for example virtues they appreciate in their parents – honesty, religious behaviour, fairness – opinions on marriage, relations with people of the opposite sex, contraception, ideal number of children ('Would you accept God's will or would you try to restrict it?'), and sexual freedom ('What do you think of freedom in intimate relations between single people which exist in some countries?').
2. *Political ideology and behaviour*. Identification with the regime's politicians, ideal political regime, opinion on state institutions, political ideology, willingness to sacrifice one's own life to defend the country.
3. *Religious ideology and practice*. There were a lot of questions on this subject, which included every sort of religious topic. The interviewees were asked, for example, to give their opinion on a set of Catholic dogmas.

In other words, the main concern of the survey was young people's aloofness from the 'National-Catholic' ideology constructed upon the doctrine of the Catholic Church, Franco's authoritarian regime and the traditional Catholic family. The initial perception of a youth problem was, therefore, the potential 'legitimation crisis' of Franco's regime among young men.⁵⁹

The survey provoked a small number of publications, all of which appeared in the *Youth Institute Review*. Their most remarkable feature was their heterogeneity on the consideration of youth as a social category: there were articles that spoke of 'youth culture' as a definite reality as well as articles that took young people's responses as a mere sample of the Spanish population which must always be analysed taking into account

59. Women are subrepresented in the sample because 'they are known to have at this age less consistent opinions'.

the 'social status' of those interviewed. This heterogeneity showed a weak institutionalization of youth as a separate category at the time. The definite results of the survey were formally presented to the Head of State in May 1962. Nevertheless, their publication was postponed until 1976, several months after Franco's death. Although most of the responses were 'good', showing acceptance of National-Catholic ideology, at the time it must have been perceived as dangerous to publish a survey that showed that there was a politically dissident minority.

The Second National Survey on Youth (1968)

The 1960s was the decade of the initial economic development in Spain. Millions of people left the countryside to start working in the new industries; industrial towns experienced huge growth over a few years and the standard of living of the Spanish population rose quickly. There was a social and economic upheaval under a political regime that was changing only very slowly. In this context, political protest against the government rose steadily and became more and more intense.

In this context there was a new development in the construction of the youth problem. On one hand, the Institute of Youth created a new Department of Sociology and Statistics in order to 'carry out sociological research on the different juvenile populations in Spain'. On the other hand, the Institute of Youth commanded a second survey on youth to be carried out by the Institute of Public Opinion.

The political motive of the Second National Survey was quite clear: growing political dissent. This influenced the survey's elaboration. It was based on the 1960 survey, but questions on material situations were reduced, while the part referring to political opinions was widely extended. Madrid and Barcelona were over-represented in the sample, at the expense of the rural population, seen as less 'problematic'.

These changes aside, the survey to a great extent replicated the first one. The main concern remained the 'right' socialization of young people into National-Catholic ideology; religious, family and political attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Nevertheless, there was a big change in publications following this survey: they all conceptualized youth as a definite generation, separate from or opposed to the adult one. This was a new feature which remained constant in the following years: social changes were seen as generational ones. 'Youth' became more and more central in sociological explanations of social change.

Generational change, however, was conceptualized in various different ways according to the ideological affiliation of the author.

One extreme is represented by Juan Gonzalez-Anleo's articles on youth and religion. This sociologist, who took part in the survey's elaboration, is concerned with 'the negative dimension of religious fact' among young people, that is, 'juvenile rebellion', 'anti-Church attitudes', 'religious crisis', etc. These 'new symptoms' are explained by a youth culture centred around the present moment: the quest for pleasure, which is also responsible for sexual freedom, drugs, pop music and a new kind of dance culture. The youth problem is defined as a 'loss of values' problem, though ultimately the author is relieved because most of the responses are 'adequate' for Catholic doctrine. This

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author's articles are also interesting because youth is defined, in spite of the data he offers, as an homogeneous group, where social class distinctions would not have any effect.

The other pole is represented by J. R. Torregrosa's book *Spanish Youth. Generational and Political Consciousness*. This author endeavours to prove, also in spite of his data, a generational consciousness among young people. Class differences are unimportant in explaining young people's opinions: the whole of Spanish youth – which form a consistent generation – wants to see political change towards 'modernization'.

Although politically opposed, both publications share three important points. First, both of them speak in terms of generations: age is much more important than social class in explaining behaviour and attitudes. Second, social change is viewed as generational change. Third, both authors are thinking of a very definite sector of the young population when they talk of 'youth': university students. These young people are precisely those who, with their street demonstrations, engendered the fears of those who commanded the survey.

The Third (1975) and Fourth (1977) National Surveys on Youth

The main political feature of the first half of the 1970s in Spain was the progressive delegitimation of Franco's regime. Political opposition to the dictatorship became more and more evident and visible. The Comisiones Obreras, the illegal trade union organized by the Communist Party, had an important presence all over the country, but mainly in the industrial towns. Political mobilization and organization against the state took place at all levels: workplaces, universities and neighbourhood associations. Street demonstrations become more and more frequent. Three armed organizations, FRAP, GRAPO and ETA – set up during the 1960s and the first years of the 1970s – were increasingly active, and in December 1973 the ETA succeeded in assassinating the President, General Carrero Blanco.

This was the context of the Third National Survey on Youth, elaborated in the last months of Franco's regime and published some months after his death. According to the introduction of the publication, its objective was to offer 'social diagnosis' and 'social therapy advice' thanks to social research, which should uncover 'today's problems of this important sector of the social body, its insertion and adaptability to today's institutions and mental patterns, which suffer the strain of a process of change, breaking and transformation'.

In this survey, data about the material and economic situation were reduced to a minimum. Its main concerns were values and attitudes in the three domains of religion, politics and family. We also see some novelties in the construction of the 'youth problem':

- ◆ *Work relations*. The interviewees were questioned on their perception of authority and hierarchy in their workplaces, trade unions, etc. These questions were closely related to the increasingly radical trade-union movement at the time.
- ◆ *Mass media*. This new interest was partly political, to discover the credibility of the different media, but it also revealed a novel interest in a 'youth culture' that would mean a different kind of leisure.

- ◆ *Drug abuse.* A new ‘youth problem’ that provoked minor interest at the time – just a few questions were asked.

The survey gave rise only to a brief publication in 1976, reduced to a mere counting of opinions. Considering the political incertitude of the moment, it was inappropriate for a sociologist to write about ‘loss of values’ or ‘juvenile promise’. However, and once more in spite of the data offered, the authors talked constantly of a ‘generational break’, which would ‘explain’ every young person’s behaviour or opinions.

The next youth survey (1977) followed swiftly, during one of the ‘hottest’ years of political transition. At this time there were rapid political changes: the legalization of the Communist Party, the first general elections, negotiation of a new Constitution, accompanied by important social movements and trade-union action (there were nationwide strikes, which usually succeeded in winning huge wage rises). The economic crisis generated increasing inflation and unemployment. Political violence carried out by extreme right- and left-wing groups as well as by the police, were responsible for several political murders and grew to levels unknown since the end of the *maquis*. This atmosphere of political and economic insecurity generated several moral panics, especially on the subject of juvenile delinquency and drug-abuse, which lasted for several years.

The construction of the ‘youth problem’ was radically advanced during these years. ‘Youth’ acted as a living metaphor for political, economical and social change. Every social problem was partly constructed as a youth problem. We can see this in the prologue to the publication of the Fourth National Survey:

The recent extension of the voting-age to eighteen years, which has increased the number of voters to 1.8 million, will mean that greater attention must be paid, by the political class, to Spanish youth problems . . . Problems such as unemployment, alcoholism, drug and juvenile delinquency . . . demand an urgent and effective treatment by the state. . . . There is no doubt that supplying good state services to stimulate creative and recreative youth leisure is one of the best prevention measures of juvenile conflicts. . . . A recent poll stated the existence among young people of a higher rate of refusal of the Constitution, as well as high levels of adherence, much higher than national mean values, to extremist and extra-parliamentary political groups. This is a clear consequence of the lack of attention they receive from society.

The survey treated essentially the same domains as the 1975 survey. Nevertheless, the importance of each theme is different:

- ◆ The chapter on political opinions was the largest one. It appears that the main research motive was to know what young people would vote and, above all, to know their potential support to extremist and/or violent options. Political instability also became a youth problem.
- ◆ Juvenile unemployment appeared here for the first time. It did not yet show the importance that it would later take on. At this time, unemployment was not an ‘insertion’ problem, but another possible ‘explanation’ of extremist political positions.
- ◆ The chapter on work relations also became larger. Its two main topics were work conflict and motivation to work. The first was related to the high work conflict at the time. The second one was related to the new discourse which was popular at the time, about personal responsibility for one’s work or unemployment situation.


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- ◆ There was an ample chapter on leisure. It appears that its practical function was the one explained in the prologue: to stimulate 'creative leisure' as a measure to 'prevent' 'juvenile conflicts'.

This survey thus introduced a new definition of the youth problem. Family and religion lost weight in the definition of the problem whilst the main concerns were politics and labour relations. However, it did not mention a 'generational breach', nor did it consider youth as an homogeneous group. On the contrary, it tried to explain behaviour by taking into account social class. This was a step backward in a sociological discourse's construction of youth as a separate group. A step backward that would not last long and that was concerned with the 'transition' conflicts – conflicts that most of the population saw as social class conflicts.

Youth problems in the 1980s: youth unemployment

The new democratic state of Spain implied a big decentralization process: most of the administrative competences were passed on to the new regional governments, *autonomías*. This process gave way to a boom of sociological production in Spain: every new government commanded new sociological surveys. Youth became, in these years, one of the main research objects – one of the official social problems. Every regional government – but also every town hall and every trade union – created a new department or service specializing in youth.

This progressive institutionalization of youth as an administrative population occurred at the same time as another process: a huge increase of moral panic where youth was always a central character, usually in the form of the young drug-addict delinquent. Drug addiction is the central metaphor of a 'loss of values' theme which runs in very different directions: from the loss of religious or family values – which should explain the low birth-rate – to political extremism or apathy.

As the political stage stabilized, all these problems were progressively replaced by a new one: juvenile unemployment. This became an official social problem in 1977 in the framework of the Pactos de la Moncloa – an agreement among the main political forces in Spain to reduce social and political tension. The unemployment problem was redefined as a youth problem and 'insertion' became the new magic word. Consequently, every reform in work legislation was justified as necessary to help young people obtain a job. Youth unemployment was, in this way, the official alibi for labour-market 'flexibilization'.

We can follow the progressive institutionalization of unemployment as the official youth problem in different national youth surveys.

The Fifth National Survey (May 1982) simply replicated the 1977 survey. It was the last survey of the Union of Democratic Centre (UCD) Government, some months before the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party's (PSOE) first government. Elaborated in a deep political crisis – some months after Tejero's failed *coup d'état* and after president Suarez's resignation – and commanded by a very weak government, this survey had as its main centre of interest the political opinions of young people.

In October 1982, the Socialist Party (PSOE) won the elections and conse-

quently the Institute of Youth received more funding and started a new 'Programme of Basic Research' in order to lay the foundations for a new 'integrated youth policy'. With the International Year of Youth 1985) approaching, 1983 to 1985 were the 'golden years' of youth research.

The Programme of Basic Research provoked a set of publications on different youth issues: values and ideology, juvenile delinquency, drugs, family relations, leisure, economic 'insertion' and political participation. The programme's director published the central report: *The Insertion of Young People into Society*. These publications marked a clear evolution:

- ◆ Some traditional issues remained, such as family, ideology and political participation, while others, mainly religion, disappeared.
- ◆ Two new problems, closely related to the moral panic of the 1970s and 1980s became much more important than they had been in former surveys: juvenile delinquency and drugs.
- ◆ The new keyword to define the youth problem was 'insertion'; the process of obtaining economic and housing independence. This new way of conceptualizing the youth problem had important consequences:
 - In the first place, it was related to an almost complete disappearance of social class in analysis. Every young person was said to share the same social 'condition' of being in process of insertion. Age classification was taken to be the main social division.
 - Insertion was primarily defined as economic. The main youth problem was unemployment. Other youth problems were simply consequences of juvenile unemployment.

The new construction of the youth problem as an insertion problem came coupled with the construction of juvenile unemployment as the main social problem. Political stabilization wiped away the problem of political 'radicalism' among youth, but replaced this with the problem of labour insertion: surveys on 'youth's values and attitudes on labour' were prolific. Juvenile delinquency, mostly linked to drugs, was also attributed to problems of economic insertion.

This new construction of the youth problem ran in parallel with the restructuring of the Spanish labour market. Progressive tightening of employers' control over workers was justified by the 'fight' against juvenile unemployment. This new official youth problem was, according to contemporary discourse, the cause of every evil among young people. It wiped out any reference to social class, and consequently strengthened class inequalities.

The 1988 National Survey confirmed this evolution: the youth question was equated to labour insertion, which occupied most of the report.

The Church counter-attacks

As we have seen, religious issues lost weight in surveys on youth after the PSOE's first government, and the Catholic Church was no longer the central ideological support. Such a decrease in the importance of state institutions caused the Church to organize its own surveys on youth. The Fundación Santa María published three surveys on youth

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during the 1980s, in which the youth problem was defined quite differently from the one constructed by state sociology. The problem was perceived to be 'a loss of values' caused by social, economic and religious changes.

The surveys reproduced the same concerns about youth that had been present since 1960: family, religion, leisure, political attitudes, youth subculture and labour situations. Durkheim's concept *anomia* (loss of values) was used to try to explain 'bad' answers – those different from the Church's official values. The new youth subculture, was held mainly responsible for this *anomia*.

Despite their different construction of the youth problem, these surveys shared two main features with the state sociology of youth: (a) they took age as the main social division; (b) they took juvenile unemployment as a major cause for juvenile deviation. Consequently we can see how, in spite of ideological differences, juvenile unemployment became the structuring axis of sociology of youth in the 1980s.

Summary

Official sociological research on youth in Spain has been closely related to political problems. Bearing this in mind, we can distinguish three main periods:

1960-74. Youth problems are defined in reference to National-Catholic ideology. The three main points of reference are attitudes and behaviour in the domains of politics, religion and family.

1974-82. At this time of social, political and economic 'transition' and instability, research on youth proliferates. The main concerns are the 'right' political socialization of young people who are viewed as prone to political extremism and the issue of social deviation – juvenile delinquency and drug-use.

1982-89. The central youth question 'insertion'. Juvenile unemployment becomes the main youth problem.

3. Understanding the issues of Chinese youth: a new generation, a source of a better future

Shao Guoyang

The environment in which contemporary Chinese youth grow up has greatly changed since the reform and opening up of the People's Republic of China in 1978. Today's youth differs from the older generation in ideology, emotion and behaviour. The characteristics they show, the problems they face and the supporting explanations all inevitably bear a mark of the times.

In this article, we try to look into the following issues related to youth:

- ◆ How do the government, the public and experts view youth?
- ◆ What are the main youth problems and why?
- ◆ What are the possible explanations of youth social problems?
- ◆ What about tomorrow?

How do the government, the public and experts view youth?

Although things may appear to have a fixed colour, that colour can differ according to the eyes of the viewer. The same is true of the evaluation of youth, and explains why the image of young people is different in the eye of the government, the public and experts.

Youth in the eye of the public

According to the *China Youth Daily*, a recent survey indicates that most teachers are not positive about their students. During a three-hour interview in one school, teachers criticized and complained about their students' behaviour, leaving the impression that young people today are devoid of any merit.

In fact, the negative public opinion of youth goes back to the early 1990s. Most reports on youth published in different media touch upon topics such as falling in love

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at an early age, leaving home, chasing after all kinds of stars and committing suicide. Today's parents all agree that the younger generation lacks the spirit of bearing hardship of which they were once proud.

When adults comment on youth, they tend to compare the present time with their own childhood. They often find that living and working conditions are greatly improved but that young people are not like they were when they were young. Youth today enjoy better material wealth, are more independent, less disciplined and have a poorer sense of collectivism. Their consciousness of responsibility is unsatisfactory in the eyes of adults.

If we take into consideration the two historical periods before and after the reform and the opening up of China, we may better understand the complaints and fears of the older generation. It is believed that the highly centralized and closed system in Chinese society before the reform created among people a kind of special feeling for, a special dependence on and an obedience towards all kinds of authority including that of the teachers and parents. Obedience was the collective image of youth before the reform. But with the reform came the liberation of youth's personality. For adults, this was something different and new. Most people were not prepared for the changes in youth and this is why they are now concerned.

For teachers and parents, children and young people are the constant object of education. Tradition has it that only those who are not perfect, those who are young or those who do not occupy a dominant position in society need education. The public likewise holds the strong belief that youth can be educated and it never relaxes in its duty to correct them.

Youth through the eyes of government

The comments of the government have always been positive for it sees youth as the future and the hope of the country.

The government's vision of youth depends basically on the actual and potential social role of youth in society. In modern Chinese history, youth has been a social force easily mobilized and activated politically. Mobilized youth often leads to the formation of mass youth movements which can be either constructive or destructive. The Youth Movement of 4 May which took place early in the twentieth century and the Red Guards Movement in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s are two contrasting examples showing the two sides of the social role of youth.

In the 1920s in order to guide youth in the right direction and to fully exploit its potentially positive role, the Chinese Communist Youth League was founded. It continues to function today, and aims to carry out effective social education and management of youth.

In China, the Chinese Communist Youth League is the largest national organization that leads and unites young individuals. Before the reform, this organization was highly attractive to young people who felt greatly honoured to be members. The low rate of youth criminality at that time was to some extent due to the role of social control played by this youth organization.

Today, although the youth organization continues to function, it has had to

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change in order to adapt to the new situation of youth work. Before, it aimed at uniting, educating, grouping and leading youth. Now it is beginning to insist upon representing and maintaining the interests of young people and serving their interests.

Hu Jingtao, Vice-Chairman of the People's Republic of China pointed out in the congratulatory speech at the fourteenth National Congress of the Communist Youth League of China held on 19 June, 1998:

The contemporary Chinese youth is an important active and progressive force in pushing forward the development of history and in promoting social progress. Youth is the least conservative in thinking and has plenty of creative vitality.

This could be considered as the government's general evaluation of contemporary youth; a government that attaches great importance to the role of Chinese youth organization.

Youth through the eyes of experts

Different from the government and the public, experts in China are those who specialize in youth research. They work mainly in specialized institutions at various different levels, the China Youth and Children Research Centre being the national institution. It works in cooperation with youth research institutions at provincial and municipal levels for youth research throughout the country. The China Youth Research Association is another important institution whose task is to coordinate different youth research groups.

While experts keep an eye on the government's youth-related policy, they are also up to speed with public opinion and the real needs of youth. The concern of the government and the topics of the public about youth often become the topics of youth researchers. The sense of social responsibility incites them to focus their work on such social concerns.

For example, when the phenomenon of the 'only child' appeared in China, the public began to worry about the negative side of the personality of the only child and its effect on Chinese society. Experts started to look into the problem. The *Research Report on the State of Personality Development and Education of the Only Child in Chinese Cities* by the China Youth and Children Research Centre in 1997 showed that only children in cities had five merits and four defects in their personality development. The following are cited among the merits: (a) a strong need for affinity; (b) high self-acceptance; (c) excellent social and ethical qualities; (d) a strong desire for self-improvement through study; and (d) a wide range of interests. Among the defects are: (a) a strong need for aggressiveness; (b) a low need for success and recognition; and (c) a lack of thriftiness and industriousness. The comments of experts describe both the associated problems and benefits.

Having realized that society had not fully recognized the positive aspects of contemporary youth, the same task group of experts put forward the concept of 'learning from youth'. This has had repercussions and provoked discussion among both the public and researchers. Some people see it as opposed to traditional ideas of education, which instruct young people always to learn from the older generation.

The National Youth Research Institute, China Youth and Children Research Centre, has established a national monitoring network to follow the changes of youth in

the country. A national report on the development of Chinese youth is published every year. The comments of experts which are based on scientific surveys and analysis are recognized to be objective and thorough.

What are the main problems of youth and why?

From whatever perspective they are viewed, Chinese youth undeniably have problems. The problems they face are wide-ranging, but the main ones as read in Chinese social discourse are the following: youth education, youth employment, love and marriage, and juvenile crime. If we analyse such social discourse, we can read the fears of the government, the public and the experts and also decipher the correlation of these topics. Such problems, encountered during adolescence, are particular to youth. Other age-groups like young children, adults and the aged have their own problems related to their physical, psychological and social position.

Every society has long- and short-term development targets. China's long-term target is to complete the modernization of industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology in order to satisfy the people's growing needs for a better material and spiritual life. The ongoing reform and opening up of China serves this objective, and all the work being done in the country is centred around this target. Those issues that will have a great impact on the realization of modernization will be put on top of the government's agenda and treated as important social issues.

Youth education

To work towards modernization, China needs well-trained people in different fields over the lifetime of at least one generation. If we look at the history of developed countries, we can see what an important role education played in the process of modernization. China needs a large number of qualified workers to reach its modernization target, and education is considered to be the only way to achieve this goal. The need for social development in Chinese society can only be fulfilled, in the eyes of the government, via youth education. This is why it attaches such great importance to this issue.

Education has made great progress since the reform and opening up of China. This is due to economic development, the strengthening of national power, the wide application of information technology and the government policy of encouraging NGOs and individuals to set up schools at their own expense. More opportunities for learning are available for the younger generation than ever before. However, there is still great discrepancy between the opportunities provided and the needs of youth. A low level of education characterizes Chinese youth as a whole.

In the National Programme for Education Reform and Development, the government set the basic elimination of illiteracy among youth and adults as an important goal of education and social development for the end of the twentieth century. Its goal was to bring down the national illiteracy rate to below 10 per cent and the illiteracy rate of youth and adults to below 5 per cent by the year 2000.

In Chinese rural areas and especially poverty-stricken areas, the nine-year oblig-

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atory education is not yet universal. It was put forward at the National Education Working Meeting in 1994 that the nine-year obligatory education must be made universal in 85 per cent of the populated areas by the end of the twentieth century, and that the rate of school enrolment should reach 85 per cent. By the year 2000, only 3 to 5 per cent of the young people of university enrolment age could pass the entrance exam for study in Chinese universities, while this figure is as high as 40 per cent in some developed countries.

Youth employment

Employment is an essential prerequisite of youth development. In China today, the social welfare system is not capable of guaranteeing the basic necessities of life for young people without jobs. Therefore, having a job to earn an income is the most important thing both for youth and their parents after they leave school. Youth employment is one of the primary concerns of the government, as the existence of a large number of unemployed people – especially young people – is a potential danger to the social order and the security of the general public. This is true not only in China but also in most countries in the world.

Every year, a large number of young people finish school with different skills and grades. Owing to the low level of economic development, it is impossible for cities to absorb this new labour force. Some researchers point out that the movement of urban youth settling down in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s was at the time a political solution to youth unemployment, because Chinese cities could not afford to keep them. Very few job opportunities were created for them. In recent years, the reform of government institutions and state-owned enterprises had the effect of ‘snow plus frost’ on the youth employment situation. A large number of people were made redundant and joined the graduate youth in the labour market for jobs.

Today, people have a large choice of career. They can work as government civil servants, in foreign or private enterprises and businesses, or they can become self-employed. Also, more people are being employed in the service sector. However, if we examine the advertisements for job vacancies in Chinese newspapers, it is clear that young people under the age of 35 have advantages and are more likely to get jobs than older people. Being young, they are more welcomed by enterprises than are other age-groups.

According to research by youth employment experts, the difficulty lies not only in insufficient job opportunities but also in the job-related ideas of young people themselves. Young people in general have high or even excessive job expectations. According to some, the key to youth employment lies in adjusting their job expectations.

Marriage and love-related problems

A recent book entitled *The Absolute Privacy* is selling very well in China. It records interviews with young people about their emotional world. The public are surprised by the open attitude of the younger generation towards sex, and their understanding and sympathy for love outside marriage. Many statistics have confirmed this change among

youth. There is no doubt that contemporary Chinese youth attach ever greater importance to their personal feelings about love and marriage. The *Survey on the Relationship between Generations in the modernization Process* conducted by the China Youth and Children Research Centre from 1992 to 1993 shows that the two most important factors to be considered when choosing a spouse are: (a) whether the boy- or girlfriend has formed an attachment for oneself, and (b) whether the boy- or girlfriend has a good disposition.

Personal feelings tend to occupy the first place in affairs of love. Over the space of ten years, the divorce rate among Chinese youth has risen dramatically. In 1982, the divorce rate for young people aged between 15 and 29 was 1.64 per cent, this figure rose to 2.56 per cent in 1990, and it continued to climb up through the 1990s. Ms Lili, a young lady from Beijing explains it like this: 'If a couple get along well, they are OK to live together. If not, why not separate?' Her point of view is generally representative of young people today.

Some experts view the rising youth divorce rate as a sign that youth accord greater importance to the quality of marriage. Others view the problem from the angle of social ethics and social consequences, whereby in most cases, children become the victims of broken homes. Unfortunately juvenile crime is found to be closely related to this.

In view of the destructive role of divorce on marriage and the family, and the negative consequences on the healthy growth of the younger generation, the National People's Congress, China's legislative authority is soliciting opinions from the general public before it starts to revise the Marriage Law. Hot discussions on this issue are reported in the press. The original intentions are to make divorce more difficult legally and thus keep family and social structures stable for the sake of a better social environment for the healthy growth of youth.

Juvenile crime

Juvenile crime (under the age of 25) which has grown since the reform and opening up has become a serious social problem in China. Before the reform the juvenile crime rate was low, but according to statistics in 1985 the percentage of criminal cases involving young people was as high as 71.3 per cent of all national criminal cases. It went up to 74.1 per cent in 1989, and fluctuated between 70 and 80 per cent throughout the 1990s. Crimes are increasingly being committed by youth gangs, students and children as well as by females.

Youngsters committing crimes not only create problems for themselves but also harm their families and society at large. When the juvenile crime rate goes up, the sense of public security decreases. This goes against the goal of modernization, which promises a better quality of life for the people. Besides, China has absorbed foreign capital for its modernization construction, and although the government's preferential policy towards foreign enterprises and the potential capacity of China's market appear attractive to foreign investors, social environment is an important factor. If China's crime rate remains high, this will deter investors. For these reasons, juvenile crime has become a great concern for both the government and the public.

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Development and stability

To find a solution to these youth problems is in the public interest. A survey shows that the greatest concerns of the Chinese public are: (a) public safety; (b) a happy family life; and (c) healthy growth of the younger generation. Their concerns are closely related to the four youth problems. In China, the Government, the public and experts have arrived at the same conclusion – China must maintain a stable and secure environment for the modernization process. Youth problems are thus problems that the whole society has to deal with.

What are the possible explanations of youth social problems?

Youth problems are interrelated; at the core of the problem is youth development, and this in turn is related to the social and economic development of the country.

As a social group occupying a marginal place in society, youth were easily affected by the rather drastic social changes that took place during China's transitional period. This could explain why youth problems suddenly hit the public eye in the 1980s.

The influence of China's basic situation on the youth problem

Today's China is basically an agricultural country with a large population and a relatively weak power nationally. Consequently:

First, the government lacks money to invest in education in order to guarantee the right to education of every young person. The well-documented Hope Project in China relies on donations to support children whose families cannot afford primary-school expenses. As long as the nine-year obligatory education remains not universal and higher educational opportunities are scarce when faced with such a large youth population, competition for education will be strong, even ruthless. This is why it is so difficult to change the practice of examination-centred education into quality education, even though educational circles have long since been aware of its negative effects.

Second, Chinese society cannot create sufficient employment opportunity for its youth. The transition towards a market economy has changed the employment situation. At one time the government took it as its duty to assign a job to everyone in the country, but as the practices of a market economy require a free workforce, a labour market has been gradually established. Now young school-leavers have to find jobs for themselves in the labour market. Contract working has replaced the unit-lifelong working system. With the growth of urbanization, more and more people will have to work in the service sector, which is looked down on by those with traditional ideas. This job tendency goes against young people's high job expectations. In well-paid posts, people need to be highly skilled. This spurs today's young people to go back to school for further study at their own expense. For many of them, a good education is a passport to a bright future career.

In any society, it is not easy to provide a suitable job for every one. With the process of modernization, it is likely that hi-tech machines will replace people in many jobs. More people will stay at home with more leisure time, while work will be accom-

plished by a small portion of the population. If this becomes a reality, youth employment will no longer be a social problem, as work will no longer hold a central position in individuals' daily lives.

The influence of social transition on youth

The transitional period brought about an increase in the divorce rate and an increase in crime. The following offer possible explanations for such social change:

Increased divorce rate

1. The idea of competition, introduced by the market economy, puts pressure on people. They have to devote a lot more time and energy to work outside the family, thus time spent with the family is shorter. Communication problems occur among family members, which can lead to family discord or even disintegration.
2. The market economy offers the opportunity for people to make choices for the second time on many things, especially because both social and geographical mobility in China and abroad are easier than before.
3. Society now is much more tolerant towards ex-marital love affairs and divorce. This greatly lessens the social and psychological burden of those who are caught in such affairs.
4. People attach greater importance to their personal feelings, and thus on marriage quality. They tend not to support unhappy marriages.
5. The market economy and influences from the outside world result in more open attitudes towards sex and the sexual tendency of the social environment. This may lead to irresponsible sexual behaviour, and thus to conflict between couples or divorce. Statistics show that a high percentage of young offenders come from problem families or broken homes.

Increased juvenile crime rate

1. Consumerism is an important feature of the market economy, which stimulates the purchasing desire of people, especially youth.
2. The market economy creates discrepancies between people in terms of wealth. When wealthy young people buy expensive designer products at a high cost, this provokes others 'to keep up with the Joneses'.
3. Since China's social welfare system is still in its early stages, it is impossible to help young people from broken homes and problem families in a systematic way. These young people are potential delinquents. Here again we see the influence on youth issues of the poor level of social and economic development. Unfortunately, since youth are not economically powered, some try to satisfy their needs by illegal means, and commit theft for financial reasons.

The influence of globalization on youth

China started its globalization process when it opened up to the outside world. The opening up has introduced capital, technology and fine foreign cultural elements into China, but it has also introduced certain ideologies and values, which have created social problems, especially among young people.

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In recent years, the rate of youth sex crime has risen. This is believed to be the outcome of the invasion of the idea of sexual freedom, which prevails in some countries. Illegally imported films, TV programmes, videotapes, books and magazines filled with violence and pornography have spread rapidly. The use of the Internet may make the situation worse. Facts show that it is under the influence of these ideas and products that some youngsters are seduced to commit crimes.

With the process of globalization, contacts between people across frontiers are becoming easier and more frequent. International drug traffickers are beginning to turn their eye towards China. The released figures show that cases of drug smuggling have risen sharply in recent years and that more than 80 per cent of the drug users are young people. And many juvenile crimes are closely related to drug abuse.

What about tomorrow?

Today, the People's Republic of China is one of the countries with the fastest economic growth rates in the world. Statistics show that people support the policy of reform and opening up: they are confident of a better future. By the middle of the twenty-first century, China will have caught up with those countries of a middle development level. As a result of this process, social and environmental conditions will be improved and be more favourable for the healthy growth of the Chinese people.

With the establishment of market economy and the progress of globalization, certain characteristics will become more conspicuous among youth, such as a greater international awareness and individualist tendency, a higher sense of equality and stronger incentive for knowledge and skill learning.

4 Taiwanese Youth in the 1990s

Yih-Lan Liu

Modern technology and industrialization have brought rapid economic growth as well as improved living standards to Taiwanese society. During recent decades, people have experienced abundance for the first time in history. In addition to economic growth, the lifting of martial law in 1987 has led to democracy in geometrical progression. Compared with the 1970s and 1980s, people are under less pressure and are less restrained, allowing a sense of freedom to develop. Both economic and political factors have contributed to societal changes and existing value systems and ideologies have been profoundly affected. Young people are a very sensitive group, easily influenced by such changes. The personality, behaviour, and values of the new generation are considered to be remarkably different from the old ones.

Many scholars have described the new generation of the 1990s as having a stronger sense of ego, pursuing more freedom and pleasure, resisting authority, as well as being more utilitarian. But compared with the youth in the past, the subculture of this generation lacks the characteristics of 'thinking' and 'creativity'. The present youth subculture is a second-hand imported culture which is mainly influenced by fashion and curiosity. However, young people themselves are unconscious of this fact. They develop their own individualistic styles under the shadow of conformity to Western fashion.

This chapter attempts to address the youth issues of the 1990s: what the common themes are and how they are influenced by social transition. In the following, these questions will be discussed from the perspective of youth subculture and social values, family, education, intimate relationships, and psychological and behavioural problems.

Youth subculture and social values

Youth subculture reflects the social values of young people, which are indeed affected by social changes. Young (1991) distinguished three types of youth subculture following the social changes in this area. They are alienation, active behaviourism, and indifference-utilitarianism. Alienation describes those young people who trust the current political and social system. They never question why there are problems existing in society, but they hold a pessimistic view about the future of that society. Therefore, they withdraw themselves from society, which results in alienation. Active-behaviourism describes young people who are optimists even when faced with tremendous change and political conflict. They believe that their efforts will make society change in a positive way. Indifference-utilitarianism refers to those young people who are easily influenced, but hold an indifferent attitude towards society. They pursue pragmatic life satisfaction and blindly follow public fashion. Young suggested that as a society becomes more industrialized, indifference-utilitarianist youth is more prevalent. Social restraint, self-control and action for glory are gradually replaced by self-indulgence and sensation seeking.

According to a survey conducted by the Academia Sinica, the social values of youth in the 1990s have the following characteristics. First, young people are generally dissatisfied with society due to unresolved political conflicts, yet in spite of this, they feel powerless to break through the current political framework and ideology. Such a situation suggests that people do not know how to deal with the disturbance brought about by the rapid move to democracy and liberalism. When martial law was lifted in 1987, democracy seemed to move forward in great leaps. Public criticism and street protests were often used as means to extort promises from the government. When people put into practice their newly acquired freedoms and democracy, they were not prepared for the ensuing chaos due to a lack of corresponding understanding of law and discipline. Similarly, young people expect a complete social welfare system, and expect the government to uphold people's rights regarding equality, work and stability/security. They are discontent with the current compensatory, passive, and provisional policy of social welfare. Nevertheless, they feel powerless to influence politics. In fact, they demonstrate a low interest in political participation. In an investigation regarding college students' identification with political parties, Chang (1996) found that 44 per cent of 339 subjects from public universities displayed no interest or indifference to political information. Although small samples may not represent the whole population, it does suggest that college students have medium concern for political participation.

The second characteristic of youth culture is utilitarianism, not indifference, as older people think. They show a certain interest in public concerns but their motives for getting involved in social service are different from those of the older generation. Historically, the nature of students' involvement in social service can be divided into two periods based on the situation of economic growth. The first period ran from 1949 to 1975, during which the democratic government took over and sedulously established its regime. Reconstruction of the social order and people's livelihood was the primary concern. The aim of young people's social service was to help to improve the quality of life of the community. Motives for getting involved in these services were mostly based on patriotism, or the virtue of charity. The second period ran from 1975 to the present, dur-

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ing which Taiwanese society has become stable and prosperous. Social service today focuses on promoting people's social welfare. Involvement of youth in this task not only demands labour contribution but also requires professional skills or training. When recruiting volunteers for service, the institute usually offers a professional training programme. Some young people have a notion of 'service' or 'contribution', but gaining knowledge, social experience and improving self-growth have become strong incentives for participation in social service.

The third characteristic of youth social values is individualism and self-orientation. Individualism is probably an inevitable outcome of modern industrialization, but is reinforced by the mass media. Messages like 'be yourself' or 'care for nobody or nothing' are broadcast publicly, suggesting to youth that this is how they should behave. Individualism has become a fashion or mental symbol of youth culture. The majority of young people see others as hypocritical and untrustworthy. Consequently, they would rather establish instrumental relationships than affective relationships.

Basically, today's youth are individualistic, discontent but practical objectors who want both to accept reality and to make changes. These characteristics are believed to have an impact on Taiwanese society, but no matter what the effect might be, adults should not judge youth by their own standards but rather attempt to understand youth culture. Such openness should decrease the conflicts between generations.

Family

Social transition has influenced the family and its role for young people in many ways. First, the nuclear family has gradually replaced the traditional extended family, and the average number of persons per family is about 5.1. Second, there are more and more women joining the labour force, which has changed the mother's role in the family. Third, living standards have improved and families have become more affluent. Fourth, the divorce rate has increased, resulting in more single-parent families. How might these changes affect parent-youth relationships and youth attitudes towards the family? In regard to the changes of family structure, since the extended family has been replaced, grandparents no longer live under the same roof, and parents therefore receive less help in caring for children. The responsibility of child rearing has increased, yet with mothers out at work, the task is even harder. In the past, when mothers stayed at home, they could take better care of their children and monitor their behaviour. But now outside employment reduces the time mothers spend with their offspring, lowering the quality of mother-youth relationships. Mothers in this society still carry more parental responsibility than fathers do even though they are employed. Although long working hours do not affect mothers' direct parenting (such as reward and punishment), they do reduce the opportunity of monitoring, supervision and communication.

Working mothers have another kind of influence on parent-child relationships. When both parents have less time to spend with their children, they feel a strong sense of guilt. To reduce this feeling, some parents try to offer their children a plentiful material life to make up for the lack of parent-child attention. They also excuse their low involvement in parenting by reasoning that they are working to provide a better life for their children. Therefore, since the number of children per family is lower, many parents

have a tendency to be over indulgent with their children. Just as the older generation consider youth today as generally spoiled and hedonistic, youth regard parents as more democratic than before. In a survey on parenting, youth regard their parents as being more protective and caring but less authoritarian. Traditional strict discipline is less appreciated by youth, and is rarely adopted by parents today.

The potential problem for parenting is the discrepancy of values between parents and children. In the past, parents acted as role models for young people, but today's youth live in a much less enclosed environment, and their life values are inevitably affected by peers as well as by society. Although parents may make a great effort to plan for their children's future, education and career, they often take their own background and experiences as standards, and may therefore neglect their children's interests and abilities, and the values of a different epoch. As a consequence, conflicts between parents and children occur. Parents blame their children for their lack of appreciation, but children complain that their parents fail to understand what they really need. Therefore, when youth encounter problems they do not turn to their parents but rather ask the opinion of others. The term 'generation gap' is the best way to describe this situation.

When the family started to be influenced by the process of industrialization, urbanization, democratization and pluralism in Taiwanese society, many scholars feared that the traditional concept of filial piety would disappear. In his study of changes regarding the concept of filial piety in the 1990s, Yeh (1997) suggested that certain elements of filial piety such as respecting and taking care of parents was still considered as very important by youth; however, the concept of obedience to parents is regarded as less important. Most youth believe that filial piety could be expressed in a flexible and rational way.

There is no doubt that the meaning of 'family' is different for parents and youth. Family conflict is often a result of this difference. Both parties should learn to respect each other's values so that they can better adjust to the world trends together.

Education

Education is believed to be the pathway to success in society. Perhaps it is because such a belief is so profoundly rooted in the minds of people here that academic achievement is so heavily emphasized. In a survey about young children's education expectations, Chang (1998) found that sixth graders perceived that their parents wished them to complete a college education at least. Most parents hold to the myth that successful parenting is to highly educate their children. They impose such beliefs upon their children to the extent that most youth would regard academic performance as the only criteria of success.

Although most people want to reach the highest possible level of education, joint entrance examination for college and senior high school limit the opportunities. After completing nine years of compulsory education, 87 per cent of youth (data from 1991) face the choice of going to senior high school or technical school. Usually they are encouraged to attend senior high school because it is the direct path to a college education. Ten years ago students who chose to go to technical school had less chance of going to college because the university systems were mostly set up as a continuation of high-

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school education. Now, since multiple courses of education are advocated and a system of higher education for technology has been established, channels to higher education are not limited to the general high-school system.

In spite of the fact that opportunities for going to college are increasing, about 50 per cent of youth are still failing the college entrance examination. High competition results in high pressure. Academic related problems have become the major issues of youth adjustment. Many students complain about too many tests at school and generally show anxiety about school grades. Some students who cannot bear the stress have been found to withdraw from school work and gradually turn to delinquent behaviour; some of them become depressed and some even commit suicide. Some parents who do not want to see their children suffer from exam pressure send their children to study abroad. These 'little foreign students' who are about 14 to 18 years old travel to the United States, Canada, and Australia.

For decades, the main educational concern has been to enter a school and to pass the exams. Learning or improving one's way of thinking has been pushed into the background, creating a permanent lacuna in the current education system. In addition, school systems now face another challenge: the traditional role of teachers as authoritative is under question. Owing to different educational needs requested by parents and students, teachers are expected to fulfil various roles in addition to teaching. For instance, teachers are not only persons who transmit knowledge, but also counsellors who can understand students' distress. Although many teachers make great efforts to meet their needs, parents and students remain unsatisfied. They do not cooperate fully and show little respect for teachers. Conflict between teachers and students as well as parents is becoming a problem.

The increasingly high levels of stress at school has attracted the government's attention. The next wave of school reforms intends to extend the compulsory education from 9 years to 12 years and in the future college entrance exams are expected to be abolished. The action of school reforms results from the awareness that examination pressure not only increases youth psychological adjustment and behavioural problems, but also educates youth to become test-taking machines lacking creativity and independent thought. The school/education reforms that are under way aim to establish a pluralistic and open education system that can provide multiple channels and opportunities for youth to acquire the knowledge and training of their choice. Learning at school is not only to acquire the ability to compete in society, but also to become a fully developed person.

Intimate relationships

'What is true love?' asked Sharsbeisa in one of his poems. Today the question asked by youth is: 'Can sex bring true love?'. Most of the older generation believe that true love only exists in marriage, but the new generation base their love life upon passion and intimacy without responsibility and giving. Many young people place love first, without caring what others think of them, or that their beloved may be married. They look for personal enjoyment, and pursue carnal and psychological pleasure in a loving relationship. They want their sensual desires to be independent, but never deny the importance of sex

and desires in life. They long for the experience of self-awareness, and worship the power of love because they believe that is the only way to find themselves. However, they often confuse love with sex. Romance can be sparked suddenly and end as quickly. Promise and commitment are hardly recognized in intimate relationships. The liberal attitude towards sex has pushed up the number of premarital sexual relationships and has resulted in a host of social problems, such as adolescent pregnancy, date rape, and teenage prostitution.

Many educators and scholars regard the increasing problems of adolescent sexuality as the consequence of lack of proper sex or gender education. The Taiwanese used to be conservative about sex and the older generation still has this attitude. Therefore, it is very difficult for parents to talk about sex to their children. In 1989, a survey was conducted to find out where young people gain knowledge about sex. Youth reported that they acquire information about sex primarily from books and magazines and secondly from friends; parents are the last choice. In the 1990s, mass media such as TV and the Internet have become major sources for youth to learn about sex and intimate relationships. Unfortunately the messages transmitted give youth a distorted vision, as they usually exaggerate the power of sex in an intimate relationship.

Educators are aware that proper education about sex and gender differences at school is very urgent. After a series of youth suicides and homicides in connection with unresolved love affairs, educators realized that inadequate attention was paid to sexual relationships in their teaching curriculum. Relevant courses are currently being integrated at school.

Psychological and behavioural Problems

In 1993 the Executive Yuan conducted a survey to understand the psychological adjustment and behavioural problems of youth. The results indicate 35 per cent of young people have experienced psychological stress. The sources of stress include school, careers, work, friends, family finance, family relationships, and appearance. Among these, academic stress is experienced the most often and is the most serious. Many young people report that they are bothered by a heavy workload at school, are worried about getting poor school grades, and are confused about choosing the right school. For those young people who are no longer at school, they particularly worry about their career and the future. In regard to behavioural problems, the number of youth committing crimes increased from 10,925 in 1984 to 28,172 in 1993. Types of crime include burglary, assault, homicide and violence, and they take place not only in public areas but also on school premises. According to statistical data from 1993 to 1994, there were 96 incidents of school violence, and eight teachers died through severe teacher-student conflict. Besides the consideration of psychological stress and behavioural problems among youth these data lead people to question the roots of youth problems.

Following the previous themes regarding the influence of social transition, youth problems can be explained as follows. First, rapid social change leads to a utilitarian social climate. Power, money and personal gain are worshipped, and morality is no longer emphasized. Influenced by this social climate, youth are inclined to do anything to get what they want, regardless of whether the means are illegal or not. Second,

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the way in which crime is broadcast by the mass media has a negative influence on youth. To attract attention and satisfy public curiosity, some media report crime in an exaggerated, sensational and detailed way, inducing imitation by delinquent youth. Third, the influence of the family has been weakened, which decreases support for young people. Studies have indicated that delinquent youngsters come from either authoritarian or permissive families. Parents with too high expectations and strict rules tend to put their children under high pressure. In contrast, parents who do not discipline their children are likely to bring up children with a high risk of delinquency due to their lack of impulse control. Moreover, youth from problem families, suffering parental divorce, conflict, abuse and negligence not only experience tremendous psychological traumas, but also are more likely to look for support by identifying with gangs. Consequently, they often become at-risk delinquents. Fourth, schools generally cannot provide an environment in which students can develop equally in every area, but rather overemphasize academic performance. As mentioned in the previous section, academic achievement is considered as a criterion of success. Students who have high academic performance are regarded as intelligent and attract more attention from teachers. Conscious of high teacher expectancy and high competition from peers, some students become anxious, tense, and depressed. In contrast, students who do not perform well are often labelled as less intelligent, and receive less attention from teachers. Associated feelings of low self-esteem as well as learning helplessness lead to emotional disturbance or delinquent behaviour.

How might youth psychological and behavioural problems be resolved? Rebuilding social morality and improving family and school environments are perhaps the best way, but it takes a long time to achieve these goals. Scholars suggest that leisure activities would help to release stress and tension, and prevent conduct disorder. Fortunately, the government has already recognized the importance of leisure activities and the National Youth Council has set up places and occasions for youngsters to relax.

Conclusion

In the eyes of the Taiwanese, youth are the builders of future. It seems that the older generation expects too much of them, such that when their performance does not live up to their expectations, they blame youth as superficial, irresponsible and thoughtless. Although they may not seem to be as serious as the older generation expect, they are vivacious, nimble, active and clever. We believe that they will construct a better world for us and our responsibility is to create a secure environment where youth can grow up with love, care and support.

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5. The social construction of youth in late post-communism

Siyaka Kovacheva

On the eve of the youth protest wave that swept the modern world in 1968, Berger and Luckman wrote that reality was a social construct and it was the task of sociology to study the processes through which this construction was realized (Berger and Luckman 1965).⁶⁰ At that time, young people rejected the dominant society created by the previous generation and tried to impose their own vision of what society (and youth) should be. So how is youth socially constructed today, ten years after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe – a major change brought about with the aid of mass youth protest?

To understand the processes through which youth is socially constructed in any of the countries of Eastern Europe, one should bear in mind the character of the social transformation under way, the achievements and the ambitions of the political élite, the institutions of civil society and all the remaining social actors. In Bulgaria, for example, the general rhetoric which forms the background of the social construction of youth in 1998 is not the shift from a modern to a post-modern society (which dominates discussions in the West) but still the transition from a communist to a democratic society and the current stage within this transition – from an ‘imitation of reforms’ to ‘speeded reforms’.

This chapter is an attempt to analyse the issue in the case of Bulgaria by looking first of all at the policies of the government and governmental agencies implementing these policies, secondly, at the relevant activities of the civic non-governmental sector in the face of various voluntary organizations, youth associations and the media and, thirdly, at social research and youth studies in particular.

First of all, the new political élite abandoned the former ideological construct of youth as the group with ‘the most important mission – to be the builder of the bright communist future’. In the new situation the élite had to find a way of constructing youth relevant to the proclaimed transition towards democracy and a market society. In the

60. P. Berger and T. Luckman. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1965.

first multiparty elections in the country in 1990, youth was often mentioned in the electoral platforms of various political parties, in the slogans and speeches at mass rallies. Content analysis (Mitev, 1996)⁶¹ of these documents revealed the dominant theory behind this new attitude towards youth – young people no longer needed privileges from a patronizing state, they needed equal chances in life. This new way of constructing youth implied that if only individuals, young people and adults alike, were left free from state and party control, their entreprenuring activity would erase all social ills. The easily created myths of the new liberal ideology were soon confronted with various processes in the social reality of post-communism: the slow and ineffective introduction of market mechanisms, uncontrollable inflation, rising unemployment, retarded development of the private sector, to mention just a few.

Amidst this flux of tendencies, two changes radically affected the official construction of youth in the first years of reforms: the unprecedented political activism of youth after 1989 and the rapidly diminishing possibilities of the welfare state to continue the generous youth policy of the communist regime.

Youth political activity after the fall of one of the longest serving Communist Party leaders in the world, Zhivkov, helped the shift of political power from the party nomenclature into the hands of the new democratic forces in such important institutions as the presidency and the government (the two waves of student occupations of mainly university buildings ended with the change of president in June 1990 and of the government in December 1990). The youth protests in 1990 gave birth to two contrasting ways of stereotyping of youth. The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) declared the protests to be a manifestation of mature civic thinking (*Democracia*, 3 July 1990)⁶² and launched the image of the young citizen with a high political morale unspoiled by the authoritarian regime. Although the Socialist (former Communist) Party did not oppose youth protest directly, it defined student unrest as ‘a conflict with unfavourable effect on the life in the country’ (*Duma*, 28 June 1990)⁶³ and hinted at the manipulation of students by the UDF. Printed and electronic media associated with this party created the image of the young hooligan disturbing the social order and acting in disregard of the mechanisms of democracy. Those contrasting images of youth were both male, as the opposing political parties seemed to agree upon the issue that direct citizen participation in politics should be a field preserved mostly for men.

In the following election campaigns (1991, 1994, 1997) youth was largely neglected as a specific group of the electorate, and the share of youth issues in party propaganda was much smaller. Within the youth theme the concept of equal chances for all continued to be raised, but a new concern came to the fore – the problems of specific groups of youth: young families, the young unemployed and youth religious movements (Mitev, 1996).⁶⁴ Yet none of them became the dominant way of constructing youth.

The most recent wave of mass youth protests in January/February 1997, this time even more confrontational, accompanied by road blockades, gave birth to another way of politicizing of the youth issue. With the Socialist government unable to carry out real reforms towards democracy and a market economy, the young generation of Bulgarians were being forced to emigrate. In this formulation of the youth question the young were presented as supporters of speeded-up market reforms because they wanted to stay in the country. Once again young people were declared to be the new citizens

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61. P.-E. Mitev, *Bulgarian Youth in Time of Transition*, Sofia, Committee of Youth and Children, 1996.

62. *Democracia*, 3 July 1990.

63. *Duma*, 28 June 1990.

64. Mitev, op. cit.

whose actions paved the way for democracy. And again the supporters of the Socialist government, which was ousted by the protests, pointed out the undemocratic nature of youth tactics and implied that the young were being used by the opposition in the power struggle.

Despite the sporadic political activity of young people which took the form of street protests, young people were not allowed to enter the institutions of conventional politics. It is true that young people shared an attitude of dislike towards routine organizational activity (Kovacheva, 1995)⁶⁵ but it was also the political élite who did not see a role for the young in institutional power. Up to 1998 the UDF did not have a political organization of youth associated with the party. There were numerous local youth clubs (of members up to the age of 30) which were not incorporated into a national structure and their members could not take part in the decision-making of the UDF on an equal basis with adult members. It was only at the national conference of the ruling party in October 1998 that this policy of keeping the young away from political institutions was changed. It was decided that young people should be integrated in political structures and a political youth organization associated with the ruling party should be created starting from below – the local and regional clubs should be incorporated into a national organization with more rights to participate in decisions. It remains to be seen whether the conference decision will be realized in practice or remain only a declaration on paper.

The welfare state and its expansion has served to construct youth as a social category in all modern societies (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998).⁶⁶ In the course of political changes and economic reforms under post-communism, youth completely lost their privileged position, previously supported by the state. Free education and health care, granted work placements for all graduates, preferences for bank loans and housing for the young, free or cheap holidays, recreational and sports facilities, and high social security all came to an end. After the dissolution of the Komsomol (the Youth Communist League, the only official youth organization allowed during the communist era and in which over 90 per cent of people aged 14-28 were members) in 1990, its property was dispersed and largely lost. The Komsomol cadres who used to serve as youth workers also dispersed, turning towards the more profitable spheres of business and politics.

The contracting welfare state was a stimulus for reaching consensus between the two major political opponents in their treatment of the young. Both parties and their governments referred to youth as the social category least in need of social support. Children and retired people were defined as being more at risk. This attitude influenced the institutional structure of youth policy. In 1992 the Youth Research Institute which was under the auspices of the Komsomol was closed as it was associated with the previous regime. The state committee responsible for youth policy was restructured several times in the course of reforms – from a unit of the Committee of Sports into an independent Committee on Youth and Children then back into a small section of a joint committee with sports.

In the programme of the current government 'Bulgaria 2000', which was accepted in May 1997, only one in a list of twelve major tasks facing the country is associated with youth and it is placed in ninth position: 'To keep Bulgaria's youth in Bulgaria by securing opportunities for creative realization and chances for a better future'. The

65. S. Kovatcheva, 'Student Political Culture in transition. The Case of Bulgaria', in CYRCE (ed.), *The Puzzle of Integration. European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research*. Vol. 1, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1995.

66. C. Wallace and S. Kovatcheva. *Youth in Society. The Construction and Deconstruction of Youth in East and West Europe*. London. Macmillan, 1998.

formulation of this task has taken up the representation of youth at the time of street protests into a document supposed to outline state policy towards youth. The programme defines the first post-communist generation as 'a new generation open to the world which has not been deformed by Communism'. The main problems of this generation are blamed on the previous governments in the course of the transition which 'did not create conditions for young people to find realization in the country according to their merits'.

Further, the programme goes on with more concrete issues presented as problems of youth: 'physical survival', 'economic survival', 'development of the intellectual potential'; 'increase in crime rate, violence, drug addiction, prostitution'; 'destructuring of the old value system and difficulties in the formation of a new system'. The main goals of youth policy formulated in the document of the ruling party are: 'Young people to become permanent participants in the process of reform; to preserve artistic and intellectual activities of young people under the conditions of restricted resources of the state; encourage self-organization and self-help of children, young people, youth organizations, young families'.

The section for youth policy in the UDF programme sounds more abstract and ideological than the rest. There is only one somewhat definite task: the legislation to conform to the all-European one by signing international documents concerning youth and children and to ensure the full participation of the country in European programmes such as Youth for Europe. The style of the whole programme demonstrates a firm adherence to the spirit of Europeanization (not globalization) in accordance with the ambition of the government to lead the country in the process of joining all-European structures. It clearly states that the orientation of Bulgaria's development is European – as 'a political and civilizational choice' (as opposed to Asia and the 500-year period of Bulgaria's being part of Turkey and the Orient). However, youth in education or work is not mentioned among the agents of the European orientation of the country. Youth does not figure at all in the section about foreign policy. Europeanization is perceived as based principally on military alliance ('Bulgaria to be accepted in NATO by the year 2001'), and then on economic integration.

The European dimension of state youth policy is realized through the Committee on Youth, Physical Education and Sports. This committee mediates the participation of Bulgaria in the Youth for Europe programme and organizes competitions for youth organizations applying for European funding. Poorly financed and understaffed, the youth section of the committee does not perceive its task as revealing and controlling genuine youth problems in the country. There are several other governmental agencies responsible for the realization of state youth policy and which influence the societal construction of youth: the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Labour Office within the Ministry of Labour and Social Care, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Health.

In the 1990s being young in Bulgaria increasingly means being a student at university or at one of the numerous colleges offering post-compulsory education. More than 60 per cent of the age-group continues into post-secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Science faces an unprecedented growth of enrolment in higher education which has to be managed with a declining budget. For five years – from

1990 to 1995 the number of students at Bulgarian universities doubled while the share of the expenses for science and research in the state budget dropped from 2.25 to 0.78 per cent in the same period. While in 1990, 96.5 per cent of students had their fees covered by the state, currently less than 40 per cent receive such support. And the burden of this change falls upon young people's parents, as the state is unable to introduce an efficient system of bank credits for students. In 1998, the state further withdrew its support for young people by introducing fees for all (with small exceptions).

With the reforms after 1989, graduates from secondary and higher education cannot rely upon the system of state allocation in work placements. Unemployment is a new but increasingly common experience among young people in Bulgaria. Since 1992, between 30 and 40 per cent of the age group 16 to 29 register at employment bureaux (while the general unemployment rate has never climbed above 16 per cent). Youth unemployment remains high even when the economy is improving and the general unemployment rate is declining. The share of young people experiencing long-term unemployment and unemployment with no work experience is rising. In this situation the National Labour Office developed in 1996/97 a programme for combating youth unemployment. It was designed as an experiment consisting of three steps. The first one was mostly educational, the second was directed towards motivation for starting up in business and the third consisted in financial support for the business start. During the first stage of the experiment neither young people nor state officials were satisfied with its course. More young people were served under general measures than under the schemes especially designed for them. The second and third steps had not even started when the government decided to stop the experiment in 1997. In the new law for labour-market regulation which was accepted in 1998, only one paragraph concerns young people, and it gives small preferences to employers offering work placements to young graduates. What is more, there are new eligibility restrictions for unemployment benefits, which exclude mostly young people from state financial support.

As a result of the actions of the two state departments, young people are under the contradictory influence of their policies: the Ministry of Education and Science is trying to push young people away from the education system while the labour market is not able to absorb them, and the National Labour Office discourages the young from registering as unemployed. Palliative measures for the young unemployed that are applied in the West, such as moving them from one training scheme to another or from one state-supported job to another will not work in the East where unemployed youth are active in the second economy and in education. In Bulgaria there is no state agency offering career advice or career education to young people while at school. It is no wonder then that the young unemployed in Bulgaria come from families in which parents belong to all socio-professional groups and the young unemployed themselves hold diplomas at all educational levels and in a wide range of specialities.

During the one-party regime, the Ministry of Defence exerted a great influence over public definitions of youth through obligatory military service for young males. The army acted as a major socializing agency – such service was perceived not only as a patriotic duty but also as a means of helping adolescents grow into strong and responsible men. Currently it has a declining place in public discussion of youth – avoiding it is becoming more and more common, meaning that a declining share of young men have

experience of military service. Unlike the army, the police has a growing impact over youth. In fact most of the regulation once exerted through Komsomol officials is done by police officers at present. The dominant definition of young people as perpetrators is promoted by police officers, who also, in the place of youth workers, monitor probation work. The Ministry of Health affects public discussions of youth with its focus on AIDS and drug addiction. Currently it is preoccupied with carrying out the reduction of state services and encouraging private health care. Voluntary organizations relying upon foreign financing are more influential in raising public attention to worsening youth health.

The analysis of the policies of the state departments suggests that there is no system for the regulation of youth transitions in an increasingly unstable society. If the state is unable or unwilling to define youth as a particular target for state assistance, is the new voluntary sector able to fill in the gap?

Surveys of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Bulgaria show that youth is their most common target group. A third of all associations and clubs had young people as their clients (Bozhikov, 1997).⁶⁷ What NGOs offered most often to the young in the country was propaganda and education – these were the two most common activities in which the studied NGOs engaged.

A study of organizations supporting young people in the labour market (Kovacheva, 1998)⁶⁸ reveals the ways in which the NGO activists perceive young people. Despite the fact that these organizations were selected because they had programmes combating unemployment, they commonly defined young people as lacking democratic culture. The interviewed volunteers shared the belief that young people in Bulgaria had enough qualifications to meet the demands of the market economy and their problem was to find conditions to prove their abilities. The NGOs commonly saw their mission in civic education – in showing to the young that, rather than choosing the easier way of emigration, they need to be active and autonomous at home. The young have to assume civic responsibilities which politicians refuse them and participate in the process of decision-making in all spheres of social life.

If this is the dominant discourse of the youth issue among organizations in the third sector, it is no wonder that their activities have a very thin spread. Less than 1 per cent of the young unemployed and of the young self-employed in parallel surveys (Kovacheva, 1998)⁶⁹ mentioned that they had received assistance from NGOs. In attempting to raise civic consciousness among the young, the voluntary associations work predominantly with young people who already have active life strategies and their services do not reach those most in need of support against social isolation.

Youth associations in the third sector are not much more popular than the other voluntary organizations. They have few supporters and even fewer members, as Bozhikov's study (1997, p. 71)⁷⁰ reveals. The author argues that 'the effect of their activities can be noted mostly on their members' and not on their clients. Their programmes explicate the problems of the political and economic development of the country and not youth problems. It seems that youth associations in the second half of the 1990s follow the tradition of the student strike committees formed spontaneously in 1990 whose claims focused on political changes and not on university reform or other issues concerning youth as a social group (Kovacheva, 1995).⁷¹

Content analysis of national and local newspapers and programmes on nation-

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67. P. Bozhikov, *The Third Sector in Bulgaria*. Sofia, National Statistical Institute, 1997.

68. S. Kovatcheva, *Youth Unemployment in Bulgaria in Comparative Perspective*. Plovdiv, Studio Design, 1998.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Bozhikov, *op. cit.*

71. Kovatcheva, S. 'Student Political Culture in Transition. The Case of Bulgaria', in CYRCE (ed.) *The Puzzle of Integration. European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research*. Vol. 1, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995.

al and local TV in one week – 12 to 18 October 1998 – carried out by students in social pedagogy at Plovdiv University, offer some starting points for understanding how the media in the country construct the youth issue. Articles and programmes concerning youth were rare and did not form a dominant theme. Close to a half of all materials about youth described outstanding young people with great achievements in sports, arts or education. Success stories had a definite international dimension – young people had either won foreign competitions or had attracted foreign attention. The second most common theme was crime and material about young people as lawbreakers slightly outnumbered those about young people as victims. A fifth of all material about young people focused on problems of education – students' housing, stipends, new subjects in the curriculum, opportunities for travel and study abroad. In fourth place came problems of underprivileged youth – the homeless, the disabled, orphans. Drugs, poverty and unemployment attracted much less attention. A little material provided international youth information describing youth protests in France and Turkey. There was only one specialized youth programme on TV concerning youth sex and health.

The general picture created by the media was about youth as winners in the transition. The underlying implication of media portrayal of youth was that gifted young people were the true ambassadors of Bulgaria to the world.

Sociological research is another route for the social construction of youth. The post-communist situation of youth studies in Bulgaria is characterized by institutional conceptual and methodological pluralization which replaced the former monopoly of the Youth Research Institute which was under the auspices of the Komsomol. In 1992 the Institute was closed as it was perceived to have been associated with the previous regime. This was not the end of youth studies in the country as many new centres came into being. Some of the numerous newly founded departments for social sciences at old and new universities, as well as private polling companies started doing research on youth citizenship, youth labour markets, social exclusion, national identity and ethnic tolerance as influenced by the growing individualization and risk in late modernity. All these newly discovered themes and ideas are studied in a more balanced approach. While during the previous regime large-scale quantitative surveys with carefully worded questionnaires dominated research in the field, at present youth studies are experiencing the rediscovery of life-history, participant observation and other qualitative methods, as well as the heuristic opportunities of using and comparing smaller regional samples.

These changes in youth research in Bulgaria have been realized under the pressure of reduced state funding. In the 1990s, the state through its Committee on Youth and Children financed only one general study of the social condition of youth (Mitev, 1996).⁷² Its report presented changes in youth participation in politics (a tendency of growing political apathy), in the market economy (readiness to start up in businesses), in education (a growing interest in higher education), sex and family (sexual liberation) and culture and arts (a turn towards entertainment and consumerism). The author presents youth as the group in which the extremes of society's development are to be found; young people have the greatest chances of succeeding in the current modernization process, and yet they are the stratum at the greatest risk. Another contradiction is also discussed: the young are becoming more financially dependent upon their parents and, at the same time, more independent in their value orientations. It is the young genera-

72. Mitev, op. cit.

tion that leads the formation of the new values needed in the transition to a new social order. Here the old concept of Bulgarian youth sociology from the 1970s about the role of youth in the juvenescence of society (Gospodinov, 1977; Mitev, 1982)^{73 74} takes a new turn in the transition. The innovative potential of the young generation manifests itself as 'juvnescent aberration', understood as a U-turn in the socialization process: 'rather than the old to show the correct way to the young, it is the young who divert the old from the traditional way' (Mitev, 1996, p. 60).⁷⁵

The competition for limited resources, resulting from the withdrawal of state support, is a new way of functioning for the youth research community in the country, among whom there is a high inflow and outflow of scholars whose professional security was lost long ago in the course of the transition. Private sources for youth studies in the face of business companies and NGOs in the country do not compensate for diminishing state funding, but they are still able to encourage thematic and methodological reorientation. A major role is played here by the programmes of foreign funding agencies such as the United Nations, the European Council, and other supranational organizations, as well as of national governments and of NGOs among which the Open Society established by the Hungarian George Soros has been a most prominent actor. These new sources of funding have made it possible for Bulgarian researchers to study youth unemployment, drug abuse, religious movements, homelessness, attitudes towards Europe and emigration. It is difficult to say how much of this agenda is set through internal perceptions of youth problems and how much of it is influenced by the vision of the (mostly foreign) funding bodies.

The revolutionary period of transition in Bulgaria is over. In the face of grave economic difficulties, normal election campaigns in the future will rarely raise youth issues as a mobilizing force. The shrinking financial opportunities of the welfare state will further divert attention from youth as a social group and will concentrate scarce resources upon particular groups among the young. Youth associations are still too weak to influence public discourse of youth problems. Youth studies react to financial openings (coming mostly from abroad) instead of forming and directing youth policy. There is no national programme of youth policy in Bulgaria or a consensus about the need of such policy. Youth problems are not seen as separate from society's general (and grave) social problem.

However, despite the declining share of young people in the population, the elements of uncertainty and risk associated with their transition are becoming more apparent, and there is a growing need for a new youth policy to assist choices for youth. In the same way as Bulgarian society needs to find its identity and the term 'post-communism' is becoming less and less satisfactory, post-Komsomol youth also needs definitions to guide new youth policies.

73. K. Gospodinov, 'Juventology and/or Sociology of Youth. An Attempt for Theoretical Introduction', *Youth Problems* (Sofia), Vol. 11, 1997 (in Russian).

74. Mitev, P.-E. 'Sociology Facing Youth Problems', *Youth Problems* (Sofia), Vol. 34, 1982 (in Russian).

75. Mitev, *Bulgarian Youth in Time of Transition*, op. cit.

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6. Youth in the processes of transition and modernization in the Slovak Republic

Ladislav Macháček

State youth policy in the modernization process in Slovakia

Designing a state policy for youth in post-communist, and subsequently independent Slovakia has been a complicated process. The country is still searching for a satisfactory distribution of responsibilities among the central organs of state administration. And there is a parallel search, with no end yet in sight, for partnership between the state and civil society. The youth movements are still not sure whether they want a state ministry of youth; neither politicians nor youth organizations are sure what the responsibilities of such a ministry should be and a host of government departments have become entrenched in disputes about the responsibilities of each. Why has youth policy in Slovakia become such a muddle?

The following passages argue, first, that independent Slovakia needs a new law on youth work rather than legislation on youth *per se*. Second, it is argued that a law focused on youth work will bypass conflicts between the various organs of government. Third, it is argued that the independent youth movements need the protection and support that only the state can offer, and that the absence of such support, with a clear legal base, is the greatest threat to their independence and existence.

Why is all this not generally acknowledged? The core answer lies in the difficulties that inevitably arise in state-building in a newly independent country. Slovakia's difficulties are particularly acute. The country became independent as recently as 1993 and has no earlier modern history of independence to draw upon. The Bratislava-based administration and its politicians are inexperienced in dealing with national, let alone international, problems. Herein lie the reasons why, in 1997, Slovakia still has no agreed youth policy. Herein also lie the roots of Slovakia's unpopularity in European Union circles. The country has been excluded from the first group of countries to be nurtured

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towards full membership. Slovakia is repeatedly chastised for failing to stabilize democracy, and for its tardy record on privatization and the free market.

The European Union needs a better understanding of Slovakia's situation. In the field of youth legislation and policy, the Slovak case, when properly analysed, reveals with unusual clarity the principles that must govern the role of the state in countries where youth organizations have their roots in civil society rather than state/party structures.

First steps

Slovakia's search for a new youth policy began with a legislative initiative by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport which was concluded by a government decree on new principles for the state's policy towards youth. The next steps should have involved implementing these principles through a law on the protection and support of youth. The basic principles of state policy towards youth in Slovakia were in fact approved by the Slovakian government on 7 January 1992 (Zásady, 1992) but have subsequently been only partially implemented.

However, Slovakia has become a full and active member of the Council of Europe whose member states have permanent bodies responsible for the coordination of youth care. The appraisal of youth care in all European countries which took place in 1985 found that only six ministers or state secretaries for youth were actually installed, even though a further five countries had youth issues included in broader ministerial portfolios on education and culture, for example. (Ramos, 1993) By 1993, this situation had changed considerably. As many as fourteen states had established central organs responsible for youth which were headed either by a minister or a state secretary while in thirteen states the youth sector came under other ministries. The cultural agreement of the Council of Europe which regulates the cooperation of ministers responsible for youth has not yet adopted any clear standpoint with respect to desirability of 'autonomy' for youth sections. This is not really a contentious issue. Some countries, including the United Kingdom, play a full part in these sessions, though they permanently vote against resolutions that would require the treatment of youth as a special section of the population with interests safeguarded by its own ministry. In the Slovak Republic the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport was initially established with a separate section for youth and sport. Later this ministry was transformed into the Ministry of Education and Science, which installed a state secretary responsible for the spheres of youth and sport. At present, therefore, this ministry includes a special section responsible for state policy towards youth.

Many other European countries have similar administrative arrangements. This solution to the location of state care of youth is fully compatible with the Council of Europe's conventions. Slovakia's administrative set-up has proved perfectly acceptable to other member countries. Indeed, Slovakia has played a leading role via the Council of Europe in advising other former communist countries on the reform of their youth ministries' remits, and their relationships with youth organizations rooted in civil society rather than party/state administration. However, a resolution of the fourth conference

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of European Ministers Responsible for Youth (held from 13 to 15 April 1993) has posed problems within Slovakia. This states that any policy towards youth should be global and implemented impartially in respect of all groups of young people in all regions (Mládez, 1993). This should really pose no special problems for Slovakia. Its administrative solution is very similar to those of the Austrian Ministry of Environment, Family and Youth, the German Ministry of Youth, Women and Old Age Pensioners, and the French Ministry of Youth and Sport. In practice, however, Slovakia has encountered internal political difficulties.

One body of opinion has queried whether any state policy can be truly impartial. This has been a hot issue in a newly independent country in which the creation and maintenance of national cohesion has inevitably been a leading political issue.

The second phase in forming Slovakia's state youth policy

The decline in prestige, arguably stigma, attached to any state policy towards youth has been a definite complication in the post-communist situation. This has applied in many former communist countries. In Slovakia this led to the initial rejection by youth organizations of the principles proposed by the Slovak government. These principles, had they been adopted, would undoubtedly have strengthened the position of the state *vis-à-vis* youth.

Disputes surfaced when the text was under preparation and were reflected in a speech by the representative of the Youth Council of Slovakia (YCS) at a youth-care conference (Kubik, 1992). This body was created soon after November 1989. It is a self-governing organization composed of representatives of forty-five non-governmental youth organizations, some linked to political parties, others to churches, and others based on sport and other leisure-time activities. Representatives of the Youth Council of Slovakia felt unable to support the government's proposal on the relationship between the state and the YCS even though they were aware that only a legal guarantee would eliminate the excuses of inactive politicians and the misuse of the legal vacuum to ignore youth problems. The representatives of the YCS pointed to several obstacles which, in their opinion, prevented acceptance of the proposal: it was said to be unrealistic in that it would not solve the problems that were to be solved, it was said to be inconsistent with existing statutes in so far as the concept 'youth' and its age range were concerned, and it was said to contradict the existing civil code governing maturity and criminal responsibility. Finally, the YCS representatives argued that the proposal was based on not just Soviet administrative principles but on the traditions of Russian tsarism.

A comparison of arguments of the YCS and the government's proposals shows that there is a problem in legitimizing the interests and needs of youth in any legal code. Solving this problem requires sensitive terminology. Three comments made by other government departments are particularly noteworthy.

1. The Ministries of the Interior, and of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, did not agree with the draft principles because, they argued, the relevant problems were already regulated by existing legal codes, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, international conventions on human rights and liberties, and conventions on the rights of children.

2. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family indicated that the rights and duties of other central organs of the state executive were being infringed.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture argued that the concept 'youth' should be made consistent with the terminology of existing laws.

Redefining the problem

The young people and scientists who first attempted to found post-communist civic associations on 10 April 1989, were aware of the dangers of interministerial disputes about their respective responsibilities. A definition of the problem was presented by Professor J. Cecetka, the chairman of the Commission for Youth Sociology at the Sociological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, who subsequently accepted candidature for the Chair of the State Committee for Children and Youth. In his article in the youth newspaper *Smena* (New Generation), he argued against the widespread opinion favouring a Ministry of Youth, and claimed that it would be more advantageous 'to leave the youth agenda with the existing ministries, and to create an institution above the ministries instead, which would cooperate with them in solving youth problems with respect to the coordination of activities and the interaction of individual ministries, whereby it would be superior to them in solving or establishing principles for solving particular issues of youth, and especially those problems that have not been managed by any ministry so far, which could be handed over to its sole competence' (Macháček, 1992).

At that time the foundation of a state committee for youth, or a ministry of youth, as an expression of a new state policy, was not torpedoed by competence conflicts between the different ministries. The controversy was centred around the very idea of a single youth organization or any single state institution for youth. This invited allegations that Soviet, even tsarist, practices were being retained. In the context of such a paternalist model the constructive efforts of sociologists could not appear innocent; on the contrary, they appeared to some to be a dangerous tendency splitting the unity of youth despite their primary intention of respecting the emerging plurality of civic associations. No better example of this confusion can be given than the comment of one participant in the debate who said, 'It seems to me at the moment that a Ministry of Youth might be perhaps established, but then the Youth Council (SZM) would have to disappear' (Macháček, 1992).

Pluralism and the state

The existence of plurality of civic youth associations after 1989 may be seen as the supreme substantiation of the need for a unified state youth policy. The authentic, democratic and autonomous development of youth movements and their evolution as independent agents youth work, independently setting their own tasks and forms of activities, can be regarded as defining the responsibilities of a central organ of state administration. All in all, the independent existence of an object of competence in civil

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society can determine the legitimate form and subject of state policy. Proceeding in this manner can avoid any competence conflicts with other institutions of state administration, and fears that any state department of youth might compromise the independence of youth organizations.

At present, according to Professor J. Cecetka, new needs of youth have arisen in connection with the process of individualization under the conditions of a market economy. These needs have in fact been recognized by the Section for Youth in the Slovakian Ministry of Education.

The fourth conference of European ministers responsible for youth care recommended developing information services for youth and connecting these across Europe in the years to come. The conference had in mind schemes such as support for youth mobility and exchange and research on youth. (Mládez, 1993) All these initiatives require governmental action. This, in turn, depends on national governments having ministries with the power to act. None of this suppresses individualization, individualism or the independence of non-governmental youth organizations.

The experience of several years of cooperation between the youth section of the Slovakian ministry and other departments has made it possible for the practical problems encountered by centres managing youth leisure activities to be transferred by mutual consent into the former's competence. This is an example of how competence issues can be solved without raising problems and fears as to how the new state executive will grapple with its tasks and responsibilities. Simultaneously, clear evidence of this executive body's willingness to respect the responsibilities of other state departments has been required. Unfortunately this has not always been forthcoming. One body of opinion within the youth section of the ministry has insisted that addressing the problems of young people, and representing their interests, depends on this section becoming the ultimate authority over all government policies and programmes aimed at young people. This would involve, for example, some transfer of responsibility for operating labour market services, despite the present ministry operating one of the most effective networks of employment offices in the whole of East-Central Europe.

A consensual division of labour between government departments has been established in Lower Austria. A. Kager (1993) has explained how the Lower Austria Act of 1983 emphasizes that work with youth 'should be far more active where needs arise which cannot be sufficiently fulfilled either by parents, home or school, or leisure-time opportunities in culture, sport and so on. Other needs of youth in the social and labour spheres fall under the competence of such state organs as the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, or, alternatively, the Ministry of the Interior, or the Ministry of Justice.

Responsibilities

Deciding which tasks to entrust to a new type of state youth organ has been a major political issue in Slovakia. From the presented arguments it would seem that the most controversial tasks are those which, up to now, have been located in other organs of state administration. From the legal point of view, there is the problem of the respective

responsibilities of civil, non-governmental youth associations on the one hand, and the youth section of the ministry on the other. As this problem was not solved early on (not even a pragmatic compromise was achieved) the controversy imperilled efforts to overcome other troubles. The legal aspects of defining the role of state *vis-à-vis* youth are well developed in countries with governments of strong social-democratic orientation which express the principle of social solidarity between the older and younger generations through their youth policies. Simultaneously, the principle of influence or intervention by the state in social and civil processes is generally accepted.

In states where a liberal or conservative orientation prevails the existence of youth as a special social group may not be accepted. The state may claim no right to intervene in this sphere, and the problems of young adults may be left to civil society. Yet even in such countries the protection and support of children at least up to age 18 is invariably respected. Ways of addressing social and other problems concerning young people over 18 differ in various ways depending on how the legal code grants benefits or aid, or imputes legal responsibility according to the age of the citizen. Slovakia's legal system does not acknowledge the concept of 'youth'. The above-mentioned Lower Austria Law on youth defines as adults all persons who reach the age of 18. The law on youth of the Federal Republic of Germany recognizes 'children' and 'adults', but also adds the category 'young adults' or 'young mature persons'.

In the Marxist-Leninist sociological paradigm the concept of 'youth' was related to a homogeneous social structure in which specific tasks, connected with the socialization process, were overlaid by a social-class perspective.

The system change in the transition to a market economy arouses expectations of prosperity linked to individual performance, especially in the competitive struggle in the labour market. Conditions of socialization are being changed, and that is why youth is also changing from being a homogeneous social group in the socialist social structure into a social aggregate of individuals at a certain phase in the life course. It seems more appropriate to speak about young citizens, young workers, young artists, young urban citizens, young citizens of the middle Slovakian region, and so on. In this way the issue of the legitimation of youth care is easily lost. Doubts arise over automatically classifying all young people in the labour market into the 'youth' category. The arguments of legal science and legislative practice that new legal norms should be compatible with existing ones are extended by arguments drawn from sociological theories about youth. The examples of other countries' legal codes governing youth protection and support suggest that concepts of children, adolescents and young adults can be applied.

Legitimation strategy

It follows from the above-mentioned analysis that there are several reasons for the need for, and equally persuasive reasons for, fundamental changes in the youth law which have been proposed and debated for five years in Slovakia. The government should realize that the aim of legislative activity concerning youth need not, and should not be an extension of the previous competences of the Ministry of Education in this sphere. After approving its draft principles on state policy towards youth in 1992, the Government of

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the Slovak Republic had no need to introduce new, major legislation on the protection and support of children and youth. It needed simply to give the ministry's existing responsibilities a new legal base.

In the author's opinion, the strategic aim of the legislative process at present should be stabilization and anchoring, via the Slovak Republic's law on youth work (children and young people) in leisure time, those responsibilities which are currently exercised by the Youth Section of the Ministry of Education. We can summarize these competences briefly:

- ◆ Supporting the activities of civil youth associations and other subjects engaged in work with youth by means of youth protection and support programmes.
- ◆ Guiding local youth care by means of tutors operating from the state administration through district offices.
- ◆ Operating information services through a network of Information centres for the young.
- ◆ Guiding and managing the network of centres for the leisure time of children and youth. Core functions will need to remain with the central state executive even when the process of regionalization in the Slovak Republic has been completed. We can mention these core functions briefly:
 - ◆ Formulation of state policy for youth, its planning and coordination with all state and civil entities engaged in work with youth.
 - ◆ Management and distribution of financial grants for youth care from the state budget.
 - ◆ Gathering and evaluating information necessary for drafting state policy and developing work with youth in leisure time, including the results of scientific research on youth.
 - ◆ Developing and promoting international cooperation in youth care.

Conclusion

The need for a change in the Slovak Government's strategy of legitimizing youth interests and needs in the legislative process has pragmatic and theoretical roots. The pragmatic source lies in an unusually strong inertia of competence interests in different organs of the central state administration in Slovakia but there is really no need to challenge this inertia. The theoretical point of view follows from the retreat from the model of paternalistic state care and from strengthening liberal tendencies in the transformation of Slovakia's political, social and economic systems. There is no case, in a democratic market-oriented society, for a paternalistic social-welfare base for state youth policies. The role of state interventions should not be to regulate market forces and civil society but rather to encourage self-help, to assist youth organizations to be independent, and to encourage them to encourage young people to become active citizens, partly but not exclusively via their involvement in youth organizations, thereby strengthening modernizing tendencies and the development of Slovakia into a truly open society. Ken Roberts is right when he says: 'Countries which have retained youth ministries or state departments for youth are wondering what their role should be' (Roberts, 1997).

Ultimately it is irrelevant whether a case for state care, expressed in the form of rights to protection or support, is derived from age, gender or ethnic status. From the point of view of the legislative process the principle goal, for both theoretical and prag-

matic reasons, has to be support for active citizenship and civil participation. In the case of young people this goal can be pursued largely through institutions engaged in youth work in young people's leisure time.

The promotion of active citizenship comprising social and political participation is fostered and practised, providing sites for self-socialization into the contemporary demands and values of a polity that focuses on social progressivism, and is especially amenable to the extension of citizenship rights, since these accord to young people an independent *raison d'être sociale* (Chisholm, 1995).

The relations between the central state administration on youth and the Youth Council of Slovakia – representing youth associations – should also be considered from the point of view of the frontiers of the state and the civic society, their relativity and permeability. If the Youth Council of Slovakia is trying to take over the functions of the state, for example the redistribution of financial funds among individual youth organizations, it provokes a very important question concerning their identity as the 'representative' of civic youth associations, as an independent, objective interpreter of their interests. It would also require an increase of paperwork in order to assure the executive and supervisory tasks. However, such a role is unacceptable for the Youth Council of Slovakia and its member organizations because it would imply a return to the proliferated bureaucracy in youth organizations before 1989.

This is apparently yet another reason why additional time and practical experience would be necessary to examine whether the Principles and the Programmes really are the very optimal standard of relationship between the state and civic society in the area of youth.

Principles of the state youth policy and programmes of youth support and protection in the Slovak Republic from 1992 until 1996 significantly encouraged the development of out-of-school pursuits for young people in all districts of Slovakia. They helped to build a new network of associations, unions and youth initiatives as well as inspiring adult citizens with deeper interest in youth work (Principles, 1992):

The Principles of state policy in relation to young people adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic emphasize:

1. State policies in relation to young people constitute a system of measures aimed at protection and promotion of young people which shall be prepared and implemented primarily within the family, school, cultural, social, economic, health-care, population, and ecological domains.
2. The state shall create legislative and material prerequisites for the protection and promotion of young people in the interests of the broad development of children and young people.
3. Young people in the sense of state policies shall be understood as the social group (provisionally defined as ranging from 15 to 26 years of age; the age range shall be stipulated ultimately in the Act) who are preparing themselves and gradually entering social life.
4. The aim of state policies in relation to young people shall be the creation of conditions suitable for their high-quality education, instruction and professional preparation and their entry into employment and social life. The policies support the development of the skills and talents of young people both inside and outside the school.

5. State policies in relation to young people shall devote special attention to the protection and the promotion of young people from socially weak families (single mothers bringing up their children, divorced parents with children, unemployed parents with children and teenagers, etc.). It shall create the conditions for development of a preventative, prophylactic and supportive system aimed at endangered, problem-causing and marginal groups of young people.

6. The major areas of state policies in relation to young people include the following:

- ◆ protection of civic rights and freedoms, creation of legislative and material conditions for participation of young people in the life of democratic society, care of the family as the basic educational environment for children and young people,
- ◆ creation of conditions for activities of civic associations of children and young people,
- ◆ education and instruction of children and young people, their professional and qualification-increasing training for jobs and professions,
- ◆ support before employment, stimulation of youth employment and protection against unemployment,
- ◆ creation of conditions for leisure time, recreation and entertainment,
- ◆ promotion and creation of conditions for youth exchange, youth mobility and development of international youth contacts,
- ◆ promotion of youth participation in the cultural life of society, creation of conditions for creative contribution of young people into cultural advancement,
- ◆ creation of specific conditions for advancing the talents of young people in various areas of activity,
- ◆ protection and broad promotion of health care for young people,
- ◆ specific care, education, protection and promotion of physically disabled young people, and inadequately socialized young people,
- ◆ protection against negligence, demoralization, cruelty and other phenomena endangering the healthy moral development of children and young people.

After 1993, the polarization of governmental coalition and political opposition influenced young people's political representation and participation in associations; young people struggled for their thoughts and beliefs. In the spring of 1996, a new umbrella-like organization called the Slovak Youth Congress was founded (close to the governmental coalition). Its goal was for the new president (M. Bozík) to 'become an alternative to the Youth Council of Slovakia' (in opposition to the government).

The majority of young people watched the struggle rather passively since they were actively involved in solving the problems which arose from their demands for education and labour. Youth unemployment is a reality. The real youth movement 'lives' outside the structures of youth associations. It takes the form of local cultural and sports life or of the movements of young people's sport and pop fan clubs, even the form of spontaneous groupings of urban 'skinheads' (attacking Roma people).

The development of civil youth associations is important for the socialization of young people as citizens of the new republic. The number of institutions for extracurricular education and training for young people is thus growing, and a system of education towards citizenship is being created.

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7. Finnish young people and youth policy in Finland

Helena Helve

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the following issues concerning Finnish young people:

1. How did the economic recession affect the attitudes and future expectations of young Finns?
2. Young Finns as citizens.
3. Evaluation and critical viewpoint of Finnish youth policy and youth work.

The economic recession in Finland during the 1990s threatened the lifestyle of young people.⁷⁶ They experienced housing problems, difficulties in earning a living, frustration due to unemployment, a decline in positive opportunities and exclusion from society. Economic recession also changed the attitudes and values of young people.

Attitudes and future expectations of young people

Impact of recession on attitudes of young Finns

The deteriorating economic situation in Finland was reflected in young people's more rigid attitudes regarding for instance refugees and development aid. Whereas in 1989 every other boy and every fifth girl were of the opinion that development aid should not be increased as long as people in Finland needed help, three years later (1992) almost every second girl (40 per cent) and a clear majority of boys (66 per cent) thought so. This has not changed since: in 1995/96 40 per cent of girls and 57 per cent of boys were against increases in development aid as long as there is need in Finland.

In 1989 young people (85 per cent of girls and 73 per cent of boys) considered the standard of living high enough in Finland that the country could afford to take bet-

76. This is a general observation, but it must be remembered that young people should not be examined as one homogeneous group.

ter care of the unemployed and other disadvantaged population groups. Attitudes towards such groups also grew more negative, although well over half (78 per cent of girls and 59 per cent of boys) were still of the same opinion in 1992. By 1995/96, the overall figures had gone down (67 per cent girls, 51 per cent boys)

Most young people (66 per cent of girls and 77 per cent of boys) in 1989 thought that Finland was too indulgent with regard to people who abuse the social-welfare system, the lazy and other 'spongers'. The most uncompromising attitudes in this respect were found among the young working population. Girls had grown more adamant regarding those who abuse social welfare (70 per cent), whereas boys had become more lenient (66 per cent).

Expectations for the future

Young Finns generally take an optimistic view of the future. For instance in 1989, 87 per cent believed that trained and diligent people would find jobs. This belief weakened with the recession in 1992 (74 per cent) and still more during the following three years (71 per cent in 1995/96).

According to the most recent Youth Barometer (1998), an increasing number of young people believed that the employment situation had improved, which was indeed the case: (46 per cent in 1996, 59 per cent in 1997 and 72 per cent in 1998). In 1994 when the unemployment rates peaked, young people were still confident that the employment situation would improve (82 per cent), although by 1996 the figure had fallen. In 1996 the 25-29 age-group had the least faith in improvement: 41 per cent disagreed with the claim that the employment situation would improve.

The Youth Barometer also shows that young people still have confidence in education and consider it the right way to improve their position in the labour market. In fact, this confidence has grown in recent years, though job prospects have not been much better.

Young Finns are indeed well educated and trained. According to OECD statistics, 95 per cent of 16-year-old and 80 per cent of 18-year-old Finns participated in secondary education and training. Only Germany had slightly higher figures. Unemployment does not seem to dampen young people's willingness to educate themselves.

Self-employment has been suggested as one alternative to unemployment for young people. Entrepreneurship, however, does not interest them: in 1995, 3 per cent, in 1997, 2 per cent and in 1998 only 1 per cent intended to establish their own enterprises whereas 55 per cent rejected the idea completely. When young people were asked to give reasons for their reluctance to establish enterprises in 1996, they mentioned the risks involved (52 per cent of all respondents), lack of information or training (14 per cent), the demands of self-employment (13 per cent) and lack of experience (11 per cent). Women were more critical of entrepreneurship than men. Two out of three (65 per cent) were sure that they would not establish their own enterprise in the near future. (Nuorisobarometri, 1998).

During the economic boom, young people felt privileged to be Finns. The recession did not alter their views. Their feeling of privilege was almost as strong in 1992,

when the rate of youth unemployment was already very high, as during the economic boom three years earlier. In 1992, 85 per cent of girls (in 1989 also 85 per cent) and 74 per cent of boys (in 1989, 77 per cent) considered themselves fortunate and privileged to be Finns. In 1995/96 the opinion remained largely the same.

Young Finns as citizens

Young people's doubts regarding citizens' chances of influencing social decision-making have been intensified by the recession. They were generally of the opinion (in 1995/96 62 per cent of girls and 49 per cent of boys; in 1992, 76 per cent of girls and 50 per cent of boys; in 1989, 62 per cent of girls and 45 per cent of boys) that citizens do not have much influence on the decisions made in our society.

Every other young person thought that the political parties had drifted further and further away from the problems of the ordinary citizen. One in three thought that no party advanced matters that were particularly important to young people, and these views remained the same from 1989 to 1995/96. This attitude could lead to the political exclusion of young people.

Finland joined the European Union (EU) in 1995. In the same year young people were asked 'If you had voted in the referendum on Finland's EU membership, would you have: (a) voted for membership; (b) voted against membership; or (c) voted at all?' Boys showed a slightly more positive attitude towards the EU (60 per cent positive) than girls (50 per cent positive).

Despite their critical attitude towards political parties, 55 per cent of young people said that they were very or fairly interested in social issues. The most important problem for young people in Finnish society was unemployment (53 per cent). According to the Youth Barometer, young people value work, but some of them accept unemployment if income is otherwise secured. (Nuorisobarometri, 1998.)

Responses of unemployed young people to the statement: 'Being unemployed is not so bad if income is secured' (in percentages)

Year	Fully agree	Agree to a large extent	Disagree to a large extent	Completely disagree	Don't know
1994	17	30	29	21	3
1995	17	36	24	22	1
1996	20	31	26	22	1
1997	25	22	30	21	3
1998	16	31	29	21	3

The table shows that about half of unemployed young people accept unemployment if income is secured. The number was greater in 1995 and 1996, when unemployment rates were higher, than in 1997 and 1998. It appears that secured income for unemployed young people has been a real alternative (although the Barometer interpreted it differently). It is fair to assume that if unemployment is accepted as a way of life, the

appreciation of work will diminish. Finns have traditionally emphasized the importance of hard work in keeping with Protestant ethics. In a comparative study of British and Finnish young people's response to the claim that 'a person must have a job to feel a full member of society', 24 per cent of Finns between 16 and 19 agreed, but only 8 per cent of British young people of the same age thought so.

According to the 1998 Youth Barometer, 60 per cent of young people considered unemployment bad, even if income was secured (57 per cent of women and 62 per cent of men). Among those who considered unemployment bad, the higher educated were in greater number. 81 per cent of the respondents who had a university education considered unemployment bad as opposed to 60 per cent of vocational-school students.

Evaluation and critical viewpoints about Finnish youth policy and youth work

Finnish youth policy

The responsibility for young people's well-being rests with the government and local authorities, as well as with families. Authorities determine the overall lines of action and deal with questions relating to young people's income, social welfare and health.

The line of action adopted by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is to promote a healthy lifestyle, eliminate preventable risks, develop social welfare and public health services, and design welfare and social policies that take account of young people's needs. The ongoing concerted effort to ensure young people's welfare and take their needs into consideration in the activities of different ministries could be called a symbiotic welfare policy.

In practice, local authorities are responsible for providing social and welfare services. The system seeks to classify and sort people into groups that can be dealt with under different headings and to which it can apply a range of standardized administrative measures. Thus, a young person can become, for instance, a long-term welfare service client. It is fair to assume that what young people expect from these services is holistic measures which support their everyday life and take their whole life situation into consideration.

Therefore, a good service entails an analysis of the client's life as a whole. Faced with such expectations, the service system finds itself in difficulties, because, organized into sectors according to the type of activity, it has to some extent lost the overall perspective. Standardized services do not meet the needs of their users, whose circumstances often vary widely. Different studies have shown that young people in danger of exclusion are very critical of these services. It is fair to say that services and young people have separate existences, without a great deal of contact in practice. Young people seek help only when absolutely necessary. The world of welfare services often seems distant and alien to young people, who find it virtually impossible to influence them. Services need to develop a closer relationship with young people to be in touch with their life situations. In particular, young people's social and public health services should be more user-friendly, minimizing bureaucracy and strictly sectoral administration.

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Difficulties in transition from school to work

In Finland at the moment, the most problematic point in young people's lives is the transfer from school to employment. Questions of major political relevance in this respect are: Are there enough rewarding training places to go around, and afterwards jobs which give satisfaction and provide opportunities for self-fulfilment? How do young people begin to build a relationship with society, especially the society of paid work?

Unemployment rates among young people have decreased lately, and it is fair to assume that there are suitable training places and jobs for the majority. Young people appear to have particularly high motivation for work. According to the Youth Barometer (1996) 83 per cent of young people answered in the affirmative to the question 'Would you accept a job even if it were temporary, rather than receive unemployment benefit, if the net income was the same?' This could be taken to mean that young people are against living on social security. However, the main problem is the group of poorly trained young people who have little work experience and are burdened with various social problems, as they are inevitably at a disadvantage in the labour market. This channels their lives into given periods of employment and unemployment preordained by employment measures. This group in particular needs urgent targeted measures jointly designed by social and labour authorities. One solution would be multiprofessional projects co-financed by the European Union Social Fund.

The paradox for young people living under the threat of exclusion is that their existence often goes undetected because they are not recorded statistically. Their exclusion should not be interpreted one-dimensionally; it has to be examined from several different perspectives. At its worst, it is a combination of economic, social, health and educational disadvantage coupled with exclusion from the centres of power, participation, and labour and housing markets. In view of this, there are good reasons for expecting holistic forms of assistance for these young people from local social and public health services, local youth work, labour authorities and the various services provided by the National Insurance Institute. This requirement is recorded in the new Youth Work Act. A society with separate sectoral services cannot see young people's living conditions as a whole or view each individual's situation as unique. The stated aim is to help young people to control their lives by improving their life situation and creating conditions for civic initiatives. What this requires is a concerted effort from educational, labour and social policy-makers.

Another important requirement is urban social policy. About 70 per cent of Finns live in urban areas. During the 1990s, young people were still migrating from rural areas to towns and cities in search of jobs. This in turn leads to the exclusion of rural young people. It appears that the risk of exclusion is connected with an urban lifestyle.

Gangs, substance abuse and crime are primarily urban problems

Studies on alcohol consumption show that it is increasingly common for young people to drink in order to become intoxicated. The proportion of homeless and excluded young people, especially young immigrants from Estonia and Russia, is growing rapidly, particularly in the major cities. Criminality and the use of narcotics is the norm

among young immigrant boys. The problem in Finland is the lack of specifically urban social policy thinking.

Conflicts between youth strategy and youth work and policy

In the 1970s and 1980s the objective in Finland was to level out inequality and to guarantee conditions for growth and opportunities for self-enhancement for every citizen, regardless of his or her background. In a youth strategy project called NUOSTRA, launched in 1992, the aim was to provide new stimuli and content for youth work and thus ensure conditions for the existence and development of youth work even under difficult economic circumstances.

NUOSTRA's guiding principle was: 'Young people have the right and the duty to construct their own future.' It is not quite clear how this precept relates to the aspiration for equal opportunity. The emphasis on young people's own responsibility might even imply that a certain degree of inequality is acceptable; in other words, lurking in the background is the increasingly advocated precept that 'everyone is the architect of their own future'. On the other hand, the NUOSTRA report does stress that the condition for this responsibility is that young people are given access to it.

The priorities defined in NUOSTRA were growth and civic activity, young people's living conditions, the prevention of exclusion, and international cooperation and exchanges. Such lines of action are two-dimensional in many respects as they also mean renouncing the emphasis on welfare and equality and shifting away from the focus in youth work administration.

Conflicts in labour policy

Labour-market support is given to all people aged 18 and over after a certain waiting period. What makes this measure exceptional is that it is subject to a given condition: an untrained person aged 25 years or more who has no job must apply for vocational training (vocational institutions, on-the-job training or labour-policy training). Failure to do so means losing the labour-market support. It is true that these obligations concern only a fraction (about 3 per cent) of young people, but it does involve certain problems in terms of the Finnish constitution and human rights. In the background one can discern the 'strategy of least resistance': once the social benefits of a group who have no efficient mechanism for looking after their interests have been reduced, it is much easier to extend the cutbacks to other population groups.

The youth-wage experiment and young people's labour-market support show that the measures taken against young people have become harsher. Certain obligations and duties are imposed on them for the sole reason that they are young; this is based on the traditional idea that young people will otherwise channel their frustration into hooliganism and irregular lifestyles. This kind of authoritarian attitude is not in keeping with the current emphasis on individuality and pluralism.

The most traditional form of labour policy for young people is to increase training provision and subsidized jobs. This method has been used, ever since the Second World War, to 'stock' the surplus work force and remove them from the labour market.

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In previous years it apparently worked well, because unemployment rates remained relatively low throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

One important training and employment measure taken in the 1990s was 'Alternatives to Unemployment', outlined by a taskforce composed of permanent secretaries, who proposed an increase in the provision of initial and further training by 33,000-34,000 openings between 1994 and 1996. This included 8,000 openings in initial, further and apprenticeship training. In addition, the programme was intended to provide 6,500 subsidized jobs for newly qualified young people. According to a review commissioned by the Ministry of Education, 70 per cent of the proposals had been implemented by the end of 1995. Measures concerning apprenticeship training and subsidized jobs were launched in 1995.

Even though the permanent secretaries' proposals have only been partially implemented, unemployment has decreased by 50 per cent in the age group 20-24 and by 25 per cent among all young people under 25 years of age. Altogether, the unemployed rate for young people under 25 went down from 97,000 (January 1994) to 67,000 (March 1996).

Another significant programme for young people's education and employment in the early 1990s was launched under Objective 3 in the European Union's ESR Programme, which seeks to integrate young people into the labour market and prevent exclusion. One form of action is to increase apprenticeship training and youth workshops. The intention is to provide 2,100 six-month trainee places in youth workshops, 650 apprenticeships in initial training and 5,200 in further vocational training between 1995 and 1999. The impact of these measures cannot be assessed at this point.

Despite the decrease in unemployment, the policy of increasing the number of subsidized jobs and educational provision has run its course. Continual training without clear objectives is a waste of national resources, especially since its quantity has no relation to quality. On the other hand, the expansion of apprenticeship training and youth workshops is a step in the right direction, because both can also be used to improve the quality of training, notably the matching of training and employment. The problem is, however, that they are primarily intended for the so-called problem youth who shun traditional forms of training. This involves the risk that they will turn into a branded last resort in training, which does not interest 'ordinary' young people. This in turn may undermine the development of apprenticeship training and youth workshops. There is the additional risk that employers start to exploit the inexpensive input of young people in apprenticeship training and workshop training at the cost of real jobs.

Despite the high rate of unemployment, Finland cannot truly be considered a society of mass unemployment, because the proportion of long-term unemployed is low. This is backed up by the findings of a survey made by Statistic Finland: 61 per cent of the active population between 20 and 64 who had jobs both in 1989 and 1994 had not been unemployed, and most of them had had the same job during those five years. The biggest problem in recent unemployment has been the cumulation of unemployment. The share of unemployed young people has remained relatively stable, at about a quarter of the total. In practice this means that the flow and/or from unemployment is relatively brisk. Unemployment cumulates in poorly trained and/or untrained workforces.

The result of this cumulation of unemployment may be that youth unemploy-

ment is categorized as just one among many other social problems. The alternative solution is to raise long-term and youth unemployment to the fore of social policy and actively seek constructive solutions to these problems.

In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion in Finland about entrepreneurship, which has also been offered as a remedy to youth unemployment. According to studies, young people do not see self-employment as an attractive alternative. There are several reasons for this. First of all, young people generally lack the work experience and competence needed. Secondly, they lack credibility: they find it difficult to convince bank managers and other financiers of the feasibility of their business ideas. Thirdly, the Finnish school system does not provide very good prerequisites for entrepreneurship, because its mission has traditionally been to socialize people for paid work and provide the relevant knowledge and skills, giving less attention to entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment are important and concrete instruments in combating unemployment. It must, however, be kept in mind that not everyone is cut out to be an entrepreneur and that an enterprise built on a shaky basis does more harm than good. In addition, several studies have shown that the optimal age for entrepreneurship seems to be around 35. At this age, the prospective entrepreneur has gained enough competence, work experience, self-confidence and 'intellectual maturity' for such an independent undertaking. Thus, it is not feasible to direct great expectations in this respect at the very youngest age brackets in the workforce, whose chances of success are at their lowest and the risk of failure at its highest.

Solutions to youth unemployment should accordingly be sought outside the paid-work sector, in a buffer zone between paid work and unemployment. In Finland the provision of voluntary and leisure activities is abundant. These could be linked to work so that young people could get experience and some compensation, though no actual wages. It would also be essential to develop this system into an alternative (not obligatory) to unemployment, work practice, training, apprenticeship and even paid work.

Critical viewpoints in education policy

In Finland, what is true of welfare services in general also largely applies to educational services. Services and young people are separate entities without sufficiently close links at the level of action. The education system does not open up to meet all young people's needs in a rewarding way.

A more individual-oriented model for education policy gained ground in the 1990s and the education system for the twenty-first century is more client-oriented. In practice, this means a shift from centralization to delegated decisions, relaxed norms and an awareness of individual differences. During the economic recession, criticism was levelled at the high cost of welfare services which did not tally with the liberalist principles of the market economy. In this context, the 'equality of educational opportunity' has gained traits of educational Darwinism: a growing emphasis on open competition – unbridled by any egalitarian measures – in both the educational and labour markets.

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A number of proposals have also been made for amending educational legislation, some of which are well justified, but they are by no means without problems. Increasing freedom of choice in compulsory schooling, together with a growing provision of 'special classes' (music, languages, etc.) for different talents, is to be welcomed but may lead to inequality among comprehensive schools in the longer run. The more fortunate will find their way to the better schools, while those at a disadvantage will be left with the local 'ordinary' school. As Finnish cities and towns are clearly divided into residential areas inhabited by different social groups, it may even deepen the threatening division of the nation into first- and second-class citizens. The education system should not contribute to a development that puts citizens on a different footing, however important it is to cater for the needs of young talents.

Under favourable circumstances, the new freedom in educational arrangements may diversify and enrich schools, but problems arise if local authorities primarily use it in order to make cutbacks by purchasing services as cheaply as possible at the cost of quality. Now that decisions have been delegated to local authorities and schools, it is only to be hoped that they have the presence of mind and wisdom to allocate adequate resources to education and its development.

The most serious shortcoming in the legislative reform relates to secondary-level schooling and the decision to preserve the parallel system of general and vocational education. It would have been preferable to draft a law that provides for both upper-secondary school and vocational institutions; this was pointed out by opinion against the bill.

Counted in years, schooling is longer in Finland than in other European countries. Finns have always placed great value on education. However, if schooling does not open jobs for young people, it may well lose its value in their eyes. It can be claimed that nothing in its content or in its learning outcome justifies education and training of even current length in today's society. Overlapping contents and intellectual idling already cause great vexation for many pupils.

Modern society, which at least in principle is built on paid work, seems increasingly to see the education system as a form of day care or storage for the potential workforce. When the labour market is saturated and neither young people nor adults can find worthwhile work, or children worthwhile occupations, the school becomes a 'great holding-tank'. Increases in training provision and longer study times are used to reduce overt unemployment. Since unemployment reached mass proportions, educational establishments from comprehensive schools to universities seem more and more to resemble waiting rooms. This may eventually prevent the school from focusing on its actual mission: building and upgrading people's knowledge and skill reserves.

Finnish training, which is very school-like, has been criticized above all for being too detached from the world of work and for not providing valid skills and competences for work. Recently, efforts have been made to bridge the wide gap between training and work. In the 1990s, the most prominent and extensive educational reforms were introduced in vocational training.

Finland is currently establishing a German-Netherlands type of non-university sector alongside the university sector and gradually upgrading most college-level vocational training to a higher education level. This will evidently prolong vocational educa-

tion. What actual improvements, if any, this will bring to school-industry relations remains to be seen. Universities in particular have aired doubts, suggesting that this reform will remain a mere 'sign-changing' operation designed to boost status.

Non-typical employment relations (part-time and temporary jobs, irregular employment, etc.) became so prevalent in the 1990s that they are almost typical. In the unstable labour market, ever greater value is placed on various personal qualities, such as life experience, outlook and action, as well as on formal qualifications. Even a good education no longer automatically guarantees a career; educational choices have become venture investments.

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8. The juvenile crisis and the social construction of youth in Portugal

Natália Alves

Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to account for the way the youth issue has been built and approached in the field of social science, particularly in the field of sociology. We will deal with the process through which ‘juvenile problems’ are converted into ‘sociological issues’. Our purpose therefore, is not to analyse in detail the problems facing Portuguese youth, as these are to a great extent similar to those of Central European countries – difficulties in acceding to the labour world and in the transition to adult life. The purpose here is to analyse the social processes of construction of these problems and the way they influence scientific production in the field of the sociology of youth in Portugal.

Social construction of youth

The idea of youth as a social category with more or less defined characteristics and specific ‘problems’ is not a new idea in Portuguese society. It started to be outlined in the second half of the 1960s with the 1964 and 1969 academic crises and with the increasing importance the student movement acquired in the struggle against the totalitarian Estado Novo regime. However, it was not until the 1980s that this category affirmed itself and became visible.

In fact, even if it is true that to speak of youth initially meant to speak of university students, it is also true that subsequently the word ‘youth’ became largely associated with the word ‘crisis’. The profound political, economic and social changes that took place in Portuguese social formation over the last few decades carried along a set of problems that affected young people in a way until then unknown. Juvenile unemployment, the demand for education, juvenile delinquency, criminality and drug addiction, have decisively shattered the idealized conception of youth.

The image of 'utopian' and 'irreverent' youth that constituted a certain national mythology have been replaced by 'problem youth'. In the eyes of the ordinary citizen and public authorities, youth has become a social problem and a priority area for political intervention. The creation in 1982 of a public organism destined for intervention on the juvenile population (Juvenile Organisms Support Fund) and the launching of policy measures in the field of employment, professional training, culture, housing, etc. specifically aimed at this group, have contributed to the increasing importance this category has assumed in social categorization processes and in what some authors call youth naturalization.

The process of youth naturalization, the idea of homogeneity it conveys and the diffusion of an ahistorical conception of this social group cannot be dissociated from the way the media have been treating the juvenile theme. Youth is presented by journalists, and in some cases by the scientific community itself, as evidence waiting to be acknowledged, as an entity whose existence is unquestionable. From this perspective, as Grácio (1990, p. 104) mentions, the role played by some studies on youth 'corresponds to an effect of the category's *scientific homologation*, perfectly equivalent, in the political action field, to the effect of *state homologation* correlating with the constitution and autonomy of the governmental youth policy'.

In fact, within the scientific community, the youth concept is balanced between two antagonistic approaches: one of them emphasizes its inner homogeneity and the other highlights its diversity and heterogeneity (Pais, 1990, 1993). According to the first approach, youth is defined as a social group composed of individuals that belong to a certain life phase and share a specific juvenile culture, like a generation's *apanage* in terms of age. According to the second approach, youth is a diverse social group, within which distinctive juvenile cultures are shaped in function of different social class, economic conditions and interests. In this case, the youth concept refers to distinctive social universes that have hardly anything in common. While the first approach keeps close to the ideological construction of youth, comprising, in the scientific field, an object pre-constructed on the basis of common sense, the second one develops a sociological deconstruction of some features of this category's social construction, which is presented as a uniform and homogeneous entity under the form of a myth.

Youth social problems

Older generations have always viewed youth with a certain distrust. Young people have been described in public opinion as 'utopian', 'irreverent', '*solidaire*', 'irresponsible', 'self-denying' and 'individualist', varying according to specific historical and social contexts and the importance such problems assume.

However, one of the most widespread perceptions of youth, and one diffused by the media, is youth as a social problem threatening society. In fact, the work carried out by the media on youth's mystification and naturalization has been remarkable (Grácio, 1990; Schmidt, 1985; Pais, 1990). Not only have they reified some of youth's 'social problems' and subsumed others, but they have also disseminated the idea of a homogeneous and unitarian culture in which all youngsters are supposed to recognize them-

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selves. Their role in the process of social categorization and in conveying a specific image of youth may be demonstrated by a situation that although recent already belongs to our collective cultural patrimony. In fact, one of the hottest disputes on the issue of youth occurred in the early 1990s, sparked by an editorial in one of the most popular daily newspapers. Following a student's 'undignified' behaviour during a demonstration the author identified youth in the 1990s as the 'low-rank generation'. The use of this expression in the mass media caused sharp debates and had a labelling effect which unquestionably marked young people in the 1990s.

The problems young people are supposed to confront have been configured differently over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, one of the problems that most concerned some sectors of Portuguese society was university students. The university crisis seemed inevitable: the number of students increased and the university institutions were unable to absorb them. Crystallized in organizational models inherited from the Middle Ages and resolute in keeping an ancestral isolation from their environment, the universities were unable to meet the needs and demands of changing economic developments. Simultaneously they showed no openness to students' increasing demands to participate more actively in academic and political life.

Today, the problems of university students and young people in general are problems that derive from professional insertion difficulties. Juvenile unemployment and the proliferation of atypical forms of employment among the younger population are coupled with difficulties both in the transition to adult life, and in the right to proper housing. Besides, as Pais (1990, p.143) mentions:

If it is true that in the late 1960s youth was a problem in that it was defined as the protagonist of a values crisis and of a generations conflict mainly placed in the field of cultural and ethical behaviour, it is also true that from the 1970s onwards employment problems and problems concerning transition to active life have progressively taken the lead in the studies on youth, which, I'd dare say, has become an *economical category*. Yet, alongside the problems of insertion into active life, other problems are regaining increasing importance. Drug and alcohol consumption, delinquency, criminality, at-risk sexual behaviour are some of the problems that have been invading discourses on youth and influencing investigations in the field of youth sociology.

Studies on youth

From local studies on university students to global studies on youth

During the 1980s, youth became not only one of the governmental policies' target-groups but also the object of the scientific community's increasing interest. Confluence of both types of interest – one of a political nature and another of a scientific nature – is at the origin of the proliferation of studies on youths, most of them funded by public institutions.

However, it would be unfair not to mention pioneer studies carried out during the 1950s and 1960s. Contrary to inquiries in the 1980s where samples were representative of the whole juvenile population, investigations undertaken in previous decades

were exclusively based upon university students. The reason for this particular interest is due to several distinct factors: first, they represent a specific group of young people, the growth of which, albeit slow, has not stopped since the early 1950s; second, the strongly selective character of university teaching, along with the university's role in the production of a future élite, place these students in a privileged situation *vis-à-vis* the majority of Portuguese youth; third, university youth were at the head of much protest against the totalitarian regime.

The first research dates from 1952 and it consisted of an inquiry on university youth conducted by Catholic Youth, an important student body of politico-religious orientation. In 1963, Catholic Youth brought out a new survey of university youth aiming to gather information on their situation and opinions. This was followed by other studies undertaken in the context of the university institution – The Social Investigation Cabinet – who chose 'the university in Portuguese life' and 'the university in the Portuguese social system' as their themes.

After a gap of about two decades during which there was a lack of youth studies among Portuguese scientists, in 1982, Juvenile Organisms Support Fund (JOSF) carried out the first nationwide inquiry on Portuguese youth. With an instrumental dimension clearly assumed by the promoting institution, this inquiry aimed to provide political decision-makers and youth organizations with information that might support decision-making. The purpose of this survey was to gather information about the behaviour, aims, hopes and expectations of young people aged between 14 and 24. In thematic terms, the inquiry focused on young people's attitudes towards the mass media, employment, vocational guidance, and the future in general; participation in associations; use of cultural and sports equipment; relationships with adults. The institutional nature of its production and its eminently political aims meant theoretical problems were virtually absent from the inquiry and this also explains why the results were not widely diffused or produced as a scientific publication.

In the following year, 1983, the Development Studies Institute (DSI) launched a new inquiry on a representative sample of the Portuguese juvenile population aged between 15 and 24. Under the theme 'youth values and attitudes', this inquiry aimed to 'elicit data that might allow to detect the effects of the institutions' inner and social logic as well as more traditional and patent community value standards on young people's behaviour, personal and social representations, adhesion or rejection attitudes, satisfaction or uneasiness'. The 1,000 youngsters constituting this study's sample were questioned on family, teaching and school, social insertion and participation, social representations, and behaviour and attitudes towards sexuality. Contrary to the JOSF study, the results of this inquiry were widely diffused and gave rise to a considerable number of publications (França, 1985; Antunes, 1985; Reis, 1985; Pais, 1985). The importance of this study for the definition of the field of sociology of youth in Portugal is patent not only in that it allowed the formation of a database, but also that it provoked reflection among the scientific community (Almeida, 1986).

However, it is impossible not to notice that the theme of work was excluded from this research at a time when unemployment among the younger population was shooting up. It is also worth noticing that among the different themes studied, family and the new forms of conjugality and sexuality were subject to a wider diffusion in the

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scientific field. The emphasis placed on these themes by the Portuguese scientific community reflects society's concerns with the 'decline' of the traditional family and the proliferation of new forms of conjugality and sexuality. This is of particular concern in terms of religion, which still remains a key factor in understanding juvenile attitudes and behaviour.

The 1980s were also characterized by the recovery of the tradition of university education. The boom in the demand for higher education that took place after the 1974 Revolution, the public sector's difficulties in satisfying this demand, and the creation of selection mechanisms for access to university made teaching the focus of social and political attention. Simultaneously the increasing number of university students engendered social mobility on an unprecedented scale in Portuguese society.

A study of university students emerged in 1985 in the context of a sociology *licenciatura* programme provided in the Higher Institute for Work and Enterprise Sciences. The public authorities' recognition of its importance changed the study from a 'local' project, devised and developed in the context of a teaching programme and guided by pedagogical objectives, to a national project funded by a state organism. In fact, in 1989, this project was integrated into the Youth Permanent Observatory, under the tutelage of the Secretary of State of Youth, the Social Sciences Institute (SSI) being responsible for its development and technical-scientific coordination.

The inquiry was exclusively directed at university students and had two main objectives. On the one hand, it intended to 'construct an extensive and permanent socio-graphic observatory on higher-education students, comparing students from different courses and students within the same course throughout their studies'. (Almeida et al., 1988, p. 11). On the other hand, it aimed at gathering 'pertinent information allowing for an effective contribution for the study of issues such as the role university students and graduates play both in mobility fluxes and in the processes of change in the national social structure and cultural matrix'. (Casanova, 1993). The inquiry was organized around three themes: social origin, expectations, and aims concerning course attendance, future profession and society, values and representations. Although it is not a statistically representative study on the university population, data collected from the 2,500 respondents permit, with a high rate of reliability, the identification of the social insertion of the respondent and his or her family and friends in dimensions such as profession, school, geographical insertion, age and sex and they also permit a characterization of the basic axes of their systems of representation (Casanova, 1993, Almeida et al., 1988; Machado et al., 1989; Costa et al., 1990).

In the following year, university students were questioned again, this time on 'generations conflict, values conflict'. This inquiry was integrated in a project called 'Portugal in the Year 2000' promoted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The 402 students aged between 22 and 25 who participated in this study were questioned on 'dominant values in Western culture: family, work, religion, education, freedom, equality, justice, change, individualism, humanitarianism, peace and nationality' (Figueiredo, 1988, p.103).

At about the same time, another study was carried out aiming at analysing the political participation of Portuguese youth. This study involved 900 students and was sponsored by the New York Tinker Foundation. After the strong commitment of young

people in the protests against the Estado Novo regime and their high social and political protagonism between 1974 and 1975, a general discourse was constructed during the 1980s, on the subject of youth's 'de-politicization' and withdrawal from the political sphere. Results from the JOSF and DSI inquiries corroborated this belief. The problem of youth's diminished political participation was thus the study's leitmotif. It sought to test the results of previous research, aimed to verify 'whether Portuguese young people would be mere decision consumers or to what extent they would contribute to decision-making, as well as the extent of their participation as voters, militants, or political actors'. (Cruz, 1985, p. 1068).

In 1987, another inquiry was launched: 'Portuguese youth: Situation, problems, aims', ordered by the Secretary of State of Youth to the Social Science Institute, a public scientific research organism in the Social Science field. At stake was again a representative study of the Portuguese population aged between 15 and 29. The 2,000 young people participating in this study were questioned on a diverse range of themes: education and school; jobs, employment, professions; youth and the future; expectations and aims, leisure time and space use; conviviality and relations with others; money and material goods; national and youth's social identity.

As the project's coordinator (Nunes, 1989, p. 4) mentions, this research's explicit objective was 'to explore some issues not addressed in recent inquiries undertaken in Portugal, trying, however, to assure certain margins of comparability both with those inquiries and with European ones directed at young people'. In addition, a new objective was introduced, to question one of the main conclusions of the DSI inquiry, that young people had very poor or almost no social participation.

The diverse range of themes comprised in the inquiry 'Portuguese youth: situations, problems, expectations' makes this research an unavoidable reference statute in the context of sociology of youth in Portugal. It also reflected some of the problems socially recognized as specific to young people in the 1980s: professional insertion problems; problems with school and problems caused by an increasingly postponed transition to adult life. As with the DSI study, the inquiry's results became the object of several publications (Nunes et al., 1988; Schmidt, 1990, Conde, 1990).

One of the most relevant features of this study was that it revealed a conception of youth that left behind the largely diffused unitarian view. As well as exploring similarities among young people in terms of situations, expectations, aims, consumption or personal relationships, the authors chose an approach that placed in evidence this social category's distinguishing differences, making visible the plurality of youth.

The 1990s paradox: public disinterest versus private investment in the production of knowledge on youth

After a period when studies on youth proliferated, ten years followed during which extensive studies on this social group were virtually non-existent. However, this lack of investigation is not related to the scientific work carried out on this theme, or to the problems afflicting young people. In fact, youth continued to be a privileged object of study. What ceased was public investment in the production of knowledge on this social group. During this period, coinciding with social-democrat government mandates and

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with the diffusion of what some authors call a mitigated neoliberalism, governmental intervention in the youth field was mainly ruled by pragmatism and by an attempt to interfere in the resolution of some specific problems such as juvenile unemployment or difficulties in insertion into active life.

In this context, it was no wonder that not until 1997 was a new inquiry into Portuguese youth carried out. Acknowledgement of the importance of these studies for the decision-making process is well patent in the words of the Secretary of State of Youth when in the Preface of the book where the results are presented (Cabral et al., 1998) he writes:

Knowledge on the sociological framework of Portuguese youth constitutes a fundamental instrument for the establishment of a serious and realistic youth policy. In fact, at stake is to know the different types of youth profiles in order to rethink policies and assign public resources where they are most needed.

The 1997 inquiry was conducted by the SSI and carried out in the context of the Youth Permanent Observatory. As in the previous case, a representative sample of young people aged between 15 and 29 was questioned. Its aim was not only to portray youth in the 1990s but also to identify changes in their behaviour, attitudes, and values during the previous decade (Cabral et al., 1998). In this sense, some of the themes that had been the object of the 1987 study remained, such as social profiles, education, work, and national identity. New themes were: conjugality and sexuality, European citizenship, political attitudes and party inclinations.

The most recent study targeting youth, supported by extensive research and funded by public organisms is the one 'consisting of a systematized collection of a series of dispersed official statistics on some of the themes that directly or indirectly elicit some indicators on Portuguese youth's social stand' (Figueiredo et al., 1999, p. 13). As in previous cases, this study was the responsibility of the SSI and was undertaken in the context of the Youth Permanent Observatory. The statistical information gathered focused on young people aged between 15 and 29 and it covered the period from 1960 to 1997 on the following topics: demography, conjugality and family, education and vocational training; employment and unemployment; health and at risk behaviour; injury and justice. The data have been made available in the Secretary of State of Youth's official website⁷⁷ in order to allow for an easy and direct consultation by anyone interested in the youth issue.

A multitude of youth themes have been addressed in other studies, but certain themes deserve to be highlighted because of their recurrence and because of what this recurrence means in terms of its social importance. Juvenile employment and unemployment issues and insertion into active life are undoubtedly some of the themes that have most attracted researchers' attention. By mobilizing different research strategies these studies have sought not only to portray the youth situation in the labour market (Correia et al., 1992; Lima, 1992), but also to account for their representations and values concerning the labour world (Pais, 1991; Alves, 1993).

Other research has concentrated on juvenile criminality and delinquency. Here, crime is not only discussed (Ferreira, 1997) but its evolution is analysed and criminal profiles are traced. (Cruz e Reis, 1983; Ferreira et al., 1993).

Juvenile culture has also been studied in connection with youth's symbolic and

77. <http://www.sejuventude.pt>

behavioural universes. These studies of a more ethnographic character are centred on 'juvenile living frameworks' and in the meaning and sense of the practices through which they are materialized (Resende e Vieira, 1992; Pais, 1993; Pais et al., 1999).

Conclusion

Changes in Portuguese society have contributed in a decisive way to the reconfiguration of the 'social problems' affecting young people. The social construction of these problems and the naturalization process of youth have contributed to the diffusion of a myth about young people to which the scientific community has not always been immune. Besides, social problems *contaminating* sociological issues seems to be a *trap* scientists hardly ever escape, especially since most extensive studies on Portuguese youth are demanded by public bodies responsible for the definition of policies for youth. In spite of the relative autonomy researchers enjoy, the social context for the production of these studies is such that no clear frontiers between politics and science are drawn.

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