



International Sociological Association
RESEARCH COMMITTEE 34
SOCIOLOGY OF YOUTH

in co-operation with



Call for papers for the Anniversary seminar of youth research, policy and practice :

Young People and Social Change after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Place: Budapest, Central European University (DISC)

Time: November 20, 2009, 9:30 – 18:00

Organisers: Research Committee 34, Sociology of Youth, International Sociological Association; in co-operation with: The Directorate for Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe; The Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission; the Italian Sociological Association; the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan-Bicocca.

Scientific Committee: Carles Feixa, Siyka Kovacheva, Carmen Leccardi, Herwig Reiter

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After the breakdown of state socialism in Europe the societal role of youth changed dramatically from that of an ideological driving force of communism to that of an agent and carrier of democratisation and marketisation.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, a symbol of both the raising of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War, this seminar takes a look at how the opening up of these societies to Europe and the world changed the conditions and experiences of growing up in the area.

The seminar examines the status of young people in these societies before and after 1989, their living conditions, issues of social participation, the way in which they construct their identity and constitute and represent current social realities, their cultures and gender constructions as well as the interplay of continuities and discontinuities beyond this historical separator. In order to frame the contributions, the seminar focuses on four main topical fields: youth transitions and their national contexts, youth in the post-communist landscapes of inequality and uncertainty, and the consequences of social change for the possible convergence of youth across the former dividing line of the Iron Curtain. A fourth stream addresses the history and activities of cooperation between youth experts from the East and the West regarding research, policy and practice.

Youth transitions in post-communism

The reconstruction and analysis of paths and trajectories of young people to adulthood and full citizenship and participation is a well-established area of youth research. The seminar invites contributions subscribing to this agenda to discuss developments in single countries as well as commonalities and differences among western and eastern European contexts. Single contributions will deal with issues like, for instance, education and training, entry into the world of work, economic and residential independence from the parental home, or relationships and family formation. Youth cultures and gender constructions in relation to the post-communist world will be also considered. National social and youth policy frameworks, in which these transitions are embedded, are discussed as well as changes in the social environment of peer relationships, family networks, or other relevant circles and associations.

Inequality and uncertainty

The transformation of former state socialist countries into market democracies did not only liberate the population from decades of suppression; it also introduced novel cleavages and dividing lines into society. The question is, whether the dynamics and driving forces behind the patterns of inequality that emerged over the last 20 years were similar to those in the advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe. On the one hand, this question refers to the 'classical' dimensions of social stratification like gender, ethnicity and religion, rural or urban background, and class. Are they equally relevant in countries with a socialist past? And how are societal inequalities translated into life chances of young people growing up in the area? On the other hand, the new regime facilitated and accelerated the development towards individualized risks and responsibilities accompanied by substantial transformations in biographies and the possibilities for conducting life. In other words, how is the western trend towards an emphasis on autonomy and choice as well as individual responsibility in case of failure

appropriated by young people in post-socialist countries? Is there a specifically 'Eastern' way of 'biographical subjectivation' among young people? How does the uncertainty culture of capitalism resonate in post-communist life worlds of growing up? And is there a co-evolution of these new experiences of uncertainty and mediating institutions like the family, or friendship networks?

Western and eastern, or modern youth?

On a more general level, the seminar investigates the question whether and how the interdisciplinary triangulation of perspectives on youth in post-communist societies is able to inform an emerging conception of youth in the post-communist European modernity, a historical period that is itself highly diverse and multi-dimensional. What is the influence of Western cultural models that are today very much dominated by the privatisation of experience, an emphasis on communication, consumerism, and a new cult(ure) of the body? How do young people relate to both the mainstream (political) culture and the many sub-cultures available at the same time? Is it possible to identify a trend towards convergent cultures and conditions of growing up across the formerly separated European regions, or do they follow strong national and regional path-dependencies that are difficult to overcome? Two decades after the collapse of communism and after the permeability of barriers to mobility across borders was greatly enhanced, it should be possible to arrive at a general assessment of the state of youth on the European continent. Did the exchange of people, goods and ideas constitute a common, truly transnational and European set of experiences of growing up in terms of chances and uncertainties as well as life styles and inequalities? Is it time for a 'cosmopolitan turn' in youth sociology and to give up 'methodological nationalism', as Beck & Beck-Gernsheim recently demanded? Or, are the cleavages throughout Europe as well as within the single countries persistent beyond the collapse of communism and perhaps reinforced by the ongoing economic crisis?

Cross-border cooperation in research, policy, and practice

Apart from substantive issues the seminar will provide room to discuss the cooperation between 'Western' and 'Eastern' youth researchers – both its historical development and its contemporary state. Both periods – before and after 1989 – have their achievements and failures. How can research into the commonalities and differences in the state of youth in Europe be further developed? What prospects are there for research collaboration on the wider European arena from 2009 onwards? Can the efforts of pan-European and national structures and researchers' networks bring about to a new shape of the 'magic triangle' between policy, practice and research?

The seminar will address such questions through a morning plenary session and four parallel sessions:

1. Youth transitions in post-communism
2. Inequality and uncertainty
3. Western and eastern, or modern youth?
4. Cross-border cooperation in research, policy, and practice

Five papers will be selected for presentation in each of the four sessions. Other papers will be selected for distribution. To the authors of the papers selected for presentation a one day stay in Budapest (including the night from 19 to 20 November) will be offered.

A one page abstract of papers proposal must be sent **within August 20, 2009** to the scientific committee of the seminar:

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