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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Objectives

*In fact, I didn't have any choice ... and at a certain point you do not see any sense in continuing applying for training or jobs. (Male, 19, Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

*Abstention is a way of voting, it is understood as a vote for something else; this is to show that nobody interests us. (anonymous, France)<sup>2</sup>*

*Even if I don't do anything else in my life, I've got this one thing [a baby] that I'm gonna have for the rest of my life and I brought it into the world. I could stay on the dole for the rest of my life but I've still got something that I've done. (Female, 19, UK)<sup>3</sup>*

In a nutshell, these quotes express very well the objective of the project “Youth – Actor of Social Change” (in the following referred to as UP2YOUTH) to understand more deeply the ambivalences and dynamics of young people's agency in the context of social change. They document young people's choices for actions or non-actions which are contextualised with regard to social inequality and disadvantage, uncertainty and precariousness.

A key issue in late modern youth research and youth policy discourses is the question of social integration understood as the relation between social structure and individual agency. Agency in this case is defined as the principal ability of persons to act intentionally. In youth research the structure and agency debate includes questions such as:

- Are young people victims of social change which narrows their scope of agency, choice and influence or are they actors of social change in the sense that individualised values and choices depart from institutionalised ways of being a member of society, especially with regard to work, family and citizenship?
- Can decisions taken under conditions of constraint and uncertainty be interpreted as subjective choice or should they be referred to as reactions to structural force?

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in: Pohl & Stauber 2004, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in: Spannring 2008, p. 65

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Knight, Chase & Aggleton (2006), p. 395

While these questions are of a high theoretical relevance for youth research, they also have policy implications inasmuch as policies rely on assumptions regarding the relation between individual and society – either addressing young people as victims of social inequality or as profiteers who take decisions according to an economic rational choice model; explaining individual choices in terms of individual assessment of means-ends-relations, which in turn can lead to social change. Actually many policy measures ascribe problems such as youth unemployment, early school leaving or teenage pregnancy to uninformed or irresponsible decision-making of young people. Consequently, they aim to influence young people's choices. Most obvious current examples are labour market policies which are intended to enhance individual job search activities by setting (mostly negative) incentives such as sanctions for 'passivity' or family policies that increase child care allowances in order to raise young women's birth rates. Even in research contexts, such assumptions are rarely made explicit. In this regard, UP2YOUTH follows a double objective:

- Improving the *theoretical understanding* of young people's agency: What does agency mean, how does it evolve? How is it related to structural factors on the one side and subjective factors on the other? What is the impact of social change on young people's choices; and does young people's agency influence social change; and if so how?
- Exploring the conditions of *policies* aimed at *empowering* young people's agency in terms of providing them with power and resources to make reflexive choices, allowing for reconciling subjective interest and societal demands; while also contributing to social integration.

Starting from the assumption that *youth* as a life phase is a social and cultural construction connected to the formation of an institutionalised life course in modern societies, the UP2YOUTH project refers to social change primarily in terms of the *de-standardisation of the life course* in general and the youth phase in particular. Thereby, growing up has become a more and more individualised process in which young people can no longer rely on traditional collective patterns, but in a reflexive way have to develop individual trajectories based on individual choices and decisions. Some researchers argue that more agency is needed in order to cope with individualised transitions towards adulthood. Others say that individualisation just makes agency more visible while agency is and has always been an integral part of social integration; and all social structure depends on being reproduced by social action. However, there are also researchers rejecting an agency perspective referring to the determining power of social structures over individual choices. These different

perspectives do not only stand for different interpretations of the relation between individual and society but also for different concepts of agency. In order to develop a more differentiated perspective towards individual agency under conditions of individualisation, the UP2YOUTH project has introduced the dimensions of culture and learning; *culture* because it is a key to the understanding of the meanings of different choices and practices, *learning* because developing new practices always implies learning, yet not in terms of formal learning but in terms of non-formal and especially of experiential and explorative learning in informal contexts (e.g. Coffield, 2000; du Bois-Reymond, 2004).

Informed by a cultural and learning perspective the underlying concept of agency adopted by UP2YOUTH is a *biographical* one which means to focus on young people's subjective views on their life courses, their individual strategies of coping with the respective demands, and their attempts of shaping their lives in a subjectively meaningful way (Alheit, 2005).

The quotations in the beginning of this introduction have been drawn from other qualitative studies as the UP2YOUTH project did not carry out empirical research itself. It was primarily concerned with secondary analysis in a comparative perspective. While this secondary analysis included a literature review on theoretical reflections as well as empirical findings – primarily from biographical studies on young people's decision-making in transitions to adulthood – focus was laid upon three topics: *young parenthood*, *transitions to work of immigrant and ethnic minority youth* and *youth participation*.

Firstly, the three topics serve to specify the reflections on young people's agency inasmuch as human agency and action are never abstract and cannot be researched except in relation to specific goals and embedded in specific social situations and fields of action. Secondly, they refer to three cornerstones of modern societies and the institutionalisation of mechanisms of social integration within individual life courses: work, family and citizenship, which traditionally have been markers of a successfully completed transition from youth to adulthood. Thirdly, these topics refer to societal institutions and life spheres which are subject to fundamental change and their analysis contributes to understanding social change in general. Fourthly, these changes present major challenges for policy, reflected by the powerful discourses on the causes and implications of these changes – either in terms of individualised ascriptions of failure or of victimisation of youth. These discourses in turn contribute to social change as a result of changed everyday practice of policy reform – or of both.

Broken down to the three topics the objective of developing a reflexive understanding of young people's agency in relation to social change can be formulated in the following ways:

The topic of *young parenthood* and of young women's and men's transitions into parenthood relates to the general changes of family relationships and family dynamics (Biggart 2005). Relevant indicators for changes in family formation are the postponement of parenthood, the subsequent decline of families with children, and the diversification of family forms including persisting phenomena of teenage pregnancy. This raises the following questions:

- What decisions and strategies do young people develop in terms of family formation? What family forms and practices of family life emerge from their choices?
- What role does social context play regarding family formation? How do educational level, career opportunities, child care, gender relationships, informal (peer and intergenerational) support influence individual decision-making in this regard?
- How are transitions to parenthood interrelated with other transitions and how do young people experience the possibilities of reconciling them?
- How do decision-making processes regarding family formation evolve?
- What does family and parenthood actually mean for young people and how is it linked with identity-related processes of meaning-making?
- What do young people learn about family and parenthood – where and from whom? How have intergenerational relationships changed in this regard?
- What kind of parent cultures are young mothers and fathers developing?
- To what extent and how do decisions and strategies contribute to the change of family in general and family policies in particular?
- What is the meaning of agency with regard to becoming a parent (or not) in terms of reflexive decision-making, negotiating gender roles and the balance between autonomy and dependency?

The topic of *transition to work of immigrant and ethnic minority youth* relates to both the changes in the relationship between education and employment and its influence on the de-standardisation of life courses and also to the trend towards migration societies, characterised



by (ethnic) diversity. In many European societies, children and youth from ethnic minorities and migrant communities have reached significant shares of the population, while their life chances often remain limited in terms of qualification, occupational status and income. Changes refer to the disadvantage of immigrant and ethnic minority youth, which – at least in some contexts – seems to increase while their trajectories and coping strategies reflect ascriptions of difference from the majority population. Research questions in this regard are:

- How do young people with ethnic minority and migration backgrounds cope with transitions to work? What experiences do they make? What different strategies and trajectories can be discerned?
- What are the structural conditions they face in their transitions – integration policies, labour market condition, inequalities, social policies and education systems – and how do these influence their coping strategies?
- How are their transitions structured by reversibility and fragmentation and how do they reconcile their identities with the dominant demand of assimilation?
- How do they develop coping strategies and how are past experiences rooted in their home countries, cultures of origin and migration histories related to individualised futures?
- What identities are they longing for and how are respective processes of meaning-making reflected by the coping strategies in transitions to work?
- How do they experience learning in terms of formal learning as well as informal learning? Where do they learn coping strategies and to what extent do these contain intercultural competences?
- How do their coping strategies influence the transitions systems and integration policies of their immigration countries?
- To what extent does their integration process reflect agency in terms of intercultural negotiation, cultural and social reflexivity?

The topic of *young people's participation* relates to changes in the citizenship status. While formally unchanged, its meaning and relevance has changed due to the de-standardisation of life courses. Conceptualised with regard to the possibility of full-time employment and linear life courses in the era of Fordism, nowadays citizenship is no longer self-evident and guaranteed in terms of a link between civil, political and social rights (cf. Marshall 1950).

Young people distance themselves from the assets of formal citizenship such as voting – especially those whose life chances are limited – while opting for short-term and ad-hoc forms of engagement which are compatible with youth cultural life styles. A variety of programmes are implemented to enhance young people's participation especially at local levels. Yet, many of them fail in reaching their target because young people do not see them as relevant for their lives. Questions that arise are:

- What different forms and meanings of participation can be found among young people – both acknowledged and neglected ones?
- How do social contexts – both structural and interactive – influence the form and content of young people's participatory expressions?
- How do young people develop (self-)concepts of (active) citizenship under conditions of de-standardised transitions and uncertainty?
- How does young people's agency evolve in terms of participatory action and how does it relate to and connect biographical past, present and future?
- How do young people experience existing forms of participation? What does participation mean for them subjectively and biographically? What political, public and collective moments can be identified in youth cultural activities?
- Where and what do young people learn about participation, formally and informally?
- How do young people's forms of (non-)participation affect the institutional system and the citizenship status?
- To what extent do young people's participatory acts reveal key aspects of agency such as autonomy, negotiation and reflexivity?

Analysing young people's agency and social change in the context of a European research project implies a *comparative perspective*. This means to take different socio-economic, institutional and cultural contexts into consideration which filter social change and which frame young people's agency in terms of different contexts of normality – which can be enabling and/or limiting.

Young people's agency is often referred to in terms of *empowerment*. Official policy discourses tend to interpret empowerment by including young people into the systems of

education, training, welfare or employment in order to facilitate their social integration. This however, often implies that young people have to adapt to pre-defined concepts and implications of integration and to down-grade subjective aspirations. The original meaning of the concept developed in the context of community psychology implied the opposite: rather than blaming the individual and demanding compensatory adaptation to unequal living conditions, it implied increasing the legal, economic and/or political power of individuals to actively shape their living conditions – individually and collectively (Rappaport, 1981).

This discrepancy emerges also from *European youth policy development*. In 2001 it was the White Paper on Youth “New Impetus for European Youth” (European Commission 2001) through which youth was put on the European policy agenda. The European youth policy approach can be characterised by promoting the shift from addressing “youth as a problem” towards “youth as a resource”, which was celebrated as a way of empowering young people and enhancing their active citizenship. In 2005, this was not only confirmed but extended through the European Youth Pact which aimed at mainstreaming youth across different policy fields, namely education, labour market, social and gender policies:

*Empowering young people and creating favourable conditions for them to develop their skills, to work and to participate actively in society is essential for the sound economic and social development of the European Union, particularly in the context of globalisation, knowledge-based economies and ageing societies where it is crucial that every young person is given the possibility to fulfil his or her potential (European Commission, 2007, p. 1).*

This quote reveals that on the one hand the European youth policy approach is a serious attempt of “addressing the concern of young people” (European Commission 2005) inasmuch as attention has been raised and also resources have been redirected so that young people would benefit more from EU policies. On the other hand, the quote reveals that both the objectives of young people’s agency and its requirements are predefined from an economic and policy perspective. The reference to empowerment as well as the definition of what “his or her potential” is, are instrumentalised for a given direction and goal of (European) society.

A critical approach implies distinguishing an agency perspective which analyses, understands and explains young people’s choices from an activation perspective which has gained dominance in European policy discourses, especially with regard to the social integration of disadvantaged youth. While agency means to ask for the experiences, choices and strategies of young people in relation to subjective interpretation and meaning of acting, activation starts from a narrow concept of ‘being active’ pre-defined by institutional or market actors. In fact,

the formulation “mobilisation on behalf of young people” (European Council, 2005, p. 20) reveals the blurring boundaries of ‘active’ and ‘passive’. This understanding aims at channelling individuals towards certain activities, especially active job searching, which in many cases implies accepting any job or training scheme regardless of subjective meaning and working conditions, while disregarding other articulations of agency.

The UP2YOUTH findings contribute to the development of European youth policy by reflecting its normative as well as social requirements. It analyses the interaction between subjective motives and societal demands in young people’s decision-making processes with regard to the key policy areas of the European Youth Pact: the transition from school to work, reconciliation between family and work, and active citizenship (ibid.). Thereby, it allows for re-balancing the focus between young people’s concerns and the development of society.

Such a contribution is not only relevant for making European youth policy more effective and sustainable but also with regard to the transnational discourse on young people – and its repercussion on national policies – which is dominated by a rhetoric of activation and the implicit assumption that young people are either not active or not active in the ‘right’ way.

## 1.2 Methodological procedure of UP2YOUTH

As already mentioned, UP2YOUTH has not been concerned with collecting its own empirical data but – funded as a coordinated action – with integrating existing youth research across Europe. The objective of improving the understanding of young people’s agency under conditions of social change has been both broad enough to include a variety of sub-topics – which themselves are on the agenda while being still under-researched – and in coincidence with current debates in youth research.

The key element of UP2YOUTH have been three thematic working groups related to the three sub-topics (see table 1) in which five or six research partners were involved in collecting and re-analysing existing research.

**Table 1: UP2YOUTH thematic working groups**

<b>Coordination</b>	1 Andreas Walther, Barbara Stauber, Axel Pohl Institute for regional innovation and social research, IRIS Tübingen (D)		
<b>Thematic working groups</b>	<b><i>Young parenthood</i></b>	<b><i>Youth participation</i></b>	<b><i>Transitions of immigrant and ethnic minority youth</i></b>
<b>Working group coordinators</b>	2 Manuela du Bois-Reymond, University of Leiden (NL)	3 Patricia Loncle & Virginie Muniglia, National School of Public Health	4 Sven Mørch & Torben Bechmann Jensen, University of

		(F)	Copenhagen (DK)
<b>Working group members</b>	5 Carmen Leccardi & Sveva Maggaraggia, University of Milano-Bicocca (I)	9 Paul Burgess & Pat Leahy, University College Cork (IRL)	12 José Machado Pais & Vitor Sergio Ferreira, Institute for Social Sciences, Lisbon (PT)
	6 Siyka Kovacheva, NEC, Plovdiv (BG)	10 Reingard Spannring & Natalia Wächter, Austrian Youth Research Institute, Vienna (A)	14 René Bendit & Jan Skrobaneck, German Youth Institute (D)
	7 Lothar Böhnisch & Simone Menz, Dresden University (D)	11 Ladislav Machacek, University of Trnava (SK)	15 Andreu López Blasco & Almudena, AREA Valencia (E)
	8 Mirjana Ule & Metka Kuhar, University of Ljubljana (SI)	13 Morena Cuconato & Gabriele Lenzi, University of Bologna (I)	16 Octav Marcovici, ANSIT, Bucharest (RO)
	18 Andy Biggart, Queen's University Belfast (UK)		17 Ilse Julkunen, University of Helsinki (FIN)

In a first phase, working groups collected studies and empirical findings from their own countries related to the topics and focussing on the areas of individualisation, culture and learning, while also taking recent policy developments into consideration. Country reports and synopsis of existing relevant studies were produced and discussed within the groups. On the basis of these, draft thematic reports were produced by the thematic coordinators following the above mentioned areas. In this phase already it revealed that even on national level only a little data and a few studies existed in which the agency perspective of young people is explored in depth with regard to these topics.

The interim phase was concerned with analysing implications of the draft thematic reports for the understanding and conceptualising of young people's agency. This was documented by an interim working paper in which theoretical concepts of agency were related to key aspects of the three sub-topics elaborated in the draft thematic reports (see Pohl et al., 2007).

The second phase of the working group processes started with selecting a series of key issues emerging from the draft thematic report which were analysed more in depth. Here, the groups took different approaches such as undertaking small local case studies or elaborating on particular figurations. Subsequently, the working papers on emerging issues were developed into chapters of the final thematic reports.

During the two group phases, the project group also organised two thematic workshops. The first one addressed policy makers and practitioners in order to include issues which are relevant from a policy and practice perspective. The second one referred to other researchers concerned with the three sub-topics in order to include complementary findings as well as findings from other regional contexts.

The final project phase consisted in a meta-analysis of the achievements on the thematic level with regard to a deeper and more differentiated understanding of young people's agency. This analysis is the core of this final report. Apart from this, a series of other products have been developed in order to secure the dissemination of the findings into policy and practice, especially a higher education module for students in disciplinary areas concerned with youth research.

### *Overview over the report*

This report is structured as follows: chapter 2 introduces the comparative dimension of UP2YOUTH and the way in which it has been applied. In the core this aims to present transition regimes as a heuristic comparative model concerning youth transitions which has served for sampling countries and for interpreting the research findings. On the one hand, this allows for contextualising the thematic findings with regard to wider constellations of the socio-economic, institutional and cultural factors of young people's transitions towards adulthood. On the other hand, this analysis is a test for the validity (and the limitations) of the comparative model of transition regimes – and a step in its further development.

In chapter 3, the theoretical understanding of social change in UP2YOUTH is outlined. Beside a general reflection of dynamics and mechanisms as well as factors and directions of current social change, focus is laid on explaining why de-standardisation and individualisation are (still) relevant analytical prerequisites for adequately describing social change.

Chapter 4 is concerned with conceptualising agency in the light of the findings of UP2YOUTH. Main dimensions refer to the emergence of agency as intentional or responsive; to development and/or selection of individual goals of action; to the way in which agency evolves and turns into concrete action; to its sociality in terms of limitations through power and inequality; of being embedded in social networks and relationships, and of its relevance for the reproduction and generation of social structures.

Chapter 5 relates the general dimensions of agency to the three topics of young parenthood, transitions to work of immigrant and ethnic minority youth and youth participation drawing on the findings of the thematic reports. This aims both to interpret the specific findings with regard to the dimensions of agency while at the same time assessing the adequacy and relevance of these dimensions for the conceptualisation of young people's agency under conditions of de-standardised life courses and individualisation.

Chapter 6 presents conclusions on three different levels: the *theoretical* conceptualisation of the relationship between youth, agency and social change and its relevance for the analysis of social integration in late modern societies; the consequences for and requirements of empirical *research* into the decision-making and strategies of young people; and the implications of the analysis of young people's agency for policy making.

## 2. The comparative perspective: the model of transition regimes

What is the added value of comparative analysis in youth research? One potential function of comparative analysis is the possibility of distinguishing between general structures and trends in the relationship between youth and social change. Another more applied one is related to identifying 'good practice' in policy and practice. In UP2YOUTH the first aspect of comparative analysis has been more important: analysing the changes in transitions to parenthood, work and citizenship as well as in the shift of national societies towards migration societies across different countries – understood as variation of socio-economic and socio-cultural context factors – was expected to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between structure and agency in young people's biographical transitions. The second potential benefit of comparative analysis, learning from good practice, is more ambiguous than contemporary approaches of evidence-based policy and practice („what works?“) suggest. Nevertheless, the practice and policy-related recommendations include also conclusions from a comparative perspective, yet less in terms of direct practice transfer than in identifying factors which enable young people's agency; factors which require re-contextualisation by local and national policy actors in order to become relevant in different contexts than from which they originate.

In order to handle the complexity of this comparative work, we started from a model of *transition regimes* which distinguishes the ways in which socio-economic, institutional and cultural structures contribute to different 'normalities' of being young and growing up. The model has been developed from typologies of welfare regimes of Esping-Andersen (1990) and Gallie and Paugam (2000) which distinguish socialdemocratic/universalistic, conservative/corporatist/employment-centred, liberal, and mediterranean/sub-protective types of welfare states. The term of regime refers to the power that such constellations have inasmuch as they explain both the rationales of institutions and policies but also serve as markers of individuals' biographical orientation.



The model has evolved over a series of studies on youth transitions involving the analysis of institutional arrangements, document analysis of policy programmes, statistical analysis, expert interviews, case studies of projects for disadvantaged youth, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with young people across different educational levels as well as with parents (McNeish & Loncle, 2003; Walther & Pohl, 2005; Walther, 2006; Walther et al., 2006; Pohl & Walther, 2007). It provides a set of analytical dimensions:

- Structures of welfare in terms of state versus family responsibilities and the conditions and rules of individual access (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gallie & Paugam, 2000).
- Structures of education and training, especially in terms of the extent to which school systems allocate pupils to different educational pathways with unequal outcomes (stratification) (Allmendinger, 1989; Lasonen & Young, 1998; Shavit & Müller 1998).
- Structures of labour markets and labour market entry – ‘open’ versus ‘close’ – and the degree of flexibility regarding transitions within labour markets and careers (Smyth et al., 2001; Müller & Gangl, 2003).
- Policies against youth unemployment (resulting from the relationship between education and training, welfare and labour market structures), including different explanations for youth unemployment as well as the different ways of interpreting ‘disadvantaged youth’ as a structural phenomenon, resulting from labour market segmentation or as individual deficit (Walther, Stauber et al., 2002; McNeish & Loncle, 2003; Walther & Pohl, 2005; Walther et al., 2006; Pohl & Walther, 2007).
- Mechanisms of doing gender, which are a cross-cutting dimension allocating young men and women to the same or to different trajectories that in turn can be of equal or unequal status and perspective (Sainsbury, 1999).
- The dominant institutional representations of youth and the respective institutional demands and expectations addressed to young people (IARD, 2001; Walther, 2006).
- Levels and patterns of public expenditure for education, active labour market policy, family and children, which provide different possibilities for implementing transition infrastructure while also representing different levels of recognition of young people as members (and resource) of societies (Walther & Pohl, 2005).
- Different meanings and respective implementation of activation revealing both convergence and path dependency under conditions of global social change in general and European integration in particular (Lødemel & Trickey, 2001; van Berkel & Hornemann Møller, 2002; Harsløf, 2005; Pohl & Walther, 2007).



A regime typology should not be misunderstood as descriptive. It clusters different groups of national transition systems which are similar in their ‘Gestalt’ of constructing youth and youth transitions (Kaufmann, 2003). This implies that structural and institutional details may diverge considerably within one regime type while contributing to a similar rationale in regulating youth transitions. For the time being, four regime types have been modelled:

Table 2: Transition regimes across Europe

Dimension Regime	Country	School	Training	Social security	Employment Regime	Female Employment	Concept of Youth	Concept of Disadvantage	Focus of Transition Policies	Expenditure* Educ/F&C/ALMP	Policy trend
<i>Universalistic</i>	Denmark Finland	Not selective	Flexible standards (mixed)	State	Open Low risks	High	Personal development, Citizenship	Individualized and structure-related	Education Activation	DK: 8,3 / 3,8 / 1,5 FI: 6,3 / 3,0 / 0,7	Liberal (more labour market orientation)
<i>Employment-centred</i>	Austria Germany France Netherlands	Selective	Standardized (dual)	State family /	Closed Risks at the margins	Medium	Adaptation to social positions	Individualized	(Pre-) vocational training	A: 5,4 / 3,0 / 0,5 D: 4,5 / 3,3 / 0,6 F: NL:	Liberal (more activation)
<i>Liberal</i>	Ireland UK	Principally not selective	Flexible, low standards (mixed)	State family /	Open, High risks	High	Early economic independence	Individualized	Employability	IE: 4,8 / 2,5 / 0,5 UK: 5,5 / 1,6 / 0,1	Liberal (more education)
<i>Sub-protective</i>	Italy Portugal Spain	Not Selective	Low standards and coverage (mainly school)	Family	Closed High risks (Informal work)	Low	Without distinct status	Structure-related	'Some' status (work, education, training)	IT: 4,4 / 1,1 / 0,5 PT: 5,4 / 1,2 / 0,5 ES: 4,2 / 1,2 / 0,6	Liberal (deregulation) and employment-centred (training)
<i>Post-socialist countries</i>											
	Bulgaria Romania Slovakia Slovenia	Principally not selective	Standards in process of transformation (mixed)	Family state	Closed High risks	Low (except Slovenia)	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	BG: 4,5 / 1,1 / 0,4 RO: 3,5 / 1,4 / 0,1 SK: 3,9 / 1,9 / 0,2 SI: 5,8 / 1,9 / 0,2	BG, RO: Employment-centred SK: Liberal SI: Universal.

\*Eurostat data on expenditures for education/families & children/ active labour market policies in 2005 (except ALMP exp. in DK for 2004)

- The *liberal* transition regime in the Anglo-Saxon countries is best characterised by the notion of individual responsibility in which young people without work face major pressure to enter the workforce. Youth is regarded as a basically transitory life phase which should be turned into economic independence as soon as possible. The labour market is structured by a high degree of flexibility. While this provides multiple entry options it also implies a high level of insecurity. Although female employment is high, it tends to be of part-time nature and in low-skilled or unskilled service occupations. In the context of highly individualising policies young people face considerable risks of social exclusion (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997).
- The *universalistic* transition regime of the Nordic countries is based on comprehensive education systems in which general and vocational education are largely integrated and reflect the individualisation of life courses. Youth is first of all associated with individual personal development providing young people a status of ‘citizens in education’. This is reflected by an education allowance for all who are over 18 and still in the education system which contributes to a partial independence from their families. Also, in labour market oriented activation policies, individual choice is rather broad to secure individual motivation. Gendered career opportunities are highly balanced due to the integration of general and vocational education, the broad relevance of the public employment sector and the availability of child care (Bechmann Jensen & Mørch-Hejl, 2001; Os & Mørch, 2001).
- In the Mediterranean countries transition regimes are *sub-protective* in a double sense. Due to a lack of reliable training pathways into the labour market, transitions often involve a waiting phase until the mid thirties, with unequal outcomes. As they are not entitled to any kind of social benefits young men and women depend to a large extent on their families who are referred to as ‘social amortisator’ for the socio-political vacuum. Long family dependency indicates that youth do not have a formal status and place in society – with consequences ranging from the positive pole of a lot of freedom for young people living with their parents to the quite negative pole of “forced harmony” (Leccardi et al., 2004; López Blasco et al., 2004). Higher education is one option providing a recognised status while informal work helps to gain limited economic independence. Young women’s career opportunities are clearly restricted and they and anticipate responsibility for later family obligations.
- The *employment-centred regime* of continental countries is characterised by a differentiated (and partly even highly selective) school system connected to a rigidly

standardised and gendered system of vocational training. Different tracks separate pupils from age ten or twelve according to performance. The dominant expectation towards youth is to socialise for a set occupational and social position – through training. This is reflected through the provision of a two-tiered division of social security, favouring those who have already been in regular training or employment, while others are entitled to stigmatised social assistance. This accounts as well for those who fail to enter regular vocational training. They are referred to as ‘disadvantaged’ from a deficit-oriented perspective and consequently, are channelled into pre-vocational measures, governed by the objective ‘first of all, they need to learn to know what work means’, in other terms: adaptation, reduction of aspiration, holding out.

It is obvious that this picture is limited inasmuch as it represents the so-called Western world. In the framework of a European project it may appear as a shortcoming that Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are not represented. In fact in some of the previous projects transformation states have been involved and analysed according to the dimensions of the model. However, the pace of transformation and the diverse mixtures between an apparently uniform past and increasing heterogeneity do not allow for quick solutions such as subsuming CEE countries under the existing model or creating one post-socialist regime type.

- The *post-socialist* countries at first sight appear rather close to the sub-protective welfare states with public structures being experienced as totally unreliable. Yet, differentiation is needed in a double sense: first, an increasingly sub-protective presence is still related to the (socialist) past in which life courses were structured in a mixture of a universalist guarantee of social positions and an employment-centred logic (as these social positions were tied to employment, to which everyone was entitled and respectively obliged). Female employment was high and secured by availability of child care. According to Pascal and Manning (2000) the significant decline in this regard makes women to the losers of transformation, at least as some countries are concerned, although high youth unemployment in some CEE countries does not differ significantly according to gender. A particularity is the situation of the Roma, especially in countries like Slovakia or Romania, who suffer from discrimination, social exclusion and poverty. According to Kovacheva (2001), one particular feature of youth transitions is that life conditions either leap from pre-modern constellations into post-modern fragmented ones, or, are a mixture of both.

The model does not replace further comparative analysis especially as differences *within* regime types are neglected and as it has to be constantly reassessed with regard to social change. And it is a model developed for interpreting differences and similarities with regard

to transitions from school to work but not for comparative analysis of conditions of growing up in general. With regard to the interplay between socio-economic, institutional and cultural structures the transition regime approach organises context information regarding the scope of action of young people in different contexts. In UP2YOUTH it has served for two purposes: it provides a rationale of sampling countries in terms of different contexts across the EU – for the project at large as well as for the single thematic groups; and it provides an interpretative framework for findings on different constellations of young parenthood, transitions of migrant and ethnic minority youth or participation.

In the following we will relate the transition regime model to the findings that emerged from the UP2YOUTH thematic research process with regard to the topics of ‘young parenthood’, ‘transitions of migrant and ethnic minority youth’ and ‘youth participation’. Despite being ‘neighbouring’ themes with regard to youth transitions they have not yet been taken into consideration by previous transition research. We will ask to what extent patterns of difference and commonalities follow or contradict the model.

In the project, we started by collecting national research on the three themes and tried to develop synoptic overviews emerging from the material. However, as the material was not only scarce with regard to most of our issues but also diverse in terms of types of data, this step was not always exhaustive. At the stage of analysis, the findings are matched with the transition regime. In the case of consistencies this may imply that general structures or patterns are at work. In contrast, inconsistencies may result from different structures affecting different social aspects in the sense that relationships between welfare or transitions to work and parenthood, integration of migrants and ethnic minorities and participation are not clear-cut. This may be due to social change and indicates a lack of research and analysis.

### *Transitions into parenthood in comparative perspective*

The comparative work on the six countries Slovenia, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom is mostly based on European statistics (EUROSTAT), on European Surveys (European Labour Force survey, EU SILC), on the European MISSOC tables and on comparative work done by European Projects with a similar thematic focus (namely the WORKCARE project, Gstrein, 2007). These compilations of studies and data are testimony of a huge body of statistical knowledge on issues related to young parenthood. Crucial data are missing, e.g. comparative data regarding employment and unemployment rates of young mothers and fathers with children under the age of 3. In the following table this huge body of information has been boiled down to some core issues: The dominant elements

in the composition of the welfare mix in each country – focussing care issues, the whole sector of childcare facilities, the dominant breadwinner model, flexibility of paid work, the dominant model of reconciliation and respective problems, parental leaves with a focus on leave options for fathers and the institutional level of gender equity. The latter is standing here as a combined indicator including the official level of institutionalized gender mainstreaming, i.e. the participation of women in all relevant societal fields, including paid work, politics, and official (public) cultural fields.

*Slovenia* already has undergone a strong tendency towards privatisation, albeit on a high level of social wealth and welfare, as concerns the level of social allowances and availability of public care. Regarding the latter, Slovenia extends these days its already high level of public child care and therefore is close to the Barcelona targets. The dominant breadwinner model is a full-time dual earner-normality, which some young women explicitly reject – because they fear to end up like their overburdened mothers. There is scarce flexibility at the side of the workers, so reconciliation of paid work and family work is a big problem. On the other hand, Slovenia has one of the most generous systems of parental leave all over Europe, also for fathers, but gender equity in this regard is only at its beginnings: most Slovenian new fathers take only 2 weeks of a much broader paternity leave option.

*Bulgaria*, because of operating on a much lower level of social wealth, suffers much more by the increasing market-orientation, by the cutback of public social infrastructure, by the increasing delegation of social responsibility to the private sphere. Regarding public child care, Bulgarian parents over the last 15 years have suffered a drop of 40% in the number of public crèches, although with 27% of public kindergartens they are still better equipped than in most other countries. This decline in public welfare has had its greatest impact on the rural economy and on conditions for the reconciliation of paid work and family work on the countryside. In terms of facilitating an equal balance of work between the partners, Bulgaria prolonged the well paid (at 90% of the previous salary) maternity leave from 135 to 315 days, which in effect tends to exclude fathers from early childcare and therefore strengthens a gender division of care work, which was previously covered by the dual earner regime. These longer periods of leave implicitly directed to mothers make their re-entry into the work sphere a difficult task. At the same time, the full time dual earner is still the norm. Under these conditions, grandparents have become an ever more important resource for childcare – and consequently are entitled to parental leave.

**Table 3: selected indicators of transitions into parenthood in Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK**

	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>UK</b>
Transition regime model	Post-socialist country	Post-socialist country	Under-institutionalized	Employment-oriented	Employment-oriented (hybrid)	Liberal
Welfare mix (reg. care)	State (market increasing)	State (family increasing)	Family and market	Family, market, state (in this order)	State, family (market increasing)	Market (state increasing)
Public childcare 0-3	High and increasing	High but decreasing	Low	Low (but high in the East)	Low (starts at age 2,5)	Low
Public childcare 3-6	High and increasing	High, but decreasing	High	High (in the West mostly part-time)	High	high
Costs of childcare	low	low	High	moderate	moderate	high
Dominant breadwinner model	weak breadwinner model	weak breadwinner model	Modified breadwinner (North) - strong breadwinner (South)	Modified breadwinner (East) - strong breadwinner (West)	Modified breadwinner	Modified breadwinner
Female : male employment	66,9 : 74,7	57,1 : 65,9	50,9 : 74,6	68,2 : 81,0	70,5 : 83,4	69,1 : 81,7
Part-time as % of female employment	12,5	2,3	26,6	46,2	74,9	42,5
Dominant family model	Dual earner	Dual earner (decreasing)	Single earner (South), dual earner (North)	One-and-half-earner model	One-and-half-earner model	One-and-half-earner model
Worker flexibility	low	low	Low	low	high	medium
Barriers of reconciliation	little flexibility for working parents	little flexibility for working parents	No part-time work, little support in work place	Little support in work place	Low	Too high costs for childcare
Model of re-conciliation	Long parental leaves	Long parental leaves	Use of informal care	Female parental leave	Female part time work	Female or male part time work
Parental leave	Good options, limited use	Poor options – parental leave badly paid	Poor but improving	Medium but improving	Medium but improving	Poor options
% of single parents	8	No data	16	16	13	24
& of children born out of wedlock	48,1	50,2	20,7	29,9	39,7	42,3
Gender equity	increasing	decreasing	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	Increasing
Regional differences	small	huge (urban-rural)	huge (North – South)	huge (East – West)	small	medium (regional economic structure)

Sources: Eurostat data (2005, 2006, 2007); EU-MISSOC 2008; UP2YOUTH country reports, Chung et al., 2007.

*Italy* still leaves most of the responsibility to the family – and the market. At the same time, it is undergoing a slow transformation process e.g. recorded in an enhancement of fathers' involvement in childrearing due to new options for parental leave. However, as all relevant regulations exclude atypical workers, a group to which young adults predominantly belong, these reforms can only benefit a minority of young parents. There are extreme differences between the North and the South of the country; in the South, above all regarding bread winner models and gender equity. But also in the South, mothers long for even more participation in the labour market, and start to reduce sharply the number of children they have. Italy is the European country with the biggest discrepancy between the desired and actual number of child births, which could be taken as an indicator for insufficient facilitation by family policies – allowances, infrastructure, time policy.

*Germany* in recent years has tried to facilitate a stronger engagement of fathers, and at the same time shows efforts to deconstruct the (West-German) myth that a parent (and due to the gender pay gap: the mother) 'normally' should stay the 'first three years' with her small child. This is major progress, and has led to a greater degree of involvement among fathers, albeit most of them stick to the minimum of two months. There are also promises to provide better childcare facilities in the West, whereas in the East, they remain on a much better level, although this is jeopardised by decline. Nevertheless, the gendered normality of a male core breadwinner dominates, and also in this regard West-German normality has totally covered the dual earner model from the East. The availability of family resources (e.g. childcare) remains a decisive factor for facilitating young parenthood, at least in the West, and at least for young people living away from urban centres.

*The Netherlands* are also actively working on the Barcelona targets, but – in contrast to the emancipatory self-concept – still refer to a mother-ideology which on the one hand would refuse the full-time mother, but on the other hand would consequently refuse full time day care. The result for most young mothers is that they work part-time, without leaving their job, and use a mixed childcare solution that also involves grand-parents. This part-time solution in a way has turned also in a part-time day care normality. This could be a smooth model for the reconciliation of care and employment, especially as there is sufficient self-steered flexibility on employee/worker-side, but it tends to stabilise a gendered work share. Childcare is delivered increasingly by the market, while the state draws back.

*The United Kingdom* still reveals a strong market-orientation, but in recent years is beginning to modify this trait with the promotion of a more family friendly policy. Although the state



still does not offer favourable conditions for active fathering, time studies show a significant increase in men's participation in domestic work. The dominant breadwinner model therefore is modified by more active fatherhood. The costs for childcare are high for those in employment with a lack of sufficient public provision. With low salaries for fathers, this can lead to new and gender-atypical solutions among couples.

In all countries, there is a significant discrepancy between the desired and actual number of child births (Testa, 2006). As “there is no one magic instrument to increase the birth rate” (Jenson, 2006, p. 161), there is also no one-dimensional explanation for this discrepancy. The analytical overview of European policies of Kröhnert & Klingholz (2008) is most convincing in this respect: it shows, that only a combination of “emancipatory policies”, which we have partly subsumed under “gender equity”, including labour market conditions, taxation, and childcare facilities for children over one year of age, could explain higher or lower fertility rates. This argument can also be extended to the explanation of discrepant family plans and realities.

One important finding in this regard is that higher levels of gender equality go together with higher expectation levels regarding the contribution of men (or society) to equal opportunities, and with ongoing dissatisfaction regarding the social reality of the pretence of a gender-balanced reconciliation of work and care (see Transitions-project, Lewis and Smithson 2006). This also indicates the dynamic relationship between structure (achieved levels of policies) and agency (levels of expectations).

The evaluation of these different constellations of transitions into parenthood suggests a close relationship among some of the comparative dimensions, especially welfare state provision, availability and costs of child care as well as parental leave. Isolating these dimensions seems to support the clusters of both the welfare regime model according to Esping-Andersen (1990) and/or Gallie & Paugam (2000) and the transition regime model (see above). The combination of these comparative dimensions, however, limits the fit.

*Slovenia* and *Bulgaria* reflect the socialist past characterised by state responsibility with available child care and parental leave being long enough to allow for a smooth re-entry into the labour market after child birth. However, already these dimensions show the increasing differences among CEE countries inasmuch as conditions are still improving in Slovenia while declining in Bulgaria.

In *Italy* the primary responsibility of the family is obvious. Child care provision is poor (and costs are high) while parental leave is not regulated in a way to encourage mothers to return to

work as soon as possible. Neither the development of informal (and intergenerational) channels is supported.

In *Germany* the primary role of family is also reflected by a lack of child care and parental leave regulations which only recently have been reformed. Considerable regional differences still represent the familistic tradition of the West German conservative welfare state and the socialist model in the East. With regard to child care and responsibilities the situation in the *Netherlands* is similar to West Germany.

Finally, the *UK* fits the model of the liberal welfare regime inasmuch as child care is largely regulated through market and individual responsibilities while options for parental leave are poor in terms of short periods of payment.

The constellations also do fit the model of breadwinner regimes (Lewis, 1993; Sainsbury, 1999) with weak breadwinner systems in CEE countries where increasing differences are accompanied by heavy changes in female labour market participation; strong breadwinner models are to be found in parts of Italy and Germany, in other parts (Northern Italy, Eastern Germany) modified breadwinner models can be identified also, as is the case for the UK and the Netherlands.

The models start getting blurred if extended to other countries (especially France). Gauthier (1996) provides a model of family policies in which she distinguishes five types:

- The *pro-natalistic model* defines family policy as population policy with the aim of high fertility through transfer payments for families with many children as well as public day care provision (France);
- The *pro-traditional model* which supports the single earner male breadwinner family with financial incentives (Germany; Austria);
- The *pro-egalitarian model* with a well-established system of public childcare facilities and support families financially for the care of small children (Sweden; Denmark);
- The *non-intervention model* where family is a private affair; the state refrains from intervention in child care, and financial support is limited to poor families (Great Britain; Ireland);
- The *hybrid model* with rudimentary family policy with a traditional attitude towards the family and support is regarded to be given through private networks (Italy; Spain).

Further differentiation is necessary if other dimensions are taken into consideration, especially work place related ones. Here, the CEE countries – including Slovenia – perform worse which undermines the state provisions while in the Netherlands part-time work and work place flexibility compensate for modest state responsibility, yet only to the extent of facilitating one-and-a-half (not dual) earner families. In Germany and Italy, low flexibility reinforces modest state activity while the UK is not as flexible in this regard as a market dominated welfare mix would have suggested.

Concluding, the patterns of transition into parenthood show some correspondence with existing comparative typologies. Rather than falsifying each other, the differences between these typologies reflect thematic limitations of underlying comparative studies as well as lack of analytical depth in explaining and interpreting particular phenomena. In fact, the discussion above shows that the models are complementary and represent the differentiation of the comparative picture. Also, this allows for new types to be added and allows for hybrid forms. It also confirms that post-socialist countries neither fit into any of the other models nor suggest a separate post-socialist regime type, at least inasmuch as Bulgaria and Slovenia are concerned.

At the same time, this overview leaves some issues without explanation and the need for further comparative analysis, especially if young people's transitions to parenthood are concerned:

- comparative analysis on the simultaneity of different highly relevant transitions in young women's and men's lives, taking into account especially the contradictory demands of transitions into parenthood and transitions into a professional life.
- Comparative analysis regarding the question if patterns of family policy and breadwinning correspond to mechanisms of *doing gender in school* and in the systems of school-to-work-transitions.
- Comparative analysis regarding the question how the apparent contradiction between working time policies, work place flexibility and welfare can be explained.
- Comparative analysis regarding intersecting lines of social differences and the interplay of respective structures, discourses, and individual positionings.

We will come back to a more concise analysis of research gaps in chapter 6.

*Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background*

The UP2YOUTH working group on transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background deals with a huge diversity of groups in the countries involved in the research: from recently arrived juvenile refugees or young people from re-unified families to descendants of families who immigrated in the fifties and sixties as well as ethnic minorities who have been in the respective country for centuries. The groups are as diverse as the migration history of the countries under study. However, the reason they are included in the study is a common background: they all share the experience of being labelled as “ethnically” or even “racially” different and are thus subject to structural and individual disadvantage. The following table (no. 4) provides an overview of the constellations of transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background for the following countries: Finland, Denmark, Romania, Portugal, Spain and Germany. One outcome of the compilation process is the insight that there is a considerable need for trans-national and comparative data on the situation of migrant and ethnic minority populations. Although European surveys like the Labour Force Survey or the Social Survey do include variables related to certain aspects of migration such as nationality or country of birth, there is a severe lack of harmonised data that would allow differentiations along the combination of categories needed for our topic. Therefore the first caveat for reading this table is a technical one: several categories are used like nationality, immigrants, ethnic and national minorities, according to the availability of international or national data. The second more crucial remark is related to the constructional nature of these categories. As Moldenhawer (2009) puts it: “a common explanation of the numerous complex conditions [...] would first and foremost require a contextualised exploration of the way in which the denomination of diverse socioeconomic, gender and ethnicity categories is incorporated in a relational social structure” (op. cit.: 49). Therefore we are using these categories as first descriptive indications of national contexts and not as theoretical categories. The third remark is on the severe lack of internationally comparable data: there is not one source of data that is able to cover our topic of labour market integration of young people from migrant or ethnic minority communities. Either information is lacking because these sources only use legal categories for their sampling like nationality (e.g. LFS) or they do not provide differentiation according to age groups (see table on p. 26).

*Finland* has been stricken by high youth unemployment since the 1980/90s. At the same time, Finland turned from an emigration country to an immigration country with migrants from the former Soviet Union being the biggest group. Absolute numbers of migrants living in Finland still today are comparably low with the share of non-Finnish nationals reaching just above 3 per cent of the population. Additionally, at the end of the 1980s, refugees from Somalia settled during a period of economic recession, which did not facilitate their integration into the labour market; and 50% of non-Finnish nationals were unemployed at that time. In 2004, their unemployment rate was still three times as high as the one for “native” Finns. The huge differences between different migrant communities can only partly be explained by their educational background, although considerable shares of young people of Somalian or Vietnamese descent for example stay with low educational certificates.

**Table 4: Comparative indicators regarding transitions to work of migrant and ethnic minority youth.**

	Finland	Denmark	Romania <sup>4</sup>	Portugal	Spain	Germany
<b>Immigration and integration policies<sup>5</sup></b>						
Major groups of immigrants/ethnic minorities	Russians, Somalis	Turkey, Pakistan, other <sup>6</sup>	Hungarians, Roma	Ukrainians, PALOP <sup>7</sup>	South Americans, Romanian, Moroccans	Turks, Ex-Yugoslavs, "Russian" Germans
Prime types of immigration	Refugees, Labour immigration	Labour immigration, refugees	Transit (small numbers)	Post-colonial, labour immigration	Post-colonial, labour immigration	Labour immigration, Repatriates
Share of foreign /minority population <sup>8</sup>	3,4 %	6,3%	10,5%	4,3%	4,6%	8,9%
Inclusion concept	Integration	Assimilation	Segregation and multi-culturalism	Multi-culturalism	Assimilation	Assimilation
<b>Education</b>						
Education model (standardised - individualised) - outcome (selection - integration)	Individualised - Integration	Individualised - Selection	Standardised - selection (choice and performance)	Standardised - Integration	Standardised - integration	Standardised - Selection
Rate of early school leavers: nationals / non-nationals <sup>9</sup>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	38% / 46%	28% / 48%	10% / 31%
Age of selection	16	14	14	14	14	10/12
Differences in performance in science by immigrant status <sup>10</sup>	n.a.	-59	n.a.	-70	-60	-85
<b>Transitions to the labour market (2004)</b>						
Total unemployment rate	9,9% (men) 10,2% (women)	4,6 5,2	11,5% (2002) 7% (8.0% men; 5.7% women) (2006)	5,7% 7,4%	7,8% 15,1%	10,3% 9,6%
Unempl. rate non-nationals/minorities	21,3% (men) 25,3% (women)	11,8% (men) 12,7% (women)	Roma: 28.49% (2002)	9,8% 9,6%	11,4% 17,1%	18,3% 15,2%
Youth unempl. rate	20,8%	7,8%	19,2% (2006)	15,3%	22%	11,7%
<b>Transition policies</b>						
Vocational training	School-based	School-based and dual system	School-based and dual system (new)	School-based	School-based	Dual system
Special policies for "ethnic minority" youth (positive action)	Vocational guidance, training, pre-vocational courses	Vocational guidance, training	Special education for Roma		Depending on municipality	Right to special support, esp. pre-vocational linked to migrant status
Equality of access to edu./training (MIPEX indicator): Scale +/0/- <sup>11</sup>	-	-	n.a.	+	+	-

<sup>4</sup> National statistics, no OECD data available.<sup>5</sup> Sources: Sainsbury, 2006; European Commission, 2007; Heckmann, 2008; Niessen et al., 2006<sup>6</sup> Morocco, Palestine and others<sup>7</sup> Migrants from African countries with Portuguese as official language („países africanos de língua oficial portuguesa“): Angola; Mosambique, Guinea-Bissau; Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe; Cape Verde.<sup>8</sup> Source: OECD, 2004; OECD average: 6,8%. Ethnic minority population used in case of Romania<sup>9</sup> Definition: Percentage of population aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education and not in education or training, source: European Commission, 2008: 7<sup>10</sup> Performance on the science scale, differences in mean scores between native and first generation immigrant students. Positive values mean natives perform better than immigrants. Data source: PISA, 2006<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.integrationindex.eu/>

*Denmark* is the country with the lowest overall youth unemployment in our sample. The “Danish miracle” of economic and labour market growth has created many opportunities for young people to enter the labour market – though not for all. In terms of unemployed youth, priority lies on re-integration into the education system providing second chance opportunities for personal development and life planning rather than quick labour market insertion. With regard to immigration, the Nordic countries operate on the basis of the welfare-oriented integration mode which means that on the one side immigrants and their descendants are incorporated into the support systems of the welfare state yet on the other hand they are looked upon from a deficit perspective. In sum, immigrant and ethnic minority youth represent a challenge for the Danish welfare and education systems as they do not seem to be able to provide immigrants and their descendants with qualifications at a similar level as members of the majority. In labour markets which are regulated on the basis of qualified work this undermines young people’s long-term perspectives for stable careers.

*Romania* primarily still is a emigration country with considerable numbers of young people leaving the country at least temporarily. The biggest problem in the transitions to work is facing young people from the Roma minority. The situation of Roma is marked by high shares of different aspects of social exclusion. One third of pupils and students with a Roma background are leaving the education system with no certificate and another third only reach ISCED level 1 qualifications. Therefore routes into employment are only part of a complex situation of spatial segregation, school segregation, poverty and social exclusion.

*Portugal*, once one of the emigration countries in Europe, has turned into a society that faces important influx of immigrants from former communist countries. These groups of migrants attracted by the labour market longing for cheap and unskilled labour join the traditional immigrant communities from the former Portuguese colonies (“PALOP” countries). The young people from post-colonial migrant communities are facing the same problems as many young people in Portugal, a considerable lack of skilled jobs and the precarious conditions that newcomers to the labour market have to deal with: the segmentation of the labour market with precarious work conditions in informal jobs and low salaries in temporary jobs. “Black” young people especially are found in high shares in early entrance trajectories to the labour market. This corresponds with the comparably high rates of school drop-out and underachievement found among communities like the Roma or Cape-Verdeans. Newly arriving young migrants from Eastern Europe and Brazil seem to substitute native Portuguese workers especially in the construction and the cleaning business while the immigrants who have been in these segments of the labour market before are staying.



In *Spain*, youth unemployment is one of the biggest societal problems with unemployment rates being twice as high among young people compared with the overall unemployment rates. At the same time, Spain is a second case of a former emigration country turning into an immigration country. Immigration is mainly labour migration from Morocco, Latin America and increasingly from Eastern Europe and China. A large proportion of labour migrants coming to Spain are young themselves, but family reunion of members of communities who have immigrated in the 90s has led to a “1.5 generation” of children and young people who have immigrated at a very young age (Aparicio, 2007; Parella Rubio, 2008). The immigrant population in the educational systems consequently has multiplied by the factor ten between 1996 and 2006. The trajectories to the world of work that young people with an migration background are over-represented in are: direct transition into unskilled labour with high shares of undeclared or fixed-term conditions.

In *Germany*, youth unemployment has been comparably low with the dual system of vocational training being regarded as a safeguard for integration of young people below the academic tracks into the labour market. With a severe lack of training places since the 1990s this situation has changed and young descendants of the labour migrants, having come to Germany since the 1950s, are affected by this downturn in a particular way. Once young people with a migrant background manage to get into the training system, their labour market integration becomes similar to their peers with no migration history. However, the second generation from Turkish descent especially is facing severe disadvantages in reaching higher levels of education and training. The welfare model of integration of immigrants has not fully managed to come to terms with socio-economic, cultural and spatial gaps between the migrant communities and the German society at large.

How about the model of the transition regimes? Does it prove relevant for the analysis of differences between our countries? With regard to the school to work transitions of immigrant and ethnic minority youth the situation is ambiguous. On the one hand the model covers quite well the area of transitions to work and the measures addressing disadvantaged youth. However, on the other hand there are difficulties when it comes to immigrant and ethnic minority youth. First, policies with regard to the legal status of immigrants and ethnic minorities seem to follow different rationales than welfare, education and labour market policies. Migration researchers therefore have developed a series of other typologies to politically and historically describe different modes of integration strategies. Thomson & Crul (2007, p. 1032) suggest to group these approaches into two lines: a citizenship approach which tries to explain variations of integration with the differences in national models of



integration and an institutional approach which emphasizes the role of institutional arrangements in the education, labour market and welfare systems. In line with the citizenship approach, Rex & Singh (2003) suggest the following typology: The assimilation system in France, a guest worker system in Germany (and Denmark), and a multicultural system in Sweden, the Netherlands and UK. The typology described by Castles & Miller (2003) clusters countries along the lines of how citizenship rights are attributed to immigrant communities: differential exclusion (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) excludes immigrants from parts of citizenship rights, while the assimilation type (UK, France, Netherlands) grants full citizenship to newly arriving communities. The multiculturalism type (Sweden, USA, Canada) even grants them with collective rights. Heckmann et al. (2001) go one step further and include integration policies such as targeted support measures for immigrants in their analysis. They distinguish three ideal type modes of integration: a republican model in France where the main migrant groups have the French citizenship and no distinctions are made according to ethnic origin which in consequence hinders the development of “positive action”-oriented policies. The multicultural model which applies (or better: has applied until recently) for the UK and the Netherlands. Here, most migrants have also citizenship status while different life styles are accepted and compatible with citizenship and while there is a strong anti-discrimination trait to the policies towards immigrant communities. In the other European countries a welfare model prevails according to which migration is addressed as a social problem. These models obviously are cross-cutting the transition regimes because they prove to offer good explanations for naturalisation rates and – in consequence – also can be related to identity formation processes of young people from migrant communities (cf. Brubaker, 1992; Tucci, 2008).

However, the models of the citizenship approach are rather weak in explaining education and labour market outcomes for young people from migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds (Heckmann et al., 2001; Thomson & Crul, 2007).

The institutional approach of modelling national particularities according to different institutional arrangements in education and transitions to the labour market (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003) is much closer to the transition regimes typology as it takes into account general institutional contexts. A synthesis between these approaches may explain why for example the Nordic countries seem to perform less successful in regulating youth transitions with regard to minorities than in general. The restrictive immigration policy in Denmark for example may create a double-bind situation for young migrants undermining the inclusive

education and welfare offers. In the light of these findings, we can formulate a number of research gaps that further research could enlighten:

- One obvious outcome of the UP2YOUTH project is the lack of comparable data on educational achievement and labour market entry in the European Union (cf. Figure 1 for an overview of availability of official data). Therefore we are in need of more studies producing reliable, comparable cross-national data on such basics as educational achievement, access to vocational and tertiary education and labour market outcomes for different groups of immigrants and their descendants (cf. Siegert, 2006).

**Figure 1: Availability of data on educational attainment of migrants/minorities, Source: EUAFR 2008.**



- The outcomes of education and transitions to the labour market for these groups should be related systematically to general features of the national, regional and local transition systems. Promising attempts in this direction are made by a couple of ongoing European

research projects which however only cover limited numbers of countries<sup>12</sup>. Interdisciplinary approaches could help to overcome shortcomings of discipline-bound conceptualizations (cf. Bommers & Morawska, 2004; Brubaker, 2001; Wimmer, 2007).

- Research needs to tap into the inner workings of educational and transition policies. How do young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background negotiate identities and social positions with institutions like school, training, employment offices and the like (cf. Fangen, 2008; Kamali, 2000; Morrison, 2007)?
- What is the influence of different approaches in education or training towards young people from an ethnic minority background (cf. Faas, 2009)? This regards also aspects of discrimination, from a subjective as well as from a structural perspective (see outcomes of the FP 7 project EMILIE, e.g. Lépinard & Simon, 2008; Wrench, 2004).
- For this research perspective, case study approaches and the level of local policies seem to be very promising (TRESEGY, 2007; Glick Schiller, 2007).
- There is a dire need for a stronger gender perspective in the research on the integration of these groups – especially under two aspects: one is the intersectionality of social positioning processes and the second is the focus on the role of masculinities in education and training processes (cf. Phoenix, 2004).

### *Youth participation in comparative perspective*

The information on youth participation which we have collected with regard to the five countries Austria, France, Ireland, Italy and Slovakia partly derives from European statistics (EUROSTAT), European surveys (EUYOUPART) and from other comparative research such as the IARD study, the All-European study on pupils' participation in school (Dürr, 2003; Birzea et al., 2004) and the YOYO study on the potential of participation of young people's transitions to the labour market (Walther et al. 2006). The information collected tentatively covers the areas of youth councils, pupils' and students' councils, the organisation of civic education in school and youth work.

In *Austria* youth councils and pupil/student councils benefit from a legal framework which prioritises representative forms of participation and which, to some extent, includes forms of co-decision making. Every second young person is a member of an organisation, usually in leisure time and recreation oriented settings, every fourth young person is involved in

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<sup>12</sup> EDUMIGROM for the education system (see Szalai et al., 2009), TIES for young adults from immigrant communities (see Crul & Schneider, 2009). EUMARGINS and TRESEGY providing important case study approaches for the analysis of local contexts (see Gerritsen et al., 2009)

voluntary activities. The most relevant form of political activity (apart from voting) is participation in an online forum rather than being active in parties, trade unions or NGOs. As regards young people's education for and support in participation, civic education is a mandatory school subject established in a cross-curricular way. Professional youth work relies on a distinct social work profile in open youth work while associative youth work depends largely on volunteers. In sum, youth participation in Austria seems well-organised, especially at national and regional level while at local level political priorities make a difference. At the same time counter cultures experience institutional pressure.

In *France* youth councils account for the local, the department and the national level, although less sustainably institutionalised than in Austria. Student councils are restricted to secondary schools and have minimal impact on the organisation of school life. The presence of school headteachers in council sessions and the importance of legal instruction as part of civic education suggest a paternalistic approach. This is also reflected by a youth work model of socio-cultural animation in which (at least traditionally) the organisation of 'positive' leisure time activities dominated over the provision of open spaces. At local level, participation is often interpreted as involvement of youth workers (not young people) in decision-making and is strongly dependant on political priorities. From the young people's side the degree of organisation is lower than in Austria. Only one quarter of French young people are members of any organisation in which cultural activities and arts play a major role. A mere one in eight is engaged in voluntary activities. The preference for taking part in demonstrations can be interpreted either as a resentment against the dominating paternalistic approach or as an expression of a distinct interpretation of 'the public' in French society.

In *Ireland* youth participation is implemented both nationally and locally. In spite of the title of a youth parliament access and recruitment occurs through membership in organisations rather than through elections. Where school student councils exist they are weak and hold restricted competencies. Civic education in school is conceptualised as both a separate and an integrated subject under the title of personal, social and health education, which suggests a more individualised than institutionalised approach. In Ireland youth work is a distinct professional discipline with its own qualifications. Provision is often through youth or social organisations and open approaches stand alongside more targeted preventive practice aimed at the social inclusion of young people deemed to be at risk. The meaningful participation of young people tends to be a central tenet of these organisations. Slightly more than one quarter of these young people declare themselves as members of an organisation and one out of every six is engaged in voluntary activities. NGOs are the most trusted and used means of political

articulation. Corresponding to the central role of youth and social organisations, youth participation is often referred to in terms of social capital while (due to the positive economic dynamics which has only recently started to weaken) at the same time consumerism is explicitly interpreted as a form of participation in society.

Youth participation in *Italy* is the least established among these countries. It is neither legally prescribed nor facilitated through infrastructures at a national level. If established, youth councils are restricted to the local level. In schools the situation is slightly more structured. On the provincial level in secondary education sometimes student councils do exist. Civic education in schools is integrated into the subjects of social sciences, law and economics, and/or history. As regards youth policies and youth work, they depend heavily on the local socio-economic and political climate. The most widespread local youth policy is youth information which refers to a ‘user’ concept of participation in relation to public institutions. Apart from this, youth work (socio-cultural animation) focuses on organising extra-curricular activities rather than providing spaces. As a reaction to this a movement of self-organised youth centres exists which overlap with alternative youth cultural scenes. The similarity with the French case is reflected by participation implying alternative political engagement, by the prevalence of membership in associations with a cultural or arts focus, and by young people prioritising participation in demonstrations as the foremost method of political activity.

*Slovakia* needs to be viewed from the perspective of an ongoing transformation and democratisation process. In principle, following the Austrian model is envisaged as the most appropriate means of achieving this goal by implementing youth councils at local, regional and national level and by making them sustainable by means of a legal framework. This also applies to pupil and student councils and the inclusion of civic education as a mandatory subject in the school curricula. This top-down approach is mirrored in the close relationship between the national youth council and the national youth policy. At the same time it seems to be limited to the national level while many towns or cities neither encourage the development of youth councils nor undertake a major investment in any youth policy at all.

A profile of professional youth work is still in the making, with a rather weak focus on open youth work and a stronger emphasis on youth associations and the organisation of (rather formal) extra-curricular activities in school. Young people themselves are only rarely members of organisations with a preference of youth organisations. While almost one fourth are engaged in voluntary activities, they prefer the discretion of online fora for expressing political views. In sum, the Slovak case may be interpreted as an attempt at institutionalised

democratisation. It provides opportunities for participation which however are not embedded within local contexts and youth cultures.

**Table 5: National configurations of participation in Austria, France, Ireland, Italy and Slovakia**

	<i>Austria</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Slovakia</i>
Dominant concepts of participation	Youth organisations Involvement in local communities Youth centres	(Alternative) Political participation Civil society Pedagogical method Participation of youth workers in decision-making	Youth (and social) organisations Consumer participation Local/national partnerships Social capital	(Alternative) Political participation Information through public administration Community psychology (social networks)	Youth organisations Political participation Involvement in local communities
<i>Youth councils</i>					
- name	youth representation	youth council	youth parliament	youth council	youth council
- level	local, regional, national	local, departmental, national	local, national	mainly local	local, regional, national
- legal frame	yes	Yes	yes	no	yes; close to ministry
- access	variable	variable	organisations	variable	organisations
<i>Student councils</i>					
- name	Pupil/student representation	Student representative councils, councils of secondary school	Student councils	School councils, provincial student councils	School student councils
- level	All levels	Mainly secondary	Primary, secondary	Primary, secondary	Secondary
- issues	Co-decision	School life	School life	School life	School life (towards co-decision)
- sustainability	Medium – high (legal framework)	Medium	Weak	Weak	Medium
<i>Civic education</i>					
- name	Civic education	Civic, legal and social education	Social, personal and health education	Social studies	Civic education
- educ. level	Primary, secondary	Primary, secondary	Primary, secondary	Primary, secondary	Primary, secondary
- subject approach	Cross-curricular, mandatory	Separate, mandatory	Integrated and separate, mandatory	Integrated and separate	Separate, mandatory
<i>Youth work model</i>					
- name	Youth work	Socio-cultural animation	Youth work	Socio-cultural animation	Youth work
- legal basis	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
- dominant forms	Open youth work Associative youth work	Open youth work Associative youth work	Open youth work Social inclusion	Youth information, Extra-curricular activities	Associative youth work, Extra-curricular activities
- professional qualification	Social workers Pedagogues	Social workers	Youth workers	Social educators	Social workers
<i>Young people's membership in organisations, voluntary and political activity</i>					
- Total ...	43,4%	23,1%	28%	13,4%	11,5%
- of which most	Hobbies	Cultural, artistic	Hobby-related	Cultural, artistic	Youth
- Vol. activity	24,5%	12,5%	17,6%	15,8%	24,8%
- Polit. activity	Online forum	Demonstration	NGO	Demonstration	Online forum
<i>Context factors</i>					
Governance of youth policy	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Fragmented	Comprehensive (since 2006)	Comprehensive
Age range of youth policy	0-25	0-25	5-18	15-30	15-25
Youth policy model	Protectionist	Protectionist	Community-based	Familistic	Transformation
Transition regime	Employment-centred	Employment-centred	Liberal	Sub-protective	Transformation
Welfare regime	Conservative	Conservative	Liberal	Sub-protective	Transformation

Sources: IARD, 2001; Birzea et al., 2004; Dürr, 2004; Eurobarometer, 2007; UP2YOUTH country reports

The comparative analysis of structures, meanings and forms of youth participation in these five countries is obviously limited by lack of sufficient and solid data. Apart from this, an international comparison of youth policy especially suffers from the paramount importance of the local level, not only for delivery but also for implementation.

In order to explain the differences between institutional forms of youth participation it is necessary to analyse



In *Slovakia* it is obvious that authorities and organisations aim at building a model similar to the Austrian one, i.e. with protectionist and employment-centred traits. However, both the socio-cultural and also the socio-economic contexts are different (especially youth unemployment being twice as high) and the loose relationship between local, regional and national level which resulted from a rapid decentralisation process seems to undermine good policy intentions. Apart from this, it seems to be widely accepted that young Roma are excluded from participation and citizenship.

Obviously, these reflections are formulated in terms of hypothesis rather than conclusions. This is in itself the consequence of a deficit in empirical data and signposts the necessity of further research. From the perspective of this comparative analysis the *key research gaps* identified concern among others:

- information on the structures of national and local youth policy including youth services, youth work and the relationship and variation between national and local level;
- information on the structures of dominant forms of youth participation as well as evaluation regarding coverage, influence and effectiveness;
- the relation between policy structures, service models, young people's legal status and cultural notions of youth;
- analysis regarding the relationship between membership in organisations, forms of political articulation and institutional structures of participation;
- understanding of the different meanings of 'politics', 'policies' and 'the public', and of the role they play in individual biographies; the subjective experiences of different forms of engagement and participation need to be scrutinized more under this angle as well

### 3. Youth and social change

Talking about social change is a precarious endeavour because social sciences have produced a wealth of thought and theories about it and producing a short overview without leaving out important developments is nearly impossible. Therefore we concentrate on the strands of analysis that evolved around the changes in the life course which are most pertinent to the changing nature of young people's agency.

In the UP2YOUTH interim paper (Pohl, Stauber & Walther, 2007), we have distinguished between a phenomenological level of describing social change, an analytical level of explaining the driving forces of social change, and the level of dynamics of social change. On a phenomenological level, we can distinguish five different diagnostic angles pertinent to our topic of youth. *First*, we can start from Bauman's conception of post-modernism which stands for the end of grand ideas and the rise of individualism (Bauman, 2001). His work centers around the developments of the post-war period with its rise of mass production, the building of the welfare state and dominant technological optimism inter alia breaking down. Beck (1986) has taken these aspects of change further and added the dilemma of political steering and state interventions that consists of a break with technological optimism and introduces a view on the manageability of change as throwing light into the unintended consequences all attempts of managing change have to face. A *second* aspect of social change is the disembedding (Giddens, 1991) from social patterns that in former times have given (not only) young people's lives orientation through norms and values. Lash and Urry have theorised this as detraditionalisation (1994). A *third* vein of theorising social change starts from the meso level and emphasizes the growing role of networks as a link between individual and society (Castells, 1996) demanding a whole new set of competencies in young people's socialisation. *Fourth*, the rise of the network society often is seen as a complementary process to what Robertson (1998) and others have coined as "glocalisation" bringing together insights into the weakening role of the nation state and the growing importance of the local level by what has been described under the vast umbrella of globalisation processes. A *fifth* strand of debate bringing production conditions into play is the debate around the changes of a fordist industry model to post-fordism (Brown, 1999), which involves the move from serial mass production to different patterns of surplus creation.

Explaining the dynamics, the factors and reasons behind these phenomena is still a bit trickier. In broad brushes, we can distinguish between modernisation, (post-)marxist and

differentiation theories. The main differences between these approaches are the way they conceive of the interrelation between the different levels of change. In this respect, three levels of change can be distinguished: the macro level comprising social structures, norms, values and cultural practices, the meso level of institutions and a micro level of individuals. Therefore these approaches all differ in the way they conceive of agency. Accordingly and again in very broad brushes, they also differ in the way they link typical change media like structures, culture or technology to these levels. But none of contemporary reasoning about social change sticks to a mono-causal explanation that puts one of these in the forefront and declares all other factors as dependent.

The perception of the way change happens has changed from linear and teleological assumptions to non-linear ones where no single force determines the direction or dynamics of change. Modernisation refers to a historical process marked by secularisation, democratisation and capitalisation of society but also to social differentiation and individualisation. We conceive social change as a multi-faceted, non-linear modernisation process that has its drivers in the conflictual appropriations of technical, economic and ecological developments by societies. Late or post-modernity is characterised by a reflexive modernisation of social structures resulting from emerging risks and side-effects such as the de-standardisation of life courses and transitions and new dynamics of social exclusion. In the following, we therefore start from the general perspective of changing life courses before we present our view of young people's agency. We also assume that individualisation as a concept is over-simplistic to cover the complex relationship between autonomy and new bindings in young people's relationships. Research for a long time has conceptualised of youth as being more or less determined by these changes (cf. Galland, 1996, p. 157). Individual agency in youth research often is taken into account if it comes to risk behaviour and deviance. And accounts of exclusion, unemployment and other issues young people have to deal with, often conceptualise their role as a response to structural contradictions. In the following sections, we want to take stock of how different writers have coined young people's role in social change in order to see which understanding of modernisation processes we can develop that does neither take structures as something young people have to take for granted nor ignore the fact that processes of social change pose new challenges to individuals.

First of all a historical tour of the concept of youth has to mention its construction character: youth has always been a social construction to explain and frame certain ways of relating generation relationships to the "outer world" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 3). It has been invented at the same time as the steam machine (Gillis, 1980). This is by no means a coincidence as it

was the mechanisms of industrialisation that made youth a necessity. Youth as a concept and a phenomenon therefore was bound to a way of transmitting values and knowledge to the younger members of society which is closely related to the beginning of the industrial age (Eisenstadt, 1956; Gillis, 1980). Of course, following the idea of a close relationship between the world of ideas and the “real” world of production and re-production, there were ideas and individuals’ life circumstances which preceded the general recognition of the concept. But, it is with the general move from a feudal, agriculture-related world to a society of class and industrial production that the concept got momentum. The introduction of general education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the first big step in a social phenomenon where the transmission of knowledge and values was changing from the seamless tradition to organised education. Educating children and young people meant at least to a certain extent liberating them from labour. Therefore, at first, the phenomenon of youth was limited to noble and bourgeois classes of society while it did not pertain to other parts of society. With the rise of the industrial age and the change in the organisation of labour it was evident that “natural” transmission of knowledge and values was no longer appropriate. Therefore the part liberation from working tasks reached larger parts of the younger generation. Since the introduction of compulsory public education in most parts of Europe, youth as social construction has established itself as psycho-social moratorium phase where tasks and obligations attributed to adult life were temporarily suspended (Erikson, 1959). The end of this phase was made visible by “rites de passage” (van Gennep, 1986) like markers taken over from transition rituals of the traditional society. Transition from youth into adult life therefore was clearly marked and tangible. It was conceived as the full acquisition of citizen rights and responsibilities of a full member of the adult community.

This phenomenological description still conforms with largely all models of explaining social change: it can be regarded as change resulting driven by the changes in the means of production, it can be regarded as part of functional differentiation of society and it is still compliant with idealist assumptions about the drivers of history made prominent in the Enlightenment and Romanticist era of thought. With the importance of industrial mass production growing this model of youth got more and more spread over mostly all groups of society – at least as a hegemonic cultural concept.

Scientific reasoning about youth was born much later than youth and theorized youth according to a variety of basic assumptions of society and its conflicts either as a problem of a phase in life largely uncontrolled by the state or as a time of education (Mørch, 2003). Therefore it is no wonder that modern youth policies rose as a surrogate to fill the gap

between the parental home and the disciplining time of either work, marriage or the military service.

Speaking with regulation theorists, the time after WWII saw an imposition of the capitalist logic of production and the commodification of goods onto the majority of populations in Europe. Large parts of everyday life were moving away from subsistence to commodified goods and mass consumption spread according to the growing participation on paid labour. With this turn, youth as a moratorium also became empirically enlarged to a majority of young people and at the same time differentiated. While for the first time, less privileged parts of the younger generation also benefited from a sizable liberation from early labour obligations; the expansion of education in the life course produced a protraction of biographical time spent within the educational system. The imposition of the idea of youth to large parts of societies went along the scholarly perception of the youth moratorium as a time of developmental tasks. This idea still was conceived as society imposed clear-cut expectations upon young people such as getting a qualification, allocation on the labour market, building up a relationship and founding a family. But, for the first time this also allowed theorists to conceive of youth as a societal group united by a cohort-specific common background of historical experience (e.g. the “sceptical generation” in Germany by Helmut Schelsky (1958). With the rise of the welfare state and democratic forms of government plus the introduction of mass consumption, life styles came into play as a new category of the social sciences. Youth in the 1960s was perceived as a liminal stage (Turner, 1969; Walther, 2003, p. 195) between childhood and adult life and was regarded as an innovative force by some theorists (cf. Kahane, 1997). In some Western European countries they even got the label of “spearhead” of social change, especially through the rise of youth-led, youth-dominated, youth-inspired forms of political protest. At this moment again, differentiation of youth life and youth living conditions became the focus of youth research again. Cultural differentiation of youth life styles, societal divisions and cleavages as potential explanations were theorised in different ways – according to basic theoretical starting points. The prolongation of the youth phase was theorized as a de-coupling of once timely related developmental tasks: youth was coined as a life phase where these tasks were to be coped with in a certain order and sequence. With the rise of the welfare state which was organised around the employment system, life courses became institutionalised as a sequence of stages sanctioned by state policies. Although the later called “standard life course” empirically never was reached by the vast majority of people, it was still the (albeit androcentric) hegemonic idea behind much of the institutions around it.

In the late 1970s and 1980s with the end of full employment even in highly industrialised states of central Europe, this model was threatened by the polarisation of youth lives into class-based, or according to another strand of social theorizing milieu-based, fractions of those who had access to modern youth life and those who were stuck with the constraints of making a living under circumstances of scarce resources. State intervention in the form of offering opportunities and subsidies for education and training or in shaping and sanctioning the normal life course came into focus.

Mass unemployment in many European countries and the crisis of the Western European welfare states together with a turn in economics to supply-side economics weakened the role of the state in supporting the reachability the normal life course. Increasing mobility of goods, money and people fell together with the end of Fordist production (Brown & Lauder, 1998). This can be seen with changes in the labour market towards the decrease of manual labour and the de-industrialisation of large parts of Europe (Brown & Lauder, 1998). In the former Communist countries, privatisation and marketisation brought uncertainty to once highly regulated life courses in a very short time when the Soviet regime collapsed (Roberts & Jung 1995; Kovacheva, 2000). With the service economy becoming more important the demand for highly-skilled labour rose and education systems expanded in most European countries with growing shares of the young population staying longer in education. Youth could no longer be seen as a phase of instrumental “in order to be” definitions, but as a life phase on its own.

The transition from youth to adulthood corresponds to changes in modern industrial and post-industrial societies. As a result of the extension of education and by the diversification and individualisation of social life it has become longer and more complicated. The broadening and prolongation of education creates a specific youth life and endangers entering adulthood. Youth tends to become the only valued part in the life course. This development is analysed by Côté and others as “disappearance of adulthood” (Côté, 2000; Frønes & Brusdal, 2000; Walther, Stauber et al., 2002). Youth life is less part of a pre-defined transition structure but is divided between socially fragmented contexts (education, job, consumption, youth culture, private relationships, etc. requiring that individuals negotiate adult positions rather than simply following existing paths (Mørch, 1999). The transition process itself as well as its purpose – becoming adult – seems to be blurred as linear status passages (e.g. education to employment) are being more and more replaced by ‘yo-yo’-transitions which are synchronous (education and employment) and/or reversible (education to and from employment). Once they are confronted with demands of transitions one may therefore rather refer to young adults

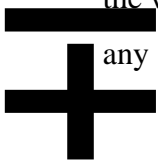
than to youth (du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Pais, 2000; EGRIS, 2001; Walther, Stauber et al., 2002).

These changes influence both the relation to work and family life. The “metro” man and the single woman are pictures of the (over-)individualised individual in late modernity. The markers between different age constructions tend to disappear; instead social differences according to education, interests and competence become dominant. Social and cultural capital become the markers of modern social structures and create new forms of social inequality (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Field, 2003; Mizen, 2004; White & Wyn, 2004). Ethnic minority youth are most at risk of marginalisation and of becoming part of the new ‘underclass’ in which the interrelation of deprived socio-economic background, school problems and precarious labour market integration is reproduced – and individualised (Faist, 1993; Mørch, 2001; Bendit & Stokes, 2003; Dimitri et al., 2008).

As more young people stay in education longer, the certificates acquired in education lose their labour market value. Beck talks of an “elevator effect” in this respect. With the loosening link between educational achievement and positioning in the labour market, the return on investment in education for young people became uncertain and this increased the importance of individual career decisions. Individuals according to Beck are forced to become their own “planning cell”. This is mirrored on the policy side with the turn to an activation agenda and the emphasis put on lifelong learning accompanying the retrenchment of the welfare states plus the expansion of juridicial measures of control like Loïc Wacquant has shown for the US (Wacquant, 2001). These developments share a common basic idea on shifting the responsibility for social exclusion or successful inclusion to the individual level. On the individual’s side, this new agenda, together with the de-traditionalisation and emancipation from social heritage make individual agency more visible and more actively demanded. Basic mechanisms of social inequality persist, but are re-defined on the individual level and partly attributed to individual’s deficits, as can be analysed in the concept of “disadvantaged youth” for example (see Walther, 2003). Public policies are reacting to the de-standardisation of life courses with attempts to re-standardisation. It is important to stress that de-standardisation is not the only relevant trend which makes agency a necessity. De-standardisation is currently accompanied by re-standardisation, above all when considering the field of educational transitions: a shortening of educational trajectories, a modularization of higher education has re-regulated youth life (partly in contrast to the intentions formulated in the beginning of respective programmes such as the Bologna process within the context of higher education). This is another layer of demands, which only apparently is contrasting with

de-standardisation. On the contrary, such trends of re-standardisation go along with de-standardisation, and make the package of demands even more challenging. The shortening of education phases in most European countries and the prolongation of working age can be interpreted as two attempts to restandardise life courses.

What has been clarified up to now? In this chapter, the dynamics of de-standardisation of youth have been connected to a historical and conceptual development of youth research under the angle of how society organises life stages. This prepares the ground for contextualizing agency in social change. As a consequence of de-standardisation agency becomes a reflexive issue and becomes more important because of the structural distortions of the whole life-course (de-standardisation). Because transitions from youth to adulthood do not any longer –





## 4. Agency in a biographical perspective

In this section we come back to the core question: what does agency mean with regard to youth and social change? After shortly recapping on the basic theoretical problem lying behind this question, we will conceptualise agency by referring to concepts assembled from sociological and social psychological research. We do this because UP2YOUTH – besides its analysis of young people's agency in three core topics of their transitions into adulthood – also has a theoretical endeavour on its agenda: it wants to develop a theoretical perspective on how to look at agency and social change in research on youth and life course transitions, and therefore needs to explore prominent concepts – also in order to clarify its non-positivistic perspective. After this we will ask, how far did we come in our research with regard to integrating essentials of these concepts into a theoretical platform useful for further research on youth transitions and social change.

As has been outlined in the previous chapter, agency can be defined as coping with demands which derive from the complex simultaneity of de-standardized and re-standardized transitions into adulthood in terms of struggling for and creating themselves some space for having a choice or for doing something according to own ideas. Agency from the start is an issue of structured intentionality respectively of 'constrained choice' (Folbre 1994): it includes a considerable part of structural forces, without neglecting the subjectivity of its actors (young women and men themselves).

At this early point, a clarification seems to be necessary with regard to the issue of choice: when we deal with agency, we start from a rather basic idea of young people's ability to act, which goes along with the fundamental option of making a difference to the surrounding world. They decide on a very basic level if engaging in taking such an option or if refraining from such intervention. But if and how this intervention is really having some effect, if it is really making a difference, only partly can be steered by the individual. This basic assumption of a space for investing energy and activity (or not) has not to be equated with ignoring structural constraints. In this regard, one differentiation of Anthony Giddens seems to be helpful:

*"... it is of the first importance to recognize that circumstances of social constraint in which individuals 'have no choice' are not to be equated with the dissolution of action as such. To 'have no choice' does not mean that action has been replaced by reaction (in the way in which a person blinks when a rapid movement is made near the eyes).*

*This might appear so obvious as not to need saying. But some very prominent schools of social theory, associated mainly with objectivism and with 'structural sociology', have not acknowledged the distinction. They have supposed that constraints operate like forces in nature, as if to 'have no choice' were equivalent to being driven irresistibly and uncomprehendingly by mechanical pressures" (Giddens, 1984, p. 15).*

This confusion might also appear in people's self concepts. The personal horizon, as underlined by Karen Evans (2002), is structured and deeply rooted in biographical and social context, so that the question is,

*"How [...] what people believe is possible for them (their personal horizons developed within cultural and structural influences) [does] determine their behaviours and what they perceive to be 'choices'? [...] Whether a person under-estimates or over-estimates their extent of control is very consequential on their experiences and socialisation" (Evans, 2002, pp. 250-251).*

And still – all decisions they take, strategies they develop, and even such reasoning we will regard here as agency.

In this paper, we start from the idea, that agency always has a transformative capacity, that it potentially involves power, but that there are on the other hand institutions and dominant discourses which in the end decide upon the power given to such agency (Bauman's idea of acknowledgment), and to which individual agency could refer (strategically or not, consciously or not).

*1. The starting problem* is, that in youth research (as well as in youth policy), this difficult topic of agency is not adequately represented: while in late modern de-standardised transitions agency at the same time is an issue demanded by society as it is longed for by individuals, it seems to be difficult to thematise agency exactly in this ambivalence. Instead, a non-reflexive picture of youth again and again is breaking through, which can be identified in at least three versions: *first*, as soon as structure-related perspectives are dominating, young people appear as victims of social constraints, which force them to react in ways which themselves cause problems, because of not fitting into the normalities still expected by those societal actors and institutions which are decisive for their transitions into adulthood – e.g. as gatekeepers into transitions to qualified work. Such a perspective is far from capturing the complex reality of young people's every day coping, and at the same time far less from capturing their potentials as actors of social change: young people are 'doing' social integration on the basis of daily routines and practices, they are actively coping with structural demands, they are inventing new solutions for these demands. By doing this, they – as could be argued – of course are "doing difference" (West & Fenstermaker, 1995) in terms of reproducing social ascriptions

regarding social origin, ethnicity and gender – but perhaps they are doing difference differently, i.e. modify such ascriptions, or break them off.

*Second*, as a kind of counter tendency, a rational choice-bias could be found in perspectives in which young people are regarded predominantly as calculators. Such approaches are ignoring structural constraints and necessities to the same extent as they overlook biographical processes, in which motivation and will are not freely available resources but are embedded in histories of de-motivation or encouragement. They are to be found in psychological approaches to “volition”, they are implied in activation policies, in which positive incentives are replaced by sanctions, and they are to be found in any idea of an opportunity cost-driven agency, as can be found in discourses around family formation. Here, it is important to keep in mind that there is never a completely free space in which young people would get rid from hierarchical structuration.

In this regard, also a *third* strand of youth research appears as too simplistic: the one which is celebrating young people’s creativity and resistance, e.g. in the field of research on youth cultures, where young people sometimes appear as “heroes” or as “creators”, again neglecting “*the subtle relations of power*” at play within youth cultural phenomena (Thornton 1997, p. 201), and more generally: within all youthful engagement.

These three versions of simplification indicate the challenge: young people are neither victims, nor calculators, nor free creators – instead, they unfold their agency in between such ascriptions, performing mixtures of such roles, and it would be an empirical question how these mixtures would look in different situations and under different conditions.

However, neither structural limitations nor impacts of societal discourses, nor the sceptical view on simplistic concepts of young peoples activities are valid reasons not to analyse how young people make choices within given constraints and in interaction with cultural norms (Elder, 1994). Moreover, it is exactly the complexity and also the ambivalence of agency that an up-to-date youth research has to be interested in – an endeavour in which youth research could learn from existing conceptual work on action and agency.

To put it differently: whereas a lot of youth research on the one hand is focussing on the inputs for decision-making processes, which is documented by an over-representation of value studies and studies on attitudes of young people, and on the other hand is focussing on the outcomes of such decision-making processes in terms of observable transition steps, the crucial part between input and outcome (the decision-making processes themselves), are still a

black box. As agency is exactly located in this “in-between”, it should be the focus of further research.

### *Theoretical dimensions of agency*

In the following, we analytically distinguish main dimensions in this conceptualization in order to clarify the understanding of agency subsumed in the perspective on youth as actor of social change: regarding the emergence of agency as intentional or responsive, regarding the development and/or selection of individual goals of action, regarding the way in which agency evolves and turns into concrete action, and regarding its sociality in terms of limitations through power and inequality, of being embedded in social networks and relationships, and its relevance for the reproduction and generation of social structures. These dimensions emerge from the range of concepts we have referred to because they cover exactly these aspects and therefore are useful for this theoretical endeavour of developing a concept of agency appropriate for our work.<sup>13</sup> The different dimensions which will be analytically distinguished in the following sections are first of all the meaning of agency, intentionality of agency, temporality of agency (including core aspects such as routine, reflexivity and creativity) and last but not least the core dimension of its relation to structure, i.e. power and resources in the respective contexts.

### *The meaning of agency*

What reasons (and reasoning), assessment, preferences and priorities are reflected by young people's actions and how can these be analysed and understood?

Any concept of goal-orientation at least implicitly refers to Max Weber who has focussed on rationality and purpose in his concept of ‘teleological’ action (Weber 1972; cf. Habermas, 1991; Joas, 1992). This also has been the ground on which theories of rational choice have been developed – especially by economists and obviously can only cover one aspect of agency. Meaning here is conceptualised in terms of maximising benefits, through weighing

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<sup>13</sup>This range of concepts used for this conceptual work is selective, but selected with good reasons, taking into consideration only those concepts which imply an interplay between social structure and individual agency in analysing and explaining both processes of social integration but also individual decision making: Weber's theory of action, social interactionism, ethnomethodology, theory of communicative action, theory of creative action, relational pragmatism, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Giddens' theory of structuration, Bauman's concept of sociality, psychological concepts of coping and motivation and finally recent conceptualisations of identity and biographical agency. All of them are concepts which are prominent to answer the agency question not in a one-dimensional way but related to social contexts which are themselves not meant as stable but permeable and dynamic. No reference is made to theories that conceptualise human action one-dimensionally as response to external stimuli – whether these are early behaviourist psychological or purely structuralist sociological theories.

costs and benefits against each other. This can take rather crude forms such as the simple Homo oeconomicus while more differentiated ones such as RREEMM (Restricted Resourceful Expecting Evaluating Maximising Man) including also non-rational subjective and normative dimensions (Esser, 1996). Criticism against ascribing agency to rational choice refers first to the tendency of conceptualising meaning and purpose as one-dimensional and linear, second to neglecting the bounding effects of social structure, third to ignoring the question of how meaning is being generated and reproduced through action, and - fourth - above all through inter-action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Archer, 2000; Strauss, 1993). As Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische put it:

*“...many rational choice theorists have made great strides in accounting for the contingencies and uncertainties involved in choice making (March and Simon 1958; March and Olsen 1976; March 1978), as well as in attempting to explore the role of values, norms, and other cultural elements (Elster 1989; Hechter 1992, 1994; see also the essays in Cook and Levi [1990]). However, we maintain that even these more sophisticated versions of rational actor models are still grounded in presuppositions that prevent them from adequately theorizing the interpretive intersubjective construction of choices from the temporal vantage points of contextually embedded actors” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, pp. 966f).*

Thus, the approach of symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists who embed agency in a complex process of intersubjective meaning-making, appears far more appropriate to grasp meaning in young people’s agency. Both approaches start from the assumption that individuals – and individual agency – constantly interact with social contexts through which meaning is generated and reproduced. Symbolic interactionists assume that all human action is based on subjective meaning, that meaning evolves from social interaction and is modified by a process of subjective interpretation (Mead, 1959). The focus therefore lies on the formative process of action and the dialectics between action and (re)production of meaning (cf. Blumer, 1969). This formative process is the origin of goals, which therefore are not supposed to be independently set by an actor. This is even more accentuated within the ethnomethodological approach with its focus on shared meaning and the fact that actions result from collective meaning in which actors and situations of action are embedded (Garfinkel, 1967; cf. Giddens, 1984).

Meaning-making needs communication and negotiation – Habermas’ theory of communicative action has been inspired by symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology and refers explicitly to Mead when distinguishing between meaning which is (re)produced by means of inter-subjective negotiation in the social life world and functional behaviour

resulting from and mediated by differentiated systems (Habermas, 1981). While he observes an increasing colonisation of subjective agency, he argues that systemic integration continues to depend on the communicative production of subjective meaning. In Strauss' Theory of Action (Strauss, 1993) this inter-active agency is of core relevance – also with regard to meaning-making. This active construction of meaning requires opportunities of inter-subjective exchange in the public (public recognition, Honneth, 1992), because subjective meaning only is meaningful if also socially recognised – this is Zygmunt Bauman's point when analysing the individual in a liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000). Youth riots in the recent past, be they in the French banlieues or in the city centre of Athens, can be interpreted as active expression of longing for public attention and acknowledgement – and as a mirror of too little participation in the past.

Strauss' action theory (Strauss, 1993) also stands for defining structure as a negotiated order. Young people negotiate meaning in all their aspects of life, most visibly in participatory activities related to youth cultures, but also when finding their place within a dominant culture, or when negotiating their social positioning as young mother or young father. This interactionist understanding of meaning making implicitly refers to the policy dimension of longing for acknowledgement for such negotiated meaning making as well as longing for better facilities for transparent and symmetric negotiation. This refers back to the most important normative point in Habermas' theory: the plea for just conditions for communication so that communicative rationality only could unfold.

Meaning-making is quite differently interpreted, at least at first sight, by psychological concepts of agency: psychological theories of motivation locate the goal or meaning of action in subjective motives which originally have been primarily seen as drives or needs (e.g. Maslow, 1970). However, in the meantime there are various approaches – as for example authors concerned with the process of generating subjective interest (Vigotskij, 1962; Krapp, 2002) – who refer to interest as subject-world-relationships which emerge and stabilise (and change) over a person's life span. And the concept of intrinsic motivation explicitly refers to activities which imply an emotional involvement, as in experiences of flow (Czikszenmihaly, 1997), or as activities which are done for themselves (Bandura, 1997).

Meaning in concepts of coping was reduced to re-establish agency in terms of regaining control over the own life situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Zeidner & Endler, 1996). As Böhnisch argues, under conditions of individualisation and late modern uncertainty this applies more and more to all human action, that means: every action has at least as a side



effect the aim to confirm individual agency (Böhnisch, 1997), and by this to cope with basic insecurity in late modernity. The extension of the concept of coping to everyday life and biography points to implicit dimensions such as coherence, individuality and self-reflexivity (Antonovsky, 1987; Böhnisch, 1997; Keupp et al., 1999). In order to grasp not only the reactive but also the pro-active aspects of agency, coping needs to be enlarged in terms of shaping the own life in a subjectively meaningful way (Stauber, 2004). It has been Joas who has pointed to these creative aspects, which have an impact on the environment and give visibility to internal processes of meaning-making (Joas, 1992). Examples are the different meanings and the different level of relevance that work, family foundation or public engagement have for persons apart from the formally set purposes of making a living, of fulfilling roles, of achieving a political purpose. In the magnitude of symbolic production (agency) by which above all young people shape their every day life, one could find a lot of empirical evidence for such creativity. Referring to Joas' and Dewey's pragmatic thinking, Emirbayer and Mische (1999) conceptualise the dialectic process of meaning making over time: rooted in and emerging from past experiences and interactions as well as existing structures, longing for anticipated, imagined and desired future effects, and embedded in present evaluation of demands and possible action (see also Strauss 1993). From here it is close to concepts of identity and biography according to which modern identity work (or biographic work as identity work over time) implies the constant reflection of the relation between I and Me (in Meads terms). Especially under late modern conditions meaning becomes more and more fragmented so that meaning-making is an increasingly contradictory and complex process characterised by biographical dilemmas. In fact, while the life course may be seen as the structural stimulus for biographical appropriation, it does not guarantee and provide for the subjective meaning of life (any more) (Keupp et al., 1999; Mørch, 1999; Alheit & Dausien, 2000). Thereby meaning extends beyond individually set purposes but includes the structurally bound processes of meaning-making as well as the reassuring of subjective identity and biography. This has been shown by a variety of studies on young people's practices, life styles, decisions and strategies (e.g. Miles, 2000; Pais, 2003; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Henderson et al., 2006; Walther et al., 2006; Walther, 2007).

Meaning-making is structured by and at the same time results in *culture* – understood here as a non-essentialist concept for analysing the meaning of practice as it evolves both individually and collectively – in social interaction. Implicitly, we stick to the approaches which have come up in cultural theories in the 80s, in which the core question has been: How does culture become social practice (Hörning & Reiter, 2004; Schatzki, et al., 2001)? Culture, as has been

outlined in the UP2YOUTH interim report (Pohl et al., 2007) embodies sets of practices developed by groups, communities or societies. These sets of practices are the totality of social actions which are interlinked within a given social context and which share values, principles and norms. Thereby they represent the repertoire from which individuals construct meaning and relate it to their new ideas and their own forms of practice, which enter the sets of practices available in future. Relating agency to cultural change also implies that practices and meanings might change, or that established and new forms of agency coexist and compete with each other. Thus, culture is also an issue resulting from young people's agency. Concerning *transitions into young parenthood*, young people's agency is dealing with a reconciliation of youth cultural life styles and new roles as fathers and mothers, and much agency is focussed on struggling for a new and more fitting (gendered) imagery. Therefore young people are belonging to (and depending on) culture and at the same time they are doing culture. Concerning *civic participation*, young people engage in a series of participatory activities, most of them deriving from their immediate needs and practices. This means that by engaging in social life young people often are inventing new forms of social engagement – and the crucial question here is indeed the one of public acknowledgement (Bauman). Concerning their *transitions to work into a migration context* respectively within a dominant culture, they are inventing a new social placing (the “third chair”, cf. Badawia, 2002), by which they are picking up elements of the different cultural surroundings they are living in.

In sum, the analysis of individual action can not simply start from preset goals (such as family orientations, political values and attitudes towards participation, work orientations) but has to include the analysis of how subjective meaning emerges from contextualized experiences of individual action. This includes experiences of interaction and (collective) meaning-making via “doing culture”.

### *Intentionality of agency*

The discussion of meaning referring to the direction of purposeful agency is closely related with the dimension of intentionality, that is the question for the source and origin of human agency. What makes young people act? Do they act because of external demands (and do they act in specific ways due to external constraints) or do they act because they want to act? Where can intentionality be located?

Some approaches conceive human action as determined by either internal (drives and needs, e.g. Maslow, 1970) or external (structural) forces, others ascribe individuals an intrinsic will to act. However, while apart from early behaviourist approaches there are no concepts of



agency that would completely deny individual intentionality, some others are either not interested in the question or focus on the structural limitations of intentionality.

Giddens (1984) discerns between motives and reflexive regulation. Motivation means the potential of agency, the underlying, partly unconscious programme, whereas intentionality corresponds with the self-reflexive regulation of behaviour in concrete situations. This refers to symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological concepts according to which persons meet “a flow of situations in which they have to act (.) on the basis of what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kind of projected lines of action they map out” (Blumer, 1969, p. 16). Identification of situations as requiring action as well as selecting practices as appropriate in these situations does not necessarily refer to subjective motivation but primarily results from the collective meaning making (and practice) a person shares with his or her community and which is reproduced through culture and socialisation. Symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists give more importance to the fact that human beings are socialised into routines and enter situations which are structured by and allow only for a certain range of cultural practices without the risk of being excluded (or excluding oneself) from a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998; cf. Garfinkel, 1967). Also if individuals either misunderstand or refuse implicit demands (or opportunities) they indirectly refer to them in their actions; or they re-work and thereby change them (Leccardi, 2005b).

This is even more accentuated in the case of Bourdieu according to whom a social field does not only predetermine (or exclude) what can be perceived, interpreted, thought and wanted in a given situation but explicitly includes the resources (capital) which are at disposal for the actor to realise certain intentional aims. He actually speaks of ‘intentionless intentions’ (Bourdieu, 1977).

From a pragmatic point of view (and very much in line with Giddens), also Joas develops a non-teleological view of intentionality. He argues first that the restriction to purposeful, rational agency implies that neither routine nor intrinsic action are subsumed under agency. Instead he follows Dewey in differentiating between self-chosen and externally induced goals of action. Second, by this reduction action gets separated from cognition inasmuch as the appraisal of meaningful purpose and rational means precedes action and thereby excludes reflexivity. Third, it separates action from the body as the place or centre of action. In sum, he conceptualises intentionality as the self-reflexive regulation of continuing behaviour (Joas, 1992; cf. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Means and goals are in a reciprocal relationship (availability of means may raise awareness of meaningful goals). A key concept for him is the

‘situation’ which stands in a ‘quasi-dialogue’ with the physical process of action. He quotes Böhler: “Without even vague goal dispositions which are given ante actu in the form of needs, interests or norms, no event will appear to us as a situation but will remain meaningless and mute”. (Böhler, 1985, p. 272)

The body-mind-relation is even more accentuated by Strauss: “No action is possible without a body (...) [a phrase, BS] so patently banal that social scientists implicitly assume it, but few follow through very far on its implications” (Strauss, 1993, p. 23). For Strauss, who puts this as the first of his 19 assumptions in his Theory of Action, above all aspects of the body in their relationships with interaction are of interest – an issue which is extremely relevant in youth research. Youth, as the age group most engaging in bodily expressions, also do this in their political engagement, in their transitions to work, in their negotiations of culture and ethnicity, gender and identity.

As mentioned already, the pragmatic approach builds (and actually has been) a bridge towards psychological concepts of motivation. Motivation theory starts from internal motives and needs as the driving powers of human action distinguishing as well between internal and external goals. As a second perspective however these are combined with the individual’s expectation to fulfil them by their own action, that is by reflexive assessment and ascription. Here, social factors can be taken into account, yet without removing the origin of action from the individual personality. This applies also to approaches of critical psychology (Holzkamp 1993; Osterkamp-Holzkamp, 1975). Recent developments towards a “psychology of volition” even rediscovered the category of ‘will’ (s.g. Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2006).

Within the concept of coping intentionality might be seen as a demand deriving from external, stressful causes as much as emerging from a deeply rooted need (or will) to stay in control over the own life situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Böhnisch, 1997). In fact, under conditions of de-standardised life courses individuals needs and efforts to not only cope with but also to negotiate the shaping of their lives in a meaningful way becomes both more visible and necessary. The diversity and multitude of young people constantly performing and revising life styles stand for the increased complexity and contradictions in (re-)presenting themselves in a way which is both self-expressive and ‘cool’; whether these are forms of family formation and parenting, participation or education and work (Heinz, 2002; Marshall et al., 2003; Stauber, 2004; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Henderson et al., 2006).

*Temporality, routine, reflexivity and creativity:*

Until now we have been concerned with the questions where individual agency is rooted and where it is directed. The following section is concerned with the question how it evolves - how it is linked to and embedded in a person's development over time. Do young people act out of routine or in a self-reflexive way? How can they act at all under conditions of late modern uncertainty in which routines developed in the past do no longer match present demands while future perspectives are blurred?

The temporal structure of agency has been elaborated most profoundly by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) who – starting from Dewey's work – operationalise agency in a temporal and relational perspective (see also Strauss, 1993). Agency is the “temporally constructed engagement by which actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970). As key temporal dimensions of agency they distinguish:

- Iteration: the effects of the past in forming stable habits such as routine (Garfinkel, Giddens) and incorporated structure (Bourdieu). Key elements are selective attention, typification and recognition of types, categorical location, manoeuvre among repertoires and the maintenance of expectations; here they identify close links with life course research (cf. Kohli, 1985; Marshall et al., 2003);
- Projectivity: future orientation in the sense of the imagination of scenarios. Key elements are anticipatory identification (motivation theory; e.g. Bandura, 1997; identity and life plans, Giddens, 1991; Keupp et al., 1999), narrative construction, symbolic recomposition, hypothetical resolution, and experimental enactment (Dewey, Joas, 1996); a relation to empirical research lies in a persons' time perspectives (see Leccardi, 2005a);
- Practical evaluation: the necessity to make judgements and take decisions within present situations which are perceived as requiring action. Key elements are problematization, characterization, deliberation, decision and execution (see coping, Zeidner & Endler, 1996; Böhnisch, 1997).

The framework idea of a (varying) interplay of (temporal) dimensions of agency turned out to be highly relevant – e.g. in the topic of transitions into parenthood: within daily coping of future young parents, within their transition to parenthood as well as within the whole

management of their daily life after the transition has taken place. At any stage of these transitions into parenthood past, present and future intermingle and influence each other: iterative moments sticking to traditional models and normalities of parental roles and family traditions, but also to role models beyond “tradition” and to individual biographical experiences have their influence on young women’s and men’s agency in present and future. The conditions for present coping and respective daily routines and experiences of course colour memories as well as future prospects. Self-concepts of young women and men, their ideas about intimate relationships, the way they sketch their lives and see themselves in the nearer or farer future, how they evaluate their near and far life perspectives all depend upon the conditions of today. How they deal with contingencies, how they manage their life, if and how they fall back to (gendered) role conceptions in order to achieve some security or how they resist such stereotypes are all important factors. Structural factors have their impact on the present, the past and the future dimension, and so does the (changing) imagery of fatherhood and motherhood, framing the context in which concrete actions take place.

Intentionality and subjective meaning as well as incorporated habitus are thus related and identified at different stages of the process of action. While the past tends to determine agency by existing structures and past experiences, the necessity to project agency towards a meaningful future and to act in – often unclear – present situations both qualify and counterbalance past influences and open opport-

time (Keupp et al., 1999). Biographical agency includes a self-reflexive relation of internal and external aspects of one's own development. Only by such self-reflection, Joas would argue, creative aspects of agency are possible which constantly question, challenge and transcend existing routines and structures (Joas, 1992).

As agency may vary from situation to situation in this chordal triad of past, present and future, *learning* comes into focus as a central concept. To acquire new practices (or un-learning old habits), it is important to achieve agency, but it is not certain that a proceeding situation can be managed in the same way or if it needs again learning new ways to cope with difficulties or to invent new situations. These new ways could look similar to traditional ones, but as long as we do not have knowledge about the negotiation processes going on before and after presumably “traditional” solutions, we cannot evaluate them as such.

Learning is always situated learning (Lave&Wenger), embedded in communities of practice, and in socially defined situations across the lifespan (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). More specifically: In all three topics, learning means: coping with simultaneous lifecourse transitions, coping with unforeseeable situations, coping with the paradox of life planning. In all three topics, learning is risk-management respectively gaining risk competence. In all three topics, learning is closely related to (de-)gendering strategies, or more generally: has an impact in terms of de-constructing ascriptions – be they related to gender, or to ethnicity, or to any fixed idea of what political articulation should look like. These dynamics probably are important driving forces – most obviously for familial development processes, but perhaps also for the participation issue, and for social change in general.

In sum, understanding action as temporal and socially embedded allows us to identify the relationship between structural influences as well as intentional aspects. It also allows us to overcome the separation between acting and the emergence of the meaning of acting. Furthermore, it differentiates various dimensions of agency whereby individuals can be conceived of as intentional, self-reflexive and learning actors without neglecting the relevance of external influence.

### *Structure and agency: power and resources, contextualisation and structuration*

Young people's agency is seen as restricted regarding their access to resources such as money or social contacts, and also restricted by older age groups, while among youth also general structural categories of social inequality (class, education, gender, ethnicity and region) account for differences and divisions. The question is to what extent structural constraints can

restrict choice among alternatives so that one can no longer speak of intentional agency. Bourdieu's perspective on incorporated limitations (or possibilities) emerging from social fields comes close to mechanistic concepts according to which external forces directly transform into (limited) agency. However, the question would be if – following his perspective on the reproduction of inequality – different habitus are more or less restricted and pre-determined and/or leave different scope for realising creative and intentional agency (Bourdieu, 1990). In contrast, Giddens assumes a dialectic of domination, that means that all forms of dependency give access to resources of action which may also influence the relationships of dependency themselves (Giddens, 1984). Both Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) and Foucault's theory of power (1976) refer to power in the first place as the capability to interfere into the external world, to make a difference. In this regard it is a fundamental requirement of any action and subjectivity.

Approaches of rational action have more problems in grasping the limiting impact of social structure as their methodological individualism denies the possibility of relating individual actions to collective structures and thereby allows only for indirect relations between structure and agency. Esser's introduction of the dimension of conflict (between the interests of competing actors) has to some extent weakened the effects of methodological individualism, yet without getting grips on the relationship between structure and agency itself (Esser, 1996). It still ignores, that issues such as motivation are not a personal disposition, which simply is awake or has to be awakened by certain incentives, "but rather evolves from experiences within social contexts. The fact that access to subjectively meaningful goals as well as to resources, skills and experiences of control are interrelated with social structure justifies the reference to a social inequality of motivation" (Walther, 2009, i.pr.).

While psychological concepts normally do not focus on structural aspects of agency, they do not necessarily contradict a dialectic relationship between structure and agency. As regards motivation, the generation of subjective interest can be seen as dependent on a person's social position (access to meaningful person-world-relationships). This is even more obvious with regard to the second factor of motivation: the perception of being in control over one's actions or the feeling of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Positive experiences of effective and successful action are closely related to social structure and thereby suggest the introduction of the perspective of social inequality of motivation. In this regard, critical psychology argues that actors have to accept externally induced goals of action – to a larger or minor extent according to their social position (Osterkamp-Holzkamp, 1975).

Obviously, the agency of young people is influenced by and related to peers, families, communities, institutional or economic actors – and therefore is constantly negotiating competing influences. Rational choice theories only take into account others as competitors or as facilitators for resource mobilisation (Coleman, 1990; Esser, 1996; cf. Archer 2000), but also psychological concepts such as motivation and coping under-estimate social context by referring predominantly to the level of individual experience and behaviour. However, motivation emerges from experience with meaningful relationships with the world and with achieving or not achieving own goals through one's actions, experiences which are structured by and embedded in social relationships (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Bandura 1997). Also coping strategies - not only by relying on social support and networks - are socially learned, shared and can be empowered by social milieux (Böhnisch, 1997).

Social context is prominent in the ethnomethodological perspective which regards each single act as resulting from and being embedded in the social context which is on the one hand to be seen as a repertoire of routines and shared meanings while on the other hand it is the life world in which individuals form their identities - through acting (Garfinkel, 1967). The parallel with symbolic interactionism is obvious. Actors meet a flow of situations in which they are confronted with opportunities and expectations to act. These situations provide the interactions which are the basis of the socialisation process. They transport potential meaning while they require (and allow) subjective interpretation as well (Blumer, 1969).

Interactionist perspectives stressing the importance of social contexts - without undermining the subjectivity of actors - of course have also been relevant for Habermas' theory of communicative action (Habermas 1981). Here – similar to Giddens theory of structuration – the ambivalence of social context is referred to as limiting (in Habermas. case functional systemic integration or colonisation) and enabling (the social life world where subjectivities are formed through reciprocal recognition; see Honneth, 1992). Concepts of identity point in a similar direction. Individuals meet role expectations which they can not disregard without risking to lose recognition and to weaken their social position. However, identity requires identification which means integration of values and meaning into the own self. Thus, identity is not a singular, individualistic endeavour. In fact, belonging to social communities providing recognition and access to practice is one of the key aspects of identity, and this implies different qualities of families, peers, schools, or the work place with regard to different actions (communities of practice, Wenger, 1999).



Social contexts always entail enabling but also limiting aspects, i.e. by regulating access to the resources necessary to acquire them; or: inasmuch as resources are limited also possibilities to think, imagine and perform identities (*habitus*) are restricted (Bourdieu, 1979). This is stressed by Bourdieu's concept of social capital referring to social contacts that are more or less convertible into economic or cultural capital. The big progress of a biographical perspective here is to imply a dialectic between individual subjectivity and sociality – whether this is the cultural repertoire of 'biographical normality' or the restricted and unequal access to resources for biographical construction (Alheit & Dausien, 2000). Individualisation is "transforming human identity from a given into a task" and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task (Bauman, 2000, p.31; cf. Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Sociality bridges the interactive aspects of social relationships but also the resources and opportunities to which social structures give or deny access; or in Giddens' terms: social structure limits but also enables agency. Bauman argues that the question of how agency is achieved cannot be understood by focusing exclusively on the ability of individuals to give direction to their lives. Bauman's definition of agency includes (a certain amount of) control over the conditions that shape opportunities for action. Leccardi (2005b) sees a relation between intentionality and sociality by differentiating between responsibility and responsiveness. Responsibility not only means the ability to respond (including the autonomous decision to respond) but also awareness and consciousness for the consequences of own actions; in contrast to intuitive, mechanic – or one-dimensionally purpose related – responsiveness. This may include also the awareness for the social embeddedness and interdependency of individual agency which is especially relevant in the young people's informal networks (Walther et al, 2005).

If we now ask: How can young people's agency (and how can any individual's contribution to social change) be conceptualized? – we have to concentrate on those approaches, which are fitting to the level of reflexivity of a late modern society with de-standardised life-courses. Corresponding with the ambiguity of societal demands to late modern young people (to be flexible and mobile, inventive and pro-active, but at the same time keen on using given resources and bonds), are concepts which are open for routine but also for dynamics, and which point to the interactive production of both routine and change, as do ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, social constructivism: The shift from asking 'what (is different?)' to 'how (difference is made?)' has deeply influenced theories which conceptualize gender (and other social categories) as a result of processes of classification, categorization and validation (cf. West & Zimmerman, 1987). Also Giddens' idea of a



“duality of structure” is open for such change: Social structures consist of (partly constraining) rules, but also of enabling resources. They are dynamic and agency-driven. Structures differ in their rigidity or fluidity which means that – despite of traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of doing things – these structures can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently (Giddens, 1984). This dialectic relationship, which includes change, is also to be found within communicative action (Habermas), within structure as a negotiated order (Strauss), or within Joas’ theory of creative action. And it is considered in biographic analysis, where the dialectics between subjectivity and inter-subjective recognition have been phrased as the sociality of the biography and the biographicity of the social (Alheit & Dausien, 2000; cf. Apitzsch, 1990).

Summing up the essentials of our walk through its core dimensions, agency is regarded as the principle ability of human beings to make choices, to take decisions and to act in an autonomous way. Motives of action are rooted in subjective (and physiological) needs and interests, they are learned from social interaction and experience, and they are simulated by concrete situations which individuals interpret as relevant and related to their subjective motives. In this sense, agency implies neither the autonomous actor isolated from social influence nor complete freedom of choice but instead implies choice that is restricted by the constraints of social inequalities and differentiations, such as gender, age, social belonging, ethnicity etc. Also, agency is not restricted to actions which are perceived subjectively meaningful by the actor and socially acknowledged by his or her social environment. One might argue that exceptions such as risk behaviour or deviant behaviour, resilience or inventive life styles reflect the principle ability of individuals to act upon own decisions, yet in terms of “constrained choice”, as in the example of the choice between continuing with education which is experienced as alienating without guaranteeing a bright future – and dropping out.

We look at agency as interconnected with individual processes of identity and biography which are rooted in past experiences and in different social contexts providing different (unequal) resources and opportunities in discovering subjective interest, in developing personal goals and in acquiring competencies required for realising them. At the same time, individuals do and have to imagine themselves in the future, a future which is not free of structural influence but yet open and uncertain. Imaginations mean how individuals want to see themselves in the future which is a mixture of reproducing and transgressing past experiences. Past experience and future imagination are interrelated in how individuals

interpret present situations in terms of being relevant with regard to subjective motives, in

## 5. Young people's agency and changes in family, work and citizenship

Agency is never abstract but always related to specific issues, goals and situations in young people's lives. In the following chapter, we will develop the reflections on young people's agency and social change by relating them to the findings of the three thematic working groups on young parenthood, transitions to work of young people with a migrant or ethnic minority background and on youth participation. We will analyse to what extent findings of the thematic working groups with regard to these areas confirm, contradict or differentiate the assumptions made in Chapters 2 and 3. Rather than summarising the thematic reports exemplary findings are referred to. The following sections are structured according to key dimensions of agency which have been dealt with in the thematic reports while also corresponding to the theoretical dimensions developed in the previous chapter. Inasmuch as the basis of data differed across the themes the sections will be more or less exhaustive on single dimensions. The following dimensions will be addressed:

- *Range of different actions and activities*: what does the diversity of young people's decisions and strategies with regard to parenthood, transitions to work in contexts of migration and ethnic minority or participation tell about young people's scope for agency?
- *Influence of social contexts*: how and to what extent do social contexts – social structures as well as social networks – influence, constrain, inhibit or enhance agency?
- *De-standardised transitions*: what is the influence of interdependency, simultaneity, reversibility and biographical dilemmas in young people's transitions on their agency?
- *Development of young people's agency in temporal perspective*: how are young people's decision-making processes and actions structured by past, present and future?
- *Meaning of young people's agency*: what do young people's actions and activities tell us about individual and collective meaning-making processes?
- *Learning and agency*: to what extent do young people's learning processes reveal aspects of agency and where and what do they learn regarding family, work and citizenship?
- *Parenthood, transitions to work and participation as agency*: what dimensions of autonomy, reflexivity and negotiation can be identified in young people's actions?
- *Agency and structuration*: (how) do young people's actions contribute to social change?

## 5.1 Agency in transitions into parenthood

The following section extracts those of the findings from the Thematic Report on Transitions into parenthood (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2008) which clarify the basic idea of agency. The guiding question is: what could we learn from investigating transitions into parenthood for the refining of “agency”? This question cannot be separated from asking, how an integrative concept of agency could help to develop further a gender-sensitive theory on transitions into parenthood, and how it could promote also a gender-sensitive research on the topic.

Although on the EU- as well as the OECD-level, and of course on national levels, a wealth of statistical material on the topic has been assembled (see Eurostat, 2008; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007; OECD, 2007; Vassilev & Wallace, 2007; Gstrein, 2007), there are not so many studies appropriate for our interest in agency with regard to transitions into parenthood – even if ‘culture’ and ‘learning’ revealed to be appropriate keys. Instead, there has to be read between the lines, against the stream, and on the level of ‘subtexts’ of a big body of research, in order to work out the implications of these findings with regard to agency.

### *Range of different actions and activities*

*First:* Against the background of ever more riskful, insecure and reversibly transitions into adulthood, agency of young people in transitions into parenthood results in a broad range of different strategies: they handle the fact of riskful transitions into paid work either by consciously delaying parenthood longer than they would like to because they are not economically independent, or they become parents early in order to organize for themselves a kind of adult status (teenage parenthood). Or they take an obviously riskful option and dare the transition into parenthood without having accomplished education or vocational training, without having a stable relationship, without having any security about care arrangements. It is important to note that the first option is not only taken by young people with better educational prerequisites, but also by those who for long periods do not achieve any stability in their economic situation. And it is important to note that also among higher educated young people there are those who dare to reconcile their ongoing educational transitions (e.g. their university studies) with transition into parenthood. We argue that the whole range of strategies among family formation – be they delaying, renouncing, consciously or unconsciously risking an (early) parenthood – is testimony of agency in transitions into parenthood.

*Second:* also the discrepancy between the number of desired and realised child births, which can be found in all our countries, on all educational levels (see Jenson, 2006), point to agency inbuilt in decision-making processes, in which young people do negotiate with their subjective wishes and with systemic constraints, labour market conditions, and conditions provided by the state and the public at large. This discrepancy between the number of desired and realised child births has to be coped with on the level of individual identity building as well as on the level of partnership development. The longing for some economic stability before becoming fathers, and respectively mothers (young women who are increasingly aware of the necessity to achieve an independent professional status before family foundation) is one answer in the scope of agency regarding transitions into parenthood – an answer which itself could cause conflicts in relationships, which consequently have to be actively managed.

*Third:* In all countries, considerable changes have taken place in gender relationships, and the range of possibilities of being father or being mother is as open as ever: On the one hand, taking care of children is now also much more of an issue for young men. 'New fatherhood' has become part of a gendered discourse although the symbolic representation of new fatherhood is pretending to be more a reality than can be found e.g. in statistics on parental leave. New gender imageries in this regard are the avant-garde of every day practices, but these every day practices often are much more advanced as policies – with different paces in our research countries. This shows that structure interferes without completely determining agency. On the other hand, new images of the omni-competent multitasking super women are putting young mothers under considerable pressure, because of the same lack of facilitating conditions. Agency in this regard can be located in successfully coping with this pressure.

*Fourth:* in all countries, the birth of the first child implies a slipping back to more traditional gender roles, even if the couples had organized their lives on a cooperative basis. If before there was time for negotiating divergent interests, as soon as the child is born parents slip into chronic time shortage and apparently old models of the distribution of household duties re-emerge; obviously the different labour situation plays a major role in this respect. Time budget studies carried out in various countries show persistently that women, gainfully employed or not, work (much) more hours in the household and take care of the children in comparison to men (Gershuny, 2000; Portegijs et al., 2006; Fthenakis et al., 2002). So, even if it has become widely accepted that fatherhood is undergoing significant changes and that 'new fathering' has replaced more traditional versions, the 'new father' remains rather opaque. On the other hand, there is some empirical evidence that fathers would like to be more involved in the fathering process: institutional changes (and also changes in working cultures in firms)

often seem to be slower than changes in attitudes and everyday cultures. Also this has to be regarded as a strong indicator of agency.

Thus, regarding the range of strategies a big variety can be found on how young women and men are doing family. This agency cannot simply be labelled as traditional or as innovative; instead, and as far as spurious studies show, it is full of ambivalences, in which some traditional solutions are picked up but re-worked into a modernized understanding, or in which young people consciously seem to slip back into traditional ways to do family (but struggle against it). Unless we do not have insights in all these decision-making and negotiation-processes young people undergo, the question if their solutions are ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ simply cannot be answered.

### *Influence of social contexts*

It is above all, labour market structures that hinder or influence young people’s agency in their transitions to parenthood. Against the background of a general awareness that relationships often do not last forever, both partners increasingly are keen on achieving, maintaining or developing some position in the professional system. Women and men are confronted with latent hierarchies in terms of gendered earning or career systems, or with too less flexibility as regards part time work – all such constraints could foil ideas for an equal share of care work. As the Transitions Project shows (Brannen et al., 2002), the context of the workplace is decisive for realizing options of a work-life-balance, even if the latter is high on the political agenda, as in Sweden (see Bäck-Wiglund & Plantin, 2007). Such findings point to the time-lag which exists between the so-called private life, institutions and official policies, but at the same time point to some resilience in opting for solutions *against* structural conditions.

So, agency evolves within (bad) conditions for the reconciliation of training, education, and gainful employment with young parenthood, together with the different drawbacks it implies for an equal work according to different frameworks of family and gender policies in Europe; it evolves within the shaping of intergenerational relationships while becoming and being parents, especially when going along with poverty, housing problems, and social exclusion in various European regions; it evolves in coping with the new normalities as “competent parents” within a new imagery on motherhood and fatherhood. Within these contexts, agency also evolves in processes which slowly but surely rework gender relationships and the public–private divide (see Jurczyk & Oechsle, 2006).

There have been identified crucial contextual (agency- and policy-relevant) areas for transitions into parenthood, which limit or open the options for young parents to lead a decent life – via labour market facilities but as well via benefits for parental leave, housing facilities, and facilities within the field of childcare, in which not only mere existence and affordability counts, but also the quality and above all the matching of crèche hours with working hours (time policy).

From all national research overviews developed for UP2YOUTH it becomes clear that forming a family is increasingly perceived by young people as a choice that entails risk that they themselves have to shoulder. In none of our countries – independent of transition regime – it seems that the cohorts of expectant parents do not feel sufficiently supported by official policies or institutions. Instead, they have to seek and find support from their parents and other kin. Evidently, the less institutional support, the more young parents are dependent on their family of origin; where intergenerational solidarity must compensate for a lack of state engagement.

However, comparative analysis also shows that policies are perceived by young parents according to the general level of discourse or policy context: rather high levels of dissatisfaction with family policies among young Swedish women are testimony of a higher level of expectations (because of a higher level of self-understood gender policy).

Young people's choices and decision-making processes are embedded in informal networks (families and peers). Intergenerational relationships, instead of getting looser, are getting closer again when young people are becoming parents – a process which is not always happening voluntarily: particularly in countries with little state support, the parent generation has to support their offspring by providing housing, caring for their grandchildren, and give emotional and financial support; for most young people the reconciliation of parenthood and work would be plainly impossible without that intergenerational resource. This throws light on important omissions and failures in state family policies, and highlights the importance of time policy. However, it also sheds light on active networking on doing family as an inter-generational project. This already could be shown in the FATE study (Biggart, 2005), in which transitions into work of young people – albeit with different solutions – appeared as an inter-generational project. This strong intergenerational interdependency seems to be even reinforced with regard to transitions into parenthood.

The same applies to informal networks among young parents. Agency with regard to such peer networks often develops long before a baby is born. Already during pregnancy young

parents get into contact with other expectant parents, often leading to a broadening of existing networks. Young prospective parents engage in such networks, in which highly relevant information is exchanged – about childcare facilities, about parental leave, part-time work or flexible work schedules, about successful negotiations with employers etc. – but also concrete resources of mutual support are generated: informal networks of childcare in bigger cities, fathers networks, networks on a large range of needs around early parenthood. By this, young parents develop new forms of sociality – and potentially also new structures, if they manage to transform informal networks into sustainable informal or even formal (infra-)structures.

### *De-standardised transitions and their influence on young people's agency?*

Riskful and insecure transitions implicitly refer to agency: If the reversibility of transitions (yoyoisation, EGRIS 2001) represents a latent risk-structure for life course transitions in general, this is even more so for transitions into parenthood. When it comes to family foundation both young women and men find themselves on a high level of uncertainty – regarding job security, professional prospects, the stability of their relationship and the stability of support systems to ensure reconciliation of paid work and family work.

The simultaneity of various transitions is becoming more and more a problem and subsequently a challenge for young people's agency: the crucial phase in professional careers in which a high level of flexibility and mobility is demanded and in which the need for additional qualification steps emerge (see JobMob-Project) is most often the phase in which family formation takes place. The respective demands are highly contradictory, so that they most often only can be resolved if either family formation is postponed or if one partner renounces a career with such demands. To cope with the "rush hour of life" (Bertram et al., 2005) becomes a more and more important challenge for young people. Agency thus gets visible in all versions of coping this challenge – either in choosing one of the options (family or career), or in trying to find an arrangement of doing one after the other (which is almost impossible), or in trying to find a reconciliation (which often includes an unequal share between the partners).

The simultaneity of transitions is accompanied by the potential reversibility of transitions, which causes the specific cocktail of uncertainties which have to be coped with by young people. However, as soon as young people have decided to become parents, reversibility and uncertainty add a different dimension. Agency can be hindered by structural forces (see above): the question, if a young father or a young mother who became unemployed can enhance his or her chances by following a new study course not only depends upon individual



agency, and cultural and social capital, but also from social policy and infrastructures in the respective society in order to facilitate such an option – economically as well as with regard to its organisation.

Dealing with the paradox of planning – which means: facing the contingencies of an open and uncertain future, but nevertheless having to plan this future as well as possible – is one of the biggest demands for young people, and even more so for young parents (Leccardi 2009). This demand is in itself full of contradictions. Agency evolves in dealing exactly with these inherent contradictions deriving from a notorious open future – on an individual level as well as on the level of partnership. This requires trust in the pay-off for their individual investment in further qualification as well as trust in the sustainability of their relationship.

### *Development of young people's agency in temporal perspective*

Understanding action as temporal and socially embedded allows us to identify the relationship between structural influences as well as intentional aspects. It also allows us to overcome the separation between acting and the emergence of the meaning of acting. This makes approaches inspired by symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology especially fruitful for our topic. Further it differentiates various dimensions of agency whereby individuals can be conceived of as intentional and self-reflexive actors without neglecting the relevance of external influence and of inter-active negotiation (with partners, with parents, with peers). This temporality of agency, and the strongly interwoven dimensions of (reworking) past, (projecting) future and (coping with) present challenges is extremely convincing with regard to transitions into parenthood. It could serve as an interpretative horizon for integrating diverse and often un-connected findings, such as findings regarding the prospects of young women and men regarding their future plans and practices as young parents.

However, temporality could mean something different if one compares early parenthood with late parenthood: early parenthood is differently involved in past experiences than late parenthood, which carries already a big biographical load of experiences. Early parenthood is also differently involved in present and future than late parenthood, because it is still not so much affected by the rush hour of life – but perhaps by other challenges regarding present (peers; education; economic dependency) and future. On an imagined time bar of possible transitions into parenthood (from teen parenthood to late parenthood), the chordal triad of past, present and future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) has a different sound for new parents – and respectively a different echo with regard to agency.

Within the dynamics of decision making strategies to become parents, agency evolves with different pronunciations of past, present and future. It can appear as very much oriented towards the past, e.g. as re-traditionalization of gender roles among partners when they have their first child (see for Germany Fthenakis et al., 2002). But it also could appear as being very much oriented to present negotiation processes between the partners (see for Sweden Bergnéhr 2008, see for Germany the PAIRFAM-project, for first results of the preliminary panel see Brüderl et al., 2007; Rupp, 2008). Present conditions – structuring factors such as official policies (materialized in infrastructure and benefit systems), but also the level of daily routines and the symbolic representation of parenthood – are closely related to decisions and strategies of young women and men oriented to the future, and might also leave their mark in terms of gendering effects. It has to be considered, that these different pronunciations of past, present and future do not represent different groups of young parents, but are much more a matter of research perspectives.

### *Meaning-making in transitions to parenthood*

This point refers to the cultural or style aspect of young people's agency and what they tell about intentions and identities of the actors. In this regard, agency of young mothers and fathers also evolves in coping with the new normalities as “competent parents” within a new image of motherhood and fatherhood. Partly they adjust to such normalities, partly they rework them in the sense of refusing the overburden going along with the perfect mother or father.

As the creation of meaning is embedded in social positioning, it refers strongly to an understanding of culture, which not only regards culture as context, but also as a product of young people's practices. Young people are belonging to (and depending on) culture and are at the same time doing culture. With regard to transitions into young parenthood, young people's agency is dealing with a reconciliation of youth cultural life styles and new roles as fathers and mothers, their agency is focussed on struggling for new and more fitting images of fatherhood(s) and motherhood(s). This longing for a new imagery is the symbolic level of doing family.

The public sphere in urban contexts makes it easier to develop and demonstrate lifestyles of ‘doing family differently’. In such surroundings, new images of motherhood and fatherhood are developed which could leave their marks on the broader public (see Thiessen & Villa, 2008) – this also includes early parenthood performed in youth cultural styles (e.g. Punk or

Emo dads and moms). Research on such youths' cultural embeddings of parenthood would be highly promising in shedding light into respective agency.

Agency and structure in this regard are always very closely related: young people are 'doing' social integration on the basis of daily routines and practices, they are actively coping with structural demands, they are inventing new solutions for these demands. By doing this, they – as could be argued – are “doing difference” (West & Fenstermaker, 1995) in terms of reproducing social ascriptions regarding social origin, ethnicity and gender – but perhaps they are doing difference differently, i.e. modifying such ascriptions, or breaking them off. Again, much more research would be needed in order to clarify these questions.

### *Learning and agency in transitions to parenthood*

Learning has taken a prominent place in becoming and being a parent in late modernity and in the context of knowledge societies. Parenthood in our societies is not self-evident any more, but has become a “project” which demands a high level of reflexivity and the willingness for learning. The new cultural norm of informed and competent parents as best guarantee to educate “successful” children is one example for the structural need for agency. The European discourse on new connections between formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning has entered the discourses that surround young parenthood and young families. This concerns very different levels of learning, among them a quasi professionalisation in matters such as the healthy upbringing of children, a satisfying negotiation in gender relations, a successful fighting for one's rights and interests as young parents on the work floor, the performance as active and engaged parents in educational institutions, the creation of useful informal networks.

The learning dimension within transitions to parenthood makes visible the ever-new challenges of these transitions and the respective agentic processes, in which learning new practices is as important as un-learning others, above all under a gender perspective.

### *How can transitions into parenthood be regarded as agency?*

Considering the dimensions of agency as outlined above, it is tricky to handle our research findings on transitions into parenthood: as has been worked out, the individual action does not simply start from preset goals (such as family orientations) but is embedded within a complex inter-subjective meaning-making. Therefore all survey data regarding the preferences of young people have to be qualified as far as they are developed within often complicated

internal and external (i.e. inter-active) negotiation processes, which are documented only by scarce in-depth studies. Nevertheless, it is obvious that subjective wishes for family foundation exist – regardless of (structural) constraints. They are both implicit in the general finding of discrepancies between desired and realised child birth, as in new ways of parenting.

For the same reason, intentionality is difficult to be located in transitions into parenthood, considering, that there is always a strong (and highly gendered) life style-aspect in family formation and parenting. In this regard, findings regarding (new) cultures of fathering, mothering, and doing family are extremely insightful, because they enlighten the range of models developed by young parents – they document the creative aspect of agency (Joas, 1992), but at the same time provide new (normative) frameworks for outlining young parenthood. The issue of (media) images will also have its relevance here – and the question how they are picked up and reworked by young fathers and mothers.

Autonomy in the context of transitions into parenthood has to be conceptualized in the way Cécile van de Velde did it in her work on the question of how young people in risky transitions construct autonomy in a situation of dependency (van de Velde, 2001). Of course, the transition into parenthood is one of the key experiences of strong mutual dependency – from partner, from parents, from peers, and last not least from the new born baby him- or herself. Of course, this fundamental dependency can be framed by very different sets of mainly economic conditions, which stand for more or less autonomy. Agency in this regard is deriving from coping with this situation, which for some young parents could stand in harsh contrast to the way they lived their lives before becoming parents, but it is also to be located in the autonomy to decide to have a child (instead of an abortion) and how to build a family around it. The fact of pregnancy is a strong kick for young people to reflect on their biographical transitions up to then and how to proceed further on.

Wherever we got insight into studies on negotiation processes around transition into parenthood (e.g. on the level of partnership, Bergnéhr, 2008), agency can be identified as an identity work balancing the individual level with the level of a love relationship. Concerns become visible, which otherwise are not in the focus of social sciences, namely the level of bodily concerns: In the in-depth study of Bergnéhr (2008) on negotiation processes around family formation, female participants in group discussions formulate their concerns about their bodily attractiveness in the context of pregnancy and giving birth, and respectively a lot of negotiating among them is around bodily practices to maintain and recover a good physical shape during pregnancy and after having given birth to a child. Partners often are concerned

with the question how to maintain a satisfying sex live after family foundation, and respectively invest a lot of energy in adapting to and shaping a new relational situation after the birth of a child.

*Negotiation* is an agency inbuilt in all processes around transitions into parenthood: how do young women and men choose between different options, create new ones, make normative decisions, step into negotiation with each other within their partnership, with former partners, within their family of origin etc., network with peers with and without children? In UP2YOUTH, creative actions (Joas, 1992) are concerned with the question of how much young adults create new spaces for political influence, create new concepts of fatherhood and motherhood, and establish new routes of transitions to work within a context they can hardly influence.

Much is depending on the conditions for and the competences of negotiating. A key competence to manage modern life inside and outside the family is the ability to negotiate one's own and others' interests (e.g. negotiating own biographical prospects and – often limited – facilities to set them into practice, negotiating familial tasks between the partners, negotiating with parents, negotiating with employers and colleagues to achieve conditions for doing family). Agency appears to be a highly relational concept concerning such negotiation processes.

At the same time, negotiation (as an agency) strongly refers to scopes, prerequisites, and competencies for negotiation. This is the point Zygmunt Bauman (1995) made: where are the spaces in society where an enlargement of the public sphere would be needed in order to allow more space for the negotiation of life politics? Such an enlargement would include the acknowledgement of the ways of doing parenthood/doing family/doing gender (differently).

### *Agency and structuration with regard to parenthood*

This is the core question regarding social change: How, by applying these different modes of agency, do young women and men re-structure or change former patterns of transitions into parenthood and create new structures? This perspective stresses the informal level much more than in the past: agency becomes visible in young (prospective) father's and mother's creation of informal networks. This agency is structures their everyday life, be it on the level of concrete local networks or on the level of networks on the internet. By such informal networks (father networks, local initiatives and so forth) young people respond to (infra-)structural lack, but at the same time create new structures – thus showing awareness for the

social embeddedness and interdependency of individual agency. This is even more so as soon as such networks manage to (successfully) apply for funding.

general lies in negotiating individual and collective interest, it seems reasonable to include all activities into the analysis which take place in the public (which at least potentially implies the consciousness of an audience) or are carried out in a way which necessarily has public effects and therefore potentially addresses the public. The emphasis on the potentiality of young people's actions is necessary as often only the outcomes of these actions are assessed while little is known about intentions or underlying motives.<sup>14</sup> At the same time it questions dominant definitions and meanings of what is political, public and participation.

### *Range of different actions and activities with regard to participation*

If one starts from the institutionalised forms of participation – elections, membership and participatory programmes – a first observation is that obviously some young people do participate while others do not; this is also the case among those with low qualifications and from disadvantaged social backgrounds, yet to a smaller degree (cf. Eurobarometer, 2007; Spannring et al., 2008). This seems banal but the observation of different activities implies that in principle choices are taken for or against certain activities. This also reveals if one considers the discrepancy between political interest which is rather wide-spread among young people and their limited political activity. While interest is seen as a basic motive for action – and therefore can be interpreted as agency in terms of potential action – it may be ‘on hold’ due to a feeling of lack of control and self-efficacy, at least as far as traditional forms of activity are concerned. At least at first sight involvement in participatory action appears to result from more conscious decision-making processes than non-participation.

If the perspective is broadened, other activities come into sight such as alternative expressions and forms of engagement. While referring to similar topics as formal politics such as peace/war, poverty/injustice, globalisation, environmental issues, these young people prefer different forms of action and articulation. Young people organise or participate in demonstrations, exchange in blogs or change their consumption behaviour (fair trade, biological). Young people are also actively involved in new forms of political protest such as “street-party-protest” which interweave politics and culture. One example is the movement “Reclaim the Streets” (RTS), a cultural coalition between the ecological movement, ravers and political activists, which has become an essential feature of the anti-globalisation movement. RTS demands non-commercialised, autonomous public space by blocking streets

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<sup>14</sup> In one of the early debates in the working group the question was raised whether suicide should not be interpreted as a radical act of participation. While the intention of this question was primarily provocative, it refers to the fact that in some cases suicide is committed in a very visible way (e.g. throwing oneself from a high building) which – potentially – can be on purpose because affecting other people in the public.

and traffic and reclaiming the territory through carnival, theatre, performances, party and dance (Brünzel, 2000). Only recently, also the aesthetic and cultural dimensions of political attitudes and behaviour have been included into research revealing youth cultures as spaces of political socialisation and contributing to overcoming the analytical separation of different spheres of social and everyday life (cf. Pfaff, 2006).

However, as also these alternative forms do not apply for a majority or the mainstream of young people, the perspective needs to be widened even further. Another case are those who become active in ways which are at risk of being criminalised and/or which openly contradict with basic societal values such as extreme right-wing or nationalist groups. They refer to the ‘common good’ – often following themes which are on the official political agenda (Europe, migration, unemployment, welfare etc.) – but reduce it to the collective of the indigenous society. To different extent they use and engage with formal procedures such as membership in associations or parties – which normally are encouraged and welcomed as political participation (cf. Pfaff, 2006; 2007).

To some extent the same applies for young people involved in urban riots because feeling disregarded as ‘second class citizens’ (such as in French suburbs 2005, in Copenhagen 2007 or in Athens 2008). These riots do not evolve from groups following a distinct political mission but from (mostly disadvantaged) young people’s conflicts with authorities and their experience of discrimination, injustice or oppression. Although not intended politically, these riots and their choice of acting these conflicts out visibly reveal that these young people refer to themselves as members of a wider community or society (cf. Lagrange & Oberti, 2006). In fact, the urban riots in France 2005 were a highly politicised movement: young people expressed their expectation of a better citizenship (both symbolic and material) and their refusal, not only to be poor, but also to be disregarded and deprived of citizen’s rights (Sala Pala, 2006). As a matter of fact, we can consider that, even if young people were not always perfectly aware of the political dimension of their involvement, they were clearly expressing a political rebellion. Gerard Mauger (2006) proposed to talk in their case of a “proto-political rebellion” and Didier Lapeyronnie (2006) of a “primitive rebellion”:

*“The riot is clearly infrapolitical, marked by the incapacity of a poor and marginal population to access to the political system and by the dependence toward the system. Violence is both a rational and efficient means of pressure and a means of protestation against an unbearable situation. But the riot is also clearly suprapolitical. It refers to the fundamental values of the society, it lays on the affirmation of the moral superiority of a ‘we’ victim of injustice, and here again it signs the refusal of a deleterious system that keep people from living” (p. 446).*



According to Habermas' theory of communicative action the fact of using these terms and language implies reference to a wider societal context and acceptance of what is assumed to be a shared meaning of social justice (Habermas, 1981).

Most activities of young people however normally are not referred to as participation but as *leisure*: consumption, sports, listening to music, hanging out with friends, or youth cultural activities such as skating. In many of these activities however, borders are not clear-cut: sports in many countries are connected to membership in associations (and may lead to voluntary work), hanging out with friends as well as skating may lead to conflicts with authorities and/or experiences of discrimination, music preferences are often connected to life styles including socio-cultural positioning and political orientation (see below).

### *Influence of social contexts on participatory actions and choices*

Consciously or not, young people appear to make choices how to relate towards the wider society and how to move and act in the public. Obviously, these choices are not taken in isolation but evolve within social contexts. Social research may analyse differences in participation and find that the higher the education level the higher the involvement in formal and alternative participation while riots apply for disadvantaged groups and right-wing extremism; for those who are still but precariously included. But: What do different percentages tell us? First, it should be noted that not all higher educated young people engage in formal or alternative forms of political participation nor do all disadvantaged young people participate in riots. Second, and more important, why are there these differences?

With regard to participation, it is difficult to say whether structural barriers actually hinder or influence individual agency; at least understood in absolute terms. As regards voting, this is of course the case with rights being tied to age and nationality; with regard to involvement in other forms of political participation, e.g. at local level, spatial aspects of distance and mobility can actually hinder individuals from getting involved.

In general however, the impact of structural factors is less direct and determining but occurs through processes of socialisation with regard to the learning of values and practices in the family, in the neighbourhood or peer group, and through associating mechanisms of political participation with other institutional settings which are experienced as disregarding individual needs and interest and/or associated with failure – such as school. There is an obvious relationship between young people's social position and their orientation towards citizenship and participation although this relationship is not one of linear causality. Actually, young

people may learn that participation – at least participation according to official definitions and forms – is not a way of actively making a difference (cf. Giddens, 1984).

This is aggravated by the insecurities young people experience. The need to invest more effort in the transition to adulthood shifts the attention from social and political issues to personal coping strategies, especially for disadvantaged young people:

*“Their ‘resource situation’ is unlikely to facilitate such engagement, especially given the perceived unresponsiveness of formal political structures to the demands of politically marginal groups” (Fahmy, 2006: 47).*

In fact, many studies reveal the relationship between trust in institutions and political participation (Smith, et al. 2005; Eurobarometer, 2007; Fahmy, 2006; Spannring et al., 2008). The relationship between better education and political participation is not only one of being informed about and understanding the political system. It has also to do with positive biographical experiences in using public institutions for individual purposes, e.g. school success allowing for choosing careers which are subjectively meaningful in contrast to school failure which additionally implies precariousness, poverty and/or institutional factors of exclusion such as being pushed into mandatory schemes (cf. Kieselbach et al., 2001).

The relationship between participation and social integration becomes explicit in Kronauer’s concept of social exclusion which includes a dimension of institutional exclusion. This does not only include whether individuals have access to societal institutions but also to what extent they can influence the way in which they use them (Kronauer, 1998).

The French case shows that education makes a difference in the contents and forms applied inasmuch as disadvantaged young people are more likely to legitimise violent demonstrations than students, since it is the only way for them to “talk” to politicians (Muxel & Riou, 2004). In fact, the 2005 riots in French suburbs characterised by violence and vandalism the protagonists were young people from deprived and segregated social areas. Their lack of opportunities and perspectives and their experiences of injustice and oppression had been addressed by many Rap songs during the previous years (Bordes, 2006; Mucchielli & La Gaziou, 2006). Six months later France witnessed strikes and demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of students who opposed a law which was aimed at enhancing labour market access of school and university leavers by lowering wages and employment regulations for young people. In the first case, the riots were the expression of feeling excluded from society and disregarded as individuals and citizens which resulted from the existential experience of powerlessness in a conflict with the police during which two young boys died. In the second

case, young people who had invested in formal education – and therefore knew how to deal with the formal system – felt treated unfairly by official policy making while still respecting legitimate forms of protest (Lagrange & Oberti, 2006).

Participation programmes such as youth forums, youth councils or youth parliaments as well as official participation related websites and blogs are mechanisms intended to overcome barriers towards participation (Matthews, 2001). Compared to the impact of socio-economic factors there is limited empirical evidence to what extent policies succeed in raising young people's confidence towards participation (cf. Spannring et al., 2008; Loncle, 2008). According to evaluation of practice programmes one of the factors which makes the clearest difference is whether young people see direct effects of participation in short-term periods. This can be explained by theories of motivation and attribution: if action depends on the feeling of control and self-efficacy and young people in general share a deep distrust towards and feel alienated from formal institutions, it follows that participation programmes must prove their effectiveness right from the beginning.

In most cases this works only for those who are already involved and who – due to positive school experiences and family backup – are in general more confident in dealing with public institutions. However, for the others – and by far not only the most disadvantaged youth – these programmes have a limited accessibility and attractiveness (not in absolute structural terms but in socio-cultural terms) as they tend to neglect young people's changed forms of engagement. They are abstract and primarily procedural rather than issue-based while young people do not want to participate per se but to actively shape their lives in ways which are both subjectively meaningful and socially acknowledged. Social geographer Christian Reutlinger (2005) describes mainstream participation programmes as 'containers' which are detached from young people's everyday lives regarding space, culture and issues concerned.

The French case shows that many inhabitants and young people in deprived areas participate in collective and associative activities in their communities rather than in more abstract contexts (Loncle, 2007). This is also confirmed by Holland et al. (2007) who conclude from findings of research on black neighbourhoods in the UK:

*-established and well-documented history of racial*

*is viewed as a platform from which social progress and social mobility can be built. Caribbean young people have strong bonding social capital in ethnic/racial-specific*

*collective mob*

The case studies carried out in the project Youth Policy and Participation (YOYO) on the potential of participation for young people's transitions into the labour market reveal that projects starting from young people's needs and providing them spaces for articulating these needs – whether these were related to leisure or job matters – in some cases contributed to a political consciousness and engagement (Walther et al., 2006). The following example from the YOYO-study shows that social contexts do not only contribute to social reproduction but can, along with peer role models, also be informal bridges towards new milieus and opportunities:

*Paolo, male, 19, lives with his parents in Palermo (Italy). He holds a vocational diploma as an electrician. Some years ago he was at risk of getting involved in criminal activities. His brother who as a part of his rehabilitation from a drug career started to engage in youth work in an association and convinced Paolo to join in. At first he felt a bit*

*attitude:*

*what happens if a friend of*

*has become in charge of the musical activities. He is member of a band that performs both within the association and at festivals in the city. Paolo is strongly committed to social engagement and does not hesitate to express an autonomous position (conflictual at times)*

*nce on childhood, where we from Palermo raised a problem the others were trying to avoid, that*

*ing people pay we run the risk of excluding kids who cannot afford it, so that in the end only affluent children will come to us. I'd work more in the streets, trying to reach more children of the*  
, 2006, p. 141).

Such diversification of socialisation and learning processes especially accounts for alternative youth cultures and political counter cultures. It also accounts for exceptional cases of family traditions of political engagement despite of precarious socio-economic living conditions. Apparently, social contexts influence young people' actions less in the sense of *whether* they relate to the wider community and the public – but *how* they do it (see below).

Especially, where politicisation does not result from conscious values and planned activities but from conflicts with authorities, it is obvious that individual and collective decision-making are intertwined. Activities such as hanging out with friends or skating in public places cannot be separated from the sociality of friendship and peer cultures; or better: are expressions of sociality towards the self, the group members and – where exhibited in the public – the wider community. If these activities are contested or suppressed this implies a

denial of citizenship rights in terms of ownership of public space of the individuals concerned as well as of the group. Even extremely individualised activities such as using web sites such as Myspace or Facebook reveal deeply social and collective aspects, for example where school classes give marks to their teachers. Without necessarily being conscious of the political nature of this act they virtually create a public space. In Germany, the site [www.spickmich.de](http://www.spickmich.de) has been prosecuted upon initiative of a school teacher who brought a charge against being assessed by her pupils on the web according to – from her perspective – unfair formulations and criteria. As the providers of the site have established rules – only pupils from the respective class are allowed to assess their teachers – in order to prevent abuse, they won the case. This revealed that a core aspect of the conflict was the semi-public nature of school which was challenged by the students using the internet (cf. Loncle & Muniglia, 2008).

At the same time policies may not only be assessed whether they enhance and encourage participation but also for what purpose and function. Based on Foucault's studies on societal discourses and governmentality, Masschelein and Quaghebeur (2003) argue that – especially under conditions of individualisation and the increasing trend towards activation – the participation discourse is connected to a trend towards self-responsibility which undermines notions of solidarity; especially where participation programmes are limited to involvement without securing access to power and resources (cf. Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

### *Interdependency of transitions*

The structural constraints on young people's participation are aggravated by the de-standardisation of life courses which means that the timing of and relation between different transitions – to work, parenthood and citizenship – are increasingly blurred. This fragmentation of transitions implies that individuals may be confronted with biographical dilemmas resulting from contradicting demands and opportunities which cannot easily be prioritised and which therefore cannot simply be interpreted in terms of linear expressions of values or attitudes. With regard to participation, apparently the uncertainty of their transitions makes young people feel that their lives are 'suspended'. They are less and less able to connect their lives to existing institutional structures – whether these are established forms of parenthood or of citizenship. One may argue that on the one hand, the flexibility of their strategies in both transitions to work and youth cultural life styles contradicts the rigid implications of continuity inherent to traditional forms of work, family and civic engagement. In other words: under conditions of flexibility and individualisation pre-defined and rigid

forms of collective action are unlikely to be considered as subjectively relevant by individuals (cf. Isin & Wood 1999). This includes practical aspects such as co-presence in regular moments and intervals as well as long-term commitment, which contradict the fragmented time structures of late modern everyday life. Rather than a lack of collective commitment or a mere discrepancy between individual and collective goals the problem might lie in a decrease in the possibilities of and in the spaces for interaction in which individual needs are communicated and linked with collective structures. Actually one might argue that consumption and the media are the last remaining mass collective spheres of action and experience (in fact ‘participation’ in terms of exposing oneself in TV and on the Internet shows increases; cf. DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001) because they can be used flexibly. In fact, they represent a changed form of public sphere.

A hypothesis requiring further research is that under conditions of uncertainty, *visibility* – as also central to scenes such as skaters and graffiti sprayers while also inherent in the performance of self which appears to be central to many other youth cultural life styles – becomes a relevant feature of what young people need in terms of citizenship rights. Traditionally interpreted as and reduced to age-specific transgression of boundaries in adolescence, visibility gains importance where the achievement of the full adult status and the rights associated with it are postponed and uncertain. In this sense, most of their activities can be interpreted as politics of visibility by (or identity politics) occupying public spaces (Fraser 1997). Also if mainly focussing on celebrating the present rather than projecting oneself into the future, they can be interpreted as attempts of protecting realms of autonomy and of – more or less explicit – resistance against being reduced to human capital through education and employment, lifelong learning and activation (cf. Walther et al., 2006).

### *The emergence of participatory action as temporal structure of decision-making*

Above, agency has been conceptualised in a temporal way (cf. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). It is embedded in past experiences and routinised social relationships, it is motivated by imaginations of a desired future and it articulates in coping with present challenges. The *past* dimension explains differences in participation according to social and educational inequalities, i.e. different experiences with agency in terms of making a difference in relation to formal institutions. It also is inherent to the dominance and hegemony of established concepts and forms of participation. The *future* dimension relates to the difference young people would like to make, primarily with regard to their own lives and identities but also with regard to their communities or even collective values and issues: “The concept of

participation reveals the wish for public and liveable sociality and for an effective creative activity in the community which has not yet been eradicated by the tendencies towards privatisation.” (Joas, 1992, p. 374). The *present* dimension relates to coping with everyday life challenges. Whether young people participate or not or in which form and context they do it depends on how they construct their biographies between past and future, between social positioning and subjective identity work in concrete biographical and everyday life situations.

Even ambiguous phenomena of participation in forms of extreme right-wing orientations can be interpreted by the temporal concept of agency: lack of future perspectives is compensated by giving meaning to the present by re-working traditional concepts of the public, symbols of the community (nation) and traditional forms of political action (including violence); yet in modernised ways which Beck has referred to as counter-modernisation (cf. Beck, 1999).

### *How do young people give meaning to situations?*

The last point refers to the question how individuals interpret situations as meaningful for themselves and therefore engage actively. The interactive production of meaning within a society is defined as *culture*. The notion of youth culture actually refers to the fact that generational factors are at work with regard to the creation of meaning – that young people give different meaning to existing habits and practices as well as different values or social practices that are subjectively meaningful for them. In fact, they contribute to the innovation and development of culture. Nevertheless, their processes of meaning-making remain connected to and embedded in existing habits, routines and structures – even if directly opposing them. With regard to participation, this is visible in the discrepancy between higher political interest than political participation (Spannring et al., 2008). In order to understand this ‘doing meaning differently’ one may consult analysis of youth cultural studies on music and consumption as well as on young people’s strategies and styles of performing self (Stauber, 2004; 2009; Wächter et al., 2008).

Pfaff (2006; 2007) found in her studies on political socialisation of young people in Germany that half of those young people who have preferences for a specific youth cultural scene (one third) position themselves in countercultures and/or alternative music scenes: whether these are Punk, Gothic, Metal and the Anti-Fascist scenes on the left, Skinheads, Neonazis and Hooligans on the right. She criticizes that, neither in political science nor in cultural studies, political orientations of young people are interpreted. In her study she analyses the Gothic/Punk scene and the HipHop scene as contexts of emerging political orientations. The Gothics and Punks describe themselves as left-wing oriented and emphasize their open



mindfulness except towards fascist and right wing groups. Compared to the average young population they are more experienced in political participation. Political discussions are part of the scene and also going to political protests is a scene-related expression. Young people involved in the HipHop-scene are less interested in politics and display less concrete political attitudes. However, they relate to the topic of social inequality which is based on individual experiences and expressed in the rap lyrics. The HipHoppers distance themselves from (established) political engagement but take responsibility in the micro-level of the neighbourhood. For both the Gothic-Punk and the HipHop scene it is true that their youth cultural life influences political orientations and activities (cf. Welniak, 2002, p. 37).

For research this means to turn from what young people do not do (enough) towards what young people actually are doing (and how) and the meaning of these actions which may also contain new forms and meanings of what is seen as political.

### *Young people's learning processes with regard to participation*

The actualisation of agency in terms of concrete action implies a feeling of self-efficacy, of being able to make a difference which implies structural possibilities but also a – more or less conscious and reflexive – disposition of knowledge and skills, or competence.

Often young people's lack of confidence with regard to participation is ascribed as a lack of information, which has been the basic justification for introducing civic education as a mandatory subject in school. However, the obvious discrepancy between young people's political interest and their active political participation contradicts this assumption. The thematic report on youth participation highlights the double-bind effect of civic/citizenship education in school which provides young people with information for participation in their later (adult) lives outside school while inside school the competencies of students' councils are limited – in most cases to contribution to extra-curricular social activities while power-related questions of school management, curriculum, learning assessment etc. are beyond their influence. This means that – apart from the information of the formal procedures of representative democracy – young people learn that participation is limited to specific issues, forms and spaces. This is reflected by a relatively low involvement in students' councils. The fact that this does not apply to the same extent with all class representatives can be interpreted by the fact that the school class is also a space of peer culture – and thereby highly relevant for subjective identity processes – whereas school is experienced as an alienating system (Machacek & Walther, 2008; Spannring et al., 2008).



With regard the official participation programmes such as youth councils many countries, regions and municipalities have discovered the need to train the young people involved. This however is limited to those who actually are involved while it also reproduces participation to pre-defined mechanisms. In order to increase the effectiveness and recognition of youth participation this often implies adapting it to formal politics (e.g. learning the procedures of submitting requests to the city council).

Learning of participation outside the formally institutionalised channels obviously relies on non-formal and informal contexts and forms. With regard to political movements, ICT play a fundamental role. While the internet fails in attracting new participants, it provides those who are engaged with platforms for sharing information and ideology and for organising activities (cf. CIVICWEB, 2007; Banaji, 2009). This shows that learning is self-organised and self-directed and that the relationship between learning and agency is dialectic: learning as action, which prepares other action, implying further learning.

In order to understand the learning processes included in the less obvious political forms of participation referred to above, the perspective needs to be broadened. Where young people develop forms of public protest resulting from conflict with authorities, two different dimensions of learning may be distinguished: *First*, learning the ‘reading’ of public space which often precedes and follows such conflict. Young people develop practices which assure them visibility, and this often implies the more or less conscious and intended transgression of existing norms and rules (skating, graffiti etc.). They learn to map public space, which includes the identification and conscious transgression of boundaries; as they have learned that adapting to school demands does not necessarily contribute to the achievement of what is subjectively important in their own lives. *Second*, young people learn from the conflicts with other citizens or the authorities. At the latest, in this moment young people develop an understanding of their position in society as regards norms, rules and power relations. The young people in the French ‘banlieues’ referred to themselves as French citizens only after being exposed to repressive measures adopted by policy makers and carried out by the police. Also the subsequent process of mobilisation has to be interpreted as a learning process with regard to collective concerns, shared living conditions and joint action (cf. Lagrange & Oberti, 2006). What is important to notice is that learning requires subjective concern and identification. Dewey distinguishes between education and training or routine with regard to the experience of identification and shared ownership (Dewey, 1916). Social learning theorists such as Lave and Wenger conceptualise learning as “legitimate peripheral

participation” in terms of entering a community of practice and of interactive processes of meaning-making and identity development (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

In sum: rather than explaining non-participation by a lack of education, learning requires participatory settings in which the implications and effects of participation are experienced.

### *How can participation be regarded as agency?*

It seems obvious that participation refers to human agency. However, the differences in young people's participation may be interpreted in terms that due to structural barriers some individuals are less agentic than others. If this contradicts our theoretical understanding of agency, we may view participation as a form of qualified agency – or better: acting. It does not only underline the sociality of individual biographical decision-making but also points to a public dimension of subjective agency. Participation in this sense refers to those acts by which individuals communicate with the wider community about needs, interest, legitimacy and adequacy of action. The public aspect is crucial inasmuch as it distinguishes social action within limited groups of individuals who know each other from social action. This addresses, or at least does not exclude, the anonymous generalised ‘other’ or ‘co-citizen’. Thereby not all actions or coping strategies of young people are participatory per se but those which imply a consciousness of their social character and their relation with and dependency on the wider community may be addressed as potentially participatory.

In sum, we argue that individuals are always agents in the sense that they not only try to cope with but shape their lives in a meaningful way, which includes longing for social recognition. Social structures restrict their possibilities to choose from different options and strategies as well as perspectives, in order to act in a way that is both subjectively satisfactory and recognised by society. While biographicity qualifies general agency with regard to the self, participation does so with regard to the wider community and society.

To what extent does agency imply an autonomous and independent actor as is suggested by the differences between those whose qualifications and family capital allow them to use the public institutions according to their subjective need, interest and choice – compared to those who depend on public support which forces them to accept forced participation? We have argued that changes in young people's participation are closely related to their citizenship status being suspended between youth and adulthood due to the fragmentation, reversibility and uncertainty of their transition processes. If autonomy is not conceptualised in terms of the self-sufficient individual who assesses his/her needs and takes decisions independently from

‘others’ this question may be answered. In fact, the general critique against interpreting autonomy as complete independence has already been elaborated by feminist theory (Benjamin, 1988). The de-standardisation of youth transitions has led to a diversification of forms of partial autonomy in young people’s lives (Biggart & Walther, 2006) whether this dependency relates to material resources, informal support or social recognition.

This refers to the *reflexivity* of agency in late modernity which allows to conceptualise agency – and thereby participation in terms of negotiation. Constantly situations, identities and practices need to be reflected and negotiated anew as regards the relationship between individual and wider society (cf. Bauman, 2000). This is expressed by the quote of a young person interviewed in the longitudinal qualitative study by Smith et al. (2005): “Citizenship? How do you put it? Being responsible ... not just taking, giving back.” (quoted *ibid.*, p. 437).

This quote reveals that the dialectic between taking and giving – or rights and responsibilities – and the subjectively differing experiences of taking (or getting) from society needs to be interpreted in terms of a negotiation process. The temporality of agency thereby is not restricted to the intra-individual processes of decision-making but to chains of inter-subjective interactions.

### *How can agency influence structure?*

Participation as agency qualifies by its reference to collective and public action. It thereby implies that agency influences the societal structuration process through public institutions and policies. In the case of formal political participation or political activism outside formal institutions this can be also interpreted as intended and intentional. With regard to young people’s actions, which are less explicitly political or which are seen as illegitimate forms of participation, this is more ambiguous. In the case of youth riots structural changes are less consciously planned although – as arising from conflict – at the same time not unintended. Young people feel that their action space is limited by authorities and engage in claiming and negotiating an extension of these limits; yet, not in terms of generalised norms and values. The same applies with regard to sub-political expressions whether these are political consumerism or leisure activities in public space. As a part of their identity work they challenge existing rules and norms which they feel as excluding them and denying the visibility they need for their personal development. Thus they implicitly refer to the dimension of social justice. It is exactly this implicit reference to general norms of inter-subjective interaction inherent to all social action which are at the core of Habermas’ theory of communicative action and which need to be identified in young people’s actions and

activities. Even non-participation in this sense has to be interpreted as potentially agentic if one considers for example the statement of a French young person quoted in the EUYOUNG study: “Abstention is a way of voting, it is understood as a vote for something else; this is to show that nobody interests us.” (quoted in Spannring, 2008, p. 65)

Young people’s activities in or directed towards the public need to be interpreted also in the context of public institutions increasingly aiming to control them: whether this is school or lifelong learning in terms of human capital building; or if it is active job search and legitimacy in the context of activating welfare and employment policies; or indeed health prevention or surveillance of public spaces. In this regard also official participation programmes can be referred to as control instruments inasmuch as they contribute to the legitimacy of individual responsibility (Rose, 1999; Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2003). Young people’s withdrawal from participation and from public institutions altogether – including early school leaving and NEET young people – need to be interpreted as active forms of withdrawal and refusal which imply concepts of fair negotiation of rights and responsibilities which – according to their perception – are being disregarded. So: “Why should we care?” (France 1998). Also if not intentional, they contribute to structural change – whether this is political response in terms of participatory programmes, reduced legitimacy of public institutions or the increasing influence of older voters in elections.

### 5.3 Agency in transitions to work of migrant and ethnic minority youth

With emergence of a generation of children and young people who did not migrate themselves, many scholars argue, it is possible to start tackling one of the most debated questions in migration research which points back to one of the core questions of today’s youth research: do today’s integration processes differ from the ones earlier generations of young people went through? As we have argued so far in this report, there are a couple of observations on young people’s situation in general which tend to indeed differ from the social integration processes of prior generations (Mørch & Andersen, 2005).

In this report., we have conceptualised social change primarily along the changes to the life course: as a general prolongation of transitions into adulthood, as the development of young adulthood as a life phase on its own, and transitions into working life as part of an interwoven set of transitions which more and more become fragmented against each other and finally as a growing and contradictory emphasis on the individual to become the rational driver of his or her own biography.

Young people from an ethnic or migrant background in public debates and scientific reasoning often are treated with what we earlier have called the “either-or” perspective. They are regarded through a structural lens: how far do their educational careers and transitions to work differ from those of the “majority”? What reasons for these differences can we observe? Is it institutional racism or discrimination that is blocking the access to higher social positions in society? Is it the individual lack of investment into education and human capital which would make migrant families’ situations comparable of the “autochthonous” ones with lesser resources? In this perspective, young people from migrant or ethnic minority communities often appear as victims of prevailing discriminating structures, and of the inability of the parent generation to make the right (life and educational) choices etc. Especially young women and girls from communities with “traditional” orientations are looked upon under this perspective.

On the other side there is a growing body of literature on deviant behaviour and self-exclusionary practices which either are interpreted as a lack of modernity on the side of certain migrant communities or as the pro-active protest among a generation suffering from the establishment of mass employment and the simultaneous retrenchment of the welfare state. Youngsters from these communities are often tacitly subsumed on the lower end of dichotomous accounts of young people’s experience of social change. Therefore these particular groups of young people – as diverse as they are in Europe – provide a good focus to develop the concept of agency as an integrative perspective on transitions to work.

In the following we are summarizing our secondary and meta-analysis material on transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background, which has been documented in the UP2YOUTH thematic report (Mørch et al., 2008). The purpose of this is to sharpen our understanding of different forms of agency in what we have called societal “figurations”. These are used to exemplify certain aspects of agency and are not meant to cover the whole field of research on migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ transitions to work in neither a systematic nor a comprehensive way<sup>15</sup>.

### *Range of actions*

The transition pathways into the labour market of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background vary vastly across and within our countries. On the aggregate level, successful labour market integration varies according to the situation on the local and national

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<sup>15</sup> For an overview of the situation in education see Heckmann, 2008; Moldenhawer et al., 2009. For the situation on Western labour markets, see Heath & Cheung, 2007, Crul & Schneider, 2009.

labour market, the characteristics of the respective ethnic minority or migrant community and on the individual characteristics like educational backgrounds, individual aspirations etc. of the young people themselves.

Our analysis has found a range of strategies to be discovered among ethnic minority and migrant communities that can be related to the specific situation of living in Europe within migrant or ethnic communities, the majority of whom were in the past closely connected to the lower social classes. Nevertheless, the distribution of young people across these patterns and the occurrence of some of these patterns largely vary according to characteristics of the given local and national constellation of factors mentioned above. But, the objective of this report is to analyse subjective reasoning and agency behind these patterns, so we can leave a more comprehensive explanation of which pattern or mode of agency is more likely to occur in which situation, in order to further research (Breckner, 2007).

Young people from migrant communities were found to have high educational aspirations and to have more positive feelings towards their schools than their “native” counterparts (OECD, 2006). Still, most of the youngsters from these communities are disadvantaged compared to the “native” or majority groups with regard to access to higher levels of education, as well as with regard to the number of early school leavers and with regard to the level of competencies reached (European Commission, 2008; Buchman & Parado, 2006). There are a number of strategies to deal with these discrepancies.

One mode of acting is the accumulation of qualifications, i.e. to continue in the education and training system. In countries with non-selective school and training systems this strategy can be easier to follow than in countries such as Germany where entry to and continuation of educational tracks is highly regulated. However, the outcomes of this strategy need not mean better chances on the labour market, but there are some hints that (e.g. in France) selection and effects of discrimination are postponed (Crul & Schneider, 2009).

Early entrance into the labour market is a wide-spread phenomenon among young people who have migrated themselves. It can be interpreted as a consequence of lower opportunities to access training and higher education, especially in countries with a highly selective education system that do not offer many opportunities for individual choice. However, early entrance in the labour market can be a strategy to maximise the individual balance between desired outcome and effort within given restricted opportunities. The latter seems to be the case of young men in Denmark with a Kurdish background reported in Topal (2007). Many of the children of Kurdish migrants having migrated to Denmark as “guest workers” in the 70s do

not engage in formal education, but instead try to enter the labour market as quickly as possible by working e.g. in the food sector. Their goal is to earn the most money in the shortest time in order to be able to return to Turkey. Formal education and training in this perspective would be a waste of time (Ferreira & Pais, 2008).

Family business is another option for entry into certain lower segments of the labour market under unfavourable conditions. In all European countries ethnic minority and migrant communities have developed economical niches. An aspect of these niches are types of businesses that are labour-intensive and yield low income and another aspect is bad working conditions. Importantly, these niches draw on the social capital of the communities and specialise in services for the specific “ethnic” community. Typical forms are “ethnic” restaurants and food stalls, kiosks, and small grocery shops (Ram et al., 2001). Most of them run as family businesses recruiting staff from their own “ethnic” group of family and friends. Other forms of self-employment additionally offer ways of securing income in segments of the labour market which are accessible with lower formal qualifications as well. A case study from Spain (Marazziti, 2005) portrays a young man from Ecuador named Lenir who came to Spain to work and make money to secure his family both in Spain (mother and sister) and back in his home country. He is working as a street-vendor and during the winter he also works in agriculture. The case shows how social responsibility sometimes is limited to the family arena. The family logic is to secure the family in the present but also in the future – to buy houses in Ecuador. Lenir participates seasonally in established business sectors and has a dream of one day getting a full-time job. He is actualizing a trajectory where he and his family have been able to express a large degree of agency in establishing themselves as street-vending entrepreneurs. In other words, he has been able to secure his and his family’s biographical trajectory, but it is questionable whether this trajectory will eventually lead him to societal participation in the Spanish society– the focus is on the family and the community of street-vendors (Mørch et al.; 2008c).

### *Structural influence on actions and choices*

Of course, structural limitations to the agency of young people’s transitions are much easier to reconstruct from the research body in Europe than anything else. One major difference in these structural influences across our countries is the position of migrants and ethnic minorities in the education system.

In Portugal, some research suggests that the dominant trajectories or traditional pathways through the education and training system, for young people with an immigrant or ethnic



African or gypsy background, are marked by massive and cumulative failure, as well as premature and unqualified drop out (Machado & Matias, 2006). Regarding the variable gender, all studies carried out in Portugal point towards the fact that, in keeping with the pattern that has been consolidating itself in the most developed countries, not only do girls have, on average, a higher level of education than boys, but they also have lower failure rates (especially in terms of multiple repetition), achieving better school results than boys. Marques et al. (2007), in turn, point out that school, being a space of attraction as much for boys as for girls, is more significant for girls. While the school system in general works as an integrative institution and means of upward mobility, some studies show that in some countries this positive development is not working for certain groups. The PISA study found that contrary to the expectation of a longer stay in a host country providing better means to succeed in education, in some countries, the second generation of immigrants were performing worse than the first generation and that, especially in Germany, the school systems was reinforcing social inequality (PISA, 2006).

Occupational trajectories for ethnic minority youth often consist of unskilled jobs and/or short time employment (Marcovici et al., 2008). They may enter the labour market early, sometimes when they are still attending school – in Portugal, 25% of young people from African countries in the age of 15-19 have a job while still in education compared to 9 % of other young people in education. In most European countries, ethnic minority youth who have problems getting a job and who have a “traditional” family structure are sometimes included in the family’s own small business, or they get unqualified jobs through the family network. In this way, families operate as social capital for the young people, but at the same time this model of social integration supports a parallel culture or social structure. Recent figures from Denmark, however, show that if job opportunities exist for young people – as they do for the time being in Denmark because of a very low unemployment rate – young people will take family jobs to a much lesser degree, meaning they prefer to enter the ordinary labour market.

The entrance to the job market is especially difficult, when high formal qualifications are needed to have a job. In Denmark, only 50% and 40% of immigrant men and women respectively are employed compared to 80% and 70% of the rest of the population. Ethnic minorities are often employed in different types of jobs than Danes – they are self-employed to a higher extent and have jobs that require low levels of qualifications. In Denmark, immigrants’ unemployment rate is three times higher than the unemployment rate of the rest of the population, and more than every fourth inhabitant with an ethnic minority background is receiving welfare benefits. Ethnic minority young people’s entrance into the labour market



is also dependent on the local level of unemployment. In Denmark, the number of employed (self-employed or otherwise) in small family shops is decreasing because of the presently low level of unemployment. Also in Spain, where formal educational demands are not so widespread, young immigrants with poor educational biographies score negatively in terms of labour integration processes – they have badly paid employment, they work in the black economy etc. Most of the immigrant population have employment with low qualification requirements; however, their labour and economic satisfaction is paradoxically high (López Blasco et al., 2008).

In the Scandinavian countries, the high educational level and the high demands for competencies in the job market create an exclusive integrative job policy, which makes it difficult to be accepted at the job market. These high demands also create prejudices and discriminative strategies against ethnic minority youth. In job situations discrimination often exists. Ma11(wi(ons )-9[(e)4(thni)-3(e)-5( 8-79(mi)-3(norit)-10(y)20( )-109(y)20(9(th)-15( 8-7whlso -387(x)

evaluate the strategies in relation to social responsibility. The negotiation strategy can be seen as a way to balance the family arena and the peer group arena, where they manage to succeed in participating in social trajectories while keeping within the borders of what is accepted in the family – the strategy has resemblance to the case ‘The Third Chair’ (Badawia, 2001). Does the strategy help the girls to develop a negotiation competence which perhaps is helpful in their further life, or does it involve subjective discrimination? The breaking up strategy is about distancing oneself from the family arena – in some cases this might enable some of the girls to participate in social trajectories that were previously out of their reach within the family. However, it might also have negative consequences for the girls, e.g. exclusion and/or revenge from the family. The double life strategy is about girls trying to balance the family and peer group arenas by leading separate lives in the arenas – it becomes an implicit negotiation strategy. On one hand the strategy might enable the girls to participate to a higher degree in late modern youth life, but on the other hand the question of long term consequences arises. Does it become limited social participation or even lead to marginalisation (Andersson, 2003)? Do they succeed in continuing to lead a double life when they become older – do they get educated and/or employed? When the girls apply the ideological/religious reconstruction strategy it can be seen as a form of negotiation – they stay within the ideological borders but make the religious practice fit their youth life. The girls seem to actualize a trajectory that leads to social participation, because they participate. But is their participation limited in ways that will eventually point them towards limited social trajectories, such as arranged marriage and reproductive family arrangements? It would be interesting to explore all of these strategies in order to ascertain where the different strategies will lead the girls in the future.

### *Temporality of agency*

The modes of agency presented here differ according to the ways in which the young people achieving them link the past – their own biographical experience, but also their family or community’s past – and the anticipation of a future with the evaluation of their current situation. Today’s youngsters are better educated than the parent generation. This is even more the case for young people from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds. Understanding young people’s transitions to work therefore must be based on an historical understanding of the relationship between the generations. While many of the members of the first generations of immigrants in our countries met a labour market that was favourable to immigrants seeking to make a living, these conditions have changed (see chap. 3). At the same time, the migration

projects of the first generation have often changed in their subjective legitimisation: the central motives for sticking to the migration as a family project has shifted from the objective to improve the parents' situation on the labour market to the objective of providing their children with better opportunities. Therefore the temporal dimension of agency of the younger generation includes the shifting hopes for legitimisation of the costs of migration onto the younger generation's success in education and labour market positioning. At the same time, the second generation has to face the fact of a strong inheritance of social inequality through the school systems. Nohl (2000) emphasizes the significance of the historical constellation of between-generation-relationships and migration situations. These constellations influence young people's perceptions and aspirations for their current situation. Their expectations for the future life plans are affected by with these constellations as well (cf. Hockey, 2009). Often their life plans as the future-related dimension of agency is taking the migration perspective on board: those confronted with blocked recognition as a integral part of the local society will have to develop a sense of belonging that incorporates notions of space – sometimes between their current country or region of residence and the country of origin of their parents. Upholding the “myth of return” can gain many social and personal functions (Mihçiyazgan, 1989). On the one side, this myth functions as a metaphorical means to confirm links within ethnic or diaspora communities (Clifford, 1994; Brubaker, 2005). On the other side, it can be seen as kind of last resort or exit strategy that – although never realised – help to cope with an unrealised future (see also Bolognani, 2007). The debates around the rise of trans-national communities show that diasporic elements of social positioning also can lead to dual orientations – both towards the current locality and the imagined or real “home” country and corresponding “dual” transition strategies where qualifications are judged on the grounds of whether they would be useful in both labour markets.

### *How do young people give meaning to situations?*

(Re)ethnicisation constitutes a strategy to emphasize or rather differentiate in-group specific – opposite to out-group specific – cultural, social or economic group properties and resources to (re)gain social recognition or their valued group distinctiveness, i.e. (re)gain a positive social identity in comparison with the out-group discriminated against. The construction of ethnic identity can be considered as a special form of social identity and allows a more or less clear differentiation between various groups, constituting a basis for a comparison between groups. Furthermore, the subjective significance of ethnic identity for an individual appears within the scope of his evaluation of such an identity. The (re)ethnicisation strategy affects both social

and personal identity (closer to the group of origin) and sociabilities (the group boundaries are less permeable to others outside the ethnic group). Further, data from many studies suggests that the tendency towards (re)ethnicisation should not be interpreted as merely a lack of willingness to integrate (Skrobanek, 2007a; Skrobanek & Wilhelm, 2008), but as one way of constructing oneself in situations of (perceived) marginality (see also Tietze, 2001; 2006).

### *Young people's learning processes with regard to their transitions to work*

School as an important part of young people's everyday life is the central social arena of negotiating social identity. Processes of Othering initiated by teachers or school-mates or school structures can render schools to places of ethnicised and racialised social positioning (Otyakmaz, 1999; Phoenix, 2005). "Doing difference" (Fenstermaker & West, 2001) is therefore a central perspective if one wants to analyse learning processes from an agency perspective. Education is the central key to individualising the responsibility for lower chances/inequality (López Blasco et al., 2008). A research perspective which analyses migrant and ethnic minority families' lacking investment in human capital as a key factor for unequal chances therefore needs to be complemented by studies of the interaction structures within the education system. Young males from ethnic minority and migrant communities especially are identified as developing a specific way of dealing with school as a social arena by developing certain types of masculinities which often do not conform with school rules (Frosh et al., 2002) and increase the risk of drop-out or under-achievement. Many studies point out that schools have become more significant for girls. In this context, many youngsters search for positive challenges and identity in places other than school, work or family. They find other particular life worlds where they can escape from disciplinary and traditional controls of school and family, find some social protection, recognition and celebration, as well as share a feeling of equality and reciprocity in their social relations. Their distancing from school, labour market and familiar cultures can be suppressed by another social meaningful disposition: the youth subcultures or micro-cultures. The subcultural networks, or the subcultural capital (Thornton, 1997) that they can provide, may contextualize the transitions from school to work as an integrative or self-exclusionary pathway. In the case of young migrants or youngsters with an ethnic background, the subcultures that they create are frequently (re)ethnicised by themselves (as a way of dealing with discrimination and with the challenges they are confronted with in late modernity) as well as by others, many times in a stigmatized sense. Some studies show that when they perceive themselves and their group as being discriminated against, some of them tend to invest in (re)ethnicisation strategies. This

was the strategy used by groups as the Turkish Power Boys, in Germany (Tertilt, 1996, see also Kaya, 2001), as well as the Latin Kings in Spain (Feixa et al., 2008), or the Hip Hop “black” movement in Portugal to react to and to cope with the situation of deprivation and feelings of marginality in reference to the dominant group (El-Tayeb, 2003). If these subcultures emerged and developed in restricted territories (the first in Germany, and the last ones in USA), they are now displaced and spread all over the world, acquiring specificities in each social context. Despite its contemporary hybridism, their participants share a strong feeling of deprivation. In a more pragmatic way, these social structures might also give the youngsters some skills or even some opportunities for their transition to labour market. In underground networks, where the deviation is the norm, their protagonists perhaps find some space to create inventive and original ways of dealing with the cultural resources and the aesthetical affinities that they share. Some authors present these social contexts as real *creative experimental laboratories* (Feixa, Costa, Pallarés, 2001, p. 298), where young people can experience new visuals, new music forms, and other kinds of new performative and communicative expressions. Both academic and political institutions that deal with youth have given minor importance to the social role of these spaces on the margins of the established channels for political involvement and commitment, as well as, consequently, in adapting to proposals of social participation “from the ground” in the day-to-day dimension of life.

Both the sociological reflection on the action of young people in “public life”, and the institutional political instances that outline and regulate this action, have been ignoring or demonising some of the real contexts of social participation and citizenship practice of young people, thwarting the potential of social intervention that frequently misaligned and subterranean arenas provide them with (cf. Ferreira & Pais, 2008).

### *How can transitions to work be regarded as agency and how can agency influence structure?*

The mere presence of young people from ethnic minorities and migrant communities has been changing the social structure of many European countries through demographic change. The transition pathways young people are taking have changed by the development of ethnic networks and businesses. Trans-national spaces (e.g. Moldenhawer, 2005) create new ways of life plans that cannot be grasped by the concept of social integration confined to nation-states and single welfare systems (Glick Schiller, 2007). Agency in these new social arenas is marked by “pluri-local incorporations” (Pries, 1999) that youth research still has to discover

as in depth “youth arenas” (Ferreira & Pais, 2008). Nevertheless, even beyond these challenging emerging issues there remains a lot to be discovered with an agency-inspired research agenda: the integration processes often regarded with a one-sided “ethnicisation” lens should be closer examined under their long-term effects (Mannitz, 2006). Whether collective agency of young people with an ethnic minority or migration background can be labelled political resistance, especially in the field of anti-discrimination (Räthzel, 2006), remains to be seen in future research.

## 6. Conclusions

In this concluding chapter we want to summarise the progress achieved by the UP2YOUTH project by theorising dimensions of young people’s agency in current research on transitions into parenthood, transitions into work under constellations of migration and participation. The theoretical objective of the project is to contribute to a better understanding of social change by shedding some light into the black box of the interplay between structure and agency, which is often referred to as the mechanism of social change. The applied relevance of this perspective lies in the fact that all policy and practice rely on assumptions of why and how young people take decisions, make choices and carry out actions. These assumptions however, are often neither made explicit nor fully conscious.

In the following we first will summarise the insights into young people’s agency gained through the thematic analysis of young parenthood, migrant youth transitions to work and youth participation. We then will reflect on how this contributes to the understanding of changes in family, work and citizenship as key arenas of social integration in late modern societies. Furthermore, some implications for youth research are elaborated. Finally, consequences of an agency-based perspective on youth for youth policy and practice are highlighted.

### 6.1 Summary: young people’s agency revisited

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people's attitudes, orientations and values – which may be referred to as the input-variable of agency – and the outcome-variable of concrete discernable actions, whether this is becoming a parent (or not), staying on in education or engaging in active job search (or not), participating e.g. in elections (or not). This perspective leaves out the decision-making processes in between which – according to our understanding informed by a pragmatic and interactionist perspective (esp. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) – is the core aspect of agency.

Under the dimension 'range of actions and activities' we have pointed to the *spectrum and diversity of young people's choices, expressions and strategies* with regard to family, work and citizenship which stand for key dimensions of social integration through adulthood in modern societies. This spectrum is much broader than the dichotomy 'active' versus 'passive' implies. This reduces agency to acting according to dominant patterns of normality and standard life courses. This research means to also take into consideration those outcomes which do not fit into dominant concepts of activity: new forms of family and family formation, changing gender relationships including forms of apparent re-traditionalisation against the modern normalities of 'new' motherhood or fatherhood; concepts of work and career beyond existing occupational profiles; or alternative forms of political engagement including the changing meaning of what is political and how individual needs and interests connect with collective affairs in the public. The diversity of actions suggests that individual decision-making processes are based on subjective interpretation and interactive negotiation of contextual conditions and situations. These decision-making processes are far more complex than suggested by deterministic approaches, according to which social positions generate specific actions. However, this does not mean a neglect and denial of strong structural influences on individual choices and actions. It also does this mean interpreting them along the lines of a somewhat "middle ground position" between structure and agency (cf. Woodman, 2009), but rather to look for the "both/and" instead of the "either/or" ways of dealing with uncertainty. An issue closely related to the range of different actions, is the obvious discrepancy between young people's wishes and orientations and the actions they actually take – or: between input and outcome e.g. the decrease and/or postponement of family foundation despite of a high relevance of family-related life plans; ambivalent career behaviour including reduction and remodelling of aspirations or step-by-step strategies of migrant and ethnic minority youth despite of high educational and occupational aspirations; apparently lower political participation than political interest. This discrepancy between input and output indicates that (unequal) structural conditions and contexts are being reworked through agency, which youth research has largely treated as a black box.



The differences in young people's choices and actions according to socio-economic background, education, gender, ethnic minority origin or labour market structures have often been referred to as evidence for the structural determination of young people's agency through *social contexts*. While these differences are obvious, e.g. in the coincidence of early pregnancy with low education, of de-motivation for education with low socio-economic status, or of (formal) political participation according to both education and socio-economic status, they far from absolute. While in many cases outcomes of agency appear predictable according to the social position of the actors, the existence of minority constellations and exceptions suggests that also other factors are at work which are mediated with each other in the course of individual decision-making. Obviously, social contexts provide young people with different resources and opportunities which influence their capabilities of exerting specific choices and actions. Comparative analysis shows that societal institutions 'filter' (global) socio-economic forces to different extent (cf. Mills & Blossfeld, 2003). This includes different welfare and education systems, family and integration policies and the concrete institutional actors by which they are set into practice.

The assumption of choices as "constrained" (Folbre, 1994) and socially embedded means not to discard the concept of choice as such but to differentiate between 'free' choice and choice in terms of decision-making (to act or not; being forced to choose despite a lack of meaningful options). This means to conceive of agency not necessarily as linear realisations of subjective wishes and goals but as complex processes of compromise and negotiation. According to Alheit und Dausien (2000) the "latent biographicity of the social" implies that "there is no mere structural influence which determines directly the individual's reaction" but social structure is both constitutive of and constructed by individuals' (re-)actions (p. 410). A more differentiated perspective towards expressions and articulations beyond the officially legitimate choices and actions reveals that structural constraints do not mean that young people simply 'do nothing', as Schneider (2009) for example suggests.

At the same time, social contexts need to be considered not only with regard to the structural forces which affect individual socialisation processes and the resources and opportunities individuals have at their disposal in specific situations but also with regard to the interactive dimension which is at play. Individual decision-making is not only structured by and embedded in social structure (macro-level) but also in concrete relationships with intermediate institutional actors and with their peers and families in everyday life.



Everyday life relationships obviously need to be seen as the transmitters of macro level social structures, research with regard to the three topics also reveals the enabling aspects of sociality of agency. Or in other words: social capital is not limited to bonding ties but includes also ties bridging to other social milieus and arenas of social action, especially if informal networks by which young parents organise reconciliation of work and family are concerned, or informal transnational networks in which the transitions of many migrant and ethnic minority youth are embedded (Boeck et al., 2006).

The sociality of agency becomes ever more complex under conditions of *de-standardised transitions*. The linear standard life course model implies a widely shared and acknowledged sequence of biographical steps, which provide orientation for individual decision-making. Destandardisation with its increasing fragmentation of transitions, especially with regard to family, work and citizenship, creates biographical dilemmas resulting from simultaneous and at times contradictory demands from various life areas, which cannot easily be prioritised against each other. This contributes to the planning paradox by which young men and women are confronted. They are expected to plan their lives individually without knowing the consequences and the viability of specific decisions and at the same time they are expected to be flexible. The relationship between initial values, orientations or life plans and the outcomes of choices and decisions are therefore being blurred. Destandardisation affects the timing of biographical decisions. While postponement of transitions to parenthood until being established in the labour market may lead to a “rush hour of life” (Bertram et al., 2005) at the same time citizenship status is ‘suspended’ as long as one of its key components – social rights (Marshall, 1950) – is connected to stable employment or in constellations of back-and-forth-migration. In fact, the emergence of life situations which are not foreseen by the institutionalised life course regime implies that the decisions that young men and women take, the strategies they develop to lead their lives in a subjectively meaningful and viable way tend to be judged as ‘too late’ or ‘too early’, to be stigmatised as riskful or deviant or to be simply neglected. Thus, they lack the social recognition necessary for both social integration and identity. The term biographisation refers to the need of individuals to actively and reflexively relate the situations in which they find themselves to their subjective identity, to create a biographical fit between external (economic, institutional, peer) demands and possibilities and internal needs, wishes and interest. Referring to the relevance of youth cultural activities among young people, one may argue that *visibility* is a key requirement for young people’s coping strategies under conditions of uncertainty and the increasing discrepancy between

institutional normalities and their lived experiences; because visibility is a prerequisite for being noticed and recognised as an individual person.

According to Emirbayer & Mische (1998) agency contains also an internal *temporal structure* which, as they argue, sheds light into the dual relation between structure and agency. In their words agency is the

*aspect), oriented towards the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and not (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects with*

In the thematic reflections on transitions to parenthood, young migrants' transitions to work and on youth participation we have found how different past, present and future can be related within individual decision-making processes, whereby situations framed by different or unequal possibilities are evaluated and addressed according to different anticipations and imaginations of the future. The latter of course are themselves influenced by past experiences and socialisation processes. However, inasmuch as the future is increasingly uncertain, the future can less and less be anticipated but requires: subjective imagination of being a parent, of working in a segmented and potentially discriminatory labour market, of linking the own individual life with collective issues in the public or through public institutions; or the future is transformed into an extended present. Indeed, the dominance of the present in young people's orientations can be read as a deprivation of future. This means that decisions and actions appear as more reactive because subjective meaning cannot be developed through imaginations of the future but needs to be actualised in the present (Leccardi, 2005). Thereby the practical evaluation in specific situations is less predictable for research, yet this does not mean independent from structural forces.

A key dimension of our focus on the 'how' of individual decision-making and agency is the *meaning* young people give to specific actions and the goals and effects related to them and the meaning-making which takes place through individual decision-making and action. We have discussed how young people do family, work and citizenship differently by negotiating dominant images with youth cultural styles and symbols and creating new practices. While images and meanings which are institutionalised and/or transmitted by the media constitute powerful forces, they often fail in providing biographical meaning for those who are expected to act within these institutions. We have therefore argued that much more attention should be paid for the actions young people actually perform and to analyse their implicit meaning rather than focussing on what young people do not do, do not do enough of, either too early or

too late. Rather than being different from or external to society, their decisions and actions provide access to the changing meaning of key aspects of social integration such as family, work and citizenship. It has also been suggested that transitions to parenthood, work and citizenship need to allow for *visibility* of the individual person, which is obvious in new forms of political engagement and protest. This becomes crucial in the case of migrants and ethnic minorities who need to develop identities beside and/or against the majority and who have to deal with ascriptions of being ‘different’ which in most cases implies marginalisation. At the same time however, youth cultures are not only the means to mediate between diverging demands but also spaces in which men and women are socialised – also with regard to future parenthood, work and participation. This applies also to practices referred to as re-ethnicisation or re-traditionalisation which need to be interpreted as the reflexive appropriation of existing life style models (among others) in concrete individual – and potentially dilemmatic – biographical situations. Youth cultures therefore include potential aspects of dominant future images and meanings, especially the issue of visibility. These changes extend also to the relationship and/or divide between public and private or collective and individual.

The question for the ‘how’ of agency and decision-making refers also to the dimension of *learning* in terms of knowledge and competencies required by carrying out certain actions. The discrepancy between actions and choices assumed as ‘normal’ according to dominant norms, values and images and young people’s (constrained and negotiated) choices corresponds with the increasing discrepancy between learning in formal and informal settings. While formal education is still an entrance requirement into the labour market it can not guarantee that the knowledge and skills it provides match employers’ needs. Nor do the ‘old’ norms, values and practices which are transferred prepare young people: for parenthood in terms of work-life balance and changed gender relationships; for work in flexible labour markets and discontinuous careers; for dealing with discrimination and ethnicising ascriptions in migration societies; or for linking the own uncertain life perspective with formal collective institutions in a meaningful way. In fact, formal education creates the double-bind situations of preparing for a future which will never take place. To understand this, and to cope with this, is a (informal) learning process of young people in itself which accounts for their distrust of public institutions. Respective learning processes occur informally among those with similar experiences and orientations, with and from trusted significant others as well as through experimenting with new practices (as the ‘old’ practices neither fit biographically nor socially). In some areas, including young parenthood, this has lead to a professionalization of

everyday life based on information from a mixture of informal networks (both peers and families) and youth or sub-cultures, the internet and – in a more selective way, depending on experiences with using bridging social capital – experts and public institutions. Therefore, biographies and parenthood, career or engagement are projects which are developed ‘by doing’. From a pedagogical perspective, this is self-evident as learning is an activity or social practice of the individual learner relating to and appropriating his or her social (and material) context (cf. Chisholm, 2008). At the same time learning can qualify agency if it contributes to a reflexive recomposition of an individual’s agentic orientations towards the own past (iteration) and future (projectivity; Biesta & Tedder, 2007).

*Agency* under conditions of late modernity therefore needs to be understood as a series of reflexive loops within an individual’s biography. Agency depends on the social position of the actor while social positioning is an active process. Reflexivity means that individuals cannot separate from their past in projecting biographical futures but can take a reflexive attitude towards their possibilities – and under conditions of biographisation and standardisation of life courses they are more and more forced to do so. This should not be read as an intra-individual cognitive approach because agency and biographical decision-making are embedded in social relationships. Although we conceive of young men and women as potentially autonomous actors this does not mean that they take decisions in isolation and independently. They interact with (and react to) institutional actors as well as peers. Transitions to parenthood are the most obvious example for decision-making in terms of negotiation between partners as well as between generations. Nevertheless, forms and meanings of the collective as well as issues identified as collective may differ from what traditionally has been interpreted as the ‘common good’ and therefore lead to decisions and actions which – from a non-reflexive perspective – are not perceived as intentional and conscious agency but as reactive behaviour which is risky and/or deviant.

The overall question of UP2YOUTH asks for the relationship between young people’s agency and social change, which means the effects of social change on young people’s agency but also the influence of young people’s agency on social change in terms of *structuration* (Giddens 1984). We would argue that in our analysis we have found plenty of evidence for contributions of young people’s agency in social change. At this point we will not go into the macro perspective of changed participation patterns challenging democracy or changing family formation challenging the generational balance and contract through declining fertility. In this place, we will concentrate on the micro level of structuration in terms of what Beck has called ‘sub-politics’ (Beck, 1992). In their attempts to support and learn from each other

informally, young men and women organise informal networks which can be characterised in terms of both bridging and bonding social capital, which is not necessarily successful – from an institutional or from an individual perspective. Networks of young parents sharing child care or transport of children, migrant networks and ‘re-ethnicised’ sub-cultures as well as global networks of political activists connected through the internet or futile networks evolving from and disappearing in the context of riots do change social structure. Some of these networks become sustainable structures if one considers ‘ethnic business’ or parents’ networks establishing new childcare facilities through raising public funding. Monetary remittance of migrants to their home countries representing major shares of these national economies is another example. Except for the case of young people’s political counter cultures, probably a minority of these influences are intentional and conscious and a consequence of personal or private decisions and coping strategies. They may develop a collective consciousness as political and/or public if their strategies fail or are rejected because of rigid existing institutions, policies, hierarchies, normalities. A far more consequential impact however is that through the growing distance and discrepancy between young people’s lives and societal institutions, their coping strategies change the meanings of key assets of social integration – family, work, citizenship – inasmuch as in their striving for social integration (or better: a good life which depends on social recognition) they have to come to (their) terms with these societal issues.

## 6.2 Agency and changes in family, work and citizenship – or: doing social integration differently?

After having summarised the impact of the thematic work for the concept of agency, the following sections will turn the perspective around and ask, how – by these considerations regarding agency – the perspective on the three topics would change.

*Regarding the topic of on transitions into parenthood* the agency-perspective first of all helps to look behind the facade of official discourses on young parenthood – most predominantly the demographic discourse, but also discourses around teenage pregnancy and deficit-oriented discourses. It shows that transitions into parenthood are neither only choices resulting from values and attitudes nor are they only strategies of coping with structural conditions, but have to be regarded as young women’s and men’s complex engagement in shaping a relevant part of their lives. Aspects of choice (even if riskful and/or constrained) and development of life

projects come into sight, without neglecting the often difficult social and structural contexts, in which this complex engagement takes place.

However, young parents are not only determined by such contexts. As soon as they search and find arrangements for childcare, as soon as they negotiate not only in their private surroundings, but also with other young parents, in their neighbourhoods, or with those, who are responsible for issues around family and work on the local level, they are shaping this social context – mostly on a micro level, but as soon as institutions are involved, also on a meso level – and perhaps in the longer run on a macro level. This is the case whenever local engagement gets sustainable in terms of initiatives which are lasting longer than the urgent needs of some parents. New insights in the topic, promoted by the agency-perspective, make clear that due to a public-private-divide, which still is vivid despite all achievements of feminist movements, the issue of young parenthood is one of those which easily get invisible as every day life *policies* (Jurczyk & Oechsle, 2006): Family related needs often are seen as “private needs” which tend to stay invisible, but also agency in this field is far from being acknowledged as highly relevant area of shaping young people’s life. Their engagement is neither acknowledged as one of high policy relevance (exactly because reworking the public-private divide and therefore still being located in the reproductive ‘private’ sector) nor it is acknowledged as a hot spot of public participation in this phase of young people’s life and their contribution to social integration.

Looking at agency as procedural including a constantly changing chordal triad of past, present and future, helps to better understand the complexity of transitions into parenthood: temporality could be an analytical tool on how each parent reworks differently past experiences (own biographical experiences as well as normalities to which they have to position themselves), future prospects (ideas on how to live a life as a young women or men, how to bring all these different strands of family, career, (diverging) interests together, ideas on how to live partnership and intergenerational relationships, etc.) and engages in the challenges of the present – including all negotiation processes which are necessary in this moment (negotiation with partners, with peers, with neighbours, but also, and very relevant, with the own parents, as long as they are available as potential child carers and supporters.) This temporality assumingly is related to gender: coping with gendered demands, but also inventing femininities and masculinities, motherhoods and fatherhoods, and doing family (at least from a subjective perspective) in an own way.

Regarding *young people's participation* a decreasing interest of young people in formal ways of engagement and participation can be stated. At the same time this does not to the same extent apply for their political interest while also new forms of participation do emerge (Spannring et al., 2008). It has also been shown that activities of young people which normally are not referred to and recognised as participation may be potentially participatory as they involve implicit processes of political socialisation or politicisation where they lead to conflict with other citizens or public authorities (Lagrange & Oberti, 2006; Loncle & Muniglia, 2008).

This can be explained by the fact that under conditions of de-standardised and individualised life courses and biographical uncertainty the links between individual need and interest and collective values and action, which are the core modern citizenship (cf. Marshall, 1950) are no longer self-evident but need to be re-established constantly. Individual priorities may not only change from one biographical situation to another but also contradict with each other (Loncle & Muniglia, 2008).

The analytical reflection of these findings from an agency perspective has focussed on the fact that the dominant distinction between participation and non-participation first of all reflects existing inequalities and power relationships: young people do not participate in the forms foreseen by adults and/or institutional actors, either because they lack the appropriate means and opportunities or because these forms are meaningless for them.

At the same time, young people cope and shape their lives socially – together with their peers and families – and they do so in the public sphere whether in public institutions or through occupying public space by youth cultural activities. This means they express needs and interest towards the wider community and/or society claiming. We therefore suggest to interpret young people's choices and actions not as non-participation but as a sign of a changing meaning of citizenship and participation as regards both forms and content.

The working definition that all activities of young people carried out in or addressed to the public are potentially participatory means that the existing forms of participation and citizenship apparently fail in convincing young people in terms of being an effective and just balance between individual and collective. Apart from this, young people do not perceive the public, especially public institutions, as spaces which are relevant for their lives and/or in which they can invest and negotiate their subjective identities. Their activities may (therefore “potentially”) include changed meanings of the collective, the public and the common good and thus imply a different mode of politics of social integration.



Inasmuch as young people's lives are more and more characterised by uncertain and precarious transitions stretching over longer and longer times, they do not benefit from citizenship in the way conceptualised by Marshall (1950) as a triad of civil, political and social rights. Pais therefore speaks of "trajective citizenship" (Pais, 2008). As for a majority social rights are suspended the reciprocal responsibility implicit to citizenship is unbalanced: why should they care for a society which does not care for them (France, 1998)?

Another key aspect of young people's activities which corresponds to the challenges of balancing subjective identities in late modern societies is the need and desire for *visibility* as a self-formed and self-performing individual (Stauber, 2004; Walther et al., 2006). Apart from youth cultural scenes only consumption and the media appear to serve this need while public institutions appear to be perceived as alienating. The precondition of their use is adaptation to the standard biographical model which they – more or less – still rely upon. Starting from young people's choices and actions, late modern citizenship might require to add the right of visibility to the triad of citizenship rights mentioned earlier.

*Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migration background*, throughout this report have been conceived as one aspect of protracted transitions to adulthood. Work as the central mode of social integration in modern societies has changed considerably in European societies. The flexibilisation of labour markets, the rise of precarious work especially among young people and the higher share of young people among the unemployed render the transition to work more uncertain. These changes provide the historical frame especially for the young descendants of labour migrants. The parent generation could still benefit from a high demand for unskilled or semi-skilled work, however precarious and bad the working conditions were in the labour market sectors they had access to. These labour market sectors are becoming smaller and the labour market even in these sectors increasingly demands higher qualifications. Rather than reducing their disadvantage to different ethnic origin and migration their situation might also be analysed primarily under the perspective of the consequences of post-industrial mass unemployment in segmented labour markets (Wacquant, 2008, p. 161).

The subjective side of these changes have been coined as the "subjectivation of work", i.e. the individuals' expectations to work have changed as well. Work has become more than a way to make a living, but in the eyes of young people has to comply with needs for recognition and self-fulfilment which at the same time has to be fought for constantly. Youth research too



often has dealt with these subjective changes of work in a simplistic way. Typologies and dichotomies like “winners” and “losers” of modernisation can lead to research overlooking the modernisation processes on the side of the less privileged parts of the young population. Parallelling this, transition policies are lagging behind in two ways: on the one hand they tend to define integration into the labour market as the telos of policies for young people in an “in order to” way which disregards the subjective side completely. If the education system cannot guarantee a stable perspective of social integration via employment prospects, in the eye of young people it loses part of its legitimation.

Young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background are concerned by these changes in two ways: on the one side, large sections among them are in the lower segments of the education systems. On the other side, “host” societies – that is public opinion and policy-makers alike – look at them from an “old” integration perspective. Increasingly, this look is led by a tendency to individualise societal circumstances for example in stressing the lack of investment of parents from migrant communities in “human capital”.

And of course, education and training are important ways to successfully integrate into work. But, at the same time, institutions in the education and training system are central arenas where subjective belonging, inclusion and exclusion are negotiated. School climate and schools’ interpretation of a multicultural reality are crucial (Faas, 2008; cf. Kende, 2007). Especially for young men, a subjective gap to these institutions can contribute to processes of marginalisation (Frosh et al., 2002). Therefore, the role of education and training systems need to be researched also under the perspective of whether they are following a “managing diversity” or rather an active anti-discrimination agenda (Wrench, 2004). Institutions dealing with young people need to reflect their own role in the negotiation of belonging – whether it is rather in contributing to “modes of distancing” (Tucci, 2008) or even clientelization (Kamali, 2000) or in opening spaces for young people’s agency (cf. Morrison, 2007).

Migrant and ethnic minority youth are in an ongoing social integration process. Often this process is seen as a sort of necessary acculturation to late modern social interaction. As this analysis has underlined, late modern social integration does not necessarily mean cultural or social assimilation. Orientations to “ethnic” traditions should not be interpreted along the lines of tradition and modernity alone, but in a more complex way.

On the one hand, ethnic minority youth are on the road to late modern society, but on the other hand they sometimes are also at the edge of society. Policies of course influence this situation. The first demand for securing social integration is the existence of equal rights and

citizen rights for ethnic minority youth. However, this is not enough. New modes of social integration are rising from what migration researchers are investigating in the context of the trans-nationalisation of migrant communities: globalised culture makes possible a huge variety of transnational and “pluri-local incorporations” (Pries, 1999; Vertovec, 2009).

Sometimes differentiated rights or special interventions are necessary to support the integration process of migrant and ethnic minority youth. With new migratory movements all over Europe, this differentiated policy perspective becomes important. It might be necessary to differentiate policies and perspectives according to different migrant and ethnic minority youth – both in relation to possibilities of supporting migrant and ethnic minority youth’s choices of engaging in late modern individualisation and in relation to a more general social integration process.

The solution is not necessarily either an assimilation perspective pointing towards either a very homogeneous culture or a multicultural society. As the report shows, it might be more beneficial to take on a perspective of social and contextual diversity, implying that integration processes are also carried out in local or smaller contexts, in which common interest and activities among local inhabitants are possible to find. Social integration appears to be a matter of attachment and belonging predominantly to the local surroundings and everyday life.

The case of girls from an ethnic minority or migrant background points youth research back to the criticism raised by feminist scholars on the conception of individual emancipation. Youth should not be regarded as a “pure” emancipation process from the family of origin, but as the restructuration of a complex interplay of dependency, responsibility and independence.

Taking over an agency perspective with regard to young people’s transitions to what traditionally have been seen as key assets of adulthood implies a fundamental change in conceptualising social integration. Often social integration is referred to in an essentialist way in terms of stable situations and constellations rather than processes. This relates to a picture of society as a container with clear boundaries between inside and outside. Such container ideas of social integration are a heritage of the period of Fordism and its mechanisms of standardisation and normalisation. Obviously they no longer fit to descriptions and concepts of late modern societies in which flexibilisation, de-standardisation and fragmentation reveal the fluidity of social integration (Bauman, 2000). Looking at how family is done (differently), means to acknowledge *that family is changing*. Therefore social integration can no longer be conceptualised as achieving any pre-defined family status. An agency perspective on

transitions to parenthood replaces the idea of family as container by the idea of family as a process consisting of various transitory statuses. With regard to social integration, the concept of family therefore no longer functions in terms of a pre-defined form, but needs to be conceived of a process of ‘doing family’ in which young mothers and fathers are involved and engaged in negotiation processes of ‘doing social integration’ – for themselves, as parents, in terms of (new) models of mothering, and fathering, and in terms of doing gender (differently).

The same accounts to participation: obviously, fixed concepts of what civic, social and political participation is like in representative democracies conceal changed relations between individual and collective, and changed meanings of the public and the political. Public engagement is taking place in different spaces than ballot boxes; political movements, be they youth riots, student strikes or ‘reclaim the streets’ initiatives document how much civic participation is in change. Meanwhile apparently non-political leisure time activities such as skate boarding, consumption or hanging out in public provide keys to changing issues of social integration and citizenship such as the increasing need for visibility under conditions of late modern uncertainty.

In the analysis of transitions to work under conditions of (trans-)migration and minority versus dominant cultures, container ideas of social integration for quite some time have been replaced by a closer look on what (young) people actually *do* in order to create and find their place(s) in society. More concretely, school in this regard is revealed as no longer a means for integration into qualified work but has to be considered as a space of everyday life where processes of intercultural communication, identity work and social positioning are negotiated.

The ‘problem of social integration’ according to this analysis is largely due to the fact that this concept of social integration is inherent to public institutions which more or less consciously and explicitly still follow the linear standard life course model. In fact, taking the age-related benchmarks of the EU’s Education & Training 2010 Strategy into account (especially indicators for pre-school, early school leaving, or lifelong learning) as well as the modularisation of higher education through the Bologna system which aims also at reducing study periods, both strategies can be interpreted as a re-standardisation of life courses under the principle of acceleration (cf. Leccardi, 2005). This relates to the distinction between social and systems integration. While social integration refers to the process of negotiation among individuals as well as between individuals and society, which implies a processual and dynamic understanding, systems integration refers to the institutionalisation of routines and mechanisms replacing direct negotiation. While indispensable in complex societies it is

systems integration which contributes to a concept of ‘society as container’. Habermas (1986) has analysed the paradox that on the one hand systems integration depends on rationalities of social integration through direct communication (e.g. young people’s motivation for learning, their family orientations or their need of social recognition and public visibility), just as social structure is actualised through individual agency. On the other hand, systems integration tends to colonise social integration inasmuch as it undermines the possibilities of direct interaction and negotiation.

The dilemma of late modern societies is that the increase of uncertainty leads to increasingly differentiated systemic mechanisms aimed at making the future predictable and plannable and at calculating potential risks and effects. According to Ulrich Becks theory of reflexive modernisation it is exactly these mechanisms which increase uncertainty as they increase – at least superficially – individuals’ scope of action (Beck, 1992).

However, taking this analysis seriously, means pushing the question *how social integration is done (differently)* into the foreground – a change of perspective close to the ethnomethodological turn regarding an understanding of social order. Social integration is taking place in processes, most often in unspectacular, informal implicit processes; young people are ‘doing’ social integration on the basis of daily routines and practices, they are actively coping with structural demands, they are inventing new solutions for these demands. Therefore the perspective on agency is necessary for the understanding of social integration. This is where culture and learning as procedural dimensions of social integration are relevant:

Learning: far beyond any official learning agenda (and therefore as hidden as the political dimensions related to young parenthood, to civic participation, to transitions into work) agency in its temporal structure is also to be seen as a learning process. While the education perspective highlights an intentional and asymmetric relationship in which the educator aims at directing the learner, the learning perspective has to be seen and analysed as a process and social practice in itself.

Especially informal and non-formal learning processes often enfold in controversial negotiation processes. They result from conflicts emerging from new (and also highly gendered) demands of a quasi-professionalisation of everyday parenting life, in which young women and men have to find their position; they result from frictions with the demands of re-standardized educational trajectories which leave no time for engagement; they result from contradictions between what is acknowledged as a contribution to social integration and what is disregarded and blamed as an “ethnic parallel structure” of society .

This learning includes biographical but also collective learning through the cooperative invention of new styles and types of parental, political, work-related engagement. This means doing *culture*: new imageries, new solutions, or old solutions in a different way – wherever young people's agency becomes visible, this will become part of the present culture of being a parent or being a small family, of reconciling family and work, of a gender work share, of the public-private relationship etc. The fact that this largely takes place outside of public institutions – or in public spaces but not in the acknowledged way of using it – explains the immense need for visibility expressed by youth cultural activities and coping strategies. They are a part of a struggle for a broader cultural repertoire of acknowledged coping strategies, life styles and forms of engagement beyond the standard life course.

Individual agency actually contributes to social integration and thus to social change – not only (actually in very few cases) intentionally as a side-effect of personal coping strategies

transition steps and actions, agency-related research also pays attention to the decision-making processes inbetween which are never isolated but embedded within social interaction. This requires process-oriented in-depth research which makes internal logics and complex negotiation processes visible.

Inasmuch as the UP2YOUTH process has largely consisted in reviewing existing research on young parenthood and transitions to work, especially regarding ethnic minority and migrant youth, and participation, we have identified numerous research gaps. These primarily concern the decision-making processes of young people. In the following paragraphs we present some examples of research gaps and questions emerging from these reviews:

With regard to *transitions into parenthood* and social integration in terms of doing family, little is known about informal networking processes among partners, between the generations, within neighbourhoods and among peers and how such networking processes do (or undo) gender (cf. Butler, 2004). There is also hardly any analysis of where young parents actually learn being and acting as parents and to what extent their informal learning processes can be interpreted as processes of participation through negotiation among themselves as well as with institutional actors.

Little research has been carried out on what *participation* means for young people from their biographical point of view, or on how specific issues and forms of participation become relevant and subjectively meaningful for them. This includes a lack of knowledge regarding the meaning of the public, of collectivity and the common good. In fact, youth participation is measured with regard to what adults and institutional actors define as relevant. Research might be carried out on the role the increasing need of visibility plays in young people's choices of activities in the public (e.g. consumerism as participation).

*Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migration background* have not yet been researched from a biographical perspective where local circumstances are compared between different European countries. The subjective meaning-making between the local and the global givens of the transition systems would shed light into why some policies are more likely to be taken up by local communities are some are not.

Cross-cutting questions concern how subjective meaning emerges from contextualized experiences of one's own actions, which is always is to be regarded as interaction and (collective) meaning-making. This means, that relationships between goals and means of action, which are rarely analysed in a dialectic way but from either the means or the goal side, have to be analysed regarding the interaction process between them.

Another cross-cutting research strategy stems from the consideration of intersecting lines of social differences and hierarchies (Brah & Phoenix 2004), which represent the complex reality in which young people's agency emerge, is hindered, and partly is facilitated. This also means including in research perspectives the body as both the source of needs, motives and intentions as well as the carrier of action into research perspectives, not only with regard to young parenthood or youth cultures but also with regard to issues such as education, work or political expression.

Comparative research is important for the understanding how different social contexts do frame individual agency differently. We have applied the model of transition regimes which in a heuristic way distinguishes different ideal types of constellations of normality in which socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors interact with individual biographical orientations and decision-making processes. This model highlights general aspects of structure and agency – actually Settersten and Gannon (2005) argue that comparative analysis helps to shed light into the “spaces inbetween” – from context-specific ones. This allows us to not only analyse how structure enables and restricts agency but also how structure is being reproduced and modified differently through agency.

## 6.4 Implications of ‘doing social integration’ for youth and transition policies

This report has been mainly concerned with theoretical reflections on the relationship between young people's agency, social integration and social change based on the review of existing empirical research finding. Nevertheless, these reflections have implications for policy and practice concerned with young people. In this report we will concentrate on rather general policy recommendations in terms of principles of policy and practice from an agency perspective. These principles are concretised and related to exemplary practice in the collection of current practices (see the UP2YOUTH website <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>).

One general insight is that young people depend to a large extent on facilitating structures, such as socio-economic resources and opportunity spaces, in order to negotiate, shape and cope with uncertain transitions to family, work and citizenship, especially where they are structured by precariousness. However, the success of these facilitating measures and structures in turn cannot secure predictable trajectories. They require that young people



perceive them as accessible, relevant and manageable and in consequence accept and use them.

This implies that they need to allow for individual ways of using them according to subjective needs and priorities. UP2YOUTH builds on previous EU-funded research such as *Misleading Trajectories* (Walther et al. 2002) or *Youth Policy and Participation* (Walther et al., 2006) in which featured the concept of Integrated Transitions Policies (cf. López-Blasco et al., 2003). Integrated Transition Policies are characterised by coordinating different policies affecting young people's lives starting from their biographical perspective. Especially, analysis of research on young parenthood has revealed that this is not yet the case for many young women and men in terms of a lack of resources and opportunities needed to reconcile work, studies and family.

Pais (2003) has described youth trajectories in late modernity by the metaphor of “maze” with youth policies mostly aiming at helping young people *out* of the maze. As he argues, however, this metaphor does not only apply to youth but to late modern life in general, and so such policies turn into misleading trajectories. Appropriate policies instead focus on supporting life *within the maze*. Supporting transitions processes as such, rather than focussing on the potential but increasingly uncertain end point or arrival, whether this is work, family or an adult citizen status implies a balance between security and flexibility. On the one hand young people need income security as well as secure access to forms of social support while at the same time these support systems need to be highly flexible to allow young people individualised use. This flexicurity (Stauber et al., 2003) is closest to the transition systems of the universalistic regime type because their social rights for support are connected to the individual citizenship status which is largely independent on the individual's life situation. The liberal regime shares the reference point of the individual citizen while the concept of citizenship is much more that of a self-responsible entrepreneur than of an autonomous individual embedded in and supported by reciprocal solidarity. In the employment-centred and sub-protective transition in contrast systems of social security and social support are connected largely to family and employment status. While providing rather different levels of support this makes them rather inflexible both with regard to individual cases and to social change in general.

Another aspect of Integrated Transition Policies is the reflexivity of institutional actors in order to realise different needs and effects of support in different biographies. The fact that the positive performance of the universalistic transition regime does not extend to the same



of the young people's needs and interests, and to be aware of the young people's subjective interpretation of concepts such as parenthood, mother and father, and family forms.

Biographical dilemmas resulting from the difficulties in reconciling different transition demands need to be recognised. Policies addressing core problems in transitions to parenthood contribute to;

- The solving the difficulties in reconciling young parenthood with training,
- The reconciling young parenthood with the demands of the workplace and career development, including an influencing enterprises such as implementing family-friendly work cultures so as to encourage active fathering
- The reconciliation of young parenthood with youth life.

This includes

- Temporal policies, such as access to part-time education,
- Access to public childcare facilities and accommodation. This includes innovative ideas around supporting private solutions for childcare to allow for flexible use based upon individual needs and life arrangements;
- Monetary transfers,
- Gender policies.

On this policy level we are returning to the basic idea of *securing spaces for young people to navigate and create their own ways into parenthood*. For example, space for negotiation among partners and between generations regarding issues such as work share or housing always have an underlying crude material basis, which has to be provided for in social policy.

However, in order to make use of space for negotiation, additional programs are needed to support young people in family activities. This includes parental and familial education which is not limited to competency in baby care traditionally provided by medical counselling. It requires support in all those areas which are necessary for shaping a relationship under new circumstances; for developing and defending concepts of partnership in everyday life, and for negotiating with institutions and employers.

Modern parental education needs to therefore include concepts such as gender competence, civic participation, and accessible local facilities for the creation of one's own networks. It should recognize that not all young parents have access to such programs and that this access

is something which has to be actively created and organized. The New Deal for Lone Parents in the United Kingdom is one example how educational elements are included in employment programs for lone parents, empowering them in doing family differently.

A further dimension refers to the policies which support, empower and acknowledge informal network building, e.g. father's networks. These networks are crucial for strengthening young people's ability to actively shape their transitions into parenthood. Additionally, they allow young parents to renounce normalising scripts dictating when the transition into parenthood should take place and how parenthood should be perceived.

Policies addressing specific groups run the risk of stigmatising respective groups. This requires the formulation of policies which acknowledge the development of each person's own imagery of how to be a young parent. The UK Father Figures Project serves as one of the scarce examples of this type of programme.

Two examples of policies which have the potential of bridging the three topics of transitions into parenthood, migration and participation in an exemplary way are (1) 'the Brede Schools' in the Netherlands (addressing ethnic minority families and allowing the reconciliation of family and work) and (2) the 'Mothers' project in the city council of Alessandria in Italy (bridging the topic of transitions into parenthood and participation, a feature of all policies which support networking initiatives for young parents).

The collection of current practices which follows in the end of this document represents a set of snapshots. The majority of these practices do not include all the of dimensions or aspects mentioned above but they are relevant steps in the further development of policies appropriate to supporting young people in their transitions to parenthood and as actors of social change.

### *Quality criteria in transitions to work policies*

Policy-making in the area of transitions to work mainly has to deal with the changing demands of the world of labour. Simultaneously, youth and young adulthood have established themselves as a distinct life stage rather than a transitory period en route to adulthood. A significant majority of young people with ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds are affected by these changes in a particular way and policy-making needs to be aware of the particular agency related to these situations.

In most European countries the changes in the working world imply a diversification of education and training pathways. This makes a life-course or life-cycle perspective in policy-making, aimed at the biographical viability of individual education and training careers,

indispensable. Although this is primarily a task of high-level planning in educational and training institutions at systems level, individual support mechanisms need to be established that work on the level of transitions between the different cycles of the education and training system. This can mean strengthening counselling and support mechanisms (such as vocational and career guidance) and qualifying these services to deal with the life situations of young people from an ethnic minority or migration background.

In the same vein, misleading trajectories need to be avoided by making transitions and shifts between and within education and training tracks reintegratable into subjectively rewarding careers. One method of achieving this goal is the modularization of training systems. This could be especially beneficial to young people who have fewer opportunities to enter into these tracks. Self-employment as a wide-spread strategy to secure employment among certain migrant communities should be combined with efforts to recognise informally and non-formally acquired skills; these skills can also acquire compatibility with recognised qualifications.

On the other side of the coin, the de-coupling of education and employment systems implies a self-reflective perspective within these education and training systems. If education and training can no longer guarantee integration by awarding qualifications that open the door to stable employment, then their legitimacy in the eyes of young people is no longer self-evident.

Education and training institutions need to reflect this new reality and they need to be re-shaped from ‘prescribing’ institutions into institutions which are part of young people’s real life worlds. For young people with an ethnic minority or migration background this situation needs to be reflected in two ways;

- (1) Institutions such as schools and training institutions have to be aware of the subtler forms of unintended and indirect forms of institutional discrimination that currently exist and build into their standard procedures methods of dealing pro-actively with this phenomenon.
- (2) Education and training are central social arenas wherein social integration and social positioning are negotiated between institutions and young people and also amongst young people themselves.

Therefore school climate and each school’s interpretation of a multi-cultural reality are crucial ingredients in discerning how young people perceive themselves and how young people discern the society around them.

In general, institutions need to be open and reflexive regarding their own role in the process of ethnicisation or “racialisation” of societal and social conflicts, and of social constellations. Ideally, they provide a flexible space wherein young people’s negotiation of social identities and social positioning are kept open. Gender awareness is a critical point in case and the above principles means that both gender-specific approaches and gender-aware mainstream services are required. This perspective gains yet more importance for girls and young women who come from communities influenced by strong and traditional gender role allocation. For these communities, a perspective of what males can gain or lose from positioning themselves in such constellations can provide a clue to solving the rising problems associated with the educational and societal disintegration of boys and young men.

The degree of institutional flexibility on the issues of belonging and social identities presents a dilemma in the targeting of policies for youth: the narrower the definition of a target group, the more risk of closing the space required for negotiation and the greater the risk of stigmatising effects.

Non-formal education in youth and community work settings in this respect seems to be capable of delivering two benefits: (1) providing migrant or ethnic minority communities with the means to celebrate diversity without losing sight of society as a whole and (2), possessing a set of working methods that allows for coping with the challenges described above. To maximise these strengths all categories of non-formal education need to be recognised as valuable elements in young people’s education and need to be closely linked into local, regional and national transition systems.

Ethnic and migratory background young people’s relative disadvantages in transitions to the labour force are primarily attributed to disadvantageous social conditions such as low income, housing issues related to socially disadvantageous concentration of problems in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and areas. To combat this state of affairs transition policies have to be embedded into a whole set of policies that attempt narrow the gap between disadvantaged groups and mainstream society. This should not of course neglect general anti-discrimination policies, anti-racist initiatives and intercultural perspectives in mainstream institutions.

### *Quality criteria in participation policies*

An agency-based approach to enhancing young people’s participation regarding “*decisions which concern them and, in general, the life of their communities*” (European Commission, 2001, p.8) implies the following set of quality standards:

- Accepting a diversity of conceptual and actual types of participation and overcoming the dominant dichotomies of what is and what is not participation:
  - Firstly, because not all young people have the same opportunities and competencies;
  - Secondly, because different issues are relevant for different young people;
  - Thirdly, because different types of participation hold the key to understanding the changing meaning of participation – including the changing meaning of politics, collectivism and public space – in late modernity.
- Implementing participation mechanisms in all ('hard and soft') institutional contexts in which young people's lives and transitions to adulthood are shaped:
  - School: extending pupils and students participation from organising extra-curricular activities to participation on contents, forms, assessment and organisation of learning;
  - Youth policy: broadening the opportunities of young people's involvement beyond youth councils through projects that allow for on-and-off engagement and open youth work;
  - Transitions to work: allowing for both choice and experimentation in counselling, orientation, pre-vocational education, training, work experience and employment schemes through negotiation and/or veto rights for unemployed young people in relation to institutional job and/or training scheme offers and the provision of service user councils in relevant institutions (e.g. job centre);
  - Transitions to parenthood: young parents as well as young people in transition to parenthood need to be consulted in relation to family policy making whilst also being allowed choice and flexibility in other transition policies.
- Providing public spaces in which young people can:
  - Express and negotiate their needs and interests, their experiences and their views,
  - Experiment with life styles in interaction with others (peers groups and the wider community).



- Young people should not be criminalized in occupying and utilizing public space; the differing needs and interests of young people and other citizens can be reconciled through negotiation between and amongst these groupings.
- Ensuring that alternative solutions meet all of the young people's needs; not just the easiest to satisfy (e.g. providing 'half-pipes' for skaters in the suburban outskirts will not end conflicts in the city centre as skaters strive for visibility).

The decoupling of participation rights from achievements and progress in transitions to work:

Conditions of de-standardised transitions to adulthood have lead to a postponement and partial suspension of the citizenship status of young people, participation in itself must be a right for young people.

Current trends (e.g. the Commission's communication on youth policy 'Investing and Empowering', European Commission, 2009) increasingly connect participation with the generation of human capital. While participation is likely to have multiple learning effects, participation must not be reduced to measurable competence and employability. A number of key points emerge in this regard;

- Learning from participation is non-formal learning; it cannot be designed *per se* but only be designed for. Wenger 1998, p.)
- Young people's labour market integration is not only a problem of employability and education; it also stems from economic flexibilisation and globalisation. Given the relationship between education and social inequality, connecting participation and human capital may increase rather than reduce unequal citizenship rights among young people.

Youth cultures need to be recognised as contextual settings in which young people develop political orientations together with subjectively meaningful life styles. This suggests that policy making has to;

- Accept and support political countercultures rather than criminalise them;
- Recognising leisure-oriented youth cultural activities as young people attempting to balance their identities and shape their lives in public.

Addressing young people's activities in the public realm, or directed to a public audience, as *potentially* participatory implies that any means of dialogue, exchange and understanding

exhibits the young people's underlying needs, interest and aspirations as well as offering the potential for altered meanings of participation.

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## 6. Annex: Dissemination and use

