UP2YOUTH

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Youth - actor of social change

Young people's transitions to work in migration societies

This issue of the UP2YOUTH newsletter is a monothematic one dealing with young people's transitions from education to work. It presents preliminary f ndings of the thematic working concerned with transitions of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background. This newsletter is the second of a mini-series of three sub-sequent monothematic newsletters – each issue presenting f ndings of one of the three UP2YOUTH sub-themes: transitions to work of ethnic minority youth (UP2YOUTH newsletter 2-08 published in September 2008) and youth participation (2-09, to be published shortly). The three topics represent areas of social change with regard to youth and the transition to adulthood. According to the overall objective of UP2YOUTH, they centre around the question to what extent this change results from young people's agency and what young people need to act in ways which contribute both to social integration and subjectively meaningful biographies.

The thematic working group on transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background involved teams from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Spain. The working process consisted in the production of country reports, exchange with practitioners, policy makers and researchers during two thematic workshops and has been backed by a theoretical debate on the meaning and implications of an agency-related perspective on youth and social change (see interim paper for download from www.up2youth.org/downloads). From the country reports, case studies on local, regional or national f gurations of transition processes have been selected and subjected to a qualitative meta-analysis along the issues emerging from the comparative analysis of the national reports. This process is documented in a thematic report which synthesises available research f ndings while also pointing to existing research gaps. It is also available for download from www.up2youth.org/downloads).

1990s, a growing body of research developed which focused on the emergence of new types of youth identities marked by hybridity, multi-culturality, and trans-cultural social spaces. In this strand of research, youth cultures were seen as "open cultures" and global cultures, which engaged young people from different ethnic backgrounds. In this perspective, belonging to an ethnic minority is considered a source of biographical and social resources corresponding to the challenges of post-modern life such as globalisation, f exibility, and cultural diversity. At the same time, however, the more structure-related research on transitions to work shows the relative perseverance of "old" factors which inf uence young people's access to different societal positions, such as socio-economic background, gender, and ethnicity. These contradictory research perspectives create some new questions about forms and levels of social integration and the role of individualisation and individual agency in the integrative process.

Theoretical perspectives

Social change in European societies is closely related to processes of mobility and migration. This mobility refers to a broad range of situations when one takes old and new streams of immigrant populations into account – f rst, second, and third generation immigrants, immigrants from former colonies, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as ethnic minorities with a long history as the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, or the Travellers in Ireland.

Young people from migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds between structure and agency

Research on transitions to work of ethnic minority and migrant youth has for a long time been focused in a problem perspective pointing to school and transition failure in terms of language deficits, the ambiguity of "living between two cultures", young women retained in traditional gender roles, or other aspects of exclusion. In the

Changing nature of social integration

Social integration and related assumptions of normality are subject to social change. Based on full employment, mass consumption and a demand-oriented welfare state the Fordist period promised at least in theory social integration and citizenship for all who followed the gendered 'normal biography'. We refer to social change as modernisation and as the shift to post-Fordist knowledge societies with f exibilisation and individualisation as their most noticeable characteristics. While individuals remain dependent on life course institutions, resources and opportunities remain distributed unequally according to class, education, gender and ethnicity while the reproduction of inequalityare attributed more and more to individual decisions. De-standardisation of life courses implies that transitions tend to turn from institutionalised status passages into permanent life situations. Not only life phases but also life spheres – especially the classical markers of adulthood

Content

UP2YOUTH Project News

The UP2YOUTH project enters it´s f nal round!
5th-6th March 2009, Brussels
This event is organised by the project `Youth - actor of social change´ together with the European Commission´s DG Research and other EU-funded research projects.
http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/181/2/

European policy developments

Youth in Spain Report 2008
This quadrennial report analyses the social integration of young people in Spain and provides statistical data on a variety of aspects concerning Spanish youth.
http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/news/news_65.html

Committee of Ministers adopted new Resolution on youth policy
The Council of Europe´s youth policy priorities for the coming years are the haert of the Resolution just adopted by the organisation´s decision-making body - the Committee of Ministers.
http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/news/news_60.html

work and family – undergo a process of de-limitation. The UP2YOUTH working group on transitions of young people from an ethnic minority or migrant background was seeking for ways to relate certain transitions structures to the ways young people from a migration or ethnic minority background experience and actively shape their transitions from school to work:

• How do young migrants and youth from ethnic minorities manage education and labour market entrance? What are their specifc problems and coping strategies in a certain national context?

• What forms of peer culture(s) do they develop, in what non-formal and informal contexts do they learn, and how does that contribute to their social integration? How are these cultural contexts recognised by societal institutions?

• Which conditions and possibilities of individual agency are provided for ethnic minority youth in different transition regimes? What forms of interplay between education systems, labour markets and modes of integration can be found and how do they infuence transitions to work?

Findings and further research questions

These theoretical perspectives and research questions have been confronted with the outcomes of the research and validation steps outlined above. In the following we are presenting them along the issues emerging from the comparative analysis of the country reports produced in the frst working group phase.

Agency and learning

Learning is a key to an agency perspective in understanding changing pathways to adulthood and citizenship. In the individualisation of transitions to adulthood learning is relevant in a double perspective. On one hand young people are expected to acquire knowledge and skills in formal trajectories. On the other hand, individual learning increasingly takes place in non-formal and informal settings. Today formal learning is most necessary but not suffcient to help young people's social and labour market integration. Approaches of non-formal learning are concerned with compensating a lack of formal learning – especially with regard to youth – and to allow for reconciliation between adult expectations and youth cultural forms of praxis. And they aim at biographi-

cal learning, refecting the relation between one's own individualisation process and external demands and possibilities. The different learning aspects complement and contradict each other at the same time – not only due to the fragmentation of different contexts but also due to the differences in status and recognition of learning programmes which more often react to labour market demands rather than preparing for social change. In fact, learning motivation becomes a key prerequisite for changing social integration and it becomes the central mechanism to ascribe societally induced inequality to individuals' defcits. Leisure time activities, family life and cultural activities all includes opportunities of having the feeling of belonging to something, but it also impose a confict regarding exclusion/inclusion, as different lifestyles in different arenas of life may contradict ways of living. In this respect additional research is needed on how activities and learning informally and non-formally interact with educational careers and in which way education policies could integrate them into the education system. Especially male youngsters from migrant and ethnic minority communities are regarded as developing peer cultures which confict with school cultures. Therefore a gender perspective in education research is highly needed to enlighten the relationship between social identities and school life.

Shaping transitions to the labour market

The improvements achieved by most European countries in the areas of education and vocational training, along with welfare policies, have led, inter alia, to a defcit of low/unqualifed labour force in sectors such as constructions, service businesses, tourism and personal care, which resulted in a structural dependency on unskilled, immigrant labour force in the labour market. Of course, this is not an encouraging environment for policies aiming at improving employment opportunities for immigrants. It is not encouraging for immigrants either in what regards propensity for improving/acquiring new qualifcations.

The interplay between the labour markets' demand for immigrant labour force and the coping strategies of immigrants seems to lead to a modus vivendi that can be maintained only as far as the immigrants' coping strategies respond tothe labour markets' demand in the host countries. This is intuitively understood or informally learned by the frst generation of immigrants and has in most cases a de-motivating effect on their career aspirations and educational improvement plans.

As suggested by our case studies, in response to this labour market demand, in most cases immigrants' aspirations for occupational status in the host country are pretty low (at least for the frst generation immigrants). Nevertheless, several case studies suggest that many immigrants develop high aspirations regarding the employment status of their children, but one could hardly assert that the informal learning context in which these children actually grow up and develop their life plans is a stimulating one with regard to motivation for educational attainment and career development.

Young immigrants are also facing difficulties with regard to the access to information and job search skills. To a certain extent, they try to cope with these challenges relying on co-nationals' networks, but this does not help them very much to catch up the def cit and compete on equal footing with young nationals on the labour market. This may at the most help them to catch up the def cit in comparison with immigrants previously settled there, which rather leads to reproduction of immigrants' position on the respective labour market than to achievement of a better employment status. The case studies have also revealed that not only professional skills are necessary for engagement but also social skills, for which non-formal and informal learning with support by youth NGOs could be a solution to compensate/complement formal education. Further research is needed to see how different migrant and ethnic minority communities benef t from NGOs work in the f eld of school-to-work transitions.

Agency and peer cultures

The more informal peer cultures reveal an extensive power of attraction and implication among young people – namely among young people with a migrant or ethnic background –, being lived as social spaces of social participation and socialization on citizenship practices.

Both academic and political institutions that deal with youth have been given a minor importance to the social role of these spaces on the margin of the established channels for political involvement and commitment, as well as, consequently, in adapting to proposals of social participation "from the ground", from the day-to-day dimension of life

Both the sociological ref ection 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.

It is in daily life, particularly in intersticial social spaces where leisure and cultural production happens, that youth citizenship is often exercised, reinvented in its senses, objectives and traditional modes of action. Actually, in nowadays the institutional and organisational scale of youth citizenship cedes ever more to a micro scale, structured in microcultural networks, from which it emerges mainly as an expressive form of construction, exploration, recognition and social preservation of personal and collective identities, namely (re-)ethnicised identities.

In many of these informal interaction networks, there arise effectively implicated cultural conf icts and claims, based on the sharing of specif c distinct and distinctive forms of identity, providing their protagonists not only with a strong sense of inclusion and demarcation, but also of existence and intervention. These are social spaces where many disadvantaged young people feel to be someone, subjects and agents of their own biography. Often this is related to "reactive" ways of coping causing opposition to the norms and values found in educational institutions. Further research is needed to better understand the interactions of educational institutions and young people with such "reactive" ways of def ning themselves. Additionally, the role of collective identities and the subjective sense of belonging seems in coping with youth transitions seems to need further investigation.

(Re-)ethnisization and policy

Relating ethnicisation processes to policies is a diff cult endeavour. According to our cases at hand we were able to identify at least three analytically clearly distinct modes of policies and its translation into economic, social and cultural structures. They are signalling how young immigrants or members of an ethnic group should become acculturated.

• The f rst mode prefers assimilation of young immigrants/ethnic groups. Here it is believed that young immigrants/ethnic minority youth should give up their interest in maintaining their heritage culture and cultural identity. It is hoped that through adaptation to standards of the dominant culture young immigrants or members of an ethnic group would have better access to means for realizing institutionalized ends.

• A second policy mode marginalization runs the risk of marginalizing young immigrants/ethnic minority youth because it encourages giving up reference/contact to the heritage culture/distinct cultural identity without giving access to the means of integration of the larger society. To disregard specif c cultural needs relating to ethnic identities can lead to a breakdown of exchange between young immigrants/ethnic minority youth and the society/majority in general.

• To some extent aspects of the mode of integration become visible. Here the legal mode supports cultural maintenance referring to young immigrants/ethnic minority youth while striving for involvement with the society in general.

All of the reported modes of policy – and the structural constraints caused by that – lead to different outcomes of young immigrants/ethnic minority youth compared to other people or groups of the native population. This in turn brings about different modes of agency young immigrants/ethnic minority youth use in dealing with the constraints or chances of the situation they faced with.

Based on analyzing the collected case studies according to "(re)ethnicization and policy" we also identif ed at least three dominant modes of agency used by young immigrants/ethnic minority youth.

New publications

Sven Mørch, Torben Bechmann Jensen, Marlene Stokholm, Brian Hansen.
Integrationskoeff cienten. Om komparativ metode, krav og udfordringer i inter-europaeisk forskning. Nordiske Udkast nr 1 2007

Sven Mørch & Helle Andersen
Ethnic youth in front. Ethnic minority youth as agents between family and individualisation
Paper for the Generations in Flux Conference, Helsinki 2008

Sven Mørch, Torben Bechmann Jensen, Marlene Stokholm, Brian Hansen. New Youth and Ethnic minorities in Europe. European Journal on Child and Youth Research, 2008.

Jan Skrobanek
Perceived Discrimination, Ethnic Identity and the (Re) Ethnicisation. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. (Release date Spring 2009)

Solvejg Jobst & Jan Skrobanek Devaluation of cultural capital. A comparison between Pierre Bourdieu and Paul Willis. Orbis Scholae1. (Release date 2009)

Jan Skrobanek, Brigit Reißig, Nora Gaupp
New Risks and New Opportunities in School-to-Work Transition: The Transformation of the German Apprenticeship system. In: Hugh D. Hindman (ed.) Child Labour Atlas: a reference encyclopedia. M.E. Sharp, Inc. (Release date 2009); USA
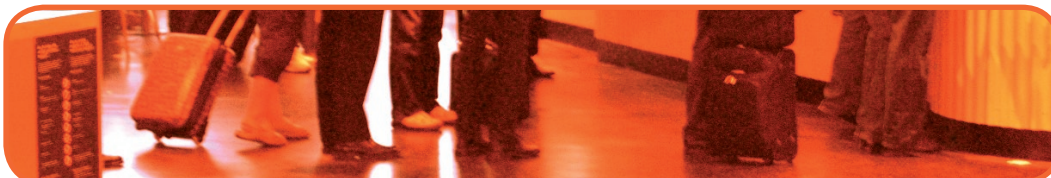
Marginalized by the larger society and separated by cultural and religious life styles, a signif cant proportion of young people with migration background is becoming part of a "processes of ethnic differentiation" reinforced by discrimination, restricted educational achievements and a low socioeconomic status.

• The most visible strategy used by the young immigrants or members of an ethnic group is (re)ethnicization. We suppose that (re)ethnicization constitutes a mode to emphasize or rather differentiate in-group specif c – contrary to out-group specif c – cultural group properties to (re)gain social recognition of their valued group distinctiveness, i.e. (re)gain a positive social identity in comparison with the out-group discriminated against.

• A second mode used is social creativity. Here the young immigrants or members of an ethnic group try to come up with both, the own group as well as the dominant group. To get integrated they redef ne or alter the elements of their own or the group they belong to. In the case of "the third chair" for example they change the values assigned to the attributes of the group they belong to, so that they get integrated in the dominant culture without giving up their own culture. The salient dimensions – e.g. belonging to a Turkish group – remains the same, but the prevailing value system concerning it is rejected and reversed. The comparisons between "Turkish" and "German", which were previously negative, are now perceived as positive caused by a "compromise" at a higher cultural level.

• In a third mode, ethnic group members (immigrants or members of the majority) may seek dominance through direct competition with the out-group. In doing so they try to reverse the relative position of their own group compared to the out-group. Like the cases show using this mode of agency will generate stereotyping and prejudice, conf ict and antagonism between inferior and the dominant groups insofar as it focuses on the distribution of scarce social and economic resources.

Further research is needed to see how these modes are related to specif c f gurations of migrant and ethnic minority communities and local/regional settings.

Perspectives for comparison: From social integration to contextual diversity

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. Though social integration exist as a general condition of late modern individualisation this does not mean that integration could or should be tackled in a specif c and def nite way. Most of the comparative research on the social integration of young people from an ethnic minority or migrant background found rather weak links of successful integration processes to integration policies. Most of the success in labour market transitions is attributable to the general economic, education and social policies that are framing labour market transitions. While there is much convergence in the education policies of European countries, this is less the case in transition policies. And while the literature body of comparative studies on education systems is growing, little is known about the impact of transition policies on young people from ethnic minority and migrant communities.

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 inf uence this situation. The f rst demand for securing social integration is the existence of equal rights and citizen rights for ethnic minority and migrant youth. However, this is not enough. 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. As the Thematic Report shows, it might be benef cial to take on a perspective of social and contextual diversity, implying that integration processes are best carried out in local or smaller contexts, in which common interest and activities among local inhabitants are possible to f 3 ip P

urations between transition policies on the one hand and take care of the local communities migration history (labour migration, refugees), their links to the country of origin (transnational communities, diaspora situations etc.) and their internal differentiation based on class, legal status and religious and political orientations. Given the com-

on the way it is conceptualising its topics, its research questions and its methods of analysis.