

Youth matters. An introduction

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Youth and sociological imagination

Why should one address the subject of youth? If the question, in the opening of an issue entirely dedicated to this subject, is expected, the answer appears to be much less; and the question itself needs to be articulated much more.

First of all: what is the cognitive objective at the bottom of the study of youth? The – traumatic – understanding of the deep transformations of European societies that began taking place in the XIX century, has deeply carved an awareness in – not only scientific – culture, fulfilled repeatedly in the recently passed century, of – possible – continuous change; this awareness – that has been extensively very generous in the production of values – generates a need – and, today, with the on-going of the financial crisis, a hope – of seeing change, sometimes with the wish of guiding it. Understanding social change, as a cognitive objective, leads the researcher in many directions but we cannot overlook that newer generations are, as a matter of fact, what of new is generated by societies: it is clear that children are the first form of a society's renovation – and conveniently sociological deliberation focuses on childhood – but it is just as evident that these are completely conditioned by society, through their parents, that generated them. New generations are the bridge between before and after, where the crucial game of continuity – or discontinuity – takes place: this game's object is the negotiation of autonomy, in other words one's ability to define him/herself as agency and delimit their own field of action. It consists of a dialectic that develops on different levels, intertwining: among individual actors – sons/daughters and parents – where educational process and socialization are particularly relevant; among individuals and society where the overriding process is the formation of one's individual identity among group actors – youth and society – which develops around the process of cultural change. Studying youth therefore means, first of all, wanting to study change.

Secondly: which cognitive orientation in the study of youth is tied to this newly identified objective? To study youth one can essentially draw upon two criteria: attempting to outline, through the production of true statements, a few traits of the considered population (epistemic orientation focusing on agencies) or attempting to elaborate new hypotheses that relate new generations with society's becoming (heuristic orientation focusing on society). The variable composition of the two criteria appears to be the most effective coordinate to come close to the mentioned cognitive objective. This composition appears necessary, as youth in European societies has greatly changed in the past decades, just as their societies have. The transformations of youth reflect – in a usually deformed way – the liveliness of societies and identifying the code that binds their relation together could represent an important interpretive contribution to social change. Studying youth requires, therefore, a mercurial commute between the in depth analysis of youth's specific traits in defined contexts, and the analysis of forms of interaction between new generations, the others and society.

Thirdly: which analytic categories are used in the study of youth? The idea itself of youth is matter of great debate and a crossroad among many disciplines of social science; a sociological elaboration of youth *à la* Comte requires synthesizing different perspectives that stimulate the identification of new analytic resources and the refinement of traditional ones, defined in relation to a context that, as of today, has greatly varied. Youth favours, furthermore, the formulation of new hypotheses – as well as control over the previously formulated ones – in face of the transformation dynamics that concern it – just as its extension as a phase of life –. Studying youth requires, therefore, the elaboration of ever-changing interpretative methods, the elaboration of which has to take place in harmony with the relentlessly unedited phenomenology of youth.

Essentially, it seems important to study youth and new generations because it fully allows, more than in other fields of research, to exercise “sociological imagination” while approaching the specific object of research, while stimulating the renewal of hypotheses, of analytic categories, of the representation of change and on how to sociologically grasp it. The desire of this monographic issue, therefore, is to contribute, on one side, to the debate surrounding the study of youth, and on the other, to the critical consideration on sociology of youth.

Affirmation of the European Youth Studies

Is it important to study youth according to the scientific community? To answer this further question, important for the legitimation of the present

issue, it is possible to observe the affirmation of the field of studies on youth considering as the Youth Studies have structured themselves inside of the international scientific sociological community. The associations referred to are the American Sociological Association (ASA, founded in 1905), the International Sociological Association (ISA, founded in 1948) and the European Sociological Association (ESA, founded in 1992). Without delving too far in the characteristics that differentiate these associations, it is noticeable how at the present time sections especially dedicated to youth are active in all three¹: their genealogy is, however, different and it is possible to understand this by considering the years in which the specific sections and the ones closer to the subject of youth have been founded (tab. 1)².

The fertile terrain for Youth Studies seems to be identifiable in the Sociology of Education section (founding dates: ASA – 1967; ISA – 1971; ESA – 1992): just a few years after the Sociology of education section's birth, the ISA and ESA activate their section dedicated to Youth Studies (ISA: Sociology of Youth – 1975; ESA: Youth and Generation – 1995) and at the same time for the ISA and almost immediately after for the ESA their symmetrical sections dedicated to Aging (ISA: Sociology of Aging – 1975; ESA: Aging in Europe – 1998) are founded; it is only later that a section on Childhood is activated within both (ISA: Sociology of Childhood – 1998; ESA: Sociology of Children and Childhood – 1999). Although the reference years and the time lapses are noticeably different – the ESA is founded almost 50 years after the ISA – it is possible to observe how the differentiating and structuring paths of Youth Studies among the ISA and ESA are fundamentally akin. The ASA, instead, proposes a different path: the Sociology of Aging (Aging and the Life Course – 1980) develops autonomously from the Sociology of Education and the section dedicated to Childhood (Sociology of Children – 1992) is born with an incentive from the first and as a specialization of the second; this section will later enrich its subjects also opening to Youth Studies and changing its name (Children and Youth – 2000).

Considering the objectives declared in the statutes of the three sections it is possible to notice how the ASA, on the subject of Youth Studies, focuses its

¹ The ASA is articulated in Sections (52), the ISA in Research Committees (55), the ESA in Research Networks (37). The number of sections all together is already an indication to how the relative weight of Youth Studies is greater inside of the ESA.

² I would like to thank Loretta E. Bass (University of Oklahoma), Kelly Musick (Cornell University), Maddalena Colombo (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Milano) e Vasiliki Kantzara (Panteion University) for the valuable informations. For a more in depth contextualization of the studies on Childhood from a sociological point of view, please refer to L.E. Bass, *Childhood in Society and Society: The US Perspective*, in «Current Sociology», 58 (2), 2010: 335-350.

Table 1: *Youth Studies among the international associations of sociology*

	ASA (1905)	ISA (1948)	ESA (1992)
Sections	Sociology of Education (1967) Children and Youth (2000) Aging and the Life Course (1980) Sociology of Children (1992) [became Sociology of Children and Youth in 2000]	Sociology of Education (1971) Sociology of Youth (1975) Sociology of Aging (1975) Sociology of Childhood (1998)	Sociology of Education (1992) Youth and Generation (1995) Aging in Europe (1998) Sociology of Children and Childhood (1999)
Aims	“The purpose of the Section on Children and Youth is to encourage the development and dissemination of sociological perspectives on children in the areas of research, theory, policy, practice, and teaching. Here, the term ‘children’ includes every human being from infancy through the transition to adulthood”.	“The aim of RC 34 is to contribute to the development of theory and practice of youth sociology and trans-disciplinary youth research on an international level, uniting professional knowledge, scientific consciousness, and social commitment of its members to work on problems and issues of youth on a local, regional, and international level”.	“Its purpose is to promote international research in the fields of sociology of youth, trans-disciplinary youth studies, intergenerational issues, and to provide the main forum for sociological advancement and debate within these fields in Europe”.
Perspective	Sociological	Sociological, trans-disciplinary and international	Sociological, trans-disciplinary and international
Object	Children (from infancy through the transition to adulthood)	Youth	Youth

	ASA (1905)	ISA (1948)	ESA (1992)
Areas	Research, theory, policy, practice, and teaching	Problems and issues of youth	Intergenerational issues
Context		Local, regional and international level	Europe
Affiliations		Professional knowledge and social commitment	
Topics (2014)	Children/Youth/Adolescents Experiences and Strategies of Minority and Immigrant Youth: How immigrant and minority youth negotiate their lives through such things as language, school settings, parental interaction and emotion regulation.	Global sociology and youth studies; Work Transitions: Inequalities and Precariousness; Collective Behaviour and Political Movements; Youth Culture and Individual Political Involvements; Transitions: Residence/Family/Education; Other Methodological and Theoretical Advances, including youth identity, subjectivities, and agency as they relate to global inequalities.	Youth agency and its expressions within the post-crisis reality, to identify the proactive strategies undertaken by young people and their social spaces; The tensions between structural and agency-based approaches to studying young people's lives; Diverse methodological approaches to study youth agency and allowing self-expression of young people, giving young people voice in research.

Source: Official websites of the respective associations.

attention mostly on Childhood extending its reach from infancy to the transition to adulthood. The ISA and ESA, on the other hand, speak of youth explicitly and exclusively as a specific field of research. Also, while the ISA and ESA highlight the interdisciplinary perspective they intend to adopt, the ASA identifies specific areas of study such as research, theory, policy, practice and teaching. Although the ISA and ESA also share an internationalization of studies, they present some programmatic differences: the ISA intends to develop their studies from both a theoretic and applicative point of view, and following this path it intends to combine “professional knowledge, scientific consciousness, and social commitment” to face “problems and issues” that youth poses at an also local and regional level; the ESA, instead, presents “intergenerational issues” in the European context as a specific trait³.

Overall, and in short, it can be said that Youth Studies are important for the international sociological community and well established among scientific associations. The firm positioning of Youth Studies is furthermore noticed at the foundation of the affirmation processes that offer two different trajectories (the ASA on one side, the ISA and ESA on the other). Lastly, a certain liveliness of these studies is noticeable, starting from an internal differentiation to a point of view that is taking place in the specific research orientation of European Youth Studies.

Another index of the appreciation of the structuration of Youth Studies can be identified by considering the existence of dedicated scientific journals and book series. A detailed exposition of the bibliographic resources of this kind would exceed the amount of space available for this introduction, but considering the scientific production, in English, of some of the most important social science publishers and of periodicals expressively dedicated to the subject of Youth Studies, it is possible to delineate an initial, partial and non-exclusive, scenario⁴. The book series dedicated to Youth Studies are neither many nor prolific considering the, by now, consolidated presence of the active sectors within scientific associations (tab. 2). Furthermore, the two series that in the past years have published the most volumes, have dedicated their attention prevalently to matters connected to childhood that, on the other hand,

³ The ESA's Youth and Generation Research Network has been systematic in the past few years. ESA Mid-term Conferences: *Negotiation, navigation, resistance – young people's agency in post-crisis reality in Europe* (Kluzkowiec, Poland 2014); *Youth in crisis? Linking research, policy and practice* (Manresa, Spain 2012); *Youth, Economy and Society* (Disley, UK 2010); *Youth and Youth Sociology in Europe* (Roosta, Estonia 2009); *Youth, Globalization and Migration – Local Diversity in Transition* (Bratislava, Slovakia 2007).

⁴ Naturally, it is not exclusively on dedicated journals and book series that scientific production of sociological nature regarding youth finds its space.

fall into the programmatic objectives of the series itself. The other two book series are almost exclusively focused on youth, promoting a trans-disciplinary and international perspective.

Table 2: *Book series*

Publisher	Book Series	Titles	Topics
Palgrave Macmillan	<i>Studies in Childhood and Youth</i>	25	Multidisciplinary perspective; Childhood and youth as social phenomena culturally located; Children’s and young people’s perspectives on their everyday lives
Emerald	<i>Sociological Studies of Children and Youth</i>	25	Methodological aspects of research on Childhood
Routledge	<i>Critical Youth Studies</i>	16	Cultural dimensions of young people’s everyday lives; Trans-disciplinary area of inquiry; Intersection of education, sociology, and media studies
Brill	<i>Youth in a Globalizing World</i>	2	Adolescence and youth from an international and comparative perspective; The emergence of transnational shared practices, values, norms, behaviours, cultures and patterns among young people all over the globe

The overview of journals (in English) is wider and complexly characterized by the predominance of the psycho-social perspective on Childhood and Youth, and by the specialization in some defined thematic settings. There are two journals with a sociological matrix and trans-disciplinary interests that focus on youth: *Young. Nordic Journal of Youth Research* and *Journal of Youth Studies* (tab. 3).

From an editorial standpoint, scientific production on Youth Studies offers a partial structuration, but a growing one. It appears that the book series of very recent activation *Youth in a Globalizing World* (Brill) and the *Journal of Youth Studies* (Routledge) – particularly relevant resources for the critic and trans-disciplinary perspective and fully aimed at the field of research – denote a significant step forward along the path of elaboration of the original orientation of the Research network on Youth and Generations (ESA, RN 30) with which European Youth Studies are affirming themselves.

Table 3: *Journals*

Journal	Begin	Aims/Subjects
<i>Young, Nordic Journal of Youth Research</i>	1993	The aim of the journal is to contribute to developing a truly interdisciplinary youth research field, where it is both possible to apply approaches of a single discipline and to integrate insights, perspectives and methods from different disciplines. Young has a strong anchorage in the consolidated and respected research communities of the Nordic countries. It also has a keen interest in innovative developments and dedicated participation in the ongoing building up of European research networks, with the aim of globalising all areas of youth research
<i>Journal of Youth Studies</i>	1998	Journal devoted to a theoretical and empirical understanding of young people's experiences and life contexts. It is focused upon young people within a range of contexts, such as education, labour market and family, and highlights key research themes such as the construction of identity, the use of leisure time, involvement in crime, consumption and political behaviour. Health and Social Care; Social Class; Social Sciences; Social Work and Social Policy; Sociology and Social Policy; Sociology of Culture; Supplementary material; Youth Culture; Youth Work
<i>Youth Justice. An International Journal</i>	2000	Journal that engages with the analyses of juvenile/youth justice systems, law, policy and practice around the world. It contains articles that are theoretically informed and/or grounded in the latest empirical research. Youth Justice enjoys an ever-increasing international presence in recognition of the developing interest in juvenile/youth justice theory and system formation within the national and international academic, policy and professional practice communities. It focuses on effective policy and practice, drawing lessons from pioneering approaches to juvenile/youth crime from around the world, in a context of children's rights
<i>International Journal of Adolescence and Youth</i>	1987	Adolescent Development; Behavioural Sciences; Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy; Child and Family Social Work; Developmental Psychology; Education; Educational Psychology; Health and Social Care; Mental Health; Multicultural Education; Psychological Science; Psychotherapy; Social Work and Social Policy; Sociology of Education

Journal	Begin	Aims/Subjects
<i>Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies. An International Interdisciplinary Journal for Research, Policy and Care</i>	2006	AIDS and HIV; Behavioural Sciences; Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology; Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy; Child and Family Social Work; Children & Childhood; Children and Youth; Developmental Psychology; Health and Society; Health Conditions; Health and Social Care; Medical Sociology; Mental Health; Physical and Sexual Abuse in Children and Adolescents; Psychological Disorders - Children and Adolescents; Psychological Science; Psychotherapy; Public Health - Medical Sociology; Public Health Policy and Practice; Social Policy; Social Sciences; Social Work and Social Policy; Sociology and Social Policy; Supplementary material; Welfare; Youth; Youth Work
<i>Children, Youth, and Environments</i>	1984	The Journal provides easy access to authoritative research articles, in-depth analyses, cutting-edge field reports, and critical book and film reviews on children, youth and the environments where they live, learn, work, play, discover the natural world, participate in their communities, and find basic services

Source: Official websites of the journals.

The subjects of research

Which thematic guidelines characterize the penetration of Youth Studies within the sociological community and what is their relative weight? To indicatively answer this question one can consider the scientific production of book series and journals with a prevalently sociological matrix⁵ together with the research projects financed by the Framework Programmes of the European Union whose primary or secondary objective was connected to the subject of youth condition⁶.

⁵ All of the book series and only the two journals focused on youth and of “generalistic” nature are considered: *Young Nordic Journal of Youth Research* and *Journal of Youth Studies*.

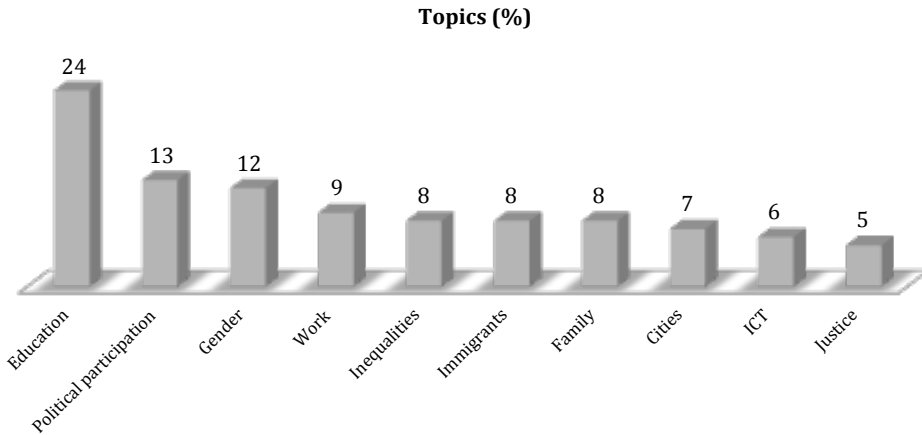
⁶ The research data for building these charts has been developed with the use of the European Union’s official search engine for consulting the archive of financed projects (http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/home_en.html): the archive has been consulted searching for the key word “youth” within the title, abstract and project. The results have been filtered by selecting projects regarding “social aspects”. The projects financed through the Frame Programmes 5 (1998-2002), 6 (2002-2006) and 7 (2007-2013) have been considered. There are 66 projects

A brief – and still approximate – overview shows which are the priority fields in the subject of research on youth (fig. 1)⁷.

Almost one fourth of the considered scientific production has treated youth condition in relation to the dynamics concerning education and schooling: this can also be read in light of the previously discussed affirmation process of the studies on youth as a specialization and consecutive autonomisation of the researches starting from the great number of researchers that are part of the sections dedicated to sociology of education. This macro-subject firmly remains the centre around which the majority of research on youth is conducted. Next in the suggested ranking are two more recent subjects of affirmation that have had a large development in the past few years: the subjects connected to political participation – in a wider sense of the term – and to gender mainstreaming. These two subjects are, for different reasons, emerging and indirectly suggest the coordinates of research development. Work, inequality, immigration and family make up the third position in the ranking of subjects that are examined by scientific research of predominantly sociological nature: they are traditional subjects that stably maintain their relevance. Youth condition studied in relation to urban context, to new communication technologies and to deviance – in a wide sense of the term – bring to the end of the ranking: these are lines of research towards which the structuration of sociological reflection doesn't seem, at least for the time being, to focus on – as much as it did in the past –.

altogether, of which 15 (FP 5), 17 (FP 6) and 34 (FP 7) to demonstrate the growing attention of the European Commission and scientific community on the subject. The topics of each project have then been identified: since some have resulted in covering multiple topics the total amount of results exceeds the overall project number. The topics with the highest frequency rate have been selected: education and school; political participation, public sphere, citizenship and civic engagement; gender and women; work, unemployment, labour market; inequalities and exclusion; immigrants and ethnic; family and parents; cities and urban; ICT and new media; justice, crime, violence and human rights. These same topics have been used as key words to catalogue the volumes of the book series and to try to count the articles published on journals through the available online archives. In order to obtain percentage values, the data has been normalized on the total occurrences divided by the research programs, volumes in series and articles on journals. The results are inevitably only approximately accurate but they are considered to deliver an orientatively effective picture on the structuration of research on Youth Studies.

⁷ The important research efforts of two important trans-disciplinary networks such as the European Network for Social Policy Analysis (ESPAnet) and the European Consortium for Political Research (Ecpr) must not be forgotten in this picture. The most recent occasions dedicated to Youth Studies have been, respectively: the 12th Annual ESPAnet Conference, *Beyond the Crisis in Europe – New Opportunities for reconciling sustainability, equality and economic robustness* where the *Generations and Intergenerational Relations* workshop also took place (Oslo 2014); the VII Ecpr General Conference, *Civic and Political Participation of Young People in a Context of Changes* (Sciences Po, Bourdeaux 2013).

Figure 1: *Youth Studies' topics*

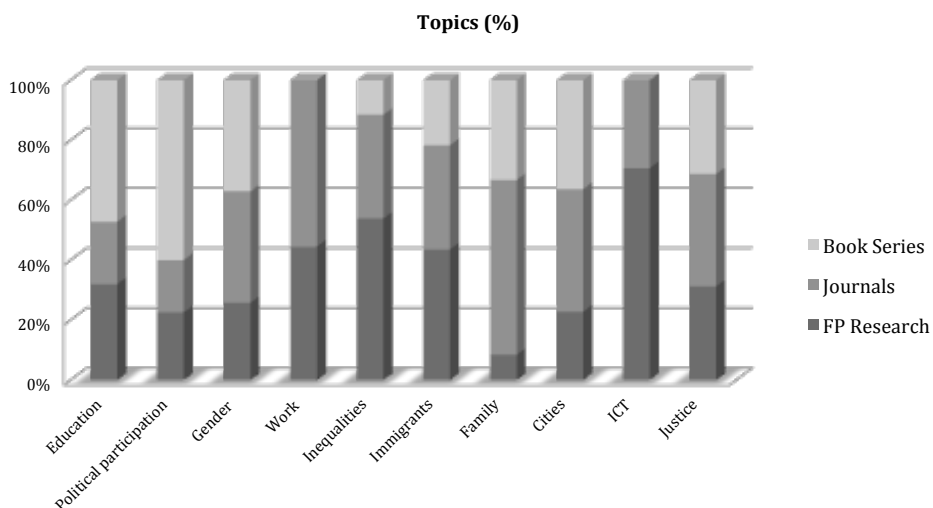
Considering the disaggregated data for each field of research, more considerations can be made (fig. 2). With the exception of the overall weight of each topic compared to the other a thematic distribution among channels of scientific production is noticeable: the European Union's research programs, book series and specialized journals. Research sponsored by the European Union focuses on ICT and inequality; scientific journals on family and work; book series on political participation and gender. The way the rest are partitioned appears to be more consistent.

A certain structuration of subjects connected to education is noticeable in reference to the previously explored topics of scientific production on youth, also considering research methods and the way they tend towards possible policy interventions. We can also say that the two fields that appear to be closer to a certain structuration, considering the interest of the scientific community expressed through the resources we are here examining, are the political sphere and gender relationships. And this should not come as a surprise considering the deep transformations that have been taking place within European societies: the political sphere, in a wider sense, and gender relationships are deeply connected, the social consideration around these fundamental bonds and the way they intertwine is growing at the social basis of the European context.

A field of research is considered to be structured – in a still vague and approximate way – when it is covered by all three of the aforementioned channels – European Union research programs, book series and specialized journals – in an overall harmonious way. Figure 2 shows how there are still many fields in the Youth Studies research that do not reach this full structuration,

in the way it is here intended. From this point of view gender relationships and education appear to be structured in an homogeneous way. Studies on political participation, on citizenship and on civic mindedness are not far from this objective. The intention of this issue is to contribute to the structuration of this last field of research within the international debate; it also wishes to intervene – although SMP is not a journal dedicated exclusively to the study of youth conditions – on the relative weakness of journals on this subject, in relation to the research sponsored by the European Union's Framework Programmes and book series, that appear to be greater compared to other fields of research.

Figure 2: *Topics through Framework Programmes, Book series and Journals*



This Issue

Therefore, the key in which this article should be read is the re-elaboration of the political sphere on the behalf of newer generations. This subject is analysed in continuity with the idea of developing a political sociology of new generations that was born in the Centro Interuniversitario di Sociologia Politica of Florence⁸: this point of view – a sociological one, but with a trans-disciplinary orientation – wishes to make the study of youth its objective, paying close at-

⁸ Pirni A., Monti Bragadin S. and Bettin Lattes G., *Introduzione. Per una sociologia politica delle nuove generazioni*, in Idd. (eds.), *Tra il Palazzo e la strada. Gioventù e democrazia nella società europea*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2008.

tention to trans-generational and intergenerational relationships, considering young people's identity as both social actors and future citizens, and offering the elaboration of new and appropriate kinds of analysis associated with an empiric study – through both quantitative and qualitative techniques – of comparative nature, applied to different, but contingent social fields. This appears to be a promising path to go down while attempting to understand the direction in which the process of social change, and in relation to this, the emerging of a civic identity among young Europeans, is proceeding; a process that once again openly reveals the uncertain, temporary and immature nature of their aspirations and of their political experience in a world that, ironically, still ignores them too much.

This issue comprises of 5 portions. The first one offers a wide-angle perspective on youth condition, to favour the elaboration of new analytic categories, articulating itself around the use of different disciplines, of the new biographies of the current young generations, of the problems that these encounter during their socio-political integration in the new European context and the mobilization of youth associations all across Europe that took place after World War II: the common ground consists of the deeply ever-changing context that European societies – also considering the on-going financial crisis – offer new generations. The article by Andrea Pirni (University of Genova) offers a trans-disciplinary map of points of view of the research on youth. Taking note of different contributions from social history, developmental psychology, social anthropology, political science and demography, he attempts to structure three separate guidelines of sociological research of youth; he then offers a final guideline for the understanding of social change from a transformations surrounding young people's universe standpoint. The formation of their own biographies on the behalf of these new generations consists of a central point in these transformations: the article by Carmen Leccardi (University of Milano-Bicocca) analytically faces this subject focusing its attention on the dialectic relation between life time and social time. The hastening of change in contemporary societies significantly impacts the biographical constructs of young people, favouring the affirmation of new values and, along with these, new semantics of the future. This dynamic takes place in a definitely difficult context: Jorge Benedicto (National Distance Education University) shows in his article how some forms of economic reasoning have deeply compromised the social and cultural texture on which the idea itself of democratic society is based upon; the financial crisis has further aggravated the situation. The trans-generational contract, based on the double paring of autonomy-independence and education-work, appears to have been betrayed and new generation are left with no other way than to search for other means of integration. Almost suggesting a potential solution to the marginalization

of current new generations, the article by Daniela Preda (University of Genova) recalls the activism shown by youth, following World War II, in committing to Europeanist associations. From the historical analysis of the evolution of different organizations presented by Preda a strong and transnational common feeling, that was able to converge in a moment of particular importance of European history, emerges.

The second portion of articles offers some deeper analysis of three Mediterranean countries where, also in light of the on-going financial crisis, some specific dynamics of change regarding youth condition on a socio-political level are taking place. Vincenzo Cicchelli (University Paris Descartes) and Valérie Germain (Laboratoire d'Economie et de Sociologie du Travail) focus on French youth. Using levels of education as a referring variable, the authors notice a growing divergence between graduate and non graduate students in transition to adulthood: French youth appears to be heavily irregular and the policies the state has carried out so far appear to be inadequate to facing this phenomenon. The growing gap between the younger portion of society and the institutional dimension appears to be even wider when facing the political sphere: Francisco Francés and Oscar Santacreu (University of Alicante) show, through the use of a multivariate analysis, how Spanish youth is tending more and more towards non conventional forms of political mediation: the financial crisis strengthens this phenomenon and the negative perception of the country's situation further reduces young people's trust towards traditional political agents opting for emerging political parties that offer new resorts. The conclusion of the second portion deals with the Italian situation. A subject that lately has scarcely been taken in consideration by European sociological research is here faced: the values of today's youth. This subject remains of central importance while studying the transformations of youth condition, as central is its placement within the issue that is dedicated to Antonio de Lillo, Professor of Sociology at the University of Milan-Bicocca: Gianfranco Bettin Lattes (University of Firenze "Cesare Alfieri") connects the most important interpretational results from the vast research itinerary covered by de Lillo in almost forty years of work. The concept of "socialità ristretta" is one of the most significant among these: one's native family, friendly and sentimental relationships, represent a bond that grows tighter and more solid for the young people considered in different surveys; around this core, however, some values connected to "collective life" that represent founding elements of individual identities⁹ are closely found.

⁹ Antonio de Lillo's studies and the intentions with which he conducted them are a precious guidance, on a both scientific and human level, for the writer of these words and – it is as-

The third portion of articles offers a more in depth analysis of Italian youth in relation to the political sphere through different points of view. Pierluca Birindelli (Gonzaga University) utilizing non-quantitative methods of research – through the analysis of autobiographies written by college students – further explores the values of young generations: values concerning one’s family and self remain central, friendly and sentimental values are still rather important, but beyond this every aspect of social life gets weaker, translating itself in a widespread particularism that leaves little room to a feeling of society. Alessandro Martelli and Ilaria Pitti (University of Bologna) analyse how youth interprets citizenship through a trans-generational point of view: the qualitative research allows the authors to observe a deep civic sense among younger generations that is, however, fulfilling itself in proactive terms only in particular situations. Dario Tuorto (University of Bologna), utilizing quantitative data, studies the evolution of turnout in Italy during the transition to adulthood: the analysis shows how living with their parents has a positive (not negative or null) effect on the probability to vote, but only for young people whose age is lower than the average age for leaving home (the “right” age for staying at home). Simona Gozzo (University of Catania) in her article tries to explain the current configuration of juvenile social involvement and political participation starting from opportunities, desires and beliefs, defined from a relational point of view. Using a national survey on college students, Gozzo shows the differences within the sample itself based on relational, social and cognitive dynamics.

The fourth portion of articles exits the Italian situation, bringing the discussion back to a point of view dimension, considering two specific contexts,

sumed – for young researchers and all those interested in the subject of youth. Antonio de Lillo was also among those who directed the enormous and systematic research of the Iard Institute of Milano on youth condition, a research of which today’s sociological scientific community is suffering the lack of. Two monographic issues dedicated to de Lillo and his work have recently been published: *Per capire la società che cambia: scritti in ricordo di Antonio de Lillo*, edited by Alessandro Cavalli and Roberto Moscati, «Quaderni di Sociologia» (2/2013) and *Per una sociologia pubblica. La traccia di Antonio de Lillo nella ricerca sui giovani*, «InFormazione. Studi e ricerche su giovani, media e formazione» (11/2013). Both, somewhat resembling the six editions of Iard’s *Rapporto Giovani*, dedicate precious studies on specific subjects connected with youth condition to de Lillo, without focusing in depth, however, on his specific contribution to the subject of youth values. This issue does not adopt the same schematics as Iard – that was noteworthy for its ability to deeply examine, by prismatically breaking them down, many of the subjects connected to youth, from the transition into adulthood to work, from political participation to spare time, from family to friendship, from association to love – attempting to trace some of the guidelines that combine many thematic fields at the same time: this is a tentative effort to take a further step forward in the study of youth through Antonio de Lillo’s encouragement.

one real and one virtual: Europe (and its politics regarding youth) and the web (and social networks). Riccardo Guidi (University of Pisa) deals with current innovation trajectories in European youth policies exploring European Union policy addresses on youth condition and the youth policies of four EU Countries (Germany, Denmark, United Kingdom and Italy) belonging to different welfare and youth transition regimes. Chiara Moroni (University of Viterbo “La Tuscia”) analyses social networks as activators of exponential relations and new formulas of self-representation. She considers social networks as real laboratories for experiencing different possibilities of construction and reconstruction of one’s Self. This construction process is very common among young people, called “digital natives”; they use social networks to define themselves and their social relationship¹⁰.

The final portion of the issue consists of an interview to two illustrious researchers of youth condition: their considerations are full of ideas to push the development of youth studies towards new directions with a further-reaching key of interpretation. Alessandro Cavalli (University of Pavia) as President of the Scientific Council of the Iard Institute (Milano) has lead masterful studies in the field of youth sociology, working closely with Antonio de Lillo. Andy Furlong (University of Glasgow) has recently completed a fundamental interpretative systematization of the studies on youth condition¹¹ and founded the *Journal of Youth Studies*, one of the richest scientific journals on the subject. Both, in however different ways, linger on the tension that is intrinsic and defines youth condition: Cavalli on the relationship between younger and older brothers, but also between teachers and students, Furlong on the relationship between dependency and independency. It, clearly, appears to be a matter of one single problematic tangle connected to trans-generational relations on which we should continue to sociologically reflect, acknowledging Italo Calvino’s sharp and lucid sensibility:

Credo che continuerà questa crisi di discontinuità tra le generazioni, dato anche che i padri sono sempre più insicuri su quello che devono insegnare, o insegnano delle cose che poi non servono. L’ideale sarebbe che il “potere di repressione” che ogni educazione deve avere e il “potere di liberazione” che

¹⁰ Although there are no article in this issue that look at gender relations and young migrants, it is believed that both fields should be deeply nurtured for the development of Youth Studies: both, as a matter of fact, present particularly interesting dynamics referring to the re-elaboration of the political sphere on the behalf of new generations. The author of this issue is, naturally, responsible for their absence here as for all of the considerations that are here proposed.

¹¹ Furlong A., *Youth Studies. An introduction*, Routledge, London and New York 2013 and (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood. New perspectives and agendas*, London and New York 2009.

deve essere il suo effetto trovino un equilibrio. La repressione non dev'essere tale da soffocare, perché allora il suo effetto educativo è nullo o catastrofico, ma altrettanto deleterio è il rifiuto di esercitare un'autorità, di rappresentare una figura di guida, di assumersi la responsabilità di fornire delle indicazioni che servano. Come si è sperimentato in questi anni, questa incapacità di educare crea soltanto degli infelici. Ma chissà quando si arriverà a un nuovo dosaggio tra una forma di autorità e il potere liberatorio che deve venire dall'educazione. Certo tra vent'anni è troppo presto perché qualcosa cambi; speriamo che almeno tra duecento anni la situazione migliori¹².

¹² I believe that this discontinuity crisis among generations will persist, as fathers are growingly more insecure on what they must teach, or they simply teach things of no use. Ideally the “force of repression” that every education should pose and the “force of liberation” that should be its goal should somewhat find their balance. Repression must never be such to suffocate, because otherwise its educative effect is null or catastrophic, and just as harmful is refusing to exercise authority, to be a leading figure, to take responsibility and give the needed guidance. As we have witnessed in these past years, the inability to educate simply creates unhappiness. Who knows when we will reach a new dosage between forms of authority and the liberatory power that should emerge from education. Of course, twenty years is too soon for something to change; let's just hope that in two hundred years the situation will get better. Interview with Italo Calvino by Alberto Sinigaglia in *Vent'anni al Duemila*, Eri, Torino 1982.

