



Call for conference papers

Vulnerable young people and the system of social care (public policy, professional practice, and young people's trajectories)

Thursday 20th and Friday 21st September 2012, Rennes, France

École des Hautes Études en Santé Publique, University of Rennes 2

The conference 'Vulnerable young people and the system of social care (public policy, professional practice, and young people's trajectories)' will be held on the 20th-21st September 2012 in Rennes. This conference is organised jointly by the École des Hautes Études en Santé Publique [School of Advanced Studies in Public Health] and the University of Rennes 2.

This call for conference papers is the outcome of a research project financed by the French National Research Agency (ANR) entitled: 'JUVENIL: perceptions of and provisions for vulnerable young people within local social and health policies'.

The notion of social vulnerability, defined as an intermediate state between social integration and social disconnection (Castel: 1991, 1995) is now often used to characterise risks associated with social precarity and new forms of poverty which have developed since the 1970s. When the term is applied to young people, however, vulnerability assumes a different significance. "At this stage of their lives young people don't possess most of the attributes – in particular a job, income, a home of their own – which represent the social integration of the adult" (Galland, 1996, p. 183). In present day, the transition to adulthood is structured by uncertainty and social risk (Beck, 1986; Castel, 2003). Young people entering the job market suffer most from the effects of the economic crisis, which translates into high levels of unemployment and insecure jobs (Ranci, 2010). However the initial insecurity now shared by more or less all young people as they embark upon their working lives has completely different outcomes over the course of their passage towards social integration, and certain categories of these young people are indisputably more at risk than others. There is a significant correlation between unemployment rates and levels of education, and the opportunity gap in relation to access to the job market continues to widen between those with educational qualifications and the rest (Walther and Pohl, 2006). Therefore, unless we classify all young people as being 'at risk', we need to be more specific about what precisely might constitute the characteristics of youth vulnerability.

On the other hand, at a time when a general air of uncertainty hangs over the passage to adulthood, young people are developing strategies of adaption which fit within the boundaries of what is possible as delineated by national and local policies, whilst simultaneously contributing to their social integration and to the subjective meaning of their biographical trajectory. Within the context of the conference we aim to interrogate the relationship between the framework constructed by social and health policies aimed at

young people, and the ways in which those young people create their own paths though this framework. The conference will therefore focus on the interaction between individual trajectories on the one hand, and, on the other, local contexts of public action and overarching national trends in the elaboration of health and social policies, and policies aimed at young people.

The conference will thus be structured around four thematic axes:

1. Local and national settings for public action aimed at vulnerable young people

The mechanisms for helping young people in difficulty are fragmented and largely dependent on policies carried out at local level, which means that there are marked inequalities between areas. Moreover, although a significant amount of public opinion is focused on young people, public policy initiatives aimed at them are underdeveloped and often highly segmented between sectors (Loncle, 2010). Research undertaken on youth policies reinforces the view of public action aimed at this group as being segmented, focusing as it does on public action in specific sectors, although work published in English reporting on research carried out in Europe seems richer in this respect (Leccardi and Ruspini, 2006; Bradley and Van Hoof, 2005; Walther et al., 2002; Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). This conference aims to transcend the compartmentalisation of research on youth policies by drawing together available knowledge on policies aimed at vulnerable young people (taking a wide view of relevant areas of activity: social, health, housing, education, justice) at both national and local level, and examining their content, values, types of proposed partnership and, in general terms, where they fit in the field.

2. Professional intervention and provisions proposed for vulnerable young people

In the face of economic crisis, policies for inclusion have abandoned their ambitions for global action; they are now refocused around employment goals, exclusively concentrated on the individual and on constructing individual trajectories, whilst at the same time recognising the structural nature of the difficulties encountered (Cantelli and Genard, 2007). Driven by the short-term logic which focuses only on what is urgent, these policies for inclusion have thus contributed to a division of the at-risk population as well as destabilising the framework of social work (Autès, 2004; Ion and Ravon, 2005). It will be interesting to study how participants frame the problems they have encountered on the ground when faced with situations of increased vulnerability, and the difficulties of maintaining a relationship of support; and how this expression of difficulties confronts the new rationale behind policies for inclusion. This conference thus welcomes contributions which relate to the types of provision which professionals can offer vulnerable youngsters (in terms of support mechanisms, but also their margins for manoeuvre in relation to the sponsoring institution, and the influence of organisational rationales or of local settings...).

3. Young people's trajectories and forms of vulnerability

Serious consideration of the limits of youth vulnerability, and of how individuals fall into, experience and escape situations of vulnerability, raises several questions. Focusing on the notion of social vulnerability encourages us to reflect upon how we qualify it, and hence on the underlying norms which characterise social integration (well-being, security, independence, etc.) (Goyette et al., 2011). This notion, when applied to young people, also raises questions about the connections between the criteria for social vulnerability and the understanding of how it is experienced, and of young people's trajectories; these are typically characterised by situations of uncertainty and obey a process-based logic (Soulet and Châtel, 2003; Châtel and Roy, 2008; Walther et al., 2002). This leads us to question whether or not there exists a type of vulnerability which is specific to young people and inherent in this stage of life. It also requires us to review the various studies of 'young people in difficulty' 'the precarious situation of the young' or 'young people living rough' in order to identify their points of convergence and divergence. This conference is therefore interested in work focusing on young people's trajectories in relation to different norms of inclusion, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

4. How do social and health policies and the use made of support systems construct youth vulnerability?

The interaction between public policies and frameworks on the one hand, and the trajectories of vulnerable young people on the other, remains an area which is largely unexplored:

- What is the impact of public policy on reducing inequality? How does it affect young people's trajectories?
- How do the young people themselves perceive and make use of the support systems available? Public policy frameworks affect youth trajectories and the classifications which operate within public action contribute to identity formation (Goffman, 1968). How do young people react to this as they make use of support mechanisms, at a time of life when identity construction is about seeing oneself through the eyes of others?
- How does young people's use of support systems change the ways these systems are structured (Charbonneau, 2010)?

This conference is therefore interested in work which focuses on how youth trajectories are structured by local or national public policy, as well as work on how young people themselves make use of support systems.

This call for papers invites contributions across a wide disciplinary spectrum. It also seeks to promote an international perspective which will facilitate the emergence of a comparative approach, and also welcomes contributions which develop the results of empirical studies. It is aimed at researchers, teachers, professionals and graduate students in social sciences. The conference will be held in French and English.

- Abstracts for proposed contributions should indicate your name, an e-mail address, and the institutional affiliation of the author(s). They should not exceed 300 words, including notes and references, and must be submitted in Word format by 15 April 2012 at the latest to colloque.juvenil@ehesp.fr
- Potential contributors will be notified of the selection committee's decision by the end of May 2012 at the latest. The full text of presentations should not exceed 5000 words, including notes and references, and must be received by 3 September 2012.
- Presentations will be given in French (with supporting documentation in English), or in English (with supporting documentation in French). For those who do not speak French at all, a member of the organising committee will be available to help translate their supporting documentation.
- The conference registration fee is 50€.
- Details of hotels and other accommodation arrangements, plus information on transport, will be sent to participants at the point at which contributions are selected.

Selection committee:

President: Patricia Loncle, researcher and lecturer, EHESP, CRAPE, University de Rennes 1, France.

Marc-Henry Soulet, professor, holder of the Chair in Sociology, social politics and social work, University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

Martin Goyette, associate professor, holder of the Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations (CRÉVAJ), École nationale d'administration publique, Montreal, Canada.

Isabelle Fréchon, research fellow, CNRS/INED, Printemps, France.

Léa Lima, sociologist and lecturer, CNAM, LISE, CNAM, France.

Emmanuelle Maunaye, lecturer, CRAPE, University of Rennes 1, France.

Philippe Milburn, professor, Printemps, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, France.

Organising committee:

President: Olivier David, professor, University of Rennes 2, director of research centre, ESO, France.

Valérie Becquet, lecturer, Université de Cergy-Pontoise, France.

Alain Thalineau, professor, CITERES, University of Tours, France.

Sami Zegnani, lecturer, CRAPE, University of Rennes 1, France.

Virginie Muniglia, social science research officer, EHESP, graduate student in sociology, ERIS-CMH, EHESP, France.

Céline Rothé, social science research officer, graduate student in political science, CRAPE, University of Rennes 1, France.

Frédérique Quidu, research officer in statistics, graduate student in management science, EHESP, France

Eric Le Grand, sociologist and consultant, Rennes, France

Olivier Douard, sociologist, LERIS, Montpellier, France

Patricia Loncle, researcher and lecturer, EHESP, CRAPE, University of Rennes 1, France

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