Marina Hahn-Bleibtreu
Marc Molgat (eds.)

Youth Policy in a Changing World

From Theory to Practice

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Table of contents

Introduction

Youth policy, youth research and young people – changing worlds, changing perspectives?[1]

By Marc Molgat, Marina Hahn-Bleibtreu and Eugénie Boudreau

Why do we need youth policies? How are or how can they be developed? What are the impacts of policy on young people? What can research bring to policy thinking, as well as to concrete policy and programme development for young people? These questions are all addressed in this volume by researchers from Latin America, Europe and North America. The attention is here on *youth policy*, whether the authors mean by this *bona fide* global youth policy frameworks or distinct and often patchwork policies affecting one area or another of young people's lives.

Of course, the contexts of each of the societies referred to in this volume are frequently distinct, as are the various categories or groups of young people described within these societies. After all, the experiences of a young migrant worker in China and the labour market integration of a young adult in Argentina seem not only separated by distance, but also by vastly differing social structures and conditions, values, opportunities and forms of support. So what can be said to unite the different perspectives, analyses and proposals brought forward in this publication? The first is a shared idea that young people today live in a rapidly changing world in which they should be considered as active citizens, capable of both participating in social institutions and of dealing with the limitations and resources that stem from them. This capacity is, however, more or less constrained by living conditions, socioeconomic status, market structures and state and community interventions in areas such as education, work and family life. The second unifying factor is a shared belief that public policy can and should be crafted to support young people as social actors, in their life experiences and their transitions to adulthood.

Following earlier developments and trends, and shifts in governmental orientations, the past two decades have been characterized by intense technological change and globalization processes. These have contributed to the restructuring of national industries and labour markets, the redefinition of public policy, and the heightened awareness that what is occurring elsewhere in the world can have profound impacts on one's daily life and local context. Although technology and globalization have produced marked improvements in the quality of life and living standards of large groups of the world population, such positive change has not been equally distributed. In some social groups already at the lower end of class or societal structures, and possessing less education and financial capital, there has been an increase in poverty and unemployment. In some countries, yet more important inequalities in wealth have been produced between those at the financial, economic and political centers and those at the margins, including large segments of youth populations. In this context, one could perhaps see young people as important 'victims' of globalization, as making up a large part of those who are forced to accept and adapt to worsening living conditions and opportunities. On the other hand, however, young people today can also be seen as striving against the negative effects of these trends, and as using technology and globalization to gain advantage, as witnessed, for example, through recent social movements for democratization in many Arab countries, and the 'Indignados' and 'Occupy' movements which denounce the concentration of capital and wealth.

In addition to their strong presence in social movements, young people also respond to modernization processes that are inherent to societies where there has been a shift away from industrial to 'knowledge societies', or to what is termed 'knowledge-based economies' by governments seeking to improve their economic competitiveness. This modernization process has exacerbated trends of individualization, i.e. the movement toward emancipation from tradition and from the social groups and places in which individuals were brought into the world (Giddens, 1994, 1991, 1990; Beck, 2000, 1992). Such 'disembedding' processes take place in social time and space, and allow individuals to exercise greater control over the orientation and timing of their own life course. For young people, these trends express themselves in the de-standardization of the transitions to adulthood which have perhaps been best analyzed by Walther (2006) in Europe, although similar trends exist in many other societies (Beaujot and Kerr, 2007, Bendit and Hahn-Beibtreu, 2008, Shanahan, 2000, Osgood, 2005). Transitions from school to work, from family of origin to own family and from financial dependence to independence are

often no longer synchronous and do not follow linear trajectories. Instead many transitions are reversible and statuses co-exist within individual lives, leading Walther and his colleagues to characterize these reversible and fragmented transitions as "yo-yo transitions" (Walther *et al.*, 2002; Walther, 2006). For example, in many societies an increasing proportion of young people delay home-leaving or return to live with their parents, while at the same time maintaining full-time employment; others may return to postsecondary education or training after a certain period in the labour market. In many of these circumstances, young people continue to be at least partly autonomous but at the same time financially dependent on their families or on government assistance.

These changes highlight not only differences and diversity in the way young people make their way to adulthood, but also a certain relaxing of social norms about transitions for young women and men that are related to family life, education and work. But, just as important and maybe more so, they also reflect transformations related to globalization, economic restructuring, the greater 'flexibilization' of work and the fragmentation of the temporal horizons of life that create uncertainty for young people, block subjective aspirations and make planning for the future more difficult (Leccardi, 2006 and in this volume, chapter 13). In this sense, the structural and institutional aspects of social life matter greatly for young adults today and specifically for those who are most vulnerable (Molgat, 2011, 2007). As the modern world has become more unpredictable and risk-laden, individuals are not only free to make choices about their lives but are obligated to do so with less institutional or collective support (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1991, 1994). This means that although some young people may choose to embark on yo-yo transitions, others experience them as an imposition for having failed "to enter a standard biography" (Walther, 2006); these 'others' are often those whose lives make them vulnerable to the very basic and 'old' structures of inequality (social background, education, gender, region, ethnicity, etc.) (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). It is therefore important that public policies aimed at young people not only reflect de-standardized transitions to adulthood as being 'new' but also as presenting potentials for greater risk.

Youth policies thus need to be sensitive to the reasons why young people make particular transitions and why they may choose to engage or participate in certain activities, groups and institutions and not others. Understanding these reasons is critical in determining how young people should be supported through public policy. And research has a singularly important role to play in this respect. Increasingly, governments are

thirsty for 'evidence-based policy', so it would seem natural for them to tap into what youth researchers are producing in terms of 'evidence'. However, this is not as simple as it sounds because the direct application of research to action is never linear. Research that pinpoints a new trend or sheds new light on a problem among young people does not necessarily 'solve' a given situation, although it can recommend changes or be used to establish policies and priorities. This is a classic problem of research in the social sciences, and reflects the different cultures of science, policy and practice (Settersten, 2003; Shonkoff, 2000). Within government, one is constantly reminded that research is but one voice within a larger political discourse in which various ideological, political and bureaucratic voices are also heard and enter into competition in the defining of policies and programmes (see Cicchelli in this volume, chapter 3).

It is in order to recognize and give legitimacy to these voices – and especially, one would hope, to those of young people and youth organizations – that the 'magic triangle of youth policy' has been promoted in certain world regions, and particularly in the European Union (Chisholm and Hoskins, 2005). This triangle ideally produces a 'trialogue' between government, youth researchers and non-government youth organizations and should be seen as a centerpiece of youth policy development. This ideal is of course difficult to achieve in practice because of misunderstandings and power differentials between the three sides of the triangle. There is also much room for discussion about the nature of the 'evidence' from research that actually enters the magic triangle, as well as how this evidence is then debated, appropriated and eventually sifted through the lens of policy makers and tied to policy statements and programmes.

This volume speaks to issues of youth policy using three distinct foci: development, effects, and perspectives. In the first part of the book, the contributors critically examine how processes, ideas and evidence contribute in different ways to structuring youth policy, and explain what challenges lie in the development of youth policy *per se*, as well as show how young people's experience poses challenges for policy. To initiate the reflection, Howard Williamson draws on the historical transformation of the concept of youth and youth policy to apprehend various youth policy frameworks and to consider the numerous elements that should be taken into consideration in creating sound youth policy. The second chapter, written by Marc Molgat and Susannah Taylor, addresses a central aspect of young people's lives in relation to policy: the process of transitions. On the basis of their analysis of the development of youth policies in Canada, they argue that these policies are often concentrated

on the transition from school to work and oriented towards individualistic goals. They go on to suggest how researchers could attract more focus from policy makers on other transition strands and on the social structures that affect young people's lives.

Since youth policies are not developed in a vacuum, it is important to understand the circulation of knowledge between distinct spheres of discourse that influence policy-making, both within and outside the 'magic triangle'. It is to this task that Vincenzo Cicchelli turns in the third chapter, identifying what he terms *semantic coincidences* in media, scientific, policy and administrative discourses on youth 'autonomy' in France. In the following chapter, David M. Hansen draws from developmental psychology discourses to present a perspective on youth policy that is not widely present outside of the United States. Many youth policy researchers are indeed critical of the normative aspect of developmental psychology, which suggests that young people should follow a natural and homogeneous path to a 'normal', fully 'developed' and 'problem-free' integration into society.

The last chapter of this section is offered by Alejo Ramirez and presents his first-hand experience in the process of youth policy development, providing a glimpse into the various interactions between the international, regional, national and local levels of youth policies and programs. Understanding the various processes, ideas and evidence which contribute to youth policy-making, such as those presented in this section, provides ground for clearer comprehension of the effect of policies on youth.

The chapters in the second part of the volume focus specifically on this last point: the effects of policy. They demonstrate that policies bearing directly on young people contribute to structuring their orientations toward work and family life, as well as their transitions, over the long term. Further, various policy arrangements that do not necessarily target youth specifically may also have lasting impacts on the lives of young people.

In the first chapter, Johanna Wyn shows how neoliberal policies have had cross-cutting effects on a whole generation in Australia. Considering how these policies have transformed the social fabric of society, she stresses the importance of recognizing the long-term impacts that policies that are not directly targeting youth can nonetheless have on young people's lives. In the same vein, Syika Kovacheva analyses the changing expectations towards employees in the context of an increasingly global competitive market brought about by economic crises, neoliberal policies and globalization. She discusses the impact of these changing expectations on parenthood, and reflects on the youth and family policies that could support young people's transitions.

From another perspective, Helena Helve addresses *Transitions and shifts in work attitudes, values and future orientations of young Finns* in the context of welfare state oriented policies. One interesting effect that she points to is the institutionalization of a longer and more flexible period of 'youthhood' in a welfare state where young people are not solely encouraged to embark upon the labour market, but also to develop other aspects of their lives.

The two following chapters focus on the experiences of young immigrants. Sunaina Maira first questions the experience of young Muslims who have migrated to the United States of America after 9/11 and in the context of the War on Terror. She puts emphasis on the differentiated experiences of young people who belong to communities struggling with political, economic and social exclusion, and she stresses the importance of considering the genuine concerns of these youth in the policy-making process. Similarly, René Bendit examines different concepts of integration and modes of integration for migrant or ethnic minority youth in Europe. However, he more specifically studies the *indirect* and *direct* integration strategies which facilitate young migrants' integration into education and labour, and shows how they are only partially successful.

Further chapters examine policies in education, employment and migration aimed at more excluded and vulnerable sectors of society. In their chapter, Claudia Jacinto and Veronica Millenar study the impact of vocational training and internships in addressing the gap in educational and social capital for youth who come from low income backgrounds in Argentina. This is followed by a final chapter that tackles an important issue affecting many young adults in China, that of the treatment and social security of migrant workers. The author, Ngan-Pun Ngai, shows how policies concerning the residential status of migrants and their labour rights create discrimination, social discontent and inequality, before considering some integration strategies to alleviate these problems.

In the third part of the book, the contributors raise a number of issues that policies aimed at young people should consider, whether in terms of how 'youth' as a period of life should be understood today, or in reference to particular issues such as participation or labour market integration, where there may be misalignments or gaps with public policy.

Carmen Leccardi sets the stage in the first chapter of this section, where she presents a theoretical perspective on changes in how we conceptualize the world in terms of space and time. She suggests that these changes affect biographical time and planning, transitions to adulthood and young people's values. She notes the importance of policies and

practices that take into consideration the present, at a time when young people's conception of the future is so uncertain and their perceptions of their own lives are constructed with increased agency.

In this context, a growing research interest in participation among youth exists, as exemplified in the next two chapters. Drawing on empirical data, Wolfgang Gaiser and Martina Gille demonstrate that participation among young people in Germany is not decreasing and that there is an increase in protest-oriented participation. Accordingly, they discuss youth policies that would allow young people to contribute to the shaping of their local and global environments. In the following chapter, Dina Krauskopf suggests that young people need to be considered as citizens who are different than the youth of previous generations, within a policy framework that encourages their participation in the social, political and economic life of their country.

Based on the Argentinian case, Ana Miranda then stresses the importance of analysing inequality of opportunities based on gender and socioeconomic background in the construction of transitions from school to work. She concludes that youth policy should favor the right to live out youth as a time to search, experiment, and gain education and training, irrespective of socioeconomic background. In the European context, Stefan Humpl and Eva Proinger present a different perspective and demonstrate how young people, as a sector of society, are more affected by increases in unemployment than the general population. They argue that the educational system is not currently meeting the demands of the labour market and that youth policies should support alternative educational opportunities for unemployed young people, while addressing integration and improving transitions.

Last but not least, Vânia Reis reflects on suicide among young people, an increasingly important phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean. She suggests going beyond the psychological and social dimensions of suicide to consider its ethical aspects (for example about life and the value of life), in order to incorporate them into prevention practices as well as into follow-ups with family and friends.

By building on the reflections, suggestions and ideas presented by all of the contributors to this volume, we hope that readers will gain insights into the processes of youth policy development, the cross-cutting impacts that these policies often have on youth, and the current transformations in young people's lives that require more research, public policy and actions in practice.

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I   Youth Policy development: evidence, ideas and processes

1. Youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe and their impact on national youth policies

By Howard Williamson

A quarter of a century ago the generic, overarching and essentially meaningless term 'youth policy' was rarely used. Certainly at a European level the term had no currency. What there was in the way of 'youth policy' was fragmented and restricted to a range of programmes for 'youth' and training measures. There was, however, one publication anticipating the future prevalence of the concept, though *Youth Policy* (Blakely, 1990) was a rather pedestrian, if instructive, journey through the formal legislation, resolutions and provisions that affected young people within the orbit of the European Union.

At national level, in some countries at least, the idea of 'youth policy' was at least starting to be broached. I contributed to that debate in the United Kingdom, first in a critique of Willis' (1985) seminal report addressing local youth policy in the municipality of Wolverhampton in England (Smith and Williamson, 1985), and later through a variety of articles and conference presentations. Of most significance, arguably, were a paper published in *Youth and Policy* (Williamson, 1993) and a keynote summary, in the same year, of proceedings at a UK conference on 'Teenagers at Risk in Britain Today'. Speakers at that event had been selected for their national reputations in policy domains such as housing, health, criminal justice, mental health, equalities and poverty; I was listed on the conference programme as speaking about 'Youth Policy' (see Doyle, 1993).

Later I argued that all countries (and, indeed, relevant institutions) had a 'youth policy': by intent, default or neglect (Williamson, 2000). My point was that young people's lives were clearly influenced by purposeful, unintentional or neglectful actions (or non-actions) by state or quasi-state institutions. Furthermore, it was important to consider 'youth policy' through addressing the ways in which its different elements com-

bined positively, clashed with each other, or sometimes simply passed each other by. Initially, through much of the 1990s, there was at least latent suspicion of this notion of 'youth policy', or stronger assertions that 'youth policy' was regulated by or restricted to only certain 'youth' activities. Indeed, there was one significant body of influence that maintained that 'youth policy' was largely the (developmental) world of education – even just 'non-formal education' – and that more regulatory intervention (such as criminal justice) or approaches dealing with the troubles of young people (such as mental health or family policy) had no place in the concept of 'youth policy'.

Tracking back, it becomes reasonably clear that, if there was such a thing as 'youth policy' prior to, for sake of argument, the mid-1970s, it was generally considered to relate largely, if not exclusively, to education – with perhaps vocational training and something called 'youth work' (see Coussée, 2008) sometimes added on. Most young people moved through their teenage years into adulthood, albeit under very different political regimes and in different economic circumstances, relatively smoothly. Paths were set, according to family and class background and perhaps educational achievement.

It was the economic crises of the 1970s and the political crises of the 1980s that transformed the nature of youth transitions, producing levels of uncertainty in young people that, at least prior to World War II, they had hitherto not experienced. Pathways to adulthood became riddled with confusion, anxiety and cul-de-sacs. There is, today, a massive literature on the changing shape and nature of youth transitions, generally commenting on the ways in which they have become prolonged, more complex, uncertain, reversible and fractured. Though greater opportunities may exist for many more young people (especially those with various forms of positive human, social and identity capital), the transition journey is also characterised by risk and vulnerability.

This has called, implicitly at least and often more explicitly, for more robust policy support and intervention in the broader areas of family life, health, learning and criminal justice (in preventative terms) as well as the more specific 'youth' areas of school exclusion or rejection, health risk behaviours (around substance misuse and sex), delinquency and anti-social behaviour, and other psycho-social disorders. This is the basis on which, despite many mantras about producing 'opportunity-focused' rather than 'problem-oriented' measures, the idea of, and indeed the need for a more transversal and intersectoral 'youth policy' has been advocated. It is now seen as imperative that policy development for young

people is based on an integrated package that proffers opportunity, pro-
tects, supports and sometimes regulates the young. In the UK, the last
strong political mantra (at least prior to the most recent General Election),
across youth policy domains was concerned with the 'triple-track' ap-
proach of prevention, support (which is often to be 'non-negotiable') and
enforcement. The new UK government favours the more amorphous
rhetoric of cohesion, contribution and 'fairness' under the banner of the
notion of the 'Big Society', though enforcement is also clearly waiting in
the wings. In both cases, however, it is very possible to detect any and all
of these threads across key political aspirations for young people, such as
lifelong learning, active citizenship, social inclusion, and personal and
community safety.

Today, of course, there are many versions of 'youth policy', at local,
regional, national and indeed trans-national levels. They establish differ-
ent priorities, allocate different resources and have different infrastruc-
tures for delivery, but nearly always, at their heart, a core set of issues,
aspirations, objectives and measures of performance are present. This pa-
per examines these issues concerning 'youth policy' within the context of
European developments in this arena, particularly the Council of Europe
international reviews of national youth policies that have been operating
since 1997.

Frameworks for youth policy

Few countries in fact have an evidently coherent framework of policy for
young people. This derives largely from two factors. First, there is usu-
ally a lack of consistency in the eternal challenge or problem of defining
'youth'. Second, ministerial portfolios are invariably, understandably,
stubborn in defending their particular domains of policy, in which young
people may often figure relatively marginally (though obviously in some
ministries, such as education, young people are very prominent). None-
theless, an increasing number of administrations would proclaim some
linkages between various elements of policy affecting young people,
even if they might not necessarily claim that this presents a fully coherent
picture.

The two major European institutions, the Council of Europe (2008)
and the European Union (European Commission, 2009), also now have
reasonably robust youth policies, even though they have been years in the

making. Indeed, the first attempt at 'youth policy' in Europe, framed in the EU White Paper on Youth in 2001 (European Commission, 2002), revealed more about the divisions in the youth policy field than its coherence: a 'youth' white paper was not permitted to address key policy areas such as education or employment since these were the territory of policy-specific directorates within, or beyond the level of competence of the European Commission. It took a few more years, and the publication of the European Youth Pact (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc 1705_en.htm), before such major areas of young people's lives were incorporated into 'youth policy' thinking. The momentum has increased further in recent years with the EU Youth Strategy (European Commission 2009) and the development of 'Youth on the Move' (http://ec.europa. eu/education/news/news2540_en.htm).

There are, inevitably, many ways to construct youth policy. Though contemporary rhetoric prides itself on evidence-based foundations for the development of youth policy, there is – paradoxically – plenty of evidence that it sometimes remains formed and forged in what one observer referred to as an 'evidence-free zone'! Politicians and senior administrators are certainly adept at finding the research that can anchor their political whims and preferences, and ignoring that which does not. Such an approach at least slides towards greater rationality, but if political whim is tempered by some research data, then research data is itself tempered by stakeholder perspectives. In the youth field, this is most strongly asserted through youth organisations: at a European level the position taken by the European Youth Forum (regarding the European Commission) and the Advisory Council on Youth (regarding the Council of Europe). Indeed, these representative bodies of both national youth councils and pan-European youth organisations would say that they provide an experiential evidence base that complements rather than conflicts with a more conventional academic evidence base. This may often be so, but there have also been times in the policy-making process when the two sources of 'evidence' have been clearly at odds. Politicians and senior officials have had to take sides, sometimes weighing the analysis with some rigour, sometimes being rather more expedient.

The EU White Paper on Youth (European Commission, 2002) took pride in what it considered to be its pioneering approach to its composition. It consulted with and engaged young people directly, as well as youth organisations, youth researchers and member states. In that respect it started to forge what has come to be known as the 'magic triangle' of policy development in the youth field (see Milmeister and Williamson,

2006), one that involves youth policy, youth research and youth practice. Yet there remain huge questions about the balance that has been struck (and, indeed, should be struck) between these 'pillars', especially around issues of whose voice is being represented and what is their democratic mandate. Even the democratic mandate may (or should) not be considered sacrosanct: there is a reasonable argument that some groups of young people lose out in the democratic process that guides the formation of local, national and international youth organisations. These are often the more excluded and disadvantaged (in the quaint Euro-speak of the European Commission: 'young people with fewer opportunities'!) and there could be a case for the purposeful targeting of these groups on particular issues (such as substance misuse, or disability, or exclusion from the labour market) when policy aspirations are closely connected to addressing those issues.

That is in fact one example of the challenges and tensions within the youth policy-making process that has emerged from the work of the Council of Europe. The Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe embarked on a programme and process of what it called 'international reviews of national youth policies' in 1997. The purpose, which has stood the test of time, was threefold: to review constructively but critically the youth policy of one country from the perspective of a team of international 'experts'; to bring an understanding of youth policy in that country to all the member states of the Council of Europe (now numbering 50); and to construct a framework for thinking about the structure, dimensions and elements of the kinds of 'youth policy' that prevail in the wider Europe. That this latter objective is being achieved through the detailed and grounded exploration of national youth policies makes it somewhat different from approaches to youth policy formulation and development that derive from academic (or experiential) evidence or political imperative.

By 2011, eighteen countries had participated in this review process[1]. That they were from all corners of the wider Europe, and therefore at very different stages of development, capacity and effectiveness, has enriched the thinking about youth policy. It may be easy for some western European countries with long histories of democracy, strong traditions in making provision for 'youth', and established professional infrastructures

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1   Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Romania, Estonia, Luxembourg; Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, Cyprus, Armenia, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova, Albania and Belgium. Ukraine is participating in a review in 2012.

(such as social work, psychology or counselling) to advance particular models of youth policy. But these established components of a youth policy making process often mean very little in countries that only relatively recently emerged from state socialism where a very different form of youth policy prevailed. Yet there may also be strengths in having no such traditions, which can sometimes stifle and constrain innovation rather than build constructively on established practice. Starting from an almost literal 'blank sheet of paper', with the requisite political commitment and reasonable resources, can produce a dynamism in youth policy formulation and development that is denied those countries with more entrenched traditions. Though it has not been subject to a Council of Europe review, the case of Serbia – the bedrock of Denstad's (2008) *Youth Policy Manual* – seems to testify to that[2].

During the Council of Europe review procedure, countries have been required to produce a national report on their youth policy, to which the subsequent international report (the outcome of the review) is intended to be complementary. Thus there are 'pairs' of formal documentation that have emerged from each review and serve as a basis for cross-national, European thinking about youth policy. Such an analysis was conducted after seven reviews, and again after the next seven (see Williamson, 2002, 2008). There may soon be a case for a third. The purpose of these synthesis reports was to extract and extrapolate both common and more distinctive aspects of youth policy within and across the respective countries. Though numerous concrete examples are provided, the conclusions to this process have been emphatically a *framework* and not a prescription for youth policy across Europe.

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2   Though some foundations were laid through the work of youth organizations in Serbia in the early 2000s, the momentum was established later in the 2000s by a charismatic and dynamic Minister of Youth and Sports. She put together an impressive team of officials within the Ministry, supported an inclusive process of consultation that involved youth NGOs and representative youth bodies, and ultimately produced a clear youth policy framework with eight distinctive thematic objectives. It still, of course, remains to be seen whether this laudable framework and the objectives within it will succeed in realizing its aspirations through effective implementation.

The Council of Europe international review process

The review process has evolved over time. Initially there were no terms of reference nor clearly delineated procedures. Indeed, the first review (of Finland, see Williamson 1999) drew words from a poem by the then Finnish Minister of Culture, Claes Andersson, to capture the feelings of the review team:

> There is a road no one has taken before you
> Maybe it's yours
> If you find it, it will be
> It doesn't exist but comes into being when you walk it
> When you turn around, it's gone
> No one knows how you got here, least of all yourself

For this reason, that first international report, beyond commenting substantively on youth policy in Finland, also aimed to provide "some signposts for the conduct of future international reviews of youth policy, in terms of working methods, substantive frameworks and processes of reflection and analysis" (Williamson, 1997, p. 11). The composition of international review teams has remained, largely, the same: a nomination from each of the statutory bodies of the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe (governmental and youth organisations, the former designated as the chair), a member of the secretariat from the Youth Directorate, and three researchers or experts, one of whom is the rapporteur. The working methods have also remained reasonably constant, with two visits to the host country, the first focusing on the central administration and 'top down' delivery of youth policy, the second paying more attention to the 'bottom up' experience of youth policy on the part of young people and at the local level. Two things have, however, evolved and changed. The process of reflection and analysis is now more robust, through building in time for the international team to consider what it has learned and to identify gaps that need filling before the conclusion to the review. And there have been changes to the substantive coverage of the review: first, there was something of an 'open book', then some emphasis was given to priorities identified by the host country (established during a preliminary visit) as well as a continuing 'open book' from the international side, and, currently, a more concentrated focus on both sides, with each identifying up to three core issues that command priority debate within the international report. The review process culminates in both a national hearing, to discuss the findings of the international team, held in the host country,

and then, after any necessary revisions, an international hearing where the findings are presented to the Joint Council of the Youth Directorate – the inter-governmental steering group on youth co-operation in Europe (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council for Youth, representing the membership of the Council of Europe. Following approval from the Joint Council, the international report enters the public domain. Each review takes about a year, though its preparation can take at least six months more.

Some lessons

Each review, to date, throws up at least one new issue, dilemma or conundrum for youth policy reflection and development. Though it might be rather invidious to name the country that has produced the issue, it is definitely instructive to run through some of the disparate themes that have been thrown into relief during particular reviews. I have no intention of providing eighteen illustrations, but I will offer the following examples.

First, there are the relations between youth research and youth policy making. Long before proclamations of the 'magic triangle' (between youth research, policy and practice), the international reviews raised questions about those relationships – when they existed more in the breach than in the observance. Even when there is thriving youth research in a country, its professional and political connections to youth policy debate may be somewhat tenuous. Professionally, the substantive focus of youth research may be in quite a different place from the prevailing policy focus. Politically, consideration needs to be given to the platforms or doors for constructive dialogue between research knowledge and youth policy direction.

Second, there are always debates as to when 'childhood' ends, 'youth' begins and ends, and 'adulthood' begins. Beyond the UN definition of childhood, as 0-18, there are myriad conceptualisations that demand attention for their consistency, coherence and usefulness. The international youth policy reviews raised this issue long before current discussions about the relationships between childhood, youth and family policy that is commanding political attention in many constituent countries of the Council of Europe.

Third, questions for youth policy in relation to migration and minorities only slowly reared their heads. Where there are significant minority