Analytical Paper

Youth Inequalities: intersections, comparisons and accumulations

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Introduction

The rise of "Youth Inequalities" and its popularity as a topic in the youth field must not be confused with superficiality or simplicity. Although "Youth Inequalities" represent a classical topic in the youth field[1], it is not at all a straightforward one.[2] There is also accumulated but simultaneously not precisely up-to-date knowledge concerning it; problems and practices of both comparability and measurement of (youth) inequalities co-exist; and ideological and disciplinary views and agenda shifts on the subject are hard to disentangle. It is a complex "moving target" in research, youth work and youth policy, corners of the "youth triangle" between which, moreover, are not only bridges but also tensions in this regard. This analytical paper intends to contribute to the identification and clarification of some aspects regarding this complexity of youth inequalities within the European context and the youth field.

One of the reasons why it is not a consensual topic in youth studies is that it captures, in an exemplary way, the never-ending passionate theoretical debate between different ideological methodological research traditions: the generational approach, on one hand, and the classist approach, on the other.[3] The topic also struggles, in research, youth work or policy design processes, with the interaction between two rapid but distinct speeds of change across time: the increasing pace of social change - educational, technological, political, cultural -, on one hand, and the density and speed of the period of youth in terms of occurrence of demographic and other important transitions and turning points in life[4]. This makes the identification of up-to-date state of the art and therefore the projection of age or country specific, persistent or emergent trends of inequality, extremely difficult. Furthermore, the accumulation, variability and relativeness (geographical, social, and historical) of (youth) inequalities contaminates the measures, the identification and the comparability of the situations of young people exposed to "more inequalities" or with "less opportunities" in life, albeit the sense of ownership and confidence that some disciplines demonstrate for certain alleged "objective" measures of inequality.[5]

From all these aspects, three were considered to be able to encapsulate the complexity of youth inequalities and were further developed:

1. *The tension and intersections of youth inequalities*, where the discussion of the (social) differences between generations or among young people is held. It mobilizes the variables of *social class* and *age* for this discussion.

2. The ordeals in the *comparison of inequalities at the individual level*, where empirical data is presented to illustrate the complexity and many times inconclusiveness of the exercise of identifying "young people with fewer opportunities". It mobilizes the variables of *country* and *Economic, Social and Cultural Status* (ESCS) from PISA[6] 2009 data for the discussion.[7]

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[1] See "Young People, Inequality and Youth Work", Edited by Jeff and Smiths (1989).

[2] See Bynner (2005); Arnett and Tanner (2005); Roberts (2010, 2012); Woodman (2009, 2010).

[3] With some paralelism with the "transitions" and the "cultural" approaches, between which some authors have been trying to fill the gap bettwen them. See Bennet and Woodman (2015).

[4] See Rindfuss, 1991; Elder, 1974, 1975 and Elder and O'Rand, 2009.

[5] Measures almost exclusively used to compare realities between countries and referring to income - such as the Gini coefficient, the ratios of percentiles or the Hoover index. These are predominantly but not exclusively used by economists, that tend to lack a more holistic and social approach to (youth) inequalities.

[6] PISA is the Programme or International Student Assessment, and all its sample is composed by 15 year olds enrolled in schools.

[7] See also Nico and Alves, forthcoming.

3. The need - both in political and research arenas- to tackle ineq*ualities as a subjective and objective cumulative process rather that an objective status*.

Falling out of the more direct scope of this paper, but acknowledged as fundamental constituent parts of all inequality processes (even if in variable manners across time and territory), are the many variables that contribute, *per se* and in interaction with each other across the life course, to produce inequalities among people, but young people in a particular way. Among these variables we can find, to mention a few: territory, employment, education, gender, conditions of life, wealth and income, territory, ethnicity and migration.[8]

1. Classist and generational approaches: tensions and intersections

Theoretical differences over the more efficient approach to tackle youth inequalities do not happen in ideological, political or policy vacuum. They overflow to other vertices of the youth triangle, namely issues centered at the very heart of youth policy design, target and implementation. They do so by being required to tackle two interrelated dilemmas:

1.1. The classist and the generational approach: *should policy be age or class-graded*?

Albeit relevant efforts in building a bridge or making a commitment between the classist and the generational approaches in the study of social change and of inequalities the academic field of youth studies still deals with the dilemma and the debate, instead of building a bridge or making a commitment, (Nico, forthcoming b).

So on one hand, in the generational approach, "youth is taken as a homogeneous group which main attribute is to be constituted by individuals on the same 'life stage'" (Pais, [2003] 1993: 29). At the limit it would mean that being youth is *per se*, and *a priori*, a social vulnerability. It would function as the first filter in the selection towards the most in need policies and measures to decrease inequalities in the population (see Table 1). Even tempering this approach with social relativism, using youth as equivalent to "social generation" that explores the way how the experience of being a certain age is conditioned by social conditions (Furlong, Woodman and Wyn, 2011: 361), it represents some complications. The most serious one is to assume, even if just in the beginning of the process, argument or policy, that a group of people that share the same birth cohort, and that are "currently" young, have a sense of belonging to that group that exceeds significantly the sense of belonging to a specific social class or community, the preference for certain life styles, or a particular professional or educational identity (just to mention a few). How can "youth" be acknowledged as having a homogenizing power of different social and cultural *milieus*?[9] How far is this in denying the significant and increasing effect of social class, gender, education in the life course of young people? How contradictory is this idea with the evidence of increasing inequalities between countries and among young people? These are questions that are

[8] See the Inequality Watch, available at http://www.inequalitywatch.eu/?lang=fr. See also the variables considered important for social inclusion of young people (Kovacheva, n.a.)

[9] This criticism is part of an on-going debate. The classist and generational approaches separate those who are affiliated in the theories of individualization from those who tend to have a closer look into the social heterogeneity of young people. This separation can be identified in the concepts of "youthhood" or "emergent adulthood" coined by Côté (2000) and Arnett and Tanner, (2005), respectively, used in the former.

regularly revisited and discussed, or implicitly included in the specific reception, by stakeholders and/or policy makers, of the very idea of specific "youth policy".

On the other hand, in the classist approach, "youth is taken as a social group that is necessarily socially diversified, constituted by different youth cultures formed on behalf of class belongings, different economic backgrounds, different power resources, different interests, different occupational situations, etc. " (Pais, [2003] 1993: 29). Theoretically, this approach does not present the same amount of relevant problems, inconsistencies or contradictions with the evidence of increasing inequalities between countries and among young people as generational approach does. It can, moreover, be said that this classist approach is the premise by excellence of sociology and the study of inequalities, that is, the basis for all the analysis of socially stratified - by variables such as gender, social origin, education, etc. – phenomena. However, this approach also represents some problems. One is, in a sense, disciplinary. Inequalities are a complex but recently popular concept that has been targeted as important by disciplines other that sociology, namely economy. This means that wealth and income inequalities have become absolutely hegemonic in the study of inequalities in our contemporary society. On its turn, inequality studies frequently recur to sophisticated indexes and coefficients of inequalities within and between countries but without having a diachronically approach into account. The other problem is caused by methodological choices combined with research resources. In this case, subjective, longitudinal and individual approaches to inequalities, which would be necessary to a more comprehensive understanding of youth inequalities, are mostly left undone. Both these problems imprint on the analysis of inequalities a static character that it does not have and that inevitably misleads the conclusions and the putative policies designed on their behalf.[10]

The relation between these two theoretical ideological approaches and policy-making regarding inequalities are significant, even if not made explicit in the very process of policy making (table 1). First of all, the classist approach is more in-tune with the socially-graded policy, while the generational approach is more associated with the age-graded policy (both intersections marked by darker cells in table 1). This is so because, on one hand, in the classist approach to inequalities, an *a priori* argument is that policy should primarily and foremost be targeted at those who are most affected or at risk of poverty, social exclusion or without social rights. This is, by the way, the basis for most of the public and social policies followed at national levels, with variable aims and levels of combat of social inequalities, not necessarily or predominantly youth inequalities. In this approach young people would only be particularly affected by these policies if they were also particularly affected or at risk of being affected by poverty, social exclusion or without social rights. This is the most youth restrictive pattern of all, but one that seems to be implicit in many "youth policy" practices and distribution of state budget. It fails more frequently to tackle the youth "missing middle", the majority of young people, with middle class background and more uncertain social destination (Roberts, 2011).

On the other hand, in the generational approach, policy should primarily be age-graded. In this case it is assumed that being young is *a priori* a condition of social vulnerability. This is more in line with the political agenda followed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission but not necessarily by the national governments. These, on their turn, may have other target groups of vulnerability[11] more consensually identified - both politically and in the public opinion. In this case, the more socially-graded goals of policy are followed through the many policies visible in the

[10] More about this in the third section of this paper.

[11] Disabled persons, children, old persons, at risk of poverty individuals, etc.

European official documents and agendas that are specially concerned and targeted at "young people with fewer opportunities", besides the ones that are intended for all young people independently of their vulnerable status.

We can see that although not fully contradictory, the rationales and points of ideological departure of using either classist theory or a generational theory are different to the point of ending up targeting different young people for, for example, programs towards surpassing of a specific barrier to social inclusion. There has to be, therefore, a clarification and transparency concerning the use of these theories in policy making.

Table 1: Classist and Generational Theories and Policies

Theory	**Policy**	
	Socially-Graded	Age-Graded
Classist	Policy should primary be targeted at those who are most affected or at risk of poverty, social exclusion or without social rights.	Young People would only be particularly affected if they were also particularly affected or at risk of being affected by a poverty, social exclusion or without social rights.
Generational	Although there are many policies that are intended for all young people, there is also a special concern with "young people with fewer opportunities" in the European official documents and agenda.	Policy should primary be age-graded. It is assumed that being young is a priori a condition of social vulnerability.

1.2. Structuralism and Individualism approaches: *do bottom-up and top-down policies meet or clash*?

The same transparency criteria would be used in the clarification of the structural or individual[12] approach, used by different corners of the youth triangle, namely by researchers and youth workers and their political – either implicit or explicit – assumptions.

There is an underlying tension between researchers and youth workers in regard to tackling youth inequalities. This tension is essentially political, as it ends up being used or appropriated as neo-liberal and left wing discourses – variably acceptable according to the countries and the political own positioning of both researchers and youth workers. This tension is thus between theoretical structuralism and individualism (table 2). Although there is, in principle, an inherent interdependency between youth policy agenda and the practices of youth work[13], the operationalization of this relation is itself dependent of a top-down or bottom-up understanding. While youth researchers, for example, are likely to be pro-structuralism, being thus incapable of denying "the (predominant) effect of social structure and social context on individual trajectories and (educational, professional, or general) "outcomes of life" - thus emphasizing the importance of social and public policies as a condition sine qua non (even of not sufficient or efficient at times) for the minimization and attenuation of unequal opportunities of life and of conditions of existence, youth workers are more or exclusively concentrated on "activating" or "empowering" young people as directly as possible, independently of the measurability or significance/relevance

[12] By "individual" we are referencing both to youth workers as "policy change makers".

[13] See Nico, forthcoming.

of the effect" (Nico, forthcoming). The former is likely to be appropriated by left-wing arguments, and the latter by neo-liberal ones (table 2).[14]

This means, for instance, that for researchers (structural ones, at least), structural conditions and policy context should pre-exist the combating inequalities policy implementation by whomever. Individual responsibility should not be put directly or predominantly on the shoulders of individuals, may they be youth workers, workers of or to the youth sector or young people themselves. The risk of failing into the "epistemological fallacy of the late modernity" (Furlong and Cartmel, (2007 [1997]) would be, in these cases, worrying high. According to this fallacy, "blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency, young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure" (Furlong and Cartmel, (2007 [1997]: 144). The maximum role that could be them expected from youth workers would be of a mediator and an intermediate between the existing policy framework, set of actions, programs and initiatives, and resources, and young people (specially with fewer opportunities). The limits of individual action to overcome deep inequalities would be acknowledged, and collective action encouraged.

On the other, the theoretical approach of individualism would directly or most likely indirectly encourage a neo-liberal discourse, in the sense that even if state intervention is not exactly discouraged, it is assumed it is up to the individuals - the ones that empower and the ones to be empowered – to overcome with the solitary merit of their own agency their lack of equal opportunities and access to education, employment, health, housing, etc. In this sense, the role expected from youth workers would be of a "policy change maker" him or herself, and/or to empower or activate young people directly. The effect expected in young people is also quite ambitious, in the sense that it is expected of them to, after being and empowered with knowledge, and still many times not acquiring the resources – educational, cultural, economic - necessary to overcome a specific challenge, indeed overcome it.[15]

Table 2: Structuralism and Individualism Approaches and Corners of the Triangle

Approach	**Corners of the Triangle**	
	Researchers	*Youth Workers*
Theoretical Structuralism --- Left-Wing Discourse	Structural conditions and policy context should pre-exist the combating inequalities policy implementation by whomever.	The role of youth worker should in this context be of a mediator and an intermediate between the existing policy and young people (specially with fewer opportunities).
Theoretical Individualism --- Neo-liberal Discourse	Individuals, both youth workers and young people, have seen their agency increase in the last decades (and therefore also their responsibility in resolving their own problems and unequal opportunities of life.	The role of youth worker is to be a "policy change maker" him or herself, and/or to empower or activate young people directly.

[14] The later can also be incorporated collectivelly. Social movements can also be fed by this individual empowerment, as well as class identity and class action.

[15] There is also a frequent tension between policy makers and the other two corners of the triangle. While the former, albeit declaration of intensions and also various documentation at the European level on cross-sectoral youth policy (Nico, 2014), tend to look at youth issues almost always through the employability or labour market lens; the latter tend, even in if different approaches, look as the problems of young people as "cross-sectoral", in holistic perspectives, that take and analyse each life as a whole (education, employment, health, culture, etc.).

There is a thin line between boosting agency skills and offering a a-historical approach to life, a sort of vacuum social context for the own action, to contribute to a poor historical literacy. A line that should be more debated in the youth field, which would contribute in its turn to a "common ground", within all corners of the youth triangle, of how and to what limits can social inequalities between young people be tackled.

2. The complex comparability of inequalities at the individual level

TG: But you know, we were happy in those days, though we were poor.

MP: Aye. BECAUSE we were poor. My old Dad used to say to me, "Money doesn't buy you happiness."

EI: 'E was right. I was happier then and I had NOTHIN'. We used to live in this tiiiny old house, with greaaaaat big holes in the roof.

GC: House? You were lucky to have a HOUSE! We used to live in one room, all hundred and twenty-six of us, no furniture. Half the floor was missing; we were all huddled together in one corner for fear of FALLING!

TG: You were lucky to have a ROOM! We used to have to live in a corridor!

MP: Ohhhh we used to DREAM of livin' in a corridor! Woulda' been a palace to us. We used to live in an old water tank on a rubbish tip. We got woken up every morning by having a load of rotting fish dumped all over us! House!? Hmph.

EI: Well when I say "house" it was only a hole in the ground covered by a piece of tarpolin, but it was a house to US.

GC: We were evicted from our hole in the ground; we had to go and live in a lake!

TG: You were lucky to have a LAKE! There were a hundred and sixty of us living in a small shoebox in the middle of the road.

MP: Cardboard box?

TG: Aye.

MP: You were lucky. We lived for three months in a brown paper bag in a septic tank. We used to have to get up at six o'clock in the morning, clean the bag, eat a crust of stale bread, go to work down mill for fourteen hours a day week in-week out. When we got home, out Dad would thrash us to sleep with his belt!

GC: Luxury. We used to have to get out of the lake at three o'clock in the morning, clean the lake, eat a handful of hot gravel, go to work at the mill every day for tuppence a month, come home, and Dad would beat us around the head and neck with a broken bottle, if we were LUCKY!

TG: Well we had it tough. We used to have to get up out of the shoebox at twelve o'clock at night, and LICK the road clean with our tongues. We had half a handful of freezing cold gravel, worked twenty-four hours a day at the mill for fourpence every six years, and when we got home, our Dad would slice us in two with a bread knife.

EI: Right. I had to get up in the morning at ten o'clock at night, half an hour before I went to bed, (pause for laughter), eat a lump of cold poison, work twenty-nine hours a day down mill, and pay mill owner for permission to come to work, and when we got home, our Dad would kill us, and dance about on our graves singing "Hallelujah."

MP: But you try and tell the young people today that... and they won't believe ya'.

ALL: Nope, nope..

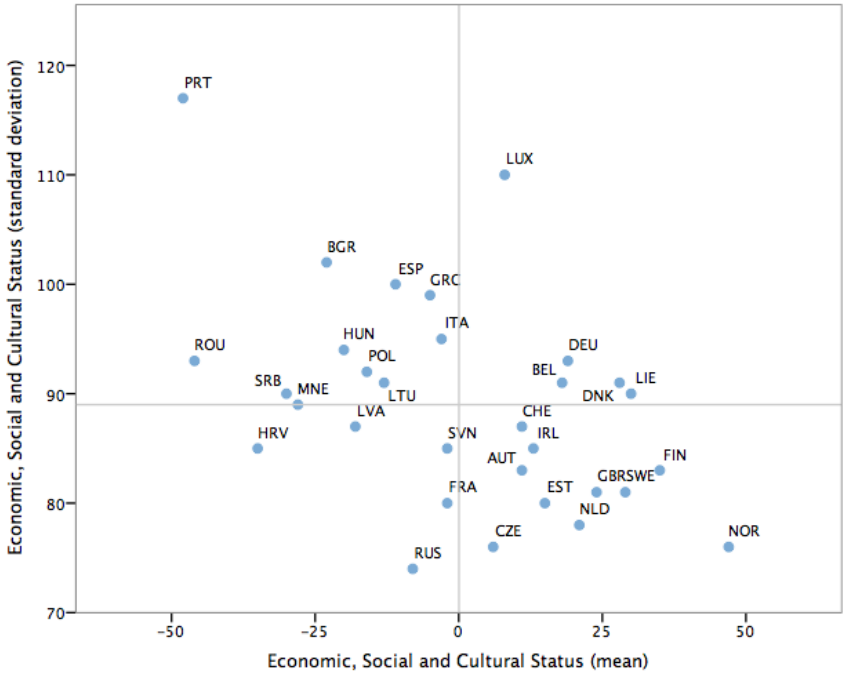
Monty Python - Four Yorkshiremen

"Social inclusion is a youth policy priority of the EU and CoE strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth and the promotion of human rights. Both institutions build their policies on the understanding of the complex and multi-dimensional character of young people's social integration and the grave risks that the economic crisis is still posing" (Kovacheva, n.a., pp. 1). Not all but many of the European youth policy or the national youth policies designed on its behalf are understandably targeted at particular groups of people or, more recently, simply identified as "young people with fewer opportunities". This is so because following a generational approach to

policy at a first stance does not necessarily imply that youth is taken as a homogenous group in terms of access to opportunities of life and equal rights (see table 1 above) in the subsequent stances. If the "ultimate" goal of youth policy is the decrease of inequalities within this age group of people, then it makes sense that it does that by increasing the *access to* and *effect of* opportunities of life for those who have less, thus leveling the living standards as much as it is possible.

But there are two premises that are silently used in the field, at least the ones produced at a European level. One consists in assuming that these mentioned young persons represent a minority within the respective age group, on his turn, within a certain country. This is partly true if we exclude the social category with the highest amplitude in terms of ESCS[16] and, in most of the countries, the highest concentration: the "middle class". Albeit recent trends of class (youth) gaps and social polarization, the majority "middle" class youngsters is still not to be ignored or neglected. So does the dichotomy between "young people with fewer opportunities" and "well-off" or "young people with more opportunities" really work? Where is the line that separates these two groups in the same country? And how do we compare and relativize levels of inequality between countries? "Disadvantage" is an inherently comparative concept and being or not in disadvantage with others depends on the point of reference, depends on to whom one is being compared to, depends on the social context at play.

Figure 1: Average and Standard Deviation of Social-Economic and Cultural Status in Europe (2012)



Source: PISA, OECD, 2012 (own calculation)

Both as an analytical and an ideological exercise, finding an answer to "who might have less opportunities?" over different patterns of inequalities at the national level is a difficult endeavor. Data from PISA allows us to map, in average and in variability[17] the socio-economic and educational status of all 15 year-old school-enrolled participants. This is a complex variable

[16] Economic, Social and Cultural Status.

[17] Through the standard-deviation.

composed by the level of education and occupation of the parents, access to material and concrete indicators of housing well-being, and exposure to some cultural habits, that approaches "class" in a holistic way (figure 1). It is possible to verify that the higher the ESCS, the lower its variability. This means that the "richer" the country in average terms of cultural and social resources, the less likely it is to simultaneously be an unequal society (you can see this in countries such as Finland, Norway or the Netherlands). On the other hand, countries with average speaking low social, economic and cultural status are not as homogeneous among them. Although both types of countries reveal higher levels of variability of this status, there is a structural difference between those above (Portugal, Romania or Bulgaria) and below the line (Russia or Hungary) In the countries above the ESCS status of the 15 year old are not only averagely low but highly uneven within the country. This is typical of very stratified or polarized societies. In this regard, Poland and Romania have this characteristic less striking.

Figure 1 can be used to illustrate the difficulty in ranking and comparing different backgrounds of inequalities. How would different profiles be ranked in terms of "less opportunities" or "more disadvantaged" or "exposed to more mechanisms of inequalities? Would it be someone (i) who is from an equally disadvantaged country (with low average and variability of the socio-economic and educational status), (ii) someone that is atypically disadvantaged in a country with high and well-distributed levels of socio- economic and educational status or (iii) high but unevenly distributed ESCS, or (iv) someone who lives in a simultaneously unequally and generally poor society (see figure 1)? Would a young person from Spain be almost automatically considered having "less opportunities"? Or would someone atypically below the ESCS average in Finland be appropriate to be accepted in such programs?

Table 3: National Sources of inequality and National and European Projects towards young people with less opportunities

Coming from countries with… ESCS	**And participating in …**	
	National projects	European level projects
Low average, Low variability *"equally low ESCS"*	Young people from these countries have a quite homogeneous but low ESCS. The difficulty would be who *not* to select.	These national filters could work at a first working stage, but the process of selecting participants is extremely depednet on how topic-dependent and goal-dependent is the project it self. Schemes of differentiation of inclusion and integration might help the process:  Separation Integration Inclusion
Low average, High variability *"predominantly but unequally low ESCS"*	Young people from these countries would have to be selected in a classist, socially-graded approach (see table 1), since these countries are highly stratified or polarized.	
High average, medium or Low variability *"predominantly equally high ESCS"*	Young people to be selected from these countries would be a minority and the difficulty could be to reach, rather them to identify, them.	

Not only answering the mentioned (provocative) question is a difficult endeavor, but also a very counterproductive one when the national or international context is not put into context (table 3). In fact, different criteria should be used when selecting people with "fewer opportunities" from each country. From countries with low average and variability, that is "equally low ESCS", the

difficulty would be who not to select. On the other hand, from countries with low average and high variability, that is "predominantly but unequally low ESCS", young people would have to be selected in a classist, socially-graded approach (see table 1), since these countries are highly stratified or polarized. Finally, young people from countries with high average and medium or low variability, that is "predominantly equally high ESCS", would be a minority and the difficulty could be to reach, rather them to identify, them.

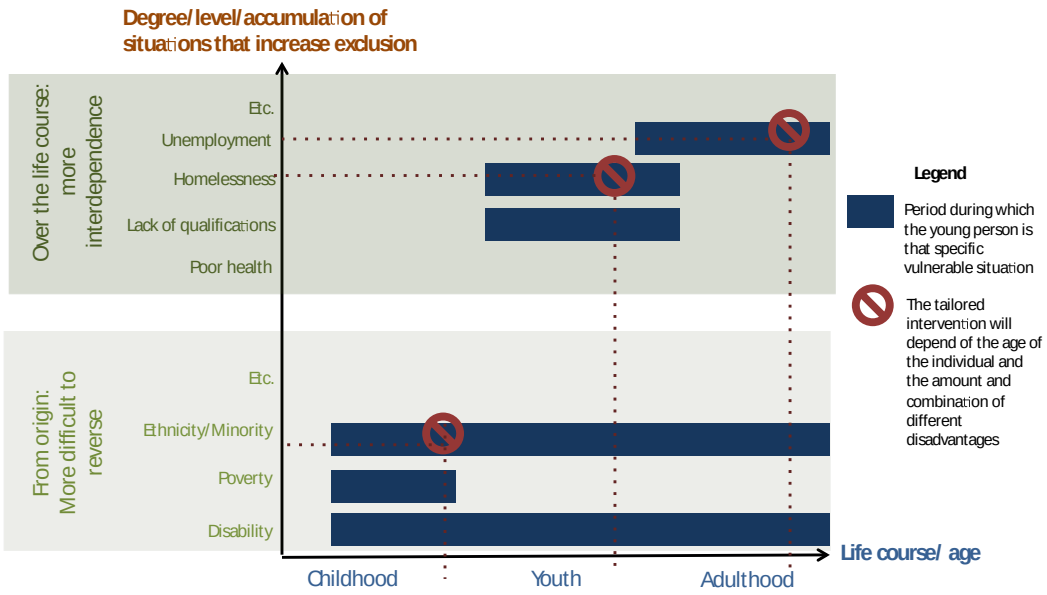
Disadvantage is not, with the exception of some variables[18], a condition *a priori*, but rather a process. It is also, in any case, a process that emerges or is maintained in a social *vacuum*.

3. Inequalities as a (cumulative) process over the life course

Inequalities have many faces, and also many sources, interactive, cumulative and not mutually excluded ones. Therborn (2006) identifies three types: vital (that includes inequalities concerning life, death and health), existential (that refers to the uneven acknowledgement of humans as people, where aspects such as liberty and human rights are at the core), and inequalities of resources (educational, income, wealth, occupational, cultural skills, etc.) (*in* Costa, 2012: 22-24). These also vary according to their feasible reversibility and to their unfortunate but systematic and recurrent interaction and accumulation across time.

It is in this notion of accumulation of inequalities that the generational and the classist approaches meet (instead of clashing or mutually ignoring). Youth studies can, or should play a part in that, as both approaches are of vital importance to this field of research, many more than for any other. Before this bridging, and although inequalities are perceived in principle as processes of reproduction or attenuation across *time*, they are hegemonically analyzed with static social categories. Before this bridging, generational approaches tend to overlook the social stratification to which individual trajectories are subject to.

Figure 2: Inequalities over the life course



Source: Markovic, Lopez, Dzgurski (2015), Based on discussions within the Advisory Group, Strasbourg, 2014

[18] Related to disabilities or health issues, for example. These would be consider vital inequalities by Therborn (2006).

The understanding of this "meeting" is crucial both at an individual and a collective level to the identification of the degree to which one is "excluded" (from one or more dimensions), the severity of the dimensions from which one is excluded, the accumulation of and interactions between the dimensions from which one is excluded, the type of intervention required and by what corner of the triangle. Time and timing is thus of the essence to interrupt inequality Matthew effect that leads to the class, living conditions and opportunities polarization and divide of youth.

Conclusion

In this paper some of the many complexities and layers of youth inequalities were addressed, namely in relation to the youth sector and its responses (concrete or ideal). Either implicitly or ideologically, or explicitly in an evidence or knowledge-based process, theoretical approaches to the study of youth inequalities necessarily overflow to policy design and implementation. This paper aimed at contributing to the latter.

Three aspects were selected as the most relevant in this regard: the intersection and tension between different sources of inequality; the comparative nature and difficulty of concepts such as "less opportunities" and finally, the processual and cumulative character of inequalities at a individual level.

Firstly, the tension between the generational and the classist approaches was addressed. In the generational approach, youth is taken as a homogeneous group, while in the classist approach it is the social heterogeneity of young people that is stressed. The two imply different rationale in the design and implementation of youth policy, namely in the definition of the **target group**. While the former is in line with an age-graded policy and the assumption that being young is, per se and a priori, a social vulnerability; the latter is more in line with a socially-graded policy and with the idea that policy should primary be targeted at those who are most affected or at risk of poverty, social exclusion or without social rights, and young people might and might not be considered as such.

Secondly, some of the difficulties of using the comparative and relative concepts of "disadvantaged" or "less opportunities" in the policy arena were discussed. Using data from the PISA-OECD (2012), namely the variable on "Socio, Economic and Cultural Status", it was possible to demonstrate (i) the incomparability of these concepts, (ii) the importance to maintaining the autonomy of national youth polices due to the extreme variation on contextual variables of inequalities, and also (iii) the awareness for those variations when mixing, comparing or joining young people from different countries together in European level initiatives. And thirdly, the fact that although "vital", "existential" and "social" inequalities vary in degree and reversibility, overall inequalities should be understood as a process rather than a status or a set of independent status. This, in its turn, calls very clearly for cross-sectoral policy, one that takes into account the overlapping, intersection and inter-causality of inequalities experienced at a individual level.

As the message to take home, it can be stated that the complexity of youth inequalities should not discourage or "disempower" the youth field, but rather stress both the need and the urgency of its confident responses.

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