Generations and Social Change
Theoretical and Methodological Imagination in Play

Call for papers

Regardless of the theoretical meanings attached to the concept of “generation”, there is wide agreement that this is a powerful concept when tackling, measuring and understanding social change. Studying changes in social institutions, social behaviours and social relations across and within generations is one of the main tasks of sociology, especially the sociology of youth. The abovementioned consensus is not, however, equivalent to homogeneity or even stagnation of approaches. Studying youth requires a constant effort to centre a “fast-moving target”. For this reason, our theories and methods have to change constantly and always be creative.

This RN 30 Mid-Term conference aims at stimulating debate about the theoretical challenges and methodological creativity which studying “moving targets” imposes on youth and generation researchers. It will be an occasion for theoretical and methodological reflections about what to compare, how to measure and interpret social change and inter-generational dynamics in young people’s lives, considering young people not only as exposed to, but also as producers of, social change.

Topics for discussion could include – but are not limited to – findings of research, methodological debates and theoretical reflections on youth, generations and social change, focussing on:

- intergenerational relationships
- transition to adulthood
- collective identities
- youth cultures
- forms of social and political participation and protest
- religious beliefs and practices
- use and representations of space
- musical and artistic practices
- bodily practices, sports, and discourses about the body
- family histories and dynamics
- labour market and precariousness
- geographical mobility and migration within and across generations
- school-work transition
- social mobility and social trajectories.
Keynote speakers:

Rachel Thomson is a Professor of Childhood and Youth Studies and Director of research and Knowledge Exchange at the University of Sussex. She is a sociologist and uses her methodological innovation, expertise and imagination to capture and understand social change and processes at crossroad between biographical and historical time, namely in what regards the life course and transitions, gender and sexuality. At the moment she is co-developing a project on Reanimating data: Experiments with people, places and archives (Funded by the ESRC Transforming Social Science).

Päivi Armila is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Easter Finland. She is a researcher of youth in different societal and cultural margins. Her studies have concerned immigrant youth, marginal youth sub-cultures, as well as youth with disabilities. Her recent work deals with youth living in sparsely populated regions with narrow possibility structures when young people’s life course choices are under the scrutiny.

Organisation, location and conference fee:

The conference is organised in co-operation with the University of Eastern Finland (https://www.uef.fi/en/etusivu) with Sanna Aaltonen (sanna.aaltonen@uef.fi) as the local organiser.

The conference will be held in Hotel Rauhalahti https://www.rauhalahti.fi/en/ in the city of Kuopio https://www.kuopio.fi/en/etusivu surrounded by Lake Kallavesi in Northern Savonia. The conference fee includes full board and bus trips between Helsinki and Kuopio. The conference fee will be 350 € for a single room and 250 € for a double room. Discounts are available for ESA members and PhD students.

To propose a presentation to the conference, please send an abstract (maximum 500 words) with author’s name and institutional affiliation to carlo.genova@unito.it by latest March 1st 2020.

The abstract must include: the topic of the paper; aims; main questions addressed; a brief description of the methodological approach used; the data on which the research is based; and (expected) results. Please write “Abstract proposal for ESA RN30 2020 conference” in the subject line of the e-mail.