

## Recenzie

### **MACHÁČEK, Ladislav: Youth and Policy**

Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2014, 228 s. ISBN 978-9955-34-458-2

Now more than ever we can observe critical situation of young people and importance to deal with that acutely discussed in various forums, media or during decision-making processes. Various stakeholders present their opinions on the reasons of the caused situation or possible solutions. Ladislav Machacek's publication „Youth and Policy” covers in 5 chapters a range of the useful results from the youth research projects, which can serve as solid basis for future discussions and following steps.

In the first chapter author analyses if individualisation is determined by modernisation and identifies main sources of it. This chapter brings a comprehensive description of youth policy development from 1992 to the present, situation of already existing as well as establishment of new networks, academic institutions providing youth research, structured dialogue among researchers and decision makers and school-self-government. Author describes various information resources for sharing knowledge and better understanding of Slovak young people (reports on the state of government policy towards youth, journals related to youth researchers, electronic data archive and so on). Author critically evaluates problems in legitimizing the needs and interests of young people in the legal code, methodology and elements of youth research, still lack of cooperation among similar institutions and problematic multidisciplinary cooperation within various sectors. At the end of the chapter, he identified several obstacles as well as key needed measure which should be taken.

The second chapter is devoted to the modernization challenges, particularly to the attitudes of young people towards the market challenges. Data from the survey which was carried out in 1993 among young people are summed up there. Various questions were explored – their values, civil participation, entrepreneurial orientation of young people and the way how they would strive to solve the situation as unemployed. Next part of the chapter is devoted to the citizenship potential of unemployed and self-employed young people in east-central Europe. The research commenced in 1996 in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia revealed very interesting results regarding the participation in the election, decision making of young voters and their preferred support closer ties with EU or Russia.

The third chapter of the reviewed publication examines very beneficial topic for further projects focused on youth participation – education for democratic citizenship. At the beginning of the chapter author underlines unflattering fact: *"young people lose interest in politics, confront state institutions with distrust and show tendency of supporting autocratic forms of leadership in the society"*. Author further develops his argumentation by results of several research projects aimed at finding out the interest in politics, political polarisation, trust in political institutions and vision of their own future. A large space is devoted to the electoral behaviour of the first-time voters in the EP elections. Many useful analyses are presented – on the reasons why young people did not participate in the elections to the EP, what would be the change to alter their participation or what are their concerns. Author presumed the trend of rising of the voter turnout in the EP elections in 2014 what was unfortunately not accomplished. The results from the research focused on measuring the rate of racism, ethnic intolerance or xenophobia among pupils are also included. Author expresses his hope for the increase of the interest of young people through new structural opportunity – student's councils at schools. He provides the findings about the motivation of certain group of students to participate, expectations of the others from student councils as well as the political knowledge of young Slovaks and insight into the project focused on teaching the civic education.

The fourth chapter explores topic "Identity: Majority and Minority". There are surveys of young people from Bratislava and Prague about intensity of feeling like a Czechoslovak or European, the mutual cooperation with Austria or the role of ethnicity in collective social identity, spoken languages of young people from Hungarian ethnic minority presented. I consider as very positive, that author supplement the results of the surveys by explanations of socio-historical circumstances, examples of testimonies obtained from respondents during depth individual interviews, what brings better understanding of the research topic notably for foreign readers.

In the final chapter author shares his personal life story from childhood to university, own involvement in the self-government university organization, his academic discovering of sociology, and faithfulness to the sociology of youth. He describes also the situation after the invasion of the allied armies of the Warsaw Pact and the consequent "normalization", what had obviously negative impact on his publication and educational activities and the trips to foreign countries. Author outlines the development of

sociological institutions and sociology of the youth as an academic discipline in Slovakia. His professional life enriches next positions as national correspondent for the youth survey at the Council of Europe, external co-worker of the Slovak Youth Institute, editor in chief of Sociology magazine, co-founder of Slovak journal for political science and Youth and Society magazine. Moreover, in the last section of the chapter, readers can find the overview of Machacek career as pedagogue and the reasons for starting it: *"Young people, which I have sensed about 40 years as research object becoming for me living personalities with its own face and individual temperament....In my age what is the most important is not to produce my own research reports, but direct students to teach them to work in a scholarly way."* Nowadays, he is Vice-Dean for research and editorial activities of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava.

The publication "Youth and Policy" is valuable contribution to current debates with full of comprehensive and inspiring information. Over a limited number of pages, author managed to sum up a large number of results from research projects and statistical analysis. All of them draw attention to questions aspiring to a further debate and measures. Thus, in some parts, I missed the deeper view of author on the reasons of some surprising results or his suggestions how to deal with them, but what was maybe left by author on purpose for our own answers. Another advantage of the publication lies in its structure; since the individual parts are well-structured according the particular topics what can help the readers to follow the main argument or to choose just the parts they are particularly interested in. I warmly recommend this publication to all researchers, students and public interested in the problems of the young generation and youth research. The readers can obtain a complex view of the problems of youth and its research from the viewpoint of sociology and publication represents undoubtedly asset in current and future youth research.

Lenka Čurillová  
FSV UCM Trnava