

Habilitation Thesis in Sociology – Maria-Carmen Pantea

Abstract

By and large, my entire research can be located interdisciplinary academic field of Youth Studies. The thesis reflects the major areas of research since gaining the PhD in 2008. A crosscutting concern referred to the meanings young people attach to the different types of work: entrepreneurship, volunteering, care, child labour. The thesis is structured according to these fields of sociological inquiry. The last sections present the services to the academic community (editorial and evaluation work, memberships in consultative bodies) and my plans for future professional development.

The conventional thinking goes that once research starts to accumulate, it is able to inform policy making processes, which develop as a consequence. However, not this seems to be the case in the area of youth entrepreneurial learning and youth entrepreneurship. Whilst policies were prompted by rapid transformations in the labour market structures, the research community seems to lag behind. A first area of research provides a sociological response to the policy calls for entrepreneurial learning. It engages with the dilemmas and tensions facing non formal learning and calls for a cogent debate on opportunities and ethical limitations involved in entrepreneurial learning.

A second area of research explores the structural barriers in cross border volunteering, young peoples' perceptions of unfairness during volunteering, the changing nature of volunteering and the intergenerational relations involved. Overall, my qualitative research enters in dialogue with dominant assumptions that render volunteering entirely self-less; it challenges the potency of the communist past in explaining the current involvement in volunteering among young people and argues that volunteering is not free from the dilemmas and tensions usually attributed to employment (e.g. burnout, discrimination, experience of unfairness etc).

A third area of inquiry explores the way parental migration is being experienced by the young people and unveils young people's caring commitments. It is argued that care giving relationships are more complex than the previous literature on 'care drain' and 'transnational care giving' has shown. This area of research demonstrates that young people do act as caregivers, despite traditionally being incorporated in the category of 'children left behind' and

contribute, together with their migrant parents, to the global care dynamics. My research suggests that gender is not the only dimension organizing the care roles in transnational families and calls for research to incorporate this generational dimension, as well.

A forth stream of research aims to understand the social processes involved in Roma self-identification. It explores how educated, 'self-declared' Roma young people negotiate their ethnicity in social environments heavily permeated by majority class values (such as higher education). It also aims to overcome the rhetoric accompanying the emergence of the Roma elite, by looking into the struggles involved when young women negotiate access to university.

Lastly, the thesis describes my contributions to the area of child labour since obtaining the PhD with a research on this topic. The thesis concludes with the projects of professional development which revolve around three areas: contributions to collective proposals and projects, continuation of research in the areas of Youth Studies and teaching graduate courses on Child Labour and Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis.

My research in the area of Youth Studies resonates with recent academic and policy developments in Europe. Since 2010, I am a member of the EC-CoE Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR). The PEYR represents a contribution of both the Council of Europe and the European Commission to evidence based policy-making in the field of youth. The Pool consists of 25 researchers and experts from Europe (both EU and non-EU countries) who possess expertise in different areas connected to youth. Its members were selected on the basis of an open call in 2010 and 2014. As a PEYR member, I provide research advice and analysis on policy strategies when requested by the two partner institutions. Between January 2012 and December 2014 I worked as an editorial board member of *Research on Social Work Practice* (Impact Factor: 0.905). Since 2013 I am Editorial Board Member for *SAGE Open*. In the last years I was a referee for *Journal of Adolescent Research* (SAGE); *Journal of Early Adolescence* (SAGE); *Journal of Gender Studies* (Taylor & Francis); *Women's Studies International Forum* (Elsevier); *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* (Taylor & Francis) among others. I consider that these experiences create the preconditions for strengthening the competencies of the academic community in this area in Romania, as well.