


 Book  
review

## *Youth in transition: How do they cope?*

A new book focuses on the many attitudes and different behaviours that affect **youth transitions in relation to work, wellbeing, employment and career interventions.**

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The new challenges for organisations and individuals globally, brought about by the recent recession, have also had an impact on youth, and more specifically on their transition to adult life. The book *Youth and Work Transitions in Changing Social Landscapes*, edited by Helena Helve and Karen Evans, is a selection of papers that present the recent research on youth–work transitions, wellbeing, employment, career interventions and research–practice gaps internationally. The particular focus of the book is the importance of successful transitions to adult life as manifested in psychological and physical wellbeing. Different international authors from Europe, the USA, Canada, South Africa, the Caribbean, India, Japan, Russia, Australia and New Zealand analyse the structural forces that affect the choices young people are able to make.

The book is divided into four sections, each of which contains several chapters.

The four chapters that make up the first section, *Perspectives on employment transitions and wellbeing changes during economic recession*, have a clear focus on the viewpoints from the UK, the USA and Finland. This includes not only a Finnish perspective around the questions on economic conditions as well as an analysis of the structures of youth employment, but also a comparison between the current economic recession and young people seeking jobs and the recession in the 1970s in the UK. Moreover, this section also includes a cross-country compari-



son of completion of the ‘big 5’ – education, entry into paid employment, partnership and family formation, as well as independent living arrangements. The aspect of this changing nature of the life course is still widely discussed, but this chapter points to the lack of systematic empirical research, particularly in the comparative studies of the transition to adulthood.

The subsequent section, *Biographical negotiations from youth to adulthood*, focuses on issues related to the more general topics of youth trajectories. One of the four chapters in this section gives a good view of the different strategies young people use in their work transitions under conditions of precarity and uncertainty.

*New career aspirations, life changes and risks* is the title of the third section in which the authors Karen Evans and Edmund Waite, among others, contribute with findings on how initial career trajectories take on historical significance.

In the last section, researchers from Australia and New Zealand, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa highlight the differences between normative conceptions of youth transitions and their realities among different sub-groups and in contrasting social and political contexts. Hence, these international contributors provide the basis for development of an extended dialogue between ideas and evidence. Following these findings, there is a clear need not only to know more about the above changes and options, but also how this is affected by, for example, the changing social expectations and economic recessions.

This is specifically highlighted in the closing commentary chapter where the challenges to conventional thinking and methodological issues that future research and theory in the field of youth transitions need to address are highlighted. Consequently, an additional typology, which helps to sort out the issues of structure and agency in work transitions, is also presented. As described, this goes beyond the simplistic polarity between “society makes them fail” and “it’s all their fault if they don’t succeed”.

In focusing on intergenerational interlinkages as well as wider cultural and socio-economic contexts, *Youth and Work Transitions in Changing Social Landscapes* is successful in focusing on the many attitudes and different behaviours that affect the current generation of young people in their work transitions, wellbeing, employment and career interventions. ■