

**EDITORIAL**

## Youths and public policies

This issue of the *Revista Katálysis* focuses on the issue of youth, which is a complex, problematic, ambiguous concept that is always submitted to determinations of the socio-historic context in which it is applied. It is thus more appropriate to speak of youths, in the plural. The concept, historically marked by a biological-generalist perspective, homogenizes the treatment of phenomena that involve phases of human life at fixed age limits. The specialized literature in Brazil and abroad has tended to criticize and go beyond these traditional age markers, using the concept of the life cycle of individuals in the fluid and contradictory process of determinations that imply the passage from infancy (family dependency) to adult life (autonomy). The change in conceptualization was determined by historic processes that produced important transformations in all sectors of contemporary societies, registered since the deep cyclic capital crisis triggered by the rise in petroleum prices in the early 1970s, which first had a profound impact on the industrialized countries and later spread to others. The structural changes in the labor market, fruit of the productive restructuring and consequent rise in education, produced the phenomenon of the prolongation of youth or a delay in leaving the parents' home. In this new conjuncture of social, political and economic forces in the global realm of prolonged and aggravated crisis, there is no longer a fixed point for the conclusion of youth and arrival of adulthood.

Studies in the human and social sciences have historically presented youth at the beginning of the generational cycle as a carrier of an alternative culture or as a phase of rebellion propitious to problems. In the 1960s-1970s, youth appeared to be revolutionary, leading pacifist, feminist and counter-cultural movements that questioned the given order. Nevertheless, the capitalist crisis of the 1970s, which led to the end of the golden age of the welfare state, hit youth hard with structural unemployment, forcing a prolongation of the time of study and family dependence, thus producing a change in the focus of studies about youths. The impediment that the crisis created for the process of integration to adulthood caused the focus of studies about youth in the more developed societies to revolve around so-called post-structuralist studies, which sought to integrate the perception between structure and actor, which in a certain manner reflected the reality that the typical route for access to adult life had become more indefinite. And as substantiated very well by the final report of the "Brazilian Youth and Democracy" study conducted by the Instituto IBASE/POLIS in 2005, "The reference to youth in the plural is the recognition of the specific weight of youths who distinguish and identify themselves in their many dimensions, such as gender, skin color, location of residence, daily life and future projects".

These different youths have been affected in all quadrants of globalized society. United Nations data reveal that the global population between the ages of 15 and 24 was 1.2 billion in 2004, and of this contingent nearly half survived on less than two dollars a day. After the crisis of 2008 this situation, which was more severe in the poorest and developing countries, also affected the so-called more developed countries, and youths in particular. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are nearly 90 million unemployed youths in the world.

In Brazil, census data for the year 2012 show that the country has a contingent of 52.2 million youths from 15 to 29 years old (IBGE/DATASUS). This is 26.9% of the 194 million people in the country, according to this census agency. Studies by PNAD (2007) indicate that approximately half of all the unemployed are youth and those young people that do have jobs earn half the salary of adults, given that, of these, only 27% have signed working papers and thus legal protection (IPEA/2008).

The violence against youth in the country is also alarming. According to the "Mapa da Violência – Jovens do Brasil" [Map of Violence – Youths of Brazil], coordinated by Julio Jacobo Waiselfiz (2014), homicides are now the main cause of death of youths from 15 – 29 and affect black males in particular, residents of the peripheries and metropolitan areas of the urban centers. Data from the Ministry of Health's SIM/Datasus

show that more than half of the 56,337 homicides in Brazil in 2012 were youth (30,072, or 53.37%), of which 77.0% black and brown-skinned and 93.30% males.

According to the National Penitentiary Department of the Ministry of Justice (DEPEN), Brazil has 440 thousand inmates in 1,134 prisons, and more than 280 thousand (some 70%) are youth between 18 and 29 who have not completed high school.

This data demonstrates the gravity of the situation of Brazilian youth, provoking the state and society to construct a public policy for youth. The current National Youth Policy (NYP), now based on the Youth Statute, which was approved in August 2013, considers youths to be all male and female citizens from 15 to 29, divided in three groups: youths from 15 to 17, denominated youth-adolescents; youths from 18-24, referred to as youth youths; and youths from 25-29, known as young adults. Considering this division, it can be seen that only the first group is included in the current policy for children and adolescents. The prolonged congressional deliberations over the constitutional amendment for youth, mediated by an important national debate, strengthened the rise of the National Youth Policy and culminated in the approval of the Youth Statute.

Contrasting with these advances, which are still being consolidated, it is perceived that the revival of conservative forces in the Brazilian social fabric has criminalized poor and black youth. There are regular attacks on the Children and Adolescent's Statute, 25 years after its enactment, accusing it of permissiveness and reductions in the age for criminal prosecution and increased prison terms are being deliberated in the federal Chamber of Deputies.

Given this situation, this issue of the *Revista Katálisis* presents articles that address the issue of youth in three blocks: the first has articles that analyze realities of youth related to issues such as: violence and youth (Perception about Violence in the Daily Life of Youths; Prevention of Youth Suicide: between statement and action; The Phenomenon of Ideology and Children and Youth Criminality); urban youth poverty (The Locus of Poor Youth in Society and the Boom of the "Rolezinhos"); paternity of adolescents and youths (Adolescent and Youth Paternity: Debates and tensions); taming the young body for production (Men Caring for Themselves: the instrumentalization of young adult males).

The second block concerns public policies for youth, highlighted by the following themes: access to higher education (Poor Youth at Public Universities: Access and permanence); work and employment (State, Society and Labor and Employment Policies Aimed at Youths in Brazil; Latin American Youth and the Labor Market: Training programs and insertion); social assistance and leisure (Leisure Practices and Public Spaces for Conviviality as a Potential Form of Protection in the Relationship between Youth and Risk); citizen protagonism (Youth as Strategic Agents for Development: Between Discourse and policy; Debates on Youth Participation: from citizens in preparation to active social agents). Finally, the third block presents other themes (Discipline as a Constitutive Element of the Capitalist Mode of Production; Social Representation of Care Recipients and of Family Care Providers for the Elderly).

Considering the dramatic reality of our youth, the challenges of the new public policies and the conservative reaction, the articles presented here provide an excellent opportunity for renewal and reflection.

Good reading!

Reinaldo Pontes, May 2016.

### **Reinaldo Nobre Pontes**

reinaldopontes@ibest.com.br

Doutor em Sociologia pela Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Professor adjunto da Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA)

### **UFPA**

Rua Augusto Corrêa, 1 - Guamá

Belém – Pará – Brasil

CEP: 66075-110