

Part 1

Chapter 1

Introduction

Youth and work transitions in changing social landscapes

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How do the young people of today in different countries and regions of the world find their way to adulthood? What are the opportunities and risks in their work transitions? What does the economic recession and rising youth unemployment mean for young people's trajectories into adulthood. The particular focus of this book is about the importance of successful transitions to adult life as manifested in psychological and physical wellbeing. Based on a series of case studies from Europe and perspectives from the USA, Canada, South Africa, the Caribbean, India, Japan, Russia, Australia and New Zealand it is examining the structural forces that affect the choices young people are able to make. The case studies analyse how social, psychological, economic and cultural factors influence young people's attempts to control their lives, their ability to respond to opportunities and to manage the consequences of their choices. This book is about the changing constellations of risk and opportunity in the transitions from school to work transitions.

Analysis of the effects of precarious work histories—temporary and part-time present employment and unstable work history—on work related psychological well-being among young people is adding to the understanding of the roles that work transitions play in youth and across the life-course. The traditional model of work transitions is under pressure from a number of changes. Not only has the nature of work changed, but so have the organisation of work and the ways in which young people enter the labour market. Jobs have been relocated to other parts of the world and the labour market as a whole has become less stable. In many countries young people are those who are suffering most from changing labour markets. As the recent recession across the world has affected young people more than older cohorts, many have no frame of reference for what is happening; they have grown up with strong economic growth and optimistic assumptions that they would be better off than their parents. Now many have

difficulties in navigating work transitions. However, the rapid ageing of the population for example in Europe and Japan has put the onus on young people and their work transitions and inflexibilities in the existing social security systems in terms of their ability to guarantee a subsistence income to all citizens. This timely topic reflects now global social and economic changes in labour markets. Work transitions of young people and their relationships with well-being form a field of action for youth policies, needing research that explores the flows of influence across these areas of young people's lives.

This book approaches the situation of young people in the current labour markets around the world, from a variety of disciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives. It is based on the strong foundation of international researchers' cooperation in the field of youth research. The ideas for the *Youth, Work Transitions and Wellbeing* book were brought to fruition in a series of papers presented in two seminars of Finnish and English researchers held at the Tieteiden Talo (House of Sciences and Letters) at Helsinki 2009 October 8-9, and at the Finnish Institute in London on October 25-26, 2010. The contributors were affiliated to research programmes in their respective countries concerned with youth work transitions in various ways: in Finland based in the Academy of Finland Research Programme on *The Future of Work and Well-being* at University of Tampere, Helsinki and in Jyväskylä; and in England, based in South Bank University, and in the Economic and Social Council LLAKES Centre (Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies), Institute of Education, University of London. This volume based on Finnish and British research groups is linked to ISA RC 34 Youth Sociology and youth research colleagues researching wellbeing and the work transition of young people in different parts of the world. These research programmes, together with the international contributors, have generated high quality research papers that make a significant contribution to understanding young people's work transitions and wellbeing internationally. A selection of these papers has been brought together in this edited collection.

The recent economic downturn has presented new challenges for organisations and individuals globally. The scope of the book is to present recent research in youth work transitions, wellbeing, employment, career interventions, and research-practice gaps internationally. Wellbeing, leisure and personal relationships are often relegated to side issues to the main game of education and employment; their influence on education and employment patterns and

decisions is all too often ignored. This volume adds new knowledge that explores the flows of influence across these areas of young people's lives.

This book is intended as a resource book in a non-traditional sense for students and faculty in youth studies. It is being published at a time of growing concern about the youth unemployment that can lead to marginalisation and social exclusion of the younger generation. The book also gives youth workers, researchers, and policy makers important and timely information about young people's life perspectives in transition to adulthood and work life. Looking at issues from the perspective of different countries deepens our understanding of the realities, shared and culturally differentiated, of youth work transition internationally as well as giving us new ideas how to approach young people and their issues and interests.

Contrasting contexts and the dynamics of change

Youth unemployment and recession are not new phenomena, but there are stark differences in the dynamics of change in the present time England, Finland and the wider world. This book explores these dynamics from contrasting perspectives, asking 'what do we need to understand better in order to find effective ways of supporting youth in a changing world?'

The life chances of young people are profoundly affected by macroeconomic conditions, institutional structures, social background, gender, and ethnicity, as well as by acquired attributes and individual resources such as ability, motivation, and aspirations. As social origin, gender, and ethnicity influence the range of options available to the individual, so too do historical events beyond individual control, such as changes in the labour market, economic downturn, or the outbreak of war (e.g. Elder, 2002; Evans 2009). Young people and adults alike co-regulate their motivation and behaviour in response to the social context (Jones, 2009; Helve, 2007; Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009). Recent changes in education, the labour market and housing opportunities place increasing pressures on young people's initiative and ability to navigate options and demands. On various measures, young people in Europe appear to be at risk of being 'shut out' of opportunities, a situation that is seen as creating conditions for social disorder as well as having a potential long term impact on well-being.

A new generation of research studies is focusing on the ways in which young people respond to and cope with sudden downturns in employment opportunities and the changing pressures involved in decision-making about vocational and higher education. Economic downturn is not new and there is

rich previous research on which to build. Research from the 1930s recessions have demonstrated long-term scarring effects that endure from generation to generation. Panel studies internationally are revealing the longer term impacts of experiences rooted in the economic recessions of the 1980s (see for example, chapters by Bynner and Schoon, respectively). There are marked differences in the wider social context in which life and work navigations are being experienced in the aftermath of the financial crises of the early 2000s.

New research has to focus on the reflexive relationships between individual responses of youth to structural shifts in opportunities, inter-generational influences and the ways in which organisational and social practices are changing. As well as understanding the role of life planning and motivation in steering young people on their paths to adulthood, we need to know more about the ways in which social practices are changing (e.g. in civic participation and in career-seeking activity) and how organisational, social, cultural and sub-cultural practices are affected by economic downturn, changing social expectations and the changing socio-political environment. Equally important is how the incentives and disincentives to engagement in education, training and civic participation are changing. By focusing on the intergenerational inter-linkages, parental and wider socioeconomic and cultural influences on attitudes and behaviours of current generations of young people come into view.

LLAKES research (Green and Janmaat, 2011) predicted that civil unrest would be likely to rise during the coming years and young people would be at the centre of social concerns. This has been underlined by recent events, where, according to early estimates young people are amongst the hardest hit by the economic crisis (see Brewer et al., 2009). For example, youth unemployment in the United Kingdom, already rising before the recession (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2011; Goujard et al., 2011), has increased more rapidly since the economic downturn, with already nearly one million 16-24 year-olds, representing over twenty per cent of the age group, without jobs in 2011.¹ In some areas, youth unemployment had reached 35 per cent. As the public expenditure cuts begin to bite, joblessness amongst young people is likely to rise even higher, and disproportionately with the other groups in the labour force. When young people are on temporary, part-time or probationary contracts, they occupy increasingly precarious positions in the labour market. These trends are present, with either greater or less severity in many other European countries affected by the banking crisis. Our initial Finnish-British comparisons, for example,

1 E.g. London Borough of Lewisham

showed the changing ways in which work entry and employment trajectories are profoundly connected to personal, housing and family transitions. Rising rents in major cities make accommodation unaffordable to many young people, which affect both employment options, scope for personal independence and family formation. While there are many similarities in the ways young people navigate changing configurations of work and life, there are also some significant international differences. For example one route to social mobility—through the accumulation of wealth from rising housing assets—that was available to previous generations in the UK through early home ownership (known as ‘getting a foot on the housing ladder’) is probably now closed, adding further barriers to mobility for a generation whose jobs and earnings prospects are poor and who will be paying increasing contributions to sustain the pensions of their parents (Willetts, 2010). Extending education and training is the obvious response to reduced job opportunities for many young people, but there are widespread concerns that cuts to public funding financial grants and trends towards increases in tuition fees in higher education may deter many less affluent students from further study (Callander and Jackson, 2005). In Finland and the Nordic countries educational entitlements and the principle of free entry to higher education is at present unchanged. Despite these differences, on various measures, opportunities for young people in Europe, relative to those of their parents’ generation, appear worse than they have been for many decades (Green and Janmaat, 2011).

Through longitudinal and panel studies of various kinds we can now examine changes in housing, family status and a wide range of personal and wellbeing factors which are crucial to ways in which young people experience and navigate changes that can impact fundamentally on their life chances. We should also be probing young adults’ views on the social unrest that has erupted in many parts of Europe, with the wider international contributions bringing these phenomena into global perspective, showing, for example, the harsh realities of youth experiences in countries such as South Africa show how growth in inter- and intra-race inequality leaves the poor, even in wealthy provinces, locked out of the economy (see the chapter of David Everatt in this volume).

Different landscapes of the book

The book is organised into four major parts: *Perspectives on employment transitions and wellbeing changes during economic recession*, *Biographical negotiations from youth to adulthood*, *New career aspirations, life chances and risks*, and *Wider international*

perspectives on youth, working life and wellbeing. The chapters in these four parts provide more in-depth analysis of issues such as school to work transitions and wellbeing in changing labour markets in England, Finland, Ireland, Russia, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, India and South Africa. A North American perspective on these changes is offered through the commentary by James Côté. The chapters of the book explain in more detail how young people are inventing adulthoods, what kind of regional identities, work values and future expectations they have, what gender, class and ethnicity/race means for work transitions, how youth in education experience working life and how work transitions create different youth pathways to belonging. Furthermore, contributions explore gender differences in achievement and social strategies, the meaning of school motivation and parental aspirations in young people's career development.

The four chapters of the section *Perspectives on employment transitions and wellbeing changes during economic recession* focus on the viewpoints from UK, the US and Finland. *John Bynner* in his chapter *School to work transitions and wellbeing in a changing labour market* compares the current economic recession and young people seeking entry to the labour market with the 1970s recession in the British labour market giving a broad historical perspective to the situation of young people in unstable labour markets by analysing British longitudinal research data. The phenomenon of NEET 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' is discussed. This is coming to known more frequently now in common with other countries, bringing the prospect of reduced life chances and challenges to wellbeing of young people in later life. This section starts by reviewing the historical back ground to these effects and what we can learn from them about the likely consequences for wellbeing of the most recent recession, drawing on evidence collected since the second-world war. The 'scarring' effects damage the expected pattern of school to further, or higher education, and work broken through scarcity of jobs for prospective entrants. A lack of crucial work experience, not only for acquisition of specific work-related skills but the more personally driven attributes of employability ranging from punctuality to taking initiative and team work will give important signals to employers.

Ingrid Schoon and John Schulenberg in their chapter *The assumption of adult roles in the UK, the US, and Finland: Antecedents and associated levels of wellbeing and health* review evidence from two age cohorts in the UK, the US and in Finland making the transition to independent adulthood. Four national and community-based studies from Britain (the 1958 National Child Development Study [NCDS] and the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study [BCS70]), the United

States (Monitoring the Future [MTF]), and in Finland the 1959 Jyväskylä Study of Personality and Social Development [JVLS] and the 1966 Northern Finland Birth Cohort [NFBC]) examined patterns of social role combinations of young people in their mid-twenties, childhood antecedents and associated adult health outcomes. They are comparing using a life course perspective evidence across different cultures and settings to enable a better understanding regarding similarities and differences of how young people negotiate the transition to independent adulthood, the role of early predictors and associated adult health outcomes. Two comparable age cohorts in each country, born in the late 1950s and the late 1960s/early 1970s, respectively, allows across country comparisons. In each country the focus is on the 'big 5' transition events (Shanahan, 2000; Stettersten, 2007) comprising the completion of education, entry into paid employment, partnership and family formation (i.e. parenthood), as well as independent living arrangements. Schoon and Schulenberg take in their chapter a critical view to Arnett (2000) who has postulated a new developmental stage of *emerging adulthood*, characterised by the extended exploration of identity, life styles, and career possibilities. They point out that *emerging adulthood* may be useful synonyms for the prolonged transition to independent adulthood, but it does not take into account the social and economic conditions that have produced extended transitions. Transition outcomes are dependent on structural opportunities and constraints as well as individual resources and capabilities (Elder and Shanahan, 2006; Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza, and Woolley, 2003).

Mette Ranta in her chapter *Finnish young adults' financial wellbeing in times of uncertainty* presents results based on a Finnish Educational Transitions (FinEdu) longitudinal study, in which 614 adolescents from six upper secondary schools participated. They answered questions on economic conditions (self-reported objective income and subjective appraisal of personal current and near future income adequacy) in measurements after the transition. Statistical analyses revealed four distinct well-being trajectories differing in level and change: two major classes having stable high trajectories and two smaller classes having significant increasing and decreasing changes in wellbeing. Moreover, the stable high classes indicated higher self-reported subjective income levels at the fourth measurement than the changing trajectory classes. Jaana Lähteenmaa in the chapter *'Agency vs. structure' a view of youth unemployment during the current recession in Finland* analyses the structures of youth unemployment using qualitative material produced in the internet-survey analyses. The theoretical framework for the chapter is build from the 'agency' of unemployed young people.

The Section *Biographical negotiations from youth to adulthood* is divided into four topic areas focusing on issues related to youth work transitions from several different perspectives. This second topic area looks at the more general topics of youth trajectories and pathways to adulthood. *Rosalind Edwards and Susie Weller* in the *Trajectories from youth to adulthood: Choice and structure for young people before and during recession* chapter present a concern about the economic recession and rising youth unemployment in the UK affecting young people's trajectories into adulthood and work transition. The article is based on a qualitative longitudinal study that has been tracking young people's lateral relationships over the past four years or more. A series of case studies of young people's biographical negotiations are used, drawing on a four-fold transitions typology which highlights the structural forces underpinning the choices young people are able to make. Edwards and Weller argue that young people enter a period of economic recession with prior resources and particular trajectories already in play in their lives. Thus, for the young people in this study, rather than recession bringing about a changed or fractured pathway into adulthood, it is providing a certain set of conditions for embedding particular, pre-existing trajectories. The chapter *Inventing adulthoods: Young people growing up in Northern Ireland* by *Sheena McGrellis and Janet Holland* presents a unique qualitative longitudinal study of young people in five socio-economically contrasting sites in the UK through their transitions to adulthood since 1997, when they were aged between twelve and eighteen. In this article the authors discuss about data from the group of young people in Northern Ireland where the study has shadowed the vicissitudes of the peace process and a recent round of interviews were undertaken in 2009/10. This section provides an overview of the young people's experiences of balancing work, education and family in all of the sites over the years, focusing on the Northern Ireland group in more detail. The recent interviews provide insight into the challenges young adults face around work and employment and the effects these have on their health and wellbeing.

The next two chapters present the research on the Finnish Work-Precaria research project on young people's work transitions, values and future horizons. *Arseniy Svynarenko* in his chapter *Regional identities, future expectations and work values* analyses young people's changing work values and identities in a time of increased uncertainty and risk of unemployment and how these constitute a challenging and disequilibrating life event in which previously-made identity commitments are no longer workable and an individual may temporarily regress to earlier identity modes. It is a time when new identities and new models

may appear. The themes of family, future plans and education are located on the intersections of work identity, local and global identities. The study about work-related values and regional identities of young Finns gives evidence that the employment situation of young people has an impact on their perceptions of future. Those who have successfully found a full-time job see their future in a relatively more optimistic light. In the perceptions of young people's future, one can see reflections of their attitudes and experiences of participation in the existing welfare and political system, negative experiences weaken the sense of national identity. *Helena Helve's* chapter *From higher education to working life: Work values of young Finns in changing labour markets* is based on in-depth narrative interviews and ethnographic observations which were gathered among young people working temporarily in tourism in Lapland. The survey data was gathered on-line on the recruitment websites of the universities and polytechnics from those in higher education seeking jobs. The attitude scales measured attitudes towards education, working life and society, and the future orientation and meaning of life. The paper places its focus on the research questions: How the students of higher education start their working life? Are they combining employment and studies? What kind of jobs do they have and how many employers have they had? What kind of attitudes do they have towards education and work and how are these influenced by their parents and friends? Do they have a short or broad future horizon, is it local or global, positive or negative? How is short-term precarious employment affecting attitudes, lifestyles and worldviews of young adults? The transition into working life no longer takes place as soon as education is finished, but rather it can begin while one is still in education or much later. This study shows that almost every third of the youngest respondents in higher education already combine already studies with work. Nor does moving away from one's parents lead to starting a family of one's own in many cases. The study shows that young people working with short-term employment contracts, or who are temporary unemployed are not doing much long-term planning. The short-term and temporary employment is changing identities, future expectations, work attitudes and values of young people. Drawing on theories of post materialism, values, identity and world views the paper discusses the strategies young people use in their work transitions to manage their life under conditions of precarity and uncertainty.

The section *New career aspirations, life changes and risks* includes five chapters. *Tracey Reynolds* chapter *Youth transitions and wellbeing: The impact of austerity on black youths living in urban 'black neighbourhoods'* draws from the research findings

of projects from 'Caribbean families, social capital and young people's diasporic identities'. It included a number of projects within Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group at London South Bank University (see www.lsbu.ac.uk/families). During 2002-2006 in-depth interviews were conducted with thirty second and third generation Caribbean young people (aged between 16 to 30 years-old) living in Birmingham, London, Manchester and Nottingham. Further interviews took place with fifty of their kinship/family members in Britain and the Caribbean (Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica) across all age groups. The research project explored how family and kinship bonds operate in the lives of Caribbean young people and their construction of ethnic identity and belonging. This paper examines the views and experiences of black youths living in three socially deprived areas of London in order to examine the way in which they recognise the term 'black neighbourhood' as a resource in these austere times. The analysis shows that these neighbourhoods represent urban spaces through which a range of social capital resources are generated including ties of reciprocal ties of trust, solidarity and civic participation. They also provide black youths with a sense of belonging and as such these neighbourhoods are intrinsically valued by them. Research highlights that central to an individuals' overall sense of well-being is the extent to which they perceive a sense of belonging and bonds of trust within their communities (Ryan and Deci, 2001). While the literature suggests that economic hardship adversely affects adults' wellbeing and their community relationships, still little is known about the impact of economic hardship on youths' wellbeing and their perceptions of community and neighbourhood. This issue is particularly pertinent because under the current economic downturn in Britain youths are one of the main groups to be adversely affected as result of high youth unemployment rates and rising numbers of young people not in any form of education or training. With regards to black youths recent figures indicate that nearly fifty per cent are unemployed and this figure is even higher among black youths living in urban neighbourhoods, sometimes colloquially referred to as 'black neighbourhoods'.

Katariina Salmela-Aro's Academic burnout and engagement from adolescence to young adulthood chapter presents recent findings related to academic burnout defined as exhaustion, cynicism and inadequacy at school. How are the three components of burnout related to each other and how do they develop? How are academic burnout and depression related to each other? What is the role of learning difficulties in this context? This article introduces the concept of academic engagement described as energy, dedication towards and absorption

in schoolwork. In this context demands-resources model is presented as an approach to study both academic burnout and engagement. The findings as to how academic engagement and burnout change from adolescence to young adulthood, from transition to high school to tertiary education and work life are discussed in this chapter. *Hely Innanen* and *Katariina Salmela-Aro* in their chapter *Gender differences in achievement and social strategies, areas of work life and burnout at the early career stage* have focused on experiences at the early career stage which may include several risk factors for employees' well-being. This study examines gender differences in burnout, in achievement and social strategies and in areas of work life. Research participants were from four organisations: IT, health care, a university, and logistics (N=378, women 56%, age range 18-30 years). The results revealed no gender differences in burnout. Men scored higher in achievement optimism, whereas women scored higher on achievement pessimism and social optimism. Men scored control and fairness to be higher in the organisation than the women. The results showed gender differences in relations between individual strategies, areas of work life, and burnout. These results suggest that employers should pay attention to both the strategies employees use and the areas of work life in the early career, and to do so from the perspective of gender differences.

Helen Cheng and *Ingrid Schoon* in the chapter *The role of school engagement in young people's career development and mental health and wellbeing: Findings from two British Cohorts* examine the role of school motivation as a potential mediating variable, linking family social background and childhood cognitive ability to later educational and occupational attainment and adult mental health and well-being. The study is based on two large representative samples of the British population born in 1958 and 1970, comprising more than 12,000 participants with information on social background, school experiences and subsequent adult outcomes. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used to assess the pathways linking early influences to adult outcomes. Results show that in both cohorts, school motivation is influenced by both family social background and general cognitive ability. School motivation in turn, influences later occupational attainment through its association with educational achievement, and also affects adult mental health and well-being. Thus school motivation shows an independent effect on adult occupational attainment and mental health, even after controlling for family social background and general cognitive ability. The findings suggest experiences and adjustment in the school system can play a significant role in shaping later attainment and levels of health and wellbeing.

Karen Evans and Edmund Waite end this section by introducing a retrospective view in *'Activating events' in adult learners' lives: Understanding learning and life chances through a retrospective lens*. The concept of career trajectories is typically used in work on transitions of young adults into the labour market, providing ideal type segmented routes that can be used to understand a variety of personal histories. In adult life, routes diverge, experiences diversify still further and multiple new contingencies come into play. This chapter shows how, in adults' life and work experiences, initial career trajectories take on historical significance. Research into adult learning experiences of workers at the lower end of the earnings distribution highlights the diversity of 'pathways' and social processes by which people come, through youth and adult experiences of various kinds, to the 'destinations' of lower graded jobs. It is argued that these 'destinations' are merely staging posts in highly differentiated occupational and personal learning careers, with considerable implications for lifelong learning.

Part Five *Wider international perspectives on youth, working life and wellbeing* brings together five chapters from different parts of the globe. The contributions from Australia and New Zealand, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa, provide the basis for development of an extended dialogue between ideas and evidence, as they highlight often dramatic differences between normative conceptions of youth transitions and their realities among different sub-groups and in contrasting social and political contexts.

Johanna Wyn in *Young adulthood in Australia and New Zealand: Pathways to belonging* draws on Australian and New Zealand research on young people's lives. Longitudinal and ethnographically based research approaches provide complementary perspectives on the ways in which young people establish a sense of belonging in times of economic recession, and under conditions of employment insecurity. From the late 1980s on, neoliberal policies in Australia and New Zealand have influenced how youth is experienced. Transition approaches tend to be based on set sequences of mobility. It is argued that this approach does not give sufficient purchase on the strategies that young people use to be well, to engage in meaningful activity and to build successful lives in their own terms in different locations. Drawing on concepts from cultural geography and youth cultures this chapter argues that the idea of 'belonging to' enables youth researchers to integrate economic change with other dimensions of life, including wellbeing and relationships to people and place.

David Everatt in *'Ring of fire or a puff of (commentators') smoke?': Youth, unemployment and transitions in Gauteng* is presenting the situation of youth

work transitions in South Africa, where youth unemployment remains at staggering levels, well over fifty per cent for the youngest working age cohort, with race, sex and spatial location all impacting. As such, traditional 'transitional' literature and concepts battle to find purchase, most obviously school-to-work and all the child-to-adult signifiers that go with these transitions. Moreover, constructions of youth have gone from anti-apartheid foot soldier and 'lost generation' through 'marginalised youth' and 'potential partners in building democracy'—to again being a threat, a 'ring of fire' surrounding the wealthy cities of Gauteng (Johannesburg), Tshwane (formerly Pretoria) and Ekurhuleni (formerly Germiston). A just-recently completed survey, however, suggests that young people are more optimistic and more engaged than their elders. The author argues that policy-makers should rather look to the inequality that marks South African to identify where the 'threat' they fear can be found, rather than blithely pointing fingers of blame at young people.

Tomokazu Makino's chapter *School to work transition and youth views on labour in Japan* analyses Japanese school to work transition system and labour system looking at Japan's school to work transition system over the last 20 years, as well as youth views and values regarding labour in Japan. In particular, by surveying various studies and statistics, he discusses what social science studies have managed to elucidate since the 'Lost Decade,' as well as the messages (and responses to them) that have been disseminated to society. This paper brings together several perspectives that are usually studied separately, such as changes in the school to work transition system, and youth values, combining them in an integrated story.

Julia Zubok in her chapter *Russian youth in the labour market* analyses the changes in education, employment, and in wealth trends based on the results of sociological research of the Youth Sociology Institute of Social and Political Studies, from 1990 to 2011. The analysed data includes results of studies conducted by a comparable methodology, aimed at tracking the social changes among youth from fifteen to twenty-nine years in connection with the on-going transformation process in twelve regions of the Russian Federation (RF). This monitoring includes the last generation of Soviet youth focusing on the changes of Gorbachev's perestroika, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the country's transition to market economy crisis caused by privatisation and the liberal reforms (so called shock therapies), destabilisation of the economy, the bankruptcy of enterprises, and growth of inflation, which all have been as significant factors in the transitions of Russian young generations. The paper

discusses these changes of the post-Soviet period in Russia and what they mean in the lives of Russian young people.

In the *School to work transition in India* chapter, *Vinod Chandra* analyses the ways in which India strives for knowledge society and attempts to improve its labour force. The attempt has been made to increase the gross enrolment rate of secondary, higher secondary and higher education by introducing various subsidies in the study fees and providing grants and scholarships to disadvantaged section of the society. Several central and state government programmes are intended to encourage school and college enrolment and retention. On the basis of a study on 600 school leavers in the districts of Lucknow and Allahabad during 2008-09, the present chapter examines whether school leaving youth in India are equipped to make a successful transition to work roles. It also explores the extent to which they are indeed making that transition. The main probing questions focus on the extent to which this section of the young population succeeds in finding productive employment. What are the career aspirations of young school leavers and how are they linked with employability in various employment sectors? What are the factors which led them to undertake a job without completing their college education?

The commentary chapter of *James Côté* concludes the volume, showing how the papers making up the content of the book offer an exceptionally rich array of evidence to illuminate its major themes. Taken as a whole, the collection highlights the challenges to conventional thinking and methodological issues that future research and theory in the field of youth transitions need to address. The concluding chapter provides a commentary on the contribution of this volume and places the individual chapters within the context of the structure-agency debate and the emerging perspective concerning the importance of agentic resources in overcoming structural obstacles in the transition from education to work in late-modern societies. From his North-American perspective, Côté takes Canadian examples of education-to-work transitions and contrasts them with examples from the UK, where social class appears to structure these transitions to a greater extent than in Canada. A typology of agentic and structural resources is then provided that helps to elucidate the interplay between structure and agency in various societal contexts, and the risks and benefits associated with the transition to work for various subgroups of differentially resourced youth. In turn, these considerations are put in context in terms of current debates concerning what young people are transitioning 'through' and 'to'. This is accomplished by providing an historical analysis of the rise of life course concepts as English-

speaking societies underwent the transition from traditional to late-modern societies, with late-modern societies requiring the individualisation of the life course and having different needs for the productive contributions of its younger members. This chapter ends with a call for researchers to understand better the resources needed by young people of all economic backgrounds to strategically manage their life courses under late-modern conditions.

As editors, we have been privileged to work with authors in a process that has extended from Finnish-British dialogue to global debate, through the discussion of new and original research findings. In reaching beyond our national settings, we come not only to appreciate societal and cultural differences but also to understand the situations of young people engaging with the realities of work in our own societies more deeply.