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Research project: Childhood and Youth: central issues or marginal concern of international social policies (1900–1950)?

Time frame: 1900–1950

Abstract: Children and youth seem a popular subject for networks and international organizations since the early twentieth century: indeed, so popular that it seems to justify the assumption, often repeated but never really critically confronted, that this century was "The Century of the Child" (Ellen Key).

Based on a variety of archival materials from international organizations (governmental and nongovernmental) and networks, the present research project studies how this concern for children and youth has been taken up by these transnational bodies. In particular, it aims to map the various networks, movements and institutions concerned with children and youth, or whose activities were devoted partially to these issues, according to the topics and specializations of each institution or network: humanitarian activities for the International Union Save the Children; sanitation and hygiene programs (Health Organization of the League of Nations); dissemination of legal intervention models (Committee of Child Welfare of the League of Nations); development of international conventions protecting young workers at the ILO; platforms of experts focused on educational issues (International Bureau of Education, Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, UNESCO).

The project also seeks to analyze various types of policies targeting these age groups, and draws attention to the different institutional models set up to address young people’s needs. It tries to shed light on the way different expert groups or actors contributed to the process of standard setting of youth policies and for what purpose, and it seeks to answer what implementation these models received over time and space.

Ultimately, the ambition is to understand to what extent contemporary politics of childhood and youth depended on the activities of...
international organizations in the first half of the 20th century, and conversely how specific national models or methods benefitted from these transnational spaces and resources moving beyond their original national boundaries.

**Publications:**


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