

REVIEW OF THE BOOK „YOUNG PEOPLE’S VISIONS AND WORRIES FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE. FINDINGS FROM THE EUROPE 2038 PROJECT”, EDITED BY DAGMAR STROHMEIER AND HARRIET R. TENENBAUM

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Abstract

The book aims to answer an apparently simple question: how do young people engage with the European Union and what are their visions and worries for the future of this entity? The answers are provided based on a large-scale PAN-European survey and are detailed in the 14 chapters of the book, organized in five parts: Introduction, Country-level findings, Cross-national findings, Commentaries, and Evidence-based recommendations. In the context of the present turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, unexpected at the publishing date of the book, time will tell if major changes appear in young people’s visions and worries for the future of Europe.

Keywords: Europe 2038 project; European identity; belief system; young people’s visions and worries

Important changes in politics, may they be social, educational, or economical, should be grounded on contextualized research, historical and geographical. The Europe 2038 project, conducted in 2016 and based on a large-scale PAN-European survey, aimed to understand the future visions and worries of young people, as well as their patterns of engagement with the European Union entity.

The book includes the results of the project and, as the editors claim, it is the first effort to identify the predictors of four forms of (dis)engagement: conventional political participation (e.g., election voting), non-conventional political participation (e.g., signing petitions to influence European decisions), psychological engagement (e.g., discussing European politics with friends), and wanting their country to exit the EU (Strohmeier & Tenenbaum, 2019).

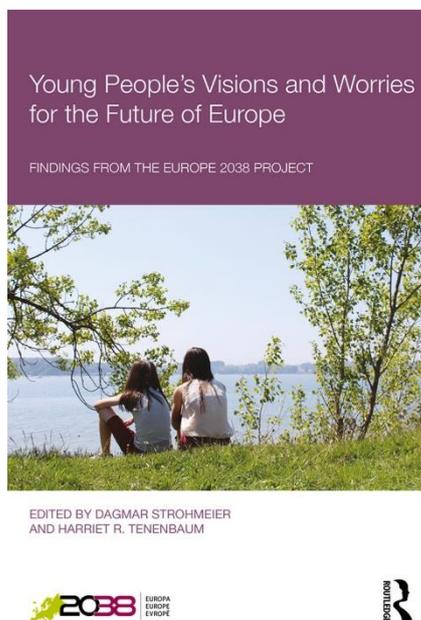
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The first part of the book is the Introduction, presenting the aim of the Europe-2038 project and the main results, as well as the organization of the chapters.

The second part includes seven chapters, presenting Country-level findings from Albania, Austria, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain, and the UK. With a younger than average age (a quarter of the population aged between 15 and 29 years old), for Albania the most important value is the respect and protection for human rights by the government and the institutions, and the main concerns were related to unemployment. In Austria, 18.3% of young people experienced social exclusion in school, at work, or during education and training, and for them the top-three priorities for EU are the economic challenges, the human rights, and the environment. For young

Germans, the most important hopes relate to the pursuit of happiness and health. The respect for the fundamental human rights is in top of the visions, and the strongest fears are the rise of social inequality and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor. For Italian young people, the respect for human rights is also in top of the visions, and the worries are related to violence and war. For Romanians, health, happiness, and employment are in top of the personal priorities, and the main worries are terrorism, violence, and crime. For Spain, education was placed in the first position in their visions for Europe 2038, followed by human rights and health care. Terrorism and unemployment were the strongest of worries. Finally, for UK young people, valuing human rights and diversity are the top values.

The third part of the book discusses Cross-national findings, and it includes two chapters, one identifying the predictors of engagement with the EU, and the other trying to answer if people’s belief system could influence the future of Europe. Among the most interesting results, it was found that it is difficult to predict intended voting, psychological engagement with the EU is associated with older age and higher levels of European identity exploration. In the case of young people who want to their countries to leave the EU, most of them are males, with lower levels of European identification, but higher levels of knowledge about the EU; also, they are in favor of reducing the size of the EU. Romania and Germany are



characterized by high levels of social cynicism and low levels of acceptance, but Spanish and British young people registered high scores of unconditional self/other acceptance. Low frustration tolerance was highest for German and Spanish youths aged 16 to 19 years.

The fourth part of the book includes commentaries, organized in three chapters. Again, among the interesting ones, it was noted that schools/education are identified as crucial factors in promoting European identity, although we need to maintain realism (e.g., How much can we expect from schools?) and take caution when speaking about active citizenship. Second, migration plays a peripheral role in the vision of young European people, in contrast with the obsession of popular parties. Third, there seems to exist an idea of “Europe” that transcends the political European Union.

The final part and chapter of the book is dedicated to Evidence-based recommendations. These are grouped into three categories: recommendations for EU policy (e.g., communicate better what the EU stands for, involve more young people directly in European institutions), for national policy (e.g., communicate the benefits of EU membership, strengthen human rights education), and for practitioners and parents (e.g., make young people aware for the benefits of EU membership in their everyday life, introduce them to funding programs).

The book also includes two appendixes, one presenting the Quantitative survey, and the other presenting the Descriptive statistics of study variables.

Taking into consideration that at the date of the survey and at the date of the publishing the current turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was impossible to anticipate, it would be interesting to check for changes in visions and worries about the future of the EU. Although a pattern of reactions can be identified, the European countries and citizens reacted differently to the restrictions of movement, to the possibility of vaccination, or to restriction of cultural life. All these could be integrated into a revised perspective of young people on the future of Europe.

References

Strohmeier, D., & Tenenbaum, H.T. (2019). *Young People's Visions and Worries for the Future of Europe. Findings from the Europe 2038 Project*. London: Routledge.

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