

STUDI DI SOCIOLOGIA

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*In collaboration with the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU/FIUC) and
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CALL FOR PAPERS

Counting in a Fragmented Society: Youth, Social Bonds, and Recognition Between Collective Belonging and Individual Trajectories

Contemporary youth live in a paradox: never so connected, yet never so exposed to processes of social fragmentation and disaffiliation. This paradox reopens a classical sociological question — how are social bonds formed and sustained when the collective structures that previously anchored individual biographies have weakened? Durkheim's concern with social solidarity and anomie, and the more recent sociology of recognition (Honneth), both point to the same underlying issue: individuals need stable frameworks of belonging and validation in order to act as social beings, and the erosion of such frameworks is a properly social condition. Where the “collective track” that once carried entire generations toward shared destinies has broken down, young people today are left to construct, largely on their own, the social relations and institutional footholds through which their presence and action can be recognized as socially significant. It is worth noting that this diagnosis—*anomie*, disaffiliation, the erosion of collective tracks—has been elaborated primarily within, and for, late-modern Western societies; the condition of youth is far from uniform across the globe, and collective structures of belonging (kinship, community, religion, the state) remain differently configured, weakened, or resilient elsewhere. This issue therefore also invites reflection on the geographical and cultural boundaries of this diagnosis itself.

This issue of *Studi di Sociologia* invites contributions that examine the youth condition through this lens, situating it within the broader sociological debate on individualization and social bonds in late-modern societies. Karl Mannheim's classic notion of generation as a shared historical destiny — a “track” onto which a cohort is bound by a common traumatic or transformative experience — no longer adequately captures how young people relate to their cohort. Generation today functions less as a shared fate than as a toolkit: a set of shared cultural and technological resources used to interpret and manage social complexity, without any guarantee of a common trajectory or outcome. This shift carries its own structural costs. When the resources for making sense of the world and for acting within it are experienced as purely personal, biographical failure is read as an individual shortcoming rather than as the outcome of structural conditions — a process of individualization of risk well documented in the sociological literature. At the same time, the proliferation of available pathways and reference groups can itself become disorienting rather than enabling, generating what sociologists have described as a paradox of choice under conditions of structural uncertainty.

Under these conditions, the individual increasingly becomes the primary unit of reference of social organization, while collective life is reorganized around looser, more volatile forms of aggregation: ephemeral tribes that form around shared passions and dissolve once satisfied; smart mobs that mobilize through networked devices and then disperse; aesthetic solidarities built on shared humor, imagery, or style. As many scholars have argued, “connective action,” grounded in the circulation of personalized content, increasingly substitutes for “collective action” organized around central ideologies and structures — with social visibility and recognition themselves now mediated, and often algorithmically distributed. Longitudinal survey data (e.g., the European Values Study) further show how, as traditional channels of collective belonging weaken, young people appear to redirect their search for social validation toward institutional spheres such as work, even as engagement with formal politics remains comparatively low — a shift with significant implications for theories of social integration and civic participation.

Generation, in this sense, may still be usefully understood as a shared “cultural climate,” shaped by common technological ruptures, economic conjunctures, and historical-political events, even where it no longer implies ideological or experiential unity — a reformulation that keeps the concept of generation sociologically productive without requiring the strong cohort unity Mannheim originally theorized.

Aims and Scope

Studi di Sociologia welcomes theoretical, empirical, and comparative contributions — with particular attention to international and cross-country perspectives — that explore how young people today build, sustain, and negotiate social bonds, belonging, and recognition in fragmented social contexts. Consistent with the journal's mission to foster dialogue across theoretical and methodological traditions and across generations of scholars, we especially encourage submissions that bring different national, cultural, and disciplinary perspectives on youth into conversation with one another. Contributions are welcome not only from and about Western late-modern societies but also from other regions and social formations (e.g., Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, post-socialist and indigenous contexts), including work that questions, qualifies, or proposes alternatives to individualization theory where collective and communal frameworks of belonging remain central or are being reshaped in different ways.

Suggested (non-exhaustive) topics include:

- Social bonds, solidarity, and anomie in late-modern youth biographies: a Durkheimian reappraisal
- Generational theory revisited: from Mannheim's "destiny" to the generation-as-toolkit model
- Individualization and "risk biography": Beck, Bauman, and Giddens on youth trajectories in fragmented societies
- New forms of collective aggregation among young people: ephemeral tribes, smart mobs, aesthetic and meme-based solidarities
- Connective versus collective action in youth political and civic engagement (Bennett & Segerberg)
- Digital platforms, algorithmic visibility, and the mediation of social recognition and belonging
- Work, family, and political engagement as arenas of social integration for youth: comparative and longitudinal perspectives (e.g., EVS/WVS)
- Youth, social vulnerability, and disaffiliation in the aftermath of shared historical traumas (economic crises, the pandemic, climate emergency, geopolitical instability)
- Catholic and faith-based institutions, universities, and communities as spaces of social integration for young people
- Youth, social bonds, and belonging beyond the Western late-modern model: comparative perspectives from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and post-socialist or indigenous contexts
- Methodological innovations in the sociological study of youth identity, generation, and social recognition

Submission Guidelines

Contributions should be original and unpublished, and should follow the editorial standards of *Studi di Sociologia* (Vita e Pensiero):

- Language: Manuscripts must be submitted in English
- Length: Articles should not exceed 35000 (including spaces, tables and references)
- The Journal adopts the American reference system, based on "surname + publication year" e.g., (Boudon 1985). When a direct quotation is reported, the page number should also be included e.g., (Boudon 1985: 112). When the quotation refers to a paper written by two or more authors, it's necessary to indicate the name of the first author followed by et al. For example: (Boudon et al. 1985). All authors' names, however, should appear in the bibliography. When references include more articles written by the same author, you should distinguish them using letters: e.g., Alexander 1987a: 18; Alexander 1987b: 233).
- When you cite a website, please don't forget to include the date of the last access: www.unicatt.it, 2/12/2005.

- Footnotes with descriptive text are allowed in moderation. Their enumeration should be progressive.
- The references must include only the papers cited.
- Examples

ARCHER M.S.

(1982) Morphogenesis Versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action, in «British Journal of Sociology», 33, pp. 455-483.

(1997) La morfogenesi della società, Angeli, Milano (or. Ed. 1995).

BOURDIEU P.

(2003) Il mestiere di scienziato, Feltrinelli, Milano.

GIGLIOLI P.P. E DAL LAGO A. (eds)

(1983) Etnometodologia, il Mulino, Bologna.

WOOLGAR S.

(1983) Irony in the Social Study of Science, in K. KNORR-CETINA E M. MULKAY (eds), Science Observed. Perspectives on the Social Study of Science, Sage, London/Beverly Hills/New Delhi, pp. 239-266.

Submission and Review Process

- The articles must be sent to the following e-mail address: rivista.studisociologia@unicatt.it. Please indicate the following in the subject line: Special Issue "Counting in a Fragmented Society".
- If the paper includes tables or figures, please make sure they are of good quality. You can attach them in a separate file. Authors are responsible for eventually requiring the rights of publication if the images are protected by copyright.
- An abstract (maximum 800-1000 characters), five key-words and a biographic note are required. Please also indicate the e-mail and the ORCID-ID of each author.
- Peer review: All submissions are evaluated anonymously by scholars with relevant disciplinary expertise (double-blind peer review). Manuscripts should therefore be anonymized before submission.

Key Information

Deadline for submission	31 December 2026
Journal	Studi di Sociologia, Vita e Pensiero (ANVUR Class A)
Promoting context	International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU/FIUC)
Submission format	Microsoft Word (or equivalent)
Contact / submission	rivista.studisociologia@unicatt.it

Authors are strongly encouraged have English-language manuscripts reviewed by a native or highly proficient English speaker prior to submission.

We look forward to receiving contributions that advance the sociological understanding of how young people build social bonds, belonging, and recognition in a fragmented society.