

## Youth: an analysis of sad passions

Juventud: un análisis de las pasiones tristes

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### Abstract

With the present contribution I would like to draw a line through various studies related to negative emotions that are often associated with the category of young people. Malaise, insecurity and fear of the future are condensed in the category that Miguel Benasayag and Gerard Schmit have defined sad passions.

I intend to outline the panorama of the main issues that young people have to face and I will try to identify which are the emotions connected to these situations to understand how they work together to form that sense of sadness that unites the new generations. Mainly I will talk about uncertainty for the future, socialization, rhythm of life, difficulties in relationship that often result in loneliness and fear of the future, situations accentuated by what is defined as the ideology of the crisis. Finally, I will focus on openings and strategies that young people put in place to exceed the sense of sadness and to find their way to overcome sad passions.

**Key Words:** Youth; Sad passions; Uncertainty; Identity.

### Resumen

Con esta contribución, me gustaría trazar una línea a través de varios estudios sobre emociones negativas que se asocian con frecuencia a la categoría de jóvenes. El malestar, la inseguridad y el miedo al futuro se condensan en la categoría que Miguel Benasayag y Gerard Schmit han llamado pasiones tristes. Describiré el panorama de los principales problemas a los que se enfrentan los jóvenes y trataré de identificar cuáles pueden ser las emociones conectadas a estas situaciones para comprender cómo juntas contribuyen a formar esa sensación de tristeza que comparten las nuevas generaciones. Principalmente hablaré sobre la incertidumbre por el futuro, la socialización, el ritmo de la vida, las dificultades para relacionarse que a menudo conducen a la soledad y miedo al futuro, discursos acentuados por lo que se llama ideología de la crisis. Finalmente, me enfocaré en cualquier apertura y estrategia que los jóvenes pongan en práctica para vencer el sentimiento de tristeza y encontrar la manera de superar las pasiones tristes.

**Palabras Claves:** Juventud; Pasiones tristes; Incertidumbre; Identidad.

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## Youth: an analysis of sad passions

### 1. Introduction

In the book *Les passions tristes*, two psychologists, Miguel Benasayag and Gerard Schmit note an increase in the requests for help that young people address to psychological assistance services, this finding pushes them to track down the traces of this malaise. The intuition behind the text is that there is an undeniable sadness that runs through today's society and that young people are the first to pay for it by juggling and planning their life trajectory in a constantly crisis context. To describe the feelings of young people, the two psychologists use the term-container of sad passions. In the next pages I would like to deepen these two macro-concepts, ideology of the crisis and sad passions. I would like to break down and analyze the various factors that contribute to affirming the idea of a difficult context in which young people are forced to move and, subsequently, to analyze sad passions. Understanding the relationship between sad passions and the social context means put in communication the social with the individual feeling to try to understand the phenomena that trigger negative sentiment, but also to pass the sad passions through a prism to break them down and understand the numerous emotional nuances.

The category of young people is very wide and over the years, youth has moved its borders a lot. For about two decades we have witnessed a continuous postponement of the fundamental life choices for the transition to adulthood, as if a gap was created between the end of adolescence and the beginning of emancipated life, a long exploratory period characterized by alternating study and work and by the reversibility of independence. Jeffrey Arnett (Arnett, 2000) coined the expression "emerging adulthood" which identifies the age group generally between 18-25 but that can also reaches up to 29 years. In this phase there is the growing number of young people hovering between adolescence and adult life, so much so that more than a phase is considered a category.

What characterizes this age group is not having a stable situation: a work, a home, a family, specifically, a role. In fact, Arnett (2000) defines this category as "roleless role" such as a continuous experimentation of different roles without assuming a definitive one. Another characteristic, connected to the previous one, is the search for one's own identity and the sentiment of feeling in the middle, not considering oneself adolescents but not even fully adults. Neets are a more specific subcategory of the emerging adulthood phase: the acronym stands for Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training. It is necessary to briefly mention this category which has long been confused in the wider topic of unemployment. The increase in the number of young people who find themselves in this situation has brought to light the phenomenon in its dual nature of exclusion from training and work processes, indicating it as a peculiar form of youth discomfort. Neet's definition is based on four characteristics: the age ranging from 15 to 34 years, the inactivity, the absence of a training program, but in my opinion the distinctive element is the willingness to choose not to work due to various causes including a lack of confidence in the world of work or the inadequacy of available work compared the qualification held. Talking about young people therefore implies taking into consideration a rather large window that ranges mainly from the end of compulsory schooling and can go far beyond thirty years. It means taking into consideration a category where roles and life paths are still potential and consequently heterogeneous and difficult to analyze, whose common thread could be the sharing of sad passions. In literature the primary emotions recognized are mainly four: anger, sadness, fear and happiness. It is from the combination of these that secondary emotions are generated: pride, nostalgia, shame, etc. It is evident that among the primary emotions, the negative emotions are in majority. Jonathan Turner (2010), in *The Problem of Emotions in Societies*,

argues that contemporary social stratification leads to an unequal distribution of resources and also of emotions. Young people mainly pay the cost of this social inequality in particular because their expectations of recognition are unsatisfied (Cerulo, 2014) for example by the inability to find work after years of study or to build stable relationships with people and roles. In an era of deep crisis and constant change, young people are at the risk of moving away from the positive emotions experienced individually and moving towards the negative emotions conveyed by the social context (Cerulo, 2015: 25).

In the next pages I will examine the difficulties that young people face. Regarding the methodology, I decided to carry out a research starting from the text of Benasayag and Schimt to draw a state of the art on the existing literature on the juvenile distress with a specific look on young Europeans. I will start from the socialization processes that concern a period of life preceding the age we are talking about but which has implications for the development of the young person and his identity. I will then analyze the relationship of young people with time, in particular the ability to project themselves towards the future in an era of acceleration. I will briefly analyze the theme of solitude and the creation of relationships and the theme of disorientation given by the mobility that characterizes the current generation. Finally I will better define how these sectors are condensed in the ideology of the crisis and which sad passions are widespread among young people. However, I want to conclude with a note of hope, that is, the recognition of young people in what has been defined as the generation of the crisis, the sharing of an emotional repertoire of anger and sadness can instead be not only an identity for youth but also a stimulus to move, to wanting to change things, to take the streets to claim the right to happy passions.

## 2. Socialization processes

It is through the socialization processes, primary and secondary, that is determined the relationship that the child, young and future adult, will have with the world. Although primary socialization is a process that takes place in the age group prior to the one taken into consideration in this article, I still believe it is important to mention it briefly. Young people are in fact the result of these processes that do not end with the adolescence because the secondary socialization replaces the first and continues throughout the life span. Socialization is the path by which the young person integrates into a wider community and enters the adult world. It is a development that goes through

several stages and takes place internally by traditional socialization agencies like family, for primary socialization and school for the secondary one. It is an intergenerational process, that is a transfer of knowledge from one generation to another, an institutional transmission, but at the same time a personal training that develops from the interior of the young person himself (Garelli *et al.*, 2006). To understand the values of young people in the contemporary world, it is therefore essential to understand the transformations that have taken place in recent years in socialization mechanisms.

Taking into consideration the two traditional agencies, namely the school and the family, it would seem that the hierarchical structure that characterizes them has weakened favoring parent-child relationships more prone to negotiation and reciprocity. While this allows for a more fluid dialogue it is also true that without authority it is more difficult to transmit values that provide a solid credible reference point for the construction of identity.

From a research conducted in 2001 by Garelli *et al.* (2006), it emerges that the two traditional socialization agencies are united by an identity crisis but that this has different characteristics. As for the family, there has been a generational truce or a pacification in parent-child relationships in the last thirty years. This phenomenon is probably the cause but also the consequence of the affirmation of what has been called "long family" that refers at the long stay of the young people in the house together with the parents, and therefore a distention of the relationship beyond the adolescent phase.

As for the school, however, the authoritarian model is absent in a different way: we can in fact speak of mutual indifference between students and teachers which almost results in laxity. Although the research by Garelli *et al.* (2006), is carried out in Italy, the speeches that underline the fragility of the educational institution are widespread. The key to understanding would seem to lie in the reciprocity between students who consider the educational institution as antiquated and the teaching staff, whose authority appears to be greatly weakened, who for its part complains about the transformations of a society that distances it, rather than bringing it closer, from its students (Garelli *et al.*, 2006).

Questioning authority is an attribute of societies prone to excessive individualism which presupposes a lack of solidarity and an utilitarian approach to relationships (Benasayag, Schmit, 2011). The prospects for the relaxation of relations between young people and families are certainly interesting, but it is also true that the erosion of classical social

institutions leads to a weakening of the points of reference, young people find themselves making their first life experiences of adult life in a context of change in which there are no cultural or institutional supports to look for in order to have certainties and build one's own identity.

To conclude the discussion it is important to remember the role of socialization in understanding and managing emotions. Emotions are in fact responses to situations interpreted on the basis of socialization and personal experience, knowing how to recognize an emotion, calling it by name, modulating it or emphasizing it is part of a repertoire of cultural skills that are learned by the institutions of the reference context. Carolyn Saarni spoke of socialization of emotions, identifying the family as the first place to learn emotions (Cerulo, 2015). Before going into the specifics of some factors that can induce sad passions, it is important to consider also the awareness of young people in knowing how to distinguish or manage their emotions. In this regard, the Italian philosopher Umberto Galimberti spoke of young people's emotional illiteracy or a deficit in the ability to know how to recognize their emotions and give them a name, to be confused with what they feel (Galimberti, 2007). For Galimberti, emotional illiteracy is linked to the massive use of new media which, being free of face-to-face interaction, prevents the activation of the body simulation mechanisms that underlie the theories of mirror neurons. These missing interactions have an impact on the ability to read each other's emotions and one's own. Surely the use of the media has an impact on the emotional stimulation of young people, but, limiting oneself to the media-emotional incapacity relationship deriving from the excessive use of online communication seems to me a reductive look at the phenomenon. Young people indeed seem to be able to choose which emotions show or not, to play an emotional work, only possible if they are aware of what it feels like. A research on emotions and young people (Cerulo, 2015) shows how they are able to perform emotional work, that is, a voluntary effort to show the desired emotions or those required based on the situation or interaction. In fact, the young people interviewed stated that sometimes they manifest emotions different from those that are experienced, they by trying to disguise the real emotion to match the one suggested by the social context. In particular, it seems that young people "modulate" their emotions based on the physical place, the university, but also family and public places and in relation to forms of sociality. For example, in relationships with friends or with the partner they hide emotions if they see that these

differ from those of the rest of the group for fear of being considered outsiders. This implies the ability to recognize the emotion of the other, one's own and to compare them. The problem then lies in the fact that emotional work is too effective and consequently the emotions shown are the simulated ones and not the real ones, the young man finds himself more often in relationships by wearing a mask and loses authenticity. On the other hand, working on emotions means knowing them, recognizing and analyzing them to adapt them to the context, therefore, we cannot speak of emotional illiteracy as it is rather a shame in expressing one's emotions, a shame that can be part of sad passions.

### **3. Uncertainty of the future**

The rhetoric of the crisis, to which we will return later, is also fueled by a continuous reference to the future in pessimistic terms. Surely the future is unknown for everyone, but for young people takes on the characteristics of a threat of impending trouble. In this regard, it is not uncommon to trace in the attitude of parents or teachers the idea of having to prepare children for the difficulties of adult life, replacing learning curiosity with the need to master tools and knowledge to face the worst. The canonical stages of transition to adult life are the transition from school to work, housing independence, creation of one's family and the birth of a son (Leone, 2016). Let's stop at the first stage, on which the next steps depend, it is a crucial phase for the young adult who begins to have not only his means to open up to independence, but also a recognition for his years of study. For a large number of young people, the transition from school to work is not so simple and represents instead a period of instability and frustration. The crisis of 2008, the new trends in the labor market that favor unstable contracts, the strong specialization combine together to outline a situation where the transition from school to work does not take place smoothly, but is managed with anxiety, fear and depression. Often after school, young people spend long periods of inactivity and unemployment, or are forced to move through a series of precarious jobs that determine a fragmented and unsatisfactory path, especially if not in line with the studies just completed. In these periods, the knowledge gained during the school year will erode, and along with these also the desire and motivation to get involved is eroded too. Young people look at the world of work in a disenchanting and cynical way by adopting a logic of postponement, of procrastination, to cope with the lack of concrete conditions for imagining a life project. In recent years, in fact, the increase in unemployment among young

people has led to an increase in that sub-category of inactive young people, the Neets, of which we have spoken, the danger for these young people is to sink into a situation of apathy that distances them from the world of work but also by the society. The difficulty of transitioning from school to work is transversal: it does not only concern young people from developing countries but also young people from developed countries who often experience frustration linked to the discrepancy between expectations and opportunities compared to the educational efforts and investments (United Nations, 2018). For those who succeed to enter the world of work, the situation is equally complicated: in the last fifty years the market has changed conformation following transversal processes in society such as globalization, technological advancement, organizational structure (Leone, 2016), the acceleration of the rhythm of life and the consequent logics of rapid consumption and production. The common feature of the employment models that are formed following these changes is the orientation towards flexibility (Leone, 2016). Flexibility understood as structural organization but also geographic: enter the world of work involves adapting to different positions but also to frequent movements. In the nineties a debate started on the consequences of contractual flexibility: some studies have highlighted issues related to individual sustainability like the limits for the construction of autonomy paths (Migliavacca *et al.*, 2015). Flexibility hides in fact forms of atypical employment which favor short-term contracts, unstable forms of employment and non-linear trajectories that imply commuting between different job positions. A fragmented professional path determines a more fragile identity construction, the profession that varies and no longer coincides with the life span cannot be considered a category in which to recognize oneself and to which identity can be in part referred. Even the perspective of life is fragmented (Mandich, 2010) because the achievement of the first job does not coincide with a point of arrival, with entry into adulthood, it is only a stage of a path that is not said to continue forward. The next stages are postponed in the absence of work or in some case are reversible such as the choice of housing independence which can prove to be a temporary experience if the work contract is not renewed. An unstable condition determines a look to the future that expresses uncertainty and disorientation, precariousness, discontinuity and a sense of lack. The young people find themselves having to compose and recompose, try to give continuity to their path, jumping back and forth between the different stages of life. As a consequence, negative emotions

are associated with the future, such as anger for having to start already with no expectations, not to have the opportunity to become what they want. The culture of precariousness is spreading where programs take the place of projects, where the only salvation is knowing how to grasp the opportunity of the moment and “surfing” on the ups and downs of life (Mandich, 2010: 206). Anger and anxiety can then be interpreted as the main negative emotions of the current era in which, immersed in confused interactional stimuli and in different daily stages, projected into a frightening future, young people have become victims of anxious behavior (Cerulo, 2015). However, these negative emotions can become the stimulus to change perspective. A 2006 comparative research reveals an interesting trend: young Danes take advantage of this uncertain period between school and work to deepen their knowledge of themselves to “find themselves” to carry out an “ego-trip” (Van de Velde in Bidart, 2006: 37). The study shows a long and exploratory form of youth, characterized by coming and going between study phases and periods of professional activity. Mobility and exploration are associated with the rhetoric of self-construction. Although specific, this study could re-evaluate flexibility as a push towards self-knowledge rather than fragmentation, it is also true that young Danes feel “safe” in their exploration phase, having the certainty of a family behind them and of a social State in which they place their trust.

#### **4. Acceleration and presentification**

Time is a particularly important topic for young people: several studies have focused on children’s ability to project themselves into the future, to determine their ability to act in the short and long term and therefore the consequent possibility of defining a stable sense of identity (Cavalli, Calabrò, 2008). The relationship of young people with time seems to develop between two trends: presentification on the one hand and acceleration on the other. In the previous paragraph we introduced the presentification as a consequence of the transformation of the young person’s relationship with the future: the short-term projects are replaced by the life project, the time horizon is shortened to the extended present which becomes the only dimension (Mandich, 2010). On the other hand, however, the present seems to become increasingly elusive following what has been called the acceleration of the rhythm of life (Rosa, 2012). It is undeniable that, in relation to the past, the world is moving at ever higher speeds, which is why in recent years, the theme of acceleration has gained sociological relevance. Acceleration is a

heterogeneous process that pervades contemporary society and is determined by technical and cultural factors. The causes of different nature can be grouped into three macro categories: technical acceleration, or the progress of communications, transport and means of production, acceleration of social change, i.e. the continuous change of social processes and also of classic institutions such as family and work that have shorter cycles and do not coincide with the span of life. Finally, the third category is the one we are interested in: the acceleration of the rhythms of life understood as the increase in the number of experiences, actions, encounters possible per period of time (Rosa, 2012). The young people therefore find themselves moving in a context of continuous change both as regards the prospect of life with contracts or relationships that have short cycles, and as regards everyday life where they find themselves crossing different contexts over the course of a day, but also to accumulate experiences and rapid encounters with the emotional variations that follow. The risk is to assume that *blasé* attitude that Simmel associated with the inhabitants of the metropolis confused and detached by the life as a consequence of a busy and chaotic life (Simmel, 1903).

Rather than a sad passion is outlined here a way to manage the emotions. The accelerated rhythm obliges young people to hit more stages in a short time, very different from each other inducing the need to vary, to change the emotions experienced, generating an increase in negative emotions. The mismatch between felt emotions and manifested emotions, therefore the emotional masking, and the non-release of emotion creates an internal overlap that produces discomfort and embarrassment generating a surplus of negative emotions (Cerulo, 2015). Finally, the rapid succession of different emotions blocks the reflexive ability, the possibility of focusing on one's own feeling and understanding it. The contemporary world, focusing on stimuli and innovation, neglects the importance of duration (Cavalli, Calabrò, 2008). It is the latter which in fact represents a parameter of value for objects, people and situations. Speeding up some life experiences also means having no way of experiencing them in depth, quickly consuming trips, relationships and moments in order to have more time to accumulate others. The rapidity of travel, for example, has allowed trips lasting only one weekend, but what experience can people ever get from the city of Paris in a day and a half? At this point we understand better how presentification and acceleration coexist in the youth experience. The presentification is in fact a direct consequence of the acceleration: it is the response to

a changed relationship with the past and the future. If the experiences have a too short duration to form a memory, the historical value of the past and of the tradition fades, then we speak of an emptying and a loss of attention for objects or experiences that become obsolete in a short time, bringing always in the foreground what is here and now. Furthermore, thinking about the present is also a strategy to avoid the impossibility of prefiguring a future (Cavalli, Calabrò, 2008). If the past does not interest and the future appears uncertain, it is logical consequence to focus on the present. Compared to modernity, where the project was the guiding principle of the individual *Bildung* training processes, in the contemporary era, the project appears inadequate to guarantee a positive relationship with the future. The project is replaced by ductility, the ability to adapt to change, to decide and act quickly (Mandich, 2010). Living in the present therefore means giving up the project in favor of the day's program, it means improvising, knowing how to move between reversible life choices, short-term contracts and unstable relationships.

### 5. Relationships and loneliness

At the root of the sad passions, according to the two psychologists of the reference text, there would be a deep sense of solitude; most young people looking for help note that they experience the sensation of being alone even when they are with other people. This denunciation of loneliness is found in all advanced social democracies and refers to a common social reality (Benasayag, 2016). Different voices in different disciplines have spoken about it, Galimberti traces the lack of the emotional bond and the consequent loneliness to an exasperated individualism that would be typical of our societies (Galimberti, 2007). Loneliness is considered an integral part of the development process in adolescence, in particular it results from the processes of separation and individualization which leads to emotional autonomy or the renunciation of dependence on parental representations. Emotional autonomy can therefore be considered the outcome of a process that takes place during adolescence in which solitude is the normal experience that accompanies it (Corsano *et al.*, 2014). However, it seems that the achievement of this emotional autonomy moves further and further, young people find themselves stranded in the previous phase, the one of loneliness that continues even after adolescence, in that nuanced and prolonged phase that precedes entry into the adult world. It is in fact here that loneliness loses its value as an experience of growth and is linked to negative emotions such as sadness, bewilderment and anguish, but above

all fear, fear of being alone and also confusion when they realize that they feel alone even with others. However, individual suffering is only the reflection of a collective culture that tends to annihilate the relationship bond. The acceleration of the rhythm of life, which I mentioned in the previous paragraph, affects all areas of life. In the sentimental sphere, the duration of a relationship no longer coincides with the duration of life: in late modernity, the duration of the family cycle lasts less time than an individual's life, the increase in divorces and marriages it is the proof (Rosa, 2012). This contributes to the perception of the transience of relationships as part of everyday life, and it is also so in friendships that by increasing in quantity they lose intensity and consequently duration. The fading of relationships also derives from the displacement of these in the online dimension, a more complex phenomenon than it seems, because on the one hand it is important to underline the fundamental role that the smartphone plays in creating and maintaining friendly, emotional or sexual relationships, from the other a greater number of mediated bonds also means more superficial bonds. The relationship that young people have with online relationships reflects this ambivalence: social is considered useful because it allows immediate communication and the elimination of distances, but young people recognize the negative influence of social media on sociality. In fact, messaging applications would have made the exchange more superficial than in an era in which relationships were considered more stable and profound, young people therefore seem to realize a "flattening of relationships" caused by the social networks (Dursian *et al.*, 2019: 42). The relationship between mediated communication and real communication is interesting. Communication in real life would seem to be conditioned by the methods of online dialogue, in the couple's relationship for example, a constant virtual dialogue would seem to make the interaction of presence more sterile since the continuous updating could cause monotony (*ivi*, 44). Young people therefore seem to realize the difference of online communication from offline and know how to juggle the two. However, it is not just a question of communication but also of ways of building the relationship which are proper to the virtual world and which, if transferred to the real world, contribute to increasing the sense of solitude and flattening. In *Cold Intimacy*, Eva Illouz talks about emotional relationships built through meeting sites, an extremely widespread practice, not only among young people. The knowledge of a person passes through a series of repeated and uniform meetings programmed by

the server (Illouz, 2007). Knowing a potential partner therefore becomes a mechanical gesture, a game of joints in which the personal characteristics described on the basis of self-perception must match the characteristics of the other. If this does not happen, people can scroll quickly and easily to the next person, as in the Tinder application. With all this choice, it is not even worth going deep into the knowledge of the other, also discovering the sides that do not match our ideal in person. Such a model leads to a continuous dissatisfaction with relationships and to a continuous exchange, from this it emerges a deep sense of loneliness.

### 7. *Disorientation and integration*

In this section I will address youth mobility: an ambivalent theme because talking about it means reconciling two sides of the same coin. While on the one hand the enthusiastic drive towards internationalization that characterizes the new generations is interesting, on the other it is a choice forced by distrust for one's country of origin. These two ways of experiencing mobility can also be opposed within the same person, they do not necessarily imply two ways of living the same experience. To define this ambivalence, we can use the terms of disorientation, *spaesamento*, (De Martino, 1977: 482) and integration, *apaesamento* (Mandich, 2010: 182). Feeling disoriented means living in an indefinite space-time, in a continuous metamorphosis, feeling in the balance between two contexts, disorientation is certainly the characteristic feature of the youthful condition (Mandich, 2010). Here we can find other causes for the emotions that make up the sad passions: the sadness of having to leave one's own places, the anger at the impossibility of being realized in one's own country, but also the fear of the unknown, shame and embarrassment in the approach of a new context with its culture and its rules. To this sense of bewilderment, however, young people seem to react through strategies of integration in the different places, proving to be able to face the uncertainties and to turn to their advantage a penalizing situation. This is the recognition of what is defined as a mobile generation that later declined into forms such as the Erasmus generation, from the name of the European project that allows mobility for work and study purposes between the countries of the European Union. The young people who participate choose to live a cosmopolitan biography that allows them to feel at home in the world and to experience multiple memberships. It is a process of deterritorialization as a tendency to abandon the local context as the reference for the construction of experience and

the consequent process of reterritorialization, or the ability to inhabit multiple spaces (Tomlinson, 2001). The young person's experience is to live a place by living the experience of dislocation, being already accustomed to variety also through the now normalized consumption of globalized cultural products. For Nathalie Heinich we can speak of generational collectives as tools of identity definition, in the sense in which we are not "young" but "the young" (Heinich, 2018: 42). In this perspective, the identity of young people is linked to national belonging but does not reduce there. It is in fact integrated with belonging to other categories, one of these could be belonging to a mobile generation, a sort of cosmopolitan nationality, an identity that derives from the possibility of having constructive experiences outside one's country of origin. A shared ground among young people of all that entails the condition of living away from home, the concept of *Bildung*, as personal development, takes on cosmopolitan characteristics. The need to know how to move, to adapt to multiple contexts becomes the pretext for feeling part of a generation in motion. Young people who decide to move to have more job / study opportunities are not passive, on the contrary they want to immerse themselves in another society and get to know the expressions of another culture. Entering the new context allows them to extend the field of the possible thanks to the increase in socialization possibilities and broaden the definitions of the world by acquiring the ability to know the other and consequently to have a better knowledge of oneself (Cicchelli, 2012). If we take the example of the Erasmus project we can realize that it is not a simple occasion limited to a person's experience for a short period of time, but a large storage that contains an imaginary made of common memories, sensations and emotions, which even if declined of the particular path of the individual, refer to a larger repertoire.

### 6. Ideology of the crisis

The various trends summarized so far can all be replaced in the large container that is the ideology of the crisis. This term refers to the idea of risk and precariousness which have gradually established themselves in the public sphere and are then filtered and normalized in the private sphere, influencing the way of acting and feeling. Faith and confidence in progress have weakened due to the various historical events and the impressions that have followed: the possibility of total destruction given by nuclear power, the constant degradation of the natural and social environment, the financial crisis (Cavalli, Calabrò, 2008) to these must be added the recent pandemic which demonstrated the unpredictability of the future and

the fragility of the system. This underlying uncertainty therefore determines a look at the future as restless and alarmed, that deeply affects the expectations of young people who have now internalized the idea of instability: the invitation to enter society, build one's career and social life in a straight line has been replaced by the idea of a future threat (Benasayag, Schmit, 2011). In the process of growth, the new generations carry a inheritance of concern that is perpetuated by both the family and the institutions predisposed to education, the latter do not transmit a teaching model based on curiosity, but rather a "useful" knowledge that "serve" to juggle the difficulties of life. The ideology of the crisis is the result of a process that lasts over time, it is from the eighties and nineties that the first doubts about the linearity of the growth process are instilled. In the text *Youth, citizenship and social change in a European context*, it is noticed the passage from the idea of trajectory to the idea of navigation to describe the path of young people towards adulthood, the trajectory is a straight path aimed at realization, navigation instead implies greater difficulties, consequently the ability and the need to remain afloat in a sea of uncertainty, knowing how to navigate in dangerous waters (Bynner *et al.*, 2019). In modern times, the trajectory defined as the life project was accompanied by the individual *Bildung*, that process of growth in a straight line that determined the construction of the biography. In the era of financial capitalism, the accelerated rhythm of life and the crisis, planning becomes an inadequate tool for looking and facing the future. The best strategy is to navigate, to know how to adapt to the flow of changes, without offering resistance (Mandich, 2010). The ideology of the dominant crisis in society is declined in the individual, fragmenting into all that series of difficulties that we have seen in the previous paragraphs. However, the sense of unease is not perceived as something extraordinary, an event to which young people are called to react. It is rather a generalized and normalized common sense that young people have internalized. If this last point may seem worrying precisely because it implies a disenchanting look with no way out, it can instead open the door to some hope. In fact, it would seem that in response to this idea of crisis two opposite attitudes are emerging that we can relate to the emotions of fear and anger: for some, fear becomes the main dominant, young people choose the passive attitude in dealing with what happens in the life, for others instead anger can become the incentive to reflect and demand an improvement in their condition. As confirmation of this, we take for example movements such as the *Indignados* in Spain, others protest in southern

Europe as in Greece and Portugal or the Arab springs that denounce the inability of politics to cope with the financial logics that regulate life. The austerity plans induced by the crisis have in fact added pain and frustration to the younger generations by urging them to action (Van de Velde, 2011). These sad passions can therefore be read in a positive key to trigger processes of self-awareness and response.

### 9. Conclusions

Emotions move in a tension between two dimensions, on the one hand they reflect socially shared forms of experience and knowledge, on the other they reflect individual predispositions. This tension is explained in the concept of emotion repertoires, that is, the appropriation of emotional concepts related to prototypical situations and the rules that regulate their expression. Leaving aside the processes of acquisition and use of these repertoires (see also Slaby and Scheve, 2019), what interests us is that these can be considered as building blocks that link the emotional lives of individuals to social structures, ideology and spheres of belonging. And it is precisely the sphere of belonging that I want to consider in this conclusion. Sad passions could in fact be considered as a sort of common basis for youth, a repertoire of sensations, emotions and moods, ways of dealing with a situation shared by a generation of the crisis. The individualization that is associated with young people then could be a false track with respect to the idea of solidarity and bond that unites those who find themselves in a difficult and uncertain situation. For example in the concept of disorientation, of which we spoke previously, the difficulty of finding roots and stability in a society that induces mobility, can be reversed in a sense of continuous mobility that creates a sort of common basis, a repertoire of experience in which the young person recognizes himself and feels sympathetic to the other. For young people who participate in the Erasmus experience, for example, a group of volunteers at European level, the Erasmus Student Network, has been created which allows young people who have participated in this experience to support the others who are participating, helping them to settle in a new city from all points of view but also reliving with them all that series of experiences that the Erasmus student faces. Being led to face uncertain situations, shifts, backtracks, adaptability and therefore common emotions: fear, anger, sadness generates solidarity rather than individualism, sad passions that create common sense. In this perspective, we will be able to see emotional repertoires as characteristics not only of social insitution or value spheres but also of a possible

new generational category in the sense intended by Mannheim (Mannheim, 1928). For the German sociologist, in fact, to compose a generation is a group of people who, in addition to being born in the same period of time, have in common values, attitudes and opinions regarding society and politics. Developing one's own identity is not a peculiarity referable to all generations, in fact there are two hypotheses: to make one's own the experience of the previous generation and its tradition or to accept one's own spontaneity and characteristics. In periods where social change is more intense and the cultural tradition of the previous generation weaker, generations define new styles and identities in harmony with the change that characterizes the historical moment (Merico, 2012). It seems that for a long time there have been no important events capable of acting as a generational reference, in fact there has been talk of a blocked generation (Pasqualini, 2011). In reality things are changing, the economic and financial crisis of 2008 destabilized everyone, including young people who have become accustomed to that ideology of the crisis that has been mentioned. This generation can then take as a generational reference the sad passions as a consequence of the components we have spoken of: accelerated rhythm of life, the difficulty in building relationships, the economic crisis and uncertain future. Sad passions, however, become part of a common identity of young people who react and take an interest in the public sphere, in common issues such as ecology or immigration, take the streets and are informed, they do not remain silent, they are a mobile generation (Pasqualini, 2011).

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