

The Youth Forum of the European Communities and Cooperation with the Latin America*

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Introduction

This essay is the continuation of the previous one published in this magazine which deals with the positions and activities of the Youth Forum of the European Communities concerning forms of development cooperation between EU countries and ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) countries. in the framework of the four Lomè Conventions (1975-1999)¹.

The last two Lomè Conventions, from the late seventies to mid-eighties, progressively introduced different forms of cooperation which also included cultural and social aspects. The European Community, moreover, in those years expanded its cooperation to non-colonial developing and democratizing countries, established a budget line for cooperation in Latin America and Asia and, in 1992, opened cooperation to non-governmental organizations and private entities².

Initially, the cooperation did not include broad participation of civil society, the decision-making processes were centralized and polarized between Western proposing countries and beneficiary developing countries. The assistance prevailed and the training aspects, that many considered fundamental for the independence and resourcefulness of the beneficiaries, were not envisaged.

In the 80s, after the big “up-bottom” projects, “bottom-up” micro-projects of NGOs spread, guaranteeing greater participation and sustainability, as well as satisfying the needs of the beneficiaries. In the 90s, new forms of development and cooperation also included civil, cultural and environmental issues, as well as economic and political ones. Human personal development and participation were thus part of the cooperation, alongside the issues of poverty, social exclusion, unemployment and environmental problems³. Europe engaged in the so-called "North-South dialogue", considered these

* The present work is a first systematization of the research carried out in 2019 at the Historical Archive of the European Union of Florence, funded thanks to the European Vibeke Sørensen Grant University Institute of Florence and was partially presented at the international online *Cooperating workshop Across Global Regions: Societal Actors, Transnational Mobilization, and Regional Integration 1960s-2020* (7-8 June 2021), organized by the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Center for Global Cooperation Research, University of Duisburg-Essen & Center for the Study of Transnational Europe, University of Portsmouth, with a report entitled *The Youth Forum of the European Communities and transregional cooperation*.

¹ G. MORESE, “The youth side of cooperation”: *lo Youth Forum of European Communities e la cooperazione con i paesi ACP, 1978-1996*, in «Itinerari di ricerca storica», n.s. 35 (2021), 1, pp. 179-199; EYFo (ed. by), *Anthology*, Bruxelles, EYFo, 2011.

² A. PIO (a cura di), *Europa-America Latina, nuove forme di cooperazione*, Milano, Unicopli, 1988; U. VILLANI, *In tema di cooperazione allo sviluppo, autodeterminazione dei popoli e diritti dell'uomo*, in A. PAPISCA, D. VELO (ed. by), *I rapporti verso l'esterno della Comunità dopo il 1992*, Bari, Cacucci, 1993, pp. 53-65.

³ On environmental cooperation in Latin America between the 1990s and the present see K. M. SIEGEL, *Regional Environmental Cooperation in South America: Processes, Drivers and Constraints*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

aspects in an international and regional framework and applied decentralized cooperation, opening to the involvement of local authorities and civil institutions.

Decentralized cooperation mobilized the population with their needs and priorities, bringing out the role of civil society in cooperation and promoting intercultural growth and education. The fourth Lome Convention of 1989 introduced the decentralized cooperation principle, which, since 1992, has been extended to developing countries in Latin America and Asia⁴. The opening of the European Community to cooperation with Latin America saw the active involvement of young Europeans, in a dimension of international cooperation and transnational mobilization through youth organizations.

The European institutions supported regional integration by promoting relations with other regional groupings across the world and in particular interregional relations with Mercosur, the Andean Community and Central America. Recent studies, in addition to reconstructing community involvement in supporting regional integration from the 1980s until today, have underlined how the initial European policy motivations have progressively shifted from geopolitics to geoeconomic issues, in the context of a rivalry with the United States⁵.

In the development of relations with the regions and countries, EEC concentrated not only with the former colonial countries but also with those of the south, promoting economic and development cooperation and conflict management through its Programmes. The European Community relied on its interregional model of interaction between regions and not between nation-states and proposed it as a development tool for Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By overcoming the problems between the Community's foreign policy and that of the individual Member States, the EEC structured its coordination policy based on the interregional model which, unlike in the European case, did not achieve the same results in Latin America⁶.

Integration, particularly economic, in developing regions was affected by the low degree of economic interdependence and the high level of dependence on economic relations with extra-regional realities. The role of external actors such as the EEC or the US in determining regional integration was fundamental in this context, but the model proposed by the EEC, based on continental experience, clashed with areas, in particular that of Latin America, where economic and social factors were profoundly different⁷.

Regional integration and its promotion were central for policy and relations inside and

⁴ F. PRAUSSELLO, *La cooperazione fra la CEE e l'America Latina*, in A. PAPISCA, D. VELO (ed. by), *I rapporti verso l'esterno della Comunità dopo il 1992*, cit., pp. 87-98; O. RETOUT, *The Europe, Asia, Latin America dialogue: financial and technical cooperation, 1976-1989*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1991.

⁵ T. LENZ, *From geopolitics to geoeconomics: the European Union's promotion of regional integration in Latin America, 1980s-today*, Saarbrücken, VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009. On a recent proposed European model of cooperation for Latin America see A. FROELICH, D. A. AMANTE SORIA (ed. by), *A Regional Space Agency for Latin America: Legal and Political Perspectives*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2021.

⁶ F. SÖDERBAUM, P. STÄLGRÉN (ed. by), *The European Union and the global South*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010. On the dissemination and interaction of regional organizations in Latin America since the 1990s see D. NOLTE, *Latin America's new regional architecture: a cooperative or segmented regional governance complex?*, Florence, European University Institute, 2014; E. VIVARES, *Exploring the new South American regionalism (NSAR)*, Farnham, Surrey, Burlington, Ashgate, 2014; P. RIGGIROZZI, D. TUSSIE (ed. by), *The rise of post-hegemonic regionalism: The Case of Latin America*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2012.

⁷ S. KRAPOHL (ed. by), *Regional Integration in the Global South. External Influence on Economic Cooperation in ASEAN, MERCOSUR and SADC*, Cham, Springer International Publishing (Imprint, Palgrave Macmillan), 2017.

outside the EEC e, at the civil and social level, it had the goal to transform regional conflicts by promoting integration as a preventative strategy to avoid conflicts turning violent and, in a long-term perspective, to mitigate and resolve them in a comprehensive and articulated institutional context⁸.

In addition to the EEC institutions, which were engaged in developing cooperation programs initially aimed at the former colonial countries, at the end of the 1970s, young people from the Member States formed their representative platform which advocated the need to open up cooperation to the cultural sphere and to promote social participation. The Youth Forum of the European Communities (YFEC), composed of the National Youth Councils (NYC) of the Member States and the International no-Governmental Youth Organizations (INGYO), active in Europe, was established in 1978 as an instrument of representation and action towards the EEC to support not only European integration, but also to promote political and cooperation initiatives involving also non-EU young people.

The YFEC, therefore, entered into the Community's development and cooperation policies and programs based on those structured within the framework of the Lomé Conventions and, in the early 1980s, advocated the need to extend policies, Community programs and funds in development cooperation to Latin America, including the no-Governmental Organizations⁹. In the 1980s, the EEC discussed the financing of development programs towards Latin America, particularly on environmental issues and the women's role in society, found the several Member States such as Italy to be favorable, Spain, Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany¹⁰.

In 1989 the YFEC in its two-year program, in the framework of North-South cooperation, decided to open up to the Latin American area where democratic institutions similar to those of Europe were being consolidated. The basis of this opening was, of course, the presence in Latin America of national and regional networks of youth organizations and a shared interest in reaching cooperation agreements.

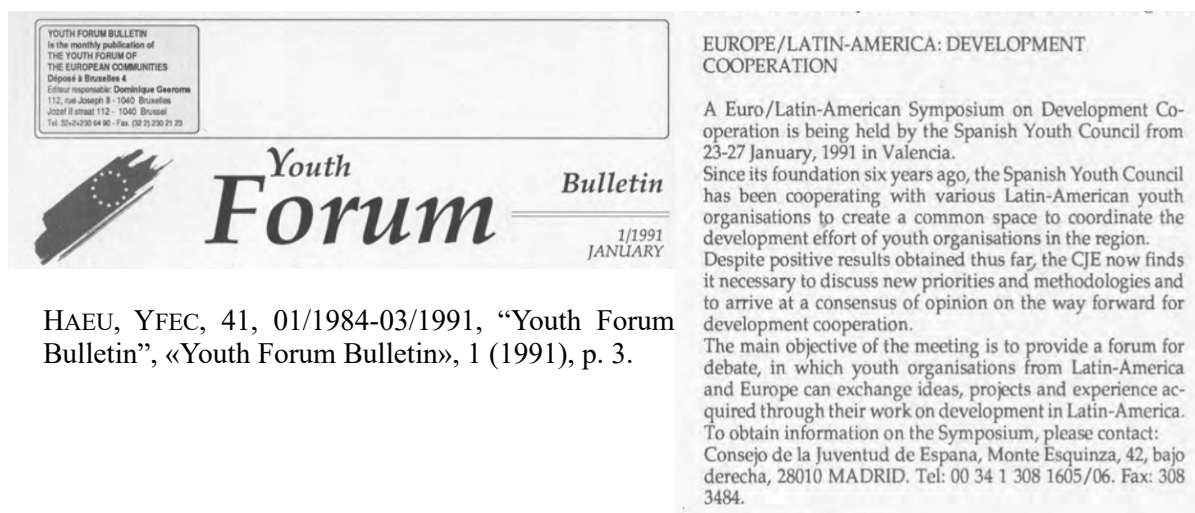
For young Europeans, the process of Latin American democratization, which began with the end of dictatorships, had favored the birth, alongside the associations that had been close to the regimes, also of new organizations or platforms of youth cooperation, but there was still no regional corporate institution¹¹. Based on European Community models, young Europeans wanted to favor the birth of regional youth coordination in Latin America by presenting regional integration as a factor of socio-economic development and political stability.

⁸ T. DIEZ, N. TOCCI (ed. by), *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution*, Cham, Springer International Publishing (Imprint, Palgrave Macmillan), 2017.

⁹ For a more comprehensive, but not exhaustive, framework on the YFEC and its positions on cooperation and development see G. MORESE, "The youth side of cooperation": *lo Youth Forum of European Communities e la cooperazione con i paesi ACP, 1978-1996*, cit., pp. 181-183

¹⁰ HISTORICAL ARCHIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (HAEU), YOUTH FORUM OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (YFEC), 11, 1981-1985, *ACP/EC Youth Co-operation Preparatory Group*, Report of the working group EC-ACP, 19-20 November 1983; *EC development policy*, in «Youth Opinion», 8 (1987), p. 2; ISTITUTO ITALO-LATINO AMERICANO, *Incontro sulla cooperazione dell'Europa allo sviluppo dell'America Latina, Roma, 19-21 giugno 1980*, Roma, Istituto Italo-Latino Americano, 1981.

¹¹ G. PASQUINO, *Militari e potere in America Latina*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1974; P. O'BRIEN, P. CAMMACK (ed. by), *Generals in retreat: the crisis of military rule in Latin America*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985; ORGANISATION DE COOPERATION ET DE DEVELOPPEMENT ECONOMIQUES, *Developpement et democratie. Les politiques d'aide en Amerique Latine*, Paris, Organisation de cooperation et de developpement economiques, 1992.



HAEU, YFEC, 41, 01/1984-03/1991, "Youth Forum Bulletin", «Youth Forum Bulletin», 1 (1991), p. 3.

Building cooperation between young Europeans and Latin Americans

Since 1986 the Spanish National Youth Council had been engaged in the establishment of a Latin American youth cooperation platform, but there were doubts about financial issues, skills and opportunities to be built on both the European and Latin American sides. There was, however, an awareness that at the political level young people would have to take autonomous decisions¹².

On the European side, Youth had to cat out a role in international cooperation outside the EU, developing a strategy in a global framework, in a long-term perspective and in a context different from the former colonial one in which he was working to start cooperation with the ACP countries in the framework of the Lomé Conventions. The YFEC set up a program that was divided into the first phase of exploration and contact to identify possible Latin American and European partners to conduct out lobby work towards European institutions and obtain funds to be used in cooperation projects.

In supporting Latin America's regional integration process, the YFEC's program relied mainly on the development of educational activities, relations and political dialogue between young people. The young Europeans, to start their program, politically recognized as their first partner the Consulta, the existing coordination body of the Latin-American Consultation of Youth Organizations¹³.

What was the state of cooperation with Latin America at the end of the 1980s? Globally, the three predominant ideologies, the Western, the Socialist and the non-aligned Third World countries, clashed with the non-global values rooted in political and cultural identities at the regional and interregional levels. At the same time, in economic terms,

¹² HAEU, YFEC, 22, 1990-1991, *ACP/EC Youth Cooperation Assembly*, Draft minute of the North/South general meeting, Nieuwpoort (Belgium), 17-18 November 1990

¹³ HAEU, YFEC, 22, 1990-1991, *ACP/EC Youth Cooperation Assembly*, *Quel role le Forum Jeunesse peut-il avoir en (ou) avec l'Amerique Latine? 1989-1990*; General meeting C – Latin America Working Group, Nieuwpoort (Belgium), 22-23, June 1991.

there was a division between industrialized and developing countries, but this was conditioned by regional and interregional differences. Latin America had its own international identity within the legal and economic framework, but it was not granted an autonomous status outside the East-West divisions, outside the Western context between Europe and the USA and outside the generic definition of "Third World.

In building its global autonomy, Latin America, for its complexity and internal articulation, had not been clearly identified with any of the existing divisions with which to structure its regional or interregional autonomy. Europe was thus part of the process of Latin American integration based on its experience of economic relations and cooperation with the Andean countries, Central and South America, fostered both by the recent accession of Spain and Portugal and by the recent return to plurality and democratic participation in almost all Latin American countries.

For the EEC's foreign relations and cooperation policy, Latin America had become a priority area for cooperation and development, while for the Latin American countries the favorable return to democratic life had coincided with the articulation of new and different political and economic relations with other regions¹⁴.

The dialogue between the EEC and Latin America had developed, at the level of cooperation, in the seventies as purely diplomatic in the fear that Europe would become an impenetrable economic region and open only to relations with Africa. Parliamentary dialogue, however, developed through meetings between the European Parliament in Strasbourg and the Latin-American Parliament, composed of representatives of the Latin-American parliaments, but only with symbolic function and without real political repercussions. The topics discussed were economic and political relations and focused on Latin American autonomy. There was also a ministerial dialogue that did not lead to an institutionalized meeting, but agreements were reached between the EEC and some groups of Latin American countries.

Among these agreements were economic cooperation agreements with the countries of the Andean Group and Central America, similar to those concluded by the EEC in the framework of the Euro-Arab dialogue and relations with South East Asia, different from the Lomé Conventions of economic-political nature¹⁵. Political cooperation was, however, implied to achieve the objective of democratic development and international peace and security, which was translated into the reciprocal exchange of practices, skills and experience.

What vision did young Europeans have of Latin America in the 90s and what was the situation of Latin-American youth? A study by YFEC carried out by Monica Frassoni and Ignacio Santos confirmed the different levels of integration in Latin America where there was no institution similar to the EEC which, after the accession of Spain and Portugal, had brought its attention to the area. On the other hand, the process of democratization had led the Latin American countries to consider cooperation with the EEC as an

¹⁴ M. PANEBIANCO, *Interregional co-operation in the North-South dialogue: Latin America and the European Community*, Florence, European University Institute, 1988, pp. 1-4; ID. (ed. by), *Europa comunitaria e America latina: integrazione e cooperazione. Atti del Convegno di Salerno, 28-30 aprile 1983*, Fisciano, U.D.S. - Istituto di diritto pubblico, stampa 1989; *Atti del Convegno Per una nuova cultura dello sviluppo. Strategie della cooperazione in America Latina*, Roma, 10-11 novembre 1987, Cesena, AVSI, 1988; A. CUEVAS, *Democrazia e sviluppo: problemi del consolidamento democratico in America Latina*, Roma, EL, 1986.

¹⁵ M. PANEBIANCO, *Interregional co-operation in the North-South dialogue: Latin America and the European Community*, cit., pp. 5-8.

alternative to the predominant American one¹⁶.

The young Europeans identified several sub-regions in Latin America: that of Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean region and the Mercosur (Southern Cone), all with different characteristics and in which cooperation and the integration process appeared difficult¹⁷.

The YFEC noted that in the 1980s the Central American Common Market and its parliament had failed to counter human rights violations in Guatemala, the financial crisis in Honduras, the civil war in El Salvador and the thorny political problems in Panama, showing all its limitations in ensuring peace and stability through integration and cooperation.

Different was the case of the Andean Pact which had solved various problems and consolidated the free trade area, and which presented itself as a winning model of regional integration also for the presence of the Andean Parliament, all despite the Peruvian civil war, the economic crisis in Ecuador and the ambiguous commercial position of Venezuela¹⁸.

The Andean Pact was an excellent basis for building a network of economic, political and cultural relations between young people, but for the YFEC was the Mercosur/Southern Cone, the most ambitious and lasting project that since the mid-1980s had already integrated large countries such as Argentina and Brazil and aimed at establishing a large common market¹⁹.

The solidity of the integration promoted by Mercosur/Southern Cone and its prevailing economic character, which reflected that of the EEC, represented for the YFEC the best opportunity to establish cooperative relationships in which youth organizations could integrate and help to extend activities to policy social and cultural aspects.

Young Europeans felt the need to support not only economic factors, but also social and cultural factors, aimed at social development to improve standards and quality of life, especially for disadvantaged people, through the development of vocational training, job creation and housing and health programs, involving Mercosur political parties in cooperation, to take advantage of the EEC's budget line dedicated to educational and training activities.

In surveying Latin American youth organizations, the YFEC noted that 40 organizations had participated in the 4th annual meeting of the *Latin American Consultation of Youth Organizations*, also called "Consulta", held in Santiago de Chile in 1990. The Consulta, which had become a full member of the *Ibero-American Intergovernmental Conference on Youth Policies*, known as the "Conferencia", was not a youth movement because it also included other types of organizations and some looked with suspicion at the "Consulta"

¹⁶ HAEU, YFEC, 22, 1990-1991, *ACP/EC Youth Cooperation Assembly*, Minutes of General meeting C - Ysermonde, 8-10 November 1991; Draft minutes of C2 meeting on Latin America.

¹⁷ *Prospects for the processes of sub-regional integration in Central and South America. Conference on the Prospects for the Processes of Sub-regional Integration in Central and South America, Brussels, 4-5 November 1991*, Madrid, Institute for European-Latin American Relations, 1992; A. GAUHER (ed. by), *Regional integration: the Latin American experience*, London, Third World Foundation for Social and Economic Studies, 1985.

¹⁸ A.I. ESCALONA ORCAO, *La cooperacion de la CEE al desarrollo de America Latina: el caso de los paises del Pacto Andino*, Florence, European University Institute, 1990.

¹⁹ INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS, *Cooperacion e integracion en el Cono Sur; adecuacion a un nuevo contexto internacional*, (Buenos Aires, 5-7 de julio de 1990), Madrid, IRELA, 1990; M. MEDEIROS, *La genèse du MERCOSUD: dynamisme interne, influence de l'Union européenne et insertion internationale*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2000; B. GALJART, P. SILVA (ed. by), *Democratization and the state in the southern cone: essays on South American politics*, Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1989.

because it was officially recognized during the period of Latin American dictatorships. In 1991, therefore, the "Conferencia" constituted a Euro-Latin-American Youth Center in Spain, known as CEULAJ, to encourage participation, foster relationships and contacts, to promote initiatives to strengthen the shared spirit of young Europeans and Latin Americans to launch cooperation programs between governments and organizations.

Concerning the situation of youth in Latin America, the documentation produced by the *Centro Latino Americano de la Juventud* (CELAJ) considered young people from the Latin American crisis and suggested possible developments in the following nineties. When considering youth conditions, factors such as education, employment, housing, health, leisure, participation and homogeneous groups such as university, urban and rural youth, popular youth and young women were taken into account.

Another aspect to consider was the role that young people could play in defining and addressing new challenges and, in particular, the involvement of youth organisations in tackling the crisis. The shared conviction was the need for young people to involve their non-integrated and disadvantaged peers to build a shared solidarity network and open up the activities of youth organisations to the most marginalised sectors through social networks²⁰.

Many and different were the youth organizations in Latin America: there were associations at the national level as in the case of the *Movimiento Juvenil por la Democracia in Chile*, there were coordination platforms of youth organizations at the national level, as in the case of Uruguay and the *Liga Peruana de la Juventud*, in addition to the many Youth Committees of the countries.

At the regional level, however, since 1987 the Central American youth organizations met every year in the *Central American Juvenil Conferencia por la Paz*, while since 1988 UNESCO promoted the Collective Consultation of the main continental youth organizations. In most countries there were government structures aimed at young people who had coordinated in continental cooperation through the Intergubernamentales Conferencias sobre Políticas de la Juventud en Iberoamerica, but at the same time private youth organisations were engaged in implementing, strengthening and dynamizing public structures and programmes²¹.

In March 1991, the YFEC participated in the Latin American-Caribbean-Europe Encounter in Santiago de Chile, organized by the North-South Center of the Council of Europe, intending to find opportunities for cooperation, in particular sustainable development and respect for human rights, in the changed European context after the fall of the Berlin Wall and in the run-up to the 1992 Single Market.

The meeting triggered the "Santiago Initiative", a document that stressed the intention to renew the cooperation between Europe and Latin America also because the democracies of the latter region, with those of the Caribbean, were considered "fragile" for their economic and financial problems. Through new forms of cooperation, therefore, the process of democratization could be consolidated, in particular by encouraging the participation of young people in political and economic life.

At the same time, the National Youth Institute of Chile hosted the seminar on

²⁰ For a general overview of the Latin American youth organizations and their involvement during the crisis of the 1980s, see the special issue of «CEPAL Review», 29 (1986) dedicated entirely to Latin American youth.

²¹ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, General Meeting on North-South, Overejse, 17 November 1989, Monica Frassoni and Ignacio Santos, *Latin America and the Youth Forum*.

"Cooperation between Europe and Latin America in the Youth Field" in which the YFEC also participated on the European side, while on the Latin American one the presence was recorded mainly of governmental organizations. The seminar ended with the elaboration of a "Santiago Declaration", but it was not a real opportunity to increase contacts between youth organisations at the level of non-governmental organisations and it failed to overcome its dependence on government structures in cooperation.

The "Santiago Declaration" proposed new methods of cooperation between North and South and between Europe and Latin America, based on mutual respect, mutual benefits, concrete social, political and economic development through multilateral cooperation. Cooperation between Europe and Latin America was to be based on a process of integration in which the various countries had to recognise the differences between them.

Concerning young people, actions should be taken to ensure better integration into society, adequate access to economic and social opportunities, in particular for marginalized young people in Latin America who are subject to discrimination and exclusion. Central were, therefore, the issues of education, training and employment of young people, as well as the issues of health or housing to make young people independent. The participation of young people was also essential for the construction of a more equitable, stable and peaceful global society, for the conservation and protection of the environment and to promote dialogue between North and South, as well as encouraging youth movements and organizations in political participation and decision-making processes.

Non-governmental youth organizations in Europe and Latin America had to engage in creating a coordination system for exchanges and cooperation on topics of shared interest, as well as government structures dedicated to young people with their international counterparts had to increase their relationships and support independent youth platforms and organizations. It proposed a "quadrilogue" cooperation involving governments (especially ministers responsible for youth), young parliamentarians, non-governmental youth organizations and local authorities. The process of international consultation and cooperation was to involve actors with recognized representativeness, stability and legitimacy, while the development of concrete cooperation was to be gradual, depending on the internal development of each partner involved between national and regional level²².

The YFEC understood that there were many youth organizations active in Latin America, but whose characteristics and development differed from country to country. In Chile, for example, there were about ten national coordination youth organizations similar to European NYC, and then there were other organizations operating under an illegal or semi-illegal regime that were trying to redefine their role in the changing national scenario.

The National Union of Students in Chile was the only organization that guaranteed democratic participation, bringing together different political forces, objected to election results, promoted political discussions and received popular support. The local student leaders had become national political leaders and central figures in the battle against dictatorships, but in a completely changed context they had shown their inexperience, as in the case of the proposed educational reform or the development of concrete policies, always ending up relegated to the opposition.

²² HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Report on the Latin America/Caribbean-Europe encounter, Santiago del Chile, March 1991; Youth Seminar, Santiago Declaration, Santiago, 16 March 1991.

The student movement was not the only one active in the period of transition from dictatorship to democracy in Chile (among others there was the native movement or that of feminism) but shared with others the need to develop new strategies, to review the old ones and to influence the political sphere, between institutional and non-institutional policies, passing from the relationship between social movements to those with political institutions²³.

In general, there was no framework for youth organizations to engage in dialogue with the government, there was no clarity in the relationship between government structures and youth organizations that, also, suffered a lack of resources and infrastructure. This situation made it difficult to develop international cooperation, but organizations were internationally-minded and were developing platforms for cooperation on the Latin American level, showing interest in contact with the European youth.

In the nineties there was a widespread perception of the decline of the sovereignty of states that induced social movements, not only youth, to organize the formation of transnational networks and coalitions, to exert social and political pressure on national states and international organizations. In the formation of these transnational networks, several themes and issues were addressed with specific objectives to be achieved through the adoption of tactical strategies focused mainly on transnational participation to influence national governments.

In the context of the dialogue and dynamics between North-South and South-South, the structuring of transnational multi-level relations was often favorable to left-wing governments and, in the articulated and complex interaction, was able to influence national policies on particular issues²⁴. The young Latin Americans, already active on the domestic side, found support in the young Europeans who were committed to promoting shared values and projects and based on the experience of transnational integration, not accepted by all young Europeans, that the EEC was realizing in those years.

The YFEC, in developing new relations with Latin America, had to consider a complex framework of actions rather than focusing on the specific activities that any youth organization could conduct. In addition, the YFEC found itself having to interact, for any form of cooperation at a youth level, not with similar institutions at a continental or sub-regional level, but with individual states and governments. The integration experience underway in Latin America, which was different from that based on the EEC, did not provide for common institutions or the resignation by States of certain powers in favour of external bodies, but it was essentially based on voluntary cooperation between sovereign governments.

On the youth side, the Latin American youth platforms were conditioned by the lack of international partners, but they could count on the presence of continental institutions that discussed youth issues such as, for example, the Iberoamerican Intergovernmental Conference on Youth Policy, considered as the institutional counterpart of the Council. The Latin American area was perceived as increasingly marginal in the external relations of the EEC, so it seemed useful for young Europeans to develop new relations with youth

²³ S. DONOSO, M. VON BÜLOW (ed. by), *Social Movements in Chile: Organization, Trajectories, and Political Consequences*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; D. L. VAN COTT, *From movements to parties in Latin America: the evolution of ethnic politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005; E. AMODIO, *I figli del rimorso: cooperazione internazionale e culture indigene in America Latina*, Roma, ASAL, 1987.

²⁴ E. SILVA (ed. by), *Transnational activism and national movements in Latin America. Bridging the divide*, New York, Routledge, 2013.

organizations and structures, beyond the framework of development cooperation²⁵.

Bearing in mind the EEC funding lines dedicated to cooperation between the old continent and the Latin American area, the main objective of cooperation was to stimulate, according to the European model, economic relations by promoting trade, investment and improvement of the general social and economic conditions of the population.

Non-economic social development and intercultural learning, within the framework of development cooperation, were not at the heart of the priorities financed and the only EEC budget line to be used in cooperation with Latin America was that relating to education and training activities. The YFEC believed that precisely in this way it was possible to seize the opportunities to start youth cooperation between Europe and Latin America by setting up training programs. The problem for young Europeans was their lack of knowledge of how to access and manage that budget line for youth cooperation and there were no direct opportunities for youth cooperation under the cooperation agreements, but it was possible to investigate some indirect financing possibilities²⁶.

Because the second Euro-Latin American symposium in 1993, the YFEC took steps to organize a joint meeting with the Consulta to make early contacts with representatives of young Latin Americans and to propose possible activities. In assessing the overall situation, the YFEC found that non-governmental organizations had already established contacts and relationships with organizations operating in shared sectors, while the YFEC was more suited to launch specific forms of cooperation on certain issues²⁷.

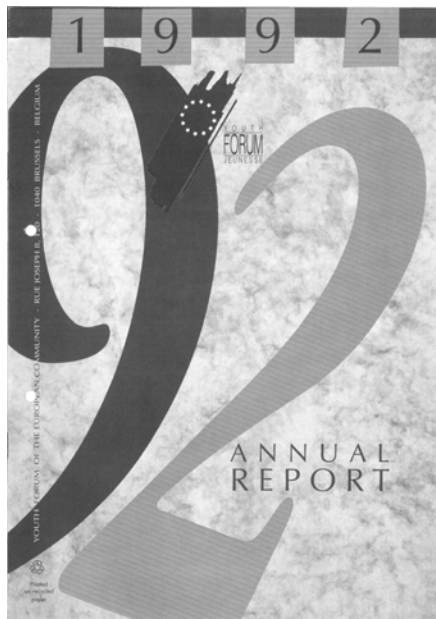
As part of the organization of the joint meeting with the Consulta, the YFEC stressed its role as a representative youth platform towards the EEC institutions and, therefore, its action programs in the framework of North-South relations reflected the priorities set by the Community. The topics of interest to the YFEC, which could therefore be applied in development cooperation programs for both European and Latin American young people, were those of the environment, sustainable development, the drugs problem, democracy, human rights, "Vie associative", the development of information for young people, education, employment, training, exchanges, poverty, young women and children²⁸.

²⁵ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, General meeting C – Latin American working group, working programme, 1991.

²⁶ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Latin America - European Community existing budget lines and cooperation agreements, November 1991.

²⁷ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Latin American Working Group C2, April 24-26, 1992.

²⁸ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Working document of the YFEC Latin American Working Group for Joint Meeting with the Latin American Consultation of Youth Organization ("The Consulta"), June 1992.



C2- LATIN AMERICA

1) The group heard MIGUEL NUNEZ from the Spanish NGO, «Las Segovias» talk on the issues of alternative development and the environmental crisis. Group members Alejandro Moraga and Mireille Murawski presented their document on «The Situation of Young People in Latin America.»

The Latin American Guide was published in English and French in September.

2) The group evaluated the progress made and drew up a proposition for the 1993-1995 work plan.

YFEC, 54, 1982-1994, Annual Report, 1992 Annual Report, p. 12.

The Euro-Latin American symposium took place in Spain in 1993 and was organised with the CEULAJ (Euro-Latin-American Youth Center), the YFEC, the Spanish National Youth Council and was also attended by the Council of the European National Youth Committee (CENYC) and the Coordination Bureau of International Youth Organizations (ECB). The CENYC was the European platform of the National Youth Committees, including non-member states, established in 1963, while the ECB was the reference since 1971 for the International no-Governmental Youth Organizations active in Europe²⁹.

The symposium concluded with a final declaration, presented and adopted by all participants as a basis for future cooperation, which indicated the guidelines and conditions to be implemented jointly, not hiding the difficulties and needs of young people and their organizations. In addition, a joint action priority plan for 1993 was drawn up including information and awareness courses, seminars and exchanges for local development³⁰.

At the end of 1993, at the end of five years of work at regional and sub-regional levels in Latin America, a platform of youth organizations was finally established: the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud (also known as COYAL: Consultation of youth organizations in Latin America). The Foro Latino Americano was composed of 40 international organizations, national Councils or national coordination platforms of young Latin Americans and was, therefore, an expression of the social context that emerged with the end of military regimes.

The opposition to dictatorships and repression in Latin America had, in fact, progressively transformed into movements that supported anti-colonialism, socio-

²⁹ On the presence of the various European platforms representing youth associations and their activities in the context of the process of European unification and in relation to the Council of Europe, see L. EBERHARD HARRIBEY, *L'Europe et la jeunesse, comprendre une politique européenne au regard de la dualité institutionnelle Conseil de l'Europe - Union européenne*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002.

³⁰ HAEU, YFEC, 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Report of the Euro-Latin-American symposium CEULAJ, Malaga, January 21-24, 1993.

economic rights, the local identity and which were based on the idea of rights and democratic institutional models that came from the West. Into the construction of democratic participation and political communities were involved all these movements that included students, artists, migrants, intellectuals, priests. In this context was inserted the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud which, overcoming the Consulta considered by some compromised with previous regimes, brought together several local youth actors with the aim of building transnational solidarity from the bottom up through the participation of the excluded³¹.

In 1994 a meeting was held between the YFEC and the Uruguayan Julio Bango, representing the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud, for which the great challenge of the decade for Latin America was to put democracy into practice, stressing that the Latin American area was a complex and multi-dimensional reality. Decentralized cooperation, outside government levels, between non-governmental organizations was welcomed, but it was feared that through the financing of cooperation governments could use non-government organizations as instruments for their political objectives. Bango, therefore, raised the delicate question of aid granted to countries with oppressive governments through non-governmental organizations that could find obstacles and difficulties in their activities.

The Uruguayan representative recalled how the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud was formed in December 1993, during a decade that had experienced profound political changes in Latin America. Youth structures in Latin America were usually controlled by governments, but the Foro was set up to allow youth organizations to be independent, to operate freely and to seek solutions to the crisis of participation that had occurred. The young Latin Americans had faced problems with resources to carry out their initiatives and were faced with a clear shortage of policies and legislation in favour of young people.

Considering that the role of the Consulta, which has already been active for several years, has now been superseded, the Foro promoted many objectives to be achieved, including the coordination of existing youth structures and regional lobbying initiatives for youth policies, as well as initiating forms of international cooperation including the YFEC. On a concrete level, therefore, the aim was to create a flow of information between the YFEC, the Forum and all the member youth organizations to build a network of relations on which, then, organize a joint activity, identified immediately in a joint Euro-Latin American training event to prepare for further initiatives³².

A new Euro-Latin American youth meeting took place in Alicante, Spain, in 1995, which led to the proposal to set up a Euro-Latin American Liaison Committee consisting of representatives of the young members of the YFEC, the ECB, CENYC and, of course, at the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud.

The Committee had to organize a training course dedicated to young European and Latin American leaders, to be prepared for the launch in two sub-regions of Latin America of projects in the framework of the Youth For Europe III program of the EU. The aim was to prepare some young leaders for the drafting of youth exchange programs to be implemented with the contribution of the European Youth Center of the Council of Europe and the North-South Centre³³.

³¹ J. STITES MOR (ed. by), *Human rights and transnational solidarity in Cold War Latin America*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.

³² HAEU, YFEC, 25, 1992-1995, *ACP/EC Youth Co-operation*, Draft minutes of the meeting of political commission on interdependence and solidarity, Brussels, May 27-29, 1994.

³³ ID., *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, The Euro-Latin-American youth

The Young Europeans had, therefore, based on their experience in the field of cooperation under the Lomé Convention and in this respect the YFEC the Foro, CENYC and the ECB officially formalized the cooperation relations between the European youth platforms and the Foro, their new Latin American counterpart, foreseeing within a year not only to start some training activities but also a new meeting³⁴.



Latin America

In 1994 contacts with the newly created Latin American youth structure (Foro Latinoamericano de Juventud - FLAJ) intensified. Presence at each others' major events and preparation for deeper cooperation were the main achievements of the year.

The Youth Forum member organisations and the representative of FLAJ in PC 3 emphasised the need for regular exchange of information and for a joint training event. Preparations for a Euro-Latin American Youth Encounter began at the end of the year together with CENYC, ECB and FLAJ. A study of Latin American youth organisations was started together with FLAJ.

YFEC, 54, 1982-1994, Annual Report, 1994 Annual Report, p. 11.

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, YFEC had initiated forms of contact and collaboration in Latin America, a region in which half the population was under 30 years of age and where military dictatorships had left some 220 million people below the poverty line³⁵.

Between 1990 and 1993, the YFEC had relations with the Latin American Council of Non-governmental Organizations, participating in the process that led to the establishment of the Foro Latino Americano de Juventud in 1993. The YFEC started

encounter, Alicante, January 22- 29, 1995.

³⁴ Id., *ACP/EC Youth Co-operation*, Minute of the joint steering group of the ACP-EC youth cooperation, Paris, February 4-5, 1995.

³⁵ J. HUBERT, *Cooperacion economica entre la Comunidad Europea y America Latina: Posibilidades y opciones*, Madrid, IRELA, 1987; C. FRERES, A. MOLD, *European Union Trade Policy and the Poor. Towards Improving the Poverty Impact of the GSP in Latin America*, in W. HOUT (ed. by), *EU development policy and poverty reduction: enhancing effectiveness*, London-New York, Routledge, 2007, pp. 33-46

relations with the Foro to implement cooperation programs, considering that, also in 1993, the European Parliament had promoted activities with the young people of Cuba and within the framework of Mercosur.

Drawing on the experience of the YFEC in cooperating with the ACP countries under the Lomé Convention, the European Union delegates in Latin America were mobilized by young people to raise funds and, above all, useful information to start programs. Latin American non-governmental youth organizations were involved to strengthen the emerging democracies, along with European ones, to consolidate cooperation in the area. The objectives of the YFEC were to extend participation in European programs to all youth organizations and to allocate funds for cooperation in MERCOSUR and with Cuba, to which non-governmental youth organizations should have access³⁶.

In building a partnership between young Europeans and Latin Americans, the YFEC stressed the commitment of young Europeans and their organizations to the development of dialogue and initiatives between the North and the South of the world. The limited resources available and the different priorities of the various participating organizations had led the YFEC to play a coordinating role by supporting the need to deal with not only continental issues.

Confirming the centrality of EEC policies in the framework of the North-South dialogue, young Europeans articulated their commitment between practical and political activities which in the case of Latin America comprised three levels. The first was that of mutual knowledge and understanding between the European reality and Latin America in general and youth in particular. The second level provided for the design and implementation of initiatives between training and development education programs involving grass-roots. The third level included all the activities to be carried out in a political sense for the recognition of youth representatives and for obtaining financial support³⁷.

In a new area of work for the YFEC, which until then had a relative experience in cooperation under the Lomé Conventions, two central points were established: identify Latin American partners and set the objectives that the YFEC intended to achieve in the area. After formal and informal relations with the North-South Centre and the CEULAJ (Euro-Latin American Youth Centre), YFEC members produced several study papers that reconstructed regional policies in Latin America and elaborated proposals to address youth structural problems at the regional and sub-regional levels.

At the same time, the YFEC launched an internal discussion to encourage participation and make concrete proposals, while a working group was active in the search for budget lines relating to Latin America and cooperation agreements between the old continent and South America. This activity took place while young Europeans were thinking about the fusion of their three representative platforms (YFEC, CENYC and ECB) in a perspective of building a global youth policy that would overcome the privileged relationship with the European Union.

There was a more incisive collaboration between the three European youth platforms which, thanks to the ECB that supported international non-governmental youth organisations, favored the opening up to the Latin American area. It was then the European Youth Forum (EYFO), set up in 1996, which carried out initiatives at a global

³⁶ HAEU, YFEC, 121, 1996, *Solidarity Committee*, Working group on interdependence and solidarity, 1996.

³⁷ ID., 24, 1989-1995, *North/South Working Group and Latin American Working Group*, Working document of the YFEC Latin American Working Group for Joint Meeting with the Latin American Consultation of Youth Organisation ("The Consulta"), June 1992.

and no longer European level, including cooperation and development education programs.



C. North/South issues

ACP/EC

Within the framework of the Lomé Conventions, (contractual trade and cooperation agreements between the EC and 69 African, Caribbean and Pacific States), ACP youth organisations have been involved in a dialogue with Youth Forum member organisations since 1986. This cooperation is now developing in the form of training seminars, a study on North/South youth co-operation and a pilot project on youth exchanges in East Africa.

LATIN AMERICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN ISSUES

A working group on Latin American issues was set up in 1991 and cooperation began with the Latin American Consultation of Youth Organisations (Consulta) and the North/South Centre of the Council of Europe. A group on Mediterranean issues was also set up, thus expanding the scope of our North/South involvement.

HAEU, YFEC, 55, 1982-1987, Various Publications, 1995 YFEC presentation brochure, p. 3.

The initial new policy developed by the YFEC towards the Latin American area reflected European cooperation policies for developing countries and, of course, led to the implementation of a program based on existing cooperation instruments between the two areas, giving priority to regional integration processes, including through the youth component³⁸.

As with the ACP countries, the YFEC undertook to coordinate the efforts of its members to foster the development of youth organizations in Latin America and a platform for their coordination and representation at a global level. The young Europeans confirmed their position that they did not want to formally export a model whose roots were in the European context, completely different from the Latin American one³⁹.

The young Europeans, since the eighties, had wondered if the form of Western democracy was suitable in other contexts and if exporting this model, above all, did not represent an imposition that was assimilated to a new and different form of colonialism. This question, which has now returned to the centre of the debate, was raised among the young people of the YFEC at first glance about the ACP countries and had, therefore, led to favour cultural aspects of the various territories and decision-making autonomy at the

³⁸ M. LISTER, *The European Union and the South*, London, Routledge, 1997.

³⁹ *Europe-Latin America development cooperation*, in «Youth Opinion», 1 (1991), p. 3.

territorial level⁴⁰.

Decentralized cooperation, supported by the YFEC both within the framework of the Lomé Conventions and concerning the Latin American area and then the Mediterranean, brought civil society into the international development and cooperation programs. Local and regional authorities and civil institutions established a mutual collaboration between the realities of the North and the South of the world in the design and implementation of initiatives involving developed and developing areas, taking into account the needs and priorities of each area, to promote fair and sustainable development and the spread of democratic processes, thus overcoming the centralized approach perceived as imposed outside the realities of application of the programmes⁴¹.

In the YFEC, there was no lack of discordant voices towards the European model which had produced social and economic inequalities and the young Europeans themselves had sometimes encountered difficulties in their democratic relationship with the European institutions. If the YFEC was engaged in building democratic and constructive participation of young people in the EEC/EU, all the efforts of young people from other parts of the world in their journey towards possible democratic forms alternative to those of the West were to be supported.

Central was, therefore, between young Europeans and Latin Americans the discussion and dialogue for the exchange of ideas, projects, experiences and, therefore, identify the priorities, methodologies and mutual objectives.

In addressing common problems, young people grasped the different aspects of their problems such as marginalization, poverty and the different treatment of women, especially young women. The solution to these problems was sought through direct involvement not only in practical activities but also in decision-making processes, to ensure wider and more articulated democratic participation.

In the concrete implementation of initiatives that could affect policy choices and development education programs, the central issues of education, the environment and sustainable development had to be addressed. Vocational training was designed to solve the problems of youth unemployment and poverty, and intercultural education was designed to integrate and combat exclusion⁴². In a broader perspective, however, environmental and sustainable development issues intertwined with other issues including development education, new economic-productive models, new skills and professional figures.

In this context, the training of young leaders in cooperation, being able to work at a regional and global level for the solution of these issues was considered a priority by the young Europeans and Latin Americans who were building their relational and organizational network.

The issue of alliances between movements of a regional or international nature can also include the case of young Europeans and Latin Americans whose organizations were involved in a process that from regional integration opened to the global dimension. The organizational alliances built by the YFEC with the Latin American counterparts, but also with young people from ACP countries, included student associations, environmental,

⁴⁰ J. PEVEHOUSE, *Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization*, in «International Organization», 56 (2002) 3, pp. 515-549.

⁴¹ R. YOUNGS, *The puzzle of non-western democracy*, Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.

⁴² M. SANTERINI, *La scuola fuori della scuola: l'educazione non formale in America Latina*, Roma, Lavoro, 1990.

trade union, scout, those relating to women or particular social and ethnic groups.

To build spaces of democratic participation for young people in political choices and decision-making processes, the platforms exploited the crisis and the phase after the fall of the South American dictatorships to improve the relations of cooperation enhancing the social and human aspects, rather than the political-economic ones⁴³.

The YFEC reiterated in its cooperation with the young Latin Americans what it had already done with the young people of the ACP countries and what it was supporting towards the European Union, namely the need to develop social policies to resolve, through regional and international cooperation, the issues affecting in particular the youth component of society, proposing the expansion of social citizenship⁴⁴.

The youth components also promoted the dissemination of institutional mechanisms to support the promotion and protection of human rights and for the development of humanitarian practices, through youth cooperation in integration processes between the regional and transnational levels⁴⁵.

The YFEC also supported the process of legitimizing Latin American youth representatives, as it was doing towards the EEC, with the formal recognition of the right to participate in decision-making processes and initiatives, between the regional dimension and an increasingly global perspective. The meetings between young Europeans and American Latrines, the mutual recognition and support, the input to constitute representative platforms towards the institutions involved in regional integration processes, the training of young people on development and cooperation programs, the drawing up of concrete projects were the practices adopted by young people to be recognized as having a legitimate role at regional and international level⁴⁶.

The international, or rather global, dimension was ensured by the widespread and articulated presence of non-governmental youth organizations which, with their formal independence and distance from political logic, should have ensured maximum democracy in decision-making and participation. Civil society, in this case with its youth component, was part of the processes of consolidation of democratic forms on both the European and Latin American sides, promoting new forms of citizenship that could be built through regional integration processes⁴⁷.

The civil and political mobilization of young people, both Latin American and European, was based on the idea of democratic participation and moved in the direction of the formulation of policies and initiatives that operated at both national and international level, having as a reference the authoritative institutional structures at the transregional level⁴⁸.

⁴³ N. VAN DYKE, H. J. MCCAMMON (ed. by), *Strategic alliances: coalition building and social movements*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

⁴⁴ A. BIANCULLI, A. C., RIBEIRO HOFFMANN (ed. by), *Regional Organizations and Social Policy in Europe and Latin America A Space for Social Citizenship?*, Basingstok, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

⁴⁵ M. HERZ, R. SUMMA, *Regional Organization and Humanitarian Practices*, Humanitarian Actions in situations other than war (Hasom), 2014, Discussion paper 9, May, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Regional-Organization-and-Humanitarian-Practices.pdf> (last access: December 2021).

⁴⁶ G. MACE, *Input legitimation dynamics in regional organizations: Mercosur and civil society*, in «International Politics», 58 (2021), pp. 704-722; <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00255-3>.

⁴⁷ M. PEREIRA NETO, *La riunione di Guadalajara fissa le basi del processo di integrazione ibero americano in vista del terzo millennio*, in A. PAPISCA, D. VELO (ed. by), *I rapporti verso l'esterno della Comunità dopo il 1992*, cit., pp. 99-107.

⁴⁸ For a critical perspective on the European contribution to the democratization of Latin America see R. DOMÍNGUEZ, *The Limits and Contributions of the EU to Democracy in Latin America: The Cases of Mexico*,

While national and transnational governmental institutions focused on the promotion of interests that were functional to shared policies, Non-governmental institutions represented both sub-national and trans-regional interests that did not find full expression in political choices. The YFEC and its Latin American counterparts operated to be formally recognized and, therefore, to become official institutions of representation and participation in decision-making processes that demanded, from their governmental or transnational counterparts, transparency, responsiveness and accountability⁴⁹.

Venezuela and Honduras, in A. BOENING, J.F. KREMER, A. VAN LOON (ed. by), *Policies, actions and influence of the EU's external relations. Global Power Europe, vol 2, Global Power Shift*. Berlin, Springer, 2013, pp. 181-197.

⁴⁹ S. PIATTONI, *The theory of multi-level governance: conceptual and normative challenges*, Oxford, University Press, 2010.