

## **Juvenile Imagination and the Government of the Soul: Observing and Directing Imagination at the Intersection of youth welfare and youth research ca. 1920-1960**

The project examines how juvenile imagination was turned into an object of youth research and science-based welfare in the German states between 1920 and 1960. By presenting a historical epistemology of welfare technologies in the German-speaking countries, it contributes to a field of study that has until now only partially been explored

Both youth research and youth welfare are dynamic fields of discourses and practices during the period under study and have neither a uniform methodological or disciplinary canon nor a uniform institutional structure. To determine the historical form and function of knowledge about juvenile imagination, a methodological approach is proposed that reconstructs the knowledge practice of administrative and welfare authorities based on the development, consolidation or disappearance of assessment and controlling technologies as well as forms of encouragement. The descriptive vocabulary is based on an expanded concept of biopolitics, that focuses on the microdynamics of concrete knowledge and regulation techniques.

In order to investigate these microdynamics, the research project draws on three regional case studies, that allow – not least due to a very good source situation – to reconstruct and compare the characteristic interaction of youth welfare and youth research in the changing political regimes. To do so, the project focuses on three leading techniques of assessment and control of juvenile imagination: 1) The development and consolidation of science based vocational guidance and aptitude diagnostics by the Hamburg Institute for Youth Research and the Hamburg Youth Welfare Office; 2) The creation and functioning of institutions for educational observation by the Welfare Seminar of the University of Frankfurt am Main and the Frankfurt Welfare Office; 3) The practice of open youth work of the Youth Welfare Office Prenzlauer Berg and the theoretical reflection of this practice in the framework of various Berlin based welfare academies as well as the Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute.

In addition to existing research, the project aims to create a better understanding of whether and how change in political conditions in the German states between 1920 and 1960 were connected to concrete changes in biopolitical control techniques. By examining the area of overlap between youth research and youth welfare the project also intends to make a methodological contribution to the historical analysis of political functions of scientific knowledge in the context of state administration and civil self-organisation.