New Perspectives on Democratic Breakdown

Weimar's Youth: Mobilisation and Discourse Networks

Abstract:

Citizen involvement and the institutions of civil society can be decisive for the collapse of a democratic regime. Research on the Weimar Republic pointed to undemocratic mobilisation in this regime crisis. However, the specific profile of those who mobilised during Weimar's breakdown has been ignored. The systematic analysis of primary sources underlines the prevalence of political youth mobilisation. Their political practice triggered controversial debates about the meaning of youth which shaped the way contemporaries made sense of their political reality. Youth encompassed debates beyond the social group and conflicts over the meaning of youth convey conflicts in Weimar's democracy. My study examines a corpus of newspaper articles through a technique of discourse analysis that combines qualitative content analysis with network analysis. This is the first time this method is applied to regime change. This research allows, on a theoretical level, a reconceptualization of the political role of youth in democratic breakdowns.

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The collapse of the Weimar Republic has refined understandings of the processes leading to democratic breakdown (Lepsius 1978, Zimmermann 1993). However, in contrast to the historiography on the period (Ganyard 2008, Klönne 2008, Krabbe 1995, Peukert 1987b, Reulecke 2001, Stambolis 2003, Weinrich 2013), political scientists concentrating on "ordinary people" have undervalued the role of political youth mobilisation in this regime change (Berman 1997, Bermeo 2003). Through their political mobilisation, young people embraced and reinforced Weimar's political divides. Moreover, such mobilisation amplified public debates over the meaning of youth that divided political camps and became a central element to convey the gradual failure of democracy to the citizenry. Analysing youth underlines the tensions which destabilised Weimar's political system, a system which was simultaneously political chaos and high-culture, renewal and doom.

Democratic Weimar's breakdown generates theoretical insights about the importance of youth in regime change. Young people influence the unfolding of these crises through their political mobilisation which society perceives as being authentic. Moreover, discussions about the meaning of youth sustain wider debates about a country's past and allow to imagine a country's future: politicians, journalists, and others cite glorious contributions of past youth to national advancement and thereby endow contemporary youth with a historic mission; a lost young generation is portrayed as a threat to the society's future and delegitimises political systems. The symbol youth thus captures competing interpretations over what regime change means. Youth is particularly suitable to turn into this permeable symbol given the constant biological renewal of who counts as a young person. Youth is therefore not a primarily age-bound category but the result of what the public understands as youth.

Youth mobilisation during Weimar's breakdown adds to existing theories of regime change. It has been emphasised, that strategic interactions between elites and masses are crucial for understanding processes leading to such change (Haggard and Kaufman 2012: 497). The causal mechanisms underlying these interactions remain, however, poorly understood given a traditional focus on levels of socio-economic development (Diamond 1992, Lipset 1960), strategies of political elites (Rustow 1970), or long-term structural components (Moore 1966). Key studies on regime change neglect the processes involved in mobilisation of the masses as Gill emphasises (2000: 82), not to mention the age profile of those who mobilise. Bermeo confirms that "the role of popular organizations in the transition process remains a subject of some confusion" (1997: 305).

The prism of youth in the Weimar Republic highlights the range of possible futures until Hitler's *Machtergreifung* [seizure of power] in February 1933. These competing scenarios illustrate opportunities for the political elites, but also constraints. I argue that politicians, alongside journalists and citizens, deliberated about the persistent weight of past legacies through the symbol youth. But youth also allowed Weimar to sustain beliefs of a brighter future. This temporal anchorage over-politicised the meaning of youth. Young people responded to those discursive structure in their political mobilisation. Their street confrontations furthered the high level of political violence (Schumann 2009).

This research makes use of a recent methodological innovation for text analysis. Discourse Network Analysis enables me to systematically examine the meaning structure around youth and to relate this to the political mobilisation of young people. To my knowledge, this is the first time this new method is applied to understand the processes leading to regime change.

The article proceeds as follows. I contextualise Weimar's breakdown in the literature, and then introduce the method of Discourse Network Analysis and the data. Afterwards, I present

the results of the network analysis and provide a detailed empirical discussion. Lastly, I draw wider theoretical conclusions for the significance of youth during democratic breakdown.

CONTEXT: POLITICS AND YOUTH IN INTERWAR GERMANY

In the early years of Weimar's Republic, a majority of citizens wanted to leave the authoritarian past behind: "[D]emocracy was both desirable and inevitable" (Anderson 2000:399). The November Revolution of 1918 expressed support for an egalitarian *Volksstaat* [People's State] (Rosenberg 1964) and kindled hopes for a responsive political system (Albertin 1997: 59-60). Weimar received one of Europe's most advanced constitutions and citizens took advantage of new possibilities for participation which the *Aufbruchstimmung* [sense of a new beginning] offered (Berman 1997: 417).[1] The progressive media prominently covered the pro-Republican *Reichsbanner* festivities of 11 August, the day when Friedrich Ebert signed the constitution (Ziemann 2013). Youth welcomed these beginnings to overcome the constraints of the world of its fathers (Stambolis 2003: 92).

For youth, this *Aufbruchstimmung* was, however, linked only at an abstract level with Weimar's political realities. Those born after 1914 felt no emotional bonds to the Weimar Republic (Fritzsche 1990: 221). The *Jugendbewegung* [Youth Movement] had flourished in Germany since the end of the 19th century. Rooted in romanticism it cultivated a distance from party politics which members' writings (Förster 1923, Messer 1924) and contemporary sociological analysis (Lütkens 1925) attest. Even political youth movements, such as the socialist workers' youth around Carlo Mierendorff and Theodor Haubach, were remote from Weimar's politics and emphasised the emotional experience that socialism should signify (Stambolis 2003: 55-69).

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[1] An example is the re-foundation of the Deutsche Demokratische Partei (Nuschke 1928: 25).

During the late 1920s, citizens gradually took their distance from fragmented and incoherent government policies (Boldt 1997: 45). Support for the parties in government declined sharply between 1928 and 1933 (Stögbauer 2001: 252). Parties set up youth movements to counteract the disaffection of the electorate (Brown 2009: 27), but youth often felt that the older generation did not listen (Mommsen 1985: 58). Numerous generational theories conveyed the specific age-relations during the Weimar Republic. Its youth was perceived as a historic agent in its own right (Weinrich 2013: 38). However, the concept of generation not merely referred to a space of experience (Koselleck 1995) but the horizon of expectation is equally important to understand why the generational concept had such political salience in Weimar. The projection of youth into the future was as fundamental for generational self-understanding as the interpretation of key historical events like the First World War (Deubel 1930: 2).

Political decisions augmented the political relevance of structural factors which undermined democracy's legitimacy: the failure of governing majorities increased attention to reparations and war guilt, both enshrined in the peace settlement of the Versailles Treaty of 1919, and contributed to the myth of the "unbeaten" German soldier who was forced by the home front to surrender unnecessarily. Köppen argues that Brüning's *Sparpolitik* [austerity policy] was not merely situational crisis management but driven by his political convictions and aspiration to restore the monarchy (2014). Brüning too quickly accepted Hindenburg's limitations on the government (Kolb and Schumann 2013: 259-60). After the September 1930 elections, none of the previous coalitions could gain a majority and a coalition with centre-right parties was unacceptable to the SPD's left-wing. Agreements on socioeconomic policies were hard to achieve and undermined the political system's stability.

When Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor in January 1933, alternative political developments were foreclosed (Bessel 2004). The 33% share of the votes won by the NSDAP during the last free elections in November 1932 signified a remarkable increase compared to

the party's first campaign in 1928, when it received only 2.4% of the votes. Hitler dissolved the Reichstag and in March 1933, the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* [Enabling Act][2] enshrined Hitler's unlimited power. The following *Gleichschaltung* [Forcing into line] eliminated non-Nazi organisations (such as parties and trade unions) which might have challenged the new political course.

By 1929 youth had left the private realm, unlike the *Jugendbewegung* which had limited itself to discussions of spiritual and existential topics (Stambolis 2011). The mobilisation of youth triggered discussions which illustrate how social and political actors appropriated the future and negotiated over competing expectations about how to overcome current difficulties. Interpreting the present as a crisis made it possible to depict the current situation as a temporary phase. The term crisis conveyed contradictory futures.[3] Although scholars narrowed down the width of contemporary meanings of crisis in the wake of Peukert's analysis of the Weimar Republic as the "crisis of classical modernity" (1987a: 266-71).[4] Dualistic approaches of "promise and tragedy" (Weitz 2007), neglect, however, that the distinction of cultural euphoria and political mourning resulted from reinterpretations of the interwar period after the Second World War (Rossol 2010: 1).

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[2] Amendment to the Weimar Constitution giving Hitler *de facto* power to enact laws bypassing the Reichstag, and officially entitled "Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich".

[3] Graf underlines the optimism of intellectuals using "crisis" {2008 #5489@371}.

[4] This reduction of the crisis from the perspective of its disastrous outcome can be encountered with Mommsen who understood Weimar through the prism of the fatal crisis of its political system (1989: 361pp.), Winkler adds to that the economic burden of the crisis (1993: 557-94) and Wehler more broadly understands crisis as a universalistic category to explain Weimar's trajectory (2009 [1987]: 229pp., 592pp.).

METHOD: DISCOURSE NETWORK ANALYSIS

Discourse creates a symbolic order and those that follow its rules can communicate about a given topic which forms social reality. Discourse conditions the production of knowledge based on rules of how to use its respective symbols, such as language. Sets of rules constitute patterns of meanings – or discursive formations (Foucault 2008 [1969]). Within and between such formations, knowledge about things or concepts, for instance youth, is represented and altered. Discourse thereby governs how a topic can be reasoned about, establishing identities and framing the social world.

To undertake the qualitative content analysis, I developed a coding scheme which is parsimonious without reducing the discursive diversity at an early stage[5]

> *Definitions* capture the meanings attributed to youth. (1) Social attributes [SA]: Is youth portrayed as being dependent upon the older generation or as being granted an independent and autonomous status? How is youth in general and its political mobilisation in particular perceived? Is youth understood as being involved or disinterested, enthusiastic or apathetic, well-informed or naïve, precious or a threat? (2) Factions [F]: Is youth described as homogenous or are differences and contradictions underlined?
> *Evaluations* [E] How is youth and its behaviour valued? I distinguish between (1) Positive, (2) Neutral, and (3) Negative. *Evaluations* and *definitions* are the central codes for extricating the different understandings of youth.
> *Tempi* [T] encompass the temporal dimension of the meaning of youth. The semantics of language contain experiences and expectations; this temporal anchorage makes language intelligible. Two temporal dimensions are investigated: (1) Layers: What times are evoked when speaking about youth (past, present, future)? (2) Rhythms: How is the relationship between different temporal layers characterised (repetition, rupture, continuity, acceleration)?

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[5] The coding scheme is enclosed in the appendix. The plots use abbreviations as indicated.

Analysing discourse as network combines the in-depth knowledge generated by qualitative content analysis with the strength of formal network analysis (Leifeld and Haunss 2012). Formally, a bipartite network is composed of two sets of nodes, and no two nodes of the same set are adjacent.[6] Let a graph G = (T, C, E) be composed of a set of individual texts (T), and the concepts used in them (C). Edges (E) exist *only* between T and C. The number of concepts by n so that $C = \{c_1, c_2 \ldots c_n\}$, the number of texts is given by m so that $T = \{t_1, t_2 \ldots t_m\}$. The bipartite network is a rectangular matrix c *x* t, with the number of rows equivalent to c_n and the number of columns equivalent to t_m:

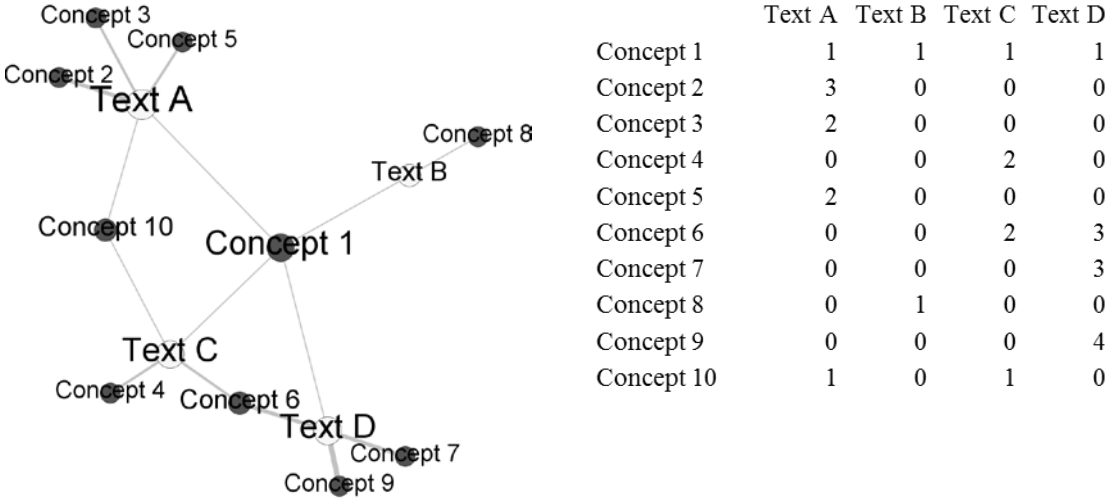|	Text A	Text B	Text C	Text D
Concept 1	1	1	1	1
Concept 2	3	0	0	0
Concept 3	2	0	0	0
Concept 4	0	0	2	0
Concept 5	2	0	0	0
Concept 6	0	0	2	3
Concept 7	0	0	0	3
Concept 8	0	1	0	0
Concept 9	0	0	0	4
Concept 10	1	0	1	0

Figure 1: Schematic Bipartite Network

The presence of an edge articulates that an author uses a given concept (dark grey) to make sense of youth in a specific text (light grey). The edge's thickness indicates the density of this link, the number of times that a specific concept about youth is used. Since meaning is contradictory and manifold, most newspaper articles combine multiple concepts. Beyond descriptive network statistics such as centrality measures for bipartite networks,[7] I employ a modularity detection algorithm for bipartite network which carves out clusters and unites

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[6] Recent debates underline the importance of the specificity of multimodal networks, (Barber 2007, Opsahl 2013, Opsahl et al. 2010).

[7] These are computed using the tnet package in R.

articles referring to a shared set of concepts.[8] This division of the discourse network reveals important structural characteristics. Barber expresses the modularity *Q* for bipartite networks (2007). Taking the above bipartite network (Figure 1) and applying Barber's BRIM algorithm suggests a division into four communities (Figure 2).[9]
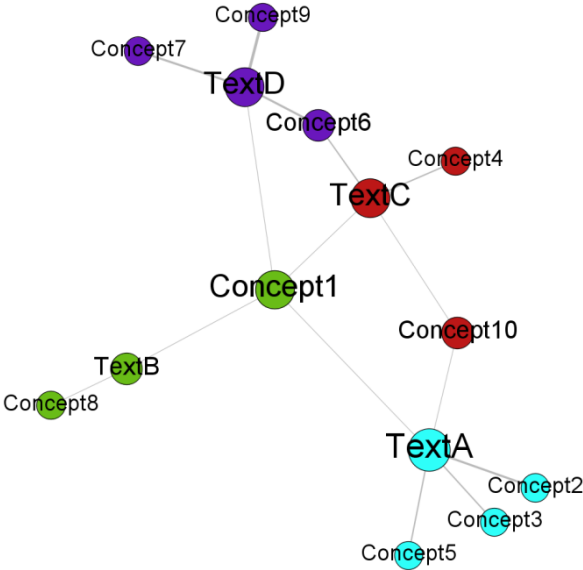

Figure 2: Modularity division of bipartite network

Modularity detection unravels structural components of the discourse but always requires careful contextualisation and interpretation. For making sense of the modularity classes, individual text segments have to be taken into consideration along with the historical context.

DATA: HISTORICAL NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers capture the complexities of the deliberations over the meaning of youth. I therefore rely on newspaper articles to infer the discursive formations. More than 11,000 papers were published in the Weimar Republic by 1930 (Büttner 2010: 322), the most

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[8] "Modularity is a scalar value that measures the density of edges inside communities as compared to edges between communities" (Murata 2010: 110).

[9] The division leads to Q_{max} of 0.4936 which is much higher than what we can expect in actual discourse networks which are much larger and more complex.

successful of which appeared three times a day.[10] Curbing the constitutional freedoms of the press was amongst Hitler's first acts (Ross 2008: 292). The media landscape revolved around two centres. On the one end of the political spectrum sat Ullstein, a Berlin-based liberal editor and owner of *Vossische Zeitung, Kölner Zeitung, Berliner Tageblatt,* and *Frankfurter Zeitung.*[11] On the other end was Alfred Hugenberg,[12] owner of one of Europe's most influential media empires (Humphreys 1994: 16-19). Despite this concentration of power, competing liberal, social, and Catholic spheres endured (Schildt 2001: 196).

I identified four outlets to capture the diverse public discourse and manually went through each issue of the newspapers to identify articles referring to youth. In total I collected 1,399 articles for the period of October 1929 until February 1933 from the *Zeitungsarchiv* at the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, of which 319 were coded. Almost 6,000 codes were then subject to discourse network analysis. (1) *Germania*: close to the Zentrum party became one of the main Catholic voices, maintaining a forum for the conservative establishment. (2) *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (*DAZ*): amongst the best known conservative papers, gradually developed an anti-republican attitude but supportive of Brüning during the 1920s. (3) *Vossische Zeitung (VZ):* defended liberal politics, with international reputation as one of Germany's oldest print outlets (Oels and Schneider 2014); an early target for Nazi attacks. (4) *Vorwärts*: founded in 1876, this Socialist paper maintained a critical attitude towards the USSR. Forbidden in 1933, it continued to circulate in exile. The topic of youth was particularly prominent in the progressive Vorwärts (31%) and is distributed roughly equally between the other three.

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[10] Ross cites an overall circulation of 15.8 million for 1932 (2008: 292). The press maintained its role for political opinion-making as radio gave little attention to news (Büttner 2010: 321).

[11] These are *bürgerlich-liberale Zeitungen*, cf. (Stöber 2005: 237).

[12] Hugenberg, member of the DNVP, was fiercely anti-socialist (Humphreys 1994: 19).

My analysis also draws on other papers but less systematically than these four, notably *Die Weltbühne*, a central organs for the radical *bürgerliche Linke* [bourgeois Left]. Despite its small circulation, it influenced beyond its readership. Other newspapers echoed its reports and prominent intellectuals regularly contributed (Deák 1968, Madrasch-Groschopp 1985).

Contemporaries linked youth predominantly to social issues and questions of education (Figure 3), which included debates about learning *stricto sensu* as well as the falling demographic weight of youth. Domestic political-economic topics figure as the second most prominent theme, with many extolling the importance of youth political involvement. Non-political aspects are the third most significant topic, relating to societal and cultural aspects of youth, including debates about gender relations, sports, and new media.
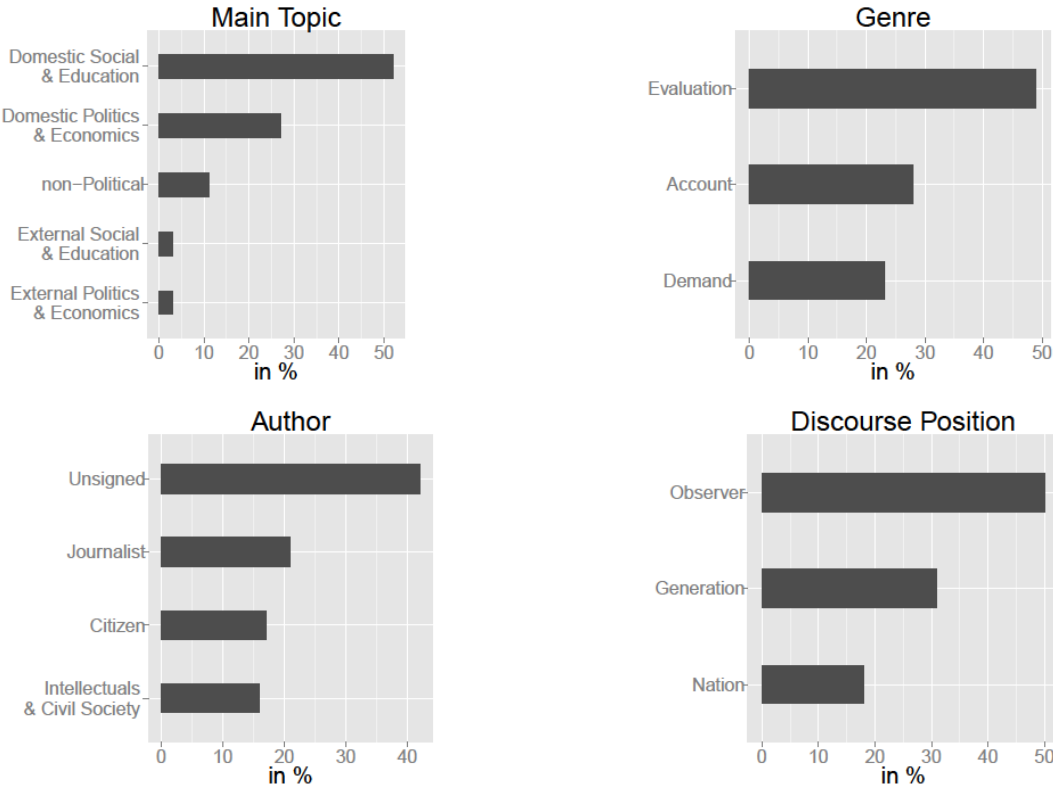

Figure 3: Weimar Republic: Corpus Structure

A large proportion of articles remained unsigned. Their style suggests that journalists wrote them since they tended to be opinion pieces with distinct national or generational discursive

positions. Weimar's *Meinungspresse* implied that newspapers maintained starkly diverging political positions – a feature captured by the large proportion of evaluations and demands voiced throughout the press.

A vibrant public sphere characterised the Weimar Republic and citizens were frequent authors of articles. Adults wrote letters or opinion pieces, either welcoming or condemning the public behaviour of youth. Students often spoke directly for their generation, attempting to impact on the way youth was portrayed to the public. Citizens, intellectuals, and representatives of civil society usually intervened from a clear generational discourse position. Politicians frequently intervened from a national position, speaking as representatives of the Weimarian national community – a programmatic way of addressing the highly fragmented public.

RESULTS: THE STABLE DIVERSITY OF OPPOSING DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS

The BRIM algorithm suggests a division of the data into four large modules alongside a residual (Figure 4).[13] The residual module clusters scattered nodes that do not fit elsewhere and do not form a discrete discursive community. The network plot expresses how distinct each formation is and which concepts bridge different formations (Figure 5). The visualisation also highlights the overlap between the formations coloured burgundy and orange. I interpret the former as PRO-DEMOCRACY,[14] revolving around the idea of AUTONOMOUS youth that is INVOLVED in public to save democracy and represents the VANGUARD of society. I understand the latter as YOUTH & FUTURE, articles and concepts which projected a FUTURE DECISIVE role on youth and put this youth-to-come in CONTINUITY with

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[13] The modularity score is 0.247.

[14] To indicate the analytic language I capitalise DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS and CONCEPTS in the text.

PRESENT youth, understood as being PRECIOUS for the German *Volk*.[15] By 1932, such arguments gained traction when journalists and politicians associated the demographic decline in the share of young people with Weimar's *Untergangsstimmung* [sense of decline].[16]
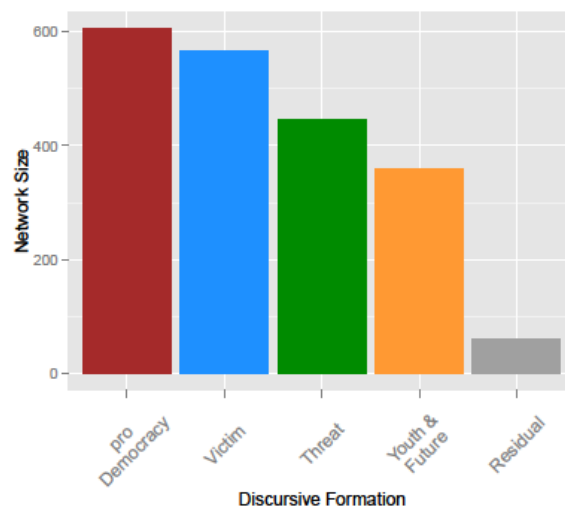

Figure 4: Weimar Republic: Size of Modularity Classes

From the concepts of the blue discursive formation I inferred that this module frames youth as VICTIM, comprising utterances about youth in CRISIS, understanding youth as INNOCENT and dependent on the older generation. During the episode, *Jugendnot* [hardship endured by youth] was a commonplace:[17] economic deprivation and soaring unemployment rates dominated everyday life.[18] Moreover, contemporaries explained political radicalism through unemployment and the economic situation thus threatened the country's political stability.[19] Authors did not simply condemn juvenile crimes but portrayed youth as victimised, driven for

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[15] Berlins Jugendarbeit, in: VZ, 03.04.1930 as well as Das Volk von Morgen, in: Germania, 29.06.1930.

[16] Volk ohne Jugend, in: VZ, 30.08.1932.

[17] Jugend gegen Radikalismus, in: VZ, 27.01.1931; Kümmert Euch um die arbeitslose Jugend, in: VZ, 19.05.1932.

[18] For readers' letters see Helft der Jugend!, in: DAZ, 20.03.1932.

[19] Kümmert Euch um die arbeitslose Jugend, in: VZ, 19.05.1932.

instance by hunger.[20] Ideally, families would be a safeguard against political radicalism but economic uncertainties put pressure on them. The return of sons unable to find work intensified family tensions in times of scarcity.[21] Comparisons put Weimar's situation in perspective, pointing, for instance to youth unemployment and gangs in Chicago.[22]

Concepts and articles of the green module construct youth as a THREAT to the established order, unlike past youth. The generational gulf ran throughout Weimar's discourse on youth. Contemporaries agreed on the cross-European relevance of this idea. But confrontations became increasingly violent from 1931 onwards, underlining that Weimar's youth cultivated a uniquely strong group identity.[23] By 1933, the destabilising political implications of the generational gulf became uncontested.[24] During the last three years of the Weimar Republic this gulf was made of feelings of abandonment among youth, which worsened because of parents' inability to support their children in economic difficulties.[25]

Presenting youth as a distinct generation, journalists also projected an exceptional political mission onto it. By 1932, the conservative DAZ reiterated young people's criticisms of the parliamentary system as evidence of the political system's delegitimisation.[26] Political leaders emphasised the demographic weight of young people who needed political education to avoid

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[20] Mißbrauchte Jugend, in: Vorwärts, 11.03.1931.

[21] Unnütze Esser!, in: Vorwärts, 04.12.1931 and Väter und Söhne, in: Vorwärts, 01.11.1931.

[22] Chikagos Verbrecherjugend, in: Vorwärts, 17.06.1932.

[23] Ansprache an die Jugend, in: VZ, 08.09.1931; Deutsche und französische Jugend, in: VZ, 01.12.1932.

[24] Der Jugend eine Gasse, in: VZ, 06.01.1933.

[25] Wege zum Jugendgericht, in: Vorwärts, 10.02.1931.

[26] Deutsche Jugend wird wehrhaft, in: DAZ, 28.10.1932.

being "bewitched" by communists and nationalists.[27] Readers' letters illustrate the popular concern created by youthful radicalism and its rejection of democracy.[28]

Figure 5: Weimar Republic: Discourse Network

No discursive formation dominated before the 1933 Nazi take-over put an end to free debate. The temporal composition of the discursive formations indicates that each persisted over the period analysed (Figure 6). Political mobilisation of youth became increasingly violent after 1929-30, with particularly intense political confrontation around 1932. The dynamics of this

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[27] Wie wählt die Jugend, in: Vorwärts, 01.03.1930.

[28] Warum die Jugend radikal wählte, in: DAZ, 04.10.1930.

mobilisation are expressed in the frequency of news coverage about youth. Media presented competing interpretations of Weimar's present until the very end of the Republic.
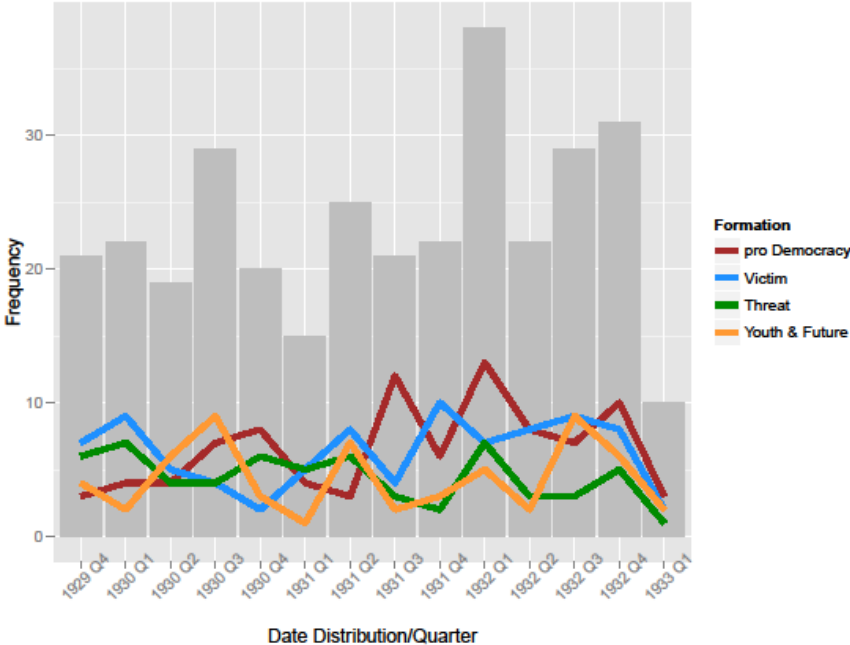

Figure 6: Weimar Republic: Frequency per Modularity Class

The network analysis of this new historical data permits precise structural insights into public discourse. This method enables me to identify the discursive structures which shaped the way young people could politically mobilise and how contemporaries perceived of young people's public activities. I examine the discursive rules that underlie the public usage of the term youth, along with the way youth mobilised for political ends. I shall now explore the specific content of each discursive formation, its evolution over time, and link it with the political developments. The research adds to our understanding of the variety of political causes for which Weimar's youth engaged during the regime collapse.

The analysis of the political significance of youth involvement contributes to our understanding of youth engagement in a democracy that was in crisis, lacked popular support, and ultimately collapsed. The processes at work during Weimar's breakdown provide the basis for reconsidering the role of youth in democratic breakdown more general and permit a

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conceptualisation of youth that takes its contradictory political involvement and the symbolic space it shaped into account.

DISCUSSION: YOUTH AND WEIMAR'S BREAKDOWN

The confrontation of and about youth shaped the breakdown of Weimar's democracy. The discourse network identifies competing visions about youth which refer to conflicting understandings of the political present. These debates about youth incorporated the important topics about where society came from and where it ought to head to, providing answers to the most urgent questions. Youth could turn into such a central space of meaning given the public visibility of young people and the semantic flexibility of the concept. The biological permeability of youth combined with its persistence as social category over time.

Specifically, the discussion of the four discursive formations highlights the contradictory visions contemporaries conveyed about their present time during the most intense years of crisis. On a wider theoretical level the analysis therefore suggests some important conclusions about how to reconceptualise "crisis". Considering contemporary language points to the openness of the situation which the term conveyed. While interpretations as crisis acknowledged difficulties, they also underlined the potential to overcome them.

Autonomous Youth Mobilisation for Democracy

Scholarship on Weimar has privileged those youth activities that undermined democracy. Amongst many, Swett (2004) and Brown (2009) emphasise that youth radicalism was critical to the public sphere. More general, Berman underlines that civil society failed to play its Tocquevillean function (1997: 417). However, the largest discursive formation revolves around an AUTONOMOUS youth, engaged for democracy and associated with POSITIVE evaluations. The lens of youth changes the perspective on this collapse of democracy. PRO-

DEMOCRACY youth was an important part of what youth meant for contemporaries during Weimar's crisis.

Contemporary sources highlight the importance of Catholic, Republican, and socialist youth. Such mobilisations shaped the way in which those who lived during the final years of the Weimar Republic made sense of their present. From 1931 onwards, the share of this discursive formation even augmented. Increasingly violent confrontations on the street encouraged other young people to mobilise for democracy (Figure 6).
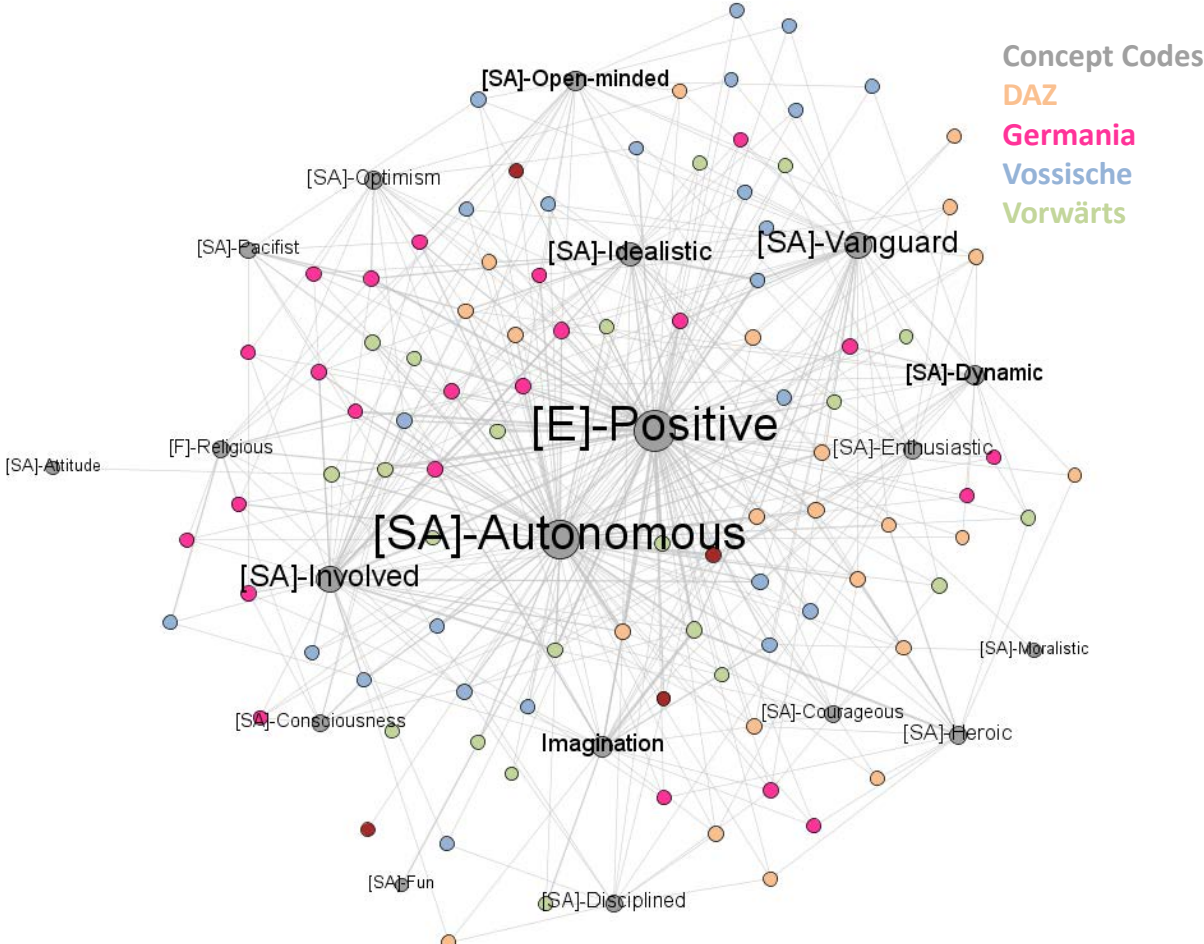

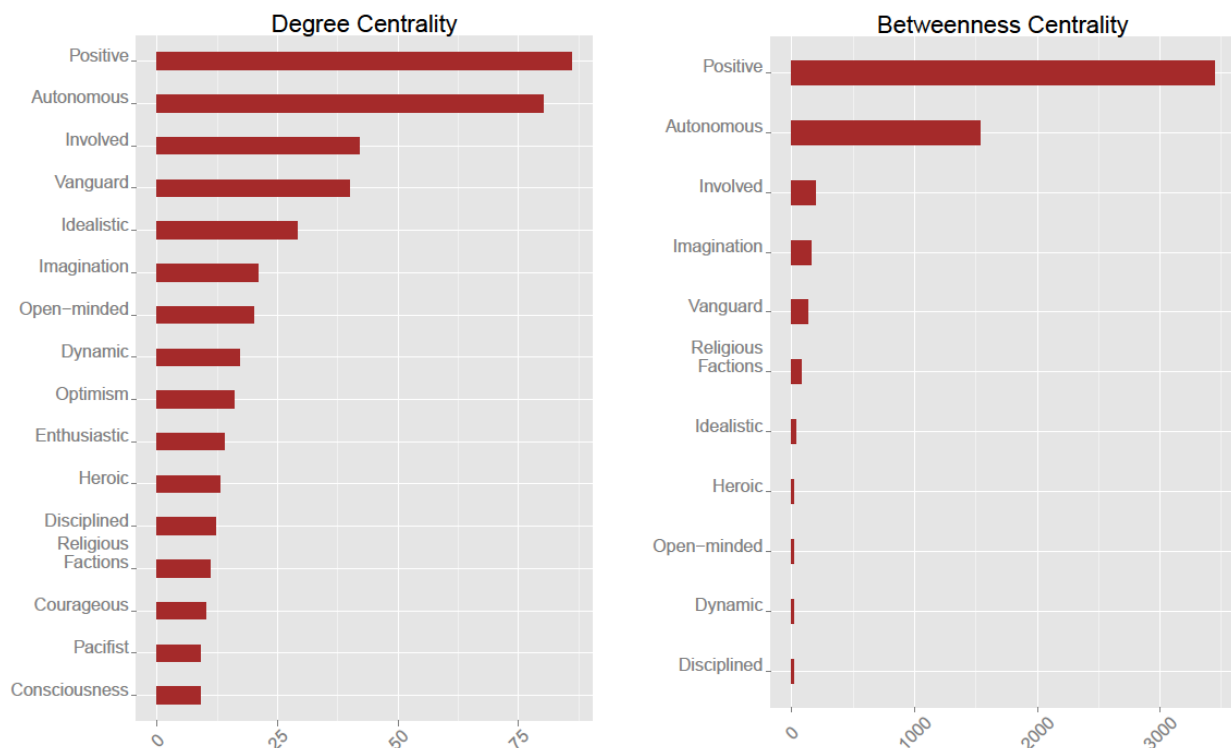Figure 7: PRO-DEMOCRACY: Discourse Network

Figure 8: PRO-DEMOCRACY: Centralities

Although youth engagement supported democracy, this hardly stabilised the Weimarian system. Indeed, such groups expressed democratic ideals which eventually also delegitimised Weimar's version of parliamentary democracy. Mobilisation and its discourse undermined the regime's legitimacy even amongst those who did not support fascism or communism. All of the sampled newspapers contributed to the pro-democratic idea of youth. But each newspaper had distinct ideas about Weimar's democracy and the involvement of youth. I argue that despite its size, the weakness of the PRO-DEMOCRACY formation was ultimately due to its internal divisions.

The network indicates the importance of AUTONOMOUS and POSITIVE for structuring this module (Figure 7). The difference in degree and betweenness centrality (Figure 8) point to the place of RELIGIOUS – referring to factions amongst young people, a new generation divided on questions of religiosity which the Catholic newspaper Germania promoted particularly. Moreover, concept-codes which underpin the image of an active and politically INVOLVED youth are important. Actors in public discourse constructed youth as political VANGUARD.

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The importance of IMAGINATION is also noteworthy, capturing utterances about foreign youth portrayed as IDEALISTIC and HEROIC which in turn shaped understanding of Weimarian youth.

Pro-democratic youth mobilisation followed three patterns. Each was specific to different sections of the public – newspapers hardly spoke about rival groups at all. This internal fragmentation of the PRO-DEMOCRACY formation emphasises the important divisions of the public.[29]

Before 1923, Weimar's public associated great hopes with the republican *Reichsbanner*. Ziemann's analysis of its war commemorations illustrates the success of slogans such as "Nie wieder Krieg!" ["No more war!"] for uniting young people (2013: 38). Criticism of the Weimar Republic, the *Dolchstoßlegende* and desire for revenge, were far from dominant in the early 1920s. Towards the early 1930s, however, the republican *Reichsbanner* had clearly lost its hold amongst youth. Its members, seen as HEROIC, continued to unite, but contemporaries expected no great results from them.

Economic hardships discouraged mobilisation beyond the strongly committed members who participated without material incentives. Nevertheless, Vorwärts maintained that this small group was INVOLVED and potentially DECISIVE for Weimar's future since engagement increased civic skills and spread republican ideas: "In these days of highly endangered political freedom in Germany it is a strong political necessity to politically educate the republican youth."[30]

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[29] Jones notes that disunity on the Right was as important a prerequisite for national-socialism as disunity on the Left (2014: 2).

[30] Die Jugend der Republik, in: Vorwärts, 26.05.1932.

The *Republikanischer Studentenbund* [Republican Student Association] shared this outlook. The *Studentenbund* collaborated closely with the *Reichsbanner* to support a democratic Weimar notably during the "Wartburgfest der Republikaner" in 1929.[31] But its support included demands that the leadership failed to accommodate, such as taking decisive actions to end anti-republican violence. Its activities therefore amplified the dissatisfaction with the existing democracy. Strikingly, in 1931 the *Studentenbund* general assembly adopted a resolution supportive of republicanism but not the Weimar system.[32]

In 1932, with political tensions increasing, the *Studentenbund* attenuated its idealistic positions. Members supported, without enthusiasm, the "Greis" [old man] Hindenburg, who seemed able to calm the violence. Despite his age, the *Studentenbund* believed that Hindenburg could overcome the generational gulf by "Aufrichtigkeit und Reinheit des Wollens" [sincerity and purity of will], similar to the devotion of republican youth to the entire "Volk".[33]

In March 1932 Lothar Harmann, a representative of the *Republikanischer Studentenbund*, claimed that despite economic scarcities, the new generation supported the Weimar Republic:

> The majority of us do not belong to the generation that fought in Langemarck.[34] […] This
> youth was placed into political and economic fights, because today she must fight for her
> existence. She wages this battle with all the passion and fanaticism which is proper to genuine
> youth.[35]

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[31] Wartburgfest der Republikaner, in: Illustrierte Republikanische Zeitung, 22/1929, S. 340.

[32] Jugend gegen Radikalismus, in: VZ, 27.01.1931.

[33] Jugend für Hindenburg, in: VZ, 12.03.1932.

[34] Langemarck (now Langemark) is a village in Flanders where severe battles took place in 1914. It turned into a symbol for the war in the Weimar Republic and when German youth realised in 1928 that German soldiers were not appropriately buried they initiated reburial which began 1930 (Weinrich 2013: 247-66).

[35] Jugend für Hindenburg, in: VZ, 12.03.1932.

The use of the term generation in republican language drew on a shared space of experience and projected a united horizon of expectation. However, the *Studentenbund's* support for Hindenburg lacked the passion of the earlier struggles for an idealised democracy: a pragmatic choice driven primarily by the rejection of fascism.[36]

Socialist youth movements make another pro-democratic voice. In 1930, Max Westphal, the leader of the socialist working youth, underlined their importance for political development. Drawing on his insider perspective, he confirmed that by 1930 a majority of youth supported Hitler or Thälmann, but maintained that youth was not simply sympathetic to the extremes. He therefore criticised the proposal by the *Deutsche Volkspartei* to increase the minimum voting age from 20 to 25: "One should emphasise that the political thinking and acting of a large number of young people takes place within reasonable parameters." He argued that 10% of the million members of the social democratic party were younger than 25 years old: there were more young social democrats than members of the communist party altogether.[37]

Social democrats agreed that youth should be more politicised. Its political education was DECISIVE for Weimar's and the party's future. In 1930, the Vossische Zeitung published numerous letters. The leading quality newspaper was the central outlet in Weimar's media landscape and resisted the downward trend during the economic crash (Fulda 2009: 23). The letters illustrate that some youth had internalised visions of being INVOLVED and ENTHUSIASTIC for politics. Erich Borchardt argued, for instance, that assessments by the older generation were biased and inauthentic, whereas youth was pure and spoke the truth. Its criticism of the parliamentary system was therefore particularly relevant. Moreover, adult-

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[36] For a similarly pragmatic support of Hindenburg by the "Landesverband der Statsbürgerlichen Jugend Berlin Brandenburgs" see: Jugend an Hindenburg, in: VZ, 23.07.1932.

[37] Anschlag auf das Jungvolk, in: Vorwärts, 22.07.1930.

driven politics seemed irrelevant as they failed to address the important question of national unity. German youth, so Borchardt suggested, distrusted the fragmented parliament. Similarly, Herbert Lode portrayed an OPTIMISTIC and IDEALISTIC young generation, poorly understood by adults: "All those who want to disillusion youth misjudge its resistant and healthy idealism, which will repeatedly reveal itself amongst the largest part of German youth."

Another writer, Georg Hase, maintained that Weimar would fail without young people's support. Youth was less informed about the "Irrgärten der Parteipolitik" [maze of party politics] but enjoyed a pure perspective on the current misery. Weimar's failures radicalised youth:

> The word 'radical', for the largest number of the young offspring, is only to be applied insofar as they condemn the party intrigues root-and-branch and distance themselves totally from "Halb-und Hohlheiten" [half-truths and empty words] of today's parliamentarism. Incidentally they believe in Republicanism and do not want to have anything in common with the radical guards of Stalin and Hitler, which appear radical to the outside with raw brute force.[38]

Progressive media fortified the idea of a DECISIVE and DYNAMIC youth and contributed to the view that the young generation held the entire nation's destiny in its hands.[39] Socialist student associations maintained a special role in the political struggle but their political demands undermined Weimar's legitimacy since they understood it as a transitory regime, prior to a proper "soziale Volksstaat" [social people's state].[40] Violent confrontations in 1932 further undermined democratic ideals in public. The pro-republican forces urged politicians to

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[38] Ringende Jugend, in: VZ, 10.08.1930.

[39] An die deutsche Jugend, in: Vorwärts, 31.01.1932 and a unique role was attributed to socialist working youth, Jugend und Gegenwart, in: Vorwärts, 31.05.1932.

[40] Unsere Studenten, in: Vorwärts, 09.10.1930.

defend them and the SPD-led union of the *Eiserne Front* [Iron Front] organised youth to oppose National Socialism.[41]

Finally, the conservative Germania granted ample attention to Catholic pro-democratic youth. The way it addressed youth and related it to the political realities intensified, however, criticisms of Weimar's democracy. Catholic journalists sacralised elections and added a spiritual dimension to political acts – expectations far from parliamentary reality. A movement like the *Windthorstbünde*, therefore, was already carefully phrasing its relation to democracy by 1929, emphasising that "it is currently quite difficult to maintain our faith". In their daily practice the Catholic movements focussed on the kind of existential questions which Weimar's politicians neglected.[42]

Faced with violent street confrontation, Catholic youth movements anticipated the need for a spiritual front. In 1931, Germania maintained that Catholic youth was vital for Weimar as the only social force that stood up for Christian values.[43] Catholic youth movements endorsed religious guidelines and placed less emphasis on a generational rupture in their rejection of liberalism and individualism (Götz von Olenhusen 1987: 100). However, radical youth on the street was hardly receptive to such arguments and public visibility of catholic youth remained low. Despite their numbers – by 1933 the *Katholische Jungmännerverband Deutschlands* [Catholic Young Men's Association of Germany] had around 365,000 members – Catholics failed to shape the public sphere beyond Germania.

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[41] In October 1931 the *Reichsbanner* and various smaller socialist movements established the *Eiserne Front* with a more radical line which had particular success amongst young people (Lösche and Walter 1989: 519).

[42] Wahlentscheidung der katholischen Jugend, in: Germania, 13.11.1929.

[43] Zweite Jahrestagung der katholischen Jugend Deutschlands, in: Germania, 03.02.1931.

The *Kolping-Jugend*, a Catholic youth movement with social and educational ambitions, supported democracy but criticised Weimar's economic conditions which wiped out individuality while turning people into productive masses. A worrisome prospect for youth, which needed to build its own personality. Such remarks were linked to criticism of the political leadership and became sharper when journalists referred to conditions in Soviet Russia, highlighting that even the Bolsheviks had started to value personal quality and responsibility.[44] A Catholic-Soviet alliance was rare and therefore all the more remarkable, as it remained conventional to condemn the distress of Soviet youth.[45]

Intellectuals advancing the idea of a democratic rescue by youth sometimes abstracted from political cleavages and associated a mission of reconciliation between European countries with youth.[46] In 1931, the novelist Thomas Mann emphasised that European youth occupied a unique position, experiencing the present more intensely than any other groups. Therefore only youth could face the truth. For Mann, the adult generation was decaying, in contrast with youthful OPTIMISM and "Tatendrang" [zest for action]. Compared to its European peers, Weimar's youth stood out:

> A young Frenchman who travelled in Germany recently said to me: 'Oh my God, we also have young people but they are *petits bourgeois*, small and immature [unfertig] adults wearing a *Schniepelrock* [tailcoat] and pince-nez on their nose. Youth in a picturesque sense of the word, which understands itself and feels and behaves as youth, which adds to the life and the picture of the country its own, distinct note – that we do not have unlike you.'

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[44] Der Tag der Kolpings-Jugend, in: Germania, 08.09.1931.

[45] Die flandersche Not, in: Die Weltbühne, 1929 15, p. 555 – it should be mentioned that with the intensified ideological confrontations between communists and nationalists a more pro-Soviet viewpoint could be expressed in the liberal newspaper, for instance Béla Balázs: Die Furcht der Intellektuellen vor dem Sozialismus, in: Die Weltbühne, 1932:6, p. 15.

[46] Hans-Erich Kaminski, journalist and writer, argued that Europe's youth is already on the move to look for honest ideals, unlike the inherited ones , cf. An einem Sterbebett, in: Die Weltbühne, 1931:42, p. 589.

Mann stressed that youth had encouraged the most important changes in Weimar's culture. Youth was critical for exposing the shortcomings and the conservative nature of the bourgeois society: "It is probably unique to our contemporary period that it received so many of its signals and key words from the young generation."[47]

International student meetings solidified the idea of an OPEN-MINDED and INVOLVED youth. It overcame the world of national competition made by its fathers. Compared to the adult parliamentary democracy, students across Europe were engaged in political debates without shunning controversies.[48] An IDEALISTIC young generation expressed dissatisfaction with phoney representations of democracy. Franco-German antagonism was put aside when talking about youth and by 1931 Germania even admired the *Cité Universitaire* in Paris, which offered outstanding conditions for intellectual flourishing. With respect the journalist described France as an ideal for Weimar: a stunning contrast with those socio-political realms where competition and hostility dominated.[49]

In the fall of 1930, sixty French and German students in Mannheim declared that an improved relationship between the two nations was a pre-requisite for European "Verfriedung" [appeasement]. They developed ideas about the "United States of Europe" and suggested that the Catholic Church, the "humanistic trans-European bourgeoisie," and the "international social democrats" could realise such a vision.[50] Described as OPEN-MINDED and as a societal VANGUARD, youth took into account differences in the way of life of each nation and

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[47] Ansprache an die Jugend, in: VZ, 08.09.1931.

[48] Zerfall der Studenteninternationale, in: Germania, 18.08.1930.

[49] Cité Universitaire, in: Germania, 15.01.1931.

[50] Das Mannheimer Studententreffen, in: Germania, 23.09.1930; for an analysis of Franco-German youth (Tiemann 1989).

overcame them through open exchange. The IDEALISTIC youth represented a united European generation, "race theorists turned pale in the absence of differences".[51]

Youth-driven international reconciliation rejected, on a synchronic level, the present adult generation and created, on a diachronic level, a discontinuity with past youth. For instance, during the 1930 annual assembly of the International Student Service, the socialist Otto Friedländer stated that current students joined the workers and helped them critically reflect about the production process, unlike self-centred and careless past students.[52] This rejection of past youth occurred across Europe and Germania marvelled about the new *Jeunesse Catholique Française* [French Catholic Youth], an IDEALISTIC movement of youth that crossed socio-economic boundaries.[53]

Forward to the Future Thanks to Youth

The fourth-largest discursive formation, YOUTH & FUTURE, intersects with the preceding one (Figure 5). Consolidating ideas about pro-democratic youth involvement, these concepts relate more specifically to the "present future" expressed through youth. Youth represented the most tangible embodiment of the tomorrow of the Weimar Republic. The diverse contemporary debates about Weimar's future contradict conventional historiographical assumptions. Ever since Peukert claimed that the Weimar Republic represents the crisis of classical modernity (1987a), the crisis interpretation that contemporaries of the interwar period produced became the consensus.[54] This enclosed analysis of Weimar within a horizon of doom (Föllmer et al. 2005: 16-22). However, crisis did not imply an absence of visions for

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[51] Jugend stürzt die Grenzpfähle, in: VZ, 21.07.1931.

[52] Die Arbeit des Weltstudentenwerks, in: Vorwärts, 28.08.1930.

[53] International Reconciliation, in: Germania, 24.11.1931; similarly Die neue katholische Jugend Belgiens, in: Germania, 31.12.1932.

[54] Cf. FN [4].

the future. Interpretations as crisis conveyed competing horizons of expectation. The YOUTH & FUTURE discursive formation is equally distributed across the episode (Figure 6). Until the end of the democratic period, youth allowed for negotiations about the country's future.

Conservative newspapers dominate the discursive formation; moderately conservative voices sought salvation in imagining the future.[55] Moreover, the concept-node CONTINUITY figures prominently in the network and indicates that contemporaries interpreted the PRESENT as having predictive power for the FUTURE (Figure 9). The network plot shows that POSITIVE attributes link with discussions about the FUTURE (Figure 10). Contemporary interpretations included optimistic projections into the tomorrow of the Weimar Republic, a future which they imagined youth would shape. Despite violent confrontations, youth remained CAPABLE and PRECIOUS for the country.
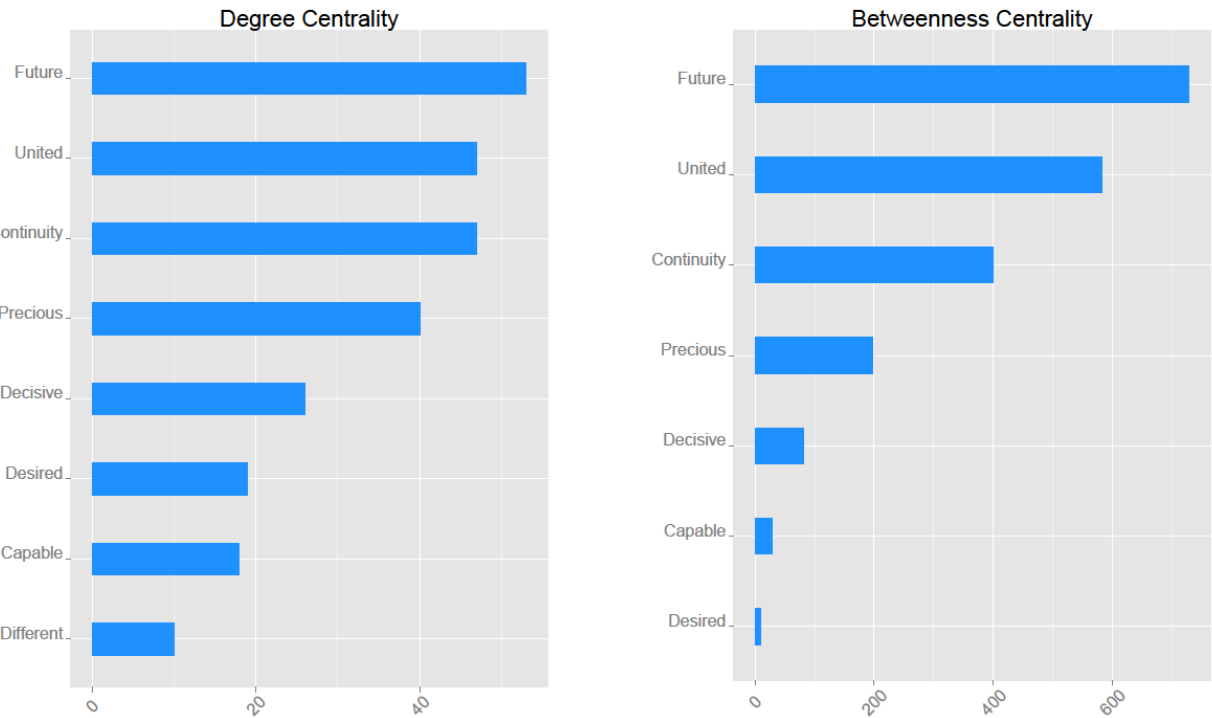

Figure 9: YOUTH & FUTURE: Centralities

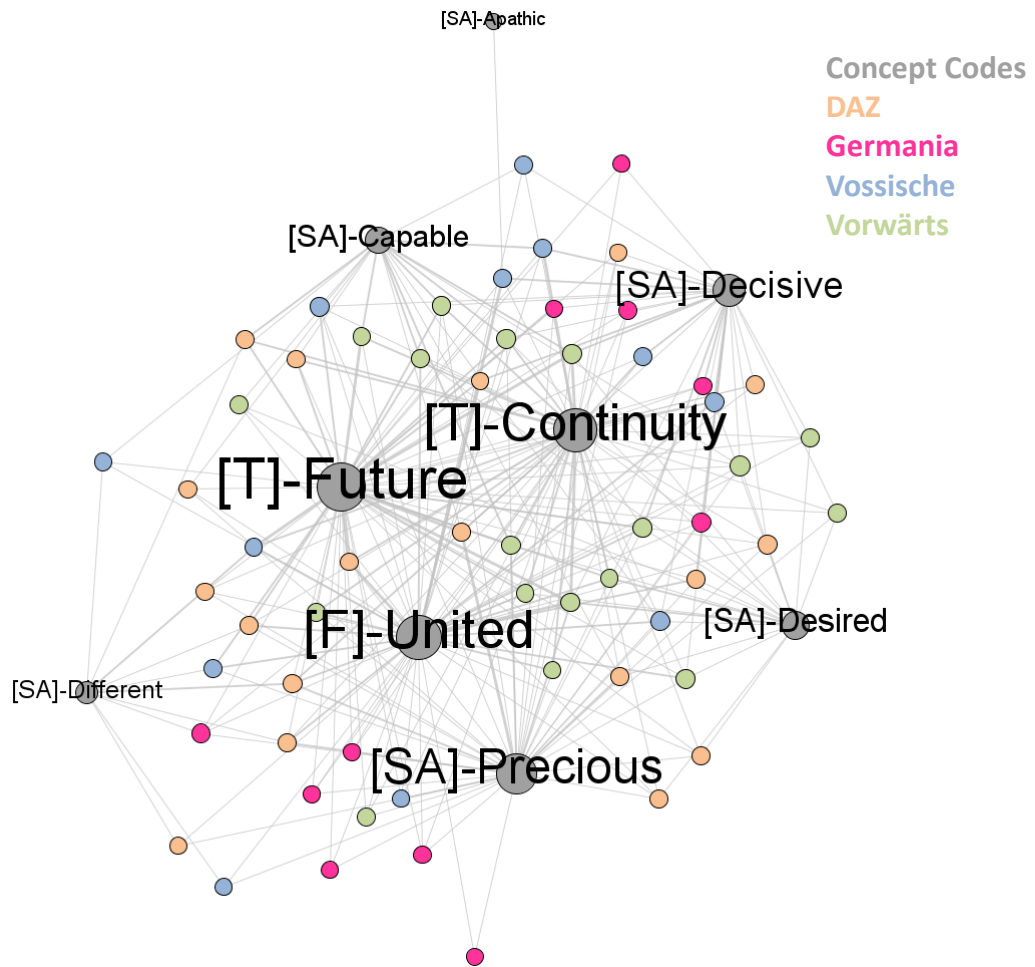[55] Germania consterputes 30% and DAZ 33%.

Figure 10: YOUTH & FUTURE: Discourse Network

Youth was crucial for the country's economic life given the gap in the age pyramid created by the First World War. For the socialists, youth represented tomorrow's workforce and youth movements needed support to assure that this FUTURE would reflect socialist ideals. Vorwärts maintained that the only way of attracting youth was through open and honest discussions about the present.[56] However, Mommsen qualified the actual socialist engagement with youth as "a farce" (1985: 58), as Gerstorff had suggested in 1930.[57]

The discrepancy between political rhetoric and the daily experience youth made seemed stark.[58] The DAZ accused the socialists of inciting and indoctrinating youth and abusing its

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[56] Partei-Jugend-KonstruktivePolitik, in: Vorwärts, 30.05.1931.

[57] Der Reformismus am Ende, in: Die Weltbühne, 1930:49 , p. 818.

[58] „Gebrochene Beine", in: Die Weltbühne, 1929:39, p. 461

naïveté, capturing youth's attention with an abundance of flags and music in a manner distastefully similar to the communists.[59] The conservative currents presented youth UNITED in this fight and in particular Artur Mahraun's *Jungdeutscher Orden* [Young German Order] emphasised that real change could only occur with the young generation in the parliament. The leader of the "Conservative Revolution" described the FUTURE as a departure from the current state of affairs but drew a continuous line from today's youth to the Weimar Republic's tomorrow, aiming for a synthesis of Prussia and Weimar.[60] Mahraun's *Orden* was the second largest right-wing organisation (second to the *Stahlhelm*) and attempted to provide a right-wing alternative to national-socialism, reconciling democratic voices with neoconservative and radical nationalist ideology. It merged in September 1930 with the left-liberal *DDP*, followed by the creation of the *Staatspartei* prior to the elections that year (Crim 2014: 205-12).

Weimar's uncertainties underpinned projections into the FUTURE which youth captured. The FUTURE became part of the PRESENT which already contained the conditions of the future.[61] Appeals to take care of youth expressed this "present future". Professor Reinhold Seeberg emphasised, for instance, that it was crucial to end the current neglect of youth. It was, for him, a given that youth represented the FUTURE which conveyed the CONTINUITY between today and tomorrow. Only by educating the most talented young people would Germany's future be better than its present. It was therefore worrisome for Seeberg to observe that an ever larger fraction of German families failed to properly educate their children. This neglect was fatal for Weimar's FUTURE.[62] Heinrich Bachmann, a Catholic intellectual, similarly

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[59] Jugendverhetzung in einem städtlichen Gebäude, in: DAZ, 24.09.1930.

[60] Die Aufgabe der Jugend, in: VZ, 02.08.1930.

[61] Zum antiimperialistischen Kongreß, in: Die Weltbühne, 1929:29, p. 84

[62] Dienst an der Jugend, in: DAZ, 16.11.1929.

portrayed youth as the *Volk* of tomorrow – he underlined that it was important to shape youth in the PRESENT to influence the FUTURE.[63]

Weimar's conservative press emphasised the importance of family bonds, united by the sacrament of marriage, for bringing up children. For Georg Foerster only the sacramental marriage could prevent "Verwahrlosung" [depravity] amongst youth.[64] Spilling over into European discussions about the "science of human improvement" (Comfort 2012: 1-28), Germania quoted Professor Mudermann in 1931 to emphasise the importance of the genes which parents transmit to their children. Youth, future parents, was expected to be cautious when choosing a partner so as to improve society's genetic endowment.[65]

Progressive media were also concerned about degeneration. VZ published evidence of declining birth rates and Dr. Friedrich Burdörfer's "Volk ohne Jugend" [Folk without Youth] (1932) gave scientific legitimacy to their interpretation that suggested that increasing and enhancing the population would save the national economy. Understanding youth as consumers, Burdörfer set them equal to employers to overcome the economic crisis. In 1932, Dr. Heinz Caspari made predictions through the year 1990, expressing grave concerns about a future lack of young people, a disaster which would make the Weimar Republic "one of seniors". This future was made all the more dangerous by the "Slavic threat": "This shift in the demographic core entails serious risks for European peace and for Germany itself."[66] Initiatives from abroad inspired contemporaries. In 1932, the Catholic press marvelled about

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[63] Das Volk von Morgen, in: Germania, 29.06.1930.

[64] Krisis und Erneuerung der Familie, in: DAZ, 31.07.1932.

[65] Jugend und Eugenik, in: Germania, 17.06.1931.

[66] Volk ohne Jugend, in: VZ, 30.08.1932.

Italian protections for children and mothers and Mussolini's encouragement for refining the national race.[67]

Youth as Victim of Crises

The concepts and articles of the second-largest discursive formation frame youth as a VICTIM of economic difficulties, the disintegration of the family, or the failures of parliamentary democracy. Associating youth with societal difficulties amplified those problems. The overall image of youth also portrayed it as dependent on the older generation. In this perspective, youth as a symbolic space conveyed the impact of economic and political problems for which it was not responsible and which it could not solve. The discursive formation was particularly important in the second half of the episode (Figure 6), when the consequences of the economic crisis spilled over into the socio-political dimension.

The Vorwärts discussed the impact of the economic situation on youth, its upbringing, its professional perspectives at length. Regarding the universities, the progressive mass media emphasised financial cuts, overcrowded classes, and teaching which inadequately prepared young people for "real" life. Lastly, the socialist newspaper warned about the observed "disintegration" of families in which sons were thrown into previously unknown difficulties.

IN-NEED and NEUTRAL are fundamental concepts in the formation (Figure 11) which avoided an outright negative picture of youth but understood it as suffering and in CRISIS. Such difficulties were linked with an INNOCENT youth which was not understood as being UNITED but SOCIO-ECONOMIC distinctions underlined the unequal effects of the crisis.

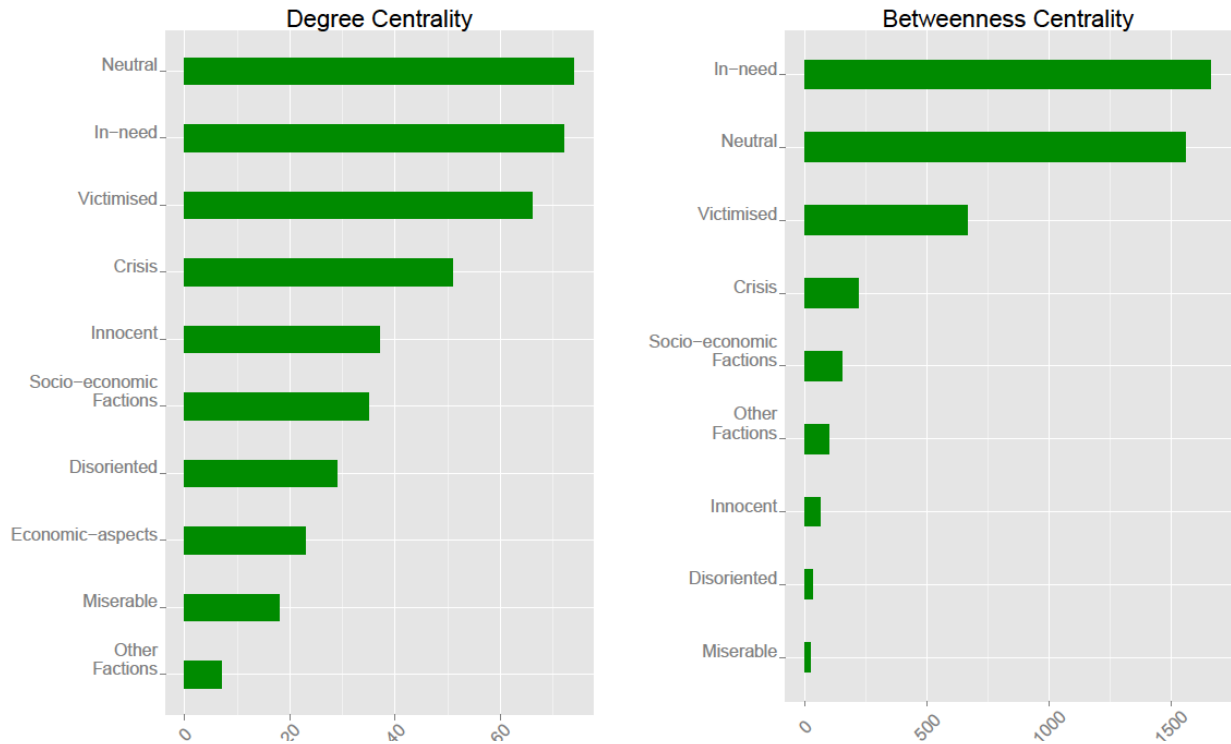[67] Italiens Mutter- und Kinderschutz, in: Germania, 02.10.1932.

Figure 11: VICTIM: Centralities

Generational affiliations raised awareness of the shared lack of orientation. Characterised by fatalism and cynicism, youth appeared mentally older than it should have been. Dependent on the older generation, youth craved parental attention. Parents, themselves embittered, were unable to respond. Family disintegration amplified the isolation of young people: "Children never knew the example of the working father." Paternal unemployment was linked with domestic abuse of young people, understood by Birkenfeld and Klepper as "ohnmächtiger Zorn" [helpless anger]. The authors did not condemn the older generation, whom they also understood as VICTIMS: "Fathers do not drink for pleasure but out of need."[68]

[68] Eine Jugend wird geopfert, in: Vorwärts, 08.09.1932, 15.09.1932, 22.09.1932, 29.09.1932.
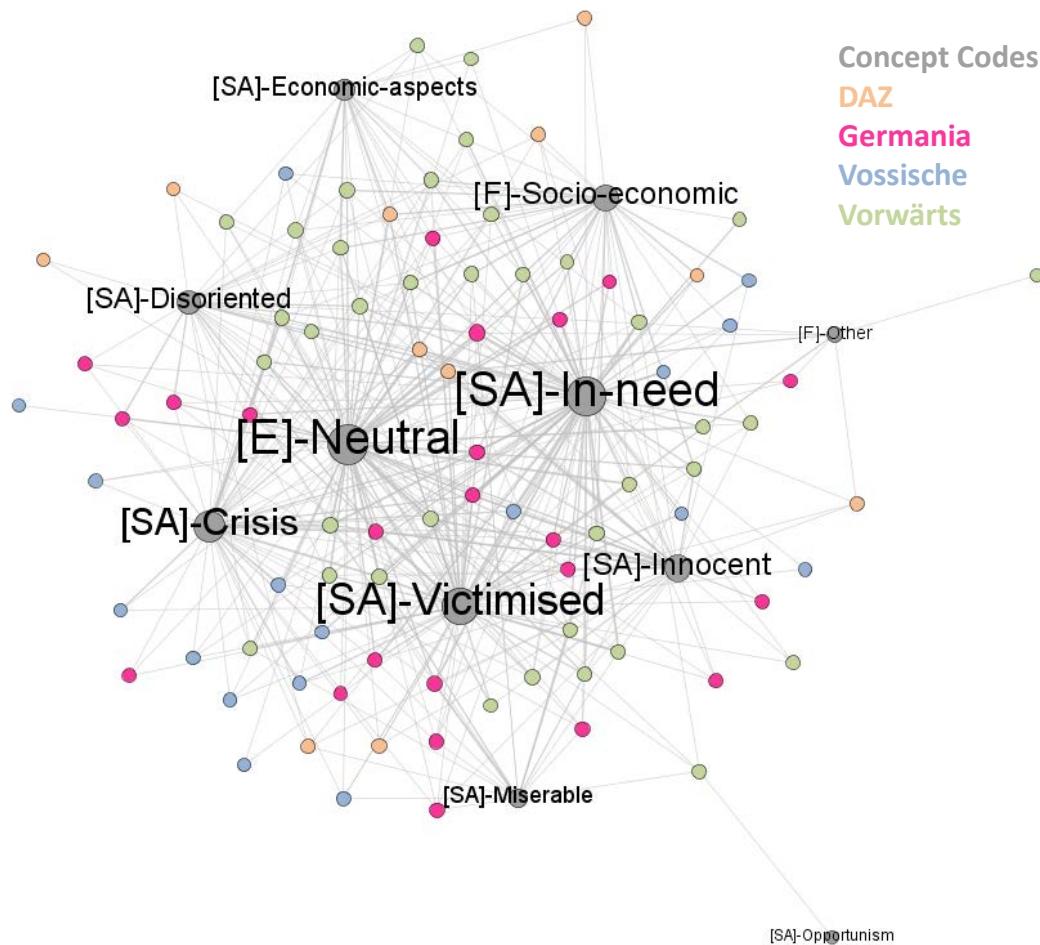
Figure 12: VICTIM: Discourse Network

References to the effects of the past were one way to externalise responsibility from youth. Through reiterations, the PAST served a central programmatic function for understanding PRESENT troubles. This discursive practice enclosed the Weimar Republic within the space of experience of the First World War. In 1930, a series of student letters to the DAZ gave an insider perspective into this persistence. Each letter formulated political demands derived from the "present past". Ludwig Eisenhard, for instance, saw the fragmentation of Weimar's politics as the most significant consequence of the war:

> The societal splintering is explained with the dreadfully bleak past which today's students had to go through. Our parents were born into a happy and victorious Germany with world-wide recognition. At that time it was easy to approve of this state and to dedicate all youthful might to it. For us, however, when we first went to school with pretty satchels, our fathers went to

the fields with knapsacks ad bayonets. Even if back then we did not yet understand the horrors, this horrible war is in our memory, deep in it, ineradicable for the rest of our life.[69]

The war's violence and isolation explained fragmentation, presenting the CRISIS of youth in a gendered way, concentrating on young men. Hundreds of competing student organisations, all primarily concerned with individual partisan interest, manifested this "verhängnisvolle Uneinigkeit" [fatal disaccord]. The past explained the present situation: inflation wiped out savings and made it impossible for young people to study, the badly conceived political system left the government weak and made room for political factions driven by economic interests. Lastly, the current generation grew up humiliated after the shameful peace settling: "The disappointed man, like a wandering moth, pushes towards the glorious light of the revolutionary parties, which allegedly bring happiness. Dazzled [geblendet] by the light he loses the sight of the general interests of the *Volk*." The youth born during the war years was a VICTIM of bad upbringings which often led to the juvenile court.[70]

Across all social strata youth worried about the future, an unwanted generation.[71] The idea of a MISERABLE youth became firmly anchored in Weimar.[72] The conservative Germania associated the despair with "Kleinverbrecher" [petty criminals] of the working class who used to be honest men.[73] High rates of unemployment prevented young people from even thinking about the possibility of getting a job and they ended up as "Landstreicher" [vagrants].[74]

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[69] Revolutionär oder Staatserneuernd, in: DAZ, 08.06.1930.

[70] Wege zum Jugendgericht, in: Vorwärts, 10.02.1931.

[71] Jugend, wir rufen Dich!, in: Vorwärts, 01.10.1932.

[72] Jugend in Not, in: Die Weltbühne, 1930:6, p. 204

[73] Haltlose Jugend, in: Germania, 15.11.1930.

[74] Jugend in Not, in: Vorwärts, 02.06.1932.

Within the rules of this formation, youth bore no responsibility for its misery, the state was to blame for failing to provide more than warm pea soup to the unemployed.[75]

Vorwärts emphasised socio-economic differences and saw "Auszubildende" [trainees] as the first victims of the economic crisis.[76] Over time, other professions were similarly understood and a young architect stressed how badly the university had prepared him for the liberal profession.[77] This problem was particularly grave for youth: growing up during the "Golden Twenties," it expected the situation to improve and yield to a new golden age. Nevertheless, youth remained motivated to find work:

> Again and yet again, the will is stopped by the barricades of unemployment, indifference and despair, often surmounts the distrust by parents and kin, who frequently think and speak according to the proven recipe: 'Who really looks for work will find it.'[78]

Debates about the value of work emphasised the importance of financial aspects but also of inner development. However, Vorwärts had to admit by 1931 that youth faced a depressing reality as its energy had been rendered superfluous,[79] leaving it DISORIENTED. Youth therefore needed assistance, and the local council of Berlin set up homes to offer some education which consolidated ideas of youth IN-NEED, strengthened by a consensus that "youth without hopes is the greatest risk for society".[80]

This interpretation seemed authentic, since young people themselves affirmed that they lacked self-esteem. They no longer dared to go out on the street because of shame and felt isolated: "Too little attention is paid to the fact that the currently young generation, aged 14-26, lived

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[75] Ohne Arbeit, in: Vorwärts, 21.04.1932.

[76] Die Lehrlingsnot, in: Vorwärts, 06.03.1931.

[77] Der junge Architekt, in: DAZ, 20.11.1932.

[78] Odyssee der deutschen Jugend, in: VZ, 30.01.1932.

[79] Rettet die Jugend, in: Vorwärts, 17.04.1931.

[80] Kämpfende Jugend, in: Germania, 28.05.1932.

its childhood under war and post-war conditions, and therefore could not find the moral support needed for its inner consolidation."[81] Such images were accepted and recognised as true – an art exhibition drew attention to the misery of youth. The accompanying daily discussions were well attended and contributed to framing youth as a lost generation.[82]

Furthering ideas of a lost generation, a Catholic student named Leni Deppner-Gerburg asked peers in 1932 to get involved in Catholic associations to oppose the public questioning of values. She regretted the continuous mechanisation of life and the apparent "Diesseitigkeit des Denkens" [earthliness of thinking], which she saws as obstacles for confronting current hardship.[83] Such attitudes were said to lead to fatal egoism and let the young generation blind to those problems affecting the entire "Volkskörper" [national body].

Intergenerational tensions were linked with youth in crisis and micro-level conflicts received ample attention, notably the impact of young men returning home once they could no longer afford to live independently. They were downgraded to disobedient "children, […] another useless mouth to feed".[84] According to Vorwärts, the domestic abuse of young people and children who took up space and disturbed parents' routines expressed this downgrading. Journalists connected the MISERABLE state of youth with the adult generation. He described alcoholic fathers who came back home late at night and woke children up to beat them. Beyond physical wounds, the mental ones worried contemporaries, who expected that they would cause future problems for the Weimar Republic.[85] The new generation's ego had been crushed before youth had a chance to develop its own personality.

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[81] Hilfe der erwerbslosen Jugend!, in: Vorwärts, 20.02.1931.

[82] Dienst an der Jugend, in: VZ, 26.11.1929.

[83] Über die gemeinschaft der kath. Studentinnen, in: Germania, 01.05.1932.

[84] Väter und Söhne, in: Vorwärts, 01.11.1931.

[85] Unnütze Esser!, in: Vorwärts, 04.12.1931.

Youth as Trouble Maker and Threat

The THREAT discursive formation portrayed youth mobilisation as undermining the existing political order across the period analysed (Figure 6) – prominent in the progressive Vorwärts and the Catholic Germania. Its authors opposed fascist and communist-induced violence and legitimised socialist or Catholic mobilisation respectively. However, despite their political significance, discussions about such violent youth never dominated the last Weimarian years.

Only a few concept codes are relevant to this discursive formation (Figure 13). Almost all articles are linked by a combination of PRESENT, NEGATIVE, RUPTURE, and TROUBLE-MAKER (Figure 14). The combination of youth as a TROUBLE-MAKER who brought the PRESENT into disorder was perceived as being new, a departure from a golden epoch. Mobilisation of *Stahlhelm* or *Wehrwolf* was usually interpreted as being either NATIONALIST and purely VIOLENT, or a sign of NAÏVE youth. Influenced by external forces, youth was also described as IRRESPONSIBLE and seen as INCAPABLE.

The arts illustrated the contemporary absorption in debates about the generational gap.[86] The "Generationsgesetz" [law of generational succession][87] and the "Jungmanneseindrücke" [impressions of a young man] were said to shape a whole nation. Politics could only be understood through the young generation and in Germany, this generation was seen as more radical because of the war and lacking in educational and professional training. For the DAZ,

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[86] See the prosaic description of the generational drifting apart in: Kleine Kindertragödie, in: DAZ, 30.08.1931.

[87] The term "Generationsgesetz" indicates the common place the generational logic had become in Weimar. Perceived as a natural law, it was also projected onto conditions aborad: Philosophie-Studentinnen in Buenos Aires, in: Germania, 20.10.1929.

the generational gulf ran between those who were 30-45 years old by 1930 and who had fought the war, and those who were younger and had not participated.[88]

Youth reiterated these radical ideas. The student Ursula Klosse lamented her egoistic and narcissistic peers who undermined the Republic's foundations. By trying to be authentic and living a life according to their own desires, they failed to contribute to the community and fell short of all ideals.[89] Commentators remarked in 1931 that the older generation had exploited the immaturity of youth: "The tragic situation of a good part of today's youth is that it believes it is being revolutionary whilst it is in reality reactionary and therefore misguided about its real political position."[90] To restrict a subversive potential of youth, conservatives press agreed that youth ought not to be socialised into particular parties. Germania argued: "First of all, the state had to be comprehended out of the idea of the *Volk*, in every *Volksgenossen* one ought to look for the human being and in every human being for God's creature. It is therefore not about de-politicisation of youth but 'Entparteiung' ["de-party-fication"]."[91]

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[88] Generation und Politik, in: DAZ, 12.01.1930.

[89] Ein junger Mensch spricht, in: Germania, 25.10.1931.

[90] Wo steht die Jugend?, in: VZ, 23.05.1931; see also (Kiesel 1933).

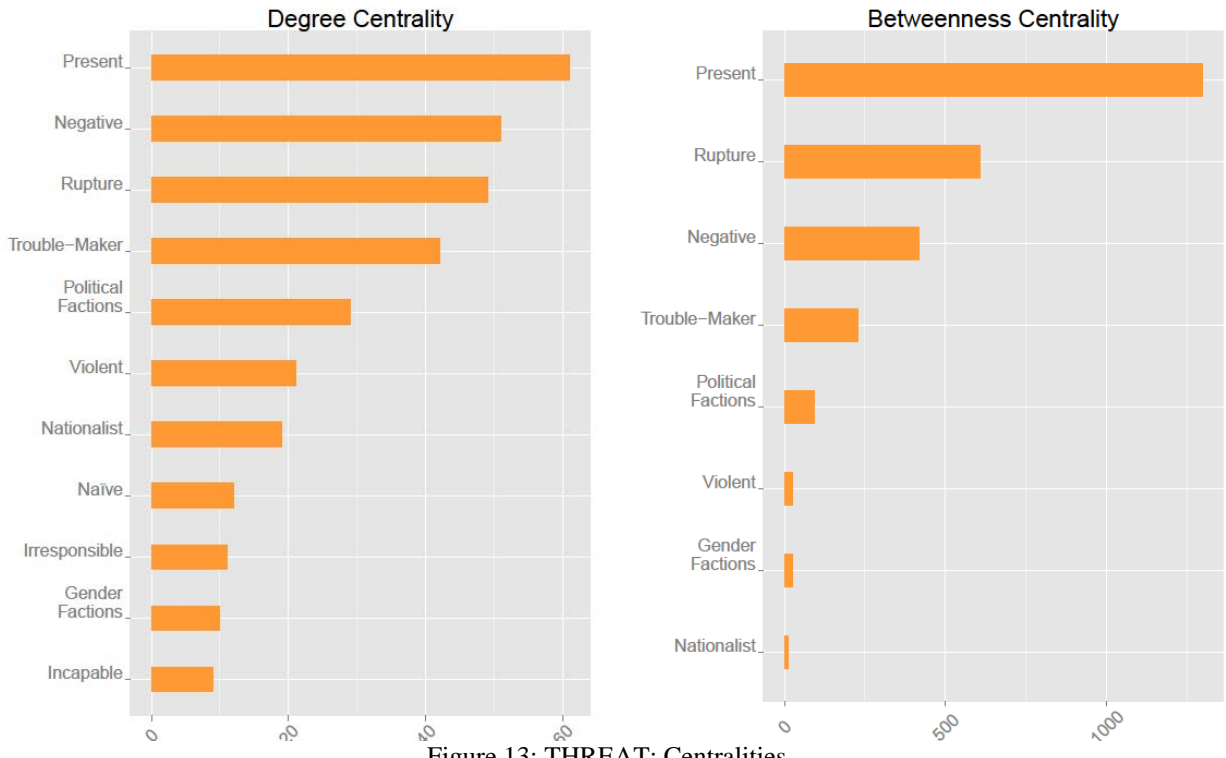[91] Um Jugend und Staat, in: Germania, 25.06.1930.

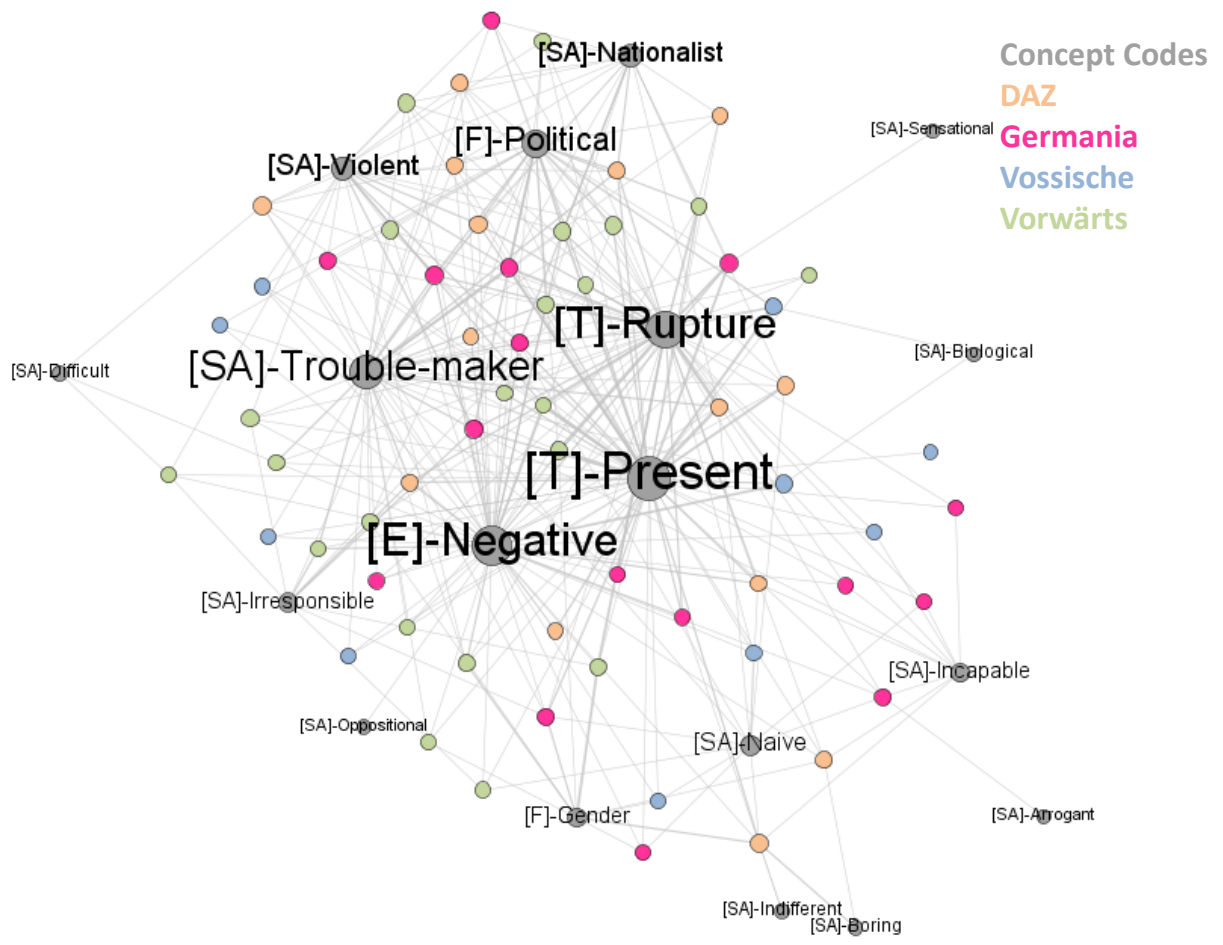Figure 13: THREAT: Centralities

Figure 14: THREAT: Discourse Network

Communist and fascist groups made Weimar's radical youth. Confrontations were common after political meetings since competing groups knew when and where opponents met.[92] Detailed reports about the often armed conflicts underlined, however, that the distinction between communists and fascists was merely situational – individuals frequently changed political allegiance even between diametrically opposed groups. Germania gave insight into this practice which emphasised the picture of a VIOLENT young generation lacking a credible political commitment. Youth appeared "leichtsinnig" [frivolous] and even politically uninvolved people might get killed in arbitrary violence.[93]

From 1931 onward, the NATIONALIST concept gained prominence. Progressive media argued that to protect youth, right-wing student associations should be forbidden.[94] Their activities were described as terror, their violence made no difference between political opinions.[95] Vorwärts reported on public disturbances caused by the *Hitlerjugend* [Hitler Youth], while insisting that the group was much smaller than it claimed to be. The journalist argued that it marched in circles to inflate its visibility.[96]

The left-wing Vorwarts denounced communist violence and remarked that it was probably motivated by understandable socio-economic grievances rather than real political feelings. However, Vorwärts also reprinted sections of the communist newspaper "Rote Fahne" [Red Flag], which glorified the violence as an act of liberation.[97] The conservative press, when it spoke about communist activities, accused communist youth mobilisation of causing the high

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[92] Kommunisten erschießen einen Nationalsozialisten, in: DAZ, 15.12.1929.

[93] Politisches Rowdytum, in: Germania, 28.05.1930.

[94] Gegen die Verhetzung der Jugend, in: VZ, 30.04.1931.

[95] SA.-Terror geht weiter! , in: Vorwärts, 22.07.1932.

[96] Hitlerjugend marschiert im Kreis, in: Vorwärts, 06.10.1932 – the metaphor "going around in circles" points to the movement's idleness.

[97] Mißbrauchte Jugend, in: Vorwärts, 11.03.1931.

level of street violence. It detailed how 25 communists attacked 6 national-socialists and killed one in January 1932. They presented communists as cowards who outnumber and attacked the national-socialists, who were legally and peacefully distributing leaflets.[98] By 1932 even Heinrich Mann, who was always in favour of youth, turned away from it. A reader's letter underlined that Mann began opposing youth because he rejected the radicalism which it had come to embody.[99]

The violence that originated from universities contradicted assumptions about them being places of free learning to prepare the future intellectual elite. The confined spaces of the university conditioned the interactions and made encounters between rival groups inevitable. Political violence could easily occur and there was fierce competition over the symbolic and physical occupation of space.

The symbolic occupation of space through songs was central in early confrontations. In 1929, the DAZ clearly condemned rallying right-wing students who sang national-socialist songs and searched for Jewish students to threaten.[100] At the same time, discussions within Vorwärts about whether or not political student groups should be forbidden, underline that by 1929 student mobilisation was already perceived as threat to the established order. The student Wilhelm Fietgens summarised a cross-societal consensus which saw student groups as dangerous and undesirable, undermining the authority of the older generation, from professors, to bureaucrats, and the bourgeoisie.[101] Students faced trials for their actions and the press criticised their vandalism and their insulting of representatives of the state as

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[98] Ein Sechzehnjähriger von Kommunisten ermordet, in: DAZ, 26.01.1932.

[99] Heraufsetzen des Wahlaters?, in: Die Weltbühne, 1932: 15, p. 568

[100] Krawalle in der Berliner Universität, in: DAZ, 13.11.1929.

[101] Warum politische Studentengruppen? , in: Vorwärts, 28.11.1929.

"Henkersknechte" [Hangman's assistant] and "Bluthunde" [Bloodhounds].[102] Early confrontations were framed as "nuisances" and "rackets," consolidating the picture of students as TROUBLE-MAKER.[103]

Over time physical violence of students expanded. Otto Piper, lawyer and *DVP* politician, maintained that radicalisation expressed the "Lebensschicksal" [fate of life] of the young generation (1932: 99). By the fall of 1930, Nazi-induced violence required regular police interventions, which even Vorwärts, normally critical of the police, supported.[104] Remembrance days were symbolically important and rival political groups aimed at demarcating their territory. During the 1930 Landmark festivities in November, students in Königsberg pulled out black-white-red flags and insulted the police called in by the university's Chancellor.[105]

The Prussian cultural minister Adolf Grimme accused students of causing the violence in Weimar. He was concerned about the impact on universities and warned that academic freedom could only be maintained if a climate of tolerance returned to the university.[106]

> No state can overextend the sympathy for young people to such an extreme, that it lets these dark things continue calmly. Henceforth the state will intervene with all means against these attempts to ruin the academic life and to undermine the freedom of research. If required also with the police, which is not going to be stopped by the so called 'extra-territoriality' of the university which in reality is non-existent.

Mobilisation by rival political groups within the confined space of the university rapidly escalated. Whenever communist or national-socialist students staged a demonstration to

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[102] Neun Studenten vor dem Richter, in: Vorwärts, 11.01.1930.

[103] Studentenunfug in Thüringen, in: Vorwärts, 16.07.1930.

[104] Der Nazikrawall in der Universität, in: Vorwärts, 13.11.1930.

[105] Universität unter Terror, in: Vorwärts, 22.11.1930.

[106] Politik und Schule, in: Vorwärts, 18.03.1931.

symbolically and physically occupy space, a counter demonstration attempted to regain the "lost" space.[107] Vorwärts urged students to embrace an academic spirit, underlining that antagonisms amongst students precluded intellectual debate and drowned the entire country in political terror. Naturally, Vorwärts accused right-wing groups of having violence as their sole aim: "One does not even grant the enemy with a right to discuss. He is beaten up not out of despair but because of conviction."[108] A flag put up by Nazi supporters in January 1932 led to fights between opposing groups,[109] as did the chanting of political hymns.[110]

By 1932, in an attempt to limit violent confrontations, the government amended the disciplinary law to give greater authority to rectors for punishment – a necessity in troubled times.[111] But clashes at Weimar's universities did not diminish and youth became increasingly understood as a VIOLENT and NEGATIVE young generation.[112] Violence eventually spread beyond communists and national-socialists and even Catholic and republican youth got involved.[113] In 1932 Piper stressed in Deutsche Rundschau the gravity of the university situation and traced the political radicalisation that was taking place during the interwar period (1932: 98).

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[107] Die Berliner Universität geschlossen, in: DAZ, 30.06.1931.

[108] Man mache den Studenten klar…, in: Vorwärts, 30.07.1931.

[109] Neue Studentenkrawalle, in: Vorwärts, 19.01.1932; Universität geschlossen, in: Vorwärts, 23.01.1932.

[110] Songs included "Deutschalnd erwache" or the "Horst-Wessel-Lied":Berliner Universität wieder geschlossen, in: DAZ, 05.02.1932;

[111] Das neue Studenten-Disziplinarrecht, in: DAZ, 03.03.1932.

[112] Die Berliner Universität geschlossen, in: DAZ, 01.07.1932.

[113] Kath. Jungmänner von Nazis überfallen, in: Germania, 04.11.1932; for Nazi disturbances of a *Reichsbanner* commemoration: Neue Studentenkrawalle, in: Vorwärts, 10.02.1933.

YOUTH AND THE BREAKDOWN OF UNCONSOLIDATED DEMOCRACIES

The breakdown of Weimar's democracy permits conclusions about the theoretical importance of youth and the political mobilisation of young people in regime change. Under conditions of uncertainty about future political developments, as characteristic of the late Weimar Republic, political and social actors get involved in an extensive struggle about the symbolic meaning of youth. In Weimar's democratic regime, the confrontation about the meaning of youth was decentralised and contradictory as the discourse network analysis highlighted. Until 1933, supporters of no particular strand could gain public dominance in Weimar. This constellation conformed to contemporary political power structures and social currents. The differing meanings about youth illustrate how undetermined the political conflict appeared to the public. In turn, debates about youth furthered the persistence of an open and balanced structure of political power. Weimar's public could plausibly believe in numerous future trajectories as competing discursive formations occupied similarly large proportions of the discourse. The network analysis allows moreover for novel insights into the dynamics of this discourse and how central concepts evolved.

The question arises why Weimar collapsed under these conditions of diversity which ought to sustain a democracy. A close reading of the discursive formations underlines internal divisions of those pro-democratic sets of meaning which appear alike at first encounter. Interpretations similarly framed youth as saviour of democracy, however, the actual political implications of such interpretations differed according to the political factions. In addition to the symbolic struggle about youth, the political mobilisation of the young people who took the streets influenced the political course.

Politicians mobilised young people to convey authentic public support for their political course. Youth appeared as a particularly forceful mean for doing so. It did not contribute to

the *Schandfrieden* [peace of disgrace] and did not suffer from a lacking legitimacy which characterised the generation of its fathers. Youth mobilisation could therefore benefit from moral superiority. When citizens understood youth mobilisation as expressing an existential truth about Weimar's political system, they sustained the importance of youth for the political sphere. Resonating with the historic context of the idealistic *Jugendbewegungen,* political youth mobilisation seemed authentic. This authenticity contrasted with the political reality of Weimar which resembled a play. The violent confrontations between youth groups of the political extremes further destabilised the political system. Weimar's politicians failed to end this violence which undermined the legitimacy of democracy as a means to respond to contemporary challenges.

Popular mobilisation against the incumbent regime conveys to society at large when a regime loses its legitimacy. Young people, Weimar's breakdown illustrates this, have fewer personal constraints on their possible involvement in unconventional political forms. This characteristic has persisted. Sloam illustrates that young people today are not apathetic but politically engaged in a variety of ways (2014: 664). Such youth engagement amplifies in importance if adult civil society fails to contain it. Flourishing youth mobilisation can become a salient voice for the political course. Splits amongst the political leadership characterise moments which might lead to regime change and encourage diverse youth mobilisation as seen in the Russian Federation after the 2005 Ukrainian "Orange Revolution". Oppositional youth was responsive to changes in Ukraine which modified its perception of Russian politics and mobilised despite significant obstacles (Krawatzek 2015). The Kremlin itself understood the potential threat of youth mobilisation to regime stability looking at "Colour Revolutions" spreading between neighbouring post-Soviet countries (Beissinger 2007). Russia's political leadership responded by setting up regime-loyal youth oppositions to support its political course.

The breakdown of democratic Weimar contains lessons for present day regime crises. The Weimar Republic's multifaceted crisis claimed young citizens as its first victims – cuts in welfare spending, rising unemployment rates amongst young people, blaming external enemies for political failures radicalised youth. In the present day crisis of European democracies, young people are similarly affected by austerity policies and express their political distrust through new forms of mobilisation. Understanding the meaning of youth mobilisation is therefore critical as it permits insights into the general development of socio-political structures. The relationship between youth and politics contains a rich and contradictory history of the complexities of the meaning of politics which discussions about youth and young people's political mobilisation drive forward.

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