

# THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE



Volume 5

Autonomy through dependency – Histories  
of co-operation, conflict and innovation in youth work

## Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



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# THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE

Autonomy through  
dependency – Histories  
of co-operation, conflict  
and innovation in youth work

Volume 5

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# Preface

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Jan Vanhee and Hanjo Schild

## COMPLETING THE JIGSAW PUZZLE: FURTHER EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE

The fifth volume of our series on the History of Youth Work in Europe, *Autonomy through dependency – histories of co-operation, conflict and innovation in youth work* is a next step in bringing together pieces of a very interesting and complex puzzle. After having published the results of three workshops in Blankenberge, Belgium (2008 and 2009) and Tallinn, Estonia (2011) and of an international and interdisciplinary conference on the history of youth work in Ghent, Belgium (2010), this book documents the reflections that have taken place in a seminar in Helsinki 2014. While the first workshops had a strong focus on the histories of youth work in given countries, the Helsinki meeting was helping us to move towards a more thematic approach while looking specifically at the histories of co-operation, conflict and innovation in youth work. It can be seen as programmatic and forward looking when Lasse Siurala stressed in a concept paper for the preparation of the fifth workshop on history of youth work the following:

“There is shared understanding that the true (?) identity of youth work must be about capacity to operate between private and public with a sufficient degree of autonomy – but definitely not without links to both private and public – hence the oxymoron: ‘autonomy through dependencies’.”

Discussing the issue of “autonomy through dependency” was timely when we look at the recent (and ongoing) debates on cross-sectoral/multi-agency co-operation. This debate is also about negotiating and creating the space for youth work – as a challenge and as a possibility. And at times where in many countries youth work needs to struggle with lacking resources it might be an option to link with other actors and other programmes – essentially a threat to the independence of youth work.

The Helsinki discussions were also enriched by bringing on board puzzle pieces with a geographic extension (speakers from the USA, Australia and South Africa) and by involving more young people, youth worker students from the University of Minnesota and Humak University of Applied Sciences (Finland).

The work done in all the history workshops helped us a lot in finding some common ground for youth work in Europe. A lot of elements you can find back in the declaration of the second European Youth Work Convention (2015). But there is still a lot of work to do by bringing together some more puzzle pieces from missing countries in Europe; also the history puzzle pieces of European youth organisations, youth workers and youth social workers need to be written.

The idea of writing and presenting the histories of youth work of all member states of the Council of Europe is not given up and continues: experts have been contacted in all those countries whose histories are not yet drafted. Those papers which exist have been uploaded in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC): <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/knowledge-/-ekcyp>. Stories of approximately 30 countries plus many thematic articles can be downloaded; others will follow.

Also the five books now published on the histories of youth work can be downloaded from the website of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/publications>.

Those who want to help us to find and collect missing puzzle pieces and store them in the European Knowledge Centre of Youth Policy are invited to contact us. Thanks a lot for your efforts!



Part I

# **Making youth work matter: jammed strategies and blinks of hope**

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# Introduction

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*Lasse Siurala*

After reading everything about youth work, we (still) don't understand what we are talking about.

(Redig, forthcoming)

**Y**outh work is about building identity and enacting it, it is about youth agency. Its historical roots are in youth movements, in ways of "being young together". The history seminars have looked at the different trajectories of youth movements, often within the context of school and social work. One trajectory is based on youth movements as social innovators and change-makers, having eventually led to the system of youth organisations and their strong position as the spearhead of youth work, notably playing the key role in the "magic triangle" of youth work. Another trajectory has been youth work developed under the influence of social work with a strong interest in integration, care and control. In many countries, youth work has become an instrument of political priorities to combat youth unemployment, juvenile criminality, drug use and marginalisation. As a result, youth workers, in the UK in particular, have claimed that youth work has lost the capacity to implement its ethos. A third trajectory has been leisure-oriented youth work, which has not always been able to hold its ground, partly due to lacking evidence of its outcomes, partly to reduced public funding and partly to lack of renewal. One reaction to youth work being "only about leisure" has been the integrated youth policies, which overall do not have a good record. The general impression of these histories has been a decline of youth work from a supporter of autonomous and innovative youth groups and movements of "being young together" to an instrument of government to integrate and control young people, and to a marginal field of service with low recognition.

This account may be right, but many participants of the fifth conference on the History of Youth Work in Europe, held in Helsinki, Finland (8-10 June 2014) felt that many of the trajectories "offer no future project ... without a blink of solutions". Many agreed, as Howard Williamson argued, that there is "an over-reach of negative, regulatory and compensatory 'youth policy' and an under-reach of purposeful and positive 'youth policy'". How can we explore the ground for "solutions" and positive strategies?

This volume will provide a versatile look at the positive and negative strategies of youth work to promote its recognition. Integrated youth policies and the "magic triangle" represent potential ways for the youth field to establish recognition and influence. The integrated youth policies have not been a great success and the historical analysis indicates some of the reasons for this. However, there are also positive experiences, which have been hampered by a lack of research and peer learning. The "magic triangle" is a great concept, but not that much of a reality (see Manfred Zentner's contribution to this volume).

The history of youth work is a history of survival in the margins. The success strategy is not isolating oneself in that margin, but crossing the nearby borders, co-operating with other sectors and actors, searching for broader alliances and networking – “negotiating the interstitial space”. Youth work is a derivative of the ways of “being young together” and on how young people today experiment and express their identities. These ways have dramatically changed, not only due to youth cultures, the Internet, social media and lifestyles, but also because of structural changes like unemployment and poverty. Youth work faces a necessary and unique opportunity to reconsider its working methods within this context of change – and finding new ways of working. Trying to understand youth work in a new context; “to understand what we are talking about”. Another “blink of solutions”.

## REFERENCE

Redig, G. (forthcoming), “Youth work and an internationally agreed definition of youth work: more than a tough job – An impulse to reflection”, in Schild H. et al., *Thinking Seriously about Youth Work*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

## Chapter 1

# Crafting the space between either and or: attending to the role of words, young people and public will

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*Joyce A. Walker*

**T**he assignment for the concluding keynote at the Helsinki seminar (2014) that addressed issues of autonomy and dependencies in youth work was challenging: reflect on the seminar experience and the four History of youth work in Europe volumes and respond to them with questions, observations and an eye to the future. This paper builds on the seminar keynote and intends to tell some stories, share some reflections, and stimulate thinking in new ways. It proposes no blueprint for the future of youth work – only issues to consider as we move forward.

The remarkable collection of youth work histories that European practitioners and scholars have produced is truly an enormous contribution to the field worldwide. The history and context of youth work in its many forms in many nations over time – sometimes hundreds of years – is available to inform practitioners, policy makers and researchers. This work is incredibly thoughtful and articulate, and conveys a lot of heart and wisdom.

Reading and hearing the histories was exciting, because in the US we are dealing with so many of the same questions and issues. That's surprising since on the surface our youth work practice, systems, policies and context appear to be so different. The observations and critical questions discussed here may contribute to future thinking in European countries as well as in the United States. The ideas are organised around three themes: (1) the words we use; (2) the way we partner with young people and allies; and (3) the public will we need in order to succeed. In discussing issues of words, youth participation and public will, and citing examples of similar issues in the United States, the goal is not to get stuck in the dichotomies – the either/or polarities – that may be useful to clarify issues, but are seldom helpful in framing new solutions that seek a middle ground or a new ground moving ahead.

## BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOUTH WORK

Let me speak personally here so readers understand a bit of my history and stance. I draw from my own 30-year experience as a youth worker, a university teacher, applied researcher and community educator. I also draw on the powerful lessons of my inspiration and colleague Gisela Konopka. Gisa was a feisty German social worker who often told stories about her days as a youth worker in the 1930s to 1940s. One relates to a young woman named Ilse who was known for her enthusiastic socialising with sailors in the Hamburg harbour area. She was picked up and referred to the youth authority. At this point in her storytelling, Gisa always burst into a smile and exclaimed, "Oh my, could she ever dance! Everything I know about dancing I learned from her! She taught everyone in our group and we had such a grand time!" Where the juvenile authorities saw only trouble, the young German youth worker saw possibilities. Where the authorities saw a shameless young girl dancing topless with sailors, the youth worker spotted talent and energy along with a big dose of problematic behaviour. To establish a connection, the youth worker asked the girl for some dancing lessons. And so it is in dance and in youth work that young people learn from us, we learn from them, we all learn from each other. We build on strengths. This is one of the fundamental truths about youth work.

Like the dance, youth work is a dynamic, not a simple service or function. Like youth work, dance involves movement, rhythm, creativity, discipline, history and tradition. Like dance, youth work demands engagement, responsiveness and co-creation. Good youth work often leads young people to places, experiences and learnings they never dreamed of before. I propose that youth work is a dynamic of learning and conversations and relationships. The youth work dynamic results from the synergy of young people, youth workers with a stance, and intentional interactions – the experiences, the programme, the focus of engagement.

Describing youth work as unique and important work, Larson (1989) captured this dynamic engagement in his doctoral research on young people in their daily environments. All the young people in the study carried beepers. They were contacted at different times of the day and evening and asked a couple of simple questions about what they were doing and how they were feeling. His conclusion was that young people are highly engaged with their friends, they are challenged in school, and they are both engaged and challenged in youth work and youth programme environments. We are talking about powerful and important encounters in this field of youth work.

In the US, youth work is not a common generally accepted term. Across the country, there is no consensus term to describe our work that is accepted by the general public, other professionals or our workers. This raises the question: Why is it so hard in this field to describe what we stand for, and so easy to resort to words that sound peripheral instead of essential? In an effort to explain it to the public, youth work is described as out-of-school time, after school, extended day, school enrichment, non-formal learning, youth programmes, community-based youth programmes, extracurricular activities, leisure, recreation and more. In Minnesota we do use the term youth work because that feisty German social worker, a product of the Wandervogel movement, came to the US in the 1950s, settled in Minneapolis, and founded a Center for Youth

Development and Research at the University of Minnesota. Konopka also espoused the term now very popular in the US: positive (or healthy) youth development. She is the first person I know to use the term youth development 50 years ago expressly in terms that went beyond existing theories in sociology, medicine and psychology.

Paraphrasing a policy paper she wrote for the US government in 1973, Konopka stated:

- ▶ We do not see adolescence or youthhood exclusively as a stage that human beings pass through to get from child to adult. It is one of many important segments of continuing human development over the life span.
- ▶ We reject the common notion that being young is solely preparation for being old except in the sense that everything before is preparation for what follows.
- ▶ We believe young people, like other people, are persons with specific qualities and characteristics who have a participatory and responsible role to play, tasks to perform, skills to develop. The degree or extent to which they experience such responsible participation will determine and maximise human development.

She spoke daily of youth work and youth workers – and we colleagues and students who worked with her adopted the term.

Gisa challenged us on important questions about youth work, asking, “So what do you want to be?” It is always a question of freedom for something and freedom from something. This fits the theme for this volume: What do you want to be autonomous for, and what do you want autonomy from? She often reminded us that dualist thinking is simplistic thinking. Avoid “either this or that” thinking: discover new ways. Listen to the young people! They have new and interesting ideas!

In her teaching and practice, Konopka emphasised developing a clear, grounded philosophy from which practical techniques could evolve. While social work was well grounded in theory, concepts and philosophy, she observed that youth workers placed too much emphasis on method, technique and tools. She reminded us to ramp up the philosophy and theory behind our work. In her later years, she questioned the tendency of the professions to assume the role of authorities who possessed wisdom and were in charge. She felt this professional drive in US social work and education prevented giving full recognition to youth work and young people. She was a passionate believer in social group work, and she never failed to acknowledge subcultures saying, “In a group we are all members” – or in her story, “In a group we can all learn to dance.”

## **REFLECTIONS ON WORDS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PUBLIC WILL**

While youth work language, practice, research and policy are not identical in the United States and Europe, some common themes emerge as relevant. In the context of autonomy and interdependencies, three challenges stand out: (1) clarifying the divergent perspectives on definition, dimensions of practice and accountability; (2) addressing the value of translational scholarship bridging science and complex practice; and (3) being strategic about the importance of leveraging systems support for field building (Walker et al. 2011). Youth workers, young people, researchers,

policy makers and the public at large have a stake in dealing with these topics. This section of the chapter explores autonomy and interdependency issues in terms of clarifying language of philosophy and practice; forging new partnerships with youth and allies; and reigniting the public will to understand, value and support youth work.

The words we use – youth work, youth development, non-formal learning, youth policy – are directly related to issues of autonomy and dependency in the field. The question, “So what do we want to be?” leads to a discussion of freedom to be something and freedom not to be something else. Youth work in Europe faces the same identity issue as the youth development field does in the United States. It has been said that youth work is an all-purpose weapon. The challenge for youth work today is to determine what we are and what we are not. It requires articulating our philosophy and principles for work with young people as well as naming the proven research-based methods and techniques that make sense in light of our goals. Is youth work an action, a philosophy or a methodology? Is youth work a social service delivery mechanism, an allied educational system, a community recreation programme, a problem prevention scheme, a client service system of case management, an intervention unit to pull out when something goes wrong, or a service on the side of young people? The public and young people need to understand precisely what this “youth work thing” is about. Words are important. Agreement and consistency on crystal clear language is critically important as we deal with the identity of our field. And identity is key to autonomy and to forging healthy interdependent relationships with other systems and in the community. The challenge is to find straightforward words to describe our philosophy, to distinguish our dynamic practice, and to identify why this work matters for young people today.

## **Youth development/youth work**

Consider this example of indiscriminate overuse. In the last 30 years in the US, some consensus has developed on why youth work exists; it exists to promote positive, healthy youth development. Most in the field believe this is accomplished through learning experiences and organised opportunities to contribute that benefit individuals and civil society. In our enthusiasm to cast away the label as those who fix youth or prevent problems, we got accustomed to the term “youth development”. The term became our answer to everything. Youth development described our work, our goals, our impacts, our programmes (Hamilton and Hamilton 2004). Because we need a word to describe what young people do, we say youth development is what young people do. Youth develop. They own it and they do it. They will develop with or without us. European writings have a much better, quite beautiful term for it: Young people being young together. Because we need an interdisciplinary word to describe our philosophy and pedagogy – a distinctive term for our way of working – we call it positive youth development. It describes a way of seeing young people in the lived world. And because we need a descriptor for non-formal learning programmes in the community, we speak of youth development programmes and organisations. We might say that girl scouting is a youth development movement.

Is it possible that the field in Europe has a tendency to overuse the word youth work in much the same way we have overused the term youth development? What do



YOU mean when you say youth work? Is it an action? A delivery system for social services or education? A philosophy? A pedagogy? A general word for youth activities? Maybe it's the label of a professional field. Perhaps it's an umbrella term (Taru et al. 2014) or an essential dynamic, as I suggest, or the term for a subset of social work? By giving one term layered and multiple meanings, we confuse people and ourselves. We alienate those trying to understand our work and undercut our own desire to be understood.

The public and young people need to understand precisely what this "youth work thing" is about. Public will and youth participation are essential to our being and our success. We want their support and engagement. So this is a plea to find new and straightforward words to distinguish what young people do, what our philosophy is, and what the dynamic practice is called. Taru et al. (2014), and Jeffs (2014) both suggest that while we may not develop a single universal vocabulary, we can identify common threads with common terms.

## **Non-formal learning**

In the European history volumes on youth work, the terms non-formal learning, non-formal education and informal education are often used interchangeably. In pursuit of more precise language, in Minnesota we have generally adopted the term non-formal learning to describe our pedagogical stance. We embraced this term because it distinguishes the learning terrain between the formal education programmes of the schools and the informal or less intentional learning that goes on in families, in front of the television and with friends. Nobody likes the term – but once explained, they get it! They resist it – but they need it. It places youth work on the educational continuum understood by large numbers of the public.

We do avoid using the term non-formal education because in our state and country the schools have the almost exclusive ownership of the word "education". Also, education places the emphasis on the system whereas learning connects the action to a learner. After 20 years of involving experienced youth workers in our Youth Development Leadership master's programme, we have several hundred of them out in the community using the term non-formal learning casually and intentionally with their staff, their organisation leaders and their partners. It is catching on.

## **Policy and public will**

In the US, policy is yet another term used inconsistently and applied to anything from rules to guidelines to good ideas to legislative proposals. I'm less clear about the level of consensus here. To explain policy in our teaching and conversations, we're falling back on a story we refer to as "The Prudential". It goes like this: One of our faculty colleagues recalls growing up in St Louis, Missouri where once a month a man in a suit came to his home to take 50 cents and a signature from his mother. When asked what this was about, his mother said, "That man is from the Prudential and that 50 cents is for our policy. If I pay, if anything happens to your father, we will have some money to live on." A policy is a contract, an agreement, simple and straightforward. And what is public policy? It is a social contract or a social mandate,

an agreement shared by the public and designed to achieve its goals. What is required to have a social contract? Public will! Your histories speak eloquently of deep reservoirs of public will through the years supporting non-formal learning supports and opportunities for young people. The social mandate you describe generally recognises and supports the individual and civil function of youth work. Still, we have to talk clearly, coherently and consistently about what it is and why it is important – even to strangers.

Clarity of words and common understandings are core to forging productive partnerships, coalitions, networks. Certainty about our essence – our bottom line – helps other agencies, departments, organisations know who we are, what we stand for, and what we cannot negotiate away. Consensus around core language can be used to build public understanding and public will and to generate funding. It can attract and draw in young people.

Is it possible to forge tight and precise common ground around the why and what of youth work and at the same time open the door wide in accepting the how, when, where? This was Konopka's idea of one driving philosophy made real by many different methods, techniques and approaches. Establish youth work's "true north" – its non-negotiable mission and purpose – and we have our fundamental autonomy and identity. When we accept some variations in strategies and methods within our local systems and practices, we are likely to strengthen local public will and our responses to the important issues of local young people. This might be a useful trade-off: unity on the why and what combined with flexibility on the terminology for the how, when and where of practice.

## **CRAFTING SPACE FOR NEW WAYS OF RELATING**

Meaningful partnerships with young people, with youth work's closest allies and with the "magic triangle" may look different once the identity issue has been addressed. Nonetheless, the context for youth work in the world today is not the same as it was even 10 years ago. As we move to the subject of partnerships, think first of interdependencies rather than dependencies. Think partnerships and collective action rather than dependencies. Dependencies seem more one-sided, imposed not negotiated. Second, think about adopting language that is comfortable and widely understood by professionals and the public. Last, consider whether our field can tolerate a flexible messiness that stimulates responsiveness and innovation over time. What if we focus not on choosing between a tidy, rational system versus a divided, fragmented system, but rather on creating a system that expresses our values clearly to young people and the public, embraces youth work principles, binds the field together but does not require conformity in all strategic and methodological matters.

Looking ahead, three topics related to partnerships demand attention in Europe and the United States. They can be uncomfortable, challenging topics, but they deserve serious consideration. Each has its own challenges, risks and benefits. They involve re-envisioning partnerships with young adults, with our closest allies, and with the "magic triangle".

## Young people as full partners, co-creators and advocates

The warrant and justification for the existence of youth work rests on the partnerships and the engagement we establish with and on behalf of young people. Youth work has no reason to exist unless young people are present, participating and powerful. It's not clear how to do this, but it can and must be done. Young people expect to be present, participating and powerful. In a world of the Internet and social media, smart devices and apps, young people's capacities to connect, influence, organise, learn and socialise have exploded – and no longer rely on coming to youth work for help. There is no youth work dynamic without them. This goes to the heart of who owns youth work. After all, who do youth workers work for? Konopka identified eight requirements for healthy development that many agree hold up across cultures and time. It's our job to determine how they play out as basic needs for young people today.

1. Feel a sense of safety and structure.
2. Experience active participation, group membership and belonging.
3. Develop self-worth through meaningful contribution.
4. Experiment to discover self, gain independence and control over one's life.
5. Develop significant quality relationships with peers and at least one adult.
6. Discuss conflicting values and form their own.
7. Feel pride of competence and mastery.
8. Expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible.

Who could have predicted how technology is changing the ways in which young people belong, gain voice, seize power, make decisions and forge relationships both personal and political? In the US, we have for too long told young people, as we have told new immigrants: behave, be patient, queue up and your time/opportunity will come. What if they decide not to wait? Or they decide that our youth work systems operate in snail time, are inflexible or unresponsive or perhaps even ignorant of the world they live in? Nowadays it is increasingly common for young people to go around institutions and systems in order to accomplish their goals.

Try to imagine a flexible, nimble framework, adaptable to communities, with plenty of room for the presence, voice and leadership by young people. How might we open the doors for young people to staff and lead youth work efforts and activities, not just respond as recipients or passive partners in the endeavour? Consider reframing youth work as the community-based movement that partners with people of all ages, and as a scaffold for young people's learning experiences, which builds social capital, and advocates for their involvement in matters that impact them? No one else seems to be filling this role, certainly not the large, established government systems in the US. How can youth work position itself as the innovative field responsive to the needs, interests and future aspirations of young people? Again there's no simple answer, but Europe seems to have an advantage or incentive to embrace a collective ethos. The US increasingly exhibits an ethos of individual success and freedom above all, something that slows down efforts to build solidarity under the best of circumstances.

## **Youth work as a family of practices forged with close allies**

Once we define who we are and agree on a common purpose, how can we broaden the scope and presence of youth work? The notion of a family of related practices is much discussed in the US as is the idea of youth worker expertise and how to achieve it. One of my bold colleagues stood up at a meeting and asked, “Can’t we just embrace this ‘glorious mess’ that is our field and get on with it?” She challenged those of us who like order in our systems to accept and embrace the inconsistencies and variety at the heart of this work over hundreds of years. What gets in the way of partnering closely – or even uniting – with our closest allies, those whose values and work are in principle so close to our own? Is it possible to resist the dichotomy of professional vs. volunteer? Traditional vs. marginalised audiences? New ways vs. the old? Transit or forum? Could we unite our closest allies – the many forms of youth work – under one large tent?

Jeffs (2014) and others have suggested building a family of practices or a family of professions. My university colleagues increasingly describe youth work as a craft with deep expertise that is manifest in reasonably varied practices and differently configured systems. The family of practice image implies that not every aspect of youth work is done by a youth worker, and not everything a youth worker does is clearly understood as youth work. In any site or community, you might need a mix of roles, not a dozen professional youth workers, to meet youth and community needs. Or one might claim the youth worker identity based on philosophy, ethos, pedagogy and world view even while employed at a school. Expertise is most commonly acquired over time, on the job and through education and training, but in some instances a university degree may be required to take on certain jobs.

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) is a successful example of professionals uniting under the banner of related practices which share a closely related mission and vision of their work. The AEA evolved from a similar debate on identity, mission and vision: Who is a researcher? Who is an evaluator? What does it take to legitimately claim one of those titles? Ultimately they came together in a partnership where each practitioner self-proclaims their expertise, interests and contributions to the field. Now all work together in topical interest groups within a very successful professional organisation bound together by a code of professional ethics based on quality, integrity and expertise in practice.

As we rethink our role, we must consider that our vast menu of offerings and programmes – our delicious diversity – could be a strength in establishing our sphere of influence (autonomy) and the partnerships (interdependencies) we need to rethink if this work is a movement, a field, a system, a sector of a larger field such as education or social work, or something entirely different. Are we a “force to be reckoned with” or a regulated profession? Are we a movement or a system, a sector or a field? What’s the difference?

## **Vision of staffing that goes beyond professionalisation**

To unite under one big tent requires a ruthlessly rigorous rethinking of how youth work is led and staffed. It requires a stance that is not “either/or”. This is a difficult

discussion for me after spending more than 20 years focused on academic degree programmes and community-based training programmes for youth workers, but I have learned that people don't stay put. They move up, over and sometimes out of a field. I've come to think that the more we prescribe the requirements for a youth worker and require pre-service credentials, the more we restrict entry into the field and the more we distance ourselves from volunteers, partners and young people.

- ▶ Can we envision room for three kinds of staff, all considered qualified and a crucial part of the team: (1) the professionally credentialled, (2) the trained apprentice, journeyman and master youth worker model taken from the crafts and semi-professions; and (3) the talented volunteer of any age vocationally motivated to be a caring leader and advocate?
- ▶ Can we envision young people playing active roles in these different staff positions? We need to appreciate more fully what they have to give and also how we intentionally or naively hold them back from engaging to the fullest extent.
- ▶ Is keeping our identity, our presumptive status and our job security at odds with being an advocate for young people, for innovation, for creative staffing, and for change in the system?

### **“Magic triangle” partnerships maintain our credibility**

There are many opportunities and tensions inherent in the “magic triangle”. Research, translational scholarship and good public policy generally work best when they hold practice and young people closely in their vision. When the “magic triangle” works best, partnerships are forged on the basis of clear, mutual self-interest. In reality they are often forged on the basis of convenience, finance, political pressure, self-interests of leaders, desire for non-duplication, efficiency, pressure from funders, attempts to save money, etc. There are multiple, often conflicting agendas. One strategy is to avoid having policy debates and research discussions that are too far removed from the realities of practice. Without a presence at the table, youth work practice and the professionals on the ground often suffer.

Here's an example of how a research protocol inserted into government funding requirements with little or no consultation with practitioners caused problems for youth work practice on the ground. Emily, a highly experienced sexual health educator and master's student, was elated when the Bush era policy of funding only abstinence-based sexual health programmes ended and the Obama administration renewed funding for broader approaches to pregnancy prevention and spread of STDs. Then she discovered that federal funding now mandated that funded programmes adopt one of a short list of approved curricula that had been evaluated in random control studies and required replication with full fidelity. She felt her authority as an educated, experienced youth worker blocked her long-standing priorities to work with sexually active, street-wise young women at a teen outreach clinic. The narrow options challenged her autonomy, expertise and experience to act in the best interests of certain young people. An important lesson is that when we borrow research models from other fields to guide our practice, the model must be applied to practice mindful of the context and needs of the young people involved.

Evidence-based practice in medicine, the discipline generally credited for the idea, does not unilaterally apply research results in practice without considering the context, the knowledge and expertise of the attending physician and the wishes of the patient.

## **BUILDING PUBLIC WILL IN CHANGING TIMES**

One powerful message resounded through the dozens of national stories described in the four previous history volumes co-sponsored by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Despite the great variety of practices over time that have existed to foster young people being young together, there appears to exist a deep reservoir of public goodwill for youth-driven associations, experiences and positive opportunities in the community. There is also a resilience of the field, an affirmation of its importance and contribution, now and over time. There is a coalescing around the values of youth-centred learning and contribution to the civil life of the community despite the debates on how to do this and that, and how to make it all work. While it's unlikely that we will chart our new directions by looking back in time, the future looks bright, albeit filled with ambiguity and new ways of operating.

### **New ways of funding**

With regard to funding for youth work, a variety of funding partnerships is essential. Youth work's autonomy – even existence – depends on a fluid and varied funding base. Ideally, public funding partnerships are fundamental for continuity and general operations. Private funding partnerships provide for targeted, responsive innovation and independence. In the US we've learned that you can't put all your eggs in one basket. This may seem obvious, but we also know the rules are changing. Some of the summaries and chapters in the history volumes reflect a sense of betrayal of government priorities, a frustration that marginalised young people do not seek the services of our system, and annoyance or disappointment that the public and other systems do not understand our worth and work. This is understandable because not only priorities are changing but also the whole world of government funding, both private and non-profit. Two trends in philanthropy prevalent in the US and perhaps in Europe as well involve direct giving and collective impact. In the US, private individuals are financing space and oceanic explorations, and private companies are exploring business ventures previously in the sole purview of governments.

One major change is the trend towards direct giving. Consider the Helsinki grandmother story. At the 2014 Helsinki history conference, it occurred to me that with a couple clicks of the computer, over breakfast coffee, a grandmother living in Finland can contribute 100 euros to the Minneapolis Public Schools and direct the money to the third grade class at Lucy Craft Laney Community School where her grandson attends. It's done in just minutes. People with disposable wealth increasingly reject giving through intermediaries, foundations and public trusts to distribute their money. They ask, "Why would I give it to you? What added value can you provide?" Whether motivated by generosity of spirit or a passion for a good idea, they want to set their own priorities, find their own promising projects/people, and give directly, cutting out the middle man.

The second trend is funding for collective action. Among NGOs and non-profit organisations in the United States, there is increasing collaboration motivated by a desire to contribute to a common outcome in a regional area or community. A group of private funders can join together to require different organisations to demonstrate the same accountability standards or proof of impact in return for financial support. In this instance, it's particularly important to know who you are and what your role can be; otherwise, you risk becoming an all-purpose weapon for others to direct to their own purposes.

In the US, the United Way, a non-profit vehicle for community philanthropy, solicits donations from individuals, companies and corporations and then redistributes these funds to community agencies based on United Way's understanding of community needs and priorities. But donors are increasingly questioning the "added value" of United Way and electing to donate directly and easily online. When asked to suggest some exciting new directions for United Way youth funding, a colleague said, "You have a record of giving to organisations that do good work as they have long done but it is all within the old system. It is not innovative; it breaks no new ground. Be innovative. Talk about collective action on the part of young people, and open the doors for them to begin to devise solutions to some of the pervasive problems/challenges in their lives – and give them the resources to institute change. This will threaten traditional recipients of United Way funding, but isn't it only a matter of time?"

Perhaps youth work should take a clue from this – leap out as a collective action place that supports investments in truly innovative opportunities for groups to support young people as they make responsible contributions to civil society. The younger generation is going to have to address/solve the problems of today so why not get them started now! Youth work could give them that head start. Experimenting with new system approaches does raise the question, "What is it about our field that is suspicious of entrepreneurial initiatives and resists bureaucratically imposed ones?"

European conversations often focus on the threat of diminished public funding; in the US we increasingly find our best chances for new and increased funds depend on partnerships with private local businesses and large corporations in conjunction with state and local government funds, private foundation grants, fees and gifts. While partnerships with businesses, new ventures and large corporations seldom yield ongoing long-term financial support, they provide significant start-up support for high profile events, new programme initiatives, capital equipment and educational opportunities aligned with the company priorities. These business partnerships often stimulate incentives, matches and leverage from other community funders. The key, of course, is a genuine alignment of interests and priorities between the funder and the youth work effort. It has to be a win/win for all the partners.

## **Significant field building by intermediaries**

An intermediary is an independent organisation or agency that gives leadership to field building and serves as a resource hub for agencies, networks and organisations that are allied with youth work. Intermediaries play a major role that contributes to public understanding and field building. They sponsor research and publish studies and research in accessible forms so it's out there for public discussion. They convene

gatherings and conversations (like the History of youth work in Europe series), serve as political watchdogs, and support the field without using youth work as their own all-purpose weapon.

Europe has many outstanding examples. The journal *Youth & Policy* and the website [www.infed.org](http://www.infed.org) are important as are the many Council of Europe contributions like its publishing arm, the Budapest and Strasbourg training centres and the resource library. The EU Commission is a major force shaping research, policy and practice standards. So is the Nordic Youth Research Co-operation. We all miss the contributions of the UK's National Youth Agency and its great publishing department.

Intermediaries contribute greatly to good policy making, essential research, and building public will. The clearer we are, the easier they can create messages to attract public interest and support. Don't forget them. Strong intermediaries are perhaps our most powerful allies in sharing our language and vision, in demonstrating possibilities for youth, and in building public will. What would it mean to build a dynamic, responsive framework that is nimble, flexible, inclusive and clear about its motives rather than build a rational, dependable system modelled on the typical government department or educational enterprise? It would require compromise, giving up some sacred cows, accepting new yet undiscovered roles for young people.

In the US a few state and national private foundations have shaped the field by investing over time in applied research targeted on the complexities of youth work practice. They have funded gatherings to discuss and draft legislation and policy goals. But because of youth work's low public profile and absence of large, loud and visible advocates, the attention on educational reform is too often focused on school reform and pre-kindergarten early learning. Youth work cannot afford to work at the margins any longer. Young people have ideas and the capacity to make the public case for the value and importance of youth work, and we must find ways to creatively support their voices.

Our challenge is to strengthen, rejuvenate or redesign a youth work field – or perhaps a non-formal learning field – responsive to the needs of community and the challenges of the everyday lives of young people today. The European history volumes make clear there is a strong, albeit messy, foundation upon which to build. Talented youth workers with ideas and energy are present to join with young people to chart some new strategies and priorities. The wisdom found in the history volumes points towards clarity of purpose, public visibility, shared resources garnered through solid partnerships and leadership from young people whose lives and futures benefit from our work as we learn from them and they learn from us, and we all learn together. In the process, remember to consider the words we use, our partnerships with young people and close allies, and the importance of the influence of public will.

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Part II

# **The rise and fall of integrated youth policies**

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# Introduction

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*Howard Williamson*

**T**here are recurrent cries for the development of integrated, coherent, transversal, cross-sectoral youth policy, often within a context of little consensus over what “youth policy” actually is. Moreover, youth work, never more than a tiny fragment of public policy directed towards young people, is frequently conflated with youth policy. This is a mistaken position, though there is little doubt that youth work, as the only dedicated youth-related practice that engages with young people in the round, has the potential to punch above its weight in contributing to wider youth policy, just as more comprehensive forms of youth policy are likely to contain a stronger commitment to youth work within their frameworks.

But how is such leverage, in the first instance, exercised? And through what mechanisms are concrete measures achieved, in relation to the latter? It is all very well theorising about rational discussion and decision making, anchored within the rhetoric of evidence-based policy making, but history tells us otherwise. The ways in which youth work influences youth policy, or youth policy determines the nature of youth work, unfold in myriad combinations. As all three contributions to this section of *The history of youth work in Europe*, vol. 5, make clear, there is no sequential dynamic with a final guaranteed result. Rather, it is all “stop-start” and “hit and miss”, contingent on lucky breaks, critical moments and key individuals and, possibly most significantly, the wider social and political context. Corney and Broadbent may state confidently that there was one key moment of transformation when youth work and youth policy ceased to be dependent on military needs and concerns and its changed focus “was now on the empowerment and participation of the young person as an active citizen, and the meeting of their interests and needs, rather than those of state or church”. But others have less confidence about pinpointing such pivotal moments. Guðmundsson talks of the “aimless development” of youth clubs in Iceland, that had almost two decades of false starts and policy cul-de-sacs until their widespread establishment; he talks of the debate “dragging through the system”. And Nieminen invokes the glorious image of “the meandering paths leading to current doings”.

Those current doings are still rarely close to the kind of integrated youth policy that is so easy to construct in conceptual terms. However, what is reasonably clear is that youth work has a better chance of flourishing when it is fairly closely connected to a coherent policy priority – whether that is a fitness agenda for military objectives, or an agenda concerned with the constructive use of leisure time arising from concerns that the devil may otherwise make work for idle hands. This may not be the youth work professionally conceived as embedded in an educational practice focused on the personal development of young people, though it could (at least sometimes) be – if learning and development, incorporating non-formal methodologies and out-of-school activities, is a key political priority – but it may nonetheless provide the anchor point for youth work to exist and survive. That anchor point may shift over time, but without it, youth work is likely to flounder, not flourish.

Ultimately, the state of youth work in one form or another hinges on both the capacity and desire of more powerful policy sectors to advocate for some form of youth work, and the ways in which societies seek to establish a policy response to recurrent, possibly universal perspectives on young people: the vulnerable, who need support and protection; the villains, who need regulation and control; and the valued, who need nurturing and recognition. And although that trio of perspectives may well be almost universal, they are balanced in very different ways, and so – inevitably – are the policy responses. Some youth policy places more weight on proactively extending opportunity, some on reactively addressing problems. Quite where and how, even why, youth work fits into such policy mosaics is always uncertain.

Beyond the rhetoric of integrated youth policies, it is very difficult to discover any significant integration in practice. Departments and line ministries follow their own paths with relatively little reference to their counterparts in other policy fields. There is, of course, overlap at different times between different sections of public administrations – for example, between health and education, education and criminal justice, education and employment. Note the pivotal place of education. One might surmise that youth work, as a key component of non-formal education, would also have a pivotal position. Indeed, the history of youth work – even just the three histories here – demonstrates quite clearly how youth work can and does interface with other political and policy agendas: leisure-time provision, military service, citizenship, health promotion. Youth work could even be the glue that binds these together. And yet the reality is that their connections are invariably inconsistent and unsustainable. And the place of youth work ebbs and flows with those wider tides of political fractures and alliances.

Finally, and the paper on Finland captures the position very well, one must always be cautious about claims that effective, integrated youth policies emerge essentially from considered and conscientious national and local youth policy planning, decision making and delivery. All three papers here also point strongly to the importance of both individual knowledge and drive and much wider international developments. One individual's capacity to understand and then translate and interpret a German language text had a major effect on youth policy in Finland, as indeed did a global UN report. In smaller ways, something similar took place in Iceland and, though the Australian contributors do not articulate it explicitly here, there is an individual

story (Maunder is British) as well as the international one concerning the UNCRC (or CROC, as Corney and Broadbent would have it).

Youth policy – integrated, disintegrated, partially composed or partially decomposed – usually has a place for something that could be recognised and described as youth work. That youth work sometimes gives rise to more considered youth policy. But youth policy development, as it splutters forward erratically and sometimes shudders to a halt, has always to be contextualised and considered against a range of contingent determinants: the national picture is invariably sandwiched between individual knowledge and action, and international thinking and developments.





## Chapter 2

# The history of youth clubs in Iceland

Árni Guðmundsson

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper I look at the establishment of youth clubs in a historical context. This paper is based on my book *The history of youth clubs in Iceland from 1942-1992* (Guðmundsson 2007). Youth clubs can be defined in many ways. A youth club can be an open forum for the youth but it can also be defined in sociological terms. In a sociological context youth clubs are, among other things, a tool to contain both the societal change and youth culture that is often viewed as unpredictable. In that sense youth clubs can monitor and prevent young people from “coming to harm”. The creation of youth clubs is the result of insecurity among parents, elders and various authority figures. This insecurity stems from the fact that the experiences of the youth of each time period are unique. The older generations have not experienced what the modern youth are experiencing and they are therefore not able to use their own experience to guide their parenting or mentoring. Older generations therefore create resources or establishments such as youth clubs that are meant to be preventive and containing – protecting young people from the dangers of this new unknown society (Guðmundsson 2007).

### THE ICELANDIC COMMUNITY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LAST CENTURY

Icelandic society has changed significantly in the last 150 years. Iceland has gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe, under the rule of a Danish monarchy, to an independent self-sufficient industrial country. At the beginning of last century, there was no gap between childhood and adulthood. Children went from being children to adults and when they reached adulthood they were expected to be as productive as adult workers. Iceland was a nation of farmers and fishermen. The majority of young people worked alongside farmers as general labourers, but after decades of hard work there was the possibility of acquiring a small piece of the land from one’s employer, and to become a farmer oneself. Therefore, upward mobility was to some extent facilitated (Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson 1997). The Icelandic “industrial revolution” started using more advanced machinery for the two main industries, which were the fish industries (small motorboats of one horse power, for example, around 1901) and the farming industry (Loftur Guttormsson 1987). The Law on Education was first enacted in 1906; until that point youth did not legally have to be in education (Loftur et al. 2008).

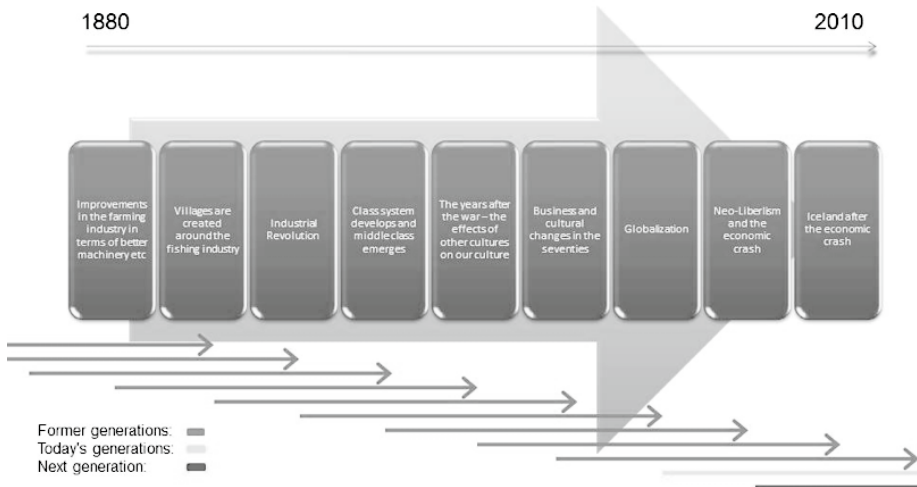
The youth organisations and other societies were formed at the beginning of the 20th century and bridged the gap between the old society of farmers and fishermen and the modern society in which the term teenagers was coined. In this modern society, the population moved from rural areas to the city and the society changed as a result. Farming was no longer the main industry and new industries brought with them new occupational roles. Suddenly adolescents were not needed within the workforce. This created free time for adolescents and for the first time in the history of Iceland young people had leisure time.

**RAPID SOCIETAL CHANGES IN ICELAND**

Gestur Guðmundsson, professor in sociology at the University of Iceland, has investigated these changes and states that over the past 130 years there have been at least eight fundamental changes to Icelandic society.

1. Improvements in the farming industry in terms of better machinery.
2. Villages were created around the fishing industry.
3. The Industrial Revolution.
4. Class system developed and the middle class emerged.
5. In the post-Second World War years the Icelandic culture was influenced by foreign cultures.
6. Business and cultural changes in the 1970s.
7. Globalisation.
8. Neo-liberalism. (Guðmundsson 2002).

**Generation that raises generation with different experiences from the parent.**



It is still unclear how Icelandic society has changed most recently after the economic crash in 2008 and what this new society will be composed of. According to Durkheim's theories it can be speculated that a post-crash society consists of speculations about the unpredictability of the future – the fight over the new society after the crash, the chaos seeking balance – and that only then will the pieces of the puzzle start to fit together.

Rapid and multifaceted societal changes create problematic conditions for parents who are raising their children in a society not fully known to the parents – a society markedly different from that which they grew up in. To give an example: a parent who grew up in the Industrial Revolution raises a child who grows up in a village or a city, which exists because of the fishing industry, as opposed to growing up on a farm. The child who grows up in a village or a city then becomes a parent and raises a child in a different society, a society where a new class system has emerged, and that child then raises a child that is shaped by American and British influences after armies from these countries lived in Iceland. And so the story continues, of course.

## **ICELANDIC YOUTH IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

There was a discussion at the International Conference on Settlements (IFS) in 1922 about how to specifically manage and support the newly coined life phase “adolescence” (Olsson 1982).

Public discussion about youth in Iceland was, however, uncommon until around 1935 and this was linked to the British army occupation of Iceland in 1939. Before the occupation the public discussion was first and foremost about the unhealthy and not child-friendly villages that had been established during the first half of the 20th century. These had provided housing for workers in the fishing industry but lacked any welfare infrastructure and were often without schools, kindergartens or other children's services. As a result, parents resorted to sending the children “back to the past”; that is, sending them to spend time on farms during the summer holidays because that is how the parents themselves had spent their childhood. One of the professionals who was concerned about the state of affairs of youth was Aðalsteinn Sigmundsson, the chairman of the 4-H youth association of Iceland. In 1939 his concerns about the youth of this era prompted him to write a 24-page booklet called *Children of the City*. In this booklet he writes:

Sometimes it seems that people have not realised that today's youth is not being supported adequately in this modern society, and that in the future this nation will suffer as result. (Aðalsteinn Sigmundsson 1939: 7)

And Sigmundsson continues:

And the city itself – what one could call the sociological entity – does not know, just like the individuals how to live in a city. Reykjavik is the first and only city in a country that has no city culture – and does nothing to create one – does not even try to create a society in which children can flourish. It mostly forgets that children exist unless in the instances in which the Law on Education forces it to remember. (Aðalsteinn Sigmundsson 1939: 16)

## ICELANDIC YOUTH CLUBS

Meanwhile conditions were not conducive to young people in Iceland. There were no facilities to meet the growing need for venues for leisure activities. In 1942, the Mayor of Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, proposed that the possibility of building a youth hall should be explored. This proposal was agreed by the Reykjavík City Council.

That same year, Jónas frá Hriflu (MP), the Minister of Education, proposed in parliament that a youth hall should be built in Reykjavík. Jónas frá Hriflu was the leader of the Progressive Party and was very influential in Icelandic politics. Around this time, the newly founded youth association in Reykjavík (4-H) asked for a piece of land to build a youth hall.

The result was that Ágúst Sigurðsson was appointed by the Mayor of Reykjavík and Minister of Education in February 1943 to prepare a report on the potential youth hall. Ágúst Sigurðsson was a teacher known, among other things, for his school books on the Danish language. Ágúst fought for the youth hall out of sheer interest and was not driven by work-related reasons nor did his fight for a youth hall represent the views of the educational system. He was met with opposition from head teachers and other people who thought that young people should be working and not engaging in leisure activities.

Ágúst Sigurðsson quickly completed the report and in the autumn of 1943 the report was published. In the report he stated:

The Youth Hall should be a respite where young people can spend their leisure time, a place where young people can work on what interests them – from social activities, revision, reading, home economics, chess or other healthy interest – there they should be able to rest after a hard day's work and enjoy healthy pursuits. Because of how alcohol is often misused in other social contexts, I believe it is right not to allow alcohol consumption in the youth hall. (Ágúst Á Sigurðsson 1943)

The youth hall was meant to be much bigger than the youth clubs of today. The plan was to have facilities for the following: theatre shows, cinema screenings, meetings, concerts/dances/exhibitions, sport matches/facilities to practise sport, an ice skating rink and a number of hobby rooms.

In order for this to become reality the council, the government and non-governmental organisations needed to provide funding. The difficulty was that there was no formal youth association in Reykjavík. The Reykjavík Association of Youth Organisations (4-H) was founded in 1948 to meet this need.

In the same year, B.Æ.R. (a federation of 33 youth associations in Reykjavík) was formed. It was meant to be a key player and run the youth hall. However, B.Æ.R. never lived up to expectations and did not meet its goal of uniting all the youth organisations. The project was simply too big for them and they could not get funding for what they were meant to be responsible for in the creation of the youth hall, which was contributing to the building costs and to running the hall. This caused the plans to come to a halt. B.Æ.R. ceased to be an organisation in 1971.

I searched for old documents from B.Æ.R. in the document storage for former youth organisations that formed B.Æ.R. but I was unsuccessful. I did, however, find some old documents from Reykjavik Council in Reykjavik Council's document storage (Guðmundsson 2007).

And the history continues, but by 1952 still nothing had happened. The Child Protection Society of Reykjavik was concerned and sent Reykjavik Council the following:

A number of children and adolescents live in accommodation that does not give them space to engage in healthy leisure activities. Because of this many adolescents take to wandering the streets, sitting in restaurants or cafés or spending their time in other pursuits that are not conducive to their maturity and growth. Lack of interests is one of the main reasons for engaging in offending behaviour.

The Child Protection Society of Reykjavik also pointed out that:

In other cultures most of the big cities have created youth clubs for teenagers. These clubs are believed to serve the same role, in terms of pedagogical input, as nurseries, after-school clubs and schools and within these before mentioned cultures, more and more youth clubs are being built. (Barnaverndarfélag Reykjavíkur 1952)

In 1954 it was decided by the city council in collaboration with the sports movement and the Federation of Icelandic Industries to create a hall that could serve these organisations. In 1964 a hall was finally built. This hall served as a venue for sport and exhibitions and was called Laugardalshöll. It served primarily the needs of the Federation of Icelandic Industries. Therefore, there was still no youth hall, even though this had been discussed and debated for years.

The case had been dragging through the system for years and it became evident by the mid-1950s that a youth hall per se was no longer on the agenda. It was back to square one again and the city was now three times bigger than when the idea was first mooted in 1942. The last real momentum was in 1957 when the mayor decided to create the Youth Council of Reykjavik (shortly before an election). The mayoral election in Reykjavik may have influenced this decision; the mayor clearly wanted to have this on the agenda as this would have helped him to get votes. All data I have reviewed indicates that Reykjavik's Youth Council had been created in a hurry with the goal of opening some sort of youth club before the election in 1958 (Guðmundsson 2007). A youth club, not a youth hall, was thereby established.

## **COMPARATIVE PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT**

If we look at the timeline in regard to youth halls in Scandinavia from 1884 when Toynbee Hall started in London, it is as follows.

- ▶ In 1912, Birkagården was opened in Stockholm, Sweden and Åskagaarden was opened in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- ▶ In 1919, Kalliola was opened in Helsinki, Finland.
- ▶ In 1933, Lundby Ungdomsgård youth club was opened in Gothenburg, Sweden.

- ▶ Around 1942, a number of youth clubs were opened in Denmark. Many young people in Denmark were active in the Resistance movement. War adversely affects people, especially youth. In order to counteract these negative effects of the war the Danes decided to open youth centres across Denmark (Lippert 2004).
- ▶ In 1953, Hammarsborg ungdomsklubb was opened in Oslo, Norway.
- ▶ In 1957, Tómsundaheimilið við Lindargötu was opened in Reykjavík, Iceland.

When Iceland is compared to other Nordic countries it is surprising how behind Iceland and Norway were in terms of creating youth clubs and venues for young people. Ágúst Sigurdsson's (1942) report indicates that Iceland had everything knowledge-wise that is required to establish a venue for leisure activities. It was therefore not a lack of knowledge but more likely the societal make-up. Compared to other Nordic countries, Iceland and Norway were older in years than, for example, Sweden when city formation took place. Iceland and Norway were countries where the majority of the population lived rurally. In Iceland the city formation was very rapid (see the historical flow chart above). According to Statistics Iceland in 2012, only 6.5% of Icelanders lived rurally but 93.5% lived in urban areas. Youth clubs are the products of urban formations and an important part of a city's make-up, especially in the beginning stages of city formation when parents are raising children in a newly formed, unknown and ever-changing society.

After 1957, when the first youth club was created, the development in Iceland was rapid. It must be noted that during this time period Icelandic society was changing in other ways. Housing was built to meet the needs of the masses of people moving from rural areas to the city, general medical practitioner practices were established, and schools for the children were built. In 1930 it was not unusual that six classes, one after the other, used the same classroom in one day. Teaching would start in the morning and end late in the evening. This pattern of using classrooms continued to the year 2000.

In 1957 the leisure centre at Lindargata in Reykjavík was created. At that time it was classified as being on the periphery of the city but as the city has evolved it is now considered to be in central Reykjavík. After the launch of the leisure centre the largest towns in Iceland followed suit and created their own leisure centres. This also applied to politics, in that after the city council created the Youth Council of Reykjavík the biggest towns created youth councils. In 1964 there were 14 youth councils in Iceland (15% of all municipalities in Iceland). In 1980 they had increased to 32 youth councils in Iceland (45% of all municipalities in Iceland). In 2006 there were 50 youth councils in Iceland (80% of all municipalities). In 2014 there were youth councils in almost all municipalities (98%).

SAMFÉS Association of Youth Clubs in Iceland was founded in the year 1985. 115 youth clubs form SAMFÉS, which is around 98% of all youth clubs in Iceland.

## **CONCLUSION**

The cultural changes and developments over the last 150 years have given each generation unique challenges when it comes to raising children, as parents are continually facing challenges that did not exist when they were growing up.

Overall there was a willingness across political parties to create youth clubs in Iceland. The history of youth clubs in Iceland is not one of big political disagreements. What was debated was mainly how to go about creating a youth hall, the size of the clubs, whether the clubs should be in every borough or whether one club in central Reykjavík would serve the target group.

Policy making and the expansion of the field of matters relating to youth and leisure activities was aimless and did not go hand in hand with the development of the city. The voice of youth and their needs were not taken into account, and it was not until the end of the 1950s when it was feared that the youth and youth clubs were heading in the wrong direction that the matter was revisited and put back on politicians' agendas.

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## Chapter 3

# The genesis of youth policy: a case study of Finland

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*Juha Nieminen*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**T**his chapter explores the genesis of youth policy in Finland. The concept “genesis” refers to the mode of formation of something and it is apposite to describe the origins of youth policy. The emergence and development of youth policy in Finland is a long-standing, multidimensional process influenced by human actors and social conditions.

### **WHY HISTORY OF YOUTH POLICY?**

Youth researchers, educationalists and politicians are usually busy with a limited contemporary analysis of fleeting phenomena. From this perspective, colleagues and students often ask me about the relevance of the history of youth work and youth policy. Broadly speaking, history is a means to understand the world around us and the intentions of human actions. History characterises those social conditions that shaped the lifestyles of our predecessors. History also gives descriptions of the different problems people have worked out in former days. The past reveals the intentions that came true and sometimes the purposes that were never realised. Historical research can also investigate the motives of human actors. As a narrative, history describes the meandering paths leading to current doings. Perhaps we can also learn something from the historical analysis. At least, we can learn of the complexity of things and, as a result, acquire some patience!

Studying history makes it possible to understand the social conditions and ideas behind youth policy in different contexts and situations. History can also point out the social position of youth at different times and highlight the means that societies have used in addressing youth issues. From history we can gain some information about the methods of formulating youth policy and also valuable knowledge of its successes and failures. Recognising the path that has resulted in current youth policy helps us to understand the specific features of contemporary youth policy. The aim of historical research concerning youth policy is not to underrate current actors but to give some value to the real forerunners and their innovations. Things generally have a longer evolution than present researchers or politicians willingly want to see and admit. Finally, knowing the history of youth policy also helps us to criticise youth policy and studies of youth policy more independently and rationally.

## **EARLY SIGNS OF YOUTH POLICY**

In the early 20th century political youth organisations and young people's interest associations principally had educational tasks. They tried to instil their ideologies into young people and train the rising generation for modern citizenship. But youth organisations also tried to make an impact on young people's issues in different areas of life. From the beginning, political and corporative youth organisations tried to contribute to the growth and living conditions of young people. Labour youth movements, conservative youth organisations and the short-lived Union of Finnish School Youth pursued attempts to influence youth policy and politics. They gave statements, published articles and commitments and distributed youth questions in parent organisations' meetings. More adult-led organisations had an important role in the policies for children and young people after Finland's independence in 1917 and the traumatic Civil War the following year. Among other things, the issues arising from the number of orphans and from poverty were considerable. As noted (Nieminen 1995; 2012), these policies were occasionally grounded in youth research (for example, Työläisnuorisotutkimus 1935). All in all, youth policy was a task of civil society's movements and organisations years before the public administration of youth work and decades before the concept of youth policy was launched. The idea of state-controlled integrative youth policy was still unknown.

From time to time, a concept of youth policy appeared in national decision making. For example, in February 1943, the Finnish parliament paid special attention to the youth question in wartime. There was an initiative concerning public youth houses launched by the Social Democratic Party. A group of members of parliament signed the initiative which wanted the government to take steps to provide youth work with the necessary offices and buildings. In an ethos of wartime uniformity this initiative urged that the spiritual and moral forces of young people be strengthened. Unrest and amorality were threats to a nation at war. The educational power of the voluntary youth organisations was seen to be inherently inadequate and selective. It was proposed that the efficacy of youth organisations should be improved by public state support. Referring to foreign examples members of parliament defined the building of youth houses as "one of the key issues in youth policy" (Parliament Initiative 1943). Building houses for youth work was more important and concrete than writing youth policy papers during those days.

The relationship between youth work and youth policy was essential from the beginning of public administration of youth work in the 1940s. After the Second World War issues like education, employment, livelihood, migration from country to town and youth criminality were discussed both in the State Youth Work Board and in the Council of Finnish Youth Organisations. But the State Youth Work Board was somewhat careful in its commitment to youth policy issues because voluntary youth organisations were still the core of Finnish youth work and public youth work administration was a new branch of administration. Because of the administrative division, concrete initiatives outside youth work's own jurisdiction were usually channelled to different ministries and administrative branches in various offices. Even if there was an obvious intention to construct youth work as an independent administrative branch, youth work was nevertheless ready for multiprofessional co-operation. Youth work was, in fact, more open to co-operation than many other professionally stronger and administratively differentiated authorities. In small communities, in-countryside co-operation was a necessity and local youth workers would take care of other lines of activities, too. For instance, there were youth workers who advocated youth work, temperance work and sports all at the same time at the local level.

The Council of Finnish Youth Organisations was more courageous in its youth policy issues. Compromises were made – there were more than 50 member organisations in the council – but many initiatives, programmes and campaigns were implemented. Permanent and temporary committees appointed by the council were established and they put into effect plans dealing with youth problems like youth unemployment and the temporary increase in the birth rate after the war. In fact the “baby boom” became a major catalyst for Finnish youth policy in the 1950s and 1960s. Caring for, educating, employing, housing and integrating the baby boom generation has been a key agenda of youth policy from an historical perspective.

In various ways, through suggestions and advice, the Council of Finnish Youth Organisations tried to influence the leisure-time activities of youth in order to develop and refine their interests. During its first 15 years, the Council of Finnish Youth Organisations was a key agent in bringing up young people's issues in a multi-sectoral way. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of a more integrated and programmatic youth policy strengthened to a greater extent in Finland. Behind this development there were both foreign and domestic influences.

## **INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES**

After the Second World War, besides the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) and the World Federation of Youth (WFDY), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was an essential co-operation forum for national and supranational youth organisations. There was also a UNESCO Youth Institute in Gauting, Germany from 1950 to 1965. It played a crucial role in global youth work during the post-war era. In the late 1950s UNESCO recognised new developments in youth organisations and acknowledged the requirements of a new era in youth activities. It also introduced and adopted a comprehensive idea of youth policy.

In 1960, a research report called “New trends in youth organizations” (UNESCO 1960) was published. It was a study based on two kinds of source material. Firstly, it was based on publications: books or pamphlets, newspapers or periodicals dealing with the problems of young people or youth organisations. Secondly, it was based on replies to a questionnaire sent out to about 100 experts in charge of national or international organisations and to educators and journalists familiar with youth problems. The result of the study was a claim for a policy for youth. Youth policy was needed to express the current needs of young people in all conditions and youth policy issues were to promote the general framework for national policies:

the movements have become aware of the need for a youth policy, which must not be coloured by the views of any political party, but, without treating youth as a separate enclave within the nation, would consist in the definition and advocacy in national politics generally, of the most urgent needs of the young. (UNESCO 1960: 63)

UNESCO’s idea of youth policy reached Finland, too. But it did not come by south winds, it did not arise from the movements of the continental shelves and it was not condensed from the pressure of social structures – as social scientists used to argue. Furthermore, there was no Twitter or Facebook in those days. UNESCO’s idea of youth policy reached Finland with the help of one human being, Mr Guy von Weissenberg, who on behalf of Finnish youth work replied to the questionnaire from the study. He was president of the Council of Finnish Youth Organisations and at the same a vice president of the State Youth Work Board. He was also a lecturer of youth education in the College of Social Sciences, later the University of Tampere.

Generally, the activities of the United Nations (UN) and UNESCO were very well known in Finland, and the Council of Finnish Youth Organisations received the activities of the UN very positively. One of Finland’s political aims was to implement its active neutrality in the UN, of which Finland became a member in 1955. So, the contacts with UNESCO and its Youth Institute in Gauting were very active, and the benefits were mutual. For example, Guy von Weissenberg operated as the United Nations’ youth expert in India and Egypt in the 1950s. He was also responsible for the UNESCO’s youth work seminar held in Finland in 1955. Besides these international tasks, he was also a member of the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO.

At that time, the impacts of youth policy came from Germany to Finland. After the Second World War, youth service and youth work had to work in new and challenging circumstances in West Germany. In difficult living conditions the nation had to ensure that the new generation would learn to live in a democratic society. The co-operative body of free youth organisations “Bundesjugendring” was founded in October 1949, and it established the position of the voluntary youth organisations. Soon after forming the Federal Republic of Germany, a new comprehensive youth policy programme called “Bundesjugendplan” (Federal Youth Plan) was introduced. Its aim was to support the work of reorganised youth organisations. Briefly, the “Bundesjugendplan” has a history of its own: from the early critique on its practice to support official youth organisations only and to the developments towards the existing “Kinder und Jugendplan des Bundes” (see for example, Krafeld 1984: 129-42).

Principally, “Bundesjugendplan” was a programmatic and financial plan on how to handle young people’s issues mainly through association-based youth work. German

youth welfare, youth work and youth policy developments were followed closely in Finland and the German models were taken into account in official state documents, too. At its best, German youth policy was introduced in an annex to the Finnish State Youth Work Committee report in 1963 (Komiteanmietintö 1963). The text describes the administrative guidelines of German youth policy as well as the draft budget of “Bundesjugendplan” for 1961. However, the National Youth Work Committee did not at that time write any programmatic youth policy programme paper, but it did make a significant proposal for the administrative organisation of youth work and a youth worker training system in Finland.

An ideographically and historically interesting question is how the description of German youth policy found its way into the Finnish State Youth Work Committee report of 1963. Was it a result of a copy-paste technique and if so, who copied and who pasted? Of course, there were no computers at the beginning of the 1960s. Perhaps the text came by letter from Germany and somebody translated it – but who understood the German language of youth work and youth policy? In reality, the text on German youth policy has been typed on a manual typewriter, it is in Finnish and it is expressive, not just technically translated. The introduction to the committee report does not say anything about the writer of the appendix. I did a little research to find the original writer; I investigated some of the committee members’ CVs and discovered the answer. The text of German youth work and youth policy was written by Mr Guy von Weissenberg – again.

At the turn of the 1950s to 1960s Finland was looking for new ways to strengthen youth work. Growing numbers of young people, urbanisation, a spreading aim of equality and the rising support of the welfare state led gradually to the rethinking of state-based youth work. Multilingual youth work experts were significant mediators of international experiences, including youth policy.

## **FROM CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION SCHEME TO YOUTH POLICY PROGRAMME**

In the late 1950s some adults and educationalists sat up and drew attention to the post-war baby boom generation which had reached its formative years in slowly urbanising Finland. In the autumn of 1959 a few people from teachers’ organisations and educational associations began to consider what should be done about a young generation that was behaving unpredictably, or so they thought. Finally, a group of adults formed an Advisory Board of Educators. The aim of the board was to support and unite different fields of educators in Finland. It decided to draft a long-term plan for citizenship education in Finland, and to collect a catalogue of studies concerning youth education. Finally, from the basis of this Advisory Board of Educators, a registered association called the Civic Education Centre was founded. From the very beginning, the centre’s mission was to compile a comprehensive research-based programme for citizenship education of Finnish youth. The Civic Education Centre became a key agent of Finnish youth policy for many years. In the early 1960s, the centre was also one of the forerunners of multiprofessional activities, being formed by mostly senior or top officials of the school system (Nieminen 1997).

The social context of Finnish youth work altered in the 1960s when the fastest changes within Finnish society occurred. In particular, the change of occupational structure from agriculture to industry and services was faster than in most industrialised Western countries. Because of the pressure of the baby boom generation, new ways of integrating young people into society were required. Besides the educational priority of youth work, policy measures to steer and allocate resources to young people had to be brought into effect. Youth employment, housing and health, as well as participation and self-motivated culture, were among the key issues. Economic growth, welfare state ideology and the centre party's and left-wing political trends produced changing circumstances for the state at the heart of youth policy.

In this context the citizenship education programme of the Civic Education Centre transformed into a far-reaching youth policy programme. During 1964, youth policy was spelled out at the Centre of Citizenship meetings and planning activities. It was obvious that Guy von Weissenberg, who a little earlier held a position of trust at the centre, would convey information about youth policy. But the aging Guy von Weissenberg, in spite of his open mind, was a proponent of youth work's pedagogical paradigm. As a politically independent person, von Weissenberg got into trouble after he adopted critical views of the Soviet Union, since the cornerstone of Finnish foreign policy was to maintain good relationships with the Soviet Union.

It was time for a new generation of experts, politicians and actors to come on the scene. In addition, the youth policy was familiar to many university scholars who had been involved in the activities of the Civic Education Centre. The centre planned and implemented a youth policy programme with experts from the School of Social Sciences (renamed in 1966 as the University of Tampere). Finally, the centre's project received state support and some financing from the Ministry of Education. In 1965, Mr Kari Rantalaiho started as a research secretary for the project. He wrote three publications and the last of them, "Youth policy of the 1970s" was published in 1970 and became a classic of youth policy. For many historians of youth work – especially for social scientists – it is considered to be the invention of Finnish youth policy. But as we have seen, the genesis of Finnish youth policy is a much longer and more complicated skein.

As a step forward, in the 1970s, youth policy was defined in youth work legislation. Furthermore, at the turn of the 1970s and into the 1980s a parliamentary youth committee made an extensive study of the living conditions of young people, and announced recommendations for the 1980s. Youth policy also got its formal definition in Finland (*Youth policy in Finland* 1981: 19):

Youth policy: orientation and application of societal policy to facilitate the growth, development, employment and living conditions of young people and to enhance their first influences.

Behind this definition there was an assumption that youth policy is a horizontal rather than a vertical process. It was different from housing policy, educational policy or societal policy, which was usually divided between economic, social and cultural policy. Unlike them, youth policy contained all of them, as they applied to young people. Roughly speaking, youth policy related to all people under 30. Official youth policy established equality as a basic goal. The aim of youth policy was to ensure

appropriate conditions for youth to grow into participatory, egalitarian individuals who made full use of their resources. The targets of youth policy were to remove individual and structural obstacles to growth (ibid.: 19-21).

## **YOUTH POLICY OF THE WELFARE STATE**

The baby boom generation had been born and grew up in an agrarian society, but it reached maturity in the 1960s and early 1970s when Finland was industrialising and urbanising at a very rapid pace. Growing circumstances for the new generation in a rapidly changing society were different from those in an agrarian society connected with traditions and uniformity. Owing to the pressures caused by the large age group, youth radicalism and the growth of youth culture, young people's own aspirations became more and more dominant in many forms of youth work. In the increasingly international atmosphere, it was seen that many of the youth work structures dating from the previous post-war reconstruction era were carrying the old order and culture.

The Finnish welfare state favoured planned, egalitarian and partly centralised arrangements in youth policy, and in the mid-1960s more explicit youth policy thinking began to gain ground. This gave rise to a more integrated and holistic youth policy in which the aim was to improve young people's growth environment and enhance their influence, as an alternative to the basic philosophy of youth work which had focused on educational and leisure-time activities. According to the optimistic new approach, educational youth work had to be transformed into socially engaged activities, which would help to improve young people's living conditions and opportunities in all spheres of life.

In these efforts, political youth organisations and interest groups played a major role. Those organisations increased their demands for an integrative youth policy for Finland. It was understandable: youth issues had always been on their agenda. Measures were taken to introduce youth policy planning into regional and local administration. The underlying idea was to use research, rational local planning and local decision making to put right shortcomings in young people's growth environments.

Just to mention briefly: In the 1980s it transpired that the idea of a politically and socially engaged youth underpinning the Youth Work Act and youth policy had been overoptimistic. The expectations placed on youth policy strategy failed to materialise in full. Studies have shown that the youth policy mission assigned to youth work has also been unrealistic to a degree. Youth activities and youth work came under the Ministry of Education, but it could neither influence other ministries' decisions affecting youth nor those made within business and industry. Despite the modest outcome, this youth policy thinking did draw youth workers' attention to young people's living conditions and growth environments on a wider scale than before.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

"Genesis" is a revealing word to describe the birth of youth policy, at least in the Finnish case. The evolution of youth policy was long-standing – it took decades. The birth of youth policy was multidimensional – it was a result of the combined effect

of ideas, politics, structures and information. Above all, the birth of youth policy was influenced by human actors. Most likely it would have happened without Guy von Weissenberg, but the early process would have been different in some way. The participation of young people in constructing youth policy was implemented through youth organisations – but that is another story.

It is possible to say something about youth policy's current position in the light of the early years, though I am not so keen on paralleling past and present as some of my social science colleagues often are. In the research on youth work and youth policy, it is a challenge to avoid extreme presentism: I mean valuing the past only through contemporary valuation or structuring historical experiences too simplistically by modern or even postmodern concepts.

However, I want to point out one noteworthy issue. Current youth policy is often seen as a global or European phenomenon. This short article proves that the supra-national dimension has been in the development of youth policy for more than half a century, from the very beginning. It would be interesting to do serious long-term comparative research concerning the diffusion of youth policy in those early days.

One function of youth work has been to exert influence on mental and material resources and their allocation in society. This is done by means of youth policy. The aim of youth policy is to have an influence on young people's position and advantages in politics and in delivering resources in different life areas. As a conscious function of youth work, resourcing and allocation is relatively new, because the governmental discipline of youth policy only developed in the 1960s. In singular cases the term "youth policy" was used in the 1940s. However, even much earlier different political youth movements had intentionally fulfilled this function. Generally, before the 1960s, however, the living conditions of young people were not understood as a separate discipline or branch.

Finally, the development of youth policy can be combined with the professionalisation of Finnish youth work (see Nieminen 2014). Youth work used quite traditional professional strategies to gain its semi-professional status. Youth work clearly distinguished itself from school, popular education, social work, temperance work and sports. It also tried to extend its functions to new areas, as professions used to do. Youth policy is a well-known example: youth work was trying to influence young people's growth environments and living conditions in every sphere of youth's life – also in the areas that are out of youth work's control. That seems to be the problem of idealistic integrative youth policy even today. But without youth work's holistic approach to youth, and without youth organisations as a part of youth work, there would not have been youth policy in Finland. Nevertheless, youth policy's path towards an integrative component of societal policy has still often stumbled, unable to display a unified and consistent position.

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## Chapter 4

# From defence to human rights: the impact of youth policy on the professionalisation of youth work in Victoria, Australia

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*Tim Corney and Robyn Broadbent*

### INTRODUCTION

**T**his paper reflects upon Australian youth policy, focusing on recent developments in child and youth protection and the introduction of a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in the state of Victoria. It looks at the impact of these policies on the professionalisation of youth work. In particular the paper reflects on the influence of both human rights and child protection policies on the development of a state-wide code of practice for the youth sector and the re-establishment of a professional association for youth workers.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH WORK

Australian youth policy has its origins in the late 19th-century Victorian state child protection and education policy, and early 20th-century Commonwealth defence policy, with the passing of the landmark Victorian state legislation of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864 (NCCA), the 1872 Education Act and the 1909 Commonwealth Defence Act. These pieces of legislation redefined, within the colony of Victoria, the notion of childhood, casting children and young people variously as a vulnerable group in need of protection, a potentially criminal group in need of controlling and also as an important national resource and asset to be trained and developed to both build and defend the colony and the nation.

The Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864 provided for the removal of neglected children from their parents to be placed in institutions of state care and reformatories for convicted juveniles, and the Education Act 1872 provided compulsory, secular and free education for children aged between 6 and 14 at a time when many received no education at all (Macintyre 1991). The 1903, 1904 and 1909 federal Defence Acts enabled the Australian Government to call up all males in a time of war and made peace-time military training compulsory (Dennis 1995; Long 1963; National Archives of Australia 2014).

The legislation set out three age groups of boys and men (12-14, 14-18 and 18-26 years) who had to undertake compulsory military training. They undertook training on the proviso that they were passed as medically fit, were not resident aliens or studying theology. If they did not enrol in the military training they faced fines and/or jail sentences. From 1911 to 1915 there were 34 000 people fined and 7 000 sent to jail, many of them boys, at a time when Australia's total population was less than 4.5 million, of which 2.58 million were male. Many who undertook military training went on to serve in the First World War. There were a total of 343 200 men and 2 700 women who served with the Australian Imperial Forces. Just over 60 000 died and 163 000 were wounded (CBCS 1927; Dennis 1995; Long 1963; National Archives of Australia 2014).

## **YOUTH WORK**

Youth work in this period is dominated by well-meaning volunteers engaged in "child saving" activities undertaken by welfare organisations associated with the mainstream churches and Christian youth organisations such as the Young Men's/Women's Christian Association (YMCA and YWCA). However, the focus on young people as a national resource begins to dominate the policy discourse as the events of the 20th century unfold (Irving, Maunders and Sherrington 1995).

Irving, Maunders and Sherrington (1995) suggest that a significant strand of (both state and federal) government youth policy in the 20th century was linked to Australia's defence. They suggest that the world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 were particularly influential, as was the Cold War period and in particular the Vietnam War. As these international crises and conflicts escalated and Australia entered these wars, the threat of invasion intensified. This led to the conscription of young men into the armed forces and the employment of young women in the factories and agriculture (National Archives of Australia 2014).

Conscription, however, also raised issues regarding the general health and fitness of young people, as up to 40% of those being conscripted were considered unfit for military service due to poor health (Irving, Maunders and Sherrington 1995). A response was for defence policy to include programmes of national fitness for youth with an outcome of producing a strong and healthy population of young adults readily available to defend the nation in a time of war. When the National Fitness Bill was introduced into federal parliament in 1941, the Minister for Health, Sir Frederick Stewart, argued that:

[In] a time of mechanised warfare ... behind the machine, in the shop or on the battlefield, there must be a fit people ... and provision, above all, to ensure the continued fitness of the young folk to whom we will hand on that heritage for which we are now fighting. (Collins and Lekkas 2011)

This led to moves by governments to fund “national fitness” regimes, youth centres with youth programmes and staff to run them and physical education in schools with physical education instructors, and commensurate higher education training courses, during and immediately after the Second World War.

## **NATIONAL FITNESS AND DEFENCE OF THE NATION**

This concern with defence and national fitness dominates youth policy for a large part of the 20th century. Youth policy does not return to child protection, education and welfare issues until the post-Second World War period in response to the Victorian Barry Report and does not move away from defence policy until the post-Vietnam War period of the late 20th century (Irving, Maunders and Sherrington 1995).

Collins and Lekkas (2011: 714-16) reinforce this view suggesting that the prime motivation for the introduction of the federal government’s National Fitness Act 1941 was “to improve the fitness of the youth of Australia and better prepare them for roles in the armed services”. However, they go on to say that one of the important by-products of the National Fitness Act was the granting of significant funds to quasi-autonomous state-based fitness councils, to deliver recreation and educational programmes “specifically focused on children and youth” and to provide recreational facilities such as “playgrounds, youth clubs and school camping programmes, as well as the development of physical education in schools and its teaching and research in universities”. This focus on youth brings with it a focus on youth services and youth work and attendant discussions on who is best qualified to undertake this work.

## **YOUTH AFFAIRS PEAK BODY**

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria is birthed at this time out of the National Fitness Council’s Associated Youth Committee (Maunders 1984). This body is set up to advise the state-based national fitness council on youth matters. In 1960 this subcommittee becomes an important stand-alone sector peak body funded by government and subscriptions from youth organisations to advise the government and to represent young people, youth organisations and youth workers to government and the wider community. This organisation continues today as the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).

The purpose of a national fitness campaign was to ensure that young people were strong and healthy enough to defend Australia (Irving, Maunders and Sherrington 1995). Conscription of young men into compulsory military training was suspended in 1929 but reintroduced following Australia’s entry into the Second World War in 1940 and stayed in place in various forms through the Cold War, Korean War and Vietnam War until 1972. This concern with defence and national fitness dominates youth policy for a large part of the 20th century. Youth policy does not return to child protection, education and welfare issues until the post-Second World War period in response to the Victorian Barry Report and does not move away from defence policy until the post-Vietnam War period of the late 20th and early 21st century.

## **VIETNAM WAR**

The 1960s in Australia was a time of rapid social change and generational upheaval. The Vietnam War period of 1965 to 1972 saw over 800 000 men participate in compulsory national service and over 19 000 serve in Vietnam. The long period of national defence and compulsory military training dominating youth policy ended with the election of a progressive social democratic Labour government in December 1972. They quickly announced the end of conscription and the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Vietnam War as one of their first administrative decisions (National Archives of Australia 2014).

The Vietnam War period saw the emergence of New Left social movements and political uprisings of young people, with Australian university students and youth organisations politicised and emboldened by the global anti-war movement and the success of international student protests such as the Paris riots of 1968. This led governments to respond with specific youth policies and programmes. The lowering of the voting age in Australia to 18 (ostensibly to align with the age of conscription) created an empowered youth voting bloc. As a result governments responded with specifically funded youth policies, ministries of youth affairs and departments to administer the increased funding allocations.

Irving, Maunders and Sherrington (1995) suggest that the long period of relatively settled youth policy was overturned by the youth-led empowerment movements associated with the Vietnam anti-war period and associated progressive social movements of the period along with free tertiary education, a strong economy and a large youth population known as the post-war baby boom generation. This focus on educating, training, employing and developing young people continued into the 1980s with the increased provision of youth work training and funding of youth programmes whose focus was now on the empowerment and participation of the young person as an active citizen, and the meeting of their interests and needs, rather than those of the state or church.

The emergence of paid and tertiary trained youth workers to run youth programmes, employment and training programmes, recreation, sporting and drop-in centres in turn led to youth workers collectively organising around pay and conditions and forming a Youth Workers' Association in the mid-1960s, and the development of youth work as a stand-alone profession began to emerge. The Youth Workers' Association, however, was short-lived, with it ceasing operations and being absorbed into the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in 1980. Hence the position of youth work as a fledgling profession remained until the election of the Victorian state Labour government in 1999 and the introduction of a charter of human rights for all Victorians. This charter led to the establishment of a code of ethics for youth workers based in human rights and the re-establishment of a professional association for youth workers.

## **VICTORIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER**

The establishment of a charter of human rights for all Victorians and the incorporation of the United Nations Human Rights Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC)

into legislation that guides work with children and young people in Victoria had a significant influence on the professionalisation of youth work.

Children and young people have access to human rights in countries that have ratified the CROC. The Australian federal government is a signatory to the CROC. The Victorian state government has gone a step further than the federal government by introducing its own Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (CHRR 2006). The intention of the Victorian CHRR is to ensure that human rights are protected within government and the wider community. The CHRR explicitly references the CROC's "best interests" principles and these are also stated overtly in section 10 of the Victorian Children, Youth and Families Act 2005:

- (1) For the purpose of this Act the best interests of the child must always be paramount.
- (2) When determining whether a decision or action is in the best interests of the child, the need to protect the child from harm, to protect his or her rights and to promote his or her development (taking into account his or her age and stage of development) must always be considered.

The CROC extends its particular relevance to youth work practice in Victoria by the inclusion of its "best interest" principles in not only the state's youth-related legislation (2005), but also the Victorian Youth Sector Code of Ethical Practice (YACVic 2007). The Victorian Code is premised on the CROC's core principle that young people are "the primary consideration" of those who work with them and that they will do so in the latter's "best interests". Article 3.1 of the CROC prescribes that:

in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

This best interest principle has been enshrined in the preamble to the Children, Youth and Families Act and creates the basis on which work with young people should take place. As such the Victorian Code of Ethical Practice for youth workers is also based on Article 3.1 of the CROC (Corney 2014).

## **APPOINTMENT OF THE VICTORIAN CHILD SAFETY COMMISSIONER**

The appointment of Bernie Geary as the Victorian Child Safety Commissioner (CSC) by the Victorian parliament was made as a response to the increasing number of abuse reports being made to government and pressure being placed on government from regular stories of abuse reported in the media. The commissioner reports directly to parliament and is seen as an independent watchdog, established to protect children and young people and promote their best interests.

In 2006, shortly after his appointment, the CSC addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. In this significant address he outlined the need to protect both young people and youth workers, calling for the development of a code of practice for youth work to address the issue of child safety. He said:

I strongly believe that youth work needs to come out of the shadow of aligned professions and a major step will be a strong and proud declaration of a code of ethical practice ...

[I]n their article “Why the Youth Sector Needs a Code of Ethical Practice” Tim Corney and Lauren Hoiles (2006) present a strong argument supporting why the youth sector needs a code. They view a code of ethical practice as a ... necessary framework for the profession, to be used by workers in their work practice and the sector as a whole. In essence, a code will provide workers and agencies with a statement of both ethical principles, worker boundaries and practices giving us a guide that outlines a set of values to inform our professional practice (Child Safety Commission 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The above statement by the then recently appointed commissioner, along with various pieces of youth-related legislation having human rights conventions written into them, gave impetus to the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) to establish a working group to develop a code of practice for youth work based in human rights (Corney and Hoiles 2006 & 2007). In turn, this important development galvanised the loose networks of paid youth workers and youth work academics to work towards the re-establishment of the dormant Youth Workers' Association ([www.ywa.net.au](http://www.ywa.net.au)), which began to deliver professional development seminars on ethics and the code of practice to its members. The universities also followed suit, introducing specific subjects on ethics and covering the youth work code of practice in the pre-service training of youth workers (Corney and Broadbent 2014).

Also occurring at this time was a global push from the secretariat of the Commonwealth of Nations contained in policy communiqués, such as the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment Goals (PAYE) (2007), explicitly calling for codes of practice based in human rights to be developed for youth workers across the member nations of the Commonwealth of which Australia has been a key contributor.

All these policy and legislative factors have influenced, and continue to influence, the professionalisation of youth work both in the state of Victoria and more widely in Australia.

However, the current state of Australian federal government youth policy and its support of youth work is mixed. Following the last federal election in September 2013 the incoming Conservative Abbott government made its view of youth work and the youth sector clear by not appointing a Minister for Youth Affairs and defunding the associated Office for Youth. This was done alongside the defunding of the national youth sector peak body the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) and not creating any new consultation vehicle to ascertain the needs of young people. The youth sector was dealt a further blow following the cessation of funding to the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies (ACYS) from the end of June 2015. ACYS was highly valued for its provision of best-practice information on youth work and publication of the evidence-based journal *Youth Studies Australia*.

These funding cuts are part of wider austerity measures designed to reduce government spending particularly in welfare-related areas (AYAC 2014). In light of these changes at the federal government level it may well be time for state-based professional associations of youth workers to consider putting aside their differences and



for them to come together nationally to advocate for the needs of their members and the young people with whom they work.

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Part III

**The “magic triangle”:  
balancing autonomy  
and dependency in the  
interests of youth work**

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# Introduction

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*Howard Williamson*

**T**he collection of papers that appeared in an edited collection following the Luxembourg EU Presidency in 2005 were preoccupied with the so-called “magic triangle” – the relationships between youth research, youth work practice (and youth organisations) and youth policy. The issues revolved around the strengths and weaknesses of the dialogues and networks between the different corners of this triangle. My own contribution to that collection was initially entitled “Harry Potter and the Triangle of Doom”, but this was not considered by the publishers to have sufficient academic gravitas! As a result, it was renamed “The research, policy and practice triangle: potential and problems” (Williamson 2006). Endeavouring to summarise aspects of the whole event, that chapter pointed to the precarity of relationships, the fragility of trust, the depth of suspicions and the recurrent fragmentation of the triangle – in a way, prefacing the arguments that have been elaborated here by Manfred Zentner. Indeed, during the seminar that informs this volume, participants made a range of comments supporting that perspective. A leading representative of youth organisations commented, descriptively, that policy making in the youth field reflected “an evolution of different configurations of actors and alliances – never straightforward”. More scathingly, a former government official suggested that “nobody wants to co-operate with research”, while a further caustic observation from the corner of youth research asserted that “magic triangles are more like a bowl of spaghetti”. The proclaimed “magic triangle” was certainly in need of conceptual interrogation!

Zentner is, therefore, absolutely right to draw our attention to the multifaceted nature of the youth field itself and then to the many wider influences and agendas that bear down, with different strength and effect, on the youth field. The implication is, of course, that one must engage with these wider forces, too, and respect their priorities and preferences, if the youth field in general, and youth work in particular, is to maintain its prominence and profile. Even the strongest of relationships and respect within and across the “magic triangle” is simply not enough. It is, for sure, a necessary condition for taking the agendas of the youth field forward in a coherent and systematic way, but it is not sufficient. Zentner, by way of conclusion, puts this another way:

So in the end – to define the magic geometrical body that should shape the youth policy debate, one needs to answer the question: What is youth? And who is more apt to deal with this question than youth research, youth work and youth policy – which remain the cornerstones of the magic triangle, whatever else may need to flow from it.

So he places the youth agenda, formed through the differential dynamics of the triangle, at the hub of a wider universe; others might argue that it is that wider universe that shapes the dynamics of the youth field triangle. What is not in doubt is the importance of recognising the interface between them: a weakly connected, confused and conflicted triangle is likely to mean an inadequate and ineffective purchase on wider debates and priorities (economy, culture, health and so forth) and less concerned attention to the youth field from those sources of political momentum. In other words, theoretically at least, youth work becomes lost if it cannot attach its cause to, first, the interests of youth research and wider youth policy, and then – through this framework – to a variety of usually more pressing political concerns. But if it can do this, then its chances of success in securing broader-based political support are likely to be enhanced.

Years ago, I wrote that youth (and community) work development rested on a “precarious equilibrium” of organisational/political, professional and personal relationships (see Williamson and Weatherspoon 1985). Dependency and autonomy, and all points in between, can take many forms. My argument was that organisational partnerships can still break down where professional values and objectives collide and/or where individual youth practitioners from different disciplines (youth work, teaching, youth justice, health) fail to see eye to eye. Conversely, where at least some professional values converge, collaborative work and mutual endeavour can still persist, even when personal relationships are fragile and organisational memoranda of understanding do not exist. And strong personal relationships can produce joint practice, even when professional and organisational arrangements conspire against it. This is another kind of triangle in which youth work is situated, one that might meld comfortably into Zentner’s formations. The point is that we need careful consideration of the conceptual and theoretical dynamics of the interactions between all actors in the youth field, and on its edge, if we are to envision both the potentialities and limitations for youth work and its future.

At a more empirical level, Marti Taru shows us how difficult it can be to balance dependency with autonomy in order to establish and sustain various forms of youth work practice. Drawing on a range of youth organisations that blossomed and sometimes died during the interwar years in Estonia, he illustrates how dependency on wider patronage and support often helped youth work to flourish, often with very significant numbers of participants, albeit sometimes (to a greater or lesser extent) on the terms of others, while more autonomous youth work was often at risk of collapse. Taru does not address the “magic triangle” per se, leaving the role of policy and research rather implicit, but emphasising how the agendas of others can influence the values and activities of youth work. The idea of “[s]he who pays the piper, calls the tune” springs recurrently to mind, yet it is not always a coerced compliance and more a meeting of the ways and the winning of consent. Youth work does not necessarily have to be oppositional to wider social priorities and concerns, though it should always approach them from a critical perspective. A completely independent youth work may be, equally, an irrelevant youth work. A dependent youth work needs to strive for partnership and mutuality, exerting at least some influence on wider youth policy agendas and not operating in a completely subordinate and subservient role. As Taru notes, a less autonomous actor has less scope

for self-determination but that does not mean no scope at all. The challenge for youth work is to harness its allies and advocates (in research, policy and politics) but then – as part of the weak link in the chain of socialisation (leisure time, as opposed to family, school or work) – to work out how far to compromise its position in return for resources and support from elsewhere, before it considers that it can no longer adhere to its founding principles and values. An unsupported autonomy can be as useless as unconditional surrender; some forms of dependency are usually the price to be paid for some level of sustainability and independence.

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## Chapter 5

# Autonomy, dependency, key actors and youth organisations in interwar Estonia

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*Marti Taru*

### INTRODUCTION

**T**he theme of the seminar held in Hanasaari in June 2014 was youth work autonomy through dependency. In the seminar concept paper, autonomy through dependency in youth work was constructed by linking youth work both to the public sphere (society at large and interests of different groups in society) and the private sphere (young people and their (age-specific) needs, wants, wishes and interests). It is a complex equation where on the one side of the equation there are the interests of society and on the other side there are the interests of young people. On the one hand, youth work is supposed to fulfil the (political) goals and aims of society and socialise young people into the functioning social order. As such, it can be seen as a tool, a pedagogical method, an instrument in the hands of society that can be used to maintain stability in the social order and political system. This aspect in the “autonomy through dependency” equation reflects the dependency side in the equation. On the other hand, youth work is also the sphere that is or could be the space for youth to experiment and express themselves as they feel it appropriate and want it to be. Young people have distinct interests, wishes and wants that need be expressed somewhere; this is the autonomy side in the equation.

In general, however, there should not be a major conflict between young people and the rest of society since both are parts of the same system – or of the same society; the situation can be compared to being like two sides of the same coin. Sometimes being young and young people are defined as a transition from a dependency on parents (or carers) to independence from them, to being an autonomous and active member of society. The transition perspective points out that young people become full adult members of society and they need to learn how to fulfil different roles that constitute adult life. Sometimes young people are viewed as a subculture, sometimes even as a counter-culture in society. This view suggests that young people are not like adult members of society in all respects, that they have distinct interests and ways of living their young lives. However, subculture means a difference from mainstream culture, not a completely different culture; it is a difference in size rather than in substance. Similarly, even if young people differ from the rest of society in many respects, they still share most cultural values and practices and they are mostly like the rest of society rather than unlike the society. Thus, making the distinction between youths and the rest of society is primarily useful as an analytical tool that helps to reveal and notice the dissimilarities, not in order to assert a substantive differentiation between substantively differing and incompatible categories in society.

The concept paper for the seminar looked at youth work as a field that was in contact with both of those dialectically opposite but still not antagonistic, substantively incompatible spheres. Can youth work achieve autonomy through dependency? This was the question to be examined by seminar participants. However, what do autonomy and dependency refer to?

## **AUTONOMY**

Autonomy, etymologically, comes together from two Greek words: *auto*: “for itself” or “by itself” and *nomos*: “law”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, autonomy refers to the condition of creating one’s own laws. Synonyms for autonomy include freedom, sovereignty, self-determination and self-government, as well as ability, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-direction. This spectrum pictures an autonomous agent as someone or something which itself chooses its goals and undertakes activities to achieve those goals.

Though autonomy refers to the capability of an actor to take decisions regarding its own way and carry out activities to achieve the goals, it is still a relational concept. Without noting the presence of other actors as well as their potential to influence others, it would be meaningless to stress the capability of one particular actor in relation to this potential of other actors. Thus, by saying that one is an autonomous actor we stress the capability to ignore other actors’ attempts to guide its decisions.

## **DEPENDENCY**

Etymologically, the word dependent derives from the Latin word *dependere* consisting of two parts: *de* (from, down) and *pendere* (to hang, be suspended).<sup>2</sup> Thus dependent

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1. [www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=autonomy](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=autonomy), accessed 21 October 2015.

2. [www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=depend&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=depend&allowed_in_frame=0), accessed 21 October 2015.

literally refers to something which is attached to something else and which would fall down and probably cease to exist when the “hanging relationship” or “link” between the “carrier” and the “hanger” is suspended. Synonyms for dependency include words like loyalty, reliance, trust, credence, routine, habit, inclination, and the like.

By saying that something depends on something else we refer to a relationship in which one party provides or guarantees the existence or wellbeing of the other party in the relationship. A defining feature of the dependency relationship is asymmetry: one of those in the relationship is more capable, more powerful than the other and thus is capable of sustaining the other party. It is not a partnership of equals where both sides have an equal say in decision making.

## **AUTONOMY THROUGH DEPENDENCY**

In the word combination “autonomy through dependency” both constituent parts point out the asymmetry of the relationship: there is a larger, more powerful party as well as a smaller, weaker party, which is conditional on that stronger side of the equation.

In the case of youth work environments and activities, autonomy can be defined as referring to the ability of each youth work actor to define its goals and activities independently, without evident influence from other concrete actors. The list of those external actors could include the state as an institution and an administrative system, other organisations within the state (which need be large and powerful enough to be able to influence) and also organisations outside the state. The independence of a youth work actor can be understood as the capability to act without substantial support from outside the actor.

## **AUTONOMY AND DEPENDENCY OF YOUTH WORK AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF ESTONIA**

This chapter looks at the history of youth work in Estonia in the interwar period. During the two decades of the first period of independence between 1918 and 1940, youth work meant largely activities carried out by (youth) organisations and youth associations. Therefore, the chapter looks into the history of youth organisations in Estonia, and examines their autonomy and dependency on external actors in defining their goals and carrying out activities to achieve those goals. As environments of youth work, youth associations and organisations have maintained importance until now, so the findings will carry not only historical meaning but remain relevant today and have a wider meaning.

Autonomy and dependency, as stated, represent two different aspects of the same characteristic of an actor: the extent of the actor’s ability to define its values and goals itself and also the ability to carry out activities that reflect those goals and values. On the one side of the continuum we find autonomous and independent organisations which have values and goals defined by their members and management board and which carry out activities to achieve those goals, while at the other end

of the continuum we have organisations which have not defined values and goals themselves but have taken them from, or had them imposed by other actors and which also use the resources of other actors for carrying out activities to achieve those goals and values.

Using this, albeit rather rough and robust, definition and operationalisation of autonomy and dependency, the chapter will look into the evolution and fate of several youth organisations in Estonia during the interwar period:

- ▶ Pupils' Societies
- ▶ Youth Temperance Union
- ▶ Countrywide Union of Rural Youth
- ▶ Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies
- ▶ Scouts and Guides
- ▶ Young Blacksmiths and the Defence League Youth Corps
- ▶ YMCA/YWCA and the Lutheran Church child and youth work

The analysis of the organisations is based on the chapter published in the previous collection of articles, *History of youth work in Europe, volume 4* (Taru, Pilve and Kaasik 2014).<sup>3</sup>

## **PUPILS' SOCIETIES**

The Pupils' Societies movement grew out of illegal pupils' groupings established when Estonia was a part of the Russian Empire, in 1917. The movement's heyday was between 1921 and 1922. Societies were active in many towns, and membership in the larger societies was counted in the hundreds. Organisationally, the movement was divided into thematic branches. Activities were carried out in the form of debates and meetings, discussion groups of literature reviews, working groups, and other similar group work formats; the movement also had its own libraries and held several public events.

The movement started to experience problems in 1922 when several chapters expressed a desire to remain independent from the control of teachers and school management, as was foreseen by the Gymnasium Act, adopted in 1922. Some of its individual members were also involved in public unrest. The Ministry of Education, which had been sceptical about the movement from the start, openly expressed its discontent with the movement. The movement was further weakened by the emergence of other youth organisations, which created alternatives for young people. As a result of all these developments, the Pupils' Societies movement gradually lost momentum and, by 1927, it ceased to exist.

An important feature of this movement was that its activities were planned and implemented by young people and for young people; the role of adults was minimal.

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3. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H. (eds), *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Volume 4, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

The management of the national organisation was also the responsibility of young people. However, instead of receiving support from an adults' organisation, it was confronted with a very powerful organisation – the Ministry of Education. This confrontation was one of the reasons why it ceased to exist. On the autonomy and dependency scale, this organisation can be classified as an autonomous and independent one; for a while this was its strength, but ultimately its vulnerability.

## **YOUTH TEMPERANCE UNION**

The Youth Temperance Union (YTU) was founded in 1923. In establishing the Union, both youth and adults were involved. However, though there had been a considerable amount of youth interest in the temperance movement, and the Students' Temperance Society (STS) had already been established in 1920, the YTU was established only when the 12th congress of the Estonian Temperance Society (ETS), held in 1923, had taken the initiative on this. Once established, the YTU largely emulated the goals and methods of the ETS. It also had access to the resources of the ETS for organising various events at different places and at schools. Its activities included organising congresses and meetings, training courses and essay competitions, which had been in the arsenal of the ETS for a number of years previously.

The Union enjoyed good times and high membership figures in the 1920s (the number of members exceeding 7 500), but it had vanished by the mid-1930s. The reasons why it ceased to exist included both a considerable weakening of the ETS and the temperance movement in general and the fact that other youth associations increasingly offered similar opportunities for leisure, while also including temperance as a principle.

The YTU to a large extent was an externally initiated and supported organisation, and it did not meet with a very enthusiastic reception among young people. It followed the goals and methods used by the adult temperance society. External support offered by the ETS was crucial for its birth as well as its functioning. The subsequent weakening of the ETS, and the consequential decline in support from its side, was also among the main reasons why the YTU ceased to exist. Thus, the YTU was clearly not an autonomous and independent organisation; on the contrary, it depended on the ETS in terms of defining its goals as well as having resources to execute its activities.

## **COUNTRYWIDE UNION OF RURAL YOUTH**

By the end of the 1920s Estonia, like several other European countries, was facing rapid urbanisation. To slow the phenomenon, farmers established agricultural commercial associations in rural areas, beginning in 1926. Young people also joined these associations; the age threshold age for membership was 14, though most youth members were 17 to 18 years old. In 1931 the National Agricultural Association (NAA), which had 72 local conventions, started to establish youth groups. This eventually resulted in the integration of all rural youth groups under a single roof. By the early 1930s, an umbrella organisation was established: the Countrywide Union of Rural Youth (CURY). This organisation was managed by adults and also employed paid

instructors to carry out activities for young people. Its main activities were training courses in agricultural and farming skills, study trips and agricultural contests, but its provision also included various leisure activities. Its members were mostly young people between 13 and 25 years of age who were interested in (professional) self-development and acquiring farming skills. Participation in the activities of CURY groups provided good agricultural and vocational skills. By 1939, the CURY had 446 chapters and 13 500 members.

An important feature of this organisation for young people was its dependence on the NAA, which was a big and powerful organisation. This organisation invested money and other resources into providing young people with constructive opportunities for spending leisure time, which placed a strong emphasis on becoming a good farmer. As an organisation, the CURY was established by the NAA and the local clubs were started on the initiative of this large adults' organisation. This organisation to a large extent determined goals, values and methods of the youth organisation, with a strong emphasis on supporting rural lifestyles and farming as a way of living.

## **COUNTRYWIDE UNION OF ESTONIAN YOUTH SOCIETIES**

In 1919, the Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies (CUEYS) was established. Its main goal was to support the personal development of young people through relevant activities and contacts with other like-minded young people. It focused on activities that were considered to have the potential for supporting personal growth and cultural development such as sports, music, literature, drama, Esperanto, chess, and activities in libraries and reading societies. A range of training courses was offered. There was a strong component of temperance, along with the promotion of patriotism and other human values.

In the beginning, the CUEYS was mainly a movement of school pupils, also involving some teachers, in the capital city of Tallinn and other towns. By the end of the 1920s, the movement had moved from urban to rural areas but had remained an organisation led by young people for young people. In the second half of the 1920s, the total number of young people affiliated with CUEYS was between 5 000 and 10 000. In 1937, CUEYS reported 296 local clubs with around 15 000 participants aged 17 to 25 years.

The CUEYS was an apolitical and non-religious youth movement. Importantly, it was based on the activism of young people; it was not part of, or supported by, a big organisation of and/or for adults. Thus it can be classified as an autonomous and independent youth organisation.

## **SCOUTS AND GUIDES**

Though the beginnings of scouting in Estonia go back to 1911, the first strong groups were established in 1917. The Estonian Scouting Union (ESU) was established in 1921 and it was one of the 22 founding members of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). The ESU developed into a strong youth organisation and in the

1930s several activity branches were active within the Estonian Scouting movement. The Girl Guides movement emerged in 1919 in Tallinn with the establishment of the first Girl Guide group in Estonia. Like in other countries, scouting groups were fairly popular among children and young people in Estonia who valued the opportunity to organise their leisure-time activities for themselves. In terms of membership figures, the organisation was quite popular. In 1937/38, Boy Scouts' membership was, according to different sources, between 3 528 and 5 314 boys. In the same year, the Girl Guides had 2 189 members.

In assessing its degree of autonomy and independence, we have to keep in mind that the organisation had many very young members and participants. Because of their age, they were not capable of managing the organisation alone. Many teachers and enthusiastic adults were involved in running the organisation; however, institutionally speaking, it was somewhat independent from other organisations. Therefore this organisation, too, can be classified as an independent and autonomous one.

## **YOUNG BLACKSMITHS AND THE DEFENCE LEAGUE YOUTH CORPS**

In 1920, the scouting movement split when a national movement emerged which accepted only Estonians as members. The movement was called Young Blacksmiths, and it also had a girls' chapter. The rationale for starting this new movement was dissatisfaction with the "cosmopolitan" nature of scouting and a wish to promote patriotism. The organisation had approximately 2 000 members by the end of the 1920s. It was, initially, quite autonomous and independent from other organisations though, as described below, it was later absorbed into another youth organisation.

### **Defence League Boys' Corps (Young Eagles) and Defence League Girls' Corps**

The Young Blacksmiths was reorganised in 1930, when it was incorporated into the Estonian Defence League's own youth organisation, Young Eagles, and it ceased to exist as an independent organisation. Young Eagles was an organisation which used scouting as a pedagogical method to build patriotic feelings and identity among boys, and to prepare them to be able to defend their country. It was established by the Estonian Defence League which also supported it very substantially, both financially and organisationally. It rapidly gained popularity among young people and in 1937/38, with 15 632 members, the organisation was the largest organisation for boys, and it was still growing.

Young Eagles certainly cannot be considered to be an autonomous and independent youth organisation as it was established and supported by a patriotic and paramilitary organisation to promote certain goals and values among children and young people.

The Defence League Girls' Corps was set up in 1932 as an initiative of Naiskodukaitse, which was a Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation. Like the case of Young Eagles, the Defence League Girls' Corps' goals, values and methods were strongly influenced by the adult organisation.

The roles of each youth organisation followed the roles of their respective adult organisations. While Young Eagles prepared boys to be able to defend their fatherland, the Defence League Girls' Corps prepared girls to be capable of supporting military activities in case of war (for example, nursing, cooking, mending, and the like). The Girls' Corps also promoted traditional family roles. The organisation was very popular among girls. Its membership figures grew rapidly and in 1939 it was the largest single youth organisation in the country with 19 601 members.

The Defence League Girls' Corps also cannot be considered autonomous and independent as a youth organisation. It was founded by an adult organisation which defined its values, goals and methods, and also provided resources to carry out its activities.

## **YMCA/YWCA AND THE LUTHERAN CHURCH CHILD AND YOUTH WORK**

In the 1920s, a number of religious youth associations and organisations were founded in Estonia. The YMCA/YWCA and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church had the largest youth organisations. In the Lutheran Church, youth work started in 1929 and continued from then on. Unfortunately there is no data on membership figures although it is known that it was quite high; it was counted in thousands. The activities of YMCA/YWCA started in the early 1920s. It was popular with youth because of the wide spectrum of its activities, in addition to religious activities, including training, educational and cultural activities, hiking and other social activities. From 1923 to 1940, popular summer youth camps were organised. The YMCA also supported the development of youth sports in Estonia. In 1937, the YMCA had 2 375 and the YWCA 1 976 members, mostly above school age.

Neither youth work under the auspices of the Lutheran Church nor the YMCA/YWCA were autonomous or independent of their parent organisations. Both were started from above, by the church or by an organisation from abroad. Both also were based on promoting clerical goals and values and accepted only children and young people who were willing to consent to this. The YMCA/YWCA was not really considered a youth organisation since it was managed by senior members; it was also considered an organisation driven by American rather than Estonian values. They also depended on the resources of the parent organisation, which was especially evident in the case of the YMCA/YWCA. As such, they were rather dependent and non-autonomous.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Youth organisations and youth work went through a major development in the two decades of the first period of independence of Estonia. By the second half of the 1930s there were a number of youth associations and organisations with different values, goals, activities and membership figures. A brief look into the autonomy and dependency of youth organisations in interwar Estonia is summarised below, in Table 1. The table reveals a fairly clear pattern.



**Table 5.1: Relationship between characteristics of an organisation and its popularity**

	<b>Autonomous/ independent</b>	<b>Approximate membership</b>	<b>Support from an external actor</b>
YMCA/YWCA	No	4 400 in 1937	Yes
Pupils' Societies	Yes	2 600 in 1921/22	No
Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies	No	Up to 15 000 in 1937 (differing estimates from different sources)	No
Scouts and Guides	Yes	Scouts: 3 500 in 1938/1939  Guides: 2 200 in 1938/1939	No
Young Blacksmiths	Yes	2 000 before join- ing Defence League Youth Corps	No
Defence League Youth Corps	No	Boys: 15 632 in 1938  Girls: 19 601 in 1938	Yes
Lutheran Church child and youth work	No	Several thousands at the end of 1930s	Yes
Countrywide Union of Rural Youth	Yes	13 500 in 1939	Yes

Membership figures, which can be considered to be indicators of popularity as well as of influence, varied very notably. While some youth organisations had around a couple of thousand members, others had membership close to 20 000 children and young people. Examination of their autonomy and dependency reveals a clear pattern: larger youth organisations with high membership figures depended on resources received from external organisations and were not autonomous in determining their goals and values but had to adopt the values of those organisations that supported and sponsored them. Even more, some youth organisations were founded by external organisations to serve and advance the interests of those organisations (CURY, Defence League Youth Corps, religious youth organisations). As such, the youth organisations were assigned the role of an environment for socialising young people into a certain world view, and not so much a place where they could live their own dreams.

Those youth organisations were the largest and most popular among young people. Certainly they did provide children and young people with attractive ways of spending their leisure time and the opportunity to learn things that might prove to be useful in life were arguably among the most attractive features of an organisation. At the same time, they had to give up a significant part of their autonomy and independence. A look at their organisational trajectory reveals that for them, being autonomous and independent and distinct from external organisations was not a value per se. Their history reveals quite the contrary – they valued being in

the dependency relationship with their parent organisation, whose values they promoted among young people.

However, there were also other kinds of youth association and organisations which valued autonomy and independence over popularity and access to resources. As testified by the case of the Pupils' Societies, their values cost them their very existence, and the case of CUEYS shows that the organisation had to undertake major changes in its organisational structure to survive. These cases also show clearly that there were young people who valued independence and autonomy over support from powerful actors (which would have meant adaptation to their values and goals). When we look at membership figures, it is clear that they were far less popular than the organisation supported by external actors and organisations. For some youth organisations, autonomy and independence were values per se, as testified by the fact that there were youth associations active in the same area, but one was autonomous while the other was not. Such pairs are CUEYS and CURY, the Defence League Youth Corps and the Scouts and Guides.

Interestingly, being supported by a large organisation was in itself not a guarantee of being a successful youth organisation. As the case of the youth temperance movement (the YTU) showed, heavy reliance on an external actor was a weakening factor – when the large, “parent” organisation, the Estonian Temperance Society, lost its power, the youth organisation dependent on it went down the drain. Though the relationship certainly is not a deterministic one, the weakening of the parent organisation was clearly a factor that contributed significantly to the weakening of the youth organisation too.

The patterns also hint that large and powerful parent organisations played significant roles in the development of youth organisations and the youth work that was carried out by and within those youth organisations. They helped to set up organisations for youth which attracted thousands and thousands of children and young people. They were capable of providing high-quality leisure-time opportunities for young people. As such they were among the main actors in the provision of youth work. However, it is also impossible to ignore the role of young people as actors in the development of youth work. As has been shown, organisations and associations established and maintained by youth had a significant role in interwar Estonia. They serve as the example of the importance of youth initiatives in the development of youth organisations and youth work.

## Chapter 6

# Observations on the so-called “magic triangle” or: where has all the magic gone?

*Manfred Zentner*

### INTRODUCTION

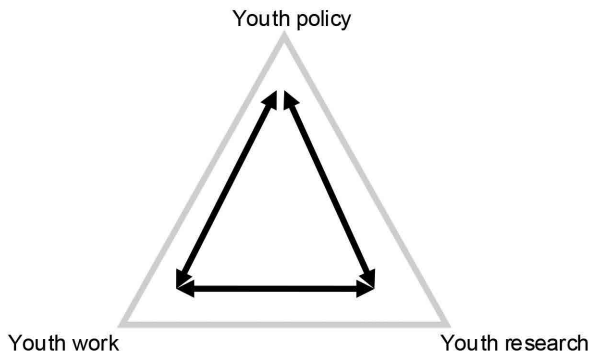
**T**he aim of this paper is to discuss whether the commonly used symbol of the triangle for the dialogue and co-operation between (the) three main actors in the field of youth – youth policy, youth work and youth research – really reflects the existing realities of evidence-based policy making or if the triangle is too weak a symbol.

Lynne Chisholm (2006) referred to this co-operation between research, NGOs and policy as the “magic triangle” of policy making, if the communication is between parties on an equal level with different forms of experience, which are complementary to each other. But she also pointed out that tensions between the actors were “neither novel nor secret” (Chisholm 2006: 27).

The triangle as the symbol for a balance of communication between policy makers, civil society and research was always an interpretation of the ideal, almost utopian structure of mutual respect and support. Furthermore, this model is a heavy reduction of the actual structure since it is implied that the whole fields of youth work, youth research or youth policy are covered and mapped in the respective corners of the triangle. But this internal consensus in the three fields cannot be assumed. Nevertheless, the triangle can function as a symbol for the possible forms of co-operation between the three actors.

The equivalent structure of the triangle indicates not only the balance of communication but also the mutual influences of equal parts in a process. Any primacy of the political/policy field or either of the other parts should not be implied. Nevertheless, it has always been the feeling that this balance was unstable.

**Figure 6.1: The “magic triangle”**



Not only were power relations between the actors unequal, but it was also the nature of the communication between them that changed the ideal equilateral triangle into other figures, since mutual ignorance and parallel unco-ordinated action existed both before and since the inception of (at least the rhetoric of) evidence-based policy making.

The starting point of a youth policy with a clear understanding of its own identity in Europe can be placed in the 1950s; and youth policy gained its independence from education policy in the 1970s – as a result of the massive youth demonstrations marked with the year 1968. With these events, a possible communication between the partners could begin. And it began with at least a dialogue between youth work and youth policy. The dialogue was established in the Council of Europe between the CDEJ (the intergovernmental steering group on youth) and the AC (the Advisory Council for Youth, consisting of representatives of youth organisations). But the involvement of researchers was not established until the end of the 1980s and a mutual exchange between all players certainly did not happen from the start of the triangle. This was due to various reasons, based on the self-perception of the players involved.

Youth work understood itself as a representative of young people supporting their needs and providing leisure-time activities, whereas the research field understood its role in objectively observing the situation of children and young people. The aim to point out problems and challenges that have to be changed was paramount, and the prevailing view from youth research was that no direct involvement and especially no dependency or accountability to policy should influence the objectivity of the research. Thus researchers were not involving themselves in the dialogue, but were “only” providing information to others; it was for others to react to the presentation of this scientific knowledge.

## **COMMON OCCURRENCES OF THE TRIANGLE**

In the different countries and/or regions the three acting partners figure in various structures from mutual ignorance to mutual respect and understanding, from mutual distrust to co-operation. One of the many forms can be understood in that way, that every stakeholder in the structure defines (or is defined in terms of) its own singularity. Researchers, for example, are sitting in an ivory tower, defining the topics of

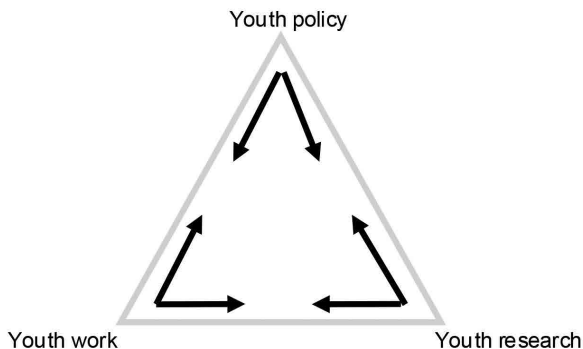
their research and following their own interests, rather than topics on request or in response to the input of youth policy makers or youth workers.

In the case of mutual ignorance, youth work, run by NGOs, is concerned about young people and about their own values – be it, for example, democracy, religion or sport – and sees itself often opposed to the interests of youth policy that seemingly aims solely for the integration of young people into systems of which youth work NGOs disapprove.

And youth policy, in this case, is set up ideologically, favouring its own aims over objective facts that influence the lives of young people. NGOs are seen as political opponents and research results considered irrelevant.

Such complete mutual ignorance or reciprocal distrust is as rare as full mutual understanding and support. In most cases contacts between the different areas exist, but these, on the one hand, do not represent the whole areas and, on the other hand, might not be positive or supportive. Tense contacts and strained communication between two or all three of the parties still create a triangle, so it may still be drawn in this way and still symbolises a communication, but one characterised by conflict rather than co-operation.

**Figure 6.2: Distrust between the actors**



This form of communication is based more on disrespect than on ignorance. Examples (maybe only a little bit exaggerated) from this structure can be given when researchers cannot accept the experience of youth workers as knowledge. Youth work, on the other hand, follows its own values and disregards any curriculum established by the state. Policy makers feel disrespected since every party takes the money provided by public funds but does not want to accept the rules created by ideological policy, and rather criticises policy makers openly and, in the case of youth work, seems to train youth to disrespect policy (makers) as well. Researchers also criticise politics and its policy impact, on the basis of (in their view) objective facts and data, but they refuse to provide any possible alternative solutions to the presenting problems and challenges. In turn, youth workers do not see any practical value in the detached social science results they see as either too special or singular and thus not valid for the completely different cases in their own youth club or youth NGO. Alternatively, the research is suspected to provide information that is too general and an overview which – again – is not considered valid for the completely different cases in their own

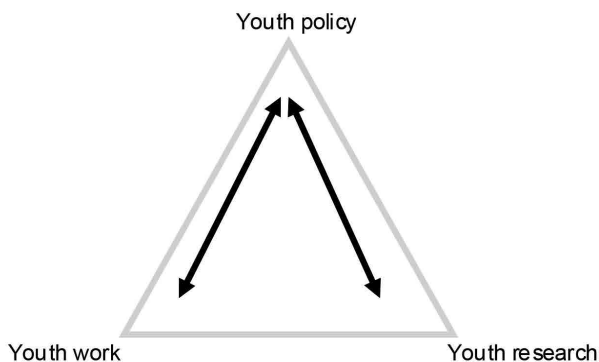
youth club or youth NGO. And again, the policy makers want different youth work practice with different agendas and aims, and seek evidence from the researchers to confirm that their political approaches are justified (or even successful). This again leads to the refusal and resistance of the research community to being misrepresented in the justification of existing political measures, and of the youth work community to being instrumentalised as the lapdogs of political ideological initiatives. In such structures the parties are seldom really communicating with each other but rather each complaining about the other side.

But as to the singularities and the perfect equilateral triangle, these structures are rare. In the two negative cases, the acting parties are self-centred and arrogant but in the second case of disrespect the other parties are at least recognised as players in the field – even though they are labelled as unworthy, corrupt, and in any case wrong.

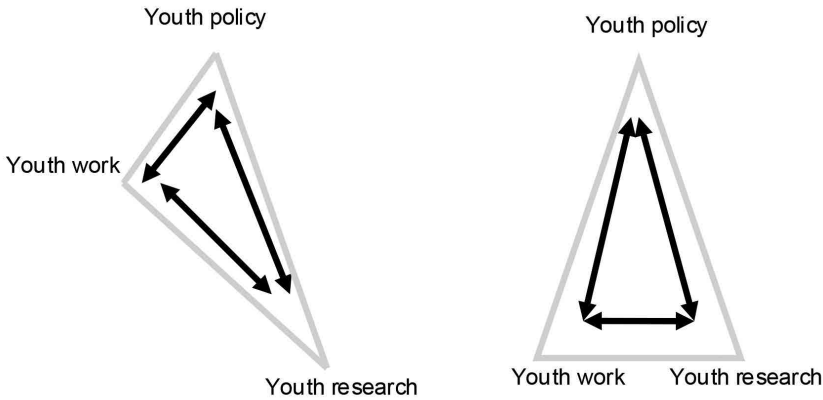
More common are situations where two of the parties have regular, good or at least non-conflicting contact, whereas the third party is left outside and is not integrated into the communication at all. Thus, a model of this kind would be a line and a dot rather than a triangle. In this communication structure the isolation of one of the actors might have various reasons. It can be rooted (positively) in personal relations or a personal history of representatives of two of the stakeholders, or (negatively) in the withdrawal or exclusion of one of the acting fields from the others because of dissatisfaction with the co-operation or because of personal reasons. So, for example, a personal history of a policy maker in a youth work organisation might influence their readiness to include youth work in policy decision making, or the fact that a youth researcher was using a youth club for music rehearsals might influence their interest in youth work approaches. But also personal conflicts between two involved representatives of the fields might lead to a disconnection of one of the areas from the platforms of communication.

Whatever reasons the line-dot structure might have, it is possible and it often happens that the current excluded party gets involved in the policy making structure by establishing contacts to one of the two already concerned parties. Thus, the triangle is not perfect, not even closed, but at least a connection between all players exists. The following model shows the incomplete triangle where the connecting corner is youth policy, which has contacts to both youth work and research, though these are not regularly communicating.

**Figure 6.3: The incomplete triangle**



**Figure 6.4: Triangles with less magic**



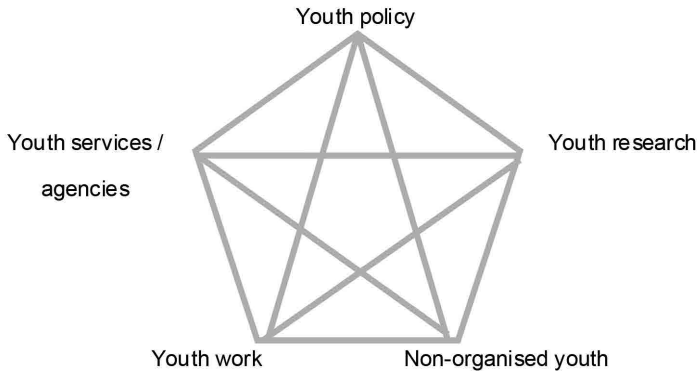
Evidence-based youth policy making should involve all three cornerstones as more or less equivalent partners so that the triangle can be constructed as equilateral. In reality, the influence on evidence-based policy making of one of the two stakeholders, youth work and youth research, can easily be bigger than that of youth policy, which would make the triangle neither equilateral nor equal-sided. This can happen if the groups of policy makers, youth work representatives and researchers are of unequal size. It can also happen if one of the groups has only an observing or consulting status but cannot bring in topics and therefore has no power for agenda setting. If research and youth work are strongly co-operating but the influence of both on policy making is weak, then the triangle would be an isosceles (equal-sided).

However, the model of the triangle, or better the model of three spots symbolising the actors, youth policy, youth work and youth research, can illustrate the forms of co-operation and communication between the stakeholders, and the graphic display can highlight existing conflicts or ruptures, as well as good co-operation.

## **MORE THAN TRIANGLES**

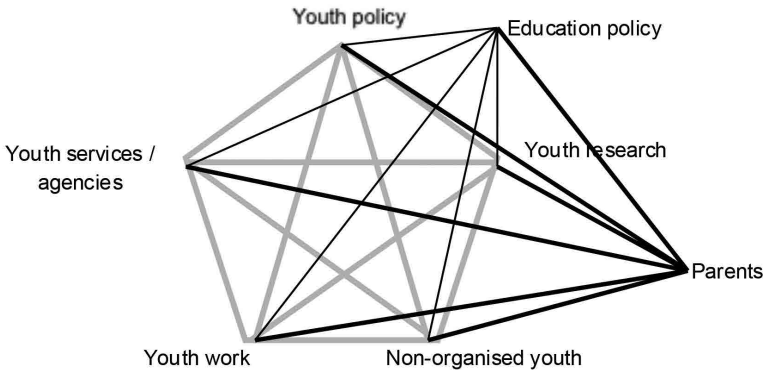
It would seem, however, that the ideal model of a triangle is insufficient; more and more stakeholders are involved in policy making, like youth care, youth services and agencies, who are neither youth work, policy makers or non-organised youth. They are not involved in youth work and are not in need of any support services, but are encouraged through youth participation measures to be engaged in policy making. Thus, the model of one triangle has to be changed to combinations of 10 triangles, which build a pentagon where all corners are interconnected, symbolising communication or co-operation lines. Each of the triangles (like youth policy, youth agencies, youth research, or youth work, non-organised youth, youth policy) could function effectively in developing solutions to certain challenges, as can quadrangles (like policy, agencies, youth work and youth research), but the ideal combination would be when all five actors with some role in supporting evidence-based youth policy are included in the communication.

**Figure 6.5: Pentagon with five actors**



The situation becomes confusing when other policy fields get involved and interact or even rival the parameters of youth policy. Consequently, participative policy making in one domain might counteract policy making in another field, or different stakeholders are involved and thus the areas overlap. In Figure 6.6, these overlaps are exemplified with education policy and parents as other policy domains, and two other dialogue groups, but it could just as well be economic policy or health agendas, or other research fields or international structures influencing national/regional evidence-based youth policy.

**Figure 6.6: Overlapping polygons**



If youth policy is in fact a horizontal topic in various policy fields, and youth is a topic in many research fields which does not claim to be youth research (for example, medical research with youth) and various actors interact with children and young people, then the picture of various overlapping (but still flat) polygons is more accurate than the oversimplified “magic triangle”.

**OVERLYING CONCEPTS**

As if this model of mutual influencing policy making in various (national) policy domains is not complex enough, one also has to consider the overlying (or



underpinning) concepts that are drivers of developments. These drivers set the stage and define the framework for all policy making in societies and can be considered the main topics of policy discourse.

These topics define the point of view from which every development of a society, every policy decision is interpreted. An example of these discourses can be the economic discourse that every development and every political decision has to be weighed by its costs, its profits or its return on investment. This can be seen when health issues are discussed mainly in regard to the cost of the developments of medication (for example, HIV medicine for countries with lower gross national product), or the costs of treatments (for example, treatment for the elderly) instead of discussing the responsibility of doctors to do their best to keep/make everyone healthy. Similarly, the refugee and migration policy of different countries is established through mainly economic arguments.

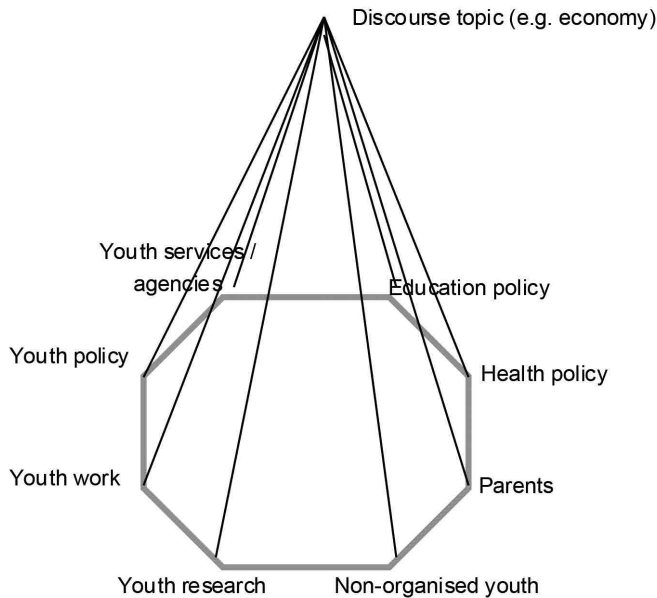
One can surmise that the two main driving topics for discourses in Europe today are economy (including profit as the main goal) and cultural differences/diversity. Two decades ago the main topic was individualisation; it was about personal freedom, autonomy and self-determination, their constraints as well as what was needed to overcome these challenges and empower more and more people. The current situation in Europe (and the so-called Western world) is undoubtedly the outcome of this discourse, but over the past 20 years or so the perspective has changed towards a more economic interpretation. This is commonly (and extremely simplified and shortened) represented as a neo-liberal point of view. Parallel to this economic paradigm another interpretative concept became powerful: cultural differences.

In both cases the acceptance of a leading discourse topic does not imply that only one value system is used for interpreting data. It can be both, the appraisal of cultural diversity as well as the concern for loss of cultural identity, but still cultural differences build the interpretation matrix. And it could also be the credo that the steady growth of the BNP is the main aim or the belief that social justice is more important than national debts which forms the individual world view, but in both cases economy defines the interpretation matrix. So the discourse defines the main objective-setting topic but not the ways of interpreting it.

These driving concepts frame the matrix for analysis and interpretation of facts, and the players in the dialogue can discuss their respective points of view. They can question any claimed superiority or legitimacy of one of the concepts and by arguing about it they might be able to find a common understanding on (possibly different) interpretative approaches.

Let us assume that the two concepts, economy and culture, are the main frameworks for development, for policy making and for interpretation. If we accept this assumption, then we have to integrate these drivers into the models of policy making. And, therefore, the models become even more complex. We could argue that these topics are overshadowing the interaction on the plane of policy making and this then brings in a third dimension, creating a pyramid with a polygon as a base derived initially from the "magic triangle", as shown in Figure 6.7.

**Figure 6.7: Overshadowing paradigm – The magic pyramid**



But currently another approach is omnipresent in any discussion: it is increasingly necessary to justify, measure, assess and evaluate every intervention and political programme. This leads to a huge amount of statistics, data and parallel evaluation results that builds another body of research which might be based on a different narrative from the policy-making discussion.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore important to mention that a considerable volume of these data and statistics is produced by companies outside the established research field, like market research companies or consultancy agencies. Furthermore, statistics offices (re)define the underlying concepts, through their definitions of “facts” and variables they are collecting and counting – be it labour market data or migration background. In both cases it is a matter of agreement and definition of who has to be counted as (un)employed, or who has a migration background.

The challenge concerning this development is that the actors and stakeholders who are included in the policy-making process might have the same approach or even competing concepts of interpretation, but the narrative behind the “objective” data production is not always public and thus not always known. Therefore, if “objective” data or external research results are used in arguing about necessary interventions, these “facts” and results might even set the agenda for the policy development process – but without anybody involved in the discussion noticing it. This implies that more knowledge not only on existing data and evaluation results but also on methodology, schools of thinking, definitions of success factors and more variables is needed in the structure of co-operation to at least see and understand the basis for agenda setting. Or else the magic will disappear from the (anyway flexible) polyhedron; it will be lost in the translation of the data interpretation.

4. Robert Thompson referred to this fact in a seminar of the youth partnership in Budapest 2012.

Following the logic of the previous graphics, these data, statistics, assessments, etc. could be presented as another spot above the plane of the political decision-making process, like the overshadowing paradigm, but also in connection to the discourse topic. But since the narrative behind the presumed objective facts is unknown, we would not know where to draw or position it. It could be literally at more than one spot, if the data being used has come from different sources with possibly different underlying interpretation concepts.

## **CHANGES OVER TIME**

Furthermore, one has to respect the fourth dimension of the model – time. Time is reflected in the main issues of youth policy, youth work, youth research and the other actors. It is not only the changes in policy making (authoritarian, participative, etc.) and the widening of the approach of youth policy to a horizontal concept that influences, as well as being influenced by, the magic pyramid or polyhedron. It is also the factual changes of the main topics for education, for a society as well as the main technological developments. So inside the interpretation matrix other issues might be tackled like – currently – migration and the wave of refugees. But gender is also one of these topics that is analysed in research, worked on in pedagogy or dealt with in policy.

Other topics defining such changes of importance in youth policy might be religion/secularity, tolerance, democracy, globalisation, internalisation, mobility and flexibility or sustainability. We understand these topics as the main issues that are dealt with in youth policy.

Beside these, technical and technological developments change the current situation of young people. Media is not only important regarding equal access to the World Wide Web, it becomes an agenda-setting topic considering the legal circumstances for cultural production of young people, escapist behaviour in online games, user-generated content and information literacy, psychological effects, new forms of violence and more. Only a few years ago, none of these issues was a topic for youth work, youth research or youth policy but currently it seems that they have gained higher importance than youth cultural activities or drug abuse, which were significant youth policy issues in the 1990s.

The change of guiding issues influences the composition of the partners that should be involved in the dialogue. Current challenges for youth policy like unaccompanied minor refugees might ask for the involvement of other experts in the polygon defining the base geometrical figure.

And last but not least, the definition of youth – as the subject (or object) of youth research, youth work and youth policy – itself has a big impact on the structure of the magic polyhedron. The target group of any intervention also defines the expertise that needs to be involved. So in the end – to define the magic geometrical body that should shape the youth policy debate, one needs to answer the question: What is youth? And who is more apt to deal with this question than youth research, youth work and youth policy – which remain the cornerstones of the “magic triangle”, whatever else may need to flow from it?

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Part IV

## **Half boy and half man**

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# Introduction

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*Filip Coussée*

**T**he following three chapters all indicate that youth work is fragile and in a vulnerable position. Youth work occupies a small space in broader discussions on the relationship between education and citizenship and between the individual and society. What makes youth work different from other actors in that social and pedagogical field is that its heart focuses on learning processes rather than on the desired outcomes of knowledge and behaviour. This process of non-formal learning makes youth work different from schooling and training. Young people and youth workers are partners in a learning process. There are inevitable differences in hierarchy and power, but they are far less coded than in formal learning situations. Youth work is driven by processes of social and societal learning. It is not only a matter of the acquisition of individual skills. The papers show us very clearly how this heart of youth work makes it a vulnerable occupation, but at the same time we clearly won't have a better chance to survive by taking our heart away ourselves. It is no good hoping that mechanisms and purposes borrowed or copied from adjacent sectors will keep us alive. Then youth work would become a weak link in a strong chain of services aiming at the smooth integration of individuals. Perhaps it is more in the service of young people to profile youth work as starting where young people are now, not where they are supposed to arrive.

## **YOUTH WORK: UNFINISHED, BUT WELL-PROFILED IDENTITY**

Youth work should hold on to a separate profile in the socialisation and emancipation of young people. It is a valuable contribution to their potential development, in supplementing the influence of parents, teachers, peers, social media, and all other formal and informal learning. That is perhaps why youth work – as much as its participants – is attributed an immature status, with the clear tendency to treat it as an informal practice, not to be taken too seriously and, therefore, in many countries outside the state's responsibility. A more mature status is to be found in a more formal status, but then youth work practice is captured by formalised procedures, evaluation forms and measurable, individualised outcomes. That is exactly the reason why society should foster youth work's unfinished professionalisation, as argued by Lorenz at the first History of Youth Work in Europe Seminar (Lorenz 2009). This immature status makes youth work vulnerable, as vulnerable as its participants. Half boy and half man. Formalising youth work into a clear method and thus an "adult professionalised practice" has proved not to be in the interest of all young people, nor in the interest of youth work. Youth work becomes instrumental, and seen as a weapon for all targets, thus developing a very targeted practice. Cherry picking and constructing dividing lines between different young people are the consequences.

The authors in this section describe other strategies for establishing youth work practice as a fully recognised, basic provision in the broad field of social and pedagogical activity. They suggest ways of doing that without formalising it into a method for individual integration and development. Throughout the papers we identify two strategies, firstly by defining an own curriculum and secondly by embedding youth work practice in a community or a broader social and pedagogical field.

Both the curriculum approach and the embeddedness approach have their own internal tensions, widely described in the three pieces. Broadly speaking one could say that the curriculum approach is caught in a tension between product-oriented and process-driven approaches. The embeddedness approach balances between autonomy and dependency. As argued throughout the whole volume, these are rather false dichotomies, and it is important to recognise them and not to run away into simplifications of the complex social and pedagogical realities we have to deal with. It is our destiny to always thematise the core of youth work between method and movement. Youth work as a method is designed as an instrument for social education of all young people. Curriculum is a central concept. The main question is how to make youth work accessible. Youth work as a movement is designed as a social educational practice. The main question then is how youth work makes society more accessible to all young people. Youth work can take very different shapes and there is no externally or predefined curriculum, nor a vast and stable method.

In both conceptions of youth work, youth workers and policy makers will seek for embeddedness in broader social practices, but in the methodical approach youth work runs the risks of instrumentalisation, which means that they do not design nor define the final goals to reach. Then youth work becomes a weapon for all targets. If we support a concept of youth work in which youth workers and young people participate in a broader social and pedagogical movement, then the main mission is not to lead young people to externally defined goals and smooth integration into existing society, but to concentrate on questioning the position, the participation and the education of young people – in all their diversity – in our societies. Youth work does not start then where young people have to end, but it starts from their lived realities, here and now. It's not the destination, it's the glory of the ride. That may sound quite naïve and convivial, but it is an essential part of our social pedagogical sphere in society, which is in turn essential to democracy itself! Formal education and curriculum may be essential too, although optimising the formal approach is necessary, but surely not enough in order to create and maintain a well-functioning democracy.

## **STILL DIFFERENT OPTIONS**

The three chapters describe rather recent histories of youth work, but – as through many other papers in this volume – it becomes clear that youth work approaches evolve in relation to economic, political and cultural (r)evolutions. The same evolution happens with social and pedagogical theories, although they sometimes take a critical distance (and have the luxury to take that distance from political realities). Through the past 100 years we have witnessed an evolution from youth work as an integral part of a well-designed civilisation strategy to a more autonomous, quite



flexible and informal social practice, youth-driven and gradually moving away from adult concerns. At the same time this seeming empowerment of youth work has created in many places an isolation from broader social movements. This splendid isolation leaves room for reintegration into a broader civilisation strategy towards policy makers, who at times equate changing political landscapes with the uprising of neo-liberalism and the growing belief that there is no alternative for capitalist meritocracy. This perspective sees youth work practice become – especially in Anglo-Americanised regimes – a part of an individualised youth policy aiming at employability and adopting a rather technical and utilitarian approach to social problems. The communitarian youth work approach disappears.

The previous volumes in this series illustrate firmly that a youth work identity cannot be isolated from its cultural and political context. It seems necessary to connect youth work to the concrete situations of actual young people and not reduce itself to a universal method that can be effectively adopted whatever the social nature of the situation in which youth work intervenes. Scouting, for instance, has long been seen as such a method. Baden-Powell himself was a Protestant, but his method was adopted by fascists, Catholics, communists. It became clear through history that the use of any possible method should be preceded by a thorough analysis of the social and cultural context in which young people grow up. Not all young people benefit from some typical scouting methods based on adventure, life in the open air, discipline and individual skills. This does not mean that some of Baden-Powell's basic principles such as "ask the boy" or "learning by doing" are also fundamental to all youth work today. It does imply that youth work shapes its identity in connection to the broader situation of young people and the institutions that co-design that situation.

There are clearly different options to choose in reconnecting youth work to society. Tania de St Croix strongly advocates a youth work practice that deliberately chooses the side of the most vulnerable young people and critically questions the prevailing social order. Other papers describe a more nuanced approach, but all of them emphasise in one way or another that any youth work practice should start from the perspective of the young people they work with and then question how to balance their aspirations with – sometimes paradoxical – societal expectations.

Therefore, it makes sense to explicitly define youth work as one of the basic interventions in our democracies and in our welfare regimes, which are permanently under construction. Some young people can raise their voice and organise themselves with little public support, others do not have the possibilities, capabilities or knowledge and need support on their trajectories towards finding themselves a place in society. That makes youth work a very difficult job, not least because many young people themselves see no alternatives and have learned to see our social systems, and their decline, as unchangeable and inevitable. They focus on their own concerns and the question of how to survive within the system. They do not question society, but ask themselves, "What's in it for us?" If it's not in terms of social mobility it is in terms of having fun. Of course this goes for most of the inhabitants of this world and that's the sole reason why pedagogy should be social, and be broadening lifeworlds and world views. That's why youth work should focus on having fun, but not neglecting its social and pedagogical mission and especially so in the interests of the most marginalised groups in society. Youth workers therefore need strong alliances with schools,

community work, adult education, trade unions and politicians. As emphasised in the second Youth Work Convention in Brussels, April 2015, youth work will have to find allies and strike alliances, both horizontally and vertically, without selling itself into servitude and losing its identity. The three papers, from different parts of the UK, illustrate the struggle to preserve the youth-centredness of youth work, without losing the connection to broader society.

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## Chapter 7

# Youth work curriculum in Northern Ireland: a history

*Alastair Scott-McKinley*

Kelt, Briton, Saxon, Dane, and Scot,  
Time and this island tied in a crazy knot.

(John Hewitt, "Ulsterman", 1991)

**N**orthern Ireland<sup>5</sup> is a region in the North East of Ireland; attempts to describe it quickly succumb to its divided and contested history. "The troubles" was a period in our history from 1969 to 1998 when we experienced "the most sustained violent conflict over national identity in Europe" (Acheson et al. 2006: 13). John Hewitt's poem "Ulsterman" hints at a complex historical amalgam of identity, politics and religion that have shaped our society, particularly over the last 40 years. This complexity has shaped our government structures, our youth work policy and our youth work practice. This chapter seeks to explore the connection between government structure, policy and practice as it relates specifically to the concept of curriculum and its 25-year history in youth work. These 25 years are marked by an emergence from "the troubles", through a fractured peace process and towards a period of unprecedented political stability in Northern Ireland's recent history.

Any exploration focusing on one aspect of youth work policy and practice is selective, but I contend that the narrative around curriculum provides insight into the relation between policy and practice and in particular highlights the importance of critical and theoretical engagement with the concepts that are the focus of policy. The chapter highlights the responses to these curriculum policy documents introduced in 1987 (DENI 1987), reworked in 1997 (DENI 1997) and revised in 2003 (DE 2003). A youth work curriculum has been a key medium for youth work policy debate and government influence concerning the purpose and nature of youth work in Northern Ireland. I propose to argue that there have been three distinct periods in Northern Ireland youth work related to curriculum: firstly, a period in which curriculum was imposed (1987-1996), secondly, the period of curriculum integration (1997-2003) and, thirdly, a period of curriculum indecision (2003-2013). I conclude by asking whether the tensions of the curriculum debate are still evident and relevant in contemporary youth work in Northern Ireland, and if we have now entered a period where curriculum has been discarded.

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5. Northern Ireland is variously described as a province of Ireland or a country of the United Kingdom depending on your political perspective; however, it currently resides within the jurisdiction of the UK. It has a present population of 1.85 million people and is located on the periphery of both the United Kingdom and of Europe.

## CURRICULUM IN YOUTH WORK

The use of curriculum as a concept in youth work is relatively recent, within the last 30 years or so. Ord has argued that as educators youth workers must, if committed to democratic principles, make their education proposals public (Ord 2004, 2007). The use of curriculum can enable the articulation of the educational purpose, values and process of youth work. However, Jeffs (2004: 81) argues: "it is the very absence of curriculum that is a key defining feature [of informal education or youth work]". This view is supported by Robertson (2004) and Stanton (2004: 84), who also claims that the very notion of a "youth work curriculum is an oxymoron". Clearly, the use of curriculum in youth work is contested. Davis (2004) points to the potential of "curriculum" to provide intellectual rigour to youth work practice, but adds the crucial caveat that the use of such a concept needs to be "explicitly and clearly defined". How then do we do this? Kelly (2009: 8), referring to formal education, suggests that "curriculum is the totality of the experiences the pupil has as the result of the provision made". This is an expansive understanding of curriculum, which Kelly then examines as a threefold distinction between curriculum as content, product and process. This affords a theoretical basis to use when exploring the use of curriculum in youth work.

Let us consider each briefly. Curriculum as "content" (or syllabus) is based on the identification and transmission of knowledge. This raises several questions: what do we mean by knowledge, what knowledge is to be transmitted and who chooses what knowledge is to be transmitted? The choice of what knowledge is to be transmitted raises questions about the value judgments of the educator and the normative nature of knowledge. If these judgments are not made explicit then the transmission of knowledge is merely passive, uncritical learning. Also the value judgments of educators are likely to be informed by cultural considerations; therefore there are dangers that curriculum as content leads to transmission of knowledge that does not reflect cultural diversity. Moving on, Kelly suggests that curriculum as "product" is the dominant understanding of curriculum, where education is instrumental and articulated in terms of end products. This is a technical approach to learning and involves the pre-specification of learning objectives. This pre-specification can be problematic for a number of reasons: (1) It can lead to linear notions of causality, for example that educators can effect behavioural change; (2) If the "articulated, negotiated and agreed needs" of young people are not considered, it can lead to hierarchical and imposed learning objectives. Without such negotiation young people are again passive and are not engaged in self-determination. In contrast, an alternative to notions of "content" and "product" is to conceive of curriculum as "process". A process-based understanding of curriculum is focused on the overt expression of the values that inform education. In such an environment young people can become active and interact as autonomous learners, articulating, negotiating and agreeing both the purpose and methods of their learning experience. Therefore, as Ord (2007: 9) points out, a youth work curriculum can be "the means by which the educational values, purposes, methods, processes ... are made explicit". Using the perspective of curriculum as process can provide youth work with a means of both articulating and communicating

its distinctive practice. Having considered curriculum briefly<sup>6</sup> I now turn to the experience of curriculum in youth work in the Northern Ireland context.

A youth work curriculum has been a feature of the youth work landscape in Northern Ireland for a generation. While the concept of curriculum in youth work has received significant attention in academic literature in recent years, at least in the UK (Davis 2004; Jeffs 2004; Merton and Wylie 2002, 2004; Ord 2004; Robertson 2004; Stanton 2004), reference to its origins, developments, use and impact in Northern Ireland are thin on the ground. Indeed, Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005) consider a youth work curriculum as largely uncontroversial in the Northern Ireland context, in contrast to the vigorous debate in England.

In order to understand a central youth work curriculum in Northern Ireland it is necessary to consider the context from which it emerged. Arising from this context are three significant factors that influence its introduction in Northern Ireland. These factors emerge from the social and political context of “the troubles”, widely accepted to have begun in 1969; this period significantly altered the shape and orientation of youth work in Northern Ireland. Firstly, there was widespread civil unrest and sectarian violence. Secondly, as a consequence of the first, was the “democratic deficit” produced by the removal of devolved political decision making, which resulted in centralised political control of education policy (including youth work policy) to “direct rule” ministers appointed from Westminster (UK). Thirdly, again deriving from the “troubles” and a further extension of the democratic deficit, were the radical changes to local administrative structures, where local government was virtually eliminated in favour of central or area boards that operated as quangos<sup>7</sup> (McCready 2001). “What emerged was an emasculated form of local government and key public services delivered through a highly centralized system of public administration” (McCready 2001:24). The administrative structure was intended to be apolitical and resulted in a democratic deficit (Knox 2008). I will argue that these three factors create a fertile soil for the introduction of curriculum in youth work.

## **THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT AND PRE-TROUBLES YOUTH WORK**

Youth work policy in Northern Ireland pre-1969 follows close parallels with the development of youth work in England and other parts of the UK. The 1944 Youth Welfare Act (NI) introduced a more comprehensive youth service. However, in Northern Ireland youth work policy commenced its significant deviation in the early 1970s as a direct consequence of the “sectarian powder-keg” that exploded in 1969. The late 1960s were the years of protest: against the Vietnam War; civil rights and Woodstock in the USA; and student protest across Europe (Harman 1998: vii). However, “the troubles”

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6. Others including Ord (2007) have provided a more detailed and rigorous examination of these concepts in youth work practice.

7. QUANGOs (Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations) are in effect non-departmental public bodies run by government appointees in the absence of any effective local democratic structures.

extended into the late 1990s. During this time there were some 3 700 deaths. In terms of population size this would be the equivalent of 115 000 fatalities in the United Kingdom as a whole or 600 000 in the United States (Hargie et al. 2003).

The period 1969 to 1976 accounts for over half the deaths. Shootings, bombings, riots and social fragmentation occurred. Young people often bore the brunt of this turbulence and there was concern that they would be drawn into the rioting, para-military activity and conflict (Smyth 2007: 49; Smyth and Hamilton 2003). Therefore, youth workers were increasingly engaged to deliver diversionary programmes aimed at keeping young people, particularly young men, off the streets and away from violence – effectively a “peacekeeping” role. During this time the statutory basis<sup>8</sup> of youth work was further established. The annual budget from the state rose from £125 500 in 1972 to £3.5 million during 1975/76 and to £8 million in 1980. “This funding resulted in 143 purpose built youth centres, a host of full-time youth work posts and an increase in professional training” (DENI 1986: 5). The youth service during this time positioned itself in a reactive “needs-response” approach which government appeared to endorse. Undoubtedly this created a safer environment for young people. However, there was recognition that this created an environment with an over-emphasis on sport and recreation aimed at catering for the “assumed” needs of young men (Harland and Morgan 2003). In effect the “hidden” curriculum of this time was about diversion, focused on preventing civil unrest; a benign form of social control. The youth work priority was to get young people “off the streets”.

## **INTRODUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF CURRICULUM TO YOUTH WORK**

As we moved from the 1970s into the 1980s, less street violence signalled a change in the intensity of the ethnic conflict (Smyth and Hamilton 2003: 19). There was also wider social and political change; the era of post-welfarism was approaching. The first Conservative Thatcher government came to power in 1979. Northern Ireland was still under direct rule. The government’s monetarist policies aimed at economic restructuring included the objectives of reducing inflation and public expenditure across the UK. It also introduced the language and discourse of the market to public policy. In the UK unemployment<sup>9</sup> was a major social policy focus. Northern Ireland has “traditionally higher levels of unemployment in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom”, and these higher levels were maintained during the 1980s (Gallagher 1991, BBC 2008). The government introduced various employment programmes<sup>10</sup> which became commonplace in larger youth centres. The youth service similar to the start of “the troubles” positioned itself again in a “needs-response” approach, a

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8. The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 and the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1973 replaced the Youth Welfare Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1962.
  9. In 1982, over 3 million were unemployed, one in eight (12.5%), in the North of England 16%; in Northern Ireland it was 20%, one in five. In some parts of the west of Northern Ireland this figure approached 30% (BBC 2008).
  10. ACE (Action for Community Employment) and the Youth Training Scheme (1982), a one-year on-the-job training programme for 16- to 17-year-old school leavers.

reactive service. The “hidden” curriculum was still focused on diversion, but with the addition of an economic focus to address unemployment. A question being asked at this period was: Did youth work have lack of direction and core purpose?

## **CURRICULUM IMPOSED: THE 1987 BLUE BOOK**

The environment in the late 1980s was conducive to further youth policy reform. “The troubles” had wrought a democratic deficit, a “direct rule” Conservative government was establishing a reputation for radical reform of public service and the youth service had demonstrated a willingness to respond to new roles and responsibilities.

A youth service review in 1985 (DENI 1986) and a 1986 conference entitled *The Development of a Youth Service Curriculum* signalled an end to the “anything goes” approach to youth work and a desire to see programmes “designed to facilitate learning as well as enjoyment” (McCormick 1998: 17). Alongside this review new legislation<sup>11</sup> reconfirmed the statutory requirement to provide youth service provision. This was a further departure from England and Wales which was unsuccessful in establishing a statutory basis for youth work (Davis 1999a, 1999b).

A year later in September 1987 the *Policy for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland* (DENI 1987) was published, commonly referred to as “the Blue Book”. It included two concepts that were central to Conservative policy makers at the time, the introduction of a central “core curriculum” and a “contract” culture. These concepts were linked to a wider policy push for value for money and demonstrable effectiveness. Youth Service managers were being asked to be “explicit about the value of youth work” at a time when budgets were constrained and costs were rising (Carter et al. 1995; McCormick 1998). In addition, the concept of a core or national curriculum was being introduced into formal education; it seemed like the concept of a “national curriculum in schools could be adopted and applied to youth work” (McCormick 1998: 18).

## **THE “CORE CURRICULUM”**

The Blue Book highlighted a need for a “greater sense of common purpose”, and a concern with producing a “more effective means of judging performance” (McCormick 1998: 20). Therefore, curriculum would be focused on central control and accountability. From this point on it is rare for youth work to be described as “informal”; it became “non-formal” with a premium placed on structured activities and discussion groups, which played down the value of informal dialogue and conversation.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the document also outlined that there “must be” a more pronounced thrust towards (a) cross-community activity; and (b) enterprise self-help and self-determination. The push for cross-community activity reflected what was emerging from youth work practice of the time. It acknowledged this practice as being central to government priorities and it complimented similar policy changes in “formal

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11. The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

12. The Blue Book is widely accepted as being written by three Education and Training inspectors (Mr P McDermott, Mr F Davidson, and Mr A Hewitt).

education”,<sup>13</sup> namely the introduction of education for mutual understanding. The latter focus on enterprise and self-help was viewed as a politically informed policy orientation; it reflected work with young people who were unemployed, but shifted the focus to the individual responsibility of young people rather than acknowledging the structural causes of unemployment.

## **CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH WORK: A CONTRACT FOR THE FUTURE**

Responses to the “core curriculum” across the sector varied. It could be ignored by groups with diverse funding sources, but for youth groups funded by the Department of Education, through the Education and Library Boards, it became unavoidable. The initial reaction from some parts of the sector was confusion and panic. A youth officer at the time recollects:

I think there was panic. If we were being honest as officers the language, terminology and jargon caused consternation. [We] had to come to the point of admitting that [we] didn't understand it.

Two broad approaches emerged. Firstly, those that tended to seek “compliance” to a new “contract culture”, with a focus on accountability. “Managerialism” characterised the “curriculum agreements” and “service level agreements” which followed. This approach was inclined to interpret curriculum as “content” and “product”. And, secondly, those that sought an engagement with or “commitment” to the concept of curriculum as a means to articulate and develop youth work practice, characterised by a renewed impetus in research around issues the curriculum had raised (or acknowledged) and included a move to the production of curriculum guidance, resources and training.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY, BUREAUCRACY AND COMPLIANCE**

At the Blue Book's launch the minister highlighted “this document is not being forced on the youth service as some kind of compulsory quasi-curriculum” (DENI 1987: 5). However, the question remained: how “prescriptive” was this new curriculum? The term “contract” indicated that all “full-time” youth centres would be “required” to draw up “a contract” with the Education and Library Boards (ELB) for the delivery of at least one curriculum area. An attempt was made to extend this to all youth groups registered (part-time and voluntary). It soon became clear that “proportionality” was not going to be a feature of the bureaucratic requirements associated with the curriculum document. “Curriculum agreements” became a feature of funding distribution and “part of the conditions for a unit to qualify in the next financial year as a registered youth organization” (NEELB 1993). This became a part of the process

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13. Education in Northern Ireland is largely segregated on the basis of religion with a distinct sector with a Catholic ethos, referred to as the “Catholic maintained” sector, and state schools, referred to as the “controlled sector”.



of management of youth work, primarily management of the voluntary sector, by the statutory sector. Power could now be exercised by the statutory service to regulate the voluntary sector. This was resisted by the voluntary sector, for in their view “curriculum agreements” lacked proportionality, and were excessive given the small amounts of funding received and the size and capacity of the groups. The concept of curriculum soon became associated with bureaucratic burden, and broad resistance to mobilise around a curriculum became a feature of the voluntary sector (Harland, Morgan and Muldoon 2005).

Meanwhile, the roles and functions of youth workers were modified to include support and training on curriculum issues. Curriculum Resource Packs (NEELB 1991, SEELB 1991) were introduced which defined each curriculum area, suggested activities and ideas for progression. Planning and pre-specification also became a feature of the “service level agreements” that full-time youth centres were expected to produce. Youth workers experienced a profound dissonance with the procedure. They could see the value in identifying young people’s needs, but struggled greatly with the task of identifying a response that required the setting of objectives up to a year ahead, often before they had an opportunity to consult directly with the young people that would be recipients of a specific curriculum programme. The broad thrust of these approaches was located in “content” and “product” understandings of curriculum; youth work was being pressured to become more instrumental.

## **CREATING COMMITMENT THROUGH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Alongside compliance, the other side of the coin was the attempt to encourage a “commitment” to a curriculum development process. The most common evidence from the period is the curriculum guidance documents from the period; Community Relation (YCNI 1992), Participation (YCNI 1993), and Into the Mainstream (YCNI 1994), which focused on gender equality. The production of these guidelines linked research into current practice and identification of good practice (McCormick 1998: 3).

An example is community relations guidance which was developed alongside increased funding<sup>14</sup> from government; it tracks a change in youth work practice from “peacekeeping” and its initial steps towards “peace-making” (Smyth 2007: 50). The guidance focused on building relationships between Protestant and Catholic young people using recreational activities and non-controversial discussion. The emergence of practice which addressed issues related directly to conflict was acknowledged; as well as work which facilitated discussion and dialogue around the more difficult issues of culture, religion and politics, exploring issues of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination.

The 1987 curriculum policy also called for “encouragement and preparation for participation on an equal basis for young men and women” (DENI 1987: 17). This was

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14. Cross-Community Contact Scheme (CCCS) (DENI Circular 1987/47) added 3.5 million.

policy recognition that girls and young women were not using the service to the same extent as young men. The addition of “equal participation” to the curriculum document was recognition of the work that emerged out of the voluntary sector (McCready 2001: 64). It was also the result of research like *Waiting our turn* (NIAYC 1978) and the work of the National Association of Youth Clubs (YANI), which in 1984 secured funding for a full-time development officer post to support and develop work with girls and young women (Morgan and McCardle 2009). Morgan and McCardle (2009: 228) note that the “work seemed to be emanating virtually exclusively from within the voluntary sector, not as a haphazard and random response to gender inequality, but rather as a strategic and considered practice with an ideological underpinning. Practice, policy, and training were coming together at one time, and were influenced by the considered discussions going on with, and between, mainly female workers and the young women”. It was a short period best captured by a Seamus Heaney (1991) quote:

History says don't hope  
On this side of the grave.  
Once in a lifetime,  
the longed-for tidal wave  
of justice can rise up,  
and hope and history rhyme.

These guidance documents represent artefacts which captured developments in research and youth work practice and curriculum guidance that was catching up. They also demonstrate practice that was making connections with wider political agendas addressing division and injustice in society; you could say a more radical and integrated vision than a new curriculum provided for.

## **CURRICULUM REWRITING IN THE 1990S**

During the period of the mid-1990s there was a tangible sense that social and political change might be on the horizon in Northern Ireland. It was a period characterised by various political processes, which included the Hume/Adams talks, the Downing Street Declaration, and in 1994 the IRA (Irish Republican Army) announcement of “a complete cessation of military activities”. This was the emergence of the peace process that would lead to the historic Belfast Agreement in April 1998. Curriculum was still a major focus and arena for debate concerning the purpose of youth work and youth work policy. In 1996 the Department of Education appointed Tom Wylie (then Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency in England) to chair a curriculum review group. The curriculum review group undertook a process of consultation; this was frustrated by the timescale set by the Department of Education. The group convened in April 1996 and reported in August 1996. In total the group met for five and a half days having taken a wide range of submissions from across the sector. The most influential figure was arguably John McCormick from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. His statements “found their way into the document virtually unchanged” (McCormick 1998: 33).

## EMERGENCE OF “A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE”

The new proposed curriculum outlined the central theme of youth work as being the “personal and social development” of young people. It also outlined three core principles.

1. Commitment to preparing young people for participation.
2. Promotion of acceptance and understanding of others.
3. Development of appropriate values and beliefs. (DENI 1997: 9)

There are four notable characteristics of the document. Firstly, there is an attempt to clarify and simplify the language used to make it accessible to non-specialists, especially part-time and volunteer workers.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it attempted to provide some clarity about the general purpose of youth work (as distinct from the youth service), by articulating youth work in terms of a central theme and three core principles. Thirdly, it did not present any form of prescription or linkage to funding. It highlighted that the model “is not intended to lead to a single, prescriptive and inflexible curriculum framework”. It was designed as a supportive framework for youth workers “to develop their practice, and see it as a tool that can be adapted or re-shaped to suit the situation in which they are working”. However, the document did not have the power to remove any existing bureaucratic arrangements associated with curriculum, which rendered this statement virtually useless to the voluntary sector. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the document orientates the curriculum towards “process”. There was a shift away from content: “it is neither possible nor desirable to set out the content of a detailed curriculum to cover the breadth of provision in Northern Ireland” (DENI 1997). The move towards process was the introduction of the programme development cycle. It advocated a planning model that involved consultation, negotiation, agreement and evaluation of youth work activities in partnership with young people. Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005) point out that those statements which subdued prescription and shifted the orientation towards process enabled the curriculum debate to be subdued and, in fact, avoided in Northern Ireland.

However, there was criticism in the Youth Service Policy Review which pointed out that “the nature of youth work appears to isolate those working with children and young people from the wider community” (DENI 1998: 32). Furthermore, it added that “youth workers are driven by the need to deliver a curriculum and that volunteers often take second place to the primary aim; that of youth work delivery”. The review reflected the view that the 1997 curriculum document had not provided enough emphasis on how youth work is connected to the communities in which it operates. Furthermore, it called for further development of curriculum materials, information and guidance, training in youth work models and dissemination of good practice (DENI 1998: 91). Curriculum was finally formally incorporated into initial training for part-time workers in 2002. The curriculum appeared to have achieved a degree of integration that seemed unimaginable in 1987. However, public policy was moving

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15. This was in part recognition that the youth work sector was largely made up of volunteers (233 full-time staff, compared to 2 000 part-time and 12 000 volunteers (DENI 1997: 6).

forward rapidly, and the peace process and the Belfast Agreement were bringing radical political, economic and social change.

## **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE RADICAL PLURALISM OF THE BELFAST AGREEMENT**

The Belfast Agreement paved the way for a return to devolution and the removal of direct rule. A root and branch Review of Public Administration<sup>16</sup> was announced, signalling a shake-up of local government. The peace process also brought an influx of European Union Peace funding.

The European Union Peace funding<sup>17</sup> created new opportunities; suddenly funding was available for local community and voluntary groups and wider sector initiatives could be funded. One such initiative was the JEDI<sup>18</sup> project (Joined in Equity Diversity and Interdependence). The twin aims were:

- ▶ To develop a coherent strategy for community relations youth work and education for citizenship in the Northern Ireland Youth Work sector.
- ▶ To embed the interrelated principles of equity, diversity and interdependence into the ethos, policies, and programmes of the organisations which make up the youth sector.

The initiative was informed by the Future Ways Project which suggests that a “sustainable and prosperous society is underpinned by fairness (Equity), an acknowledgement of our differences (Diversity) and a relational understanding of the ways in which we work together (Interdependence)” (Eyben, Morrow, Willson and Robinson 2002:12). The JEDI project was of its time, and its emphasis on policy change reflected the Equality Legislation of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 that emanated from the Belfast Agreement. Section 75<sup>19</sup> of this legislation required public bodies to give due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The JEDI initiative worked under several strands; it reviewed research, training, policy and practice. It produced a series of publications that influenced the youth work sector greatly. This included a replacement of the 1992 Community Relations Curriculum Guidelines in a document called “Reflections in Practice” (Smyth 2007; YCNI 2002). This document and the work of JEDI presented a much more radical approach to community relations. It presented a vision of a fairer society, at ease with difference, acknowledging one another as equals and promoting improved relations between all. The challenge was: could the youth work curriculum incorporate this vision?

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16. Review of Public Administration was a process to review local government structures in light of the Belfast Agreement.

17. The PEACE I programme (1995-99); PEACE II (1999-2006); PEACE III (2007-2013) with a new strategic approach.

18. JEDI was created in 1998.

19. Under Section 75 of this Act, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity: between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without ([www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)).

## CURRICULUM REVISION 2003: A PERIOD OF INDECISION

In 2003 the curriculum was revised at the request of the Department of Education, which paralleled various changes in the formal education curriculum. The main changes that were reflected in the curriculum document were the addition of the “core values” of equity, diversity and interdependence. This was an attempt to look back and integrate the learning from the JEDI project. There was also a reduced emphasis on programme areas (content) and a further emphasis on the programme development cycle (process). The 2003 document seemed like a refinement of the 1997 document to reflect the changes that the peace process had wrought. However, there was frustration that it did not more fully reflect the central role that the youth service needed to play in “peace-building”. In effect, it retained a more conservative pluralism, rather than embracing fully the more radical pluralist vision explored within JEDI. In this respect, the 2003 curriculum document appears incongruent. It is, in effect, a “fudge”, an expedient compromise which hinted at a different orientation, but stuck with the status quo. In a strange way this reflected the wider political climate. The devolved political assembly had experienced a series of frustrating false starts and the Review of Public Administration has stalled. The democratic deficit was still present, only in a different guise. Knox points out that this was typical of the political climate during this time, which civil servants have dubbed the period of continuation on a care and maintenance basis (Knox 2008).

During the period 2005 to 2008 the youth work sector was focused on implementing a new Youth Work Strategy (Department of Education 2005). This strategy was ambitious and represented a considerable co-operation within the youth work sector. In relation to curriculum, one objective of the strategy was that curriculum should be underpinned with conceptually based knowledge, on the stages of youth development, in relation to particular age groups. This led to a call for “age-specific curricula”, which was the recognition that the work of youth workers should be theoretically underpinned, a call made by Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005:51). However, this work stalled. The economic climate was changing and there was considerable pressure from within the Department of Education, led by the Education and Training Inspectorate to orientate the focus to “measurement” and an examination of the outcomes associated with youth work. Curriculum’s influence was in decline, in a period characterised by indecision.

On the rise was the approach of “New Public Management” in which quality assurance and performance information would take centre stage (Pollit 2011). The increasing pressure to systematically generate measurable outcomes was becoming a recognised feature of the sector (Harland, Morgan and Muldoon 2005, Morgan 2009, Macaulay 2006, 2009).

As we look to the future, in the new more integrated youth work policy “Priorities for Youth” (Department of Education 2013), curriculum is relegated to minor statements. “Priorities for Youth” appears to have the hallmarks of a more integrated youth policy, with clearer links to other government policy and priorities. The focus is on securing the “strategic alignment of youth work with Department of Education priorities”. These are “raising standards in education” and “closing the performance gap between the poorest and highest performing young people”. A key feature of this will be the

targeting of resources and reporting systems that have “clear performance indicators and measurable evidence of progress”. The challenge of such a focus will be to maintain a focus on “process” in youth work practice, when the policy shift appears to be again towards “product” and a more instrumental approach.

## CONCLUSION

The development of youth work curriculum in Northern Ireland over 30 years has corresponded with radical shifts in the social, political and economic environment. Youth work as a practice has demonstrated a willingness to respond to the needs within society, be they civil unrest, unemployment or a contested society. And in return government has been receptive to these responses and has captured some of the efforts of youth work into various policy statements. The curriculum documents of this time attempted to reflect youth work as an educational endeavour. The early imposed curriculum of 1987 was oriented to content and product and the dominant narrative of the period was the linkage between curriculum and disproportionate bureaucratic burden. However, there is limited evidence of youth work agencies seeking to influence the discourse around curriculum by engaging in the production of curriculum guidance documents that better articulate the process and practicalities of practice. On rare occasions these documents have captured a more radical vision of youth work, such as the work associated with gender equality in the early 1990s and the JEDI initiative in the early 2000s. A key feature of these approaches is that they articulated a vision of society characterised by a call for a more fair and just society where oppression could be challenged. A more proactive youth work. These more radical visions were not reflected in subsequent policy, although their influence, while muted, is present. Where the youth work sector was able to influence curriculum, the aspiration appears to have been to shift the focus towards a “process” orientation, with a broad statement of purpose informed by values and principles.

Curriculum statements in Northern Ireland were introduced as a “political project” and this perhaps reflects something of their nature. Curriculum statements in youth work in Northern Ireland are political documents, they are Janus<sup>20</sup> figures, and they have two faces: they look to the past and to the future, expressing something of both policy and practice. The introduction of curriculum to youth work policy and practice in 1987 was a beginning and marked a significant period of transition from which you could argue youth work has emerged within a more integrated policy in the form of “Priorities for Youth”. The articulation of youth work as an educational endeavour in the form of a curriculum has been a constant during this period. Has this articulation of youth work stabilised understanding of youth work among policy makers during a time of radical transition? Or has it shifted the Overton window of what policy makers can argue as politically acceptable, by changing the discourse and pushing youth work towards product? Curriculum like Janus faces both ways; your conclusion on its importance maybe depends on your perspective.

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20. Janus was the Roman god of beginnings and transitions.

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## Chapter 8

# The importance of Aristotle's *phronesis* in resisting instrumentality in youth work in England

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Jon Ord<sup>21</sup>

The context for this chapter is the recent history of youth work in England, which has been one of increasing compartmentalisation, accountability and an increasing emphasis on outcomes. The purpose of the chapter is to attempt to answer some of the questions about why such an exclusive focus on outcomes is particularly problematic for the practice of youth work, and what we can try and do about it. Youth work does have significant and profound outcomes for the young people who are engaged in its process, but an exclusive focus on outcomes independent of the process that produces them is at best putting the “cart before the horse”, if not expecting the cart to pull itself. Before exploring this problem and offering some solutions to it, however, I want to explain some of the key drivers of this current policy context, from an English perspective, though I am sure much of it will resonate with many of you outside of this national context.

### **HISTORICAL AND POLICY CONTEXT**

The earliest attempts to draw youth work into a specific outcomes-focused practice is evidenced as early as 1979 by Bernard Davies in his seminal paper “In Whose Interests” (Davies 1979) where he refers to a fundamental shift in youth work from an open-ended social education model to “social and life skills training”. Davies’s early warnings seemed to have been merited when within the following decade, the infamous ministerial conferences of 1989-92 had been established, a significant focus of which sought to identify what the then minister referred to as: “the priority outcomes which the youth service should seek to provide” (NYB 1990: 34).

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21. An earlier version of this chapter was previously published in the journal *Youth & Policy*, April 2014, no. 112, pp. 56-73.

This shift in focus for youth work coincided with the election of the Thatcher government and corresponded to a wider sea change in policy. This was characterised by Clarke, Girwitz and McCloughlin (2000) as a shift from welfarism to post-welfarism, welfarism being underpinned by a commitment to social democracy, while post-welfarism was driven by the emerging neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is underpinned by a commitment to the pre-eminence of the market and the conception of individuals almost exclusively as consumers. In educational policy terms, neo-liberalism brought about an emphasis on “utility” or usefulness, what Ross (2000) refers to as the establishment of the utilitarian curriculum. This resulted in an almost exclusive concern with outcomes, a focus on what education provides in tangible terms, as well as the rise of vocationalism and the skills agenda in education.

Accompanying the rise of neo-liberalism and these specific changes in educational policy has been a wider assault on professionalism, and the disappearance of a situation where: “the professional was trained to a high-level and largely to use his or her judgment in the delivery of services. This can be characterised as the shift from trust me (I’m a professional) to prove it (and if you cannot I will sue)” (Ford et al. 2005: 110). Alongside this has been the establishment of a managerialist culture (Ord 2012), which begins to redefine how judgments about “quality” are made in the public sector (Cooper 2012), as private sector business practices, which are characterised by the three E’s of efficiency and effectiveness and economy, become the dominant discourse (Farnham and Horton 1993).

Despite this wider policy shift, and ironically for those who thought the arrival of New Labour might herald a return to the social democratic tradition, it was under the influence of New Labour that youth work really began to experience the impact of neo-liberalism: initially, as youth work was brought in line with other social welfare services under the auspices of “Connexions” (DfES 2001b) in England and Wales; and then more specifically with the arrival of “Transforming youth work” (DfES 2001a, 2002), with its targets for recorded and accredited outcomes, its imposed planning cycles and its emphasis on the delivery of programmes. Mark Smith argued strongly at the time that this was the end of convivial informal education-based youth work (Smith 2003). Youth work-specific targets for both accredited and recorded outcome (DfES 2002) went some considerable way in re-prioritising youth workers’ practice. Outcomes- and product-focused, as opposed to person-centred and process-focused youth work, had arrived (Davies 2008; Ord 2007).

One of the latest examples of this “quest” for outcomes arose out of the Education Select Committee report (House of Commons 2011) where they expressed the belief that: “there is no good reason why robust but sophisticated outcome measures should not be developed to allow services to demonstrate impact” (2011: 26), as a direct result of which The Young Foundation produced “An Outcomes Framework for Young People’s Services” (The Young Foundation 2012), but more about that later. The neo-liberal policy drive is continuing with an emphasis on the importance of the market and competition, resulting in outcomes-based commissioning. As a lecturer in youth and community work I received a stark reminder of this complete reframing of practice when a current student requested a module on “results-based practice”.

## THE PROBLEM OF OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH WORK

I would argue that outcomes-focused practice is necessarily problematic for youth work, not least because outcomes themselves are problematic for youth. Not that I'm arguing youth work does not have significant outcomes for young people but that outcomes-focused practice tends to fail to comprehend how those outcomes are produced.

Outcomes-focused practice tends to conceive of learning and the resulting outcomes in a linear fashion. An example of this is provided by Merton and Wylie (2002). Commenting on the traditional educational goals of youth work, both within their own statement of a youth work curriculum and via their influence on the production of the "Transforming youth work" document, they argue that:

Such broad goals need to be expressed in a set of more specific outcomes if they are to be helpful in the planning and in practice. The more clearly we can specify the ends, the better we will be able to choose the means for achieving them. (Merton and Wylie 2002: 2; and DfES 2002: 11)

This approach is often characterised in educational terms as a "product approach" (Kelly 2009; Ord 2007), that is one which is premised on the pre-specification of outcomes and an emphasis upon the necessary inputs required to achieve those particular outcomes. This approach places an emphasis on the educator and has parallels with what Kelly (2009) refers to as "education as transmission" or what Freire (1972) refers to as the "banking approach to education".

This approach is not totally alien to youth work and it is possible to plan some youth work in this way, for example the almost ubiquitous sexual health awareness sessions about how to put on a condom and avoid sexually transmitted diseases, or drug education sessions which focus on specific knowledge about harm minimisation, and the effects and the potential harm of particular drugs. However, I would argue the profound and transformative outcomes that youth work enables are not only not produced in this pre-planned and pre-specified fashion, but that insisting that youth workers plan their work in this way actually has a detrimental effect on their ability to produce significant outcomes for young people.

It was Mark Smith in 1988, following Brookfield (1983), who suggested that many of the outcomes in youth work are "incidental", that is arising by pure chance and yet distinct from "accidental". They are very often not a product of what Smith refers to as: "planning and managing instruction so that the learner achieves some previously specified object" (Smith 1988: 125). They are produced through a complex set of processes and particular circumstances which unfold in practice, as the late Jeremy Brent (2004) explains when he describes an excellent depiction of the emergence of such outcomes in his paper "The Arch and the Smile". Within the paper he portrays the transformation that a young woman undergoes as a result of becoming an active member of a youth club. He describes how at the outset she was "a shadowy appendage of her boyfriend" (Brent 2004: 70) and despite attempts at identifying specific problems that she appeared to be dealing with such a housing issue or her lack of attendance at school, none of the specific interventions

seemed to be particularly merited. She did, however, throw herself into the life of the club, for example taking responsibility for organising a trip. Over time she began to smile, a visible transformation taking place in her demeanour and her sense of self. Brent argues this significant outcome could not have been planned for in any pre-specified manner but it emerged out of a process of engagement with both workers and young people:

There has been no product, no target met, no plan completed, yet all the evidence points to there being a profoundly important personal outcome for Kelly. (Brent 2004: 70)

It is important to acknowledge that such outcomes “emerge” (Ord 2007) out of a process of engagement which is purposeful and has educational intent, but is not pre-planned. The process of learning and the production of such outcomes are not pre-specific and linear. Neither is there a one-to-one correlation between what the youth worker does and the outcomes young people achieve with many of the most significant outcomes in youth work.

That’s not to say youth workers do not have educational aims but these are broad and not specific and importantly are grounded and developed in responses to the young people’s aspirations, intentions and interests rather than immutably pre-set in advance by “others”. Contrary to Merton and Wylie’s (2002) claim that we can only achieve our aims if we are more specific, I would argue that on the contrary we can only achieve our aims if we remain broad in our educational intentions. This is well illustrated with the example of confidence. I admit to being more than mildly irritated by evaluations of youth work sessions which boldly claim improvements in young people’s confidence as a result of the undertaking of particular activities. How can confidence be produced in this manner? On the contrary, I would suggest that confidence is built over time with appropriate interventions, such as guidance, encouragement and support or the setting of surmountable challenges. It cannot be rushed and can equally be easily undermined. It is difficult to produce a genuine growth in confidence. However, youth work does enable young people to grow in confidence (DES 1987) but the reframing of youth work into specific sessions akin to a series of lesson plans is not likely to assist this process (Ord 2007; Smith 1988). Not least because it is often not the confidence itself which youth workers directly focus on but what is “going on” for young people – what is pertinent to them, at that particular time. In this sense youth work is best described as having an indirect causality and, importantly, judgments are required based on a complex interplay of a number of variables, discerning “what is going on” at that particular time.

Youth work may provide some specific solutions to designated problems and specific youth work interventions may produce specific outcomes. For example, a young person approaches a youth worker for advice on filling out an application form and as a result of the assistance provided in filling it out the young person is offered an interview. Or two young people are involved in a dispute and as a result of responding to a request to sit down and talk it through the young people resolve their dispute. Yet the relation between youth work and many of its more profound and transformative outcomes, such as those described by Brent (2004) above, is not

one that is correctly characterised as “directly causal”. Neither of course is it entirely non-causal; it would be foolish to say there is no relationship between what youth workers do and the outcomes that emerge. There may be some merit in conceptualising the process of youth work as being “indirectly causality”.

If we follow the example of confidence we reflected upon earlier: there are a number of factors which come into play in terms of what a youth worker may do to try to increase a young person’s confidence, such as providing opportunities for taking an appropriate level of responsibility, setting surmountable challenges, offering guidance and support, and providing appropriate praise and recognition. And of course in order to undertake these interventions it is necessary to have a good relationship with the young person concerned in order to know what their interests and capabilities are so as to be able to provide appropriate opportunities and challenges. This process also takes time and we need to trust and have faith in the process, and trust is something which is in short supply in the current climate (O’Neill 2002). The process cannot also be easily broken down into separate parts, and needs to be seen holistically, since youth work often only makes sense if it is seen in the context of its progression over time; and the concept of distance travelled goes some way to ensuring an appreciation of this.

## ARISTOTLE

While seeing youth work as indirectly causal, the very notion of causality itself is, however, potentially problematic. What is needed is a different way of conceiving of youth work independent of notions of causality, as causality itself is located in a particular way of seeing the world. To illustrate I want to introduce a distinction proposed by Aristotle, a Greek philosopher of the fifth century BC.

Aristotle offered a threefold distinction between different forms of knowledge:

- ▶ *Episteme*
- ▶ *Techne*
- ▶ *Phronesis*

(Aristotle circa fifth century BC, in Irwin 1999)

***Episteme*** equates to scientific knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2001; Irwin 1999) and is found in the modern words epistemological and epistemic. It relates to knowledge that: “must be the conclusion of a demonstration, a deductive inference in which the premises are necessary truths explaining the conclusion” (Irwin 1999: 347).

*Episteme* thus concerns universals and the production of knowledge which is invariable in time and space and which is achieved with the aid of analytical rationality. *Episteme* corresponds to the modern scientific ideal as expressed in natural science (Flyvbjerg 2001: 55).

***Techne*** equates to craft and is defined as: “a rational discipline concerned with production” (Irwin 1999: 321). It is found in the modern words technological and technical. Craft or *techne* is concerned with “bringing something into being” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 56). Aristotle provides an example: “building, for instance is a craft, and is essentially

a certain state involving reason concerned with production" (Aristotle 1140a: 7-9, in Irwin 1999: 88): Flyvbjerg sums this up as:

The objective of *techne* is application of technical knowledge and skills according to a pragmatic instrumental rationality ... *episteme* concerns theoretical know-why and *techne* denotes technical know-how. (Flyvbjerg 2001: 56)

**Phronesis** is difficult to translate directly. Irwin (1999) suggests that wisdom would be a suitable translation, however the Greek word *sophia* is already translated as wisdom. Flyvbjerg (2001) points out that unlike *techne* and *episteme*, *phronesis* has no direct translation into modern terms, but that is not to say it is any less important. The word prudence is most often used to translate *phronesis* (Flyvbjerg 2001; Irwin 1999) but it is sometimes also referred to as practical wisdom, or "practical common sense" (Flyvbjerg 2001: 56). *Phronesis* translated as prudence can, however, lead to confusion as Irwin suggests prudence is not meant in the sense of:

Narrow and selfish caution ... [going on to suggest that] the prudence in jurisprudence comes closer to Aristotle's use of *phronesis*. Since it is deliberative, prudence is about things that promote ends but it is also correct supposition about the end. (Irwin 1999: 345)

*Phronesis* or prudence is therefore essentially ethical. As Aristotle suggests: "virtue is similar to prudence" (Aristotle 1144b: 2, in Irwin 1999: 99). Or as Irwin points out, Aristotle is arguing that "prudence is necessary and sufficient for complete virtue of character someone cannot have it and fail to act correctly" (Irwin 1999: 345).

In contrast to *phronesis*, *techne* or craft is amoral. Aristotle uses the example of a stone mason and points out that whether or not he is a good stone mason bears no relation to whether that particular person is regarded as "good" in the moral sense, that is, he or she is virtuous or leads a "good life". *Techne* can be applied correctly or incorrectly, while *phronesis* cannot. *Phronesis* is necessarily a kind of action which leads to a good life (Irwin 1999: 345). Importantly, *phronesis* or prudence is therefore: "concerned with action" (Irwin 1999: 345), action being a translation of the Greek work *praxis*. In its strictest sense, *praxis* is rational and deliberative action based on a decision, but which: "is its own end" and is not done exclusively for some end beyond it. It aims at "doing well" (or "acting well" – *eupraxia*) for itself" (Irwin 1999: 315). This is also what further distinguishes *techne* from *phronesis*: "craft must be concerned with production, not with action" (Aristotle 1140a: 18, in Irwin 1999: 89). Aristotle sums this up as:

Prudence is a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being. (Aristotle 1140b: 5-7, in Irwin 1999: 89)

One of the few 20th-century commentators to embrace the notion of *phronesis* is the political theorist Hannah Arendt who interprets *phronesis* as the ability to judge or have insight. She cites its importance in relation to the development of political thought, as it entails:

the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happened to be present; even that judgement may be one of the fundamental abilities of man as a political being in so far as it enables him orient himself in the realm ... the Greeks called this ability *phronesis*. (Arendt 1961: 221)



There are immediate parallels between Arendt's description of *phronesis* and youth work, given the importance she places upon discussion in the development of judgment or insight and the importance of conversation in youth work practice (Jefferies and Smith 2005). It is claimed that *phronesis* is a more suitable frame of reference for youth work. To explain this further we need to look at some more recent commentaries and applications of a "phronetic understanding", such as that offered by Bent Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg 2001). Flyvbjerg attempts to argue that *phronesis* offers a better foundation for a social science than *episteme*. He argues what are often considered the failings of social science, such as its lack of predictability or its inability to produce universal laws, are in fact a result of an unhelpful comparison between the social and natural sciences. He goes on to argue that they operate on a different basis, and until that is fully acknowledged social science will never be fully appreciated for what it is. It is not necessary to follow all his arguments in order to learn some of the lessons about the usefulness of *phronesis* to an understanding of youth work, but one which does need to be considered is the importance of context.

## THE CENTRALITY OF CONTEXT

One of the primary distinctions between *phronesis*, and both *episteme* and *techne*, is that *phronesis* is context dependent, whereas *episteme* and *techne* are context independent. *Techne* and *episteme* strive for context-independent explanations of actions, behaviour or wider social practices upon which generalisations, laws and predictions can be made. What constitutes rules governing production or the laws of science are independent of the context in which they are applied. Indeed it is a: "requirement that a truly explanatory and predictive science must operate independent of context" (Flyvbjerg 2001: 46). Similarly, the rules governing production are independent of what is actually produced (for example, the principles of building such as providing a sound foundation). *Phronesis*, by contrast, is essentially social and as Flyvbjerg suggests, context independence seems impossible in the study of social affairs (ibid.). Citing Giddens, Flyvbjerg suggests the difference in the study of social affairs is that: "The object is a subject" (Flyvbjerg 2001: 32).

An appreciation of the importance of context has profound implications for both youth work and its associated outcomes. Context-dependent explanations are of a different order. They are not reductionist, but multilayered and unique to both individual social subjects and their specific circumstances. Such explanations are qualitatively different, again as Flyvbjerg points out:

Context dependence does not mean a more complex form of determinism. It means an open-ended, contingent relation between contexts and actions and interpretations. The rules of the ritual are not the ritual, a grammar is not a language, the rules of chess are not chess and traditions are not actual social behaviour. (Flyvbjerg 2001: 43)

Given the importance of context, it is therefore the "particular" that is important within *phronesis*. As Aristotle emphasised: *phronesis* concerns: "knowledge of particulars, since it is concerned with action and action is about particulars" (Aristotle 1141b, in Irwin 1999: 92). Aristotle also emphasises the importance of experience

in understanding the particular. In a discussion about healthy eating he contrasts theoretical knowledge of light meat and argues that this alone will not necessarily mean a healthy diet unless one has experience of eating chicken, arguing: “people who lack [theoretical] knowledge but have experience are better in action than others who have knowledge” (ibid.). As Smith (1994) commenting on *phronesis* points out: practical wisdom [phronesis] is grounded in experience” (1994: 110).

If we return then to an application of this thinking to the understanding of youth work we can see the resonance between Aristotle’s phronetic knowledge with an approach to youth work which is grounded in an appreciation of young people’s lived experience. As Batsleer (2008) suggests, youth work is rooted in the personal, social and spiritual development of young people which has to be understood in the context of their “particular” lives and therefore their “experience”.

To illustrate, consider the following example from the national Choose Youth lobby in London. A young man gave an impassioned account of his personal transformation as a result of his engagement with his youth worker. He explained how throughout much of his school life he had been labelled as awkward and difficult, and been increasingly getting into trouble. A profound change took place as a result of the engagement with his youth worker. In recounting his story the young man described how, through their conversations, Sam had helped him redefine who he was. He now saw himself not as difficult but as passionate, not as problematic but as energetic and committed. Importantly, he came to see his previous problems at school as a result of the school failing to provide an appropriate outlet for his energies. The young man is now the chair of a youth forum and a credit to himself and his peers.

Such an example, like the earlier one described by Jeremy Brent, where Kelly begins to smile for the first time, is not only rooted in the “particular” and the context of the young person’s life, equally importantly it is founded in an understanding and appreciation of the meaning of the young person’s life – the context in which they live and how they construct their own lives. Such an example embraces a phronetic approach to youth work, one which is concerned with questions of what it means to live a “good life”, and make moral decisions which result in actions (praxis) that are both informed and deliberative (Aristotle, in Irwin 1999). Let me illustrate with a hypothetical example. It would not be beyond the realms of possibility to consider that within the neo-liberal technocratic and epistemic approach to youth work a particular agency or project would be expected to collate the number of young people entering work as a result of undertaking a particular youth work programme or attending a project. However, what would be considered a good outcome in this respect? What if a young person held down a job at McDonald’s for six months? Would this be considered a good outcome? The answer to this question is entirely context dependent. If for example the person had been rehabilitated from a drug or alcohol problem, had few if any educational qualifications, or had challenging behaviour, and never having had a job before, this would be a remarkable achievement. However, if the young person in question had none of these associated “problems” and had perhaps 10 A star GCSEs, holding down a job at McDonald’s with school may well be considered a problem in itself, but not as an “outcome” at all.

## THE DOMINANCE OF *TECHNE*

As we saw earlier, with what was described as a product approach to the framing of youth work, with its emphasis on programmes, planning and a linear specificity between educational intention and outcome, it is easy to recognise the dominance of Aristotle's *technē*. It is no surprise that what tends to be emphasised within this approach, therefore, is the acquisition of tangible knowledge and skills. Indeed as Stenhouse (1975) (an ardent critic of the product approach to education) admits, the product approach is suitable when dealing with tangible outcomes, but that these make up a minority of suitable foci for education, given the value laden and controversial nature of knowledge itself.

More importantly, as has been argued, the transformative and life-changing outcomes of youth work, such as genuinely building confidence, encouraging aspiration or facilitating changes in young people's beliefs about both themselves and the world around them, do not lend themselves to this "product" approach. As we saw with our earlier reflections upon causality, youth work, though purposeful and intentional, is a more open-ended educational process with what can at best be described as an indirect causality. *Technē* emphasises rules, rationality, objectivity and universality whereas *phronesis* emphasises context-dependent interpretations of social practices, which require an appreciation of both the meanings and values of the social actors involved. As a practice, youth work rooted in *phronesis* would be concerned with providing opportunities which necessarily contain a degree of uncertainty, fluidity and unpredictability, not least because they need to be "played out" in the real lives of young people.

Arguably the dominance of *technē* is all-pervasive (Batsleer and Davies 2010; Ord 2007, 2012; Smith 2002). The effect on how various aspects of practice are conceived has been profound, from the micro to the macro: from how individual youth work interventions are framed not as part of an overall educational aim but justified in terms of specific outcomes, to how rigid youth work plans are required to link directly to tangible outcomes and also how our overall services are conceptualised in a "fix-it" fashion. Young people arrive with identifiable, observable and rectifiable issues or problems which workers are expected to resolve, or if they are unable to resolve them, they are expected to refer on or signpost to someone who can.

I have argued one of the problems at the root of this is the issue of causality. Causality itself originates from a technical and scientific (*technē/epistēmē*) approach to the world, one which emphasises predictability, universality and rationality, above context dependence, unpredictability and complexity. *Phronesis* implies that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that is a qualitative difference is achieved which is not reducible to a succession of stages. As Flyvbjerg (2001: 43) argues:

[*phronesis* is not] a more complex form of determinism, it is of an entirely different order, one concerned with, and underpinned by, values, judgements and meaning.

To illustrate the differences let us consider two alternative approaches to a common youth work issue: challenging racist language. It is widely accepted that racism is contrary to the fundamental values of youth work (NYA 2001), but how to effectively

challenge racism is a complex matter. One approach derived from *techne* would prioritise a tangible outcome from a specific intervention, such as young people ceasing to use particular words which were deemed racist. This, however, provides no guarantee of a change in attitude or belief and may reflect mere compliance to avoid further consequences. Attitudinal change is complex, unpredictable and context dependent and, importantly, takes time. The context of a young person's racism might be embedded familial beliefs, and to even attempt to change such beliefs and resulting attitudes will take considerable time and require the youth worker to engage in a dialogue about how the young person sees both themselves and other people. The approach must maintain respect for the young person, but open up alternative ways of seeing the world and other people within it. This is an approach driven by *phronesis*, and has the potential to facilitate significant change. Indeed, we may be better off limiting the use of such terms as "intervention" as it has strong connotations of specificity and use notions of engagement instead.

## **EPISTEME AND THE QUESTION OF MEASUREMENT**

Alongside *techne's* dominance of youth work has been the increasing presence of *episteme*. What Aristotle refers to as scientific knowledge, with its emphasis on the quantifiable, measurable and generalisable, as well as the establishment of universal laws. There has been a noticeable correlation between the rise of *episteme* and the demand for youth work outcomes. The starkest example of this approach was presented by Dr Louise Bamfield (2011), ex-advisor to the Department for Children, Schools and Families in Tony Blair's New Labour government, who advocated the need to provide an evidence base and advocated the performance of randomised trials to measure the effectiveness of youth work. Only by doing this, she argued, could a sufficiently robust evidence base be provided upon which future claims for funding could be based. The latest example of epistemic thinking can be found in the recent government report on youth services, which states: "We find that many services are unable or unwilling to measure the improvements they make in outcomes for young people. The lack of a common measurement framework across the sector makes it extremely difficult" (House of Commons 2011: 75).

What we see here is evidence of the universal trumping the particular. The desire for the objective rides roughshod over the importance of the subjective. Despite even the best efforts to acknowledge phronetic knowledge, it is technocratic and epistemic (instrumental or scientific) approaches which inevitably dominate. As Fairfield points out in his comments about education as a whole, we seem to be: "profoundly beholden to a single conceptual framework – 'science-technology'" (Fairfield 2011: 95) so that approaches which are rational, quantifiable, measurable and generalisable always take precedence. As a result:

The rational perspective has been elevated from being necessary to being sufficient, even exclusive. This has caused people and entire scholarly disciplines to become blind to context, experience, and intuition, even though these phenomena and ways of being are at least as important and necessary for good results as are analysis, rationality and rules (Flyvbjerg 2001: 24).

The very notion of measurement asks the wrong kinds of questions and looks to provide the wrong kinds of answers. We would be better off talking in terms of “demonstrating changes” rather than “measuring outcomes”. This would more accurately reflect and bring to life the process of youth work. Measurement is derived from *techné* and epistemic conceptions of the world where everything is quantifiable, rational and universal. Einstein reputedly had the following quote on his wall in his Princeton office and knew the important message it conveyed:

Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted. (Einstein, in Shah 2007)

The problem is that with the domination of *techné* and *epistémé* over *phronésis* “we tend to count what we can measure, and what we can measure counts” (Bennet 2005: 30), thereby denigrating that which can’t be quantified and measured. “Aristotle is arguing that natural and social science are, and should be, different ventures” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 3) and the process of bringing youth work to account must reflect its essentially phronetic nature.

## A WAY FORWARD

We must be able to articulate the practice of youth work with confidence. It is not intellectual laziness that the practice cannot be pre-specified with any degree of certainty beforehand or brought to account objectively, but it can be demonstrated afterwards. Quite the contrary, openness or uncertainty is a prerequisite of enabling a practice to develop which ironically is more likely than not to be able to meet the unfolding and emerging needs of young people. Indeed, even the recent parliamentary Education Select Committee acknowledged this (House of Commons 2011).

We have also been shown a way forward in the recent publication from In Defence of Youth Work: “Youth Work Stories” (IDYW 2012). This booklet provides 12 accounts of “particular”, “context dependent” examples of practice – “stories”. The communication of important narratives like this provides a powerful evidence base of practice, but the fact is we have very few accounts of young people’s stories. Rather than spending time devising outcome measures and attempting to apply technocratic and epistemic thinking to an essentially phronetic practice we would be better off spending our time communicating and celebrating, locally and nationally, stories from practice. In isolation they are separate raindrops which may quickly evaporate but together they may combine to produce powerful rivers which have the potential to erode immovable objects.

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## Chapter 9

# Building alliances, taking sides: the effects of strong governmental guidance and control

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*Tania de St Croix*

### INTRODUCTION

It is often argued that youth work needs to build alliances and partnerships, not only on principle but also strategically, because we are a small field and have limited influence or strength on our own. In this chapter, I cautiously support the need for alliances while arguing that we must always be critical about which alliances we choose to develop. Alliance building is a political act, and youth workers – as well as researchers, policy makers and educators who support youth work – need to make political choices about who we make alliances with and who we do not.

While the particular contours of alliance building are likely to vary across Europe and elsewhere, the notion of a political approach to building alliances is likely to be relevant beyond borders and boundaries, albeit in different ways and with different emphases. My own perspective comes from my experience as a youth work practitioner and researcher in England, where youth work has been more clearly brought under the auspices of social control over the past 20 years. “Partnerships” with more formal agencies have often diluted the aspects of youth work that have made it special and distinctive such as putting young people first, staying informal, and being on young people’s side (Davies 2005; IDYW 2011). In often coercive relationships with more powerful agencies, youth work has begun to look more like formal social work or mainstream education; for example, youth workers have often been required to turn previously informal activities into accredited courses, while formal monitoring mechanisms have required intrusive and lengthy administrative processes for young people and youth workers alike. My recent research on grassroots youth work in England finds that this has been the experience of even the most junior part-time

and volunteer youth workers.<sup>22</sup> The heart of youth work has not been entirely lost; however, in this context it has sometimes felt difficult to hold on to.

Over the following pages I will draw on these recent histories, in which much of English youth work has engaged in formal alliances or partnerships with establishment agencies. Reflecting on my recent research, I will think about the dilemmas and tensions of alliance building in relation to street-based youth workers in particular, reflecting on one youth worker's story of working with – and then not working with – the police. I will end by calling for a critical approach to alliance building.

## A CRITICAL DEFENCE OF YOUTH WORK

To discuss why and how alliance building is a fundamentally political activity, I want to start with a quotation from Lasse Siurala's background paper of the Conference titled *Autonomy through dependency* (later modified into Chapter 13 in this volume):

Has youth work been able to create alliances to preserve its existence? ... The alliances are often other bigger sectors or external funders, which lead to another kind of questions: [sic] What is the threat of these dependencies? For example, strong engagement with the social sector can put more emphasis on work with marginalized young people and their families, and make the youth sector appear as an instrument of social work or as social work itself. The consequence of alliances can also contribute to dissolution of youth work.

This view from Finland resonates with the English experience over the past two decades, particularly under the New Labour government (1997-2010), when local government youth work often made close alliances or partnerships with formal social work, schools, youth offender services and policing. Through these partnerships, professional youth workers were often removed from informal group contexts where young people chose to attend, and instead directed to work with young people defined from outside as "risky individuals" (rather than as members of a community whose problems might have structural and societal causes). After the 2008 financial crash, attacks on the welfare state and voluntary action hit youth work particularly hard; in most places, open forms of youth work where young people are free to come and go have been at greatest risk of closure (Cabinet Office 2014; Unison 2014). In this process youth work has been devalued, and is now seen as a set of skills that can be applied in any setting, rather than a distinctive practice with a particular philosophy that takes place in a setting where young people choose to attend.

Debates over these and other changes led to the formation of the In Defence of Youth Work (IDYW) campaign.<sup>23</sup> When practitioners, educators and researchers set

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22. This chapter draws on my four-year qualitative research study of how part-time and volunteer youth workers experience their role in a changing policy context in England, 2010-14 (de St Croix 2014). The study involved in-depth interviews and discussion groups with 35 youth workers working in youth clubs and street-based settings, as well as policy analysis and critical ethnographic reflection on my own youth work practice. This work was supported by an Economic and Social Research Council PhD studentship.

23. See <http://indefenceofyouthwork.com> and IDYW (2011; 2014); see also Taylor (2012) in volume 3 of this book.

up IDYW, it was because we were deeply concerned about the direction that youth work was going in. Over the years, the campaigning work of IDYW has naturally ebbed and flowed; at times there has been lively activity and discussion in local groups, and at other times activities have primarily consisted of a popular website, an annual conference and local workshops and seminars. Even in its quietest moments, however, IDYW has acted for many youth workers as “a shelter in the storm, where critical dissent and collective support is still encouraged” (IDYW 2014).

While IDYW has made alliances with groups of young people and trade unions campaigning against cuts to services, the campaign has never been engaged in an uncritical defence of youth work. When IDYW started in 2009, the cuts were perhaps already inevitable, but youth work at that time was still relatively well funded. Alliances – in the guise of joined-up working and information sharing – were often required as part of this funding, and in many local areas youth work was merged with social services, youth offending teams, social housing providers, schools and colleges. Youth work became formalised, more bureaucratic, target focused, monetised and commodified, placed more clearly in the framework of social control, surveillance and policing. It seemed to many practitioners that youth work was losing its identity, its sense of solidarity with young people and its informal approach. In this context, IDYW was set up to defend youth work as a critical, democratic and emancipatory practice, which engages with young people on their own terms and through their own choice, emphasises group work and community work, and fosters collective action and democratic autonomy for both young people and for workers.

In the recent history of UK youth work, alliances with establishment authorities have sometimes put us on the side of authorities rather than on the side of young people. These alliances have not even been effective on a pragmatic level – they did not protect youth work when spending cuts were introduced. Despite being incorporated in integrated services, and despite largely going along with inappropriate monitoring and surveillance, youth work in England suffered massive closures. Questionable alliances might even have been part of our downfall – in some places there has been little left to fight for because the heart of youth work had already been lost by the time the cuts came in.

## **YOUTH WORK’S PRIMARY ALLIANCE**

In this context, youth workers, and those who support youth work through research, education, training and policy, need to think about whose side they are on. I realise that the idea of taking sides – even of being political at all – is uncomfortable for many youth workers, educators and researchers. In these fields of work, we are (quite rightly) inclined to build on what we have in common rather than dwell on disagreements. It is important as youth workers to be co-operative, helpful and optimistic, and to celebrate these virtues. However, there are other inclinations we youth workers tend to have that we also need to hold on to and value: our fierce defence of young people; our tendency to ask awkward questions; our critical reflectiveness; our fighting spirit.

It is not possible to be apolitical. If we say that we are neutral, we perpetuate the status quo and allow the strongest and most privileged groups to dominate (Freire 1985). Currently in Europe the strongest are those who are economically and militarily dominant, those who believe that everything must be organised according to the logic of the market and domination. If this is not enough to convince youth workers to take sides, we might also think about the worrying rise of far-right racist political parties who are gaining political power across our continent. Building alliances with our local, national and international governments is a matter of politics, and the ideologies and actions of our governments must be considered when we decide whether, when and how to work together.

Of course, this view comes from a particular political standpoint – one that is radically critical of neo-liberalism and authoritarianism, and in favour of freedom, equality and solidarity. I do not assume that all youth workers share these values or political standpoints; there will always be contestation and differences of opinion. “Taking sides” is never straightforward.

Nevertheless, our primary alliance must always be with young people, and we need to place ourselves firmly on their side.<sup>24</sup> We should build alliances in particular with those young people who are most marginalised in this neo-liberal world. Of course, there are tensions even if we agree with this: for example, what happens when some young people are oppressive towards other young people? What happens when marginalised young people take out their fear and anger on others? What happens when young people want a service to continue, but the only funding available requires that service to change beyond recognition? Young people are not a homogeneous group, and there will always be tensions in meeting their needs. This does not, however, preclude the importance of “taking sides”; the concept is useful in bringing a clarity for youth workers that our primary alliance must always be with young people, particularly those young people who have little access to power and influence.

## **TAKING SIDES AGAINST SURVEILLANCE**

The idea of making young people our primary allies can help us to think critically about what other alliances we should – and should not – make. I want to illustrate this with reference to street-based youth work in England, thinking in particular about youth workers’ roles in and against surveillance. Street-based youth work can bring “taking sides” into particularly clear focus, because it has a history of engaging with young people who are disengaged or marginalised from other services. In the English language, the street itself is often a metaphor for trouble. Young people who spend time on the streets and in public spaces are spoken of in negative terms, referred to

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24. In making this argument, I note resonances with Howard Sercombe’s (2010) argument that youth work is distinctive because its primary client is the young person with whom they engage. I come from a youth work tradition that avoids the term “client”, with its often condescending and power-loaded connotations; nevertheless, I agree with the position that “young people need to know that someone is unambiguously acting for them, is on their side, and will not act against their interests, whatever the interests of other stakeholders” (Sercombe 2010: 26).

as “youths”, “vandals”, “sluts”, “hoodies”, “drug dealers” and “binge drinkers”. Whatever they are actually doing, they are said to be “hanging around” or “up to no good”. As the sociologist Roy Coleman (2005: 141) says, “it is often merely their visibility alone and not their behaviour that is deemed problematic”.

Young people who spend time on the streets are a diverse group, and they are there for a variety of reasons. Some of them may be homeless, involved in so-called gangs, wanting to get away from troublesome home lives, and at risk of exploitation. Others may simply want to spend time outdoors with their friends, and have limited access to other spaces or find those spaces too limited or controlling. Whatever their reasons for spending time on the streets, as youth workers we meet young people where they are and as they choose to present themselves, not asking too many questions at first, letting them tell their own stories when they are ready.

Whatever the diversity of real young people on the streets, however, the stereotypes of gangs, anti-social behaviour, drugs, alcohol and sex are used to justify the criminalisation of so-called youth nuisance, through surveillance and control measures which go hand in hand with the privatisation of previously public spaces. This is not only true in the UK, but is an international phenomenon. This quotation is from Australian research into young people’s views on surveillance:

Me and my mates we’re always getting some look from the security guard, or you know, security cameras. We’re not trying to be bad, we’re not starting any trouble, we’re not doing anything wrong. But it’s the mentality. (Young person quoted in Wilson, Rose and Colvin 2010, 27)

Cameras and security guards are only part of the complex governance of young people on the streets in England, which also encompasses rules against wearing hoods and hats; the removal of benches; youth curfews; exclusion zones; laws against nuisance; zero tolerance policing; gated housing estates; privatised shopping malls, and more. This is a form of governmentality that is gendered, classed and (most of all) racialised – for example, a young black person in the UK is six times as likely to be stopped and searched by the police as a young white person, and in some areas of the UK this statistic is much more stark (EHRC 2010). No area of life is exempted from surveillance – last year in the UK we heard that undercover police officers had lengthy sexual relationships with the environmental and social activists they were covertly spying on, some even having babies with them (Lewis and Evans 2013); while Muslim communities, young people and those who work with them are now a particular focus of state attention (Khan 2013).

Surveillance has become normalised for young people. In many schools in England, schools take students’ fingerprints for electronic scanners, apparently to make it easier to charge the students for their school dinners. Many schools have cameras on every wall and in every classroom, even in the toilets. The students are watched, and their teachers are watched too. All of this is so normal that many of them do not even protest; they take the surveillance society for granted. Those who are critical are actively discouraged – some young people I work with tell that one of their fellow school students started a petition against fingerprints being collected, and the petition was ripped up by a teacher (Mouth That Roars and Voice of Youth 2013).

It is almost as if the more we find out, the less shocking surveillance seems to become. Surveillance justifies itself, becoming the cause as well as the result of increased monitoring and control. Negative judgments of young people on the streets increase as well, because judgment and surveillance are intimately connected. Lucas Introna (2003: 212), a professor of technology, puts it well: "Surveillance is not just a general 'staring' at the world; it is always with a purpose, i.e. to make some judgement about the one being monitored." The more that young people are watched, the more harshly they are judged; the more harshly they are judged, the more that surveillance measures are seen as being necessary.

Young people who are suspicious of authority have every reason to be so – they believe, with justification, that many adults are untrustworthy. For a great number of young people, particularly those who are black and/or Muslim and/or working class, the authority they distrust most of all is the police force. For street-based youth workers it is clear that taking young people's side includes not allying ourselves with the police.

## **BEING DETACHED FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT?**

When street-based work grew in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, it was specifically intended to be different from other forms of work with young people – it started to be named as "detached" youth work because it was detached from institutions that young people identified as hostile, irrelevant or overly institutional (Goetschius and Tash 1967; Morse 1965). The street-based youth workers I interviewed from all over England suggested that some of this history of "detachment" persists; they talked about being community based, relatively free, and more flexible in responding to young people's wishes and ideas. Here are the words of three of the street-based youth workers I interviewed:

On detached you've got more freedom, I feel, you can go out and do more with the community.

When you're on the streets you're like, you're not in that position of power.

Things can come out of detached work but you're not advertising something ... And I think it's the only space in youth work where I think they can lead and it's not too target focused.

Of course, the relationship between street-based youth workers and young people is not necessarily as open and equal as practitioners sometimes claim, and detached youth work can itself be seen as a form of surveillance. Nevertheless, if we compare historical street-based youth work and other forms of work with young people – teaching, social work, policing – street-based youth work has often come closer to working on young people's terms. In recent years, however, as youth work in England has moved in a direction of formality, street-based workers have increasingly been required to fulfil government targets. Many of the workers I spoke to as part of my research were required to prove they had got young people into jobs, or reduced crime in a neighbourhood. Under these conditions, street-based youth work is no longer clearly distinct from the systems it was meant to be distanced from. As a result of funding for crime reduction and employment creation, workers are increasingly

drawn into the formal surveillance of young people on the streets, coercing youth workers and organisations to take part in alliances that might change the nature of youth work.

## Tracey's story

Here I will explore one youth worker's story of an alliance with a local authority that led to enforced partnership work with the police, the consequences of which led to her organisation pulling out of both alliances. To some extent, many youth workers had historically kept the police at arm's length, particularly in areas where young black and working class people experienced policing as violent, racist and abusive. Others had worked with the police on occasion – for example, organising joint football matches – but it remained rare for youth workers and police officers to walk the streets together. After the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, however, local authorities in England and Wales were required to engage more actively in crime prevention; one consequence was that many authorities began to require its funded detached youth workers to work closely with the police.

Tracey (not her real name) was the part-time co-ordinator of a small charity in a town in the north of England, working as a street-based youth worker in a project funded by the local government. Previously she had met occasionally with local community police officers, and had a reasonably positive relationship with them, but they did not work together. One year, when her funding contract came up for renewal, the local government representative told her she would be required to work on the streets with the police every Friday night. Tracey said,

It was like, "we're doing this, we fund you, you need to do it like this". And of course immediately your back gets up. Cos you're like, well, no actually, I'm not so sure as I want to walk around with the police. Because I'm not so sure this is gonna help our relationships with young people and how they see us.

Tracey's project needed to keep the funding they had relied on for years, so she started the joint working arrangement, but her suspicions remained. She particularly disliked that when she walked around with the police on a Friday night they were confiscating alcohol from young people, which she did not think was part of the youth work role. She continued to question the partnership at meetings with local government representatives but she said that she was not listened to or respected. Eventually Tracey and her manager, the chair of trustees, agreed that they should pull out:

We stuck to our guns and they said "well if you don't do it like this then we won't fund you, you will lose your contracts with us and we won't pay you". And it was brilliant because my chairman was like, "Well, actually, what you're saying to us is you own the purse strings. Well, actually, this type of work doesn't fit in with what we think our remit is, our mission statement. And we won't do it." So that was amazing.

More and more frequently, funding in England has become contingent not only on how "successful" a project has been (and the criteria for success are highly debatable – see Jon Ord's chapter in this section). Funding is also linked to how willing the project is to fulfil certain requirements, such as – in this case – joint work with

the police. Tracey's organisation's stance lost them a reasonably amicable alliance with their local authority, and with it went the funding they had relied on for years. Pulling out was a big decision, which Tracey found stressful; but she was proud to have stood up for her principles, and she managed to find alternative funding to keep the project going.

Tracey's story is inspiring because it shows that, even in a time of real worries about funding and job security, youth workers – including workers like Tracey who do not see themselves as particularly political – are able and willing to act according to their principles. However, it also highlights the role of power inequalities in alliance building; if youth workers make alliances with more powerful authorities, it is possible or even likely that they will be subsumed under those authorities' general objectives. In these situations, it is difficult to negotiate other than by refusing to continue with the alliance.

## **CONCLUSION: CRITICAL ALLIANCE BUILDING**

Tracey's story is not unique. Several other youth workers I interviewed told me about decisions not to work with the police, to distance themselves from local authorities, or to refuse to share young people's personal details with their funding bodies. None of these youth workers were opposed to alliances per se; in fact, those workers who refused close alliances with establishment organisations tended to have particularly good alliances in the local community. For example, Tracey's organisation was closely linked with the local church, which gave valuable moral and ethical support and also helped with funding. A youth worker in another organisation I interviewed had close links with the local LGBTQ community, who supported them to fight a requirement to hand over young people's details to local government officials.

Choosing our allies, then, is a political act. Politics informs the allies we refuse and the allies we actively seek out, and ongoing critical reflection (such as that demonstrated by Tracey) is necessary to think about the political implications of the alliances we engage in. Just as negative alliances are problematic for youth work and for young people, so positive alliances are necessary and important. To conclude, I will discuss the kinds of alliances that might strengthen and broaden youth work. I have already argued that our primary alliance as youth workers must be with young people, and that local youth organisations must build alliances with community organisations in their areas. But what about alliances beyond the neighbourhood level?

The first and most important alliances that youth workers could develop is with other youth workers! This might sound obvious or self-evident, but at a time when youth work is increasingly fractured and individualised, we cannot take for granted that practitioners have the time or the workplace cultures of meeting up, working together and thinking about how we can support and learn from each other. Our isolation is encouraged and exacerbated by the systems of managerialism and competition that exist in our workplaces and in wider society. For example, in my research, grassroots youth workers told me that they had been prevented from meeting with colleagues – indirectly, because they are too busy and there is no time or space for them to meet, or directly, because they are not permitted to meet. In



addition, youth organisations that act as if they were businesses now “compete” for funding and even for young people; we are discouraged from sharing our ideas in case they are “stolen” by somebody else. It is hardly surprising, then, that few youth workers communicate regularly with others in different organisations, in different places and in different countries. Because of this lack of communication, workers can feel that the problems they are facing are unique and local, when in fact they are often a result of wider policy agendas that affect youth workers across England and beyond.

Youth workers love talking to each other. This has been one of the most valued roles of the campaign network, IDYW, which has created virtual and physical spaces where workers can come together, be critical, express their views, explore their situations, share ideas, and feel less alone. As workers and volunteers who have a relatively low status, it is important that we become stronger, maybe more able to speak up for young people and for youth work. Our neo-liberal world is inherently individualising, and it is important to make active efforts to think and work more collectively.

As part of this alliance building, spaces for international sharing and solidarity between youth workers are very important. The changes that affect us locally have their roots in global markets and global policy making, and we need to be better at discussing our situations across borders: through conferences and exchanges, books and reports, social media, and in other creative ways.

My second example of productive alliances is with activists working for equality, social justice, freedom, and the environment. Youth work is distinct from activism because it starts from where young people are starting from, rather than approaching them with a particular cause in mind. However, it makes sense for youth workers to make alliances with those young (and older) people who are fighting oppression and environmental devastation. As well as sharing some values, youth workers have much to learn from how activist movements organise themselves non-hierarchically, how they create change from the grass roots, and how they are often changeable and adaptable. Activist movements can learn from youth workers too, about starting from where people are (rather than where we might like them to be) and working for long-term change rather than quick wins.

A third area in which to strengthen alliances is with places of learning and research. This includes universities and research organisations. However, it should not be restricted to them, particularly as universities are – like our governments and youth organisations – becoming increasingly market oriented. Youth workers can build mutually supportive links with progressive people and groups within universities, while also building alliances with alternative places of education and research. There are people outside university environments researching things like unfair employment practices, and environmental pollution, and exploitative housing laws. There are also grassroots networks of education – in the UK there is a growing movement of “Philosophy in Pubs”, a network of groups who get together in their local pub to think and talk about issues they are interested in. There are also various political education networks which share many values with youth workers; for example, members of IDYW have organised education events in alliance with

activists at squatted social centres, and contributed to radical education networks that involve teachers, arts educators and students in thinking about and trying out alternative approaches to education.

In calling for a critical approach to alliance building, I do not mean to suggest that alliances are not important. Much the opposite; alliances are probably more important than ever, but they need to be the right alliances. As youth work has come under attack in the UK, and as many of us trained as youth workers are finding ourselves working in more formal settings, IDYW is discussing the importance of developing alliances among people who might see themselves as critical, radical and democratic educators – youth workers in all manner of settings and situations, alongside teachers, social workers, youth workers, housing workers, lecturers, researchers, and others who are committed to critical dialogue with those they work with.

Young people must be our primary allies. This means that we need to keep young people's lived experience at the centre of our thinking when we're making alliances, particularly the lived experiences of those young people who are most disadvantaged by the neo-liberal, money-oriented world most of us live in today. If we are defending youth work, then, this defence should never aim simply to maintain a practice that has existed in the past. A defence of youth work needs to ally itself with young people to change things for the better, challenging fundamental assumptions about the way we live now. We will be able to do that much better if we choose allies who share those dreams and those aspirations.

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Part V

# **Negotiating space in the margins**

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# Introduction

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*Lasse Siurala*

## **INSPIRATION FROM THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE**

**T**he history volumes on youth work have suggested that economic interests, political priorities, societal concerns, governments, the social sector, education, and so on have in different ways exerted their influence on youth work. Sometimes youth work has had to sacrifice its key ideals and ways of working, it has become instrumental to external objectives and increasingly subject to budget cuts. For example, the influence of social work has contributed to a strong interest in integration, care and control. In many countries, youth work has become an instrument of political priorities to combat youth unemployment, juvenile criminality, drug use and marginalisation. As a result, youth workers, in the UK in particular, have claimed that youth work has lost its capacity to implement its ethos.

These accounts may be right and it is important to understand the myriad of ways in which external influences or alliances construct a small field like youth work. However, many participants of the fifth history workshop (Helsinki 2014) felt that the above trajectories were overburdened with pessimism: “[they] offer no future project ... without a blink of solutions” as I recall Guy Redig mentioning in the Helsinki workshop. Other commentators have agreed that among the history volumes there is an over-reach of negative, regulatory and compensatory “youth policy” and an under-reach of purposeful and positive “youth policy” (Williamson and Coussée 2011). There is room for exploring “solutions” and positive strategies.

Clearly, the trajectories and the recognition of youth work have developed differently across Europe. In the UK, youth work has witnessed a startling decline of government trust and support and a good many youth workers feel deeply frustrated by this recent development and do not see much hope in the future. At the same time, in other countries, even EU countries whose economies are even worse than that of the UK, like Finland, youth work has surprisingly positive experiences of the past five years and expectations for the next five years. A recent survey *Future expectations on municipal youth work* (2015) of directors responsible for local government youth work in Finland gave the following results:

- ▶ 76% said the recognition of youth work has increased “significantly” or “somewhat” during the past five years;

- ▶ 71% felt the recognition will increase “significantly” or “somewhat” during the next five years;
- ▶ 6% said the recognition by local politicians of youth work has decreased during the past five years and believed that it will decrease during the next five years; nearly half said that recognition has been improved during the past five years and will stay that way during the next five years;
- ▶ 67% said the funding has “improved” or “remained unchanged” during the past five years;
- ▶ 61% said the funding will be “improved” or “remain unchanged” during the next five years.

These two examples of UK and Finland show that the recognition and position, as well as youth workers’ perception, of local youth work can be very different across Europe. It also indicates that there is room for historical analysis of “solutions and positive strategies” as well as of the effect of the broader economic, cultural, historical and political frameworks to the differing trajectories.

This section includes three chapters which look at “blinks of solutions” from three very different viewpoints: the past, present and the future. One is a historical account of a (successful) survival trajectory of youth work (Besse and Carletti), another argues that today’s youth cultures provide youth work with an opportunity for renewal (Spatscheck) and the third suggests that youth work should also react to emergent broader societal changes and their forthcoming prospects (Siurala).

Besse and Carletti provide a fascinating historical account on the development of youth work (animation) in France. It frames the situation of youth work in relation to formal education (during *éducation populaire*), social work (*éducation spécialisée*), the whole school day (*éducation partagée*) and various forms of *intervention sociale*. The analytical emphasis is on how youth work has been able to create its position in the interstices between larger sectors. The key factor is its “generalist”, flexible and co-operative competences to link the specialised professions into a more comprehensive service. Apparently, during its history, it has also been able to retain certain professional respect in the eyes of formal education and social work, and an “anti-institutional mood” to create the necessary space for independent (interstitial) action.

As the volumes on the history of youth work in Europe show, institutional histories of youth work can take many different paths. Clearly, French history indicates that youth work is essentially “an interstitial practice”: by making good use of the key competences of youth work one can create professional space and recognition through co-operation with other sectors and their programmes. In this sense, youth work is a construct of interstitial practices. Spatscheck’s chapter shows that youth work is also a construct of the changing forms of “being young together”. He looks at youth cultures and their impact on the role of youth work. How do new forms of being young together – youth cultures, media, lifestyles, living on the fringes – change our thinking and models of youth participation and the role of youth work? The author highlights the importance of the daily lives and social spaces which young people inhabit as forums where identities, citizenships and politics are negotiated and enacted. Youth workers have to rethink their working methods and approaches



consequently. Essentially, there are two kinds of roles for youth work. First, to function as a mediator between the lifeworlds of the young people and society. Second, to support youth citizenship through the everyday social spaces of young people. As a consequence, as Spatscheck indicates, we should broaden our conception of many of the key concepts of youth work, like “youth participation”, “politics”, “citizenship education”, “integration into general culture” and so on. What Spatscheck says is that youth work should be reconstructed through the constantly diversifying ways of “being young together”.

Siurala summarises some of the debates in the past history volumes (1-4) which result in considerable ambiguity of the term “youth work”. The Belgian scholar Guy Redig has put it bluntly (at the Helsinki workshop discussions): “After reading everything about youth work, we (still) don’t know what we are talking about.” Siurala suggests that some approaches, structures, concepts and methods no longer meet the reality of the lifeworlds and concerns of today’s youth, and thus appear confusing. Some parts of youth work have perhaps turned into “sacred cows”. The question is raised as to what extent that applies to such cherished approaches as the “magic triangle”, the integrated youth policy, youth councils, to name but a few. Even if the youth field, overall, is innovative and flexible, there is also room for critical self-reflection. Siurala then moves on to problematise the concept of “autonomy”, draws inspiration from recent social philosophy and suggests that during the current and forthcoming times of “complexity, plurality and uncertainty” the youth field cannot turn inward but must link with others and build alliances through which it can make its unique competences visible and recognisable. Youth work needs to become dependent on others to create independent space – thus the paradoxical title *Autonomy through dependency*.

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## Chapter 10

# Youth work as interstitial practice between borders: a historical perspective on French *animation*

Laurent Besse and Marc Carletti

Interstice:

“An intervening space, especially a very small one.”

([www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com))

### PRELIMINARIES

The present chapter sets out to explore the historical relationships between youth work and other professional fields in France with a particular focus on schooling and the social sector and with references to the fields of culture, sports and leisure. In the concept paper for this fifth History of Youth Work seminar, the terms youth field, youth sector, youth work and social sector assumingly refer to common objects for comments and analysis. However, it should be reminded that in the context of European policy making those terms appear as linguistic and sociopolitical constructs whose level of correspondence with and relevance to the diverse national realities can vary considerably.

In France, youth policy (*politiques de jeunesse*) taken in a broad sense (that is, the sum of significant government initiatives affecting young people's lives) is for the greater part directed towards young people aged 11 to 25. The lower limit of this age band does however extend, as French local policies often stand under the phrase *politiques de l'enfance et de la jeunesse* (child and youth policies). In fact, most professionals working with young people are also trained to engage with children and other age groups. Moreover, the distinction between “youth” and “community” as regards training, practice and professional identities is much weaker than in other European countries.<sup>25</sup> One of the most striking features for foreigners is probably

25. French *animateurs* and *éducateurs spécialisés* are trained to work with all age groups excluding children under the age of 6.

the long-lasting reluctance towards the very idea of central government-led youth policy (at least until the 1970s). Therefore, a distinctive trait is that French youth policies are mostly cross-sectoral and transverse to several state and government departments and administrative divisions whose names can be compiled into a relatively short list of appellations including: *éducation nationale*, *affaires sociales*, *action sociale*, *cohésion sociale*, *santé* (health), culture, *travail* (work), *emploi* (employment), *ville* (city/urban development), *jeunesse* (youth), *sports*, *loisirs* (leisure). When referring to public action targeted at young people, each of these fields relates to a substantial collection of (a) legislative and administrative frameworks and modes of organisation both at national and regional/local levels; (b) schemes, measures and programmes implemented by various public, semi-public or private bodies; (c) job titles and designations to classify voluntary and paid workers. For the sake of clarity, and considering the limited extension of this study, our remarks will focus on the French notions and policies that best fit the meaning areas covered by the English terms “youth work”, “schooling/formal education”, “sports”, “culture” and “social”.

These terms “youth work” and “youth sector/fields” call for some introductory comments. The literal translations for youth work (that is, *travail de jeunesse* or *travail dans le domaine de la jeunesse*) are unfamiliar to most French speakers. In accordance with Patricia Loncle’s contribution to the first History of Youth Work seminar, we shall contend that the phrase “youth work” as defined by the Council of Europe<sup>26</sup> is a blanket or umbrella term under which several professional titles can be regrouped when considering the French context (Loncle 2009). As stated by Loncle, two main groups may be identified, the largest of which by far being that of the *animateurs* (*socioculturels*, *socioéducatifs*, *de loisirs*, *jeunesse*) with the *éducateurs spécialisés* as the second most important professional group. This allows us to posit that the title *animation*, followed by an assortment of modifying terms (see above), may in most international contexts translate fairly accurately as “youth work”, although French terminology doesn’t explicitly refer to the beneficiaries but conveys what is actually performed for/with them (animate/educate). For indeed the notion of “activity” is central to the French approach to working with people of all ages including youth. As for *éducation spécialisée/éducateurs spécialisés*, we shall consider the phrase “special (needs) youth worker” as a reasonably adequate equivalent.

The chapter’s main purpose is to put a historical perspective on *animation* as an autonomous field whose developments and boundaries have been defined through its relations with the schooling, social, sports and cultural sectors. From their origins to present times, *éducation populaire* and *animation* have emerged and developed in constant, and often strained, interaction with the formal education system and, from the 1950s onwards, with other emerging professional fields. The first section will mainly show how *animation* historically relates to the French system of public schooling known as *éducation nationale*. The second section discusses the origins

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26. “Youth work is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of ‘out-of-school’ education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation” (Council of Europe 2009).

and developments of *animation* as regards its articulation with the social, cultural and sports sectors. The third and conclusive sections will highlight some of the issues at stake with regards to the positioning of professional *animation* in France. The blurred professional identity of *animateurs* may indeed be perceived as a threat to the development of a well-established youth work profession in France. However, it will be argued that the interstitial quality of *animation*, caught as it is between more dominant neighbouring sectors (Lebon 2009b), should not be solely considered as a weakness but also as an opportunity. It will be suggested that the very function of youth work resides in its capacity to bridge gaps and fill spaces through increased co-operation with more powerful but over-specialised and less flexible professional bodies.

## **EDUCATION POPULAIRE AND ANIMATION: WITH AND AGAINST THE SCHOOL**

From a bird's eye view, *animation* appears as the legacy of *éducation populaire*. At least three main trends can be traced in the history of *éducation populaire* in France: the first relates to the working class movement ("socialist"); the second regroups the religious organisations and the churches, mainly Catholic; the third is clearly inspired by a strong republican/*laïque* stream of ideas and political action (Poujol 1981). The latter is probably the most original with significant impacts on the two others, especially on the Catholic trend. Among the main features of French Republicanism, one can discern the importance of school within its programmes and forms of action. The main purpose of this section is to highlight the importance of schooling in the emergence and development of youth work in France. We shall also discuss the conflicts and the forms of co-operation that have resulted from the existence of such lineage. At least two reasons can account for this choice: one is certainly that the relationship between the schooling system and the non-formal education sector has probably been most specific to the French context as compared with other European countries since the 19th century. The second is that this question is particularly relevant today, as French school is experiencing an important reform which could have some effects (side effects at least) on the field of *animation*.

### **The perpetual school (from the French Revolution to the 1960s)**

The role of school in the building of the nation is common to many countries. The originality of the French case lies in the centralisation of the schooling system since the end of the 19th century with a unified school structure over the whole country, a single national curriculum, and with schools run by schoolmasters and schoolmistresses hired and trained as central state civil servants since 1889. From the origins of the republican schooling system, schoolteachers were seen as the missionaries of the Republic whose task was to oppose the Catholic influence and claim the heritage of the Enlightenment in the name of science and progress. In what has later been called a "school war", the duty of the *maîtres d'école* was to spread literacy (the three R's) but also moral progress. In their classrooms as well as outside the schools, they taught adult courses, evening classes and popular conferences which they were strongly

advised to give for free. One minister of education (*Instruction publique*) at the end of the 19th century once referred to the *maître d'école's* "goodwill" as "the unlimited budget which can pay for the education of the masses" (Mayeur 2004; Prost 2004).

From its early days, French non-formal education initiatives (known as *éducation populaire*) were strongly linked to the formal education system whose secular and free primary state schools were the schools of the common people. Therefore, *éducation populaire* was predominantly staffed with schoolmasters and schoolmistresses from the primary school who, from the 1880s onwards, voluntarily engaged with children and youth in after-school activities and holiday camps. In the late 1920s, they gained a very strong influence within the oldest and largest cultural federation to this day: the *Ligue de l'enseignement* (the Schooling League). In the first half of the 20th century, after-school education was the realm of *éducation populaire* and the *mouvements de jeunesse* (youth organisations) whose programmes included evening classes, summer camps, leisure, sport and arts activities. As a result, the school influence came to extend outside the school into the non-formal/informal sector where the Catholic Church, and to a much lesser extent the Protestant denominations or the Jewish organisations, offered similar activities to compete with the secular initiatives.

The *Ligue de l'enseignement*, which defined itself as the incarnation of the Republic, acted both as a lobby for cultural activism and a kind of quango since no government department was devoted to youth and cultural activities, with the exception of a few minor administrative bodies for the Fine Arts. As regards youth, the government refused to import such central totalitarian policies as those implemented by the Nazis in Germany, and the fascists in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s. In that matter, France like other countries in Europe stuck to its liberal ideals. This created much space and freedom for associative initiatives and can account for the emergence of a thriving voluntary sector in the field of youth and community education. The 1940 defeat against the Nazis and the establishment of a dictatorship (the "Vichy" or "Maréchal Pétain" regime) created a major shift. One of the enemies Pétain decided to fight was the public schooling system; the symbol and the core of a Republic he hated. The *Ligue de l'enseignement* was soon banned. The regime, although ruled by an 84-year-old man in 1940, was obsessed with rejuvenating the country. It thus introduced a central youth policy, with a dedicated department (*ministère de la Famille et de la Jeunesse*, then *Commissariat à la jeunesse*). It was influenced by models coming from Italy and Germany, though no compulsory youth movement equivalent to the Hitler Youth was established. The Catholic organisations were obviously privileged until 1942 (Halls 1981) but most private bodies and associations remained active. The birth of such central youth policy in the Vichy years would have a major impact on future government initiatives: the Republic became distrustful of any central state temptation to take on full responsibility for youth policy until the 1960s. This was particularly true for the *laïque* movements including the *Ligue* which strongly rejected the idea of a Ministry of Youth on the grounds that a Ministry of Education was already in existence. After the Second World War, hundreds of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses (central state civil servants) were paid by the state but seconded to the *Ligue de l'enseignement*. This meant that they worked full time in those "associations" affiliated to the *Ligue*, which carried out after-school or holiday educational programmes for young people. In those days, the training of

schoolmasters and schoolmistresses (in the *École normale*) also included sessions of informal/non-formal education in preparation for their future roles (for example, with the Centres d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation active (CEMEA) about the techniques of self-expression or about summer camps). Thus the role of the formal educators became absolutely central to the very existence of *éducation populaire*. A small administrative body called *Jeunesse et Sports* (within which sports was clearly the most important) was eventually established in 1945 but was integrated into the Ministry of Education with a peripheral status to avoid re-enacting the Vichy experience.

## 1960s-1990s: the forgotten school?

Things changed radically at the turn of the 1960s, at a time when young people gained importance as social actors and while France was experiencing its post-war baby boom, massive urbanisation, mass consumption and the growth of secondary level schooling. As France was facing its Teddy boys (the "*blousons noirs*") and the anxiety of a social vacuum threatening the new towns and social housing estates (Cupers 2014), strong focus was put on the need for trained *animateurs* to "fill the gaps" and channel all energies towards the making of a cohesive society (Besse and Carletti 2015). Debates arose between specialists about the ideal balance between voluntary *animation* and professional *animation*. Permanent *animateurs* emerged slowly but the support given by central government, local authorities and voluntary organisations to the various youth clubs (*Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture*, *clubs Léo Lagrange*, *clubs de jeunes*) changed the face of youth work in France (Besse 2014). This led to a major shift whose characteristics could be summarised as follows:

- ▶ The new generation of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses experienced a drop in professional prestige in an urbanised and more learned society. As a consequence, they got less involved in *éducation populaire/animation* as compared with the previous generations.
- ▶ The centrality of school was questioned by most actors within French society, but even more fiercely by the proponents of *animation*. (Labourie 1981)

Such developments may account for the tracing of a dividing line between formal and non-formal/informal education in France from the 1960s onwards. Since then, the professional identity of *animateurs* has partly been built against the declining model of the schoolmaster/mistress. *Animation* developed outside the school, without the school, not to say against the school. This marked a clear shift from the previous period when the secular *fédérations d'éducation populaire* were staffed with schoolteachers while their Catholic counterparts were led by clergymen. *Animation* in France has thus kept a certain anti-institutional mood and an anti-school flavour which can account for a persistent lack of effective co-operation between the two sectors.

## WORKING WITH YOUTH: A FRAGMENTED PICTURE

Other structural distinctions are relevant to our discussion. To get a clearer view of what *animateurs* really are, it is necessary to highlight the origins and implications of the current division between special (needs) youth work (*éducation spécialisée*),

clearly a well-established social work profession in France, and youth work (*animation*), whose categorisation within the social work sector is problematic (Carletti 2014). Equally pertinent to the positioning of youth work in France is the gradual distinction from the 1970s onwards between the sociocultural and cultural sectors. Particularly significant is the growing importance and weight of professional groups relating to the Ministry of Culture in the implementation of French public policies and in non-formal education programmes. Other critical politically motivated changes include a widening of the gap between “youth” and “sports” within the *Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports* administration and the development of sports education as a separate professional field.

### **Animation: a social work profession?**

In France, the co-existence of two separate categories of youth workers corresponds to a politically and socially constructed fracture within society between those young people who are perceived as fitting in and those who allegedly fail to do so. The distinction between *animation* and *éducation spécialisée* can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s with the professionalisation of two categories of practitioners working with young people in non-formal education settings. Both groups have historical connections with French popular education as well as common ideological sources; but while *éducation spécialisée*'s theoretical and institutional frameworks have mostly been shaped in relation to the medical and social care sectors, the practical and theoretical approaches of professional *animation* have kept closer links with those of *éducation populaire*. Although it has often been called a social profession, *animation* has established ambiguous and debated relationships with *éducation spécialisée* and French social work as a whole.

It should first be noted that several of the leading figures and prominent actors in the field of education such as Gisèle de Failly, the co-founder of the CEMEA, were dedicated to the promotion of out-of-school education for both ordinary and excluded youth. Henri Joubrel, an active leader of the Scout movement, devoted himself to adapting the aims and methods of scouting to the re-education of children and youth.<sup>27</sup> The common references of those committed to the education and well-being of disabled, maladjusted or at-risk youth covered a broad range of approaches complementary to the formal education system. These ranged from the character-building and moral strength education methods of the Scout movement to the more progressive views and theories of such influential thinkers and pedagogues as Rousseau (1712-78), Pestazzoli (1746-1827) or Célestin Freinet (1896-1966), with a shared concern for active youth-centred approaches and a focus on both individual and collective relationships. As a co-founder of ANEJ in 1947, the first national association for professional educators of “maladjusted youth” (Chauvière 2009), Joubrel epitomises the link between some of the youth movements and the emerging special (needs) youth work sector. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the social work sector was still embryonic within government and the state machinery, co-operation between the emerging social care services and the voluntary organisations engaging with

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27. See for example, Joubrel Henri, *Le scoutisme dans l'éducation et la rééducation des jeunes*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951.



young people was by no means unusual. Forms of co-operation were all the more important in that the schooling system, though claiming its ambition to provide education as a universal service to all children, paid little attention to those who didn't fit. As a consequence, the education and care of those with special needs was for the most part transferred to the third sector and outside the mainstream public schooling system (Chauvière and Fablet 2001). Those social and educational care initiatives, which had been carried out by Catholic or secular organisations since the second half of the 19th century, later gained legitimacy as they joined the autonomous social work sector in the late 1950s.

In a seminal paper Jean-Claude Richez brings forward convincing historical evidence to support the view that the period 1930 to 1960 was crucial to the growing distinction between the fields of *éducation populaire* and social work. Those times of "missed opportunities" (Richez 2011) led to the creation of two state departments with separate legislative, administrative and policy frameworks at national and local level: *Jeunesse et Sports* and *Affaires sociales*. The terms *éducation populaire/jeunesse et sports* then came to relate to the universal open-access provision of youth services with the *animateur* as a leading professional figure emerging in the 1960s, while the appellations *affaires sociales* and *action sociale* covered almost exclusively the areas of welfare and social care in close institutional and political interaction with the health sector and the justice system. Among the many professionals working with youth, the *éducateurs spécialisés* gained recognition and legitimacy in engaging with those who were designated as in need, different or troublesome. This process entailed greater dependency on the health sector with a strong influence of psychiatry in both the training and practice of those special (needs) youth workers. Such developments led to the constitution of two co-existing models of youth work. *Animation* would focus on global collective community-based methods with broad educational goals while *éducation spécialisée* would develop targeted work with problematic youth and strong connections to the fields of justice and health. Forms of targeted preventive work took shape in the 1960s with the *clubs de prévention* (Peyre and Tétard 2006) staffed with special (needs) youth workers: the *éducateurs de rue* and *éducateurs spécialisés*. The first initiatives had developed in the late 1940s and 1950s with forms of street work mostly undertaken and supported by volunteers and actors in the fields of health, justice and social care as well as by libertarian educators such as Fernand Deligny (1913-96). However, a more targeted social work approach to prevention was officially defined in 1972 and formal distinction was established between "natural prevention" (*prévention naturelle*), to be carried out by the *animateurs*, and "targeted prevention" (*prévention spécialisée*), to be assigned to the *éducateurs de prévention spécialisée* (Peyre and Tétard 2006). *Éducation spécialisée* was then positioned in the list of the social work professions and within the social sector. The case of *animateurs* has proved trickier as they have rarely been categorised as social workers within the administrative, legal and policy frameworks of the *Ministère de la santé et des affaires sociales* or within local government policies. Although the French *animateurs* have always been entrusted with missions of social integration and social control, it can be argued that their core target groups have not been problematic youth alone. They are often called "generalists" as opposed to the many "specialised" professionals trained to address more specific issues or targeted sections of the population.

## Working with youth: the age of expertise

In France, the agenda within government has favoured a clear distinction between three autonomous sectors whose professionals are expected to work outside the formal school system for the development of the physical, mental, moral and social faculties of French youth: (1) health/social care; (2) youth and sports; (3) culture and the arts. Health and social care were regrouped within a single ministry in 1956 while the cultural sector gained its independence from the *Education nationale* through the creation of a *Ministère des Affaires Culturelles* in 1959. In the same year the “youth and sports” sector was instituted as a *haut commissariat* directly attached to the prime minister. It had first appeared as a secretariat of state in the 1940s and gradually developed into a fully fledged ministry in 1966 with periods of direct dependency on the Ministry of Education. As mentioned in the previous sections, universal provision of out-of-school cultural, leisure and sports activities was for the most part left to the *mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire* whose militant workforce professionalised into *animation socioculturelle* in the 1960s and 1970s (Poujol 2000). In the thousands of sociocultural facilities built in the 1960s as part of extensive construction programmes in all major cities, the *animateur socioculturel* was meant to foster participation and generate dynamism among adults and youth alike (Cupers 2014). From this perspective, the *animateur* was primarily a facilitator whose *raison d'être* was to bring people together in the building of a cohesive society and, like in the English youth service tradition, to liberate young people's capacities and talents (Davies 2008). Therefore, the French *animateurs* were never trained as specialists to solve social or psychological difficulties, nor were they qualified as skilled artists or outstanding athletes. The proponents of *animation* contended that sports and arts activities should not be the sacralised objects of some outcomes-focused practice but rather the means to foster individual and collective emancipation through active participation.

From the late 1970s onward, prominent figures in the cultural and sports sector supported the view that arts education methods and well-designed sports programmes (*médiation culturelle* or *artistique*, *éducation sportive*) were more beneficial to the development of youth than the mere provision of loosely defined activities. The generous and holistic ideal of *animation* gradually gave way to a more technical and targeted approach to working with youth (Ion 1986). The multiplication of training paths and vocational qualifications ensued in the fields of culture and sports, which led to the constitution of various professional groups with more specialised skill-oriented approaches (arts workers, sports educators). The *animateurs socioculturels* were accused of being mere “activity leaders” promoting poor-quality leisure activities to the detriment of true educational work which required the expertise of trained artists or qualified sports practitioners.

These historical developments have led to the appearance of several co-existing modes of intervention with young people in non-formal settings and in co-operation with the schools. In recent decades, a growing number of professional groups have flourished within various sectors (social welfare, health, culture and the arts, sports). Many have acquired some expertise in the field of youth work, drawing from the historical precedents of *les mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire*/

*animation* whose line ministry of *Jeunesse et sports* has had to fight for legitimacy (Lebon 2009a). The “Youth” section at government level now appears to be rather weak in comparison with “Sports”, its wealthy and influential elder sibling, and the powerful ministries of *Santé et Affaires Sociales* and *Culture*.

## THE NOTION OF “SHARED EDUCATION”: A NEW ERA FOR FRENCH YOUTH WORK?

In practice, on-the-field co-operation was recognised as a necessity when the situation of French youth became problematic from the early 1980s onwards. Since then, the recurring urban riots, social inequality and school disaffection issues in the distressed neighbourhoods of the French big cities have led to a substantial channelling of resources towards a variety of intricate cross-sectoral initiatives delivered by multidisciplinary teams and multi-agency partnerships. A sequel to the 1982 programme “*opérations anti-été chaud*”, “*Ville, Vie, Vacances*” was launched in 1995 as a problematic youth-targeted set of leisure, sports and cultural activity programmes carried out by social workers, youth workers, sports educators and community artists in partnership with secondary schools in priority neighbourhoods. This central government funded programme was meant to promote citizenship and social inclusion by providing at-risk young people aged 11-18 with an opportunity to engage in a whole range of educational activities during their free time. *Ville, Vie, Vacances* has gradually been extended geographically with an ambition to reach mainstream youth (Lapeyronnie 2003). However, it should be stressed that the political agenda has mostly tended to draw *animation* away from its universal, holistic and emancipatory ambitions towards a form of youth social work through an accumulation of peacekeeping policy schemes and social-integration-through-employment measures. Simultaneously, these initiatives have developed as part of a continuous process of “decentralisation” initiated by the *lois de décentralisation* of 1982 which has led to the implementation of urban policies within the blueprint of the *Politiques de la ville*. Such policies have confirmed the predominance of the local level in educational and social matters. These measures, which include the newly promoted notion of *éducation partagée* (shared education), have proved fertile ground for more active co-operation between all professional and volunteer workers operating with youth, either within or outside school. They have also contributed to the fragmentation of the youth sector and to the blurring of professional identities. Although French youth work as a professional field has grown in terms of number and devoted budget (Lebon 2009b), the fact that youth services have remained discretionary and without a strong legal base has favoured the hiring of poorly qualified underpaid workers (mostly part-time) and a form of competition between the several professional fields claiming legitimacy over an ever-expanding and boundless domain known as *intervention sociale*<sup>28</sup> (Beynier 2006; IGAS 2006).

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28. The term *intervention sociale* covers a very broad and vague area (IGAS 2006). It is either used as a synonym for *travail social* or as a linguistic attempt to bring some coherence to the wild development of professional designations applying to those who work for the building of an inclusive society (teachers, social workers, youth workers, health workers).

In 2012, the Ministry of Education launched an ambitious reform of the schooling system to cope with its recurring difficulties in the context of a structural social crisis affecting the French popular classes. The main purpose of the new law is to better organise the school week in order to create the conditions for successful learning by reducing the number of school hours and by offering cultural, sports and leisure activities to all children. The *loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République* has entailed major changes in the relations between *animation* and the formal education sector. It can surely be seen as an opportunity to restore the link and foster co-operation between the formal and non-formal education sectors at local authority level and under the inspiring notion of "shared education" (*éducation partagée*). It should be noted, however, that the implementation of the law has mainly (if not exclusively) affected children and youth under 11. Although *animation* has always catered for pre-teens, it appears that the 2012 reform of the schooling system has tipped *animation's* centre of gravity away from young people (11-25). Even if most municipalities of more than 10 000 inhabitants now operate some kind of service through a *service jeunesse* and a collection of state-initiated agreements between local authorities and the third sector,<sup>29</sup> professional youth work with the 11-25 year-olds is certainly not at the top of the political agenda and has to fight for recognition and visibility. As in other European countries, *animation* with young people has struggled hard to "colonize a distinct territory" of its own (Bradford 2004). French youth workers are now required to devise complex strategies to make their way among the proliferation of trained experts from other sectors and the tangled cross-sectoral programmes and policy measures (Gillet 2001). So far, they have managed to survive as "space fillers". For, indeed, allowing separate "social units" to concord has always been their core purpose. In an age of connection, their holistic, multifaceted and process-focused (as opposed to outcomes-oriented) approach (Ord 2013) may prove an asset when it comes to bridging gaps and fostering co-operation between the various social actors (citizens, young people, policy makers), but also between the more specialised fields of formal education, sports, culture and social work where forms of over-targeted and over-specialised work may encourage further segmentation of practitioners and beneficiaries alike. To this end, Gillet has introduced the notion of "mediation" as a key strategic function of *animation* by which *animateurs* develop a capacity to operate within the interstices of society (Gillet 1996). From this perspective, the recognition of the interstitial quality of youth work as "border pedagogy" (Batsleer and Davies 2010: 44) becomes meaningful and may even appear as a necessity. The promotion of youth work's intrinsic "Protean" (Bradford 2004) capacity to intervene across several sectors from an "in-between" position rests upon the assumption that it is the combined and collaborative labour of "generalist" youth workers with specialised professionals from other sectors which alone may create the conditions for young people's active participation with society. Under such circumstances, youth work's capacity to take on many forms, to co-operate and adapt quickly is not only an asset but also a prerequisite to the realisation of its very mission as a mediating practice.

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29. Projets Educatifs Locaux (PEL) in the 1990s, Contrats Educatifs Locaux in the 2000s and the 2013 Projets Educatifs Territoriaux (PET).

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## Chapter 11

# Lifeworlds, spaces and citizenship: social pedagogy and youth work as mediating professions

Christian Spatscheck

### 1. SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AND YOUTH WORK: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR LIFEWORLDS AND THEIR DAILY LIVES

**Y**outh work is understood as an independent third field of education and *Bildung*<sup>30</sup> that takes place outside families and the fields of school and professional education (Deinet and Sturzenhecker 2013; Thole and Pothmann 2012). Following the approach of informal education, youth work aims at enabling and empowering young people to find a responsible approach to developing individual and personal autonomy as well as societal and democratic participation and social engagement. The main principles of youth work can be characterised as a voluntary engagement, an orientation towards the interests of young people, the absence of formal curricula as well as the realisation of a growth through participation (Sturzenhecker 2004). Youth work offers an open learning environment in youth clubs, other youth settings, as well as in youth associations and organisations that follow different conceptual frameworks and which have developed from within their historic and societal contexts (Spatscheck 2009).

The theoretical understanding of youth work in Germany is often rooted in the theoretical model of social pedagogy. Social pedagogy places theory and practice as the relationship between individuals and society, recognising the possible conflicts and professional solutions within this relationship as seen from a socio-educational perspective (Hamburger 2012: 14). In this sense, it aims to move away from the approaches of individual(ising) pedagogy and instead develop educational activities that also shape and influence societal conditions focusing on their target groups and involved social actors.

30. The German term of *Bildung* is difficult to directly translate into English. The nearest translation would be “education and development” as *Bildung* implies the process of growth and development of an individual on the basis of their own inner forces and potential and in the context of a supportive environment.

A newer approach to social pedagogy stresses the need to find a professionally adequate relationship to the lifeworld of the target groups and, where helpful, to support the individuals in the daily activities of their lives. This model of lifeworld-orientation has been formulated particularly by the German social pedagogues Hans Thiersch (Engelke, Borrmann and Spatscheck 2014: 429-45; Grunwald and Thiersch 2009; Thiersch 2005, 2011). It stresses the need to understand and support individuals in leading their everyday lives and can be regarded as one of the currently leading paradigms in the discussions of social pedagogy. The concept of "leading of life" (*Lebensführung*) is understood as an ongoing process between the influences of individual lifeworlds and official institutions and organisations. In this context, lifeworlds do make sense to the individuals, although this sense can sometimes only be understood within the context of all their influences. To gain a broader understanding, lifeworld-orientation follows a critical-hermeneutic approach that tries to understand individual activities as attempts to cope with leading a life within the existing social contexts.

Implicitly, the lifeworld-oriented approach integrates the following figures of thought that can be traced back to the discourse of German social pedagogy.

- ▶ For the social pedagogue Klaus Mollenhauer, social pedagogy as theory and practice needs to be active for the development of a supportive and productive "relationship between the generations" (*Generationenverhältnis*) that is conceptualised within societal contexts (Engelke, Borrmann and Spatscheck 2014: 379).
- ▶ Social pedagogy is developed around the idea of a factual "need for education" (*Erziehungstatsache*) that is grounded in the anthropological condition as well as a human need for education and care (Engelke, Borrmann and Spatscheck 2014: 375).
- ▶ Generally, social pedagogy stresses the importance of the "social" in pedagogy (*Gesellschaftsgebundenheit*). Education and development cannot be regarded as individualistic activities but need always to be regarded in relation to society (Mollenhauer 2001: 19).
- ▶ According to the social pedagogue Herman Nohl, the starting point and main reference for social pedagogy needs to be the human subject (*Subjektorientierung*). Social pedagogy should not automatically work towards aims that meet the interests of the most influential actors, but start at the developmental needs, interests and potential of the subject itself and its personal and socially related development (Engelke, Borrmann and Spatscheck 2014, 288).

## 2. YOUTH CULTURES AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

The discourse of social pedagogy marks as key tasks for youth work the search by young people for their own ways of life in society and their cultural activities. The youth work profession needs to be able to understand youth cultural lifeworlds in order to be better able to create and provide opportunities for the positive development of young people within their social environments.

Youth cultures are, despite a long history and a continuous struggle between sovereignty and emancipation, still an integral part of the everyday life of young people



(Spatscheck 2006, 2013). The youth researcher Klaus Farin (2010) estimates that currently about 70% of the younger generation are at least influenced by youth cultures while about 20% might regard themselves as a full member of a youth culture.

For a considerable time, youth cultures have stood for subcultural protests and revolts against the controlling influences of adults. At the same time, formerly subversive virtues like creativity, innovation, activity and provocation have themselves become cherished attributes of an entrepreneurial self (Bröckling 2007) that needs to be able to compete and survive in the struggles of a globalised capitalism. Familiar ideas of control and rebellion have vanished and a new normative ideal of freedom connected to self-care emerged in late-capitalism.

However, some old mechanisms continue to exist. The often hysterical “moral panics” (Cohen 1972) of the 1950s and 1960s about “long-haired” Rock and Roll fans and the “rebels without a cause” does not differ too much from current adult reactions towards the “explicit” lyrics of Gangsta Hip Hop, violence-related computer games or young people with a (supposedly) low interest in integration or a balanced and healthy nutrition or lifestyle.

Youth cultures invent themselves again and again and formulate their difference to mainstream society through their aesthetic innovations (Spatscheck 2006, 2013; Spatscheck et al. 1997). In this context, the following elements can be identified.

## **Music**

In youth studies, about 98% of the 10- to 18-year-olds state that they like to listen to music as a daily activity (Zinnecker et al. 2003: 144). About 21% play music themselves (mpfs 2010: 9). For the majority of the 10- to 18-year-olds, Hip Hop still seems to be the first choice (Archiv and Gangway 2008). But also, “good old Rock music” stays vital after 60 years of existence. Beyond different varieties of Metal music, young people continually appreciate Indie, (Retro-)Punk, Emo and Garage bands. Folk music finds new varieties in Weird- and Freak-Folk. And Techno music is becoming diversified in newer genres of Electro, Dubstep, Grime, Drum and Bass and Gabba. Streaming, downloading, new digital formats, smartphones and mobile devices enable users to find new ways for the distribution of music.

## **Fashion**

General norms about youth fashion can no longer be defined. The diversity of styles and creations brings a lot of freedom as well as enhanced demands for creativity and choice. Among some peer groups, certain brands are still of central relevance (Zinnecker et al. 2003: 154). The Retro look brings the styles of former decades to a newborn interest. Certain youth cultures, like Cosplay (Costume Play) or Visual Kei, invent innovative forms of creations for clothes and dressing.

## **Body cultivation**

Through piercings, tattoos, branding, bodybuilding or cosmetic surgery, the body can be cultivated and becomes a carrier for youth-related messages (Neuß and

Große-Lohheide 2007; Shell 2010: 88). Gabriele Klein (2004) describes how Techno music communicates its non-verbal messages directly through dancing and physical experience. Newer dancing styles like “Jerking”, “Krumping” or the “Melbourne Shuffle” and trend sports like “Parkour” show how cultural acquirement can be realised directly through the body and physical activity.

## **Design**

Youth cultures develop their own forms of media design through apps, web pages, video clips, animations, flyers, magazines or album covers. Known images and symbols are ripped from previous contexts and integrated into new environments. The first flyers, posters and fanzines have been created in copy shops. Today, four-colour prints, special cuts and innovative forms have become more and more usual (Riemel 2005). The wider distribution of printing machines and techniques of design and production has led to an enormous popularisation of designed media.

## **Arts**

In Hip Hop the painting of “graffiti” or “tags” has become an established form of culture. Many of the images and writings do not carry direct messages but Baudrillard (1978: 30) regards graffiti as “significants without significates” that can symbolically reacquire public spaces. Along the forms of “street art”, innovative and creative forms of design of urban spaces can be found (Klitzke and Schmidt 2009). Techno culture has developed new forms of light projections, paintings, body art, pyro installations and video and object art (Die Gestalten 1995).

## **Language**

Following the principles of *bricolage* (tinkering), peer groups develop their own forms of languages. Communication about consumer goods, media products, drugs or other topics is mixed with playful exaggerations, stigmatisations, discriminations and new semantic contexts (Baacke in Ferchhoff 1993: 139). In this way, new creations of language are developed, like the “Kiezdeutsch” (German in an “urban neighbourhood style”) that is spoken by young people with migration history or the ironical “Kanak-Sprak” (Kanak language).

## **Media**

Young people integrate media contents through active acquirement and networking, and form new sociocultural creations. Current online communities, like Instagram, Facebook or WhatsApp, are even based on the very principle of community building and acquirement through their users.

## **Drugs**

The connection between youth cultures and drugs follows a longer tradition. Influences from drugs can be traced in the development of certain music styles as well as other aesthetic elements. But general conclusions about linear connections between certain youth cultural scenes and certain types of drugs can no longer be drawn.

Facing the general relevance of youthfulness in current Western societies, it becomes more and more difficult for young people to demarcate from adults through an ownership over youth cultural means. But young people will also continue to be innovative and try to search for spaces for the development of innovative youth cultural activities.

### 3. THE FUNCTIONS OF YOUTH CULTURES WITHIN THE LIFE PHASE OF YOUTH

In recognition of the passage of youth as a developmental life phase and as a space for a “second chance” for re-socialisation (Böhnisch 2012), youth cultures provide a lot of resources for the individual and social development of young people. On a general level, youth cultures provide a means for escapism, relaxation, physical experience, sexuality, aesthetics, sensuality, orientation, sense, competence, mutuality, membership, identity, autonomy, recognition and justice (for further details refer to Spatscheck 2006).

From a more concrete perspective, the following functions of youth cultures for young people can be identified and addressed through opportunities offered from youth work (Spatscheck 2012a).

- ▶ Youth has always been connected to the idea of a protected passage and forbidding too early a movement into adulthood. This passage granted young people a space for experimentation and the development of an own way of life. Current youth research shows that the idea of the social moratorium is vanishing because young people are growing up in a society full of disembedded risks and societal challenges at a younger life age (Böhnisch and Schröer 2002). Youth work clearly cannot release young people from these new demands. But youth work can still provide protected spaces of temporary moratoria that enable young people to experiment with their personal development. Such experiments need the possibility of being risky or of going wrong. Youth work needs to create settings for such experiences without adopting the “moral panics” of adults and organisations of a cautious or forbidding nature.
- ▶ Youth cultures can be seen as attempts to gain individual development and liberation through aesthetic means. Youth work should meet these needs by enabling young people to find experiences which allow such acquisition. The “Socio-Spatial Approach to Youth Work” follows the idea of providing spaces for young people that are not “finished” but can and need to be “acquired” (*angeeignet*) (Deinet and Krisch 2006). Such spaces can be created within youth clubs but also in public spaces or within specially designed events. These processes of acquisition are valuable opportunities for informal education and motivated learning (Deinet and Reutlinger 2004, 2014). The research into youth cultures shows the importance of room for aesthetic expressions in such settings.
- ▶ Youth cultures provide options for the search for the “good life”. Youth work can guide young people’s development towards becoming capable individuals. Scherr (1997) formulated the need for a “Subject-Oriented Youth Work” that supports young people in their search processes and becomes an important

institution for informal education and *Bildung* (education and development) in the sense of supporting young people to identify and develop their full potential.

- ▶ Youth cultures can be important sources for the development of individual habitus. Youth work should therefore be open and supportive towards youth cultures. Furthermore, it should seek to clarify where it can enable young people to gain social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital through processes of (in)formal education, collaboration with other institutions and enterprises and the creation of local “landscapes of education”.
- ▶ Youth cultures reflect the growing diversity in our societies. Neither philosophically nor practically does it make sense anymore to adopt the idea of a “*Leitkultur*”, a culture that can integrate all other cultures under one umbrella, as well as the concept of “integration” under the common roof of one mainstream culture (Terkessidis 2010). Instead, there is a need for new agreements about how to live together in societies of growing differences towards ethnicity, gender, class, age, abilities, sexual orientations, etc. Youth work can be a space for the common search for a culture of diversity and an actor for diversity education. To be able to assess such situations adequately, youth workers should keep Nancy Fraser’s interconnected approach in mind: Social justice means both the recognition of differences and the redistribution of resources (Fraser 2003). Accordingly, the youth work profession might look for a theory and practice of a rights-based youth work that follows the principles of human rights and social development (Ife 2009, 2012) and aims to support a balance of rights and duties in society.

## 4. YOUTH WORK AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Following a framework of youth work and social pedagogy, youth and youth cultures cannot be examined outside their sociopolitical environments and the political conditions of citizenship. Participation should be connected to the lifeworlds, interests and potentials of the individuals. Therefore, social pedagogy tries to intervene between the individuals and their social environment. This environment can be characterised as usually antagonistic; the competing interests need to be mediated and negotiated in a political mode (Ranci re 2008).

As an intervening practice, social pedagogy can be understood as a form of practical and lifeworld-oriented approach of mediation between the different actors that tries to create positive settings for developmental and learning conditions. The interventions of social pedagogy or youth work can also be regarded as a form and approach of practical citizenship education (Spatscheck 2011). This relationship always depends on contemporary sociopolitical developments. Some of the main lines of discourse are discussed in the following section.

### 4.1. On the current state of relation between political systems and individual lifeworlds

Political theorists describe a tendency towards a system of “post-politics” that implies the vanishing of the political itself (for example, Crouch 2005; Mouffe 2005). Especially

in European countries, one can find in all population groups a decreasing interest in political participation and in political understanding and knowledge. Also, we have to face poorer social cohesion, integration and solidarity in most European societies (for example, Bauman 2000). The whole idea of citizenship seems to be under threat.

At the same time, increasing levels of social polarisation are being experienced. A growing number of people realise their marginalisation and that they are being categorised as “the superfluous”, being no longer needed in the current economy and society (Bude and Willis 2007). Under such conditions, balances of mutual recognition are becoming lost and it is not surprising that affected groups often develop hostile opinions against the current form of democracy or political system and develop extremist and hostile positions (Mouffe 2005).

But there are also signs of continuous political affiliation. Youth studies show an ongoing political interest in their target groups and new forms of citizen protest like the “Occupy” movement or new party formats like the “Pirates” show that interest in political activity still exists among young people but might need new forms of articulation.

## **4.2. Can citizenship be taught? Learning democracy within lifeworld-oriented settings**

Within the context of citizenship education, the tensions between lifeworlds and systems offer new challenges and possibilities. The pedagogue Gert Biesta (2011) proposes a new understanding of political education that moves from “teaching citizenship” towards “learning democracy”. He doubts the possibility of teaching citizenship and identification with political systems through the mediation of knowledge and facts. Rather, he argues that we need to start from the current and urgent issues that young people experience in their daily lives. In this sense, it seems necessary to reshape citizenship education in lifeworld-oriented projects that are situated closer to the everyday lives of the target groups. Biesta also gives the following conclusions on what an implementation of his approach would mean:

- ▶ *The need to create new settings.* Instead of working with individuals, settings of groups or neighbourhood-based learning are much more suitable for his social learning approach. This leads to a spatial orientation of learning (Deinet 2009; Kessl and Reutlinger 2007) and connects to new forms of peer education and participative pedagogy.
- ▶ *The shift from “having citizenship” to “doing citizenship”.* Learning democracy means identifying issues of common concern within learning groups and searching for suitable forms of debate and common strategies. In this sense, citizenship education would mean the rediscovery of the idea of the Agora within the everyday lives of the target groups.
- ▶ *The courage and possibility of taking risks.* Open learning environments lead to open outcomes. Among the positive effects they could also lead to discovering anti-democratic opinions, prejudices and opinions that are directed against the dignity of certain groups of people. Political education certainly offers the hope of convincing individuals about democratic values, but the risk of failing or supporting anti-democratic values remains as a challenge for young people that has to be realised and conventionalised.

## 5. YOUTH WORK AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: SPATIAL APPROACHES OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY

How can considerations about youth cultures and citizenship education be integrated into interventions by youth workers? A concrete possibility is described in the spatial approaches of social pedagogy (Deinet 2009; Kessler and Reutlinger 2007; Spatscheck 2012b). Accordingly, young people, their youth cultures and their interests and potentials are discovered within their individual lifeworlds and spatial contexts. Social spaces are regarded as relational settings that emerge through social interaction by the participating individuals. Spaces have influences that are represented by social structures, but they can also be changed and developed through activities of acquirement (Deinet and Reutlinger 2004, 2014). The activities of acquirement can be regarded as the possibility of social and individual development. Youth work should therefore be regarded as an actor with socio-spatial relevance and influence (Deinet and Krisch 2006).

To develop a grounded understanding about social spaces, lifeworlds and social conditions, it is helpful to undertake systematic “socio-spatial analyses” with target groups (Deinet 2009; Krisch 2009; Spatscheck 2012b; Spatscheck and Wolf-Ostermann 2009). The following methods are especially helpful:<sup>31</sup>

- ▶ structured walks/city walks with target groups to find out about their daily lifeworld experiences;
- ▶ the “needle method”, which uses maps and needles that are pinned on by target groups to symbolise certain qualities of places and spaces;
- ▶ the drawing of “mental maps” or “subjective maps” that show “inner pictures” about lifeworld-situations;
- ▶ “peer group grids” or “target group grids” that gather information and opinions about certain groups or milieus in the neighbourhood from the perspective of the involved groups;
- ▶ activating interviews with qualitative and quantitative design;
- ▶ participant observations;
- ▶ auto-photography of pictures of typical life situations that are shared and debated among involved groups;
- ▶ “time budgets” or “time charts” that show the amount of time spent at different places and organisations;
- ▶ interviews with key persons and local lifeworld experts;
- ▶ surveys on and analyses of institutions from users’ or neighbours’ perspectives;
- ▶ secondary analyses of existing social data.

Based on the results of socio-spatial analyses, groups can then start to identify common issues and interests and develop common goals and strategies for local social development (Reutlinger 2008). Here, it is very helpful to build on suitable forms

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31. For further descriptions of the methods refer to Spatscheck and Wolf-Ostermann 2009 or the section on methods (*Methodenkoffer*) of the German open access journal [www.sozialraum.de](http://www.sozialraum.de).

(for example, activating media work, forums, world cafés, community workshops, open spaces, etc.) and to communicate about common solutions with target groups and supporting partners. Within the lifeworlds of young people, youth cultures and their potentials are of key importance and can be integrated as positive sources, connecting points and resources for socio-spatial analyses.

The lifeworlds of young people and their youth cultural experiences can then be brought together with the question of citizenship when they are mediated on everyday levels and are connected with the personal experiences of young people. Youth work along the principles of social pedagogy can be regarded as an active participant that thematises the interests and needs of young people and thereby can revive the political as a forum for debate on a practical and local level as well as on trans-regional levels. Against this background, youth work can become a credible and very real element for a lifeworld-oriented citizenship education for young people.

Generally, approaches of lifeworld-orientation should not be understood as individualising practice that is directed at enabling young people to cope with their lives within unsuitable societal conditions. To be fully credible, lifeworld-oriented citizenship education and youth work needs to be supported by a clearly visible and experienceable youth policy on European, national and local levels.

This would also mean a revival of the sociopolitical question (Böhnisch and Schröer 2011) that has been marginalised in many European countries. And it could revive the idea of the republican element of politics as well as the demand that the political still needs to be a constitutive element of negotiation within an active civil society and a democracy that deserves its name.

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## Chapter 12

# Autonomy through dependency: histories of co-operation, conflict and innovation in youth work

*Lasse Siurala*<sup>32</sup>

### THE ORIGINS OF AMBIGUITY IN YOUTH WORK

**T**he first history conference in Blankenberge, Belgium in 2008 (Verschelden et al. 2009) looked at the identity of youth work through national histories. Youth work was seen to be constantly constructed in time and between two apparently opposing interests of emancipation and control. Youth work (youth organisations, public youth services or other types of youth work)<sup>33</sup> was about young people, their autonomy, aspirations, problems and living conditions, but it also operated in a given society with its own problem- and integration-oriented expectations of youth work. The conference explored the ways in which society exerted its influence on youth through youth work (control) and the ways that youth work tried to cater for the lifeworlds of young people (emancipation). It was largely concluded that due to these conflicting pressures, youth work was not able to establish an autonomous space for itself and was felt to be in identity crises.

32. I am thankful to Filip Coussée (University of Ghent), Tomi Kiilakoski (Finnish Youth Research Network), Juha Nieminen (University of Tampere), Leena Suurpää (Finnish Youth Research Network), Joyce Walker (University of Minnesota) and Howard Williamson (University of South Wales) for their lengthy, insightful and critical comments on the draft versions of this paper.

33. As Filip Coussée puts it (personal communication): "This includes all the hybrid shapes from recognized youth work in some countries to virtually non-existent youth work, child care, extended schooling, sports and culture, health care or even the Red Cross, military service or fire brigade in other countries."

Youth work appeared to be more about social integration than about societal change. It was suggested that in its efforts to help young people integrate into the existing social order youth work easily became instrumentalised, pedagogised and formalised. In a number of direct and indirect ways, a pedagogical youth work intervention became an instrument of society to ensure that young people are efficiently socialised. As an example, the Scouts were seen to use “guidance without direction” to promote political passivity and social dependence. Youth work has developed methods to work with young people which are seemingly objective and well-meaning, but which can keep young people quiet, passive, dependent and controlled. For example, a Finnish study (Juvonen 2012) on street work shows that the relationship between a street worker and a young person is not – contrary to what we might think – open, equal or operating on the terms of the young person. Professional street workers have certain status, authority and practices which, subtly used, make the encounter between the two asymmetrical.

The 2nd history conference, also in Blankenberge (Coussée et al. 2010), explored in more detail the role of youth work between the interests and tensions of youth and society. It was suggested that youth work was defined by increased professionalism and methodisation. Youth work specialised in various methods taught in formal, vocational and higher education institutions, and became a formalised profession. This led to the elimination of political and pedagogical aspects of youth work (Lorenz 2009). Emphasising expertise and specialised knowledge leads to understanding youth work as a methodological or technical practice. This is in contrast to those who understand youth work as ethical practice, not as technical practice.

The 3rd history conference (Ghent 2010, see Coussée et al. 2012) continued to reflect the tensions between the two expectations of youth work: emancipating youth and integrating youth. The contradictory expectations were seen to lead youth work into identity crises; “youth work as oxymoronic practice” or “youth work as an oxymoronic blend”. Youth work can only be understood as a practice which desperately tries to find the right blend between working with youth and for the society. In a broad historical perspective after the Second World War the task of youth work was to integrate young people into the existing social order (transit zone). After 1968 it was increasingly agreed that the youth phase is valuable, as such, and for the independent growth of young people (social forum, youth as an actor of change). In the UK, the youth conception was to understand youth as a separate phase of life on which society and youth workers should not impose their educational ideas. The youth worker had the task to link the lifeworlds of young people and create a dialogue with the adults (the society). After the recessions of the 1990s in Europe, all this changed. The task became rather “to monitor, predict and control the individual development of young people” (Coussée et al. 2012: 319).

A significant number of historical studies and contemporary research gave the overall impression that youth work tended to assume an integration role and that it was increasingly difficult to maintain autonomy or promote emancipation of youth. In fact, emancipation increasingly appears to take place outside the youth field, in the streets (the “Occupy” movement), on the Internet (social media), in the arts (like activism) and through everyday actions, campaigns and life style choices of young people. The Ghent conference report concludes (*idem*: 323) that “The only way out

seems to be to recognize the oxymoronic nature of youth work." Youth work must keep on reflecting the conflicting pressures from youth and society and keep on finding innovative solutions to retain autonomy.

The 4th history conference (Tallinn, Estonia 2011) "enriched and deepened our awareness of the tapestry of ideas and practices that inform work in the space between young people and society" (Williamson and Coussée 2011). This space is unclear and does not provide youth work with a solid, recognised identity, perhaps not even a name. For example, in Romania – at least up to that time – there has been no such thing as "youth work" or "youth policy". According to Howard Williamson (2013, personal communication) Finland is relatively unusual in its consistent use of the term youth work.

Thus the question: What is youth work?

There are two basic approaches in order to answer this question and face the ambiguity in youth work: To elaborate a shared understanding on the essence of youth work (through internal reflection) or to create the role and recognition of youth work through co-operating with others (external positioning).

## **AUTONOMY THROUGH ESSENCE**

### **Sacred cows and cherished values:<sup>34</sup> tradition and change in youth work**

During recession and uncertainty it is customary to search for security. In youth work that often means pursuit for the essence of youth work; something safe and permanent, untouchable to outside actors and external influences, a solid core of methods or approaches – autonomy through essence. Some argue that youth work is essentially about a youth worker's individual face-to-face encounter with a young person,<sup>35</sup> many maintain that it is about providing young people a space of their own (a youth centre) and those focusing on social youth work might argue for street work as the core of youth work. But youth and their living conditions and expectations are constantly changing. It is probable that many of the working methods we cherish as basic can rather be sacred cows which we should critically assess. Maybe it is more important to work with youth groups than face individual young people, maybe we need more spaces for intergenerational encounter than spaces isolated for youth only, and maybe we should reach young people through social media rather than in the streets only?

Youth work methods and approaches can have a long history during which things happen and decisions are made which produce different outcomes in different

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34. This pair of terms has been used for some time by Howard Williamson in presentations on youth work and, in the context of youth work history conferences, was discussed by Williamson and Coussée in the Tallinn meeting (2011).

35. The suggestion arising from the first Ministerial Conference on the Youth Service in England and Wales (in 1989) that youth work was about groups was firmly rebutted by the Thatcher government. Youth work engaged with individuals.

countries. Seeing how our working methods and approaches have historically developed may open our eyes to alternative futures.

Take the example of the history of mobile youth work in Finland. It originally started at Helsinki in 1964 as “gang work” under the co-ordination of the Youth Department. The first gang worker Pirkko Fihlmann had studied in the USA and brought the tradition of going onto the streets and mingling with the youth gangs (Ilves 1998). However, it was not until 1991 when a project on outreach youth work was established in Tampere that the current Finnish forms of mobile youth work were established. The project in Tampere was inspired by Norwegian mobile work which, at that time, had been carried out in the big cities of Norway for 20 years. There were two types of mobile youth work: *uteseksjonen* – work which was individual and problem oriented – and *feltarbeid*, which was close to community work and based on empowering the local community to support youth at risk. Mobile work in Tampere took the form of *uteseksjonen* – which then became a national model (Huhtajärvi 2007). The individual and problem-oriented street work was finally established as the Finnish format of mobile work through the amendment of the Youth Act on outreach youth work enacted on 1 January 2011. Today, in some municipalities outreach youth workers outnumber ordinary youth workers. The development of the concept of mobile youth work in Finland and its final institutionalisation through legislation has modified the public and professional image and role of youth work: Youth work is more about integrating (individual) young people at risk to the existing social order than about supporting ordinary young people to develop and experiment with their identity, to make grounded choices in their educational and employment career – and maybe change the existing social order to meet those choices. If mobile youth work had taken on the Norwegian *feltarbeid* approach or the German concept of mobile youth work (Specht 2010), the image of youth work in Finland could have looked very different.

Another example of cherished values and sacred cows is youth participation. Youth participation is a truly cherished value, but are some of its practices rather sacred cows? Youth councils have become the most popular – even hegemonic – way of youth involvement in local decision making in Europe. In Finland out of the 336 municipalities (in 2011) 200 have set up a youth council to express the views of young people. The Union of Youth Councils in Finland is a powerful national lobby organisation. Youth councils in Finland represent the dominant discourse on youth participation and also restrict experimentation with other forms of youth participation. When the Department of Youth at the City of Helsinki decided in 2010 to search for an alternative model for local youth participation, the local and national lobby organisations started a large campaign against this decision. Lobbyists met city councillors, parties of the city council and high civil servants to speak for an elected youth council. The media was frequently used to attack the alternative plans of the Youth Department (Siurala and Turkia 2012).

The Finnish experience has to be put into a historical and cultural context. A comparative study of youth participation in Finland and Germany found marked differences in the two countries (Feldmann-Wojtachnia et al. 2010). In Germany youth participation was understood as civic activities and projects carried out by young people in NGOs, while in Finland participation was about activities in formal representative structures like youth councils and youth parliaments. The authors recommend that

Finland should promote youth agency outside the predefined top-down frameworks of representative structures, enhance diversity in the forms and methods of participation, improve accessibility to youth participation and offer a variety of ways to act, exert influence and become involved (*idem*: 65-75). The Finnish approach to youth participation needs to be better adapted to the ways young people today express their concerns. Perhaps cherished values (established forms of youth participation) have become sacred cows. That typically happens when organisations are not able to react to change. Sacred cows become what organisation researchers call “sticky configurations”, “lock-ins” or “fixations”. Peverelli and Verduyn use the term social and cognitive fixations to refer to ways in which an organisation, an institution or a field of activity or service sticks to its sacred cows: “Cognitive fixation means that the constructed reality is seen as the objective reality and no new views are accepted” (2010: 86-88). In such cases the organisation’s focus is on internal dialogue and rhetoric, hostility and suspicion towards external actors and ideas, over-emphasis on “own” identity and fight against “others”. It is suggested that such organisations should replace their social and cognitive fixations with social and cognitive variation. In youth work that would mean conscious creation of opportunities to work with other sectors and other professionals, youth researchers and young people who do not go to youth centres or join youth organisations – other people who could bring in new ideas and stimulate cognitive conflict. The history of youth work is also about understanding why sacred cows persist and how they can be overthrown.

In the 4th history workshop in Tallinn 2011 Williamson and Coussée (2011) warned the youth field against “splendid isolation” – from becoming too autonomous and too much oriented to its internal dogmas. Historical analysis is needed to decipher how cherished values have established themselves and how some of them have developed into sacred cows. Or, it could be that the values are still valid and do deserve to be cherished, while the problem is that some of the concrete working methods which have been created to implement the values have become assimilated into the values themselves. Youth participation is a value, a youth council is one instrument to implement it, but at some point “youth council” has become equivalent to the value itself.

## **Histories of innovation: determinants of renewal and deterioration**

Competence and its continuous development are necessary for a discipline to establish its recognition, identity and autonomy. What kind of processes have contributed to renewal and innovation in youth work and youth policy? What has been the pressure of societal concerns to develop new measures and policies to combat issues like marginalisation and unemployment? What are the internal incentives to renewal, like finding ways to work with youth via the Internet? How have the established ways of thinking and working given way to innovations and new ways of thinking? What kind of intellectual orientation, professionalisation, methodisation and lobby interests and structures have hindered innovation? In this sense, a story of sacred cows must be a story of power and influence in the youth field. What are the conditions for critique, unveiling and overthrow of a sacred cow? What kind of “social and cognitive fixations” have there been and how have they developed? How

can you tell the difference between a cherished value and a sacred cow? How can you identify a sacred cow? Are there “sacred cows” to be slain or “cherished values” to be defended?

### **The “magic triangle”: the mysterious threesome<sup>36</sup>**

The youth field sometimes makes a collective assertion about its internal collaboration between research, policy and youth work – the so-called “magic triangle”. It is assumed that the interests of the actors are common and that together they can promote the visibility, recognition and autonomy of the small field of youth work. However, it is also possible to look at the “magic triangle” as an arena of internal conflicts and struggle for power.

Lynne Chisholm (2006) described well how distant are the relations within the “magic triangle” of research, policy and practice. There are differences of logic, language and normative understanding. She and many others (Williamson 2006) think that better co-operation between the corners is of mutual benefit and can be promoted. Chisholm argues for (1) better recognition of grass-roots youth work knowledge and competence, (2) “bringing the research community closer to the campfire” (2006: 38) and (3) creating better information exchange channels (like the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy) between the corners of the triangle. Despite these tensions there seems to exist shared optimism in the promise of the triangle. Chisholm’s optimism bases on “learning to use difference positively” (2006: 39). Williamson (2006: 181) encourages the triangle “to make some sacrifices to their own independence and autonomy” for the gains to outweigh the losses.

However, there are also those who are not convinced at the actual capacity or willingness of the practice, research and policy to converge, share and make sacrifices. Siurala (2012) argues that the tensions between the corners of the triangle can even be described as oxymoronic: there is the rhetoric of “a network promoting joint interests”, but also practices indicating rather “a battlefield of social closures maximizing their own interests”.

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36. The relationship between research, practice and policy is sometimes called the “magic triangle” (Chisholm 2006), the Golden Triangle (Jacobs, Lambert and van Bockstal 2010) or even the Eternal Triangle (Smith 1997). The concept is mostly used to discuss the relations between the corners of the triangle and their actual or expected effect on the development of the entire youth field. Some of the authors (Siurala 2012) argue that the Golden Triangle is golden only in official rhetoric. As Filip Coussée has mentioned (see also Berg 2006: 21), perhaps too little notice has been on the internal tensions within the corners; in the research corner the tensions between developmental psychology, social pedagogy and youth sociology, in the practice corner the tensions between youth organisations and local government youth work and in the policy corner the tensions between different levels of governments on youth work and youth policy development. In addition, ambiguities within youth research, youth policy and youth work have held back co-operation between the corners of the triangle. Young people and youth work struggle with their identity, but so does youth research. It is not a recognised academic discipline and many researchers who study youth defy being called “a youth researcher”. Keith Roe, a well-known Nordic “youth researcher”, started his keynote speech to the 2nd Nordic Youth Research Symposium (in 1989) by saying: “I do not regard myself, or wish to be regarded, as a youth researcher” (Ehrnrooth and Siurala 1991: 14).



In 1972 the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation were founded within the Council of Europe. "Youth" meant "youth organisations". The 1970s and 1980s were Youth NGO time. Consequently, as Peter Lauritzen (2006: 15) notes, "Researchers and experts were practically out, because '...there are no better experts on young people, than young people themselves ...' as the *Zeitgeist* of post-'68 would tell us". Since then the NGOs have been in charge of the Council of Europe youth agenda. Youth organisations and their national and international structures claim to be the representatives of young people. They work in close co-operation with the policy makers, sometimes through specific arrangements like "co-management" (Council of Europe) or "structured dialogue" (European Union). But how can it be historically understood that other youth field actors like youth research, other youth experts in the life of young people, municipal youth work, others working with young people, youth movements and other non-NGO youth actors have been in the shadows and margins of youth policy or have had a supportive role at best?

The governments became stronger in the 1980s when the ad hoc committee (CHJE) became a Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ). Within the co-managed structure of the Council of Europe youth field the governments became the balancing power to the youth organisations. The CDEJ also started to look favourably at new partners. Youth research came on the agenda at the first Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth in 1985. The final text mentioned "research and documentation on youth issues" (Proceedings 1988: 130), recommended "securing information exchange between youth research workers and research facilities" (*idem*: 134) and the attached medium-term plan mentioned "initiation of a network of co-operation among youth workers in Europe on research issues" (*idem*: 151).

Pressures to create networks also with youth researchers became stronger. First, the CDEJ mandated the first Expert Committee on Youth Research, which gathered prominent youth researchers and also some government and NGO representatives. Second, the 2nd Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth, entitled "Strategies for European youth policies in the approach to the year 2000" and held in Oslo, Norway, in April 1988 consisted of a presentation by the Finnish Minister of Culture Anna-Liisa Piipari on strengthening the role of youth research in the Council of Europe youth field. The presentation was commissioned by the CDEJ.

Through this strong political support the research co-operation gradually developed into a regular meeting of youth research correspondents reporting back to CDEJ and expanding its activities through the programmes of the two European Youth Centres (in Strasbourg and Budapest). The first partnership agreement with the European Commission signed in 1998 later also included youth research.

The "magic triangle" – policy, practice and research – started to come together. However, it is almost 50 years since the 1968 *Zeitgeist*. The argumentation for NGO legitimacy was indisputable at the time, but it is reasonable to have a historical look at the developments since and ask questions like: How has the legitimacy of youth NGOs, youth research and youth policy since the credo "there are no better experts on youth than young people themselves" been articulated? What was the role and the resulting recognition and mandate of other youth field actors like youth research, non-organised youth, non-NGO youth workers, adult organisations or youth experts

in other fields? What kinds of tensions were created between collaborative relations (within the “magic triangle”)? How did the resulting structures shape the approaches, methods and the identity of youth work and youth policy? How do the historically defined roles, mandates and power positions of the corners of the triangle meet the current youth policy challenges? Is it possible to imagine alternative histories and futures? How authentic is the triangle?

## **The hope for integrated youth programmes, policy and plans**

The most ambitious policy effort of the youth field has been integrated youth policies through local or national youth policy plans or programmes. These programmes have typically had a broad scope. They have been targeted at a large range of youth questions with a broad range of actors, often to improve the living conditions of young people in a municipality or a country. Integrated youth policy plans and surveys – national and local – have quite a long history dating back to the golden era of social planning of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in Finland the concept of integrated youth policy plans was launched by Kari Rantalaiho in 1969 (“Youth policies for the 1970s”) and Juha Vartola, who in 1975 drafted a guide to integrate youth policy plans for local governments. It was followed by nearly 100 municipal integrated youth policy plans during the subsequent decades.

According to follow-up studies on Finnish and European policy plans, very few of them were actually implemented. “Experience from some countries suggests that youth policy plans have promoted the visibility of the youth sector and youth affairs across other sectors, but that it has been difficult to commit the other sectors to actually implement the proposed actions” (Siurala 2006, see also Schillemans, Claeys and Bouverne-De Bie 2003; Sörbom 2004).

In 1995 the Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) of the Council of Europe decided, on the proposal of Finland, to start running national youth policy reviews – with Finland as the first country to be reviewed in 1997. Since then 20 surveys have been carried out (by 2015). No studies on the actual impact of the surveys exist. Howard Williamson has authored two follow-up reports based on the survey documents themselves, some questionnaires and his experience as rapporteur to many of the reports of the international evaluation teams set up by the Council of Europe. One of his overall conclusions is that: “What is written in national reports may bear little relation to practice on the ground” (Williamson 2008: 55). Williamson’s words signal two things. First, the use of the word “may” indicates that we indeed do not have enough research data to arrive at that conclusion, and, second, there is a grounded expectation that national reports do not necessarily reflect the reality and that they have not trickled down that well.

A historical approach should look at how and why these initiatives were originally established. What are the reasons for their success and failure of implementation? How has this co-operation affected the image, approaches, working methods, resources, dependencies and the autonomy of youth work?

Alliances with other sectors are not uncommon. They have been established on a thematic basis with one or only a few partners; co-operating with schools on youth

participation, with health authorities on substance use prevention, with the social sector on youth at risk, with employment authorities on youth integration into labour markets and so on. Youth unemployment became the key youth policy concern after the exceptionally high youth unemployment rate in the latter half of the 1970s. In Finland the main measure of municipal youth work became youth workshops, first developed at Helsinki City Youth Department in 1983. As other resources to local youth work were reduced, the workshops became the instrument of survival for many local youth services. At the same time youth work became very close to employment policies, organisations and funds. This alliance has undoubtedly affected the public image of youth work and youth workers' perception of what is youth work. Similar historical analysis could be helpful in understanding youth work that has been allied with the social sector, schools or the cultural sector.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, through these partnerships youth work can negotiate itself for recognition and resources; that is, more autonomy. For example, through co-operation with schools, youth work can expand its clientele and make wider use of its working methods. Youth work has developed many methods to promote integration into school and labour markets, thus becoming a recognised partner with the employment authorities. In this volume Besse and Carletti explain how the history of youth work in France has resulted into "interstitial" or autonomous space in the margins of formal education, culture and social work.

## **AUTONOMY THROUGH DEPENDENCY**

### **Defining autonomy**

Dictionaries define the word autonomy as immunity from arbitrary exercise of authority: political independence, liberty, self-determination, independence – freedom from control or influence of others. Autonomy, according to Wikipedia, is the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision. Dictionaries define autonomy, but also seem to imply a normative statement: The inherently rational individuals and societies based on representative democracies run by rational citizens, with the help of science, are able to direct the world we live in. Individuals and societies are able to resist "arbitrary exercise of authority" and "control and influence of others" and become gradually more autonomous. There is a strong faith in the progress of enlightenment, reason, rationality, individual agency and democracy. At this point, it is fair to also remind ourselves of the ideas of critical social philosophy about social change, agency, power and autonomy.

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37. An amendment of the Finnish youth law (2010) was a response to the increase of youth unemployment. It urged municipalities to recruit mobile youth workers to reach the NEET youth and forward them to further services. As the ministry substantially funded the street workers, most municipalities started recruiting them. Outreaching youth work started to profile local government youth work. In many small municipalities street workers even outnumbered ordinary youth workers. This change of focus cannot but have an effect on the profile, services, pedagogy and the image of local government youth work. In the UK these kinds of "youth workers" were not seen as youth workers by young people themselves (Davies 2009).

This critique may be squeezed into two essential questions: (1) To what extent is the world we live in a rational construct? (2) Are the existing forms of representative democracy enough to govern the world?

## **Complex and uncertain worlds**

William Connolly (2011) argues that both nature and society are characterised by complexity, plurality and uncertainty. He looks at the difficulties to explain natural phenomena like biological evolution and cites the Nobel Prize Winner Ilya Prigogine to make his point: "Our universe is non-linear, full of irreversible processes and far from equilibrium" (2011: 44). Human agency based on rational thinking cannot sufficiently deal with all this uncertainty. The same applies to social phenomena. Connolly refers, as an example, to the difficulty of predicting societal phenomena like the after-effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union. He goes on to suggest that we are witnessing the clash of religious systems, political ideologies, escalating "minorisation", as well as the collision between neo-liberalism and global warming – social phenomena (called "abstract machines") which largely avoid scientific scrutiny and which nobody seems to control. Thus both natural and social phenomena are very difficult to explain, predict and govern. This complexity and uncertainty of the world makes it difficult to identify the power which threatens rational agency and autonomy of individuals and societies. Furthermore, according to Connolly, to adapt to uncertainty and to respond to changes difficult to predict, we need actors outside of established science and traditional representative democracy. We need people who are able to interpret "weak signs" of change – artists, dissident scholars, innovative scientists, social movements, subcultures, non-governmental organisations and, yes, young people. At least, the established sciences and democracy need to open up to other kinds of perceptions and actors. More recently Connolly (2013) has discussed neo-liberalism as a mechanism to create (the false) impression of markets as a self-regulating system. He thinks that breaking conventions, critical practical wisdom, role experimentation and alternative lifestyles can spark off a societal reflection process – to see the multi-tiered, complex and unpredictable nature of "the human cosmos".

## **The new mechanics of power**

Michel Foucault (1977) writes that the power limiting the agency of a rational individual is "fluid and ubiquitous". He thinks that it is increasingly difficult to identify where the power is and thus know how to deal with it. "The new mechanisms of power", as he calls them, have penetrated everywhere "beyond the state and its apparatuses". Foucault has been criticised for not leaving much space for the individual and social agency. However, he says that also those governed utilise power expressed as "multifaceted forms of resistance and action" (Foucault 1978: 93). For those governed, autonomy appears simultaneously as an externally created framework of action and as something that can be negotiated. Blanchard (2012) points out that Foucault thinks that through a critique of the ideological forces present in our social structure, it is possible to link with others doing the same and achieve

“moments that can potentially be transformative of those agents involved in such moments”. Foucault himself carried out historical studies to critically explore “the ideological forces present in our social structure”.<sup>38</sup> To sum up, Foucault cautions us to regard autonomy as something that can be easily captured through scientific analyses of the (social and natural) world. Autonomy is intricately linked to societal power relations, which do not easily open up to ordinary rational citizens. They can be reflected and acted on.

## The democracy deficit

Dictionary definitions of autonomy seem to assume that liberty, independence and self-determination can be reached through rational individuals (with the help of scientific knowledge) which exert their influence through representative democracy. “Democracy deficit” is the term to describe the lack of ability of current democratic structures to engage and have a dialogue with the citizens, their movements and organisations. Could it be that the procedures of representative and deliberative democracy are too restrictive within the complexity, variance and conflicts of civil society, and within the diversity of lifeworlds among young people? This is exactly what Chantal Mouffe (2000, 2005, 2009) and others (Connolly 2011; Glover 2011; Honig 1993; Tully 2008) maintain when criticising representative and deliberative democracy. According to Mouffe (2000) both Rawls and Habermas overemphasised the capacity of rational procedures to arrive at consensual decisions. Instead we need “the availability of contending forms of citizenship identification” (Mouffe 2000: 10), tolerance and dialogical spaces. That means structures for continuous, open and tolerant dialogue between the complexity of civil society and the government. Furthermore, agency is not only about rational behaviour, it is also about passion and emotions. More recently Connolly (2013) underlines the importance of anxiety, practical wisdom and creativity as sources of positive human action. He thinks that we also need action which crosses boundaries of the public and the third sector, different professions, art and science, organisations and movements: “We must therefore work on mood, belief, desire, and action together” (Connolly 2011: 147). Without going into more detail in this debate, it may be concluded that autonomy as an ideal for a youth service needs to be critically considered. A youth work actor (local, regional, national or international) needs to negotiate its autonomy in relation to other actors in “the public” and in relation to “the private”, the young people. To respond to the multitude of different young people, their passions and desires, the challenge is to create room for diverse expression and dialogical spaces between them and youth policy – and not only to rely on representative structures of the public sector or the organisations.

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38. Foucault distanced himself from the traditional historiographical sense of uncovering historical truths. In a critical overview Richard Rorty (1994: 264) summarises Foucault’s view on historical analysis: “do not look for progress or meaning in history; do not see the history of a given activity, of any segment of culture, as the development of rationality or of freedom; do not use any philosophical vocabulary to characterize the essence of such activity or the goal it serves; do not assume that the way this activity is presently conducted gives any clue to the goals it served in the past.”

## Autonomy reconsidered

Autonomy is increasingly about managing uncertainty and emotions rather than organising reason and facts. Understanding autonomy as the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision puts a strong faith in reason, evidence, free individual agency and democracy. But, there are those like William E. Connolly who argue that life is essentially not a rational construct and defies rational explanation. Facts and evidence are interpreted differently by those in different power and cultural positions distorting our possibilities to acquire an objective evidence base. “Un-coerced” decisions are difficult to make as “power is everywhere” (Foucault) and it is hard to identify due to its “fluid and ubiquitous” nature. Alternative research (like Chantal Mouffe and Robert Glover) suggests that democracy is not essentially about rational decision making of elected representatives rather than about “mood, belief and desire” of people and about the power of collective emotions and assumptions that have a tendency to spread as movements (individualism, nationalism, rise of the Right, “Indignados” and the “Occupy” movement, religions, ISIS, etc.). The phenomenon of “democracy deficit” has highlighted the experience of people of not being heard by city councils and governments as well as their mistrust in these bodies. The “people” are the civil society characterised by “complexity, conflict and difference” (Cinefogo 2011: 3).

## Autonomy and organisational culture

Peverelli and Verduyn (2011) have studied how organisations cope with increasing complexity and ambiguity. Authors maintain that people want to make sense of the ambiguity through social interaction, linking with other actors: “The reduction of equivocality (ambiguity, complexity) by actors through ongoing social interaction in order to couple their behaviour in ways that suit the joint performance of certain activities” (Peverelli and Verduyn 2011: 5). In other words, organisations try to control uncertainties and create autonomous space for action through social interaction and networking. In the private sector, companies establish clusters with different kinds of organisations, those with differing objectives, even with competitors as far as the overall result of the co-operation reduces equivocality. In a cluster, competition and co-operation can co-exist. These findings have two implications.

First, autonomy does not mean isolation. In the era of uncertainties autonomy is created through negotiating interdependencies with other actors. Through interdependencies organisations gain influence, recognition and power, and thus autonomy. Instead of encapsulating oneself in internal practices of youth work, the youth field should engage in collaborative relationships with other actors and the young people. The art of youth work is to establish relationships and dependencies which improve the recognition and influence of youth work and contribute to its relative independence of agency – its autonomy. A broader framework of interdependencies is the European and the global. As a rule the unit of youth policies is either national or European: national youth policies seldom extend to other countries and European youth policies seldom link to other continents or to global issues. This type of “autonomy” or rather “isolation” is sometimes called “methodological nationalism” or “methodological European policies” (Wimmer and Schiller 2002). The idea of levels

of government (national – European) and the vocabulary that goes with them do not capture the interconnectedness of social activity and social systems; phenomena like transnational protest movements, transnationally spreading populist nationalism, commercial youth cultures, Internet communities, global warming, clash of religious systems, global capitalism and so on.

Second, it is not necessarily a threat to the autonomy of youth work to collaborate with “competing sectors” like the sports, health, social and education sectors, adult organisations, private companies, etc. One recent (2011-2012) example, which revolves around this issue, was the debate on the integration of youth affairs in the Erasmus for All programme (later Erasmus+). The Commission wanted to create more synergies and co-operation between the formal education (Erasmus) and non-formal education (youth and sports) programmes through an integrated programme, but national youth exchange agencies, youth organisations and many governments strongly opposed it. The argument was that integration into a big programme will result in the loss of its independence and lead to a gradual disappearance of the youth programme and the sector. However, it is possible to add another approach to this issue: Instead of the youth field playing it safe and protecting its current autonomy within the larger programme, it could consider negotiating its recognition and relative freedom through partnerships, networks, activities and projects with those with the big money and educational authority of the Erasmus for All (Erasmus+) programme.

## **DISCUSSION – THREE MINGLED ORIENTATIONS TO YOUTH WORK?**

It might well be that different historical interpretations and societal changes mingle and modify differently our perceptions of youth work. First, there is “the New Public Management seizure of youth work” (1990s onward), which modified youth work into a tool to monitor, control and guide young people, which introduced measurement, assessment and performance management of government objectives, which re-profiled youth work closer to social work, employment services and support to formal education, and which cut public funds for youth work. This societal change has affected countries in different ways, but overall has activated youth workers to defend the field and identify the following characteristics as the essence of youth work: A professional relationship between youth worker and young people, with youth as the primary, socially excluded client, the youth worker as the advocator for youth (Sercombe 2010), sometimes even a “guerilla profession” against the institutions (Belton 2014). The relationship between the youth worker and the young person is often seen as an unpredictable process, difficult to measure (Ord 2012). A youth work process can take unexpected turns and the turns might be difficult to explain. Finnish outdoor educationalist Steve Bowles said that in adventure education learning is often “something that takes place between the youth worker, the moon and the campfire”, something which is not easy to break down into didactic phases leading to clear-cut quantifiable learning results. Furthermore, the outcome of a youth work project might not be measurable knowledge or competences (of formal education), but rather practical knowledge, non-formal learning which is challenging to capture through standardised measures.

Second, there is the post-1968 “Defence of historical and modernist ideals of youth work”, which saw youth organisations as the representatives of youth with impressive structures for local, national and European advocacy, which praised integrated youth policies and believed in the potential of research, youth work and policy makers to jointly defend youth work (the “magic triangle”). The common elements were (1) belief in representative democracy and (2) trust in research: Youth work was essentially about youth participation (or active citizenship) through representative democracy, and youth policy and the “magic triangle” were based on youth research. By and large, the mandate of youth organisations has not been questioned since 1968 in that “youth participation” and its established forms continue as the overriding rhetoric, perhaps even a sacred cow in the field, and the official rhetoric of the “magic triangle” has not much changed.<sup>39</sup>

But, perhaps we have overestimated the rationality of things (reason, research, measurement, planning, self-organisation of markets and so on) and do not see the cracks in representative democracy (lacking trust in politics and politicians, frustration of social movements getting their voices heard, new formats of agency and so on). Perhaps we should orient ourselves to the unexpected and uncertain nature of things. Is it possible to imagine alternative forms of youth agency, find ways of supporting them and develop responsive public policies? How can youth work prepare young people to handle controversies, uncertainties and unexpected situations, to keep on redrafting their future trajectories? Are there alternative constellations of expertise on youth? Instead of evidence-based integrated policy plans, can there be evidence-informed strategic alliances with other actors? Are we ready to move the emphasis from researching and teaching scientific knowledge (“*episteme*”, as Aristotle called it) to developing practice-based and -oriented wisdom to know how to act in real life situations (“*phronesis*”, according to Aristotle)? Can we create independent space and recognition for youth work through “interstitial spaces” between the big sectors of social affairs, formal education, employment and so on? Can there be autonomy through dependencies? This is the third, emergent type of orientation: “The reluctance to face alternative perceptions of youth work”.

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39. As an example “Youth Work in Finland” is defined as a tripartite pillar of Youth Organisations, youth research and the Ministry of Education and Culture (see the respective web pages of the Ministry, the Youth Organisations and the Finnish Youth Research Network).



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Part VI

# Conclusions

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## Chapter 13

# Bridging youth work, but on whose terms?

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*Lasse Siurala, Filip Coussée, Leena Suurpää and Howard Williamson*

**A**ccording to the 2nd European Youth Work Convention the aims of youth work are to “create spaces” and “build bridges” to promote active citizenship of young people (Declaration 2015: 5). The bridging role is to support, in particular, social integration of youth at risk. These are general guidelines for youth workers to work with young people. The convention also states that “There is a need for more collaborative practice, to gain more experience and develop models for closer co-operation between different actors from other sectors working with young people” (*idem*: 9). This volume takes a historical look at the relations between youth work and other social actors. The title “autonomy through dependency” also suggests, in line with the convention, that collaboration with others is one way of establishing a recognised identity for youth work – youth work which always has claimed to be a flexible co-operator.

The convention uses the phrase “youth work” to refer to individual youth workers, but also to the institutions in which they work. However, more often than not “youth worker” denotes the individual worker or the point of service. The organisation, its decision making and management structures, dialogue with staff, conflicts with staff, co-operational relations with other sectors, the funders, the city hall, regional and national government and so on tend to be pushed somewhere in the background. The overall impression is that it is youth workers only who run youth work. Of course youth workers with their experience and competence of working with young people are at the heart of the organisations and services working with and for young people, but one cannot overlook the role and importance of the institutional and organisational level, which can either make the life of youth workers difficult, or create good conditions for youth work practice – as for example outlined by the second European Youth Work Convention. However, even if collaboration between youth workers and people working with young people from the other sectors can be originated directly between the workers, it is seldom sustainable without the support of the respective structures and organisations. Thus the key to success in implementing documents like the declaration of the second Youth Work Convention is to find ways of working on two levels: on the level of youth work practice and on the institutional level. Of course, the dichotomy of these two levels is a simplification: There are other layers which frame young people and youth work. There is the ongoing struggle for power between civil servants of the public institutions and politicians. There are also political, economic and religion-related meta-changes affecting the thinking and agency of all the layers. This is to remind us that the overall picture is more complicated than conceptualising youth work as a tense position between young people and society.

However, this volume on the history, and often on the near history of youth work takes a look at both levels mentioned above. It looks at youth workers' view on societal development affecting their practice and it analyses the institutional development that frames youth work. The volume indicates that the position of youth work between young people and institutions is a complex one. National histories differ in terms of their emphasis on centralised guidance and on activities born out of the encounter between young people and the youth worker. At some historical moment institutional youth policies can be coercive, but at other times provide support at the local level and allow for grassroots autonomy. There are examples of successful co-operation between youth work and other actors and sectors, but also versatile discussion on the difficulties and threats of that relationship.

## **YOUTH WORK AS A POLITICAL CONSTRUCT?**

Let us take some examples from this volume. Since the 19th century, Australian youth work developed through a number of stages in which the predominant political priorities on children and young people had a direct effect on the contents and organisation of youth work. In its early phases national concern was child protection and the education of young people, which also came to establish the youth policy agenda. Due to Australian involvement in the First World War, Second World War and the Vietnam War, society became worried about the physical condition and military competences of their young people. During a large part of the 20th century a fitness and military programme dominated youth policies. As the Vietnam War was over and as anti-war and related youth movements also had an effect on the cultural climate in Australia, there was a turn to a "youth-led empowerment movement" with youth policy and youth work administration, youth participation structures and the professionalisation of youth work. Later the state of Victoria was inspired by the UNCRF and adopted in 1991 the Victorian human rights charter which further strengthened the position of youth work. Clearly, the youth field made good use of and benefited from this development. Interestingly, during the last decenniums, depending on whether the Labour Party or the Conservative Party were in power, youth work has been respectively high or low on the government agenda. Clearly, the way that national, social and political history unfolds has a definite effect on youth work. As Australia indicates the effect can be either coercive or open up opportunities for youth work. Sometimes the effects of political changes on youth work can be indirect long-term effects. Take the example of the Second World War and the aftermath in the history of youth work in France. During the Nazi occupation the Vichy government established strong centralised youth work structures for political purposes. As a reaction to that, French youth policy became, for a long time after Vichy was gone, very distrustful of any centralised youth policies. This was one important factor which contributed, for a long time, to a peripheral position of youth work in the national administration.

The most vivid descriptions of the undesirable effects of political institutions (the government) on youth work come from the near history of the UK. Several papers in this volume argue that during the recent decenniums government policies in the UK concerning youth work have contributed to, not only drastic reduction of funds, but



also to sacrifices at the heart of youth work, to dilution of youth work, and, according to some, to the loss of its identity. Northern Ireland is another example of how political priorities affect youth work. The period of “the Troubles” (1969-98), the period of the Thatcher government and more recently the New Public Management era all guided the youth work “curriculum”. Curriculum changed as politics or administrative culture changed. However, it was also possible, to a certain extent, for youth work to successfully negotiate the contents of the curriculum. Alastair Scott-McKinley argues that a curriculum has a Janus face, reflecting both political interests and the interests and expectations of youth workers, and sometimes even the young people. The story in Estonia, between the world wars, was diverse, one of control, patronage and sponsorship. The degree of autonomy of youth organisations from their mother organisations – in this particular case of youth organisations in the interwar period Estonia – created risks, but also considerable benefits like relatively high levels of youth participation and membership.

What can we learn from these accounts? First of all, it is very difficult to close your eyes to the effects that political institutions and their history have on youth work practice and its institutional design. Second, the ways that societal priorities and issues have cascaded down to youth work have not only been coercive. In many cases youth work has positively responded to these concerns, has developed its practices and, overall, benefited from changes in societal concerns. Third, it appears that there tend to be more and richer accounts relating to cases of oppression and pressure than on those of support and dialogue. Maybe oppression is more typical than dialogue: it is just that small non-powerful sectors, like youth work, tend to become invisible losers in larger societal decision-making processes. But it is also possible that, for some reason, it is the negative experiences which attract the headlines, history writing and research.

However, it is important to learn from the non-successful experiences, too.

The tension is between the “heart of youth work”, its “own curriculum”, the “core of youth work” and “youth work embedded in other sectors, in the society”. As suggested earlier in this volume (by Filip Coussée) “own curriculum” and “embedded youth work” are “false dichotomies”, because in reality they mingle. However, it is important to recognise the tension. Looking at it as a dichotomy can be used as a conceptual framework which sensitises us to discern phenomena and processes which otherwise might stay hidden. To take one example, it may appear that the experiences of the abrupt and drastic changes in youth work in England are not transferable to other countries with seemingly more secure and stable situations of youth work, and thus not relevant. However, it may well be that similar changes take place everywhere, albeit with a slower pace, so slow that we are unable to perceive them. Becoming acquainted with the UK process, and the dichotomous relation between government policies and youth work practice, can serve as an intellectual grid to study the more feeble indications of exactly the same process in another country.

In sum, youth work has a heart of its own but it also has to “resonate with changing political landscapes”. The key is to respond to societal expectations without losing heart. This means two things: To know what your heart says (what is youth work, its curriculum) and to respond to the interests of society.

## THE HEART

In her keynote speech Joyce Walker (University of Minnesota) asked:

Is this work [youth work] a movement, a field, a system, a sector of a larger field such as education or social work, or something entirely different? Are we a “force to be reckoned with” or a regulated profession?

Apparently, it is not only a European challenge to search for the “heart of youth work”. In fact, Guy Redig (Free University of Brussels, 2014), when commenting on Walker’s presentation, was excited to work on this together: “No wide Atlantic ocean neither strong winds can hinder us in this shared battle.”

Jan Vanhee (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Belgium, 2014), the other commentator to Joyce Walker, said that, “We cannot develop a single universal vocabulary, but we can identify common threads with common terms.” Despite the difficulties, this volume identified some common threads and common ground: Youth work is not problem driven; youth cannot be reduced to just a stage to be passed through; youth work supports young people to find what they want to be as a collective voluntary non-formal learning process; and it helps broaden lifeworlds and world views (citizenship learning, if you want). Youth work nurtures experiential methods, play and fun. In essence, youth work is also about “space filling”, linking actors. Due to the versatile nature of the field there exist many other characteristics of youth work, and different youth workers emphasise different aspects of it. Furthermore, some of the characteristics change as new challenges emerge. But to keep one’s heart, there must be an explicit set of coherent characteristics of youth work.

## RESPONDING TO THE INTERESTS OF THE SOCIETY

The societal expectations for youth work can be (at least by and large) acceptable to youth work, which then leads youth workers to design practices and services which meet these interests. There are examples of how municipal youth services have succeeded to integrate their views and programmes in the city council priority plans. A good part of youth work probably finds a positive way to respond to societal concerns and expectations. The success factor seems to be the capacity of youth work to integrate its objectives, programmes and activities within, for example, the municipal, regional or national programmes and budgets. Another variable is the capacity of the city, regional administration or government to create dialogues with youth work as they design their political documents, programmes and budgets. Overall, we lack historical and social science accounts of these processes.

As this volume has vividly shown, youth work can also find societal expectations and interests unacceptable, or difficult to link with the heart of youth work. Jon Ord argues that the current “managerialist culture” threatens youth work because of its New Public Management inspired emphasis on measurement and quality assessment. According to him, measurement through pre-set objectives and the overall idea of “measuring outcomes” does not work for youth work, where the educational processes are unexpected and incidental. As a result: “measurement asks the wrong kinds of

questions and looks to provide the wrong kinds of answers" (see Jon Ord's article in this volume). Submission to the managerialist culture leads to the impossibility of following your heart within youth work. Interestingly, this resistance to societal expectations has led to the exploration of new conceptual frameworks for youth work (see Ord's reflection on the Aristotelean concept of "*phronesis*" in this volume) and to the development of new strategies to make the outcomes of youth work visible (see Ord's proposal to move from "measuring outcomes" to "demonstrating changes", also Cooper 2011: 55-70).

According to de St Croix (in this volume) youth work was forced into alliances with other sectors and "became formalised, more bureaucratic, target focused, monetised and commodified, placed more clearly in the framework of social control, surveillance and policing. It seemed to many practitioners that youth work was losing its identity, its sense of solidarity with young people and its informal approach". Then came the cuts and finally "[these] questionable alliances might even have been part of our downfall – in some places there has been little left to fight for because the heart of youth work had already been lost by the time the cuts came in". De St Croix, together with many others, like Belton (2015: 2017-2018) and Skott-Myhre (2009: 275-284), see the relationship between youth and society, and alliances between youth work and the public sector as political acts threatening youth work and young people. The task of youth work is to ally with young people, critical youth workers, critical researchers, alternative educators and, with other activists, sharing the same political philosophy and the same dreams and aspirations, and fight against those "economically and militarily dominant" and for the heart of youth work. De St Croix has made the relevant point that societal expectations presented to youth work as democratically agreed decisions or as apolitical administrative guidelines actually are "political choices". Furthermore, she also reminds us that the alliances that youth work creates with other sectors are not necessarily based on mutual interest, or the interests of young people, but rather on "political acts" with explicit or hidden agendas going against the heart of youth work and against young people.

Some time ago Guy Standing from the ILO characterised our times saying that there is "an unwillingness to think, speak or act radically". This clearly is not true for the entire youth field. De St Croix, Belton, Skott-Myhre and many others exemplify youth workers dedicated to stand on the side of young people and help them – and us – to critically view institutional, political and economic pressures on youth work and young people. Of course, the brave dedication to stand on the side of young people (and the critical allies) and work against the establishment risks landing into "splendid isolation". Earlier in this volume it was suggested (by Filip Coussée) that the "splendid isolation" of youth work leaves room for reintegration into a broader civilisation strategy to counter and combat neo-liberal individualism. At the moment, alternative civilisation strategies can find their proponents in civil society (like youth organisations, youth movements), academia (like youth researchers) and the arts (like popular culture). However, for those of us who work in public sector youth work, the opportunities to engage in "guerilla warfare against the institutions" (Belton 2015: 217-218) are not that good. Perhaps, as a minimum common denominator one could agree with Howard Williamson: "An unsupported autonomy can be as useless as unconditional surrender" (see Williamson's introduction to Part II in this volume).

## YOUTH WORK AS “INTERSTITIAL PRACTICE”

A further reaction of youth work to societal expectations is to negotiate the interests of youth and youth work with those of the other sectors, city council or government. The history of youth work in France is an interesting example. A small service in between formal education and social services has been able to establish a recognised position and role within the services for young people, “an interstitial space”. Youth work has been able to become “a space filler”, bridging the gaps between other sectors. The key seems to have been the “generalist”, flexible and co-operative competences of the *animateur* to link the specialised professions into a more comprehensive service. Furthermore, during its history, French youth work has also been able to retain a certain professional respect in the eyes of formal education and social work, and an “anti-institutional mood” to create the necessary space for independent (interstitial) action.

Historical accounts of youth work are essentially unique and not easily transferable. However, the French idea of youth work as “an interstitial practice” provokes us to reflect on at least two things. First, what else do we need to know to negotiate “interstitial space” for youth work? Second, what does “border pedagogy” mean? Apparently, we lack historical accounts and contemporary analysis about the ways in which youth work has been successfully struggling between education, social service, employment authorities, culture and sports. As to “border pedagogy”, Besse and Carletti point out that health, sport and culture workers have adopted some elements of “youth work” to pursue their more specific goals. That cannot be seen as dilution of youth work, but rather as something strengthening it. Through inter-professional collaboration competences can travel. It is even possible that in such working contexts new competences, even new professions may develop. To take an example, a youth worker in Helsinki had been working for a year in a multiprofessional team with social and health workers (sharing an office) to develop practices to work with young people via the Internet. As she was asked how her professional competences had changed during the year, she replied: “There is no return to youth work only” (Siurala 2011: 144). Apparently, the cross-sectoral team combined their disciplinary competencies into something more than their additive effects. Border pedagogy can create new professional competences, perhaps even new professions?

The title of the fifth history workshop “Autonomy through dependency” wanted to provoke reflection on the difficult relation between youth and the society and to launch the idea of youth work being defined through its co-operative relations, also implying that it is good for youth work to establish alliances. The title was formulated including an oxymoronic interpretation. The internal conflict was: One can either be autonomous or become dependent. The French account of youth work as “interstitial practice” says one can have both. Youth work can offer activities which both teachers and youth workers find useful. Ideally, it is a reciprocal dependency: both experience that they give something to the activity and get something out of it. In this sense, it might be better to use the expression “interdependency” rather than “dependency”.

But, to what extent can youth work fight for “interdependencies” rather than “dependencies”?

## **GRAND NARRATIVES OF YOUTH WORK?**

When the concept of the “magic triangle” came together somewhere in the 1980s it has since been discussed as the great opportunity for the youth field to unite its competences and respective power to drive forward the entire field: youth policy, youth research and youth work. But it did not work out as a convergent dynamo of the field. Rather, in its entire life, it has evolved very little. And, during the past decenniums the concept has not become any clearer. For many, “magic triangles are more like a bowl of spaghetti”.

As to the history of youth policy, “there is no sequential dynamic with a final guaranteed result. Rather, it is all “stop-start” and “hit and miss”, contingent on lucky breaks, critical moments and key individuals and, possibly, most significantly, the wider social and political context” (see Williamson’s introduction to Part II in this volume). Typically, youth work approaches developed through individuals, whether it was youth clubs in Iceland or the introduction of youth policy to Finland. Still, even with strong individuals, youth clubs in Iceland witnessed “aimless development” and youth policy came to Finland through “meandering paths”.

The above description might exaggerate the randomness of the historical development of youth work, but it reminds us of the dangers of claiming that structures, policies, approaches, methods and so on are “historically necessary”. Rather, many things could have come out differently. This volume on the history of youth work can provide many readings: there is a rich collection of national youth histories to complement and add to the respective accounts in the four earlier volumes; there are histories and analyses of key youth work themes for readers to compare with their own experiences, sharpen their critical view and inspire their thinking; and there are a lot of unexplored areas yet to be studied.

## **HISTORIES OF THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE?**

One specificity of this volume is that it wanted to look at themes. It outlined some, but it appeared that many of the key themes lacked historical studies. As a result, the volume is a mix of thematic accounts on youth work: some from a longer historical perspective, many looking at the near history of the past few decenniums, a few contemporary studies and even an effort to look at future challenges. One can hear the critique that it is not justified to compose a history book from totally different discourses and disciplines: history writing, contemporary youth sociology and future-oriented social philosophy. Not all historians want to parallel past and present, or judge the past in a contemporary framework, nor are they interested in extending history into the future.

Respecting this, we perhaps may, at the same time, be tolerant to alternative uses of history. In various ways history writing might not be disconnected from the present nor from the future.

According to E. H. Carr (1987:30), history “is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and the present”, not least because of the ways in which contemporary ideas, ideologies, interests and assumptions have an effect on the interpretation of historical material

(Iggers 2000). Thus, there must also exist areas or themes of youth work which have skipped the notice of contemporary history accounts, because contemporary priorities have sidetracked them or because certain topics are still taboo. For example, in Finland such topics could be “illegitimate children left behind by German soldiers during the Second World War” or “transgenerational effects of traumatised youth of the Second World War”.

In addition, there are historians who call for a history of the present to “reflect on the role history plays in establishing categories of contemporary debate by making them appear inevitable, natural or culturally necessary; and to publish work that calls into question certainties about the relationship between past and present that are taken for granted by the majority of practicing historians” (*History of the Present* journal). Are there histories of youth work, youth policy, their structures or founding fathers, which might have been written to legitimise their current status?

Then we have Michel Foucault, who also talks about “history of the present”, which “should constitute the starting point for any enquiry into the past and a critical ontology of ourselves” (Fuggle, Lanci and Tazzioli 2015: 1). In Foucault’s own words: “The game is to try to detect those things which have not yet been talked about, those things that, at the present time, introduce, show, give some more or less vague indications of the fragility of our system of thought, in our way of reflecting, in our practices” (Foucault 1996: 411). The fifth workshop on the history of youth in Europe wanted to look at thematic histories. It identified present topics like the “magic triangle” and integrated youth policies and wanted to know how they came about. Do current youth work structures have historical legitimisation, which is no longer valid?

Furthermore, historians have traditionally rejected the idea that we can use the study of history to think about the future. “On methodological grounds, most historians reject as either impractical, quixotic (imaginative but unrealistic), hubristic, or dangerous any effort to examine the past as a way to make predictions about the future” (Staley 2002: 72). However, the barriers between disciplines have become diluted and it is scientifically legitimate today to write histories of the future: Why could we not extend our knowledge on the history of youth work a few years into the future? Why not “History of youth centres in Iceland 1950-2040” or “Integrated youth policies in Europe in the 2030s”?

National histories of youth work in Europe keep exciting readers about the volumes, at the same time as the self-consciousness and deeper understanding of the roots of the respective youth work has increased. Perhaps these histories have also contributed to a wider recognition of youth work as a field anchored in a long and rich history of experiences and development. One could enrich the approach with histories of the present and of the future.

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The "History of youth work in Europe" series aims to achieve better understanding of current challenges in youth work and youth policy. Volume 5 addresses questions like: How have government policies and administrative practices over the past few decades affected youth work? What kind of strategies has youth work developed to react to them and to create a positive space for work with young people? Can educational approaches of youth work, like social pedagogy, help mediate between young people in their ever-changing lives and society? Co-operation between youth policy, youth research and youth work has been called "the Magic Triangle" – but is the magic still there?

This publication discusses these and other topics from a variety of perspectives. The authors come not only from Europe, but also from the USA, Australia and South Africa, providing a refreshing, comparative reflection on youth work issues and opportunities, which is revealed to be global in nature. They also have diverse and varied backgrounds in youth research, youth work, youth policy making and youth worker training. This comparative historical perspective puts some of the pieces of the "youth work puzzle" together, while many are left unconnected. It also becomes apparent that there is an element of randomness in the historical development of youth work. Many structures, policies, approaches and methods are not "historically necessary". Rather, many things could have come out differently. This volume on the history of youth work provides many readings: it provides a rich collection of national youth histories to complement and build upon the four earlier volumes, and histories and analyses of youth work for readers to compare with their own experience, sharpen their critical view and inspire their thinking.

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