

# **The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today**

*Edited by Griet Verschelden, Filip Coussée, Tineke Van de Walle and Howard Williamson*

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## **The interesting histories of European youth work and policy**

*Hanjo Schild and Jan Vanhee*

In May 2008, we – the team for international youth policy in the Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults of the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe – organised the first workshop on “the history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for today’s youth work policy”.

Why this interest in the history of youth work and youth policy? In recent years, several youth movements and organisations have celebrated their 75th, 80th or even 100th anniversary with a variety of activities, alongside efforts to safeguard their heritage. Especially at local level, they have organised exhibitions and explored their archives to present the origin and history of their organisation, in many cases publishing a commemorative book with pictures, reminiscences and text. In 1981, for instance, one of the authors of this introduction, Jan Vanhee, together with other youth leaders set up a whole project to celebrate the 35th anniversary of their Chirogroup.

At universities, particularly in departments of social and cultural studies, sometimes students write a paper or an essay on youth work or a related topic, and occasionally one can find a PhD dissertation. For example, some years ago Filip Coussée was defending his PhD at the Ghent University. It was fascinating to get such a historical and pedagogical overview, but it was especially amazing to see the links and parallels with similar developments in other countries like the UK and Germany.

Since the end of the 1990s, international co-operation in youth policy has grown rapidly, particularly within the European Union, but also in the Council of Europe. In the latter the major focus from the early 1970s was on capacity building of youth organisations and the training of youth workers and youth leaders. This changed in the 1990s completely with the introduction of youth policy reviews and later youth policy advisory missions. (For more information, see: [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth), the homepage of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe.)

Thus not surprisingly it was at that time, the end of the 1990s, that the authors of this introduction joined bodies involved in European youth policy development. From then on, in international meetings and conferences, we heard from to time – but never systematically organised – interesting historical reflections and opinions about the development of youth work and policy in various countries.

The key to youth policy must be a better knowledge and understanding of youth. If we are to learn from experience, it is obvious that a historical dimension of this knowledge is crucial for youth policy and policy making. Until now this historical knowledge was only nationally and incidentally produced and collected; we concluded that it was time to start bringing together different trends and realities in a joint framework. Therefore we started collecting interesting documents, studies, opinions and views on this theme from different parts of Europe and assembling everything in a kind of jigsaw puzzle. Another important step was of course to identify the right experts in various regions and countries of Europe, not the easiest exercise.

From the very beginning we had in mind to invite experts in the field to jointly reflect and exchange insights in a small workshop. The main aim was to increase the attention given to the history of youth work and youth policy, and to start a discussion on this issue, putting it higher on the European youth agenda. We also intended the workshop to identify the close links between youth work and policy developments, and broader social, cultural and historical trends.

One of the major objectives of the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe is to produce and provide knowledge on youth in Europe; for this purpose the Youth Partnership organises thematic events (seminars, workshops) and some studies on specific issues. The relevant information and knowledge gathered in these activities are distributed via the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy and by special publications – in both cases the aim is to contribute to what is called evidence-based youth policy.

The Youth Partnership organises many of its activities in co-operation with other partners. An excellent example is the May 2008 workshop, whose scope and positive outcomes (including this publication) were achieved in co-operation between the Flemish Community and the Youth Partnership.

In this publication you will find contributions to this first workshop. We invited eight experts from seven different countries: Louis Vos and Filip Coussée from Flanders (Belgium), Bernard Davies from England (UK), Miriam Teuma from Malta, Christian Spatscheck from Germany, Marcin Sińczuch from Poland, Helena Helve from Finland and Patricia Loncle from France. To start, Walter Lorenz (Free University of Bolzano, Italy) gave a keynote speech in which he commented on the function of history in the debate on social professions in Europe. Pierre Mairesse and Rui Gomes contributed to the opening and closing sessions respectively on youth policy development at the European level.

It is also our ambition to continue this process, especially in view of the lessons that we can learn for developing youth work and youth policy in Europe today! May we invite you to contribute to this continuing exercise?

# 1. The relevance of youth work's history

*Filip Coussée*

Any profession that fails to learn from its past is doomed to repeat its mistakes. Community and youth work has made a huge contribution to the wellbeing of communities but, with a few honourable exceptions, it has failed to produce its own histories. By neglecting to record its successes and its failures, it has left itself vulnerable to those who would foist on it warmed-over policies that have been tried and found wanting in the past.

(Gilchrist, Jeffs and Spence, 2001)

## Youth work's identity crisis

Youth work is a polyvalent and multi-faceted practice. It takes place in a wide range of settings, it varies from unstructured activities to fairly structured programmes, it reaches a large diversity of young people, touches a lot of different themes and is on the interface with many other disciplines and practices. This versatility is one of the strengths of youth work. Young people grow up in very different situations. Youth work has the power to respond in a flexible way to this diversity. The fragmentation and methodical differentiation originates in the unremitting attempt to increase the reach of youth work, but at the same time this versatility leads to fragmentation and product vagueness (Thole, 2000). As Williamson (1995: 36-45) argues: 'If anything goes it is hard to identify the defining features of youth work.'

Youth work throughout Europe seems to suffer from a perpetual identity crisis. This crisis is spurred by ambivalent attitudes towards youth work. Youth workers and youth policymakers are torn between excited words of praise and obstinate criticisms on youth work practice. Youth work is a powerful educational tool, youth work is a school of life providing the required skills to survive in our risk society, youth work broadens the social environment of young people, ... But youth work does not reach the hard to reach young people and if they do then youth work does not seem to reach big things with challenging or vulnerable young people. Society's ambivalent attitude towards youth work seems to work out different depending on the status of youth work provision. In some countries we can observe a widening gap between voluntary youth work and professional youth work provision. Moreover it seems hard for youth workers to put their work into words which makes it even more difficult to go beyond the statement that "youth work that works is not accessible and accessible youth work does not work" (Coussée, 2008a).

Youth work tries to cope with its identity crisis in different ways. In some countries youth workers and even youth policymakers tend to turn their back to their critics. Unintentionally this splendid isolation makes youth work even more inaccessible and/or useless for vulnerable young people. In other countries the attention shifts from an identity crisis to an efficiency crisis. Youth work has to produce certain measured outcomes. In still other countries the identity crisis turns to an existential crisis. Do we still need youth work?

Due to the lack of a clear identity youth work risks to become the plaything of powerful social forces serving goals and functions that are at first glance improper to youth work: smooth integration in the prevailing social order, individual prevention of all kind of social diseases, removing young people from public space, preventing young people from school drop out, ...

An international comparative perspective has the potential to broaden the view on our national youth work policies and their inherent paradoxes. The Youth Partnership built up some tradition in international exchange. With the attention for the history of youth work this seminar combines the international perspective with the elaboration of another broadening perspective: a historical view on youth work.

## **Youth work's history**

Historical consciousness is not really strong in youth work (Giesecke, 1981; Taylor, 1987; Davies, 1999). That is just part of its nature with quick changes of participants for instance, but it is also an observation that can be made in the broader field of the social professions (Lorenz, 2007). Volunteers as well as professionals tend to concentrate on the order of the day and to make plans for tomorrow. Despite the fact that many questions are recurrent, we tend to turn to the newest publications and the most actual debates (Imelman, 1990).

The workshop definitely did not aim at purifying an essential youth work concept irrespective of historical and cultural context. Rather it was the purpose to identify the close links between youth work developments and broader social, cultural and historical trends. What are the beliefs and concepts that underpin youth work? How do they relate to the recurrent youth work paradox saying that youth work produces active and democratic citizens but at the same time seems inaccessible for young people who are excluded from active citizenship? Tracing back the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions within and between countries must help us to initiate a fundamental discussion on nowadays youth work identity and cope in a constructive way with the recurrent youth work paradoxes.

Therefore we need to go beyond the boundaries between different youth work practices, but there are other boundaries to transcend.

- Boundaries of time: we can clarify our ideas if we shine a light on aspects that self-evidently structure our discussion, but are themselves not open to critical inquiry (Heyting, 2001). Thus, aspects of youth work that seem self-evident need to be situated in their historical context. Changes in youth work also need to be situated in their economic, social, cultural and political context, which brings us to the next point.
- Boundaries of place: we can link the ways different countries see youth work's identity crisis to broader discussions that touch all social professions. In countries with a social pedagogical tradition (e.g. Germany), discussion is focused on existential questions; in countries with a social policy tradition (e.g. the UK), youth work tends to engage in questions of effectiveness and efficiency. Bringing together these two perspectives can lead to a fruitful discussion.
- Boundaries between policy, practice and theory: the social pedagogical perspective (why do we organise youth work?) seems to be discussed mainly in academic circles, while questions of efficiency are mainly defined and tackled by policy makers and managers. In both cases we can see the risk that discussion is disconnected from practice. We lack a youth work theory that is grounded in practice (Giesecke, 1984; Jeffs and Smith, 1987). Bringing together policy, practice and theory – often described in Europe as 'the three angles of the magic triangle' (Milmeister and Williamson, 2006) – was therefore of major importance in this workshop.

## **A workshop on youth work history**

The organisers – the Flemish Community and the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe – invited keynote speakers from a wide range of countries across Europe to give their view on the evolution of youth work in their country.

Following the logic that we need to situate youth work histories in their socio-economic and political context, the organisers wanted to highlight changes in youth work from the different types of welfare system (cf. Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gallie and Paugam, 2000): social democratic, liberal, conservative/corporatistic, Mediterranean. This classification corresponds to the regimes of youth work defined in the IARD Study (Schizzerotto and Gasperoni, 2001) and adopted in the ISS Study (Bohn and Stallmann, 2007): the universalistic/paternalistic system, the liberal/community-based system, the conservative/corporatist system and the Mediterranean/sub-institutionalised system.

Therefore the programme featured participants from the so-called social-democratic welfare systems (Finland), from countries typified as liberal (UK) and from conservative regimes (Germany, France, Flanders). Malta exemplified a more southern-European welfare type (although strongly influenced by the UK). These categories originated in a rather Western logic, so Poland was invited to bring a story from a post-communist country (as did Germany in part). In the sequel to this first history workshop we see a need to complement this scope by paying explicit attention to South-East Europe and Russia, for instance.

### **Key questions for the speakers**

On youth (work) policy:

- When was the concept ‘youth work’ used for the first time? From what day on can we speak of ‘a governmental youth work policy’.
- Youth work is said to be a typical third-sector intervention, but youth work seems to have its roots in the second educational milieu (work or school). How did this change?

On the pedagogy of youth work:

- What were the influential theoretical concepts that underpinned youth work? Can we see an evolution in these concepts?
- Youth work is between emancipation and control. Unfortunately youth work seems to empower the powerful and police the vulnerable. Has it always been like that?
- Did emancipatory youth work ever work with non-emancipated youths? If yes, did it do so in a non-individualised way?

On youth work methods:

- Some youth workers and policymakers say that real youth work is voluntary work: ideally there are no professionals involved. When did professional youth workers make their entrance in youth work? Why?
- The voluntary participation of young people is another key dimension of youth work. Are there examples of compulsory youth work? How did they turn out?



## Key questions for the discussion

On the relation between young people, youth work and youth policy:

- What is youth work?
- Youth work usually follows social change, though sometimes youth work may be ahead. Or is it true that youth movements and cultures have always come into being outside youth work?
- Youth workers – although youth work never was a mass activity – pretended to represent all young people. Is that why youth work seems to reinforce a divide between organised, well-educated, well-behaved, participating young people and those who are unclubbable, unorganised, marginalised, disaffected and disadvantaged?

On actual perspectives for broadening youth work research:

- What was the first youth work research? What were the research questions? How have youth work research questions evolved through the years?
- What has been the role of youth work research? Has it fed evidence-based policy or delivered policy-based evidence?
- Youth work research seems very much influenced by prevailing youth work practice. In fact, youth work research tells us more about the characteristics of unorganised young people than about existing youth work practice itself.
- Does youth work have (counter)productive effects? Is youth work – seen as non-formal education – measurable? What does history teach us on these recurring questions?

To help prepare the participants, we sent a booklet in advance: ‘A youth work history’ (Coussée, 2008b). A rapporteur, Dr Griet Verschelden (University College, Ghent), summarised the discussion.

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## **2. Youth work and policy at European level**

*Pierre Mairesse*

The months following the May 2008 workshop can be seen as crucial in the development of youth policies at European level. This is the period for the EU member states to prepare their reports on the first cycle of European youth policy co-operation. On this basis the European Commission will make proposals for the future framework of European co-operation in the youth field in 2009.

Thus ideally the outcomes from the debates of this workshop could feed into our joint work in the near future and help us improve the shape of youth policy in Europe.

### **Ten years of youth policy development**

Today we can look back at about ten years of youth policies in Europe. From the beginning, mobility has been the driving force behind these developments.

### **Three generations of programmes**

In 2007 we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Erasmus programme, the first scheme that allowed European students to get to know another country during their studies, meet another country's young people and study in a different university system. It also highlighted the real wealth of Europe, its human resources, who need to be as well trained as possible.

The idea quickly gained ground in other sectors. People are not educated just through school systems, but also through non-formal experiences and learning. Cross-border youth exchanges between young people who were already meeting in youth clubs and youth organisations was a natural follow-on from the initial project, as was the training of youth workers. The result was the first European exchange programme, aptly baptised Youth for Europe.

A second generation of programmes – the YOUTH, SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI initiatives, launched in 2000 – have had a significant impact. In 2006, the European Union provided financial backing to help 500 000 people experience mobility in Europe. Two thirds of that number were young people. In 2007 the European Commission launched a third generation of programmes, including Youth in Action.

### **The impact of programmes**

If we define a generation as ten years, then three to four million young people have already directly benefited from European programmes. Open to all young people, regardless of their social, educational or cultural background, these youth programmes have given young people a unique opportunity to explore and experience for themselves the meaning of inclusion and respect for diversity.

Indeed, these programmes have helped to involve younger generations in experiences that have two dimensions: the acquisition of skills through non-formal or informal learning, and the development of their active citizenship. The programmes are also a chance to develop new skills and competences in an informal setting. As an additional source of learning, Youth in Action activities are particularly relevant to young people with fewer opportunities.

In this way, European youth programmes have greatly contributed to the consolidation of civil society, and to the professional development of youth work in general. Apart from the impact on young people themselves and the youth sector, they have also had a political impact. There would have been no Bologna without Erasmus and no White Paper without Youth for Europe.

### **The history of a unique White Paper and its impact**

The White Paper on youth was announced to the European Parliament at the end of 1999. It was the outcome of patient political work to establish an optimal consensus between the then 15 member states. Its preparation also helped to create a real coalition to develop a European approach to youth issues, even if it was not yet officially a European policy. As a result, the member states asked the Commission to publish its White Paper, which it did in November 2001.

The priority of the White Paper quickly became to promote active citizenship among young people, though there was some discussion whether it would be better to focus on making youth an integral part of other major social policies. The White Paper also set out a framework of co-operation: the open method of co-ordination was adapted to the youth sector.

Initially 15 member states, then 25 and now 27, have used the White Paper as a basis for their work. The participation of young people is now at the centre of national youth policies. Ties between ministries and national youth councils, and between the Commission and the European Youth Forum, have been significantly strengthened by it.

What is perhaps even more striking is that youth policies in the majority of the 12 new member states that have joined the European Union since 2004 are also based on the White Paper. Laws, strategies, action plans to provide backup for youth organisations, youth participation and volunteer work, and even quality standards for youth work, have developed considerably in all these countries as a result.

Needless to say, the White Paper did not resolve all the issues single-handedly. The countries in question were also greatly helped in defining their new policies by the remarkable work done by the Council of Europe in general and Peter Lauritzen in particular.

### **Changing paradigms: the challenges for young people**

Whether it is more urgent to prioritise the active citizenship of young people or to focus on their professional and social integration is a long-standing question. It came up yet again, quite understandably, in 2004. The demographic change – a Europe with fewer young people, but more responsibility for all of them – forced the member states and the Commission to

react. The aim now is the comprehensive social and professional integration of young people, so that each young person can participate fully in society.

Europe has too many early school leavers: in 2006, about six million young people left education early. Most member states still need to increase their efforts; it is already clear that Europe will not meet the target of no more than 10% early school leavers in 2010. Work is another challenge. Unemployment among young people is 17.4%, twice the European average.

Obstacles in education and employment in turn are linked to social integration problems. How can young people who are being left behind in education, and who are excluded through unemployment, feel that they have a stake in society and that society cares about them?

## **The European Youth Pact**

In 2005, youth issues got an important boost when the European Council adopted the European Youth Pact. This was quite a historic moment, the first time that youth had received specific attention at the European Council. It was a signal from member states that young people should benefit from the reforms that are needed so Europe can reach its Lisbon goals of more growth and more and better jobs.

The Youth Pact emphasised the need to increase youth employment, to improve the social inclusion of vulnerable young people and to ensure that fewer young people leave school early.

## **A Communication on full participation**

It was against this background – employment, education, participation – that the European Commission in September 2007 made yet another strong commitment towards young people, aiming at promoting their social inclusion and professional integration and encouraging their autonomy and active citizenship.

Despite the fact that the Union makes great efforts in tackling youth unemployment, results could still be improved. Member states need to address more systematically and more broadly the causes of youth unemployment.

There is therefore a need for a transversal youth strategy, building on co-operation between policy makers and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels. To create and shape such transversal approaches at different levels, the contribution of youth work and its further development at European level is crucial.

## **Youth work**

Current youth policy documents at European level do not address youth work as a profession and do not deal with youth workers as a particular target group of policy development.

Most commonly the documents refer to the relation between voluntary activities and youth work, and demand the encouragement of training opportunities, better co-ordination and management, and stronger support for local organisations, including youth workers and youth leaders. Thus a certain role of youth work in the context of youth activities is recognised, but it is generally not covered in depth nor sufficiently addressed.

The main objective of youth work is to give young people the opportunity to shape their own futures. The general aims of youth work are the integration and inclusion of young people in society. Traditionally youth work belongs to both social welfare and the education system.

Growing difficulties at the transition from school to the labour market also have an impact on youth work, because it now increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion. As a result, it can be said that activities in the youth field are more and more focused on employability and better transition into the labour market.

## **Future perspectives**

Based on the rich and encouraging history of youth policy in Europe, I would like to propose the challenges for the coming years where youth work has a specific, important role to play.

The diagnosis is on the table; all the necessary questions have been clearly asked. We now need to change gear and move to the next level, which is that of problem resolution. Unemployment among young people must be reduced. Poverty affecting children and young people must be eradicated. Education systems must change. Volunteer work must be backed. Non-formal education must be recognised. Youth participation must be effective. Dialogue must be structured. And youth work must be developed at the European level.

Currently, some policy aspects that concern young people are dealt with at national level and others at European level. A vertical approach is needed: it should be recognised that many of these issues could be handled more efficiently at regional or even local level.

## **A shift from traditional youth work**

New forms of activity are under development in the youth field at different levels. Based on the opinion that youth work provides required skills and competences, along with basic opportunities for the transition from school to the labour market, the importance of improved employability and the acquisition of key competences are highlighted more and more, in particular because the required competences are not sufficiently imparted in the formal education systems.

Youth work has a major role to play in this – it appears on the scene as both a provider and a promoter of activities – but this process also brings the risk of providing projects and activities that focus too much on explicitly defined educational objectives.

In some countries we can observe a widening gap between voluntary and professional youth work provision. Youth work has to answer to these challenges with adapted concepts and an approach balancing traditional youth work activities and emerging, focused ones.

Policy development towards improved youth work at the European level should take account of requirements to meet the key challenges. It could encourage youth work and youth workers to establish closer co-operation at European level.

### **Different needs and target groups**

Inclusion and active labour-market policies are only effective if they actually reach their target groups. In particular, immigrant and ethnic minority youth, as well as young women, are often under-represented in measures – or they profit less in terms of meaningful outcomes.

The key future challenge will be the growing demand for guidance and counselling, demand from the individual young people and the different stakeholders in the field.

In order to include more of the young people with fewer opportunities, innovative youth work activities have to adapt to individual and biographical needs as well as to needs of the society and the labour market. Only through this shifted focus it will be possible to better address young people with fewer opportunities and increase the number of participating young people from different target groups.

### **Professional development of youth work**

A number of challenges have to be tackled if we are to improve youth work as a profession at national and European level:

- Co-ordination of policies is required. The complexity of constellations of disadvantage requires integrated multi-disciplinary services. Social integration needs to be understood and addressed in a holistic way, embracing issues of individual and social relevance.
- Training and guidance of youth workers has to be adapted to the changing needs of young people. It is important to better reach out to young people, identifying and recognising their potential for co-operation.
- Youth work has to provide sufficient and attractive opportunities for further education and training, with continued guidance and motivation for different target groups. Youth workers in the field have to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools and skills to balance the relevant interests and motivations of the participants and stakeholders.

To improve the profession of youth work and establish quality standards at European level, we would recommend that criteria for learning outcomes of youth work training be clearly indicated in national and European qualifications frameworks. Youth work knowledge, skills and competences have to be described according to the relevant levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

### **Recognition of youth work**

Recognition of non-formal learning has become more and more important at European level in recent years. The youth field has contributed to this development in many ways, with diverse examples at all levels.

There is sufficient proof of the success of the learning process and the outcomes for young people from activities run by organisations in the youth field and outside formal education. So far the value of this learning has not been sufficiently recognised by stakeholders or the public. Formal and social recognition of youth work has to be further improved significantly.

## **Conclusion**

As the current Director General for youth issues, education and culture, Odile Quintin, has explained so well, the policies she is dealing with lie on the crossroads between competition, employment and citizenship. It is therefore vital to adopt a multi-dimensional approach, even if it is not the simplest of options.

What has been accomplished to date is certainly not worthless and is even, from many points of view, remarkable. Co-operation exists, and it works, but it is still fragile: for this reason, we must continue to think like pioneers, developing our sense of coalition and consensus to ensure that things continue to evolve, step by step, for the greater good of young people and of Europe as a whole.

Youth work has shown its potential to contribute to discussion and development on a very practical level, based on experience. However, increased co-operation at European level can improve professional and voluntary youth work as such.

There is still some demanding work to do on this, but based on our experience of co-operation so far, I think we can be optimistic that we are on the right track and that the outcome for young people in Europe will justify the effort we put into it.



### **3. The function of history in the debate on social work**

*Walter Lorenz*

Looking at the history of any of the social professions in Europe is a risky business because this history is complex, non-linear and fraught with moments when the profession developed in ways that today are not acceptable and probably embarrassing. In fact, in many of the social professions it is not even clear whether the aim was full professionalisation or whether the professional branch, like the voluntary sector, was just one strand among many others that together constitute the field.

#### **Professionalisation**

Objectively, it can be said that professionalisation in the social field is at the very least incomplete, measured by the standards of the traditional professions like medicine or law. In contrast to those benchmark professions, those in the social area are invariably struggling to secure their profession's reputation in the eyes of the public; and they have no strict control over access to their profession, the curriculum content or designated fields of practice.

Nevertheless, professionalisation has been part of their long-term aim to leave behind pre-professional forms of practice and embrace a rational, theory-based approach with certified training courses resulting in an approved form of practice. This emancipatory project was in line with the advance of rationality in modern societies alongside dreams of gaining control over social problems and rationalising the pedagogical transformation of society towards a better way of functioning.

For all professions, this process of rationalisation had the side effect of distancing them from their historical roots and giving them the appearance of a timeless activity, no longer contingent on incidentals such as language, traditional habits and customary narratives. Modern professions have a tendency to leave history behind, each new development turning a new page to emphasise the universality of the concepts they use, timeless and context-less.

#### **A crisis of confidence**

This distance has a price, because users of professional services may not fully identify themselves with these new practices. On the one hand, the public demand this universalism as part of their faith in rationality and the abstract laws of science, which offer reliable solutions to the problems of illness, social instability and ignorance. Rationality and science were the driving engines of the project of modernity and progress. But today this very project and its founding principles are in crisis, and with it the traditional professions. The promise on which they are founded cannot be redeemed, so they increasingly reveal their shortcomings in their own terms. Their reputation is dented by numerous cases of malpractice, which make the public doubt not just the reliability of the controls the professions exercise over their own practice but also the very principles of rationality and progress themselves.

Unpredictability haunts every professional practice area and undermines the universalism on which it was based. These challenges and the associated drop in public confidence are not incidental side issues, which could be overcome with more stringent quality controls and advances in research and knowledge, much as some social policies emphasise the need to modernise public services. Rather, they can be regarded as signs of a crisis of confidence, a failure to find common ground between the public and the experts.

This crisis corresponds to the growing importance that questions of identity have in all social contexts and in social policy. As globalisation advances and threatens to produce a universal sameness, belonging to an identifiable group acts as a counter-movement, and being understood by members of a group that share a common identity becomes all the more important. For instance, in the exercise of a profession, aspects like ethnicity, gender, age and life experiences start to count, side by side with formal qualifications and quality controls. This crisis therefore signals the return of historical dimensions and brings with it the necessity to re-define the parameters of professional conduct and professional identity.

## **A time of change**

The crisis of confidence is compounded by other challenges to the self-image and autonomy of the professions. First among them is the emancipatory process of modernity itself, which has not confined itself to privileged groups but has become a defining characteristic of citizenship. Citizens demand increasingly that public services and expert systems become accountable to their users and to the general public, rather than just to politicians and administrators by a system of hierarchical control within each organisation. And consumer movements claim the same degree of control also over all private transactions, whether commercial or professional, so that the quality of a product or of a service can be monitored, not just through the balance of supply and demand but through watchdogs in the form of independent organisations which represent the interests of the public and consumers.

These consumer movements and the emphasis on citizens' rights resonate secondly in the principles of neo-liberal politics, which have swept across Europe. They impact not just on economic strategies but also on the organisation of public and professional services, particularly in the social field. Neo-liberalism seeks to extend market principles to services and transactions that were formerly organised with scant regard to choices made by non-expert users. These neo-liberal principles are hence perceived as (and largely intended as) an attack on privileges and autonomous organisations – mainly, but not exclusively, those of the state. The combined challenge of these factors requires a fresh look at the principles on which professions base their credibility and authority.

Youth work is directly affected by those developments and finds itself therefore in a state of transition. It can be argued that it is fortunate for the profession, now and in the future, that the general crisis in the professions (outlined above) is occurring just at the point where youth work is beginning to enter seriously the era of professionalisation. The crisis arrests any automatic assumption that sooner or later youth work will inevitably acquire full professional status and that all objections to this are expressions of backwardness.

## **An opportunity**

It will therefore be argued that controversies over the professional status of youth work and its reluctance to fully professionalise are not a sign of weakness, but offer an opportunity to examine not so much what professionalisation would mean theoretically for youth work but rather how the principles of youth work can be reconciled with principles of professionalisation. It is the right time to examine what kind of an agenda youth work has become (or would become) tied to as a result of professionalisation in the context of current social policies. To do this we need to trace the historical development of those principles in different cultural and national contexts, not as an abstract stream of development.

The challenge of this re-examination of professionalism in youth work is to combine cultural specificity with a concern for universality, which means a concern for equality, for a political commitment to transforming social processes and structures that disadvantage and exclude young people from fully participating in adult society and developing their abilities to the full, while fostering their individuality and cultural belonging.

It is probably not by accident that the surge in historical studies in the social professions coincides with a rupture in society's relationship with history. On the one hand, the post-1989 era has been characterised as "the end of history", the dawn of a period when the struggle between the big ideologies has ceased (or has been won by one ideology, capitalism, which some would see not as a product of history but as a kind of law of nature whose truth will prevail sooner or later, the truth that no central political steering is possible, only that of the invisible hand of the market). This struggle for ideological supremacy, which drove history and politics for at least the past 150 years, is supposed now to have come to an end.

On the other hand, societies are being plunged into the depths of history, or rather of histories, especially their own national or ethnic histories. This has happened not just in post-colonial and post-Soviet trouble spots, with their struggle for autonomy and nationhood, but also within the seemingly settled boundaries of established nation states, where separatism and nationalism celebrate a dramatic resurgence. History suddenly seems all around us, instrumentalised as a legitimisation of territorial claims and a defence against the uncertainties and fears of societies that become once more aware of their ethnic and cultural diversity.

## **Two approaches to the crisis**

This is where the social transformation of professions (as outlined above) links with broader historical and political processes of transformation, which by the way also affect the identity of academic disciplines (and this has a double impact on youth work). Identities are not only being newly defined, but claims of identity and authority have to be legitimated in fundamentally new terms. In this process, two principal approaches are discernible in current debates, approaches that aim to re-establish the credibility of – and confidence in – services, but fail to engage critically with history and hence with identity.

### **The functional approach**

One approach uses functionalism: in the prevailing ideology of market choice, services seek to position themselves with the argument of efficiency. A customer – the state, a community

or an individual – demands a certain service for a particular purpose, and a service provider bids to deliver the service at the best price. This approach neglects (or even deliberately eliminates) all reference to established traditions of principles and methodologies, value systems and intellectual continuities. Instead, such approaches seek to apply the criterion ‘What works?’ – the more sophisticated term (stemming significantly from medicine) is evidence-based practice.

I consider this to be an a-historical approach which will have negative consequences, not because it ignores historical lines of development *per se*, but because it suggests an engagement with cultural diversity that eliminates an important social dimension. This missing dimension, obscured by the use of the seemingly neutral criterion ‘evidence’, can only be grasped from the premise of a profound, critical and differentiated engagement with history. I would argue that – even though this approach ostensibly leads to custom-made services, such as culturally specific services in the form of clubs and projects for members of religious or ethnic communities, it has the effect of either essentialising cultural differences and thereby fragmenting lines of social solidarity, or of trivialising cultural characteristics and reducing them to lifestyle choices.

In any case, the central mandate of the social professions, the establishment of ‘the social’, is being eliminated from the agenda, because service users are seen as individuals or groups of individuals defined by their own characteristics, whereas the key task of establishing a social dimension is to create bonds between people who are essentially different. In this functional perspective, society becomes a collection of individuals or an archipelago of communities, ghettoised by ideological or physical walls.

The construction of social solidarity is not an engineering task – or, if it is turned into a piece of engineering, it has dire consequences. This has been demonstrated not only by the racist social engineering and industrialised killing camps of the Nazis, but also by ethnic cleansing, which remains formidably real in many social conflict zones, from ex-Yugoslavia to Northern Ireland and many parts of Africa.

### **The iconoclastic approach**

The other approach is what I would call an iconoclastic use of history, which also has its parallels in current politics: here reference to history and continuity is indeed made, but history is over-emphasised as a means of legitimating or claiming a particular, privileged or dominant position now. ‘We were here first’ is the battle-cry: this territory, this range of competences is ours by tradition, and no further questions need be asked about our ownership. We must ask whether the surge in historical studies mentioned above, and not only in social work circles, is partly motivated, perhaps tacitly and implicitly, by fears of losing a privileged position, since neo-liberal social policies distribute tasks and contracts for services with scant regard to professional boundaries or convention.

In this type of approach the self-interest of the profession prevails again over the concern for carrying out a social mandate responsibly. An abstract notion of history and identity serves to consolidate privileges. It prevents a real engagement with historical processes, which always imply an engagement with, if not contamination by, the processes of today’s world from which professions seek to free themselves.

This is now the nub of any engagement with history, be that from a national-political or a professional perspective: it has an immediate impact on current political or professional practice, but it can be constructive only if the dialogue with history is based on critical, hermeneutic premises: it must have the intention of introducing a critical distance to that immediacy and relativising any fixed, linear notion of development. By that I mean that the engagement with history needs to be always a two-way process, an interrogation of the past that remains conscious of the subjectivity of the questioner, and an examination of the present in the light of historical precursors and parallels that break open the 'facticity' of the present, a process in which the veracity of the information and the legitimacy of the claims derived from it are constantly being questioned.

It is the weaving of those questions, the creation of shared, meaningful symbols, that ultimately makes the fabric of society. Society derives its cohesion not from a-historical facts (biology) but from a commitment to shared principles, values and aspirations. Nothing else can hold a society together but this continual development and re-working of an incomplete project, the search for understanding.

### **Youth work pulled two ways**

Youth work plays a crucial role in all this. In no other field is the tension so visible between the two approaches to social integration, the challenge that modern societies have to confront.

On the one hand, youth work has the mandate to leave real-life processes to take the course of their self-generated dynamic as a constant source of renewal for society. Youth work, seen from this perspective, stems from youth movements, from the search for autonomy, identity and authenticity as the constituting tasks of adolescence. This type of youth work cannot be organised or controlled or professionalised without turning it into an instrument of assimilation and adjustment. This carries the risk that youth work will always disturb the established social order and cause instability – but it is also thereby a source of renewal and creativity for society.

On the other hand, youth work represents the interests of the system, which regards integration as an organisational task requiring structures, rational plans and utilitarian goals. Youth needs to be led and educated; youth needs to be closely tended, just as a tree needs tending if it is to bear fruit. The history of youth policies and the development of youth services in every region of Europe shows the constant oscillation between these two poles, demonstrating the promises and dangers of each of those sets of approaches.

In terms of lifeworld processes, youth movements have played an important part in shaping youth policies, but also in the development of national policies generally. The nation-state project, in countries like Germany and Italy for instance, derived much of its energy from the romantic youth movement, with all the negative implications that came to the fore in Fascism and Nazism. The events of 1968 were also associated with youth rebelling against a system that in their view had failed to face up to the past and was continuing to operate by means of colonialism, oppression and authoritarianism. It is understandable therefore that some countries like the UK limited the influence of the state on youth services and deliberately did not professionalise them, because this would suppress and restrict the energies and creativity that youth generates as a source of cultural renewal.

It is equally understandable that most complex modern societies, faced with ever-increasing problems of governance and integration, sooner or later began to invest in and thus influence the development of youth services, utilising them as part of the system of social integration, for better and for worse. For better, because lifeworld processes, left to their own spontaneous dynamics, often reproduce social inequalities; and the state, if it is committed to greater equality, has a duty to compensate and even positively discriminate in favour of marginalised youth threatened with exclusion from mainstream society. This requires policies, training structures and methods. For worse, because totalitarian regimes picked up on the potential for early ideological manipulation vested in youth services and therefore targeted youth as the core component of a new society and as allies in political movements.

So why not leave this awkward ambivalence behind that is vested historically in youth work and rally round a rational, effective, fully professionalised approach to youth work? My answer is, because this tension cannot and must not be resolved simply by siding exclusively with one or the other model; rather, in every operational context, the parameters for the 'right' approach to youth work and youth service need to be negotiated against the background of a detailed examination of the past history of the interests, movements and resources that are manifest in these specific circumstances.

This reflection requires very particular skills, which are not additional to the skills of youth work itself, but rather constitute core elements of the required youth work competences. They are the core hermeneutic skills of 'making sense', making sense of the lives of young people not in an objectivising or in a psychologising perspective (although psychological and sociological reference points might well have their importance in this process of understanding), but by engaging in a joint project of sense-making that connects to traditions of previous hopes, life concepts and origins, and at the same time transcends them to form something new, something that has relevance now, that exposes itself to the multiple and contradictory pulls and pushes which characterise the lives of young people in particular.

I want to draw on just some of these controversial issues that have always been part of such an historical approach to youth work and which lead to practice-relevant discoveries and points of departure.

## **Identity**

Historical change in all the social professions, and in youth work too, confronts us with multiple issues of identity, particularly in the three dimensions of gender, ethnicity and class. In each case, the underlying question is whether youth services are about the reproduction of identities or about their transformation.

## **Gender**

Whereas the profession of social work has historically been clearly dominated by females, this is not the case in youth work, where males had greater influence or where associations were split on gender terms. This settlement has left gender identity under-conceptualised in youth work and it is only now being raised gradually as an issue worth examining. It needs to be asked why gender issues have not had a more contentious history in youth work and whether having such a debate would open up useful reference points for future development.

## **Ethnicity**

This is often portrayed as a new issue, particularly in immigrant societies where youth services are meant to play a key role in the integration of young people from different ethnic backgrounds and where the question of separate, ethnicity-specific services has to be confronted. But, on closer examination, youth services always had a strong element of ethnicity in the interest of nation-building or in the treatment of cultural traditions, where for instance religion became a quasi-ethnic marker designed to form a particular identity orientation.

Culturally defined identities played a major part in the development of youth work. Many immigrant projects which are organised on ethnic lines only mimic a basic tenet of 'indigenous' youth work, namely that religious denominations and culturally defined groups can claim the right to give youth a cultural reference point in their specific traditions. Here we have not even begun to disentangle the awkward questions of the boundaries of a legitimate sense of belonging as against their exclusionary, discriminatory effects. It needs to be asked where offering reference points for identity formation around cultural traditions becomes an exercise in fostering exclusionary and even racist tendencies.

## **Class**

Historically, youth work and youth movements show many complex fissures along class lines. There was always a clash between youth initiatives that emphasised being working class as a positive value in identity formation and those that tried to question that form of socialisation and impose an agenda of 'betterment' on disadvantaged youth. The latter usually sought to engender a class-neutral identity for youth and promote inclusion, but often this had (perhaps unintended) discriminatory effects.

Particularly in the area of sport, clear class divisions prevailed, besides nationalist sentiments. Success in sporting activities like boxing or football was often portrayed, and offered, as an escape route from class bonds, but it succeeded only on an individual basis and often in an ideological context that was designed to legitimate or even consolidate structural class divisions.

In many societies, belonging to privileged or elitist sporting associations paved the way for future career success and was a way of socialising young middle-class people into positions of privilege and superiority. Commercialisation of sports and leisure activities has often obscured the traces of these distinctions and produced an individualised approach to identity formation. However, in many neighbourhoods and increasingly among immigrant groups, youth clubs retain their identity-forming capacity and continue to bear signs, if not of class belonging, at least of protection against anonymity as a means of exclusion.

## **Inevitability of politics**

As the examples show, where youth work raises issues of identity – even where identity is constructed in a non-political sense – youth work inescapably meshes with political agendas.

Hence, historical reflections in this field must inevitably confront the degree to which in a given context these political implications were made explicit, or point out the implications of a version of youth work that presents itself in an apparently politically neutral sense. The inherent ambiguity of many forms of youth work, as an organised element in public social policy or as a spontaneous product of social movements or other initiatives in civil society, can easily be exploited for political purposes.

Here the uniformed youth movement merits particular attention as an example of a phenomenon that can be understood in opposite ways: it can either be read as a spontaneous response to young people's need to have clear reference points for the development of their identity, so the structure of activities, the rituals and the uniforms can be seen as an intrinsic characteristic of youth; or the identity-shaping element can be seen as an attempt by the system to control and channel the needs of young people in a direction that ultimately suits the need of the state for well-adjusted youth.

Totalitarian regimes in particular were always keen to exploit this ambiguity, yet an assessment of different forms of youth work and youth movements cannot focus on their presentation as such, but must place them in a precise historical and political context. This kind of detailed work on the complex underlying motives, strategies and agendas that drive youth work and youth policy, formally and informally, is not only of theoretical interest but has direct practical implications because it helps to sharpen those competences (essential in youth work) that recognise and deal with the social construction of needs and identities.

On the basis of such a differentiated analysis it might also be possible to bring together again the historical experiences of East and West in Europe. In youth work, even more than in the social professions generally, the potential benefits of using past experience in the East have been hampered by the verdict that all youth work under communism was ideologically premised and hence not comparable to approaches in the West, at least in non-totalitarian countries and times. This attitude is often tinged with neo-colonial interests that seek to install in post-communist countries wholly Western systems, including youth services, as if one could ever start from zero with such developments. Ideologically motivated youth services were never totally imposed but responded always to some extent to the needs, dreams of autonomy and even rebellion, and concerns for identity of young people, just as seemingly non-ideological forms of youth activities always resonate with political agendas. In such historical dialogues lies an enormous potential for practice innovation.

## **Questions of guilt**

These considerations finally touch on the most sensitive issue in approaches to youth (and hence to youth work in the broadest sense), a current sensitivity which is heightened by historical considerations and studies. Looking at how young people were treated in the past confronts us immediately with massive guilt. We become aware how much suffering adults inflicted on children, often under the pretext of good pedagogical intentions, 'for your own good', which at times amounted to regimes of systematic oppression and exploitation. The insidious and exploitative nature of some of those projects can lie hidden behind a façade that portrays them as a 'spontaneous outpouring of youthful zeal and enthusiasm'. Their history stretches from the grotesque (so-called) Children's Crusade of 1212 to the youth element in China's Cultural Revolution and the growing phenomenon of child soldiers.



But, even apart from these extremes, child care, education and youth work have changed considerably over the centuries; methods that at one time seemed acceptable or even enlightened now seem shameful. It is only in recent years that the stories of children and young people who suffered abuse – in children's homes, in sports associations, in activities associated with the churches and elsewhere – have been seriously listened to. Their stories are an important part of a historical perspective on the precariousness of all methods. For we must ask how today's approaches to youth work and child protection will be judged by future generations – methods such as computer games and leisure activities, freely available in youth clubs or pursued 'spontaneously' on the internet, or protective methods like constant supervision by social workers, curfews in inner cities or treatment methods for hyper-activity.

The balance between giving children and young people more responsibility for living their own lives or pursuing their interests and protecting them from damage is not a question that can be answered with reference to positivist scientific or abstract moral principles; rather, this balance has to be negotiated continually in each new generation and in each cultural and political context. But reflecting on history makes us aware of the relativity of all perspectives, which is a useful and probably necessary starting point if we are to face up to this enormous responsibility, in the full knowledge of the risks of facing up to historical guilt.

## **Conclusion**

In all these areas, historical reflections seem to lead us into an abyss of uncertainty and relativity, so that any attempt at searching history for eternal, unequivocal answers seems doomed from the beginning. So why bother? The answer may lie in a fragile, historical, subjective reference to humanism. Because childhood and youth are, anthropologically speaking, not a biological given but a social construct that every epoch and every culture shapes differently, according to its prevailing values, as a result youth work becomes a necessary but delicate task that takes those values seriously but allows for a critical position to be taken towards them, a position which in itself feeds on awareness of its historical relativity.

The task evolves in a dialectical force field that on the one side pulls in the direction of greater control over youth, making young people adjust to what adults define as reality and its necessities, and on the other side maintains that spontaneity gives the chance of renewal, of innovation, of progress. The two aspects together define the project of humanism, a project fraught with misunderstandings but nevertheless a source of cultural inspiration and true scientific endeavour. Humanism is an incomplete project, a project without fixed reference points, a project that continually transcends boundaries and categories, a challenge which exceeds (and must exceed) technical competence if it is to remain true to its mandate of realising the human in a social context instead of dissolving it in a technical, ultimately dehumanising process. The confrontation with history suggests this humility, but that need not give rise to resignation.

## 4. The Catholic Flemish Student Movement, 1875-1935 – emergence and decline of a unique youth movement

*Louis Vos and Lieve Gevers*

International literature on the history of youth movements usually mentions two prototypes: the German *Wandervogelbewegung* and the English Scouting. The *Wandervogelbewegung* – starting in 1903 and lasting until 1914, though with far-reaching repercussions on the *Bündische Jugend* of the Weimar republic – was a society of pupils from secondary schools.<sup>1</sup> They formed small local branches of the movement and organised hiking tours through the countryside in an attempt to escape from the industrial and conservative society (*Gesellschaft*) of imperial Germany. They wanted to experience forms of genuine community life (*Gemeinschaft*) in their own group and through contact with traditional songs, folklore and customs that were considered to express a German authenticity. Their fundamental critique of established society led them to a form of escapism, creating an ‘empire of youth’ outside the ‘real’ world.

Scouting, introduced by Robert Baden-Powell – officially during a camp on Brownsea Island in 1907 – was above all a method wherein self-government was a core element.<sup>2</sup> An altruistic life code was summarised in the slogan ‘be prepared’, referring to both mutual help and service to others. To develop this attitude, it emphasised hiking and camping in the open air and working together for survival. The deeper aim was to educate youngsters in good citizenship, which referred more to smooth integration into society than to a critique of the establishment.

The aim of this chapter is to present a third prototype, so far not mentioned in international literature, but worthy of comparison with the usual two prototypes and even pre-dating them: the Catholic Flemish Student Movement (with capitals, as here it is used as a proper name).<sup>3</sup> It was an autonomous youth movement, mainly for pupils of secondary schools, under the leadership of university students from the Catholic University of Leuven, as well as

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1. Felix Raabe, *Die Bündische Jugend. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*, Stuttgart, 1961; Walter Laqueur, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung. Eine Historische Studie*, 2nd edn, Cologne, 1978 (1st edn, 1962); Heinz S. Rosenbusch, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung in ihren pädagogischen Formen und Wirkungen*, Frankfurt, 1973; Peter D. Stachura, *The German youth movement, 1900-1945. An interpretative and documentary history*, London, 1981; Otto Neuloh and Wilhelm Zilius, *Die Wandervögel. Eine empirisch-soziologische Untersuchung der frühen deutschen Jugendbewegung*, Göttingen, 1982.

2. John Springhall, *Youth, empire and society*, London, 1977; Michael Rosenthal, *The character factory: Baden Powell and the origins of the Boy Scout movement*, New York, 1986; Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the empire: the frontier and the Boy Scout movement, 1890-1918*, Toronto, 1993.

3. The authors, both historians and professors at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, have been studying the subject for 40 years now, have published several books and articles about it, based on original sources, and wrote the chapters on ‘Student movements’ in the 19th and 20th centuries in W. Rüegg (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe*, Cambridge University Press (Vol. III, 2004, Vol. IV in print), wherein they compared different European cases. The most important books dealing with this subject are: Lieve Gevers, *Bewogen Jeugd. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van de Katholieke Vlaamse Studentenbeweging, 1830-1894*, Leuven, 1987, and Louis Vos, *Bloei en Ondergang van het AKVS. Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Vlaamse Studentenbeweging, 1914-1935*, Leuven, 1982.

seminarians (students preparing for the priesthood). It flourished in Flanders – the Dutch-speaking northern half of Belgium – for about 60 years, from 1875 until 1935. It combined the need for fraternity among young people with a critical commitment to the (Catholic) Flemish (national) Movement, and played a major role in the self-education of generations of influential Flemish Catholic intellectuals and in preparing militants committed throughout their life to the Catholic Flemish cause.

## **Youth order, youth care, youth movements**

The concept of youth did not always have the meaning or connotation that it evokes today. Now it refers to a clear-cut part of the life-cycle between childhood and adult life, with specific characteristics of its own. In pre-industrial societies, such a life-cycle period certainly did not exist as a general pattern. In those days, children immediately after infancy had to work for their daily bread and were therefore confronted with the hardships and struggles of life from a very early age.

Nevertheless, a privileged category of youngsters had existed since ancient times, those who belonged to the nobility and other upper social classes and who experienced a distinct period between childhood and adult life, one which was devoted to learning. Their number increased in the middle ages with the foundation of universities, and the growing demand within the centralising modern states for civil servants with a proper education. In medieval cities there were also craft and professional fraternities formed to meet the needs of young apprentices travelling in search of training. But, in a society where 85% of the population lived on the land, only a small minority of young people benefited from these opportunities, experiencing their youth as a specific stage in life.<sup>4</sup>

In pre-industrial societies, though, the bulk of young people met in spontaneous, self-regulating and informally structured local fraternities, giving room for the get-togetherness of their generation. This “traditional youth order” – as it was labelled by the Dutch sociologist J.S. Van Hessen – had specific functions, not economic, but moral and social, including the regulation of communal sexuality (particularly access to marriage) and generally guarding the traditional order within a system of unwritten rules. This resulted sometimes in enforcing the social equilibrium of village life by ritual and symbolic *charivari*.<sup>5</sup> This “traditional youth order” lasted in non-industrial areas in western Europe until the end of the 19th century. Its daily pattern comprised hanging around in a group at certain places, strolling the streets, visiting pubs and dance halls, listening to (or making) music and boys chasing the girls. It can be characterised as a primary institution, close to the function of the family, because it contributed to the process of socialisation and self-development.

Industrialisation, first in England, then in Belgium, France and Germany, brought fundamental changes to European society, which gradually divided into social classes. Aside from the privileged aristocracy and the hard-working labour class, there was a *bourgeoisie* or middle class that began to see itself as the main support of the nation, modernisation and democracy, and therefore responsible for religious and moral regeneration. This enhanced the

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4. John R. Gillis, *Youth and history: tradition and change in European age relations, 1770 to the present*, New York, 1974, pp. 26-31.

5. Peter Selten, *Het apostolaat der jeugd. Katholieke jeugdbewegingen in Nederland, 1900-1941*, p. 35, referring to E. Shorter, M. Crubellier, J. Le Goff and J.-C. Schmit.

need for an expansion of schooling at secondary level, attracting mainly youth from the middle class and to some extent from rural areas. Secondary schools became the main instrument for the formation of a new, more educated class of civil servants and teachers. For some it was also the stepping stone to university, where the elite was educated.

The gradual segmentation of schooling caused a clear segmentation of the life-cycle, so that a distinct period of adolescence appeared. It gave the young a moratorium on their societal responsibilities, which were postponed to make room for formal education. It also opened the way for a specific youth culture, along with extra-curricular activities in a third milieu of education beneath family and school. In the inter-war period, more youngsters benefited from this new system, but it was only after the Second World War that it became more or less the general pattern in western Europe.

In the second half of the 19th century, those concerned with the welfare of children came to the fore. Their motives could be of a religious nature or inspired by an enlightened scientific view. The notion of adolescence for all youth, not just for a happy few who could afford to study, served here as a cornerstone. The idea that it was necessary for young people to experience their youthfulness was in England expressed in the slogan 'boys will be boys'. It was at first attributed mainly to the inmates of secondary elite schools, but was later generalised to all youth, regardless of their class or background.<sup>6</sup> Also, the idea came to predominate that it was better to organise the free time of youth rather than let them hang around and organise themselves spontaneously.

A breakthrough followed in organised group life for youth. It was the result of three factors: the conviction in circles of educators that it was necessary to create some specific provision for youth, the choice of the association model (which already existed for adults) and the idea that some elements of the traditional youth order should be incorporated in the new youth organisations.

There were various initiatives by adults to establish such forms of youth care. Some were of a Christian denominational colour; others could be seen as more neutral and apolitical. For Britain we mention here only the creation of the YMCA in 1854, the Boys' Brigade in 1883 and Toynbee Hall in 1884. On the continent from the 1850s, patronages (Catholic youth groups) were set up, firstly in France and Belgium; in Germany, the Catholic priest Adolf Kolping launched the Sankt Joseph Gesellenverein, which expanded into the Netherlands. In French-speaking Belgium, priests began "Estudiantines de vacances", circles for secondary school pupils meeting in holiday periods. Those initiatives were inspired "by a certain romantic notion of youth as source of personal and societal revitalisation".<sup>7</sup>

Some adults wanted to mobilise the young for societal goals: for example, the local branches of the Zouaven-corps – named after the military volunteers fighting for the Pope in the 1860s – established by priest-teachers as extra-curricular associations in Flemish Catholic secondary schools, the ideologically completely different *Bataillons scolaires* of the French Third republic and also, around the turn of the century, the Young Guards of several political parties in Belgium. In all those associations, though the members were young people, the responsibility lay mainly with the adults organising them, with an emphasis on paternalism.

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6. John R. Gillis, *Youth and history*, pp. 138-9.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

At the end of the 19th century, there emerged a new type of youth association. This new form went beyond the previous youth care organisations, leaving more scope of responsibility for the youngsters themselves; it became known as the youth movement. Steadily, young friends formed small groups, with fraternity as a core element, and creatively organised their own youthful educational, recreational and cultural activities on the principle of self-government.

A youth movement could be defined as “a youth association, led by young people under their own responsibility, with members joining on a free basis, requiring an active participation of all group members to create a fraternal local group atmosphere, embedded in, and inspired by, a specific code of life, which would guide the attitude and behaviour of the members, not only during the group meetings, but also in daily life, as they nurtured their awareness of belonging to a specific generation, with a mission of its own”. Self-responsibility of the young did not prevent support from adults, who were accepted as advisers and helpers, but the decisions were made by the young people themselves. As opposed to the youth care approach, where the emphasis was on what John Gillis has called “paternity”, in the youth movement the centre of gravity shifted to fraternity, which was closer to the ‘natural’ need of young people to get together.<sup>8</sup>

In the self-image and early historiography of the first youth movements, their emergence was usually presented as a spontaneous rebellion of youth, driven by the need for emancipation from repressive adults and authorities. That gave them an unjustified mystique: when those youthful initiatives emerged, the social atmosphere needed to provide enough oxygen to let them breathe. The viability of a youth movement depends on the appreciation of parents and teachers, who in most cases were even the origin of the idea of youngsters to start it. This is logical, given that the socialisation of youth is always the result of an interaction between cultural elements transmitted by adults and their appropriation and adaptation by young people, who through their fresh contacts transform and renew the existing culture.

Therefore the usual interpretation, that the *Wandervogelbewegung* emerged as a natural and spontaneous protest, is dubious. It seems that the protest against the suffocating and coercive atmosphere in German secondary schools began (and had its first success) in the *Gymnasium* of Berlin-Steglitz, a school characterised by a relatively open climate and even open-hearted contact between teachers and pupils. As a result, Ulrich Aufmuth defines the emergence of the *Wandervogelbewegung* as “eine gelernte Rebellion”, a ‘taught attitude’, cranked up to a certain extent by some teachers.<sup>9</sup> The movement was not really opposed to middle-class culture, but rather to the aristocracy (still dominating society) and industrialisation. Thus it reflected the anxiety of the middle class for the modernisation of society.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Ibid., *passim*.

9. Ulrich Aufmuth, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung unter soziologischem Aspekt*, Göttingen, 1979, p. 145. Aufmuth argued that the view of a “spontaneous rebellion of youth” was based on three unproven suppositions: first, that an “objectively unfavourable situation” would be immediately recognised as such by the youngsters and so would affect immediately their consciousness; second, that this new awareness would automatically and immediately cause an attitude of protest; third, that reaction to a new situation always follows a transparent cause–consequence scheme. In reality, the ‘objective’ reality is not immediately experienced as such, but perceived and thus transformed by interpretation. Subsequent action is inspired less by intellectual analysis than by someone’s value judgments and social position. Thus the reaction of individuals or groups in a given situation cannot be explained simply by stimulus–response. Aufmuth, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung*, pp. 92-3.

10. Peter D. Stachura, *The German youth movement, 1900-1945*; Neuloh and Zilius, *Die Wandervögel*.

## The Catholic Flemish Student Movement

There are parallels with the situation in Flanders, where in the last quarter of the 19th century emerged the Catholic Flemish Student Movement, the first free youth movement. Its birth was embedded in a romantic commitment to the revival and revitalisation of the Flemish people and community, which was considered to be in its deepest and most authentic essence Catholic.

The broader Flemish Movement was initially a mere by-product of Belgian nationalism. It aimed at putting the Dutch language – the language of the people in Flanders – on an equal footing with French, which since 1831 had been proclaimed the only official language in Belgium, and was spoken not only in Wallonia – the southern part of the country – but also in the north by the upper class. From the second half of the 19th century, though, the Flemish Movement was mainly supported by Catholics, especially by many priests. For them, the struggle for a Catholic Flanders and equality for the Dutch language became two sides of one coin. In about 1890, the Flemish Movement broadened its programme, advocating a Flemish Belgian sub-nationalism, with linguistic, social, economic and political emancipation of the Belgian-Flemish community. The Christian Workers' Movement also supported those claims. Gradually, Catholic, Flemish and social emancipation became three terms in one equation.<sup>11</sup>

The Catholic Flemish Student Movement joined in the Catholic Flemish Movement as a whole, and shared its ideals and objectives. It emerged in Flanders in the 1870s as a free youth movement, with no formal link to the Church or Catholic bodies. It attracted mainly secondary school students, 12 to 18 years old, but also university students and seminarians. Students and seminarians at Leuven University formed the overarching leading committee. It lasted until the 1930s; only then did public life in Flanders – including secondary schools – switch from French to Dutch. Throughout almost the entire period under consideration, students, seminarians and secondary school pupils in Flanders were daily confronted by French as the language of instruction.

Therefore it is understandable that, in the self-image of the movement, its members described its birth as a spontaneous protest in places where the burden of French culture was felt most. That heroic story has not been confirmed by our historical research. We concluded that on the contrary, both at the moment of its conception in the 19th century and during its revival after the First World War, the movement flourished first and foremost where a certain pro-Flemish climate already existed. In 19th-century Flanders, the structural precondition and the seed for the emergence of the movement was the network of Catholic secondary schools, most of them under the authority of the bishops, where the atmosphere was created by the young priests who taught there, a common practice being to give young priests, normally ordained at the canonical age of 24, their first appointment in a secondary school rather than in a parish.

The conjuncture was formed by the political polarisation in Belgium between Catholics and Liberals in the second half of the 19th century, which also affected the Flemish Movement. From 1872 onwards, the rise of a militantly anti-clerical, free-thinking liberalism, trying to get a grip on the whole Flemish Movement, caused a Catholic reaction. Hugo Verriest, a priest from West Flanders and a teacher at the minor seminary of Roeselare, with the approval of his

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11. Emmanuel Gerard, 'The Christian Worker's Movement as a mass foundation of the Flemish movement' in Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (eds), *Nationalism in Belgium: shifting identities, 1780-1995*. Basingstoke, 1998, pp. 127-38.

bishop, called youth to arms in order to defend the Catholic heritage. Entwining Catholic and pro-Flemish arguments against the threat of freemasonry was a potent mixture that appealed to Catholic students. The generation leaving secondary school in 1876 responded to his call, with Albrecht Rodenbach as its charismatic leader.<sup>12</sup> When he went to the Catholic University of Leuven, he met student leaders from other provinces inspired by the same commitment to the renaissance of a Catholic Flemish people and culture. Together they founded in 1877 an overarching body of student leaders from the five Flemish provinces, with the aim of building a movement led by university students that had ramifications in all those provinces among Catholic Flemish youth in secondary schools.

The University of Leuven had a medieval predecessor, founded in 1425, but it had been re-established under episcopal supervision after the revolutionary period in 1835. At the time under discussion here, French- and Dutch-speaking students attended the same classes, but the two language groups had separate social lives.<sup>13</sup> From the 1870s on, the Flemish students began to organise their social, cultural and political activities through Dutch-speaking associations. Inspired by a 'back to the people' spirit, they saw themselves as having a mission in the service of the Flemish people, seen a second-class group in Belgian society. They joined the broader Flemish Movement as a group, and from the 1870s onwards they played a spearheading role in it. As such, they were an example of a student movement of the classical type, a group joining a broader emancipation movement and then serving it as a vanguard and mobilising force. Because of their leading role in the Catholic Flemish Student Movement, the Flemish students in Leuven also had a great impact on the attitude of pupils in secondary schools.<sup>14</sup>

## **Ideological evolution**

Once the movement was under way, some tension arose with school and Church authorities. The reason was that the movement drew the obvious conclusions from the teachings of the young priests and as a result demanded a more authentic Flemish atmosphere in schools. By doing so, it became a source of trouble in the eyes of the authorities. In 1877 and 1878, the Bishop of Bruges ordered measures against the movement which was, at that time, gaining momentum in his schools. He largely hindered and, to some extent, stopped its local activities and the overarching organisation. However, this could not prevent the movement from taking off again after 1880. The actions of the bishop were not in opposition to the Flemish demands of the movement as such; they were directed against a rebellious spirit that could lead to insubordination, a weakening of discipline and an undermining of ecclesiastical authority.<sup>15</sup>

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12. Michiel De Bruyne and Lieve Gevers, *Kroniek van Albrecht Rodenbach (1856-1880)*, Brugge, 1980, 294pp.

13. All courses at Leuven were taught only in French until 1914; it was about 1935 before all classes were taught in French and Dutch, so that students could choose the linguistic regime. In 1968, the university was completely split along linguistic lines, and the Francophone part was transferred in the 1970s to an area south of the linguistic borderline, where it formed the nucleus of a new city called Louvain-la-Neuve (near Wavre).

14. Lieve Gevers and Louis Vos, Ch. 8 'Student movements' in Walter Rüegg (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe, Volume III: Universities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1800-1945)*. Cambridge, 2004, pp. 269-361; Louis Vos, 'Rebelse generaties. Het studentenprotest in de jaren zestig' in Louis Vos, Mark Derez, Ilse Depraetere and Wivina Van der Steen (eds), *De stoute jaren. Studentenprotest in de jaren zestig*, Tielt, 1988, pp. 7-54.

15. Lieve Gevers, 'The Catholic Church and the Flemish Movement' in K. Deprez and L. Vos (eds), *Nationalism in Belgium: shifting identities, 1780-1995*. Basingstoke, 1998, pp. 110-19.

The ideological evolution of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement followed the winding road of changing attitudes in the broader society. The founder of the first student association in West Flanders and Leuven, Albrecht Rodenbach, was a cultural nationalist, aiming more at creating a new mentality in Flanders rather than at political action. Through his writings and organisational talent, he gave the movement its classical form, which later – he died as a student at the age of 24 in 1880 – still served as a point of reference. His protests and those of his friends were mainly against the “degenerating education” – because it was French in language and spirit – in secondary schools, and of course also against the repression of his movement by the Bishop of Bruges. But he also turned against both the lukewarm attitude of many pro-Flemish Catholics and the (in his eyes) hypocritical policy of the Flemish liberals. He was convinced that this generation of Flemish students and pupils would play a key role in the Catholic-Flemish awakening. More than anyone else, he was responsible for spreading the feeling in the student body of a specific commitment to the cause. For more than a century, this missionary pro-Flemish spirit would be transmitted from generation to generation.

From about 1879, the movement’s centre of gravity shifted from West Flanders to seminarians in Mechelen and then to pupils from Antwerp secondary schools, with Adolf Pauwels as the main leader. They changed their objective from cultural to political action. Through language legislation they hoped to realise – at least partly – ‘Dutchification’ of the public secondary school system in Flanders, under the supposition that the numerically stronger Catholic network of secondary schools would then automatically follow. Indeed, in 1883 a law imposed some bilingualism in public secondary schools, which nevertheless remained French-speaking. The orientation towards advocating language legislation in education was maintained after 1884, when the leadership of the movement came again into the hands of students from different provinces in Leuven, and the political climate had changed because the Catholic Party again was in power. A new generation of students supported the organisation of several Flemish national meetings, where both Catholic and non-Catholic Flemish nationalists, students and non-students, tried to combine their forces in order to put pressure on the government.

### **Catholic youth or Flemish youth?**

This collaboration with non-Catholics provoked reaction, and seminarians in Mechelen gained control over the Flemish Catholic Student Movement in order to preserve its Catholic character. The second overarching organisation they created in 1890, the Catholic Flemish Student Association, referred explicitly to the religious component of the movement. Their slogan was AVV VVK (*Alles for Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen voor Christus*) or ‘All for Flanders, Flanders for Christ’. But the new overarching organisation did not distance itself from the demands for education in Dutch and, in 1892, the Archbishop of Mechelen formally banned the movement in his diocese. The effect of this did not last for long. The movement continued to exist and, after a short while, the rectors or directors of Catholic schools and the authorities in the seminaries turned a blind eye, even on occasion supporting the movement once more.

One reason was that in the two other dioceses in the Flemish provinces, Ghent and Liège, there was no repression at all, but rather overt or quiet support of the movement by the clergy. There was also a lessening of the tension between the Church and school authorities who wished to keep their seminarians and secondary school pupils away from politics, because around the turn of the century the Flemish Movement as a whole broadened its programme. As a result, within the Catholic Flemish Student Movement, interest shifted from the political



to the cultural level, the main target being the personal cultural development of its members, combined with social commitment among student youth and the younger clergy in the then booming Catholic social organisations. In 1903, for the third time, an overarching body was founded: this was the AKVS, the Algemeen Katholiek Vlaamsch Studentenverbond ('General Catholic Flemish Student Association'), where the label 'general' meant the whole of the Flemish region, crossing the borders between provinces or dioceses. It flourished for more than a decade, but was brought to a standstill by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>16</sup>

Many older members found themselves serving as soldiers in the trenches. Most local associations, as far as they could continue activities, did so in the line of the pre-war tradition. From 1919 onwards, the movement was resurrected at local and overarching levels, and for a period it flourished. But the First World War also brought about an ideological rupture in the larger Flemish Movement. Two factions emerged that became more and more antagonistic in the inter-war period. On the one hand there were those who considered themselves the heirs of the Activists, pro-Flemish militants who during the war had accepted the help of the German occupier in carrying out some structural changes in order to resolve some pre-war Flemish grievances. On the other hand, the majority of the Flemish movement – mainly of Christian democrat orientation, had remained loyal to Belgium throughout the war.

### **Flemish nationalism**

The first faction created a Flemish Nationalist political party aiming at home rule for Flanders but gradually becoming more anti-Belgian, rejecting not only the Belgian state, but soon also the Belgian parliament and parliamentarism itself. In the early 1930s, the ultra-Flemish nationalist party was transformed into a uniformed fascist one, adopting the principle of 'all power to the leader'. The other group remained loyal to Belgium and democracy, was supported by the majority of pro-Flemish citizens and wished to achieve monolingualism in Flanders for public affairs through parliamentary action and language laws.

This rupture had major consequences for the student movement. Post-war generations of Flemish students in Leuven were strongly attracted to the radical orientation and they tried to push the Catholic Flemish Student Movement into the radical camp. Disciplinary measures by the rector, fully supported by the episcopate because of provocations by anti-Belgian Flemish nationalist student leaders, led to an open student revolt in 1924 and 1925. The Belgian bishops' condemnation of anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism in 1925 fuelled radicalism, not only in Leuven, but also in many Catholic secondary schools. These developments alarmed the bishops, especially as the moderate wing of the student body was apparently unsuccessful in trying to counter this radical offensive.

The bishops tried to stop anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism in their schools by repressive means, but at the same time the most pro-Flemish of them, firstly the Bishop of Liège and later a new bishop in Ghent, attempted to detach local branches of the movement in their diocese from the leadership in Leuven. This led to the formation of an alternative Catholic Flemish Student Movement, not anti-Belgian but certainly pro-Flemish, approved by the ecclesiastical authorities and with a larger role for seminarians in the overarching provincial

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16. The first overarching body was the Vlaamsche Studentenbond ('Flemish Student Association') of 1877; the second was the Katholiek Vlaamsch Studentenverbond ('Catholic Flemish Student Association') of 1891; but the name AKVS is used to mean the Catholic Flemish Student Movement's organisation over the whole period.

organisation. When around the same time the idea of organised Catholic action, as propagated by the Pope, took shape in Flanders, it seemed logical to incorporate in this new structure the local associations of pupils, seminarians and students. They were eventually forced to cut all contact with the leadership in Leuven and join the new Catholic Student Action bodies.

This was possible because of the functional autonomy of local groups. A long power struggle between 1928 and 1935 put the young members in a difficult dilemma: whether to remain faithful to the old organisation or follow the bishop. The new youth organisations considered themselves to be the heirs of the old free Catholic Flemish Student Movement, because many local associations had simply continued their activities, maintaining many of the old traditions, but now within a different framework. This was seen as more modern and in tune with the spirit of the time than the old AKVS, because it was a top-down structure under the direct leadership of the bishop and clergy, characterised by hierarchical decision making; even youth leaders were appointed by chaplains at the lowest level.

The Catholic Flemish Student Movement came to its end as a result of both external coercion and internal antagonisms. In the 1920s, the controversy was between those who wanted to emphasise the cultural and educational function of the movement, and those who sympathised with a radical anti-Belgian ideology and wanted more political action. In a second stage, at the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s, the bishops tried to channel student youth away from the old organisation, and the issue was seen as one of rebellion or obedience to the Church authorities. Finally, midway through the 1930s, there came a clash among the small group of believers who still followed the old tradition, between those who wanted to maintain the custom of an autonomous student movement, and those who wanted incorporation in one of the radical right-wing Flemish national political formations.

## **Structural and functional characteristics**

### **Bottom-up organisation**

Four channels connected local groups with the leadership in Leuven. First was the system of representatives. Those university students at Leuven who were also members of one of the many local associations in towns and villages in Flanders served as a contact person between the lower realms of the movement and those at the very top, responsible for the exchange of information in both directions. This system proved at times to be a weak link, simply as a bottleneck in communication sometimes occurred. If representatives were not conscientious, the contact between top and base evaporated. There was also always the danger that the representatives would care less about carrying opinions and demands from the local level up, and more about passing down the message from the top. That could easily lead to ideological manipulation.

But there were three other channels of bottom-up communication. Firstly, the secretary of each local association regularly drew up a report of its activities and sent it to the leading general committee in Leuven. Secondly, there were organised meetings of the local leadership at the provincial and general rallies in the Easter and summer holidays. Finally, there were regular journals and sometimes circular letters with suggestions and directives for local activities. To avoid regional isolation, local associations also established mutual contacts on their own initiative. Sometimes leaders of different local chapters met in the same secondary school, sometimes they created an overarching regional structure wherein adjacent local

groups could work together, and also there were mutual visits by groups at fraternisation meetings or local celebrations.

The structure of leadership followed in principle a bottom-up direction. The leadership was democratically chosen by annual elections in all the local associations; nowhere was there a system of a top-down assignment. Through their representative in Leuven, the local chapters were entitled to elect the provincial leadership, and sometimes there was even an election at a provincial rally, with all the presidents of the local groups participating. From the five provincial committees, a general committee was chosen with one general president, usually someone who had served as a provincial president in the previous year. Throughout the whole period 1875 to 1935 though, provincial autonomy was strong: each decision required unanimity within the provincial committees. It was a tradition that even survived the AKVS as an organisation, and remained strong in successive organisations incorporated in the Catholic action movement.

Another remarkable characteristic was that – despite the bottom-up structure – there was enough scope for the leading elite within the university to put their own accent on proceedings, without the threat of local associations amending it. This resulted in some tension with the seminarians, of whom only a small part studied in Leuven, and with local associations who did not agree with the general direction. Those tensions did no great harm to the activities of the majority of the members because, despite directives from above, in reality the local groups had functional autonomy. They could continue unimpeded, whether in line with what Leuven prescribed or not.

During the academic year, the leadership in Leuven prepared AKVS periodicals for publication and planned activities for the Easter and summer vacations. Then there were rallies and meetings at provincial and general level, but mainly at local level, where in some cases the members of the local association met for activities almost every day. In 1924 – the heyday of its history – the 233 regularly functioning local associations comprised about 7 000 young people. We estimate that in the eastern province of Limburg three quarters of all pupils attending Catholic secondary schools were members of the movement, in West Flanders half of them, in East Flanders probably two fifths, and in the province of Antwerp at least one third.<sup>17</sup> So we can say that, in the first half of the 1920s, the movement was firmly rooted in the milieu of Catholic pupils and students in Flanders. Important for its radicalisation in the 1920s was the fact that the leading elite of the youth movement were also deeply involved at university level in the Flemish (university) student movement. So there was a certain merging of the youth movement with the classical student movement at university.

The Catholic Flemish Student Movement was embedded in the broad Catholic Flemish movement in different ways: through its structural link with the student movement at Leuven University, through the lectures and speeches delivered by leading Flemish figures at local, provincial and general meetings, and the articles they wrote in the journals of the movement, and through the many priests teaching at Catholic secondary schools, many of whom were former members of the movement who transmitted their enthusiasm for the moral and cultural uplifting of the Flemish people. As a result, an idealistic commitment to the renaissance of a Catholic Flemish people was encouraged among young students from one generation to another.

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17. L. Vos, *Bloei en ondergang van het AKVS*, Vol. 1, pp. 213-15. For the Flemish part of the province of Brabant there is not enough evidence to calculate or even estimate percentages.

The most typical element on the structural level was that the movement fully developed the characteristics of a youth movement, but also borrowed some elements from the university student movement. In its local branches it allowed groups of young people, under their own leadership, to organise their own lives with the aim of personal and social development; on the other hand it was embedded in the Flemish Movement, implying preparation for a commitment in adult life and direct support of the contemporary movement. This combination of an orientation to action with an emphasis on personal and social formation, oriented towards a commitment in adult life, was the originality of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement. On the one hand it provided a free haven for youth, while on the other it oriented them towards development of the broader community.

### **Local groups**

Despite all overarching initiatives, the movement only obtained its real stature on the local level. Local associations were founded on the initiative of pupils, students or seminarians. In provincial towns, their associations were active throughout the year, which was also the case in the semi-secret associations in Catholic boarding schools, mainly in East and West Flanders. The most common form of local association though, a type scattered even across small villages in Flanders, gathered only during school holidays at Christmas, Easter and in the summertime. They then drew up a very lively activity programme, with almost daily meetings. These groups had an typical membership of 25 to 45 people, most of them studying in secondary schools. In some associations, the group of 12- to 14-year-olds was so large that they could form a division of their own, with an appropriate programme wherein recreational activities played a larger part than discussion meetings.

Those serious meetings, though, formed the backbone of the local programme. They were a succession of lectures, songs, debates and exhortations. It was there that the spirit of the movement was transmitted from generation to generation. It was also there that younger members drew attention, when they gave a speech for the first time, and where they practised with unprepared speeches their fluency and command of the Dutch language, as their formal schooling was in French. Special attention was given to the use of the standard language, and the avoidance of dialect. In many groups, the form of these speeches was assessed by a previously appointed referee.

Aside from the 'serious meetings, there were more recreational and social activities like hikes, cycling tours, pilgrimages, games and outdoor activities. Above all, in most groups there were also daily rehearsals of the great theatre play that would bring together the whole local community at the end of the summer holiday, in an effort to contribute to popular education. All activities were imbued with Flemish nationalism and a Catholic spirit. Not surprisingly, each day started with the recommended daily group mass in the parish church, where prayers were said for Flanders.

The link between recreational and educational activities was the living tradition. It was also that tradition on which the authority of the leadership in Leuven, and in fact the whole organisational structure, was based. It was evoked at provincial and general meetings, where former student leaders encouraged current members to keep the torch burning. It was ever-present in the journals where "the great men of our People" were presented as role models for the contemporary generation. Tradition was also articulated in the discussion meetings of the

local association, where former members of the group – priests, missionaries or laypeople – regularly appeared as living parts of the uninterrupted chain that linked the past to the present.

There were more local customs supporting this living tradition: the flag or standard of the group, for the creation of which their predecessors had, with great effort, collected donations. That flag was the symbol and rallying point for the association. It was solemnly carried in processions and in provincial or general parades, and it was the central symbol in the ceremony for the acceptance of new members. There were other symbols as well: the official song, specially composed for that particular local association, and above all the logbook, where all activities were recorded, was handed over from generation to generation, allowing current members to discover that older local people, family, teachers, parish priests or other public figures had once been active in the association. Through all of this, members got the impression that they were not simply forming a peer group of their generation, meeting for fun and recreation, but were also participants in a fraternity reaching over time and space, and fighting for the same noble cause.

### **What the movement meant**

Very correctly, as John R. Gillis wrote, “any explanation of youthful behaviour at a given point in time must take into account not only of social and economic structures, but also previous historical experience of the age group, as an independent variable of its own. Tradition did not always stand in the way of change, but interacted with it in ways that made custom itself an agent of transformation”.<sup>18</sup> The past was not simply the past, but “the layer upon layer of youth traditions”, which reconciled tradition and continuity with change and renewal. That is also why, in the historical analysis of youth movements, one should not look only at the ideological evolution, because that follows changes in the social context over time. More important is to find what the core characteristics of a youth movement are, and to include in the analysis the slower pace of change in function and structure of the movement. It is only in the interaction between ideology, structure, daily life at local level and functions in society that the specific identity of a movement can be described.

The functions of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement were seen differently by its members, the student elite at university, the clergy and ecclesiastical authorities, and the Flemish movement as a whole. For its members, the Student Movement had foremost a function in their education and socialisation. It provided the opportunity to express their own creativity and develop fresh contacts with the existing culture, and to do so by interpreting their mission in their own way with people of their own age. At the same time, this experience made them members of a broader ‘imagined community’ working for the benefit of the Flemish people.

For the university students who were leaders of the movement, its function was partly that it could transmit to the next generation the ideas that had emerged among the current students at Leuven. The students of tomorrow were still in secondary school. If they could be convinced of the viewpoint that now prevailed in Leuven, this would consolidate that viewpoint for the future. There was a possible pitfall, especially at times when the student movement at the university was radicalised. If the leadership tried to spread their radical ideology in secondary schools, they risked coming into conflict with the school and Church authorities. In the 1920s,

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18. John R. Gillis, *Youth and History*, p. 38.

this was the time bomb undermining the further autonomous existence of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement.

For the clergy and most bishops, the movement functioned as an auxiliary agent of idealistic and Catholic education. The altruistic and religious attitudes that the Church and teachers in Catholic schools tried to impose on pupils in a normative and rational way were also part of the life code of the movement, and therefore more easily accepted by the members in an intuitive way. On an educational level, after a while the movement was simply seen as a third pillar alongside the family and school.

In 1919, it was appropriately a former provincial leader and then priest, Paul Vandermeulen, who described the Catholic Flemish Student Movement as “the main factor in our Flemish Movement, because it is from here, as from a source permanently bubbling up, that the convinced and unselfish militants emerge, who must procure the Flemish fight its uninterrupted continuation and final victory”.<sup>19</sup> This statement indicated that the movement was seen not only as a means for personal education, but also as a mobilising force “for Christ and Flanders”, and that was why the broader Flemish movement – mainly Catholic – appreciated and supported it, as long at least as it remained within the broad consensus and common front of those fighting for the resolution of Flemish grievances.

## **Profile, significance, legacy**

### **Profile**

We can define the Catholic Flemish Student Movement as an original youth movement, comprising Catholic pupils of secondary schools, seminarians and students, organised in a structure where local associations had large functional autonomy and decision making followed a democratic, bottom-up principle, although the leading elite of students and seminarians at the University of Leuven had an important role of its own, not controlled by the local associations.

The Student Movement’s identity was the result of a specific configuration of several elements, such as its emergence as a by-product of an emancipation movement, the structural link with university students, a living youth tradition, a generational consciousness, a formal autonomy and self-activation in local associations. Moreover, it had a specific function that was widely appreciated by the Catholic Flemish community in Belgium, and by the people responsible for Catholic and Flemish education. It declined because gradually this positive functional perception disappeared.

The leading elite was strongly affected by the political development of the Flemish student movement at Leuven University and it tried to influence the local associations, so as to keep up with ideological developments in Leuven, which sometimes caused tension with the Church authorities. The Student Movement was embedded in the broader Flemish movement, through the actions of the leadership in Leuven, through the appearance at meetings of Flemish leaders and militants, through the articles they published in the journals of the

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19. Translated from a letter from the priest Paul Vandermeulen, dated 20 May 1919, to seminarian Jozef Meekers, quoted by Louis Vos, *Bloei en ondergang van het AKVS*, Vol. 1, p. 12.

movement and through the role of priests and seminarians played out on the local level in schools and associations.

Nevertheless, formally the movement remained autonomous, deciding on its own direction without any interference from the authorities, as well as being a great place for the living tradition passed down from generation to generation. Concerning its pattern of values, the movement always maintained the Flemish and Catholic emphasis, highlighting as a specific goal the education of its own members. This education in the formative years of adolescence encompassed problems on the social, cultural, religious and even political level, and somehow linked them to the Flemish movement. So it embraced the ‘now’, but it aimed also at militant participation in the Catholic Flemish movement ‘later’.

## Significance

Some have labelled the Catholic Student Movement ‘the oldest youth movement’. Certainly it was one of the oldest, but more importantly it was unique compared to others. It did not create its own specific youth realm that rejected the adult world, as the *Wandervogelbewegung* had done in their heyday. It did not serve as an instrument for preparing youth for good citizenship and smooth integration into the established order, as scouting did. But it did combine preservation of a space where committed youth could be themselves, in an idealistic framework of serving the Flemish and Catholic community in the present and at a later time, with an enhanced critical attitude to the existing social order, without being tied to the leash of the Catholic Church or a political party.

Those elements remained part of “the subterranean traditions of youth”,<sup>20</sup> especially in secondary schools and at university, for almost a century, affecting both the new Catholic Action youth movements that succeeded the AKVS in the 1930s and the commitment of generations of Catholic Flemish university students in Leuven. Its idealistic tradition was continued over many generations, until the 1960s. Even later, it was perhaps still an element in the explanation of why youth movements remained strong in Flanders, whereas in most other European countries they simply withered away from the 1960s onwards.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that, apart from the above-mentioned reasons for the decline of the AKVS, a more general aspect of the *Zeitgeist* played a role also. In the 1930s, a time when radical right- (and left-)wing ideologies were engaged in a huge power struggle, there was no longer any room for autonomous youth associations. Not just in Flanders, but everywhere in Europe, free youth movements disappeared. They were absorbed or replaced by new youth organisations, incorporated within political parties or churches, with the aim of creating “a youth with a mission” that would affect social and political developments. Especially when economic crisis spread over Europe, and political regimes seemed unable to stop it, the demand for radical solutions became stronger.

Like the Catholic Church, other bodies tried to strengthen their grip on youth. The new youth had to be incorporated again in organisations led by adults, in their march towards a new order and a new society. In all those new formations, structure and form were important. They were all organised from the top down in a specific style. They wore uniforms, marched at the

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20. David Matza, “The subterranean traditions of youth”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 228, 1961: pp. 102-18.

call of the clarion in military style, bearing their banners to the rhythm of rolling drums. This style – which survived the Second World War and remained a major element in Flemish youth movements until the 1960s – was an attempt to give expression to the new times.

## Legacy

The decline of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement marked the end of the free youth movements in Flanders, but not of the youth movement as such. New youth bodies were formed, structurally integrated within their ideological (Catholic, socialist or liberal) pillar, each consolidating their segment of the population. They were seen as a reservoir of future militants. Catholic youth movements aimed at personal sanctification of their members, preparing for their commitment to conquer society by religion. Their “deviant conformism”<sup>21</sup> – their radical commitment as a group to defend the Catholic cause in the society – was enhanced, but always within the lines prescribed by the Church and the Catholic pillar.

Gradually though, and this was the case from the 1940s, in all those youth movements, the focal point shifted from direct actions in the broader community to personal development through group activities, although the ideological framework remained unquestioned and the Flemish emphasis continued to be a self-evident reflex, albeit more in emotional and cultural terms than in political demands. At the same time, ‘youth movement’ as a method was systematically developed in its classical form of outdoor activities in groups, borrowed partly from scouting and other older youth movements.

Like the parades, the open-air activities and the emphasis on group life were a way out of the tedious meetings of the study circles. This development was backed by the theoretical underpinning of “the unique methodology” of the youth movement, supplied by adults responsible for education. They suggested that the youth movement was the third milieu of education, after the family and school. In all youth movements, leadership training adapted to various age groups was introduced, and the quality of the publications for leaders and members improved. It was in the 1950s that national and regional offices with paid leaders were established. That period, along with the 1960s, was the heyday of the youth movement in Flanders, in which Catholic organisations formed the most important and influential part.

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21. Klaus Allerbeck, *Soziologie radikaler Studentenbewegungen. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten*, München/Vienna, 1973.



## 5. Youth work and its forgotten history: a view from Flanders

*Filip Coussée*

It is a common belief that organised leisure activities, such as youth work, produce positive outcomes for the participants. There is a problem, however: youth work has a limited reach. Those who seem to be the most in need of this kind of organised leisure activities do not participate. The discussion in youth research and youth policy focuses therefore on the question how to reach the “hard-to-reach”. However new difficulties show up. New and more open kinds of youth work don’t seem to have the same “positive power” as the so-called traditional youth movements. They even seem to create counterproductive effects. We call this mechanism the “accessibility paradox”. The more we try to move young people into youth work, the worse it seems to get. In a historical excursion we argue that this is not a new question; nor do we give new answers. As a conclusion we shift the focus of the discussion to a question that offers more broadening perspectives: moving from the question of the accessibility of youth work provision to questioning the surplus value of youth work as seen from historical, political and social pedagogical perspective.

### **Youth work hardly reaches the hard-to-reach**

Academic research in Flanders – as in Germany, the UK, USA and elsewhere – underpins the belief that youth work (especially if it is a structured programme) produces positive outcomes for its participants. Participation in structured youth activities contributes to academic results (Fredricks and Eccles 2006), the development of social and cultural capital (Dworkin, Larson and Hansen 2003) and mental health (Mahoney, Schweder and Stattin 2002), it promotes a sense of citizenship (Williamson 1997), contributes to the process of achieving independence while maintaining good relations with the parents (Larson, Pearce, Sullivan and Jarret 2007), prevents all kinds of risk behaviour (Mahoney, Stattin and Lord 2004), leads to a stronger position in the labour market (Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins 2005) and nurtures democratic skills and attitudes (Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt 2003). Developmental and community psychologists and sociologists soon get together to further unravel the relation between participation and positive outcomes.

The seeming naturalness of this relation is also voiced in the media. Very recently youth work in Flanders twice got newspaper headlines. One said “Chiro and Scouts have a societal yield of €300 000 000”. These two popular uniformed youth movements<sup>22</sup> were ascribed this value because of the huge numbers of volunteers in their local troops; if their work were done by professional child carers, this would involve considerable cost to society. The second news item focused on the Flemish Chief Scout and his switch to politics, maintaining a tradition. The Scouts, like other youth movements, have supplied several members of parliament and ministers – even a prime minister – in recent decades, strengthening the idea that our youth movements offer a breeding ground for active, engaged and responsible policymakers.

Many other news items focus on the huge individual and social value of youth work. The media usually don’t bother to disentangle cause and effect, and most youth work researchers

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22. Whereas these types of youth work in most countries would be called “(uniformed) youth organisations”, in Flanders we still call them “youth movements”, referring to the historical legacy of the student movements. But, unlike them, current youth movements are more structured and explicitly focused on leisure time. Some authors speak of ‘youth movement’ in the first sense and some use ‘youth movement’ in the second sense (see below).

seem unable to do so (Fredricks and Eccles 2006). It is striking how these messages again and again establish the image that “youth work” is synonymous with “youth movement” (especially in Flanders) or even “structured leisure programmes”.

It is clear that policymakers are influenced by these messages from researchers and other opinion makers. Fully in line with these positive messages, they are especially concerned about the fact that youth movement membership is unequally distributed among children and young people. Low-skilled young people, young people from low-income families and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds – often lumped together under the label “vulnerable young people” – are under-represented in the youth movement. In other Western countries too, their attendance in structured youth activities is below average (Larson 1994, Williamson 1997). They are exactly the groups who seem to be most in need of all the kinds of positive outcomes described above. Hence, participation is a key theme in youth work discussion.

### **The start of systematic youth policy in Flanders: neutral and a-pedagogical**

Discussion seems to neglect the questions of what youth work essentially is, and what it does in practice. The focus is on the question how to raise participation rates. The low participation rate of different groups of young people in youth work is not a new finding. It seems to be a recurrent problem in youth work policy, in Flanders as in other countries (see for instance Jephcott, 1954; Müller et al., 1964; Eggleston, 1976; Williamson, 1997). In most countries it has in fact been the drive behind a huge differentiation in youth work supported by an active, but a-pedagogical youth policy.

From 1945 on, the government started to build a national youth policy in Belgium. A central place in this policy was allocated to youth work, more particularly to the youth movement. After the Second World War, the popularity of youth movements declined in most European countries. This was not the case in Flanders, for the government put the youth movement at the heart of its youth policy. At the time Van der Bruggen and Picalausa (1946) endorsed the central position of the youth movement in Belgian youth policy:

Through governmental measures and through their own initiative, the leaders of the youth movements are now taking a definitive responsibility towards the needs of youth in this changed world: physical health and fitness, moral and character education, vocational guidance and apprenticeship, education toward family responsibility, and an adequate civic education adapted to the technical and moral needs of democracy. The youth movements are firmly decided to help solve all these problems by the influencing of the public opinion and of the government, by a close co-operation with one another, by the extension of their action to the mass of youth, and by the complete and well-integrated education they aim to give to their members, alongside the family and the school, so as to enrich their personality and equip them to accomplish the great task of rebuilding their country and helping to make a better world.

The youth movements were at that time among the most attractive leisure activities. They were well-known and eye-catching – for example, the glorious pilgrimages to Lourdes and Rome and the frequently organised mass spectacles and jubilation festivities. They were tightly integrated in their mother organisations, and their leaders had a fairly big influence on policymakers. The existing youth organisations, mainly Catholic, wanted the government not to set up new forms of youth work or its own youth organisations, but instead explicitly to orient “unattached young people” to the youth movements. It fully responded to their wishes.

The government recognised some other, more specific youth organisations and clubs, but it classified these youth work forms as “support services for social, technical or civic

education". They were supposed to refer their clients to the youth movements for "further harmonious education" (Deshormes 1953). Even the fresh air cures of the health insurance organisations were incited to win souls for the youth movement. Government did not interfere in the content of youth work practice. Therefore, Flemish youth policy was called neutral and a-pedagogical (Collard 1957, Peeters 1974). The question of what youth work is or can be, given the specific conditions in which different young people grow up, was left aside.

### **Declining participation, increasing differentiation and the policy of moving up**

By the end of the 1950s, the conviction gained ground that the youth movement could not grow into a mass movement. The format was considered "too demanding". Nevertheless, the government still had confidence in it. Existing youth movements developed new forms of work to attract unattached young people. Supported by policymakers and academics, the youth movement considered itself as the crux around which new forms of open youth work would take shape (Peeters 1963, Cammaer et al. 1967). However, the profile of the group reached by youth movements did not change a lot. Insofar as the new forms of youth work reached some of the unattached young people, they did not succeed in moving them on to the youth movement. At that time the national chaplain of Chiro launched his teabag metaphor. Members of Chiro should function as a teabag in the water and spread their beneficial influence to the masses. Cardijn, the founder of Christian Workers Youth, used a similar metaphor. He spoke about "the yeast and the bread".

Nevertheless, inspired by British and Dutch examples, open youth work gained ground. Particularly in the bigger cities this happened increasingly without interference from the youth movement. Stimulated by a certain moral panic, local government started to focus more specifically on unattached, workless youth. Open youth work grew into an established youth work form. Thus youth work participation rates increased, but the politics of moving on (catching the unattached and guiding them into the youth movement) did not work.

Rather we saw the development of two kinds of open youth work: work with middle-class youth (often young people who grew too old for the youth movement) and work with particular target groups (jobless youth and later immigrant and underprivileged youth). These work forms soon started to employ professional youth workers. One could observe a growing gap between "general youth work" (working with middle-class children and young people, offering them meaningful leisure activities) and "specific youth work" (working with target groups, offering additional or compensatory educational support). For this kind of youth work, the gap between the lifeworld of these groups of young people and the lifeworld of the youth workers legitimised the professionalisation of youth work.

### **Working with young people and working at young people**

Broadly this is the situation today. Flanders has a high "youth work index". For every 250 young people there is a youth work initiative. There are many work forms, but the distinction between the general youth work and specific youth work has remained. The former is labelled traditional or classic youth work; the latter is called "youth social work". Table 5.1 shows in brief the characteristics of both kinds of youth work.

**Table 5.1 Types of youth work: general and specific**

	<b>General</b>	<b>Specific</b>
Participants	Middle-class	Vulnerable groups
Youth worker	Young people, volunteers	Young adults, professionals
Frequency	Once a week, weekends	Each day, not every weekend
Radius of action	Leisure time, recreation	Adjusting/compensating for deficient experiences in family or school
Activities	Structured programme	Unstructured, open
Educational philosophy	Holistic	Specific
Position in community	Splendid isolation	Uncomfortable inclusion, instrumental

This is an archetypical description. In fact there are many volunteers working in youth social work, for instance. We can make several comments on the fourth and fifth lines in the table. The activities in youth social work are often just as structured as in youth work, and the educational philosophy is to a large extent the same: implicit and focused on (rather obscure) processes (see Williamson and Middlemiss, 1999).

Apart from their distinctive client groups, the biggest difference seems to be in the way the two types of youth work are treated by (local) government, where attitudes to and expectations of the two youth work forms are clearly different. With youth social work, government puts aside its neutral attitude and expects clear results, like less trouble in the neighbourhood and reduced school drop-out. The ideal remains to move young people into the volunteer youth work. This governmental attitude creates a distinction between youth work working with young people and youth work working on young people (Jeffs, 1997). This distinction is firmly embedded in youth work policy in most European countries and it grew stronger with the neo-liberal political hegemony from the late 1970s. It is no accident that UK youth work in the 1970s evolved from a universal, needs-led service – as stipulated in the Fairbairn-Milson report – to a budget-led, outcome-focused service for areas of high social need. Fairbairn-Milson had only just been published when Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State of Education (Davies, 1999a; Wylie, 2001).

Since the 1990s we have witnessed some shifts in thinking on the purpose of youth work – connections with schooling and the labour market are more emphasised, for instance – but the discussion does not go beyond questions of method: which methods are best at reaching the hard-to-reach? The debate on what youth work is or can be, on the individual and societal levels, is pushed away by an instrumental youth work policy.

This instrumental focus leads to other unintended and unwanted consequences, for instance, reinforcement of the dividing lines between young people. These dividing lines – partly an answer to different needs and cultures, partly exaggerating and even creating differences – have been drawn in young people's neighbourhoods and schools, and are now reinforced in their leisure time. This situation should at least raise questions about the democratising and other positive effects of youth work, listed above, for it does not seem very difficult to act democratically among like-minded souls. Furthermore, this situation confronts us with a youth work paradox: youth work offers more open provision, to attract groups of young people that differ from middle-class standards of good development, but at the same time these kinds of youth work do not meet the standards of what good (that is, efficient and effective) youth work should be.

## Going beyond the youth work paradox?

The emphasis on increasing participation rates has led to a differentiation in youth work forms and to a schism between general youth work and youth social work. The situation in Flanders, however, is slightly different from that in most European countries. Whereas, in most parts of the Western world, participation rates in traditional youth organisations have dramatically dropped (Hart, 2006), they are still fairly high in Flanders. Flemish youth movements had a difficult period in the 1980s, but they are still alive and kicking. As a consequence both kinds of youth work – general and specific – are clearly included in one youth policy, whereas until recently in most countries the relationship between uniformed youth organisations and youth social work (usually simply called youth work) was not on the agenda.

Only recently in some countries has the role of traditional youth organisations in broader youth policy been reconsidered. In London, for instance, the Scouts are being given grants and publicity to attract young people. This is part of Mayor Boris Johnson's Time for Action plan, which aims to tackle the causes of teenage violence and criminality (Bennet, 2008).

That example shows that connections between different kinds of youth work could open up perspectives that go beyond the dividing lines between young people. Accessibility is also a keyword in Flemish youth policy, but in practice there is a clear restriction: accessibility only seems important in one direction, from 'youth social work' to 'youth work'. Sixty years after the first youth policy steps, the civilising discourse of moving up from 'youth work working on youth' to 'youth working with youth' is still unaffected. The youth work field has grown (although it stays principally within leisure time), youth work policy has been decentralised, participation has become a common word in youth work discussion – and yet the basic principles have remained the same.

The youth movement is seen as the real and natural youth work, the highest point for young people to reach (hardly surprising with all our boy-scout MPs). Youth social work represents a kind of second-class youth work for second-class young people. Youth work researchers underpin this distinction by saying that more open kinds of youth work don't have the same positive powers as traditional youth movements, or even seem to create counter-productive effects. Open youth centres, for instance, bring drugs, consumerism, aggression and trouble in the neighbourhood (Dishion, McCord and Poulin 1999; Mahoney, Stattin and Lord 2004).

This puts youth social work in a very ambiguous position. It is needed as long as 'real youth work' is not accessible for everyone, but in the meantime it is said to hinder the accessibility of general youth work. Youth social work has no identity of its own. It has an interim status and, at best, a derived identity: it has to stop the gaps left by general youth work. Youth social work is as vulnerable as its clients, a position that led to a crisis of the youth work profession (Banks 1996). It does not fit in the traditional youth work ideology (voluntary work, young people leading young people, work restricted to leisure time); and above all youth social workers need a budget to do their work. Yet, if they don't succeed in their mission of moving up unattached youth, what's the point in organising youth social work? Solely to save young people from boredom, as Furlong et al. (1997) put it? To put it mildly, this does not seem a very ambitious mission.

## **Giving youth work an identity of its own**

The interim status of youth social work determines the way we look at its participants: they have a not-yet identity. They are doing better than the kids who just hang around, but they are not yet behaving as they should. Policymakers seem to hope that the intervention of youth social work will civilise those vulnerable young people so they can participate in ‘normal’ volunteer youth work and enjoy the benefits from this real work. Clearly, that is an illusion, but an enduring illusion. One of its consequences is that the highest achievable purpose among the positive outcomes described above seems to be “individual empowerment within the existing societal balances of power”.

So the civilising politics of moving up do not work, but maintaining the separate circuits won’t work either. Therefore we must have a close look at the fundamental principles of our youth work definition. They seem evident, but how fundamental are they? How ‘natural’ and how ‘original’ are they?

In this respect it seems difficult for youth workers to articulate what youth work is all about (Ingram and Harris 2005). France and Wiles (1997) recorded this definition:

“Youth work is social education and social education is ... what youth workers do”. Or as Baizerman (1996) puts it: “Youth workers do youth work, they say, and often this is a vague category because they tend to claim that their practice is ineffable, or artistic, a craft which can be seen but not described or analysed”. He continues: “Youth work praxis has many forms worldwide and it is necessary to accept this and not urge a single model. A definition of youth work as a family of practices gives legitimacy to this variety.”

The lack of a clear identity, however, means that youth work is vulnerable to instrumental forces. As Howard Williamson (1995) states:

If anything goes, it is hard to identify the defining features of youth work. The German author Nörber calls youth work therefore an *Allzweckwaffe* (‘weapon for all targets’) and he adds: “Wer für alles offen ist, ist nicht ganz dicht” (Nörber 2005).

To construct the identity of youth work, we need to overcome three big shortcomings in current youth work theory: (1) Youth work theory is a-pedagogical and not funded in practice. (2) Youth work theory is a-political and restricted to individual empowerment. And (3) youth work theory is a-historical, representing the (middle-class) youth movement as the real and original youth work. These critiques are important to give shape to broadening youth work research in the future.

### **Shortcoming 1: Youth work theory is a-pedagogical**

The increasing emphasis on outcomes means that youth work policy is not neutral any more, but it is still a-pedagogical. We discuss the worth of different work forms and desired outcomes. We do that to a large extent apart from the youth workers and young people whom it concerns. As a consequence, youth work lacks theory that is funded in practice. That is not a new criticism. The British authors Jeffs and Smith came to the same conclusion in their 1987 book *Youth work*. The German authors Giesecke, Mollenhauer, Müller and Kentler had already written in 1964 a book called *Was ist Jugendarbeit?* (‘What is youth work?’). The authors started from the finding that youth work was stranded in *Praktizismus* and lacked any

theory. As far as we have youth work theory now, it is based on psychological and sociological perspectives.

The key questions are: Why is it important for young individuals to participate in youth work? What is youth work's value for society? The more youth work seems to gain societal approval, the less social pedagogues seem to interfere in the youth work discussion. It is only recently that pedagogical voices in youth work research have regained some strength (see Jeffs and Smith, 2005; Stein et al., 2005). As a matter of fact, the same goes for social work theory (Lorenz, 1999, 2001; Petrie et al., 2006).

Social pedagogical research can help us find an answer to underexposed questions. Youth work research should focus less on the learning outcomes that youth work should produce and pay more attention to the question how far youth work affects the learning of young people. We need pedagogical research that goes inside youth work and shines a light on the social pedagogical nature of youth work from the perspective of young people and youth workers themselves (see Spence, et al., 2007). Therefore we need to go beyond the thesis that youth work is "an art" (Young, 2006) or "a craft which can be seen but not described or analysed" (Baizerman, 1996).

## **Shortcoming 2: Youth work theory is a-political**

Youth work is supposed to emancipate young people. The meaning of that concept is filled in in many different ways, but as we saw above "individual empowerment" seems to be the highest achievable purpose for youth work. Youth work policy is not about social change in an unequal society (Taylor, 1987), but it seems obsessed by the quest for more effective methods to organise young people.

The question is: which elements inherent in our youth work definition possibly restrict the emancipatory force of youth work? How emancipatory can youth work be if we insist that youth work should be run by young people themselves, or that it should be restricted to leisure time, or that youth work quality can be measured by looking at individual outcomes? Do these characteristics really provide a royal way to emancipation for every child? Or is it rather the reflection of a policy context in which individual autonomy and responsibility are overvalued? It seems as if the interim status (and the hierarchical inferiority) of youth social work reflects the destiny of all social work in a residual policy context where the pursuit of social cohesion determines the agenda, rather than the pursuit of social justice (Lister, 2000).

Jenkinson (2000) states: "Too much youth work practice has remained at a recreational level and not enough thought has been given to standing back and evaluating the work, asking: 'why do we do what we do?', 'what is the purpose of it?', 'what is its aim?'" The author concludes that there are "many examples of excellent youth work around the country, with well-defined aims and clear direction based on principles of real participation, liberation and empowerment." We need urgently to study that kind of excellent, but apparently not very eye-catching youth work practice.

### **Shortcoming 3: Youth work theory is a-historical**

This brings us to our last major criticism of youth work theory and policy. The characteristics of the youth movement are implicit, but inextricably linked to a spirit of youthful enthusiasm and inspiration. Derived work forms seem to lack this spirit. Open youth work has apparently nothing more to offer than a watered-down version of the real youth movement spirit.

The real spirit is represented by the first youth movements in our regions: the Wandervögel in Germany and the Catholic Student Movement in Flanders. In our classic histories of youth work, both are represented as autonomous organisations of young people, fighting against industrialisation and oppression, and striving for cultural renewal (Laqueur, 1962). This mythical Wandervögel-spirit dominates to this day our youth work discussion, but to a large extent in an invisible way.

### **We cannot isolate pedagogy from its social and historical context**

Historical consciousness is not one of the strengths of our youth work. That is one of Davies' (1999b: ix) remarks on the UK youth service: "This is a service, I am tempted to conclude, without a history and therefore, if it is not very careful, without an identity." What we emphasise in this chapter is the impossibility of defining a pedagogical identity isolated from its social and historical context (Giesecke, 1964). Youth work theory cannot be developed without bringing along youth work history. Youth work theory cannot be extended without taking account of the diversity in the category 'youth' and people's educational environment.

Therefore the first step in developing youth work theory is to deconstruct youth work history and reconstruct it from a broader point of view. The second step is to develop a coherent body of youth work research, focusing on the question how youth work intervenes in the lives of children and young people, rather than racking our brains over the problem of leading youth to youth work. We don't have space here for a comprehensive exploration of these two steps. In what follows we sketch the important developments in Flemish youth work history and try to show some new perspectives in a contextualised youth work approach.

### **From youth movement to youth work method**

Our classic youth work histories take existing youth organisations as their starting point and go back in history, reconstructing the life of the various organisations. Depaepe (2004) calls this "presentism". History is built up starting from the present situation, as if the shape contemporary youth work has taken were inescapable, following an internal logic. It is important to identify the underlying concepts, as these concepts structure the youth work debate. Even though they are often invisible and no longer open for discussion, they define what's possible and what seems impossible (Lorenz, 2007).

Usually history is traced back to the interbellum period, when the youth movements had their heyday, spurred by Catholic Action. Under the umbrella of the JVKA (Jeugdverbond voor Katholieke Actie) there were several class- and gender-specific youth movements: KSA ('Student action'), BJB ('Young farmers'), KAJ ('Young workers'), KBMJ ('Merchants youth'), in each case with their feminine counterpart (Loriaux and Rosart, 2002). Besides such Catholic Action Youth Movements, there were also some so-called auxiliary bodies like



Scouts and Guides and Chiro. These were youth movements that appealed to younger children. They were – at least according to the Church – less focused on direct Catholic Action. Alongside these youth movements in the Catholic segment there were liberal, nationalistic and socialist youth groups. They were much smaller than the Catholic ones and they get only marginal attention in youth work histories.

What we now call youth social work did exist in those days. From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the bourgeoisie and religious congregations established patronages, Catholic youth groups for working-class youngsters. Often these activities are not included in youth work histories. Sometimes they appear as “youth care”, a kind of youth work that became redundant as the youth movement made the synthesis between adult concerns and youthful idealism, spread its wings and tried to grow into a mass movement. It is important to complete and to refine this classic history of traditional youth work.

The youth movements form a significant part of youth work history. For instance, Romano Guardini (Quickborn) was an important German youth work pedagogue with strong influence in Flanders. He canalised unbridled youthful enthusiasm into a religious and educational programme. In doing that he turned the first expressions of a youth movement, seen as a social movement, into a youth movement with the emphasis on seeing it as a method of youth work. In methodising an existing youth movement, the first youth work pedagogues were clearly inspired by the Scouting method.

The story of Baden-Powell is well known. Inspired by Ernest Thompson Seton’s Woodcraft Indians and his own skills and experience gained in public school and in the British Army during the Boer War, he prepared a training programme for boys. He developed the Scouting method for William Smyth of the Boys’ Brigade, but his method grew into a movement that conquered the world (Rosenthal, 1986; Jeal, 1990). Dissemination of the Scouting method helped to transform youth work into a decontextualised and apolitical concept (Lewin, 1947) where social struggle and redistribution made way for cultural renewal and character building.

## **How the youth was won**

The youth movement in Flanders is studied for the most part in isolation from other educational interventions and pedagogical theories. This youth work method acquired a monopoly position after the First World War, stimulated by a certain moral panic (again) about the physical and mental health of children and young people right after this disaster. There were also concerns about growing leisure time. The introduction of compulsory education made the distinction clearer between family, school and leisure time. Another important factor was the development of psychological theories on the nature of adolescence (in particular the influential theories of German-American scholars like Stanley Hall and Eduard Spranger, who studied the German youth movement, the Wandervögel).

The new youth work method called Scouting offered the possibility of connecting these adult concerns to adolescent nature and thus it was welcomed as the remedy for “the youth problem”. It seems clear, however, that it was modelled on the image and supposed needs of the middle-class adolescents who joined the Wandervögel movement. In that way the “youth question” was disconnected from the “social question”. Moreover, this view of youth was fed more by myth than by empirical observation or real participation. The flower of the German

Youth Movement got slaughtered in the mud of Flanders in 1914-18 (Tyldesley, 2006: 25) and the myth grew stronger between the two world wars.

The transformation of student movements like the Wandervögel or the Flemish Student Movement into youth movements (as a method of youth work) did not change the profile of their participants. In Flanders, Scouting did not succeed – maybe because of the influence of the romantic Wandervögel mythos – in reaching working-class youngsters, although Baden-Powell himself intended to bring boys of different social classes together through Scouting. Like the student movement, Flemish scouting – for the most part Catholic – was clearly animated by priests and middle-class students. The spirit that is linked to these middle-class movements is not naturally the “real and original” youth work spirit, but the youth movement in the second sense (based on the scouting method) seems to have dispelled other forms of youth work, which may have led – from the perspective of some young people – to a situation of boring uniformity.

### **Where have all the working-class youngsters gone?**

The history of Flemish youth work – even if restricted to the so-called youth movements – is much richer and more complex than classic youth work history suggests. There was never just one youth work spirit or model. Youth work needs and demands changed through the ages. Giesecke shows that the Wandervögel generation was strongly integrated in society. They strove for individual freedom and independence, whereas post-war youth grew up in a plural society and looked in the first place for orientation and security. This drove the Weimar pedagogues to despair, because they supposed that young people searched for the same things in youth work as they themselves had searched for and found in youth work when they were young (Giesecke, 1981). Youth work spirit also varies in relation to the people involved in it. Working-class youth movements like the Christian Workers’ Youth and the Young Socialist Guards were very different from each other, but differed also strongly from Scout troops.

Defining the youth movement (in the sense of a method of youth work) as the best and most effective kind of youth work instigated a strong push to transform existing youth work into Scout look-alikes. This was not a sudden transformation but a process that took years. The Church replaced the first Student Movement with the KSA, a youth movement that was more in line with Catholic assumptions. In fact it was the Socialist Party that began the introduction of Scout-alike methods. Some leading socialists got inspired by the German Wandervögel mythos and the back-to-nature wind, which also blew in the field of education.

After the international socialist youth conference in Stuttgart (1907) under the presidency of the Belgian Hendrik de Man, pedagogical aspects were more strongly emphasised (Collignon, 2001). Next to the Socialist Young Guards – a one-issue social action movement – they established a less political and (from a pedagogical viewpoint) more valuable youth movement, later called the AJC (Algemene Jeugdcentrale). Following the socialists, the Catholic action movements introduced, little by little, Scouting methods into their activities. Self-government, participation and learning by doing became the basic principles of all youth movements. The patronage groups became Chiro, KSA and KAJ evolved from study circles and social movements into youth movements, and the fresh-air cures introduced youth movement techniques. Gradually they all began to ask the same question “Where have all the working-class kids gone?” (Coussée, 2008).

## Cardijn meets Baden-Powell

At first sight, there seems nothing wrong with the emphasis on self-government and other emancipatory elements. Nevertheless, in this trend to more uniform (and uniformed) youth work, it seems we threw away some important aspects of what youth work was or could be. How otherwise can we explain the fact that working-class youngsters gradually disappeared from the land of youth work? How can it be that youth workers like Don Bosco (who ran one of the first Catholic patronages in Turin) or Joseph Cardijn (who founded Christian Workers Youth), whose initiatives at some points seemed less emancipatory and more paternalistic, obviously appealed to working-class kids?

Joseph Cardijn, a priest (in later years he was raised to the purple), is in this context a useful antidote to the Baden-Powell glorification. They each founded a movement that conquered the world, but the two youth work forms are very different. Very clarifying is the discussion they had when they met in London in 1907. Baden-Powell made the proposal to Cardijn that he should become Scouts Officer for Belgium. Cardijn tried to explain to the Chief Scout that one has to distinguish between youth in general and working-class youth. This is my translation of an excerpt from their conversation, as written down by Cardijn (1948: 137):

Cardijn: Do you know that there are young workers who have particular problems and needs?

B-P: I don't know young workers. I only know young people and I want to create strong-willed men.

Cardijn: Do you know how young workers have to live inside factories, how they get influenced by this workman's sphere? How could we help them to remain kind-hearted, even to exercise a positive influence in the factory?

B-P: I'm not acquainted with working-class life.

Both men have a clear view of the purpose of youth work. Baden-Powell obviously sees the essence of youth work as something that can be defined apart from the young people it concerns. Cardijn on the other hand takes the situation of working-class youth, and the (supposed) needs connected with that status, as his starting point for social pedagogical action.

It is Baden-Powell's "abstraction from context" that is characteristic for our a-pedagogical and a-political youth work theory today. Unfortunately, Cardijn's Catholic Workers' Youth evolved – as did Don Bosco's patronages – into a "real youth movement". This happened partly under pressure from the Church and partly under the influence of Catholic trade unions. These two Catholic organisations found each other, in the wish to see less political action and education in Workers' Youth and more attention to the fostering of Scouting values like learning by doing/playing and guidance without dictation.

## Methodical (re)differentiation, unaffected basic assumptions

It needs more (and more intensive) historical research to present a solid picture of the aspects of youth work that got ruled out of the youth work discussion with the establishment of the Scouting hegemony. Ruling out adults seems to be one of the central aspects in this narrowing down of youth work, along with the exclusion – not intentionally, but obviously as a consequence – of working-class young people.

It seems clear that we in Flanders made a cultural turn in our youth work discussion at that time. The somewhat paternalistic but down-to-earth youth work with kids from the working class was replaced by a view of youth work participants as a cultural vanguard. The Scout method, with an injection of German Wandervögel romanticism, formed the prototype of the youth movement that suited the concerns of leading adults in government (beyond left and right!), churches and schools: emancipation, but within the prevailing social order. Pedagogues adopted this model at one of the first pedagogical conferences in 1919. Policy makers gave it the status of best practice with the start of the official youth work policy in 1945.

How practitioners coped with these changes is far less known, but from then on developments in youth work were presented as differentiations of the ideal youth movement model to democratise its lovely spirit. To make the youth movement more accessible to “those who were most in need of democratic socialisation”, the aspects that had been eliminated in youth work discussion have gradually been reintegrated, but in a more methodical way.

Thus involvement in debates on working conditions or learning circumstances has been replaced by a one-way attuning of youth work to the demands of school and labour market, or to all-embracing prevention issues (joined-up thinking!). All these methodical differentiations of the ideal model are somehow considered as inferior or subordinate (as their clients are too, perhaps). We seem to have forgotten that the central place of the youth movement itself was a serious narrowing down of the youth work concept. In a sense, youth work history is not a history of democratisation but of civilisation.

## **Conclusion**

A less mythologised and more politicised view of youth work history opens up possibilities of conducting research that goes beyond the quest to impose emancipatory solutions on recalcitrant groups. That search inevitably leads to what-we-need-is-more-of-the-same conclusions and an increasing formalising of the non-formal. Historical research – along with research grounded in youth work practice that throws a light on the perspectives of young people themselves – must contribute to a social pedagogical identity for youth work.

Emancipation remains a key concept, but it needs to be reconsidered in the light of that research. In recent decades, the youth movement has indeed successively emancipated itself from adults, church, school and party politics, but in doing this it further ruled out the working-class kids. This emancipation is one that falls back on the modern concept of emancipation, which has its roots in the 19th-century moral crusade. That crusade is still (or again) very much alive; it is one that restricts emancipation to the promotion – through education – of individual social mobility within the prevailing social relations and balances of power. The elimination of the social in pedagogy is the reason why youth work, just as much as social work in general, does not seem to get much further than empowering the powerful and appeasing the vulnerable.

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## 6. Defined by history: youth work in the UK

*Bernard Davies*

### Framing the narrative

One question, posed a number of times at the Blankenberge Seminar, seemed to have considerable resonance for many of the participants: “Why can’t youth workers define what they do more clearly – and more credibly?” I realised that this had not been a particular concern in preparing my own contribution, which was (and is) underpinned by a quite contrary premise: that over the past century and a half in England – and indeed, it could be argued, over the UK generally – the core features of a way of working with young people have been formulated and refined so that, overall, they provide a well delineated if unfinished definition of a distinctive practice that we now call “youth work”.

That this definition is unfinished goes without saying. In all human endeavours of this kind contradiction, debate and revision are permanent features, with the product inevitably problematic and contested, never final. Nonetheless, my reading of the past is that, within these parameters of continuing dialogue, the current problem over definition in the UK is not that no definition exists. Nor is it that the definition is not widely shared, including (as we shall see) by young people. Rather, as I argue in the final section of this chapter, the problem in the UK is that the definition that is deeply rooted historically and widely embraced is not one that our most influential policy-makers want to hear – least of all implement. The government’s “youth minister” Beverley Hughes made this very clear in December 2005:

Primarily [youth work is] about activities rather than informal education. Constructive activities, things that are going to enhance young people’s enjoyment and leisure ... I want activities to be the main focus. (quoted in Barrett, 2005: 14-15)

To trace how over some 200 years the UK has reached this official position, this chapter – though not giving equal attention to each – takes as its starting points the three key questions set for the Blankenberge Seminar:

- How has youth work policy, pedagogy and methods evolved historically?
- What role have these played in integrating young people into society?
- How has youth policy more generally dealt with that role?

My responses to these questions are shaped by the proposition that youth work is a social construct, whose creation has to be understood in the context of the wider political, economic and social conditions in which it developed. This approach is for me important, partly because it exposes to explicit examination historical struggles and events worth considering in their own right. Here, however, it has another value. It helps to throw a critical light on how the historic UK conception of youth work has been achieved – and how, in a different context and under pressure from changed political priorities, policy-makers are seeking to narrow and even subvert that definition.

To illuminate these arguments, I start by giving some attention to the later 18th and early 19th century, focusing on working-class struggles to generate bottom-up forms of popular education within which, I suggest, some recognisable features of a youth work approach are discernible. By mid-19th century, however, these struggles had very largely been lost, to be replaced increasingly by an acceptance of (or at least compliance with) top-down institutions – particularly church- and state-sponsored schooling. As a result, by the later decades of the century, when an adolescent segment of the population was becoming identified as needing recreationally-based and mainly group-focused forms of “improvement” in their leisure time, it was taken as self-evident that the necessary youth leadership, far from being popular in origin, had also to be provided, in this case by a range of philanthropic institutions.

With some bridging between them, I examine three landmark periods of this semi-official (and dominant) history:

- The late 19th and early 20th centuries, when voluntary philanthropic effort constructed youth leadership as a distinctive practice with young people.
- The years between 1939 and the 1960s, when a state commitment to youth work was secured and consolidated.
- The period after 1997 when (at least in England) youth work practice was re-shaped and redirected, if not actually redefined, by neo-liberal welfare principles of the New Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

This rather schematic approach clearly carries some risks – particularly of giving too little attention to the complexities and contradictions of historical processes. Not least among these is the fact that, in each of the four UK countries, youth work has developed some very different policy frameworks and trajectories. This has been increasingly true since the mid-20th century and especially since the devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the 1990s. For the period before these changes, I attempt to distil some key features common to all four countries. From the 1960s onwards, my focus is increasingly on England.

## **A youth work prehistory?**

### **A movement for popular education**

In the UK, the origins of youth work and policy can be traced back to the mid- to late 19th century, with the establishment of a range of philanthropic organisations providing (usually separate) leisure-time facilities for boys and young men and girls and young women.

However, youth work in the half century before these developments – the period covering the early stages of the industrial revolution in Britain and the class struggles which this produced – has long seemed to me to merit broader attention than it has usually received. Though more recent studies may now be available, my interest was first prompted by my encounters with the work in the 1970s and 1980s of the – now defunct, out-of-fashion and too easily forgotten – Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, based at Birmingham University.

For me the main stimulus came from the historical research and writing of Richard Johnson. Though no doubt unintentionally, this carried intriguing hints of some earlier alternative, albeit barely emergent, forms of youth work hidden within the popular education movements he was describing – and, once these had been largely defeated, subsequently hidden too from

history. Some of our wider discussions at Blankenberge – particularly on the formative impact on youth work in some European countries of youth (and wider) political movements – made an at least tentative exploration of this possibility seem even more relevant here.

Other historians have pointed to precursors of modern British youth work in this earlier period – particularly the network of Sunday schools which from the late 18th century were established for working-class children by Robert Raikes and by Hannah More and her sister (see for example Smith, 2002). As early as 1844 a group of middle-class young men founded what is widely regarded as the UK's first national voluntary youth organisation, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), with the declared aim of “uniting and directing the efforts of [other] Christian young men for the spiritual welfare of their fellows in the various departments of commercial life”.

What Johnson was describing however was something very different. In particular, unlike Raikes' and More's initiatives, it was not being done to working-class people by their “betters” but by and for working-class people themselves. For example, Johnson (1976, 1977) examined in some critical detail “the discovery of indigenous educational traditions” which, he showed, were at work from the late 18th century up to the demise of the Chartist movement in the later 1840s (see also Harrison, 1961; Silver, 1965; Simon, 1972).

Though the result, Johnson concluded, was less a system than a network – or a movement? – it nonetheless amounted to a “strategy [which] was substitutional” and through which, in three main ways, “they did it themselves”. One was to maintain “a running critique of all ‘provided’ (or ‘philanthropic’) forms of education” – particularly the forms of schooling then developing but also the institutions being developed for working-class adults. This critique was extended to the role of the state – seen as an instrument of capitalist employers – including, by the 1830s, its first interventions into schooling for working-class children.

The second key feature of the strategy as outlined by Johnson was “alternative sets of educational goals”, including alternative definitions of the “really useful knowledge” required by working-class people not just for daily living but for radically changing an unequal and unjust society.

Thirdly, Johnson pointed to “a vigorous and varied educational practice”. This was implemented through the wide dissemination of a radical press and other printed matter, through secular Sunday schools and “halls of science” and, Johnson suggested, through the at least partial subversion of provided institutions such as mechanics' institutes. Its methods also included learning through a variety of other grassroots bodies and from “the knowledgeable friend, relation or neighbour”.

### **Youth work – or not?**

What Johnson was describing was bottom-up, indigenous working-class activism based on self-help and self-organisation. Some significant and indeed fundamental differences from the youth work we know today – both in purpose and pedagogy – are therefore clear. For one thing, because these educational activities were seen as a vital contribution to assuring and sustaining class solidarity, group action was much more than a means to other ends. The kinds of self-development that so dominate current educational provision were certainly valued.

Collectivity, however – a commitment to working and achieving together for the common good – was, in its own right, a key desired outcome.

Secondly, it was assumed that, as an essential element of this search for solidarity, the approaches for implementing the education on offer, though undoubtedly intended to include young people, needed to be cross-generational. Thirdly, within the content of this education “practicality and liberality were not seen as incompatible (as they are by many modern ‘academics’)”, not least because social analysis and social action (theory and practice) were assumed to be both inseparable and essential for dealing with the punishing daily “labouring” experience of society and how it operated.

Despite these divergences – and without overstating or romanticising what was actually achieved – it is possible to discern within the popular education that was being advocated and indeed practised some pre-figuring of youth work pedagogy and methods as these are now understood in the UK. What Johnson describes as an endorsement of “‘reasonable’ adult behaviour” towards children mirrors the long-standing youth work assumption that adults will seek respectful relationships with young people, rather than dominate or patronise them as “not yet quite complete”. This was also a practice based on experiential learning, which stressed “the child’s own activity”.

Much of this learning, as we have seen, was to be developed in informal educational ways, in and through group experience and interaction. Moreover, because it was explicitly designed and intended to bring about social change, it was inherently (rather than as an extrinsic curriculum subject) designed as a form of citizenship education. Indeed, within it were organic forms of learner participation and commitments to their empowerment which make their currently fashionable UK versions look insipid and manipulative.

Even though such claims can be made only very tentatively – some, I suspect, may even judge them fanciful – for me a speculative exploration of this kind is important for a more general reason. It reminds us that other informal and indeed non- (or only minimally) institutionalised forms of education were in the past not only seen as possible but actually practised. The youth work which the rest of this chapter examines, far from being inevitable, has therefore to be treated as above all a social construct – the compromised product of intense inter-personal and inter-group processes and conflicts with deep historical roots.

## **From popular to provided**

Later versions of the indigenous educational tradition described by Johnson have been identified – for example in an independent working-class adult education movement in the early decades of the 20th century (Phillips and Putnam, 1980). In a very different context the tradition was perhaps again discernible in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s as Black communities strove to provide indigenous educational (including youth work) provision for their young people. Significantly, however, in a strong echo of what happened to the educational movement that Johnson was examining, by the late 1980s many of these pioneering Black activists had “decided they needed to take the grants, the jobs and the positions on committees that would bring them closer to the new site of struggle – the local state” (Shukra 2007).

For, following the defeat of Chartism in the late 1840s, the popular education tradition had weakened substantially and eventually all but disappeared. By then organised working-class activity was softening its view of the state and its possibilities, and concentrated increasingly on gaining access to and improvements in provided institutions, including those offering education.

Such incorporation was interwoven too with a growing ruling-class determination to secure firm control of this crucial educational terrain and, particularly through schooling, to become the dominant provider for the labouring classes. As Raikes' and More's efforts show, this was not a new approach. But, from the 1830s onwards, the dominant philanthropic and state providers set in train something much more radical – and which, at a time when 21st-century UK governments have become obsessed with young people who are NEET ('not in education, employment or training') again has a strong contemporary ring. These initiatives Johnson had described in an earlier article as

an enormously ambitious attempt to determine, through the capture of educational means, the patterns of thought, sentiment and behaviour of the working class ... – [designed] to raise a new race of working people – respectful, cheerful, hard-working, loyal, pacific and religious. (Johnson, 1970: 119)

It was this far-reaching aspiration, underpinned by the organised working class's increasing engagement with state provision, which from the mid-19th century squeezed out any practical possibility of sustaining recognisable forms of indigenous working-class youth work or indeed any similar educational endeavour. As E.J. Urwick, subwarden of the Toynbee Hall Settlement in London in the early 1900s, put it in 1904, the assumption by then was that:

The children of the poor follow where they are led. Their "betters" are their leaders, and the example of their life determines their path. (quoted in Gillis, 1974: 140)

It is therefore the provided educational philosophy and institutional forms generated by these ruling-class perspectives and ambitions to which we must look for the origins of what over the next 150 years became established in the UK as the dominant versions of youth work.

## **Pioneering provided youth work**

### **New challenges, new responsibilities**

It was not until later in the 19th century that changing social and economic conditions prompted a UK-wide development of such a practice. By then, commentators were convinced, these changes were presenting the nation's young with new and tough challenges – and those with means and in positions of power with new responsibilities. Not unrelated, in this period those passing through a newly discovered (or constructed?) phase in the life cycle, adolescence, were seen as needing some of the protections and nurturing as well as the disciplining already in place for children.

Some of the challenges were domestic. As the demand for unskilled (especially child) labour reduced, more and more young people were neither in school nor at work. Where "corrupting" commercial facilities such as "drink-shops" and the "penny gaff" (the "low" music hall) did not fill this new leisure gap, "the street, and only the street, remained", offering ready opportunities for the young to indulge in "one main amusement" – gambling (Russell and Rigby, 1908: 10-11).

The youth of the country were seen as being tested, too, within a new international context. In an early version of globalisation, Britain in this period – no longer the undisputed workshop of the world – sought to bolster its political and economic position by embarking on a revitalised imperial mission. Were the young ready for the demands of this burden? What extra guidance and support did they need, to be sure they could respond? Youth work as we now know it emerged in part as one response to this national self-searching.

But who should, who could, take on these emerging responsibilities? Pragmatic and often major compromises with the *laissez-faire* principles which had so shaped Victorian Britain had already been made – in order, for example, to guarantee public health and spread elementary education to the whole population. Nonetheless, in the later 19th century and even into the early decades of the 20th century the state remained, at best, an unwelcome intruder in the personal and social spheres of people's lives. For, responding to the newly identified leisure-time needs of young people, a state role was therefore never apparently considered. Self-evidently, these were "suitable fields for voluntarily supported clubs" (Berry, 1919: 96), a task for "thinking people who felt something must be done" (Russell and Rigby, 1908: 12), for those who were conscious of what their "happier fortune has bestowed on us from our circumstances" (Booton, 1985: 14), those who were "fortunately placed" and therefore "felt very strongly that in some way [action] was incumbent on us" (Schill, 1935: 5).

By the early decades of the 20th century the result was a network of local independent boys' and girls' clubs across the UK. From the 1880s, under the influence of William Smith, military-style brigades for boys and girls also took hold and by the 1900s were being supplemented and indeed often underpinned by Baden Powell's Boy Scouts and later the Girl Guides. In due course these sought mutually supportive links by setting up a range of local, regional and national associations and federations.

The men and women who formed these clubs, "battalions" and "troops" never envisaged them as a universalist provision; indeed they constantly fretted that:

none of these agencies – not even the Boys Club, laying itself out merely for the boy's amusement – make an appeal to the mass of the boys of this [working] class. And the boys who come are precisely those who need the Club least. (Freeman, 1914: 129)

From the start these new institutions sought explicitly to be selective – or, in the current jargon of UK social policy, targeted. Their explicit focus was "working lads" and "the factory girl" – in the Ardwick area of Manchester, for instance, "those who had to spend their lives in the mean and squalid districts and slums of our city" (Schill, 1935: 5).

## **Motives and purposes**

Nor, at this early stage, were these pioneers talking about youth work. "Youth leadership" was what they were seeking – a term very deliberately chosen as an explicit statement of intent. Indeed, most often the language in which those intentions were expressed displayed an openness and absence of ambiguity which today have been lost or (more likely) knowingly abandoned. No evasive talk here of "the deprived" or "the underprivileged", of "the disadvantaged" or "the socially excluded". "The poor" were the poor, "the lower orders" the lower orders.

Moreover the aims which they then set themselves, though as always run through with contradictory pulls and pushes, continued to reflect that earlier highly ambitious commitment identified by Johnson: to “re-moralising” a whole class. Some were explicitly focused on improvement – “to educate them in other ways than book learning” (quoted in Booton, 1985: 32). Though this included encouraging and supporting young people to acquire “harder” (especially recreational) skills, it also focused on what today would be labelled “soft” personal and social skills – on “bring[ing] the Public School spirit to the masses” (Berry, 1919: 9), on what the founders of St Christopher’s Working Boys’ Club in the early 1900s called “a better tone” and “good form” (quoted in Booton, 1985: 14).

These broad goals were framed within some taken-for-granted gender perspectives and boundaries. Thus the first object of Openshaw Lads’ Club, founded in Manchester in 1888, included the aspiration “to encourage manliness of the highest order” (Flint, 1948: 8), while for Maud Stanley, a girls’ club innovator and leader in the 1890s, it was important that:

we shall ... give the working girl an influence over her sweetheart, her husband, her sons which will sensibly improve and raise her generation to be something higher than mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. (see Booton, 1985: 51)

As a number of the quotations above show, much of what was being attempted was also located in the wider child-saving movement so prominent in this period. Some of the interventions were explicitly, sometimes passionately, concerned to rescue the children of those hewers of wood from exploitation by their capitalist employers. As Walter Lorenz pointed out in his keynote address to the Blankenberge Seminar, this propelled some of these pillars of their community, perhaps in spite of themselves, into forms of political activism – though rarely ones which posed a direct challenge to the system itself.

Within the leisure contexts of the new youth leadership, much of what was done also sought to counter the perceived dangers embedded in young people’s daily lives and everyday social world. One of the most influential women pioneers, Lily Montagu, was clear for example that

Our dances competed with low, cheap, dancing halls where girls went for a sixpenny hop ... and [where] the company was most objectionable. (Montagu, 1954: 78-9)

And so too were the founders of Openshaw Lads’ Club:

None will dispute the appalling lack of facilities at that time whereby young men and boys could spend their leisure hours usefully and prepare themselves for worthy citizenship. (Flint, 1948: 7)

Moreover, with so many of these activities understood as wicked, immoral, indeed straightforwardly sinful, underpinning all these efforts was an again-undisguised and unapologetic Christian proselytising – an open commitment, expressed by the founders of St Christopher’s Working Boys’ Club, “to help [the young] learn that the service of God is the highest service” (quoted in Booton, 1985: 14); or, as the founders of Openshaw Lads’ Club put it, “to help them to be Christians in life as well as in name” (Flint, 1948: 8).

Altruistic intentions cannot however be taken as the only ones which moved the pioneers. Much self-interest was at work here, too, often driven (as today) by fears which dated back at least to the start of Britain’s industrialisation. Some of these were experienced keenly and very personally. In the view of one commentator, for example, in the 1870s:

If we in the Church of England do not deal with the masses, the masses will deal with us. (quoted in Davies and Gibson, 1967: 38)

Some three decades later, the journalist and historian C.F.G. Masterman echoed these same anxieties:

They [the ruling class] dread the fermenting, in the populous cities, of some new, all-powerful explosive, destined one day to shatter into ruins all their desirable social order. (quoted in Davies and Gibson, 1967: 35)

What is more, by then those masses were indeed seeking to challenge the system itself, were organising themselves through trade unions and a political party advocating socialist solutions to their grievances and were sometimes too, it seemed to those in power, intent precisely on destabilising that desirable social order. As influential a youth leadership protagonist as Baden Powell thought it “no exaggeration to hope for valuable results from scouting in the direction of ultimately solving class differences” (quoted in Davies and Gibson, 1967: 38). Indeed, for him the need was urgent to maintain and strengthen both Britain’s internal unity and its wider imperial mission:

Remember, whether rich or poor, from castle or from slum, you are all Britons in the first place, and you’ve got to keep Britain up against outside enemies, you have to stand shoulder to shoulder to do it. If you are divided amongst yourselves you are doing harm to your country. You must sink your differences. (quoted in Springhall, 1977: 59)

We must all be bricks in the wall of that great edifice – the British Empire. (quoted in Springhall, 1977: 15)

## **Defining and constructing a distinctive practice**

For working with what today would be labelled a very challenging client group, the aims which the original youth work sponsors set for themselves were thus very stretching. For responding to this challenge, much of what they did was probably intuitive, pragmatic, heavily reliant on trial and error. Much too, no doubt, was transient – long lost to history. Nonetheless, far from merely emerging out of some accidental or inevitable impersonal process, the youth leadership that was pioneered in the period from the 1860s and 1870s into the 1900s was designed and constructed: drawing on a self-conscious analysis of the needs and characteristics of the groups to be attracted; incorporating learning from the experience of actually doing the work; generating a small but significant literature; and, through this, disseminating that experience more widely.

The youth leadership this constructed was therefore no fly-by-night enterprise – no passing whim. From the start it was an endeavour which, though added to and refined over the next century and a half, went a long way towards defining the core features of a practice with young people which distinguished it from other approaches. What were these core features? Because of its implications for how the work overall would need to be initiated and developed, most fundamental was the presumption that young people would choose to attend and to continue to participate:

In the first place the boys had to be persuaded to come. (Russell and Rigby, 1908, 18)

It is no use asking girls to whom one is unknown; they will not come; they are distrustful of such invitations, and shyness also will prevent their entering a strange place. (Maude Stanley, 1890: 57)



A compulsory programme is contrary to the Boys Club method. (Henriques, 1934: 7)

This fact of young people's voluntary participation remained a central – perhaps the defining – consideration in much of the pioneers' subsequent thinking and planning. In particular, their determination to provide young people with an educational experience broadly defined – to move them not just beyond the interests and activities but also the values, beliefs and habits which they brought with them – meant that they needed, constantly and constructively, to respond to this reality. It showed up repeatedly for example in their acceptance and indeed often positive embrace of young people's demand that, during their precious leisure time, they had a chance to relax, meet with friends and do things they enjoyed:

the first object [is] Recreation ... the compelling force which brings members to the clubs ... The second object we may call Education ... The first object in itself leads to the second. (Russell and Rigby, 1908: 19)

Most Clubs make amusements and sports the main concern of their organisation. That is right, because, otherwise, the boy who is tired after his work will not attend. (Freeman, 1914: 129)

In setting these processes in motion, the early youth work providers also emphasised what we now might call personalisation – the need to meet and engage with young people as people, as individuals:

To know about the boy is by no means the same thing as to know the boy. (Henriques, 1934: 51-2) [emphasis added]

As the essential underpinning of this, they sought to build relationships which demonstrated respect for young people: as the founders of St Christopher's Boys' Club expressed it: "to ourselves mix with them freely".

Any helper in a girls' club should have friendliness in her manners and in her heart. (Stanley, 1980: 56)

Also embedded early were notions of what today in the UK we would call participation:

A few boys' clubs place great reliance on the principle of self-government by the members. (Russell and Rigby, 1908: 85)

it is the right principle, as soon as the lads reach years of discretion, to draw them into responsibility for the club's welfare ... seniors should have their own committee to look after the working of the department. (Schill, 1935: 52, 54)

Finally, the work was built on a recognition of young people's own friendship groups as important and valuable to them and so as a potentially positive medium through which to engage and work with them – "where the boy picks up valuable habits from association with other lads" (Freeman, 1914: 129).

Real pals ... are generally keen and even insist on sticking together. It is not uncommon for a boy to refuse to join the club unless his friend is also taken in. (Henriques, 1934: 46)

Indeed for Urwick, "the street gang was in some sense the school for the poor" (Gillis, 1974: 63):

Understand it [the street] and you hold the key to many of the riddles of social morality, and let this too serve to explain how it is that the majority of boys and girls for whom the home does so little and for

whom the school has so little chance of doing much, nevertheless grow into decent and respectable citizens. (quoted in Gillis, 1974: 64).

Though spread unevenly through the written records and analyses of what was being attempted at the time, these were recurrent features of the new youth leadership – voluntary attendance; education through leisure-time activity; a focus on the individual; a personalised relationship with him or her and his or her peer group; and participative approaches. As these came together over the decades, they defined a distinctive practice which was handed onto, and progressively consolidated and developed by, subsequent generations of youth leaders and their advocates.

## **The state takes a hand**

### **Small stumbling steps**

What also continued to be taken for granted was that this practice must be provided largely through charitable action. As a result, well into the 20th century youth work in the UK lacked a coherent national policy framework. Fiercely independent voluntary organisations, liable to respond in highly competitive ways, continued to dominate the field, usually operating on clear philosophical and organisational principles of their own. The only UK youth work policies which could be said to exist were by and large their policies, with the most unifying issue being their distrust of the state.

Not that the state was entirely passive in the first half of the 20th century. Though inconsistent and lacking follow-through, governments did seek to respond to the effects on young people of the wartime conditions of 1914-18, particularly by trying to bring greater local coherence to what voluntary youth organisations were doing. More fundamentally, over these decades the wider political context shifted. Pressures again built up from below for the state to take greater responsibility for ameliorating the worst excesses of capitalism, particularly from the labour movement – though one key component in this, the trade unions, showed little interest in something as marginal as youth work to their overwhelmingly work-focused concerns. More pragmatically, whole populations and their economic and social institutions had to be mobilised to fight two total wars and then to carry out major post-war reconstruction.

By the 1940s therefore the popular mind-set on state intervention had changed significantly. This gave governments a much stronger mandate for involving themselves in areas of provision which, for them, had previously been off-limits. As a clear sign of this changed environment, in 1936 most of the national voluntary youth organisations set up a loosely structured “standing conference” as a minimal form of collective self-defence against government “interference”.

In these years the youth of the nation remained a major focus of attention and concern. Increasingly, governments fretted over how fit and motivated young people were to defend their country and how they could be guaranteed guidance and discipline while their fathers were away fighting. UK prescriptions for state action in this period were constantly circumscribed by cautionary references to the monolithic (and very un-British) youth movements of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. Nonetheless, by the later 1930s, as another war threatened, it was accepted that a limited state role was needed if the youth leadership on offer was to be relevant and effective. This was expressed in new powers given

to local authorities to pay for youth facilities in the years running up to the Second World War.

### **From wartime enthusiasm to austerity**

The real state breakthrough came after the war started. The first of a series of government circulars and policy statements appeared in 1939 and 1940. In 1942, all 16- and 17-year-olds were required to register with their local office of the Ministry of Labour in part “to secure contact between them and the Youth Service” – though not, the government circular stressed, “to apply compulsion to the recruitment of youth organisations” (Board of Education/Scottish Education Department, 1943: para. 1).

Perhaps most significantly, key clauses were inserted into the radical Education Act passed in 1944 which required local authorities to secure – though not necessarily themselves provide – “leisure-time occupation” and “facilities for recreation” for young people. The UK thus emerged from the war with a formally designated “Service of Youth”, to be delivered locally in partnership with voluntary organisations but underpinned by central government resources, oversight and even an occasional steer.

Though some local commitments remained strong, the notional partnership between local authorities and local voluntary organisations was rarely easy and often ineffective. Indeed, as old-fashioned British class snobbery got to work, to many of those involved the last thing it must have seemed like was a partnership. As the very sympathetic director of education for Derbyshire, Jack Longland, commented in 1951, on the one hand for many of the charitable sponsors:

[as] local authorities belonged traditionally to the servants’ hall, their unsympathetic bureaucrats were the last people to be trusted with so delicate and esoteric a mystery as youth leadership. (Ashbridge Conference report, 1951: 33)

One the other hand, he recalled:

Some Directors of Education – old style – and perhaps a civil servant here and there, were shocked at being told to initiate a service so imprecise, without compulsory sanctions or school attendance officers. (Ashbridge Conference report, 1951: 32)

A central state commitment to youth work did not last, however. With official policy committed to keeping all young people in at least part-time education till they were 18, powerful voices began to question whether a Service of Youth was anything more than a dispensable frill. Such doubts were reinforced by the severe financial constraints which throughout most of the 1950s sapped the state’s wartime enthusiasm for youth work. Indeed, it subsequently emerged, the government’s deliberate but undeclared policy was by the end of the decade “not to advance the Youth Service” (Labour Party, 1959: 19).

Under pressure from lobbying from within the service, ministers and their civil servants eventually began to rethink this position. If a service was to be justified and supported out of public funds, they seemed to conclude, then a radical shake-up was needed – not least to confront those entrenched and outdated voluntary sector attitudes highlighted by Longland (see D.S. Smith, 1997: 41-3). The outcome in 1958 was the appointment of a seasoned committee chair, Lady Albemarle, to head an independent review of the service.

## **The Albemarle effect**

### **Creating a state policy framework**

When it reported in 1960, it was clear that the committee's recommendations were carefully geared to what Lady Albemarle judged the government would accept. As a result the report was endorsed by the Minister of Education in its entirety on the day it appeared. This included its proposal for a national policy framework for the Youth Service, which identified the local authority's task as "to determine policy in their areas ... and to ensure that adequate and varied facilities are provided" – though still, it made clear, "in consultation with the voluntary bodies" (para. 160). The role of central government was also to be strengthened, particularly for "securing the performance by local education authorities of the duties put upon them by ... the Education Act of 1944" (para. 155) – a gentle if often ineffective reminder to local councils of what statutorily they were supposed to offer in their areas.

The committee also gave a strong push to the professionalisation of those it still saw as "youth leaders". It recommended that over the following five years – later extended to ten – a specialist one-year emergency training course be established to qualify 140 new workers a year. Extra resources were to be made available for employing full-time staff, and nationally recognised machinery created to set their salaries and conditions of service. In combination, these developments generated an often sharp debate over the following decade on whether the voluntary work which, as we have seen, had historically been the main resource for providing youth leadership in the UK could survive this purportedly professionalising onslaught.

### **Responding to a teenage generation: values**

Beyond these structural changes, the report presented the government – and certainly many of the historic sponsors of youth work – with more than they had bargained for. In spite of violent reminders on the streets of London and Nottingham in 1958, the committee seemed able to offer only a puzzled and evasive response (para. 74) to one of the most far-reaching social shifts getting under way in the UK – its often reluctant transition to a multi-racial society.

Nonetheless, a number of committee members proved highly responsive to other important social and cultural changes of the period. They particularly spotted the emerging challenges to deep-seated class attitudes – particularly to Britain's deference to "elders and betters" – of a younger generation of "teenagers" with increasing disposable income and consumer power. Looking back in 2004 to what impelled him in 1962, aged 21, to write his autobiography, Ray Gosling – initiator of a highly publicised alternative youth project in Leicester in the early 1960s – vividly caught the mood of many (though not of course all) of his generation at that time:

we said and acted out a NO that went on to change the world, we did. I did. Our people did. Our generation did ... That back then we/I said NO to family, past, church, religion, tradition, work as nine to five, as factory fodder; say no to the Lord and no to the Vicar and no to ownership. (Gosling, 2004: ix-x)

Two years before Gosling's biography appeared, if in rather more circumspect language, the Albemarle report had offered a not dissimilar explanation of its efforts to prompt some accommodating shifts in youth work's values and purposes. Uncompromisingly, it declared:

[the Youth Service's] way of embodying aims is mistaken. For many young people today the discussion of "spiritual values" or "Christian values" chiefly arouses suspicion.

Committee members had been struck, the report went on,

by the great number of occasions, in the evidence presented to us, on which words such as the following have been used as though they were a commonly accepted and valid currency: "service", "dedication", "leadership", character building". [emphasis added]

And they drew the conclusion that

these particular words now connect little with the realities of life as most young people see them: they do not seem to "speak to their condition". (Albemarle Report, 1960: paras. 143, 145; emphasis in the original)

The committee made clear its concern that, in making these strictures, it might be misunderstood. It thus emphasised, somewhat unconvincingly, that it was seeking only to challenge the language in which youth work's values had been and were being expressed, and not the values themselves. Nonetheless, in such a high-profile state paper, the blunt expression of doubts about what, for nearly a century, had been so taken for granted by most youth work sponsors had the effect, albeit briefly, of opening up new spaces for debate and action within youth work. Within ten years for example women, Black and lesbian and gay workers were struggling to occupy this space by injecting explicitly liberationist aspirations into their youth work practice – though, significantly, even then struggles around class within what remained a predominantly provided practice still "dare not speak their name" (see Taylor, 2007).

## **Responding to a teenage generation: methods**

Underpinned by this (albeit partial) deconstruction of youth work's historic value base, the Albemarle committee reasserted and reframed some of the core features of youth work practice inherited from its 19th-century originators. Apparently taking young people's voluntary participation as a given, it for example re-stated youth work's educational role – as it put it, its goal of offering "training" and "challenge". At the same time, as the first sponsors had done, it emphasised that, in the youth work context, such educational goals could only be realised through the provision of acceptable and engaging recreational activity. It thus gave equal emphasis to the need for what it called "association" (para. 135), in the process contributing to a reconceptualisation of youth leadership during the 1960s not just as youth work but as "social education" (para. 132).

Starting from the proposition that "too often it must appear to the young that by joining a club or group they forfeit the opportunity of doing things in the way they like" (emphasis in the original), the Albemarle report also placed a renewed stress on young people's "self-determination", on their "self-programming" and on "valu[ing] very highly the active participation of young people and their own leadership of groups which they bring into existence themselves" (para. 188). Indeed, it defined the service's users as its "fourth partner", alongside central and local government and the voluntary sector. Finally, while confirming

the individualistic aims which have continued to dominate provided education in the UK – “to help many more individuals to find their own way better, personally and socially” – it recognised the importance of a “sense of fellowship” (para. 135) for young people and that their “gang loyalties are intense”. For the committee, clearly – as, again, for the pioneers – working with and through young people’s peer relationships remained an important feature of youth work.

## **From the permissive 1960s to a new public managerialism**

### **Towards targeting**

Within a decade, the egalitarian and libertarian pretensions of the 1960s were being tested to their limits, revealing roots which were extremely shallow and ill-adapted to harsher climates. In government policies, most were quickly swept away by the economic shocks of the mid-1970s – the rise in oil prices, another UK financial crisis, harsh IMF-imposed restrictions on public spending. Though hardly top of the policy-makers’ priority list, youth work soon felt the consequences.

Attempts began early – in 1971, for example, by Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education – to concentrate youth workers’ attention on state-defined targets such as “areas of high social need” and young people “who are demonstrably disadvantaged”. Under the Thatcher administrations of the 1980s and 1990s, this refinement – or narrowing – of youth work’s focus became more systematic.

Underpinning Thatcherite social policies was an explicit and principled repudiation of the UK’s post-1945 welfare consensus and the settlement it had produced. Here, their starting premises included, firstly, that “there is no such thing as society – only individuals and families”; and, secondly, that high taxation and high public expenditure were undermining both personal responsibility and national economic prosperity. With youth work suspect anyway for its perceived links with the permissive, “woolly liberal” notions of the 1960s, it found itself a victim of the Thatcher government’s constant efforts to reduce local and central government spending. And, where resources were being provided, youth workers were increasingly told that they must target their work: prioritise groups such as the young unemployed and “young people at risk of drifting into crime”.

By this stage, policy directions for youth work in the four UK countries had already diverged, in some cases significantly. Even though its overall ideology had its impact throughout the UK, once the Labour government devolved some legislative powers to Scotland, Wales and eventually Northern Ireland, policy and structural differences became even more marked. The focus of what follows is therefore on England.

### **New Labour “modernisation”**

This 1997 New Labour government saw no reason to reverse Thatcher’s social policy reforms: on the contrary, it shared much of her disillusion with the old welfare state and with many of the ideas on which it had operated since its creation. Under Blair and then Brown repeated attempts were made to radically restructure – “modernise” – public services. To achieve this, heavy reliance was placed on two approaches: an unrelenting search for the holy

grail of “joined-up” services and “seamless” provision; and tight, top-down micro-management of policy implementation and direct practice by targeting resources on groups identified by national policy as priorities and by an insistence on “measurable outcomes”.

Over the whole of the New Labour period, these strategies crept steadily closer to youth work provision. One failed attempt was made to implement both at same time through the creation of a comprehensive “youth support service” for all 13- to 19-year-olds – Connexions – which was originally planned to absorb the Youth Service. In the event, however, it was two other initiatives that had the greatest impact on youth work, how it was conceived and how it was delivered. The first was announced in *Transforming youth work: resourcing excellent youth services* (DfES, 2002) which, as the title suggests, had a specific focus on the Youth Service and very direct implications for youth work. The second, *Every child matters* (DfES, 2003), had a much broader focus – the reorganisation of all services for children and young people delivered through local authorities, including youth work.

For youth work, *Resourcing excellent youth services* (hereafter *REYS*) represents something of a landmark document – a threshold crossed. For one thing, it set quality standards for the delivery of youth work which each local authority was expected to meet. Secondly it provided a statement of values, which gave at least rhetorical endorsement to many of the practice features embedded in the formulations of youth leadership by the first youth organisations and then re-affirmed by Albemarle. As significant however, beyond this rhetoric *REYS* for first time also set local youth work providers “hard” statistical targets. These were focused for example on how many of its 13- to 19-year-old population it “reached”, engaged with “actively”, worked with “intensively” and helped achieve an “accredited” or “recorded” outcome. Youth workers were also required to meet a range of locally agreed targets for work with “at risk” young people such as NEETs, potential offenders and drug users.

By 2008 this framework for planning and evaluating youth work had come to dominate not just local authority services but also, as they were increasingly converted by New Labour into an arm of state policy (see below), many voluntary youth organisations, too. Policy-makers, many managers and some youth workers welcomed it as helpful in increasing accountability and driving up quality. For many field practitioners, however, the new measurement regime proved deeply alienating (see for example Brent, 2004; Spence, 2006). For them, the targets were experienced as valuing – indeed in practice often allowing – only what could be “measured” statistically, resulting in youth work’s historic core features being treated as irrelevant, even as obstacles to achieving the desired policy outcomes.

*Every child matters* was much more wide-ranging in its intentions – indeed, it was one of the most ambitious social policy documents of the New Labour period. Overwhelmingly shaped by a major child abuse scandal and backed subsequently by two *Youth matters* papers with a particular focus on youth work-type provision, this had as its primary goal the integration of all local state children and youth services, including crucially the pooling of their budgets. As a result, as from April 2009, all statutory youth work provision in England was planned to operate through local integrated youth support and development structures, embodied often on the ground in integrated management and practitioner teams comprising a range of professional disciplines.

In the process, without any declared change of policy, the one state-funded (albeit deeply flawed) institutional structure that had had an explicit remit for developing (and, often even more importantly, defending) youth work – the local authority Youth Service created in 1939

– was in effect dissolved. Almost as though it had never existed, from 2004 onwards references to it simply disappeared from state policy papers and from ministerial statements, to be replaced by the generic concept of “youth services”.

### **From youth work to “positive activities”**

Because this chapter was being written in mid-2008, much of the evidence of the effects on youth work of these changes is anecdotal. On the positive side, the overall New Labour youth policy framework gave a new emphasis to strengthening young people’s influence within the services catering for them, including their leverage on decision-making and resource allocation. Particularly significant here was the creation of Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds, with grants from the funds to local youth projects and activities being decided by local youth panels operating with considerable autonomy (see Golden et al., 2008).

By mid-2008 however, in many parts of England, the concerns of many youth workers and some of their immediate managers about what was happening to youth work were running wide and deep. One concern was that youth work now operated from a deficiency model of young people, rather than the potentiality model which had shaped much youth work in the past; thus the over-riding policy expectation being placed on staff, and the irresistible call on their budgets, would be to stop children being abused and prevent young people from becoming offenders. A second concern was that the new local children and young people services would be dominated by staff with backgrounds in child care (especially child protection) or youth offending, with little first-hand understanding of or sympathy for youth work.

At the same time, the government was insisting that activities for young people, especially “disadvantaged” young people, must be “positive” and “constructive” – indeed, it was using such formulations as in effect a substitute for what it saw as the “unstructured” youth work approaches, in which ministers clearly had little trust. As the Beverley Hughes statement quoted at the start of this paper illustrated, it was also suggesting that, as “activities” apparently had intrinsic developmental qualities independent of the human interactions and personal relationships through which they were delivered, it was no longer necessary to conceive of them as even informally educational.

These emphases on “structure” and in-built “constructiveness” signalled the evacuation of another key youth work principle – starting with the agendas which young people had brought with them to their encounters with youth workers and through which, as we have seen, workers then sought to develop their educational programmes. In particular, what Russell and Rigby had understood a century earlier as “Recreation – the compelling force which brings members to the clubs” was clearly no longer seen as a particularly helpful arena in which to meet young people or seek to develop their interests and talents, at least as they were conceived by powerful state policy-makers.

Instead, before they had even met or had chance to develop any rapport with a single young person, youth workers were increasingly being expected to define what the appropriate agendas were – with “appropriate” here determined largely by top-down central government policy priorities: preparation for work, reduction of teenage pregnancies, prevention of drug misuse, diversion from “anti-social behaviour”. More and more, therefore, youth work was seen, not as a practice in its own right, but as a tool for other agencies to import in order to



achieve their own policy priorities, especially when these required them to “consult” young people and fine-tune their delivery of services.

This move from open leisure contexts, where practitioners worked on young people’s own territory, to much more formal institutional settings and pre-determined schemes of work had another, even more far-reaching implication for youth work. It undermined what (as we have seen) had from its earliest days been taken as intrinsic to all its practice: young people’s voluntary attendance. In 2006, this assumption was openly questioned by one of the government’s most favoured think tanks, the Institute for Public Policy Research. In a report which became a major reference document for government policy-makers, it proposed that, in the provision of “positive activities” an “element of compulsion within an overall package of user choice” might be needed and therefore permissible (Margo and Dixon, 2006: 173-4).

In the main however the threat of compulsion was less direct, more creeping: youth work, often the only way of getting essential funding, was inserted into other settings. These included for example schools and colleges, youth offending teams and “entry to employment schemes” where young people’s attendance was a requirement and where therefore power relations were tipped firmly in favour of the providers. Some saw a need to reconceptualise youth work to accommodate these political and financial pressures and their impact on practice (see for example Williamson, 2007: 33; Ord, 2007: 58-62).

For anything resembling youth work to occur here, one of its crucial process elements, the on-going negotiation of the terms of engagement between young person and adult, had to be adjusted, often radically. In particular, practice needed to confront and overcome the (at best) unmotivated compliance or (at worst) unrelenting and even aggressive resistance with which many young people responded to these impositions on their freedom of choice. Only if the attendees could be won to a more willing and authentic participation in what was on offer could anything like a youth work process have a chance of developing.

The wider New Labour policy context in which youth work was now operating also encouraged a much more negative view of young people’s peer groups and their wider peer networks than historically youth workers had adopted. The Blair governments’ unrelenting demonisation of youth as violent, as “feral”, as “yobs”, bred a climate in which even two young people on the streets together could be read as a threat. More specifically, reports and policy documents emphasised how teenage peer groups could block “disadvantaged” young people’s participation in “positive” activities and reinforce their “anti-social behaviour” (see for example Margo and Dixon, 2006: 118-20). For youth workers, too, validating work with and through the teenage peer group became more difficult as they found themselves negotiating an organisational culture within the newly integrated children and young people services dominated by social work perspectives, by a preoccupation with individualised assessment of “client needs” and by one-to-one responses to these.

Individualisation, as we have seen, had never of course been absent from youth work. From its earliest days youth leadership had sought to “know the boy” (and girl) personally, as an individual. Increasingly, too, it had come to stress the importance of seeing them, not through the filter of adult-imposed labels – young offender, drug user, teenage mother – but for who they were as a young person.

Within the structures that developed out of the New Labour reforms, however, youth workers seemed likely to be drawn more and more into engaging with young people mainly or only

because, as individuals or products of a range of family pathologies, they had problems or were problems. Responses were then liable to assume that they needed to be treated on an individualised basis or, at its widest, as son or daughter or sibling of a family.

Among other consequences, these expectations posed a threat both to the youth worker's role as the young person's advocate, including when necessary with and against the family, and also to a commitment, more recently acknowledged, to respecting and working actively with young people's wider collective and cultural identities. Above all, however, they threatened to marginalise youth work's historic focus on the young person as peer-group member even as new evidence was emerging on how young people's peer networks could help them to stay safe on the streets (Seaman et al., 2006) and facilitate personal and collective development through the traditional youth club (see Brent, 2004; Hilton, 2005).

## **Some lessons from history**

What broader messages does this rapid and often simplistic survey of the history of youth work in the UK – particularly England – have for the UK and perhaps for European colleagues too?

## **The overall policy framework**

In the UK, once the struggles for indigenous forms of popular education were lost, it became a given that youth work had overwhelmingly to be a provided activity. Over these 150 years, its development has been far from one-dimensional or one-directional, with struggles surfacing from time to time over its purpose and form. These however have rarely or centrally been to challenge its top-down control and direction. Rather, the overall narrative has been of an initial and long dominance by a range of philanthropic bodies in what was assumed to be a no-go area for state; this was followed by state offers of support; they led to the state seeking to ensure clearer direction and greater coherence; and finally the state asserted its effective control of overall youth work policy and priorities.

This current stage is proving to have major implications for that initially dominant interest, the voluntary youth organisation as – now reassigned by New Labour to “the third sector” – it responds to the state's expectations and requirements. Research by the Charity Commission for example, carried out in 2007, revealed that two-thirds of charities with an income of £10m and over were by then getting 80% of their money from state while only 26% of those delivering public services felt “free to make decisions without pressure to conform to wishes of funder” (Charity Commission, 2007: 2–3). The locus of power and decision-making has thus shifted decisively from the days when a curriculum area such as youth work was treated by state policy-makers as a secret garden into which they ventured at their peril.

## **Purpose and values**

Here too the narrative is not one-dimensional. The providing organisations – philanthropic and state – have always been subject to a number of conflicting value pulls and pushes. These have particularly sought a balance (often unspoken) between an altruism emphasising individual need and a defence of self-, class and national interest. Moreover, the balances

achieved here have shifted repeatedly in different periods in response to the dominant economic, political and social conditions of the time.

Today, though some of these contradictions persist, the balance framing youth work in particular has been tipped, often very firmly, towards its role as a societally integrating resource. Even the New Labour preoccupation with young people's participation, though producing some innovative opportunities, remains centrally concerned with overcoming the young's reluctance to participate in the electoral process. More broadly, much of what youth workers are now being asked – required – to do is to skill-up young people for working as uncritically as possible within existing institutional frameworks and processes: that is, to implement a new version of that 19th-century aspiration to “re-moralise” a whole class – or in this case sub-class.

## **Practice**

What this narrative also traces over this century and a half is an incremental build-up of a distinctive practice, rooted in a number of core features and working principles. However, as the state's role has strengthened, particularly in last ten years, these have been substantially unpicked, at least in England. Less and less is youth work provided as part of a leisure facility that young people choose to attend, one that roots itself in adult–young people negotiation, one that the young people help to jump-start and out of which a curriculum develops based on how the young people define their interests and concerns. More and more, practice is driven by pre-defined, adult intentions and priorities which, at best, are liable to be impatient with the essential process-led nature of the youth work approaches inherited from the past.

In mid-2008, the youth work practice created by its 19th-century pioneers, and revised and refined since, thus seems – to put it at its most optimistic – at a crossroads. In England at least it is operating in a local environment that offers considerably less institutional protection for its distinctive methodology than at any time over most of past seventy years. Its traditional national and local voluntary organisations, where they are not willing collaborators, are having to struggle to avoid becoming mere instruments of the state's intentions. And power holders within the central state itself have developed a mind-set which is at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to many of youth work's core practice features.

In adopting this stance, New Labour ministers and their civil servants could be seen, not for the first time, to be breaking two of the rules central to their policy-making rhetoric – that planning must be evidenced-based and provision increasingly shaped by user (“consumer”) expectations and demands. Not only do young people continue to insist to inspectors, evaluators and researchers that for them youth work is a valid and valued way of working. They often also assert, or at least imply, that it is precisely those key historic features of the practice that make it so productive for them.

Let the final words of this chapter therefore be those of young people.

On choosing to be involved:

We chose what to spend time on – we planned the six weeks between us. Before everyone else is in control, never us.  
a teacher said I was a shy person and recommended [this project] to me. I came last year and felt more confident and this is my second year.

### On being empowered:

I don't get told; I get asked.

[The youth worker] has helped me stand on my own two feet.

[Youth workers] are honest, they set boundaries, for example about confidentiality ... and I'm empowered to make decisions by that.

You tell [the youth workers] what you need rather than vice versa.

### On personalisation – being seen and treated as individuals:

[The youth worker] doesn't treat you like some kid she works with – she treats you like a person.

... they understand that everybody's different.

They know us ... You know they want to talk to you.

I don't ever feel patronised.

### On starting with young people's interests and concerns:

You get to do things you enjoy.

I like all the activities here because the learning is made more enjoyable.

### On going beyond these starting points:

When you say you can't do it, they say you can.

I ... can do new things.

the worker is always telling us we're doing well.

[The workers] give you a second chance ... they want you to move on.

### On working with and through young people's peer network and friendship groups:

I have made new friends.

I liked working with the other three people; and I've opened up to everyone.

You can see past the colours now. It's not a problem no more. Girls and boys got to know one another.

(Davies and Docking, 2004: 16, 20; Merton et al., 2004: 43-9, 56, 127)

That then is how young people see – define – youth work. Is anyone up there listening?

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## **7. Youth work development in Malta: a chronicle**

*Miriam Teuma*

Malta is a small island sitting in the Mediterranean Sea. It is about 27 km long and 14.5 km wide, taking just over an hour to drive across. According to NSO (2008), the Maltese population is 410 290 and Malta as an island is considered to be the most densely populated country in Europe. In its uniquely complex history, Malta has gone through successive waves of domination by the Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Spanish, French and British – each of whom has left some distinctive marks on contemporary Maltese society.

Despite these often enforced engagements, Malta remains its own unique reference point. Sultana and Baldacchino (1994) stated that Maltese people have managed to accommodate outside influences and retain a strong sense of national identity. The survival of the Maltese language and culture in the face of what we have gone through is certainly not evident. Sultana and Baldacchino (ibid.) identify three decisive influences on contemporary Malta: the British tradition, the Roman Catholic Church and what they term “the Realm of Lilliput” (ibid: 14). What did they mean by this?

British interest in Malta was essentially strategic and, on the whole, the British model of imperialism tended not to disrupt local culture and customs unless it was absolutely necessary to its national interest. As such, the British did not seek to wipe out the local language or culture, and certainly avoided serious disputes with the Roman Catholic Church. However, the British did leave the marketable asset of fluency in the Maltese language and also left an imprint on education, administration, justice and government. It happened that the colonial governor style of top-down administration fitted well with established local traditions of paternalistic authority coming from the Church.

### **The early 20th century**

It is in this set up that youth work was conceived. How? Looking back, work with young people was done mainly by the Church. Maltese youth work had its origins in the activities of the Catholic Church and its voluntary organisations. Bodies such as the Society of Christian Doctrine, Catholic Action and the Salesians – all established in Malta at the beginning of the 20th century – were concerned with providing structures through which adults could reach youth and keep them connected to the orderly Catholic world. They mainly worked for the same cause using different methodologies. They were also committed to youth socialisation, to mould a Catholic character and to develop Maltese Catholic citizens with habits of self-control, rather than having a congregation of young people separate from adult society and whiling away their time aimlessly.

The Society of Christian Doctrine was founded in the early years of the 20th century by a young Maltese priest, George Preca, who was proclaimed a saint in 2007. St George Preca was imbued with the idea of building a relationship with a group of young laymen (and eventually women as well) to encourage them serve the Church, primarily by helping them lead a truly Christian life, and he was dedicated to evangelisation with young people.

Knowing that a group of youngsters were in the habit of meeting regularly, Saint George Preca struck up a steady friendship with them. Sometimes he was rebuffed, more often than not he was gladly received, so that gradually his advice about spiritual matters was as welcome and accepted as his chattering on other things. Soon the group of youths who met in the vicinity of Hamrun Parish Church, chief among them being Eugenio Borg, grew and grew so they had to rent premises for their meetings (<http://www.sdcmuseum.org/>).

Saint George Preca was of the opinion that, although Malta was virtually completely Catholic and all the population was church-going, young people knew very little about the truths of Christianity. In general, religion was based on the practice of popular devotions and little else. These lay men and women started catechetical work in the parishes. The society's centres opened daily for the catechetical formation of children and young people. Young people also found a space to socialise and discuss other things.

The Salesians founded the Salesian Oratory (better known as Salezjani) in 1908, to carry out activities which promoted human and Christian education to young people. Don Bosco's Oratory, as it was named, aimed at providing not only a service of catechism but a presence and participation in the life of youth. Its programme was not limited to catechesis but included educative and pastoral work. The oratory in fact tried to move away from a parish mentality towards a missionary outlook, open to young people who belonged to different parishes.

Catholic Action, founded in the 1930s, formed groups of young males and females in parishes who practised their catechesis by taking action in the community and doing voluntary work depending on local needs. Catholic Action was brought to Malta by Professor Daniel Callus OP, who set up the Lega Universitaria Cattolica Maltese. The federation of Catholic Action, comprising male youth groups from eight parishes, was formed in October 1931 and a year later the female youth section was launched.

Alongside the voluntary work done by a number of church organisations, the British connection brought about the Malta Scout Association, which applied to become a member of the British Scout Movement on 9 November 1908. The first few scouts started a tradition that kept Scouting in the very forefront of youth education in Malta. Baden-Powell visited Malta on several occasions. He took the Maltese Scouts under his wing, often writing to them with advice and praising "the progress in efficiency and the spirit of the Boy Scouts of Malta". Shortly before his death Baden-Powell typed what was possibly his last letter, on 21 July 1940 from Paxtu in Kenya "to congratulate my old friends, the Maltese on the plucky way they have stood up to the infernal bombing of the Italians ... They have the spirit of fearlessness and patience which enables them to face danger with a smile to stick it out to the triumphant finish" (<http://www.maltascout.org.mt>).

Baden-Powell had expressed himself so because the Scouts of Malta played a distinguished role in the the Second World War during the aerial siege of the island between 1940 and 1943. Until 1966 the Scout Association of Malta was a branch of the British Association. Malta became an independent state in 1964, and in October 1966 the Maltese Catholic Scout Association became a member of the World Scout Conference.

It is evident from what I have been discussing that a culture of volunteering through a number of organisations existed and still exists in Malta. These organisations have been very directive and have worked paternalistically to keep young people off the streets while promoting moral behaviour and Catholic formation.



## **A new wave!**

With independence and the Second Vatican Council reforms (1963-65), the Church had to take up the challenge of its new social role. The 1970s and early 1980s brought youth centres run by the parish priest in some parishes, whereas other parishes had youth-led groups run by Catholic Action. These centres still aimed at Catholic formation but also served as a drop-in club where young people could frequent the centre every evening, have a drink at the bar and play indoor games or football as well as attending a weekly Bible study or religious meeting usually organised by a young priest from the parish.

These centres were complemented by retreats run for groups of young people in a residential retreat centre. Diocesan youth work was also introduced, for which a co-ordinator was appointed by the Archbishop to help the parishes set up local youth groups where they did not exist, train local volunteers, organise large events like *Festa Zghazagh* ('Youth feast') and build links between parishes.

New movements also started running local or national youth groups. These groups were not connected to any parish, but they required a certain commitment to the faith among young people or a certain tradition or style. Cassar (2004) stated that these movements embraced an essentially sectarian vision of Catholicism with very hierarchical structures, whereas Abela (1991) described them as being very selective in their choice of members. He said that for example the Focolare Movement attracted the young upper class, and the Comunioni and Liberazione looked for young professionals.

The Church was still the original and major provider of youth work. According to Abela (2001), the European Value Survey 1981-84 revealed that Maltese young people – unlike their peers abroad – were found to be the most religious, very traditional and with no radical aspiration for social change.

## **The state and the youth service**

Where does the state feature here? In reality the state did not feature much, except that in the 1980s a section called YSO (Youth Services Organisation) within the Education Department was set up to organise youth exchanges between Malta and some nearby countries, to encourage young people's mobility and strengthen language practice. These exchanges were organised through schools during the school holidays and young people were taken to countries like Italy and France.

There was also the introduction of school chaplains in secondary schools and in the only state sixth form (named the New Lyceum), where a dedicated priest introduced an element of youth work provision to back up the school's Catholic ethos and complement the mainstream educational work of the school. But was this enough? Did young people want any kind of youth service? What was happening in Malta then? What were the thoughts of young people?

The mid-1980s brought about a complete change in the economy in Malta. The Mintoff socialist era ended in 1987 and the new Nationalist government adopted a policy of a more open economy, after an era in which "the intensification of the policy of bulk buying and

price orders was a peculiarity” (Agius, 2004). Moreover, the economy became more dependent on services rather than manufacturing. This brought about a huge tourist influx and the development of modern leisure places like Paceville or tourist jungles like Bugibba.

This service-based economy brought a shift in young people’s thinking about membership or participation in organisations. Youth sought to belong because of the services offered, rather than because of an interest in the ideals of the group. At the same time, the development of the newly attractive leisure places and the shift in values due to the effects of industrialism, consumerism and tourism brought about a decline in the use of parish youth centres and other youth services offered by the Church. These were no longer attractive, and numbers fell off drastically. According to Abela (2001), the European value survey in 1991 showed that the religious homogeneity of former times was gradually giving way to more secularised lifestyles. Young people’s focus shifted away from “muscular Christianity” to social relaxation and personal development, so they could gain greater enjoyment in their free time.

As a result, a number of youth-led movements – peace, political, environmental – were formed and a Federation of Youth Organisations was set up in the 1980s by the government. However, this federation collapsed due to lack of agreement between most of the organisations. Following this collapse, the then First Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Culture, Sport and Consumer Protection, Dr Michael Frendo MP, set up a forum where young people could express their views on how they wished to set up a National Youth Council. The first National Youth Conference was held and many proposals were brought forward. One result of the National Conference was the establishment of the National Youth Council.

On 28 January 1992, the National Youth Council was declared to be the National Organ for Youth Organisations. The Council adopted its statute, giving it autonomy from government, and established committees, which discussed and worked on issues including international relations, social activities, education and employment.

This interest brought about a transformation of the parliamentary secretariat into a Ministry of Youth and Arts, which started drafting the first Maltese youth policy. This was published in 1993. Subsequent changes were made as the result of regular reviews and in 2003 an International Review Team of the Council of Europe was invited to evaluate its progress.

## **Professional youth work**

In 1992 the University of Malta agreed to a request from the ministry to establish an Institute of Youth Studies, to set up and give training to those who wished to become professional in the field. The training model adopted was a British model from the 1970s. As a result a cadre of qualified staff was trained, but with no full-time professionalised service to go into.

The concept of youth work came into use when the Institute of Youth Studies, now the Department of Youth and Community Studies within the Faculty of Education, launched the official training course for youth and community workers in 1993. At that time I was a student on the course and when I went around saying that I had taken up a course which trains people to become youth workers, people asked what would happen to the students when they became older. At the time the general public confused the term youth worker with young worker. Many times I found myself explaining, when introducing myself as a voluntary youth worker, that I work with young people and a youth worker need not be a young worker.

The first group of graduate students founded the Maltese Association of Youth Workers (MAY) in 1998 and its Code of Ethics was launched in MAY's general meeting in 2001. MAY applied for professional recognition by the Maltese Federation of Professional Associations, which means that youth workers are now represented in government consultations with other professionals in the development of relevant policy areas. It has also taken up the responsibility to campaign for state funding and professionalisation. Whether MAY will become a trade union or remain a professional association is an issue under lively debate.

As a result the government established a number of Youth Empowerment Centres within local councils and a Youth Information Centre. However, MAY feels that this is not sufficient and its ultimate aim is to see the full recognition of youth work as a profession, with appropriate employment opportunities available. It is worth noting that the Diocesan Synod that ended in 2003 published a document for youth, which stressed the importance of having professional workers working with young people. As a result KDZ – the Diocesan Commission for Youth – started professional training for volunteers working with young people within the Church.

### **Now or never**

We became a member of the European Union in 2004. We are now committed to a society in which young people are valued on their own terms as creative, autonomous citizens. The emphasis on promoting moral behaviour and character development has enlarged to recognise the educational validity of leisure. Since 2004, a young people's employment strategy has been published and an educational reform is to be drafted.

However, we tend to forget (or do not realise) that neither decent employment nor comprehensive education guarantees the enjoyment of youth. Consumer and market pressures and the emotional and psychological turbulence of growing up, moving from dependence to independence, generate both individual and group challenges as well as (more importantly) opportunities that are specific to young people in our society. Minds are set and lifestyles created throughout this period.

Young people need opportunities for learning beyond the classroom, to learn more about themselves and their culture, their rights and responsibilities. They need an entitlement to learning, personal support and easy access to public space as a place of their own where they can enjoy themselves. They need to be empowered, not directed, as can be seen from the history outlined above. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the conditions that enable young people to act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. We need to create a social space where young people can explore spiritual, emotional, artistic and intellectual capacities outside the formal education system and the demands of work.

There is still not much paid youth work in Malta. Graduate students involve themselves in voluntary work and have embarked on projects through the Youth in Action Programme, but they are not professional workers. I describe youth work in Malta as a very new profession that has not yet clearly identified its role or purpose with the government. For trained youth workers, the overwhelming definition of youth work is that of "empowerment of young

people”. However, the exact nature of empowerment, with its settings and contexts, is not yet embedded in practice, nor clearly evident to those in power.

Policy-makers have the idea that youth work could contribute to community and lifelong learning. An agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) has been established, to integrate youth workers in schools both with challenging behaviour students and in extended school settings to support youth participation through student councils. However, there is still no clear commitment or articulated need for a regulated and developed profession of youth workers. There is still a strong belief that the government should continue to promote volunteering and so, while there is such an active voluntary sector, there is no clear incentive to replace voluntary youth work with professionals employed by the state. The future of young people is a collective concern and therefore cannot be left only to the Church or voluntary effort. The state may of course fund voluntary organisations, but it should commit itself to be the prime mover.

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## 8. The German perspective: youth work, integration and policy

*Christian Spatscheck*

Historical processes are often difficult to describe; usually, different sources offer competing perspectives. Youth work in Germany has a long history with many protagonists and a variety of interests striving for influence and power. Bearing this in mind, one can no longer look for objectivism in history but rather try to describe and reflect the relevant protagonists in the contexts of their social roles and interests (Ricoeur 1974: 64). Therefore I have tried to describe the most important outlines of youth work in Germany within the characteristic social contexts of each phase. To gain a clear structure, I describe the events within eight chronological phases.

### **Phase 1: Pre-professional forms of youth work (17th to 19th century)**

Many decades before we can talk about the first professional youth work in Germany, we can identify different forms of public associations for young people that can be characterised as either informal or semi-public.

The establishment of their own informal public meeting places for young people can be seen in the late 17th century (Thole 2000: 34; Gängler 2005: 503). These places were situated in towns and villages and were mostly frequented by the young and unmarried in the evenings after working hours. As the girls were often spinning there, the meeting places were called *Spinnstuben* ('spinning rooms'). Also they were named *Lichtstuben* ('light parlours') because the rooms were illuminated in the evenings. The big novelty of these establishments was that they were organised without the direct participation of adults. Young people started to find their own forms of gathering, beyond the control of adults and public institutions like the state, the church, employers, schools or the military. These new forms of self-organised community enabled young people to establish their own rules, rituals and forms of culture that were more liberal than the ideas of adults.

The second form of pre-professional youth work was the associations that established semi-public meeting places for young people. With industrialisation in the late 19th century, an increasing number of young people left their families to become workers in the factories of the big industrial towns. Due to the lack of established socio-cultural networks, the new industrial towns could not offer many meeting places for young people and adults without families. Their inhabitants therefore started to establish their own forms of association for sport, education and sociable leisure and dancing (Thole 2000: 36). The *Schnapskasinos* were regarded especially critically because those who went there often drank higher amounts of alcoholic beverages and made contact with the working-class movement of the social democrats. Priests like Adolph Kolping, teachers and officers started initiatives to gain more influence on the young people who were regarded as threatened by moral decline. Around the associations emerged the typical debates about control and emancipation of young people and the concepts of "sensible" or "useful" leisure that were to become typical debates in youth work until the present day (Spatscheck 2007).

## **Phase 2: Volunteers as professionals (1890 to 1933)**

The late 19th and early 20th century saw the establishment of youth as a distinct phase of life in the passage from childhood to adulthood (Krafeld 1984: 10; Schäfers 1994: 53). At the turn of the century too, youth work became more and more established as a special form of sociability with the character of informal socialisation. In general we can distinguish three typical forms of early youth work: youth movements, youth associations and the first forms of public youth work (Gängler 2005: 506; Thole and Küster 2005: 497).

The newly emerging bourgeois and proletarian youth movements can be seen as self-organised counter-movements against the increasing public control over self-organised youth groups (Krafeld 1984: 23, 42; Thole 2000: 40; Spatscheck 2006: 150). The Bündische Jugend especially, with their best-known form of association Wandervogel ('Wandering bird', founded in 1904), was soon a very strong group that united up to 30 000 members (Giesecke 1975: 19; Thole 2000: 41; Niemeyer 2001).

The bourgeois youth movement can be seen as a counter-movement to the industrial culture of the late 19th century, which was regarded by young people as feudal, double-minded and too hierarchically organised. Youth appreciated and cultivated the informal community of peers, searched for authentic group experiences, friendship, the simplicity of wanderers and voluntary commitment to the rules of the group (Hermann, in Thole 2000: 40). Beyond their direct relevance for young people, these groups influenced a new generation of teachers, artists, politicians and welfare officers very strongly and became a role model for different social contexts for many decades to come.

Parallel to the bourgeois youth movements there also emerged a proletarian youth movement, formed by young people from the working classes (Giesecke 1975: 31; Krafeld 1984: 42, 79). These movements, founded by young apprentices and workers, articulated their basic rights as workers and citizens to receive fair treatment in factories and searched for ways to escape the huge demands from authoritarian and dangerous working environments.

From the middle of the 19th century we can also see the emergence of special youth associations based around the fields of religion, sport, politics or leisure (Thole 2000: 42). Most of them developed within existing adult organisations, which opened youth departments with more freedom and room for the interests of young people. The adult organisations also followed their own interests in reaching "endangered" youth and broadening their membership base. Compared to the youth movements, these youth associations were much more dominated by adults and by the ideologies of the institutions behind them. The youth associations soon became very diverse in form and encompassed all social and moral milieus. They could build a very active base of volunteers for their activities and soon found many more members than the youth movements. Catholic youth associations alone organised up to 800 000 members at the beginning of the 20th century, while protestant youth associations had 165 000 and sports youth associations could count 320 000 members (Thole 2000: 42).

Public youth work was organised directly by the state and gained a big boost from the Prussian Youth Care Law reforms of 1911/13, which established public youth work formally in Prussia (Krafeld 1984: 102; Hafeneger 1992: 25; Kappeler 1999: 93; Jordan and Sengling 2000: 40). This type of youth work was mostly carried out by specially trained teachers, priests, officers and craftsmen in their leisure time. Most of them worked as volunteers without fully paid positions. The basic aim of the first forms of public youth work was to save

young people from the threats of moral and physical decline. Very common forms of youth work were war games, exercises, cultural activities and youth protection. It is very interesting that already these early forms could reach a lot of young people from the middle classes, but soon found difficulties in reaching marginalised or poor young people and young people with bohemian or sub-cultural lifestyles (Thole 2000: 48).

### **Phase 3: The National Socialists' ideological youth work (1933 to 1945)**

The takeover of the National Socialist regime in 1933 led to a huge restructuring of youth work in Germany (Krafeld 1984: 111; Hafeneger 1992: 75; Kappeler 1999: 225; Kappeler 2000: 61; Thole and Küster 2005: 498). Following their ambition to create a "state youth", the National Socialists formed the Hitler Jugend (HJ, 'Hitler youth') and the Bund Deutscher Mädchen (BDM, 'Federation of German girls') as instruments to form and infiltrate the minds of the young German generation.

Most of the existing youth associations were declared illegal or were integrated into the structures of the HJ and the BDM (Ferchhoff 2000: 50). Due to the general obligation (*Jugenddienstpflicht*) to become a member of the HJ or the BDM 8.7 million out of 8.87 million young people aged between 10 and 18 were members of the state youth organisations in 1939 (Möding and von Plato 1986: 293).

Young people were identified as a special target group that could be influenced very easily and were regarded as ideal future carriers of National Socialist ideology. Youth organisations were fully integrated into all National Socialist structures and their main aim was to prepare the younger generation for the wars of the future, establish blind dutifulness and infiltrate young minds with the National Socialist ideology about the creation of a master race that should dominate all other races (Spatscheck 2006: 151).

Most young people seemed to collaborate with the Nazi regime or remained silent about any inner protest (Thole 2000: 61). But some free and illegal youth movements continued to exist, notably the Swing Kids, who loved Anglo-American swing and jazz music, and the Edelweißpiraten ('Edelweiss pirates'), who still followed the ideas of the Bündische Jugend; these managed to survive through the whole Nazi dictatorship (Klönne 1986; Möller 2000: 261). As these groups stood in open and direct opposition to the leading National Socialist ideology, they were hunted by the police and the youth authorities and faced sanctions like arrest, deportation to concentration camps and even the death sentence (Spatscheck 2006: 153). But in the end even the totalitarian system of the National Socialist dictatorship could not prevent young people developing and pursuing their own forms of youth culture and the values of their subculture, despite strong public control and drastic penalties.

### **Phase 4: Youth work in post-war western Germany (1946 to 1989)**

After the breakdown of the National Socialist system, the western part of Germany established forms of youth work that can be characterised as an effective compromise between old forms of established youth work and the new ideas of the German Youth Activity (GYA), which was founded by the allied occupation troops (Krafeld 1984: 129; Hafeneger 1992: 103; Hafeneger 2005: 510; Thole 2000: 63; Thole and Küster 2005: 499). Youth work in post-war western Germany was mostly carried out by people who were already youth

workers before or during the National Socialist dictatorship. Therefore youth work found strong personal and conceptual continuities from the pre-war era – and even, in some aspects – from National Socialist youth work.

The allied occupation troops tried to establish programmes for the democratisation and re-education of the German population. One of these initiatives was the establishment of 300 German Youth Activity homes in the UK and US occupation zones; these homes were reaching over 2.5 million young people in the late 1940s. The GYA homes and other German youth clubs followed the concept of the open-door clubs and the ideas of socio-cultural activities around the arts.

The work of the youth associations started again and most organisations from pre-war times were re-activated in the way they operated before. Because most of the youth clubs and youth associations were characterised by strict governance according to the strong normative concepts of the adults, there often was not much freedom for participation and the ideas of the young visitors (Thole 2000: 65).

Against this background, youth work was challenged strongly by the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Krafeld 1984: 165; Hafeneger 1992: 147; Hafeneger 2005: 514). Young people began to protest against their parents' generation, against their authoritarian ideas and their former involvement in the National Socialist dictatorship. German youth demanded more liberation and self-organisation in society, influenced by the ideas of social movements and emerging pop cultures. This new generation challenged the traditional forms of youth work intensively.

During this period, a lot of new theories and models for youth work were developed by protagonists who were often connected to youth work, the protest movements and the academic world all at the same time. The leading theory models for youth work in this phase were characterised by three types of approach: emancipatory approaches (Müller et al. 1964; Giesecke 1975), radical anti-capitalist and revolutionary approaches (Liebel 1970; Liebel 1971; Lessing and Liebel 1974) and the more moderate, needs-oriented approach to youth work (Damm 1975; Damm 1980; Damm 1998). These theories and models reflect the strong impact of social changes on youth work at that time. A large remaining question is how strongly these theory approaches really made an impact on everyday youth work practice.

## **Phase 5: Youth work in the GDR (1946 to 1989)**

It was some years after the Second World War before the eastern part of Germany experienced a new attempt to create a "state youth" (Thole 2000: 69; Thole and Küster 2005: 499). After a fresh extinction of all plural youth work structures, the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ, 'Free German youth') was founded as the official youth organisation of the German Democratic Republic. The FDJ (including the Pioneers for children) soon got more and more members and reached its highest rate of penetration in 1987 when 86% of all inhabitants aged under 18 were members. The FDJ was directly connected to schools and offered a variety of group and leisure activities, holiday camps and youth clubs. The FDJ facilitated a high grade of voluntary activities from adults and young people, albeit the ideological design of the activities was mostly controlled by the state.



The FDJ was regarded as one key instrument for the transformation of the socialist state ideology (Schäfers 1994; Kappeler 1995: 259; Möller 2000: 270). Youth was regarded as the democratic and socialistic avant-garde, and the FDJ pursued the development and promotion of the “socialist personality” that only would engage in “sensible” and “useful” activities. The main objective of youth work in the GDR can be regarded as the education and formation of young personalities that would follow and embody the government’s ideologies.

It soon became clear that not all young people were ready to become this kind of “socialist” personality, and the state’s activities of control were gradually increased. In particular, members of opposition groups or church groups and people who applied to leave the country were controlled by the police and the intelligence service, the Staatssicherheit (the Stasi, ‘State security’). Young people could be arrested, deprived of their rights to work or visit certain places and be sent to “educational homes” or jails (Kappeler 1995: 260; Leo 2003). Despite the often desperate activity by the government to keep control, a variety of resistant youth cultures existed throughout the whole regime of the GDR, including Rock fans, Beatniks, Punks, Skinheads and other groups (Spatscheck 2006: 160).

## **Phase 6: Modern youth work – trends and developments I (1990 to 2000)**

After German re-unification, three new paradigms started to dominate professional debates about youth work in Germany.

Franz Josef Krafeld (1992) was receiving a strong response within the professional community for his approach of a peer-group-orientated youth work. He argued that youth workers no longer should try to organise young people into new groups but rather should refer to the already existing peer groups and their specific interests and potential. He demanded that youth workers should regard youth cultural styles and forms of expressions as normal phenomena and no longer as correctable problems. Also he stressed the fact that peer groups facilitate high grades of self-organisation and socialisation, which should be used as potentials for youth work. Here youth workers should learn to be companions of peer groups rather than their teachers.

Krafeld (1996) also developed a second new model for youth workers, which he named “accepting” youth work. This approach was especially designed to meet hard-to-reach youth who were involved in sub-cultural life styles and criminal behaviour. To gain relationships and access to these young people, the accepting approach recommended youth workers to tolerate problematic and harmful behaviours and opinions of the young people during the first phase of establishing contact. The relationship and trust gained would be a prerequisite for the changes that would only be possible after a longer-lasting social pedagogical process. The accepting approach was especially used with young right-wing extremists and in contexts of mobile youth work. In eastern Germany this approach was sometimes misunderstood when some youth workers tolerated the crimes of young right-wing extremists for too long and even enabled right-wing organisations to establish youth clubs as bases for their activities.

The third new approach, named subject-oriented youth work, was developed by Albert Scherr (1997). He re-connected to the emancipatory traditions of former decades and pursued the question how emancipation could still be possible in a society that no longer believed in the collective emancipation of young people. Scherr identified new potential for emancipation on

the individual level of the subject, and recommended support for young people in developing themselves as full, autonomous and responsible subjects as a key task for youth workers.

## **Phase 7: Modern youth work – trends and developments II (2000 to today)**

In recent years, professional debates about youth work have been dominated by the following three issues and approaches.

Firstly there can be seen a special professional interest around the spatial approach to youth work, also referred to as social-space orientation. Founded by Böhnisch and Münchmeier (1990) and promoted by Deinet and Krisch (2006) and Reutlinger (2003; 2008), this approach follows ecological concepts that look beyond individuals or groups and stresses the meaning of local social spaces as a key field for youth work practice and research. Like all institutions, groups and individuals, youth work and young people too are inseparably connected to social environments. Youth work can be a mediator between young people and social spaces. In this role, youth work can be an actor of change and innovation within spatial contexts. Deinet (2006) and Deinet and Reutlinger (2004) also show the importance of acquiring space for young people in the context of their struggle for identity and subjectivity, and they show methods by which youth work can accompany processes of acquirement.

A second trend is the increasing connection between youth work and school (Deinet and Icking 2006; Henschel et al. 2007). In recent years, Germany has seen a big increase in the establishment of whole-day schools. Before that, nearly all schools were based on morning lessons and free afternoons. To raise the standards of education, support working parents and to aid the inclusion of at-risk groups, more and more schools have changed into whole-day schools. Most whole-day schools combine forms of formal and informal learning and are therefore interested in the knowledge and potential of youth work about informal education and social learning. Through these developments the question emerges how whole-day schools and youth work can co-operate in optimal ways. Youth workers especially debate how they can contribute to a system of formal education without losing the qualities of youth work's informal character and peer-group learning, and its key standards of voluntary and interest-centred learning. Cloos et al. (2007) have developed a "pedagogy of youth work" that stresses the special methods of communicative learning in youth work. Müller, Schmidt and Schulz (2008) have specified how the approach of informal learning can be put into practice in youth work.

In the context of the movement to evidence-based social work, youth work is facing demands to work with concepts that are based on empirical research. So far, youth work in Germany has worked very little with theories and concepts directly based on research results. Most of the leading concepts in youth work seem rather to be pedagogical ideas without empirical grounding. By referring to fieldwork, Lindner (2007) showed that there already existed a variety of empirical studies of youth work and its effects on young people, neighbourhoods and institutions. There seems to be first-hand empirical evidence on youth work that still has to be expanded and systematised to strengthen the knowledge base and public recognition of the positive effects of youth work for society.

## **Phase 8: Some challenges for the near future (2008 onwards)**

What are the prospects for youth work in the future? Here I propose three emerging topics that seem to be key challenges for youth work.

Firstly we can see increasing social inequality in Germany. This inequality can be identified in the distribution of income and declining chances for full participation in society, work life and education for all the inhabitants of Germany (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales 2005; 2008; for young people see Corak, Fertig and Tamm 2005 or Hurrelmann and Andresen 2007). Youth work is directly challenged by these developments because it is getting more and more difficult to promote the social inclusion of young people. Young people who see no perspective for the future are threatening to become the new hard-to-reach clients that are being lost to the integrating influences of society.

A second challenge emerges with the new meaning of emancipation. For decades, younger generations fought for their autonomy against the controlling influences of governments, adults and public institutions. But now post-Fordist and globalised capitalism seems to demand a new type of worker and citizen. Instead of willing and subordinated followers of orders, the new ideal seems to be the flexible and active entrepreneurial self (Bröckling 2007, Arnegger and Spatscheck 2008), people ready to care autonomously for themselves by adapting to the rapidly changing demands of the market on their own responsibility. In this context the question emerges whether emancipation in this context is still possible and, if so, how. It is a key question for youth workers how young people can still find their autonomy as whole persons within these new demands without submitting to market laws as the only reference. Connected to these questions, the traditional role of youth work seems to be challenged in a fundamental way.

The third key challenge for youth work seems to be the current changes in funding. Whereas for the last thirty years, youth work has experienced a strong increase in financial support, now the numbers of professional youth workers are declining. In 1982 there were 17 004 professional youth workers in western Germany (Pothmann and Thole 2005: 348). Between then and 1998, the number of professional youth workers increased to 49 967 for the whole of re-unified Germany, but the latest available figures (from 2002) show a decrease of nearly 9% down to 45 514 professional youth workers (Pothmann and Thole 2005: 353).

In facing these new challenges, youth work in Germany has to search for new strategies to keep its unique approach of informal, voluntary, leisure-based education and its connection to local social spaces and neighbourhoods. Only if youth work succeeds in showing its positive effects for young people and society, and only if youth work manages to remain an independent, critical and self-critical agent of socialisation with clear and useful concepts, can the history of youth work continue as a story of success on the basis of a long tradition.

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## **9. Poland: the ideological background to youth work**

*Marcin Sińczuch*

The aim of studying social history can be perceived from a practical perspective. Collected historical knowledge can give many insights into solutions and activities now being developed and introduced. The practical outcome of such historical studies can be especially appreciated when building a reflective theoretical background and aiming to draw up a framework and define the possibilities of potential or prospective action.

From a historical perspective, especially when one wants to look back at the 1950s and 1970s, some currently approved definitions of youth work seem inaccurate when applied to social reality in the past. In this contribution I assume that youth work includes every possible action intentionally dedicated to young people, including active participation (direct or indirect) by youth. Viewed in this way, youth work can be examined according to its goals, form, content and actors, and its general structure in time and space.

### **Three influences on youth work**

Youth work seems to be a highly contextualised area. It is written into the everyday routine of each social group that contains representatives of different age cohorts, but it can also be seen among young people; and sometimes its forms and content are designed by groups of adults who are not in contact with young people directly. According to many definitions, youth work can be presented as institutionalised action, but it may also include elements of spontaneity or subculture, and it can be carried out by youth, for youth and according to youth's expectations and plans.

Although we find many approaches to defining youth work, it is apparent that youth work is in practice a set of loosely interconnected activities, which are defined, redefined, tested and modified by successive generations. Undoubtedly, youth work is shaped by its own internal tradition – containing grounded forms of work with and for youth in a given country, cultural area or organisation – but it is also determined by general trends and ideological projects in public and political spheres.

The third element influencing youth work, which is strictly connected with the two above, is recognition of the role of youth in a given historical moment. Friedrich Tennbruch (1962) distinguished three forms of the existence of young people in a social system, appearing in different historical contexts. Although his theory was based on Germany, it possesses a dose of generality.

Chronologically, Tennbruch identifies firstly the generation of youth movements at the beginning of the 20th century, when young people began to realise the need to affiliate through participation in mass youth organisations aimed at civil, cultural and social targets not related with direct political engagement. The next is what can be called “the generation of radical political solutions”, taking responsibility for the fate of society, the metaphor of which describes the situation and attitudes of young people engaged in revolutionary movements aiming at changing the world to give it youthful character and values. This ideological

engagement in post-war societies gives place to the third generation, one of aloofness and retirement from the political or even the public sphere and instead focusing on private, family and work life: the post-war generation of stagnation.

The history of youth work can be illustrated by two lines on a graph. One line is a sinusoidal curve, describing the return or circulation of three dominant narratives – organised, but rather apolitical, youth working for their own environment; youth organised for social change with clear and conscious political involvement; and disorganised youth, apolitical and running away to the private sphere. The other line on the graph is a growing straight line, representing the rise of individualism, autonomy, reflection and rationalisation of the place and activities of individuals in a society. Thus, it can be said that in youth work there exist different paradigms, each of which comes to the fore from time to time, but in the meantime the whole domain is subjected to social and cultural changes.

In this chapter, I present the situation in Poland, which can be easily used as a preliminary model for the processes of youth work formation in the whole of central and eastern Europe, with special emphasis on countries like Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, including in some aspects Romania and Bulgaria, and not excluding even the Soviet Union and Germany. However, my focus is on examples and evidence from Poland itself, presented in terms of the ideologies which have influenced the content and form of youth work in Poland since 1900.

## **1. The time of youth organisations, 1918-1947**

The earliest youth work activities did not recognise youth as an independent social group, because the meaning and position of young people in society were determined by their prospects and potential. Thus, the meaning of “being young” was to prepare for their future position in society (Gillis 1974). This view also determined the forms of social participation, which were focused around education, self-development and restricted socialisation. Young people were supposed to prepare for adult life and belong to the kind of community (social, class, professional) that would add an adult value to their life. It should be emphasised that the development of youth work in central and eastern Europe was deeply influenced by the process of gaining national independence by many countries of the region after the First World War. This impact could be seen on three levels.<sup>23</sup>

Firstly, the historical delay in the process of nation construction had had to be supported by powerful, rapid and broad actions carried out by well-prepared elites. Young people in the emerging nations constituted a natural resource for the recruitment of leaders-to-be. That is why youth work was orientated towards the recruitment, education and due preparation of the national elite. Youth organisations formed a system of ideological distribution, from centre to peripheries. However, in practice, their resources were used on the very local level for youth work that was orientated more towards “fun and benefits”, and their ideological principles were not of crucial importance.

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23. The selected examples of youth work and youth organisations of the inter-war period in Poland can be found in the recently published book by P. Tomaszewski and M. Wołos, *Organizacje młodzieżowe w XX w. Struktury, Ideologie, działalność*, Toruń 2008 (English abstracts of articles included).



Secondly, the construction of nation-states was accompanied by the denial of other nations' values: their cultures were treated as backward and not deserving autonomy. This idea was put into practice with different intensity in different places, but usually there could be recognised a strong model of competition between different groups of young people with their own youth organisations, including undermined nations, religions and cultures. The idea of intercultural dialogue based on the principle of equal rights was not common and it was seldom a central element in real youth activities. However, there was great diversity among Polish youth movements and organisations of that time. The majority of them were connected with specific social backgrounds, possessed precisely defined political identification and treated their own values or ideologies very seriously.

Thirdly, youth work focused on citizenship. The majority of the population was in a poor economic situation and demanded different forms of help. In fact, youth work of that period very often included numerous and diverse activities of social service, such as food supply, health care and professional training. Another important dimension of youth work was citizenship training – young people, especially those from underdeveloped, often rural areas, were taught their civil rights and duties, regulations, the law and bureaucratic procedures necessary for functioning in society. This kind of youth work was found in different institutional forms. In Poland there was a big focus on citizenship training during obligatory military service. Young soldiers were trained in writing and reading, principles of personal hygiene and preventative health care, they learned about innovations in agriculture and received a basic knowledge of entrepreneurship, accountancy and other techniques. Apart from these practical activities, great attention was paid to forming patriotic attitudes, historical consciousness and national identity (Odziemkowski 1996).

In summary we might characterise youth work of that time as based on centralised youth organisations, tied to their social background (national, class, religious), with competition as a common activity. Among other important factors, we can point to pluralism of organisations, mass membership and strong identification with the organisation and its values. The dominant ideologies of youth organisations often referred to nationalism (defined as patriotism) or values featuring particular social groups. They were focused on the education of future elites that could take part in social conflicts in the differentiated world, where nations, social classes and cultures engaged in struggle (Sińczuch 2002).

## **2. The time of great ideologies, 1948-1956**

The Second World War resulted in the suspension of youth work in open form. At the same time, youth eagerly engaged in activities combating the German and Soviet occupations. In consequence, youth organisations acted under cover, pooled their resources and followed a common aim – preparing young people to fight for the preservation of national identity. In this field there can be mentioned the resilience of underground Scouting, which among many other activities engaged in war propaganda, their graffiti forming a kind of patriotic street art.

After the Second World War, the communist party continually took over more and more aspects of social life, erasing their autonomy and diversity. The communist regime relatively early started to abolish many youth organisations, including Scouting, and aimed at replacing them with one, mass, totalitarian and controlled movement. It took form as the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP), founded in 1948 on the basis of previous socialist and communist organisations, which were abruptly terminated at that time, and (officially) had over two

million members at its peak (Wierzbicki 2006). In its activities, ZMP promoted ideas of education through labour, domination of individuals by the collective, ascendancy of public over private, engagement in political life and building a new socialist regime.

One of the main communist ideas was to create a new mankind, and the relevant process was “socialist upbringing and education” that led to the creation of a new individual, a new collectivist-oriented man (Walicki 1996). Not surprisingly, the rank and value that youth work gave to the ideology and practice of totalitarian communism was extremely high. The materials and instructions for youth workers in state organisations of that time were full of quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin. Here is Marx, emphasising the importance of youth: “The future of the working class and the future of socialism itself depends on the education and formation of the young generation” (Marks 1960 s. 212).

In the 1940s and 1960s, the methods and theories defining the model of youth work propagated at that time were grounded in a classic, orthodox Marxist perspective, according to which youth did not exist apart from the system of class struggle. In fact, the main stress was put on youth coming from the working class or from the rural poor, but other groups of youth were not excluded from the focus of the regime. As it said in one of the official documents of the Polish United Workers’ Party: “although worker youths are closest to the party, it never sets forth the interests of only this group, focusing on creating conditions to enable youth from other backgrounds to reach positions of representatives of the working class” (Gašiorowski 1983).

The resulting centralisation of youth work was accompanied by the creation of massive infrastructure. On central and regional levels there were created so-called palaces of youth – institutions offering various activities – from sport to cultural and artistic activities such as painting, sculpture, photography, music and dance – to chosen, skilled individuals who showed the appropriate attitude for the new regime. However, this offer was not available to the majority of youth living in smaller cities and rural areas. Various cultural clubs or centres were founded, but they suffered from the lack of staff, equipment and – very often – ideas and approaches for attractive forms of youth work.

### **3. The time of pragmatism in the communist state, 1957-1989**

Changes in the regime originated in the death of Stalin and, even more, the 20th conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Poland began an era of deconstruction of socialism, understood as a homogeneous project of total social change (Kurczewska 1992). In 1956 the ZMP was dissolved as a spontaneous act, and the retreat to formal pluralism became visible. One of the most important acts was to revive Scouting, which in Poland resembled the classic forms and visions of Baden-Powell much more than in other socialist countries.

Along with the deconstruction of socialism in its orthodox form, there appeared new tendencies in defining the place of youth in society, accompanied by the creation of new forms of youth work. Alongside ideologically conservative trends, there emerged ideas of a more liberal attitude to youth. We can point to approaches to revive the youth movement through activation and increasing freedom in such organisations as the Union of Socialist Polish Youth (ZSMP) and Union of Polish Students (ZSP). These groups were much more popular among young people than the communist party itself (Adamski 1980). Many found their own place there, especially those who looked for some sort of political career,

inaccessible through proper party structures, or for way of realising aims not connected with politics, from cultural activity (musical, theatrical or literary) to essential goods (such as flats or construction sites reserved for the ZSMP) and market activities.

One of the proofs that this was a fundamental revolution in the perception of the unique situation and particular problems of the younger generation was that it was now recognised as a “quasi social class”, which was almost seditious from the orthodox Marxist point of view.

The postulates of relative liberalisation and changes in the party and government attitudes to the problems of youth constituted an approach to change as a longitudinal process, which eventually failed. At the beginning of the 1970s more than one fourth of communist party members were 30 or younger, but in 1980 only 10% of members were in this age group (Jarosz 1986: 214). Simultaneously there were fewer and fewer students in universities coming from the worker or peasant classes, which clearly indicated the failure of basic assumptions of party policy towards youth (Jarosz 1986: 150).

In the 1960s and 1970s the role of school as an institution of youth work increased. Because mass youth organisations focusing solely on cultural activities became less popular, as did the sparse network of cultural centres, school became the only place with activities oriented towards youth, including occupational training, preventive measures and the distribution of social help. Youth work became an activity conducted by teachers (as part of their non-curricular duties) on school premises, with the aid of school infrastructure. Such a state of affairs unfortunately ended with schematisation and lack of spontaneity, as well as identifying youth work with the idea of formal education, when it was supposed merely a supplement.

In the meantime youth organisations underwent a significant change. First, ludic elements became more and more important in youth work: decision-makers had at last become aware that young people have a simple right to enjoy their spare time without having to fill it with study, work for the collective and other ideological additives. Second, the scope of activities that young people could do for themselves increased. Young people could now conduct their own projects using the infrastructure of youth organisations and schools. In that way youth work partly met the wishes of officials. For example, if young people agreed to conduct a school orchestra, the head teacher would offer them an auditorium to rehearse rock music.

#### **4. The time of social protest, 1970-1989**

The 1970s were a period of rapid modernisation in Poland, though the experiment of introducing consumer elements to Poland’s socialist economy ended in failure. Before that, there was a cultural opening-up which changed perspectives on the place of youth in society. The most important change in youth work was to break the state monopoly in the 1980s.

Even in the 1970s there were several initiatives and projects engaging youth – often prepared by youth itself – which had nothing in common with official state youth work. The sources of inspiration were often subcultures; the content remained usually some form of artistic expression, such as music, theatre, visual arts and various forms of psychotherapeutic activity (Jawłowska 1975). From the start of the 1970s, the role of the Catholic Church increased. The Church institutionally supported many youth groups, even tolerating young people whose beliefs and ideas differed from the Catholic world view. There were subculture pilgrimages

(for example, a hippy pilgrimage) to Jasna Góra and dissemination of the religious movement Light and Life (Dzięcioł 1996).

The foundation in 1980 and development of the social movement *Solidarność* became the impulse for the civil activation of the whole of Polish society. It was then that formal youth organisations came to life, independent of the government, such as the Independent Union of Students (NZS) or Student Solidarity (Anusz 1991). At the same time young people began to express their own opinions in public and political affairs. More and more people engaged in ecological and pacifist movements, and one could observe an exceptional outburst of youth subcultures (Fatyga 2001).

Alternative and subcultural movements gave birth to a group of leaders who – tacitly condoned by the state – began to introduce new forms of youth work. At first these new forms targeted youth endangered by social marginalisation or pathologies (especially drug addiction), but soon they took the form of activating movements, trying to push young people to take control. Although today we may talk about the ostentation or naïveté of many such undertakings, in the 1980s they constituted an important factor in change, and some of them created new forms of social activity for young people.<sup>24</sup>

Undoubtedly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, new topics and new forms of activity were turning up on the youth work scene. Young people had won their right to talk about important issues, their sense of life, their need for engagement and their world views. The youth work scene also welcomed actors, who featured in informal groups, often coming from subcultures; the repertoire of their activities expanded to street work, outreach, detached youth work, events and performances. The ideological dimension of youth work became once again apparent, but this time the ideology (or even ideologies) was that brought by youth itself.

## **5. Change: new challenges, new structures? 1989-2008**

Since 1990, Polish youth work has undergone more evolution than revolution. In its contemporary forms we can identify traits typical of both mass movements and youth organisations, alongside traditions of informal engagement, *ad hoc* activities and spontaneous creativity. Presumably, the latter will become more meaningful, especially with the growing distance of youth from solid forms of engagement and participation.

Today Polish youth work is subordinated to pragmatism, as it is supposed to bring particular outcomes in competences, skills and experience. As part of its ideological message, young people are not directly told what the world is like but rather they gain a set of tools with which to try to answer this question themselves. The youth work scene in Poland is very diverse. After mass youth organisations and schools, the most important role is played by non-governmental organisations – foundations and societies dealing with everything from sport and recreation to fighting discrimination – though the largest single group have sport as

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24. One example is the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation, an initiative to engage young people in collecting money for charity; every year 120 000 young volunteers take part. This foundation endorses the social engagement of youth, runs courses, trains volunteers and organises an annual free concert called Woodstock Halt – each year this becomes a more and more important forum for open dialogue between elites (political, cultural, religious) and youth. In the 1980s its founder, Jurek Owsiak, organised surrealist happenings and demonstrations which were very popular among youth subcultures, but were often criticised by countercultural orthodoxy.

their main focus. Although there is agreement that the engagement and spontaneity of youth are the main aims and values of youth work, the existing structures are not yet ready to open a real dialogue with young people and recognise them as co-authors of youth work practice.

## Conclusions

My intention was not to give a detailed history of youth work in Poland, but to sketch the main orientation points, the most important trends and tendencies. It is worth noting that many forms of youth work have often co-existed – and still co-exist – although some of them will sometimes be more popular than others. Of course, we should remember that work with youth ought to create a sphere of diversity of practice, in form and essence – by its own definition, one could say. Table 9.1 describes the most important features of youth work which appeared in (and often – but not always – dominated) particular periods.

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**Table 9.1 Polish youth work formations and their characteristics, 1918-2008**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Time of inception of youth organisations</b>	<b>Time of the great ideologies</b>	<b>Time of pragmatism and deideologising communist state</b>	<b>Time of social protest</b>	<b>Change – new challenges and new structures</b>
<b>Period</b>	1918-1947	1948-1956	1956-1989	1970-1989	1989-2008
<b>Forms of social participation of youth</b>	education, activities in youth organisations – but a time of moratorium: youth not recognised in society as an independent value.	education, participation in youth organisations, involvement in political activities – youth treated as extremely important group in society: focus on youth; generosity and demands	legitimisation of (limited) consumer forces; drive for stabilisation and social advance within the framework of socially accepted norms and patterns.	contestation of patterns and norms (education, lifestyle, consumption); “locked out generation” syndrome; formation of subcultural enclaves and their legitimisation, withdrawal from officially promoted forms of engagement (“inner emigration”).	education, consumer demand, entering the labour market, gaining experience and competences, “better-quality youth”.
<b>Forms of youth organisations</b>	centralised organisations, each tied to its social background (national, class, religious); confrontation and competition between them; pluralism; mass membership, strong identification.	mass organisations dominant, subordinated to one ideology; organisations unified; central, bureaucratic control; involvement in political action.	mass organisations differentiated (urban, rural, student, scouting), tending to become more attractive for young people; focus on rapid and prolonged benefits.	local, informal groups; rebel-orientated, informal types of action by formal youth organisations, “one-off event” and network approaches, new forms of youth work provided by Catholic Church	non-governmental organisations, non-formal groups.
<b>Patterns of youth work; model of youth worker</b>	professional youth work animators and local enthusiasts for youth work (youth and adults)	professionalisation, strict regulation, bureaucratisation; ideology affects every detail of youth work; syndrome of “socialistic” work, education, sport, fun, competition etc. Promotion of young leaders.	orientation towards career in organisation, pragmatism (objectualisation) and instrumentalisation of youth organisations by young people and by youth workers.	subcultures as a base for youth worker recruitment, informal action in formal youth organisations, therapeutic orientations, focus on troubled youth.	voluntary activity, young leaders with professional background, project-oriented approach, new forms of youth work.
<b>Ideology</b>	nationalism; ideologies of particular social groups; creation of elites; differentiated world; perspective of social conflict (nations, classes)	only one appropriate ideology (communism); new men and women, new society; education and formation in collective action, emphasising work influence; “control as a highest form of trust” principle.	functionalism and pragmatism; co-operating, centralised society; assumption of coincidence of individual and collective needs.	action for action, utopian projects, overvaluing of and fascination with spontaneity, creativity and fresh view offered by youth subcultures.	co-operating, non-centralised society; knowledge- and evidence-based action; more networks than hierarchies; procedures of auto-reflection and evaluation, activity and involvement as values in themselves.
<b>Dominant or new forms of youth work</b>	community youth work	centre-based youth work	school-based work	detached, outreach youth work	youth development

## 10. The Finnish perspective: youth work, policy and research

*Helena Helve*

The history of Finnish youth work has its roots in Christianity. Finland was rather thoroughly a part of Catholic culture until, at the end of the 16th century, the Reformation of the Church of Sweden was accomplished. The church started the first rudiments of comprehensive education. In 1809 Finland was occupied by Russia for a decade, though the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland remained active and shared its state church status with the Finnish Orthodox Church in 1869, when a new Church Act was passed, giving the church its own legislative body, the central synod. A year before, the Lutheran parishes were differentiated from the secular municipalities, both being given their own finances and administrative bodies. The general responsibility for comprehensive education and the care of the poor was transferred from the church to secular municipalities. From 1923 it became possible to leave the state church in Finland without having to join another religious congregation. However the majority of the Finnish people remained members of the Church.

Finnish independence in 1917 was immediately followed by the Finnish Civil War, which divided the nation into Reds and Whites. The Lutheran Church assumed the White position without question, while the Red side was anti-clerical, even murdering priests. After the Civil War there was great concern about violence, alcohol drinking and the morals of lower-class young people. Under the constitution of 1919, the new republic was deemed to be non-confessional, with freedom of religion. Many political youth organisations, such as civil guard youth clubs, were established in the 1920s and 1930s, still divided into Reds and Whites.

### **An example: the YMCA**

I take here, as an example of early youth work, the YMCA (in Finnish, Nuorten Miesten Kristillinen Yhdistys, or NMKY), founded in Turku in 1886. At that time it could not get permission to operate under Russian rules. In 1889, after the YMCA's World Meeting in Stockholm, the authorities permitted three local YMCAs: in Helsinki, Tampere and Joensuu.

The Finnish YMCA had mixed groups for boys and girls, and closely co-operated with the Lutheran Church. The YMCA started Christian boys' and youth work in Finland, including camps and Scouting. Its own Scouts league, the Blues, was set up in the 1930s, but no longer exists. Music in many forms played an important role, with choirs, a symphony orchestra and brass bands. In 1923 the Finnish YMCA set up a special sports body, the Sport Alliance of Finnish YMCAs, which still exists. It introduced basketball in 1938 and volleyball in 1939. Co-operation with all Nordic countries was wide from the start. The Finnish YMCA started its international social work by helping refugees after the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> In 1979 it

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25. After 1945, the YMCA extended into work for international understanding, peace, solidarity and care for the environment. It also encouraged members to participate in physical exercise, sports and open-air activities.

began development co-operation with the African Alliance of YMCA in Gambia. In 1990 bilateral co-operation started with the Estonian YMCA as part of its European fieldwork.<sup>26</sup>

So, the YMCA has grown to be one of important youth movements in Finland.

## **Youth clubs and associations**

The first Finnish youth association, Nuorisoseuraliike, was founded in 1897 with the aim of educating rural young people. The idea came from a Dane, Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (born 8 September 1783, died 2 September 1872), the father of the folk high school. Grundtvigian philosophy gave rise to a new form of nationalism in Denmark in the latter half of the 19th century. The most important philosopher of Finnish nationalism was Johan Vilhelm Snellman (born May 12<sup>th</sup> 1806, died July 4<sup>th</sup> 1881). He considered Lutheranism an important factor in Finnish identity – for example in agrarian youth clubs and organisations from the 1890s, in the 4H clubs (1920s) and the Scouts (1930s).

The roots of Finnish youth organisations were there in the 1880s, and the first secretary for Nuorisoseuranliike was being paid by the state already in 1906. However, early youth work was voluntary work for youth leisure-time activities and was often separate for boys and girls. Separate youth camps for boys and girls were organised from the beginning of the 1900s.

During the Second World War, the Church again became an important factor in Finnish nationalism. The Church participated actively in social work, getting closer to the labour movement. Diaconal, family and youth work emerged as new forms of church activity. The ideology exemplified in the slogan “For the home, the faith and the Fatherland” had a strong influence on youth movements. The Second World War turned the Orthodox Church of Finland into a church of evacuees. After the Winter War, Finland was obliged to cede Karelia to the Soviet Union. The Church lost 90 per cent of its property, and 70 per cent of its members had to be evacuated from their homes. The Orthodox population became dispersed throughout Finland. As a result of this the Orthodox Youth Association of Finland (in Finnish, Ortodoksisten Nuorten Liitto, or ONL) was founded during the war, in 1943. The main activity in the early days of ONL was to arrange study circles and clubs for Orthodox young people. In the children’s clubs and youth clubs, religious teaching played a very significant role. ONL has had close connections and co-operation with many Orthodox youth groups, for example with the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth in Poland and in Estonia. Nowadays ONL also organises pilgrimages for youth, mostly to Russia and Greece.

Finland lost the war, but maintained her independence. She seemed powerless to confront the military superiority of the Soviet Union, hence negative references to “finlandisation”. J.K. Paasikivi (President, 1946-56) started a new foreign policy to the Soviet Union. The Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance, signed in 1948, formally integrated Finland into the Soviet Union’s security framework. Despite this, Finland could in fact be considered a neutral country from a legal standpoint. Efforts to achieve neutrality during the Cold War era actually approached the Swiss model. Finland refrained from membership of international organisations, including the UN, right up to 1955, because such commitments could have resulted in the eventuality of having to take sides in conflicts between the superpowers.

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26. The YMCA’s mission is to help young people, especially those who are in danger of becoming socially excluded, or are already excluded, and those subject to social problems, assisting them to solve their problems.



Finnish foreign policy became more active under President U.K. Kekkonen (1956-81). Among his initiatives were the Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone, persuading the Nordic countries to declare their neutrality and organising the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

## **Student youth movements**

In 1963 the Students' United Nations Committee (Ylioppilaiden YK-yhdistys) was founded in Finland. The committee played an integral part in debating international affairs and promoting foreign policy debates. The union radicalised in 1968 and played a key role in student politics. Also in 1963, the Committee of 100 (Sadankomitea) against war and nuclear armament was established, inspired by its British predecessor. Its supporters came from leftist youth and student groups, and advocated civil disobedience to achieve their aims and to promote the idea of peaceful development.

The first student union elections were in 1963. Although student unions had previously been dominated by traditional student organisations, several communist representatives were elected for the first time. In 1965 about 130 demonstrators participated in the first Finnish demonstration outside the US embassy in Helsinki against the American war in Vietnam. Although people previously were hesitant, Finland's foreign political position started now to be discussed openly. On 1 May 1968, thousands of students took part in a march against war, capitalism and "bourgeois" values in university cities all over the country. Student caps and traditional academic symbols were set on fire in the central market places. On 21 August 1968 the student unions organised demonstrations in front of the Soviet embassy, against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The radical Finnish student movement divided between those who condemned the Soviet occupation and those who tolerated it.

An important step for the radical Finnish Student organisation was 25 November 1968, when students occupied their Old Student House in Helsinki, the venue for the Student Union's 100th anniversary. The occupation became a kind of political expression in Finland, although the radical opposition was still without a political home and internal ideological divisions were strong. The continuing cycle of new social movements began at the end of the 1970s.

## **Political youth organisations**

The political youth organisations have their own history, connected to the history of Finnish politics and political parties. Nowadays young people are involved in the parties' work and in creating youth policy. The youth organisations are particularly active during party congresses, when the main policies of the parties are formed. Generally, the chairpersons of the youth organisations have the right to take part in the main decision-making bodies of their mother parties. In Finland there have been few youth boards, and participation in political youth organisations has been weak during recent parliamentary and local elections. The political voice of young people is not articulated as it was in the 1970s.

## **Finnish youth policy and youth work**

Youth organisations have had a significant role in Finnish youth work and policy for a hundred years. Their activities are based on young people's own involvement. Freedom of

assembly and subsequent organisational activities are basic rights enshrined in the Constitution of Finland. Since the 1940s, central government has subsidised youth organisations systematically. The Act on Government Transfers for National Youth Work (1035/1973), effective from 1974, established the support system that had already been the practice based on appropriations allocated from the state budget every year.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the objective in Finnish youth policy was to guarantee equal conditions for growth and opportunities for self-enhancement for everyone, regardless of his or her background. In 1992 a new youth project called NUOSTRA (Nuorisotyön strategia, or 'New youth strategy') was launched. The aim was to provide new stimuli and content for youth work, and thus ensure conditions for the existence and development of youth work even in the economic depression in Finland in the 1990s. NUOSTRA's principal idea was: "Young people have the right and the duty to construct their own future." The priorities defined in NUOSTRA were growth and civic activity, young people's living conditions, the prevention of exclusion and international co-operation and exchanges.

In Finland, legislation governing youth work has been enacted regularly since 1972, being reformed every ten years or so (1986, 1995 and 2006). The Youth Act (72/2006) includes support for young people's growth and independence, promotion of active citizenship, social empowerment of young people and improvement of their growth and living conditions. The Act also lays down provisions on expert bodies assisting the Ministry of Education, the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (NUORA) and the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee. The Advisory Council mainly focuses on youth policy issues and it submits to the government annual evaluations of implementation of the Youth Policy Development Programme.

The Youth Act authorises the financing of youth by support systems for youth work and policy – for example, government grants for youth organisations and investment grants for national youth centres, grants towards construction of facilities for young people, support for youth research and support for international youth co-operation. In addition, local authorities and youth organisations receive discretionary grants earmarked for workshop activities for unemployed young people, afternoon activities for schoolchildren, youth information and counselling services, preventive substance-abuse welfare work using web-based media, young people's cultural activities, the International Award Programme in Finland (Avarti), national and regional youth work development projects and provincial youth services.

Annual government expenditure on youth work amounts to about €39 million, accounting for about 0.1% of the state budget. Municipal youth work appropriations total about €150 million, equating to 0.6% of municipal budgets. The amounts targeted at children and young people account for about 15% and 35–45% of the state budget and municipal budgets respectively. This means that youth policy, including the national Youth Policy Development Programme and municipal child and youth policy programmes, has far-reaching economic impact. Within the Ministry of Education budget, youth work is mainly funded from the proceeds of the national lottery and pools. In line with the Lotteries Act (1047/2001) and the related Act on the Use of Proceeds from Money Lotteries, Pools and Betting (1054/2001), youth work receives 9% of these funds. Other beneficiaries are the arts, sports and science.

At the beginning of 2006, there were 432 municipalities in Finland, of which 44 were bilingual (Finnish and Swedish). Swedish is the first language in 19 municipalities, and three municipalities have Saami languages as their first language.<sup>27</sup>

The Ministry of Education has been given responsibility for the general development of youth work and youth policy. State Provincial Offices are the authorities dealing with youth work and policy issues at regional level, whereas local authorities have local responsibility for these issues. A new element in the Youth Act is a national Youth Policy Development Programme, to be issued by the government every four years. The programme includes national youth policy objectives, and guidelines for the preparation of provincial and municipal youth policy programmes. The programme is prepared in co-operation by key ministries involved in youth affairs, working under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

## **Internationalisation**

Finland has played an active role in multilateral youth sector co-operation within the frameworks of the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE) and northern European regional structures. The most important of these have been the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK), the Baltic Sea Working Group for Youth Affairs (WGYA) and the Working Group on Youth Policy of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (WGYP), which was chaired by Finland between 2005 and 2007.

When Finland joined the European Union in 1995, it changed both Finnish youth policy and the everyday life of young people because, with our EU membership, young Finns could join various EU programmes and move more freely inside the EU countries. Finland initiated also reviews of European national youth policies and was the first country to be reviewed in 1996.

The Finnish Youth Work Act 2006 represents European youth policy as laid down in the White Paper, for example, promoting active citizenship of young people in decision-making and working actively in youth organisations, and it offers an Internet-based system of listening to young people.

## **The Finnish tripod of youth research, youth work and policy**

In Finland youth work is now network-based characterised by a tripod structure, representing co-operation between the Ministry of Education's Youth Division, Allianssi and the Youth Research Network, which is part of the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Society. The tripod structure implies working together, using the skills, knowledge and expertise of different partners (for example, in implementing the EU White Paper on youth policy and the EU Youth Programme).

The Finnish Youth Co-operation organisation, Allianssi, was founded in 1992 to carry on the work of the previous youth service organisation, Kansalaiskasvatuksen Keskus (KAKE, founded 1960). Allianssi has about 140 member organisations, so we can say that almost all

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27. In 2005, Finland had 5 255 580 inhabitants, with about 2% of these being immigrants and 62% living in urban municipalities. The capital city, Helsinki, had a population of 560 905.

youth-related organisations belong to it. Allianssi is also involved in youth information with many web services and maintains the Youth Studies Library and Youth Info House, a web service for youth work specialists. Its services also include training and seminars. Allianssi co-operates with the Finnish Youth Research Society and the Finnish Youth Research Network. They have published together a magazine *Nuorisotutkimus* ('Youth Research') and launched research projects on young people's living conditions and attitudes in their Youth Barometers from 1995. In addition Allianssi publishes the national youth work magazine *Nuorisotyö* (eight issues per year). Allianssi is also responsible for the youth election that is held in connection with the general election.

Allianssi is active in the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the European Youth Card Association (EYCA), the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), the Baltic Youth Forum (BYF) and the Nordic Youth Committee (NUK). In addition, Allianssi co-operates bilaterally and multilaterally with the United Nations by sending a youth delegate to the General Assembly every year, as part of the official Finnish delegation; in 2004, Allianssi received ECOSOC status from the UN. Allianssi also offers youth workers opportunities in various international exchanges, study trips and seminars.

Allianssi co-operates with the Finnish Ministry of Education, participating in working groups and committees, giving statements and comments, and influencing decision-makers on matters related to young people's lives and youth work. In Finland the tripod system draws on representatives of three sectors: public administration (ministries, regions and municipalities), youth research and youth organisations (Allianssi). This has been the case, for example, with implementation of both the EU White Paper on youth policy and the EU Youth Programme. For the latter project an advisory group was set up, to which Allianssi belongs.<sup>28</sup>

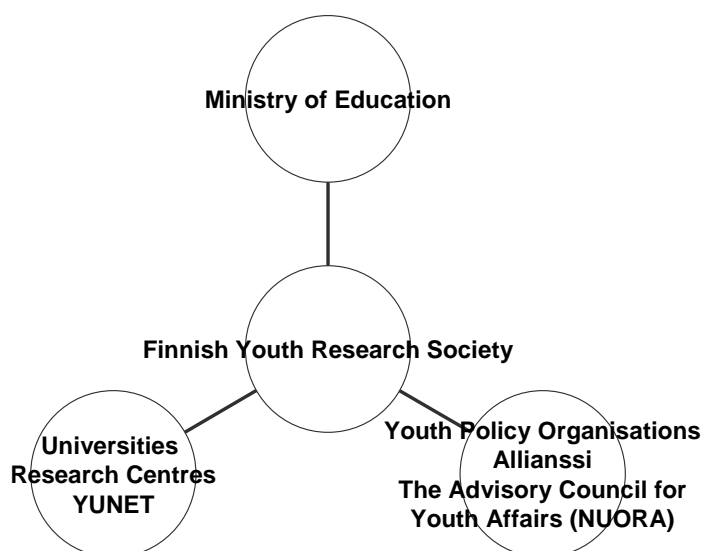
### **The Finnish Youth Research Society and network**

The Finnish Youth Research Society was founded in 1988 in co-operation with the Youth Division of the Ministry of Education. The journal *Nuorisotutkimus* ('Youth Research') began publication in 1983 under the Ministry of Education. The economic recession at the beginning of the 1990s spawned (in 1994) the Youth Research Programme 2000, which continued as the Youth Research Network (see [www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi](http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi)), which was set up in 1999 under the auspices of the Youth Research Society. In the same period, the funding for youth research – from the Ministry of Education – expanded enormously. At present there are about 20 researchers working with the Youth Research Network, whose projects are financed either directly by the Ministry of Education, as performance-based grants, or from outside projects.

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28. The annual budget of Allianssi is more than 2 million euros, about two thirds of which comes as financial aid from national lottery funds, allocated by the Ministry of Education.

**Figure 10.1: Youth research in the tripod with youth work and policy**



Finnish youth research is multidisciplinary, but dominated by the social sciences and youth sociology in particular. Evaluation research is a rising trend. In the academic field, qualitative cultural research has a strong impact. The Youth Research Network and the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (NUORA) have published annual Youth Barometers describing young people’s values and attitudes, and yearbooks describing young people’s living conditions.

**Table 10.1: The history of Finnish youth research and its ethos**

The 1940s and 1950s	The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s	The 1990s and 2000s
Research on hobbies and leisure-time activities of young people (e.g. Helanko 1953; Allardt et al. 1958).	Research on youth cultures, leisure time and the development of youth work and youth policy (e.g. Rantalaiho 1969; Hirvonen 1978, Telemäki 1984, Lähteenmaa 1991).	Research on youth values, marginalisation, multiculturalism and citizenship (e.g. Helve 1998, 2002 and 2007; Suurpää 1995; Paju and Vehviläinen 2001)
Ethos of socialisation: nationalistic values of work, religion	Ethos of participation, equality and welfare	Ethos of individuality, life management and social empowerment
moral and temperance education	citizenship education	hermeneutic and interdisciplinary approach

## Youth work training

In recent years in Finland the subfield of education entitled Leisure Activities and Youth Work has been restructured, which means that people working in the same positions may have many different qualification titles. Programmes leading to youth work positions are available both at upper secondary vocational level and within higher education.

Church parishes train their own youth workers at their own vocational institutions. The qualification available at upper secondary vocational level is the Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction. The qualification confers the title Youth and Leisure Instructor

and can be completed at several educational institutions offering programmes in Leisure Activities and Youth Work. Those who have completed the three-year upper secondary vocational qualification have general eligibility for further studies, which means that they can apply to the universities of applied sciences and academic universities. The qualification can also be completed as a competence-based qualification.

The first Finnish university course leading to a higher degree in this area – a ‘Bologna’ master’s degree – has been provided since 2005 in co-operation between the University of Kuopio (Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy) and Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (Department of Culture, Youth and Social Work, plus the Mikkeli University Consortium); it is a two-year Master’s Programme in Youth Education.

The University of Tampere has been offering university-level youth work studies since the beginning of the 1980s. In January 2009 it started a Bologna Master’s Programme (120 ECTS) in Youth Work and Youth Research, with 15 students.<sup>29</sup>

**Table 10.2: The professionalisation of youth work in Finland**

Period	Changes in youth work	Professional training
1920s		Youth Institute opens 1922 for training of youth workers – moves to Mikkeli Paukkula in 1925
1940s	Need recognised for scientific youth research	Youth Education studies start in 1945 in Helsinki Institute for Social Sciences with 32 students – course moves to Tampere in the 1960s
	Need recognised for competent, professional youth workers (Guy von Weissenberg, see Nieminen 1998)	The church starts its own education and training for youth workers in 1949
1970s		University of Tampere offers Degree in Youth Work from 1970, main subject Education
1980s		University of Tampere offers master’s-level orientation for Youth Work from 1980 (in some years from 1990 it offers Youth Education)
1990s	New leisure activities	University of Tampere offers lower degree (BA) from 1982 Youth Work education – programmes offered for youth work positions at upper secondary vocational level (three-year upper secondary vocational qualification, 80 credits, raised in 2001 to 120 credits)
2000s		‘Bologna’ Master’s level (120 ECTS) programmes offered from 2005

### Master’s degree for youth workers in Mikkeli

Training in youth work has a long tradition in Mikkeli, which has great expertise in youth work. The goals of the pilot Master’s Degree Programme in Youth Education at Mikkeli were to provide diversified practical and theoretical skills for use in the fields of teaching, training, youth work and leisure activity leadership, planning, research work and evaluation.

29. In 2006, the Humanistic University of Applied Sciences started a Master’s Programme in Youth Work.

The master's pilot project was financed partly by the European Social Fund. It involved developing co-operative models for municipal youth education, focusing in particular on the needs of municipalities and other actors in the field in eastern Finland. The experimental and research work associated with this project attempted to determine how young people's positive regional identities could be strengthened and how young people's exclusion from education and employment might be prevented. The possibilities of strengthening the position of actors from eastern Finland in international co-operation were also studied in the project, for instance in Estonian youth work methodological training (the International Award Programme) and in adjacent area co-operation with the Russian Republic of Karelia (EU youth work and culture projects intended to strengthen civil society). On the basis of the EU youth programme, this project helped to develop the European dimension in regional youth work and international exchange.

The project's educational objectives were well accomplished. Co-operation with those in the field of youth education on the municipal level was realised, and in the process models were developed for national and international co-operation. Local co-operation was primarily in the students' master's thesis projects. Their scientific investigation of young people's living conditions and identities within municipalities has become the basis for new forms of research and development work. Applying this sort of research work in practice can be seen as a means of improving the whole youth work area. The education provided by the programme has increased the professional qualifications of local youth workers.

This has already affected students employed in the field by advancing their careers, improving their salaries and enabling them to take on more challenging tasks in the field of youth work. Through the professional development of students and the 17 MA degrees granted, this project has brought new jobs and produced new research, development and training initiatives, which have created new working opportunities in youth work.

## **Some critical views of Finnish youth policy and youth work**

Here I try to describe some changes in Finnish youth policy in recent years. There has been a shift in the ways of speaking of and reacting to children, young people and families with children. This change has been described as a transition from a welfare policy regime to risk politics (Harrikari 2008). This change is connected with the economic recession of the 1990s, with the resulting scarcity of public resources for youth policy-making. Finnish studies have pointed out that the direct implications of the economic depression and social policy in the depression era were both exceptionally harsh and had a severe impact on youth (see Helve 2002; Harrikari 2008).

The first indicators of a new regime were changes in the topics of public debate (cf. NUOSTRA 1992). Since the mid-1990s, parliamentary initiatives concerning children, the young and families with children increased rapidly. In 2001 nearly a tenth of all parliamentary initiatives were targeted on these groups. However, debates about children and young people are permeated by concern, fear and panic, as a result of the school shootings at Jokela (2007) and Kauhajoki (2008) and the Myyrmanni bombing in Vantaa. Crime as a societal problem is obviously highlighted in the issues of children and young people much more since about year 2000 than it was in previous decades. Politicians have focused on the criminal activity of those under 15 (the age of criminal liability in Finland since 1894).

The development and maintenance of the comprehensive, high-level social service system – which prevented all types of social problems and especially violence among young people – was challenged. This meant that the principle of prevention as the leading strategy was now rejected, at least in the sense in which the principle was understood and implemented in the welfare policy era. New concepts were adopted and the old ones were adapted.

Alongside the social prevention of the welfare policy, early intervention became the dominant orientation from the late 1990s. Prevention and early intervention in the Finnish context were aimed at the whole population in order to avoid social problems. Implicitly this policy accepts the emergence of social problems since it has the intention to correct them and fill the ‘holes’ of insufficient prevention. It observes and allocates control activities to the problems that have already emerged. Harrikari calls this “risk-oriented hot-spot thinking” in which control sensitivity to societal reactions is significantly lower if compared to the old idea of social prevention.

### **Perspectives for Finnish youth work**

Different studies have shown that young people in danger of exclusion are very sceptical of youth politics and youth work services. The services and the young people have separate existences, without a great deal of contact in practice (Kauranen 2006). Young people seem to seek help only when absolutely necessary. The world of welfare services often seems distant and alien to young people, who find it virtually impossible to influence them. Youth work and youth policy need to develop a closer relationship with young people to be in touch with their life situations (Harrikari 2008).

The paradox for young people living under the threat of exclusion is that they often go undetected because they are not recorded statistically. Their exclusion should not be interpreted one-dimensionally; it has to be examined from several different perspectives. At its worst, it is a combination of economic, social, health and educational disadvantage coupled with exclusion from the centres of power, participation, and labour and housing markets. In view of this, there are good reasons for creating holistic forms of assistance for these young people from local social and public health services, local youth work, labour authorities and the various other services.

This requirement is recorded in the Finnish Youth Work Act 2006. A society with separate sectoral services cannot see young people’s living conditions as a whole or view each individual’s situation as unique. The stated aim is to help young people to control their lives by improving their life situation and creating conditions for civic initiatives. The purpose of the Youth Act 2006 is to support the upbringing and independence of young people, promote their active citizenship, strengthen youth socialising and improve the conditions of young people for living and growing. Active citizenship means the civil activity of young people participating in the running of society. Strengthening their socialising focuses on improving the life situation and life management of young people in danger of social exclusion. The Youth Act obliges municipalities to involve young people in the drafting of youth issues. The law states that the opportunity must be arranged for young people to take part in dealing with youth work and policy matters locally and regionally. Young people have also to be listened to on matters that concern them. The question is how this Act can reach those young people who cannot even be found in statistics in a polarised society? (*Nuorisobarometri* 2007)



What kind of youth policy or youth work should we practise today? Exploring the history of the theory and practice of youth work in Finland gives no clear answer to this question. Even the meaning of the term 'youth work' is unclear: reading the introductory text of various youth organisations, the Ministry of Education, Youth Research and other bodies, we find some very different concepts of youth work.<sup>30</sup> The new freedom in local municipality youth work arrangements may diversify and enrich the methods of youth work, but problems will arise if local authorities primarily use it in order to make cutbacks by purchasing youth work services as cheaply as possible at the cost of quality.

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30. Today, the functions of Finnish youth work cover the socialisation of good citizens (or is that hidden control of young people?), support for (national/EU) identity formation, compensation for excluded young people (special youth work; youth welfare), and resources and allocations (Youth Act).

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## 11. Youth work and policy in France

*Patricia Loncle*

To understand the specificities of French youth work, we should look at the current situation from a European perspective. In this regard, the Youth partnership contributions are obviously significant, and the following quotations particularly illuminate the French situation:

To describe the nature and scope of youth work in Europe it is first of all necessary to stress that there is no consistent definition of youth work either in all European countries or even in any single country. Youth work is a summary expression shaped by different traditions and by different legal and administrative frameworks, and it is used for a wide range of activities. ... In general we can state that in all countries youth work is defined as a domain of “out-of-school” education and thus linked to non-formal or informal learning. ... We can see that most of the definitions contain two basic orientations reflecting a double concern: to provide favourable (leisure time oriented) experiences (of social, cultural, educational or political nature) in order to strengthen young people’s personal development and foster their personal and social autonomy, and at the same time to offer opportunities for the integration and inclusion of young people in adult society by fostering societal integration in general or preventing the exclusion of disadvantaged groups. ... Regarding the target groups we can state that in all countries youth work addresses young people in general as well as disadvantaged or socially excluded groups. Although there are certainly different priorities in general youth services and targeted services, it can be argued that the aspects of participation and protection are given in all countries. (Youth partnership, 2004)

The French situation echoes these statements: there is no single law that regulates the intervention of youth workers, and the aim of their intervention is largely implicit: it depends predominantly on the work context of the persons involved (which means it depends on both the local decision-making process and the particular difficulties that affect young people).

### Professionals in youth work

Under the umbrella of French youth work, at least four professions can be gathered. They are the *animateurs socioculturels*, *éducateurs spécialisés*, *chargés de mission* and *animateurs de prévention* or *animateurs de santé*.

The most numerous are the sociocultural activities co-ordinators (*animateurs socioculturels*): these professionals are the core group of youth workers. They are about 120 000 of them in France (Lebon, 2007). They work mainly for local authorities (municipalities and *départements* – local and meso levels) or for NGOs that are funded by public grants (of which a large part are local grants). Their profession was gradually organised during the 1960s but in a rather informal way. They principally provide leisure, cultural and sports activities for young people in a specific district.

The second group is the special needs workers (*éducateurs spécialisés*), of whom there are about 55 000.<sup>31</sup> They work for the same types of employer as the sociocultural activities co-ordinators, but their funding comes mainly from the *départements*, which are responsible for combating delinquency since the first decentralisation laws (1982-83). Their profession

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31. See <http://educateurspecialise.lesocial.fr/exerciceprofessionnel.php>.

appeared at about the same time as the co-ordinators' but it is regulated by a professional agreement (signed in 1966). They intervene in favour of disadvantaged young people, those who are at risk of delinquency or who are endangered by their family.

A third group consists of the operations managers (*chargés de mission*) of youth job centres, the *missions locales pour l'emploi des jeunes*. About 11 000 persons work in the 480 centres found in all the major cities. They are funded by various public bodies.<sup>32</sup> Introduced in 1982, the operations managers aim to provide support for 16- to 25-year-olds entering the labour market. In 2006, they dealt with 1.2 million young people, of whom 40% found a job or were given a training session.

The fourth group is constituted by a new type of youth worker, specialising in the field of health. Named health organisers (*animateurs de prévention* or *animateurs de santé*), they are the latest professionals to emerge and their profession is not regulated at central level. They are employed at local level by municipalities, *départements* or NGOs. As yet, there are no statistics available on their exact numbers. They work principally, but not exclusively, in helping young people and focus on preventing risk behaviours (alcohol, drugs, road safety).

To synthesise this brief synopsis, we can quote Francis Lebon who wrote recently about the professionalisation of sociocultural activities co-ordinators:

The professional group does not – or only hardly – constitute a profession defined as an organised body, with its rules, its identification procedures and its careers. Some authors consider that the professionalisation process exists but that its outcome is uncertain; they mention both brakes and progresses. Other authors limit themselves to the description of the reality: they consider that the diversity of work conditions and the variety of job profiles does not permit to affirm the existence of a profession. On the other hand, the strong division of work distributes persons according to unequal positions and segments the professionals' groups. Besides, the professional identity causes problem. It appears fragmented, fragile and pulled apart between the various institutional worlds in which the activities are developed: cultural action, employment policy, tourism, sectors of social, education, sport, disabled people, elderly people, etc. (Lebon 2007: 17-18)

In order to appreciate the different elements that led us to this rather difficult situation, I propose to analyse the history of youth work through a threefold perspective: the evolution of youth work; changes in the youth question; and the local implementation of policies by youth workers. To do so, I base my work on a variety of multidisciplinary material on the history of youth work, youth policy (at national and local level, with special attention to the latter) and youth sociology. This material is a mixture of secondary analysis of existing data and of empirical material from my own researches.

To develop my argument, without pretending to establish an exhaustive history of youth work in France, I have focused on the three periods that seem the most relevant to explain the current situation in my country. As a consequence, my presentation is divided into three sections: the first is dedicated to the emergence of the youth question at the end of the 19th century; the second section focuses on the incomplete professionalisation of youth work in the 1960s; and the third section deals with the challenges of youth work in contemporary French society.

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32. Youth job centres receive 470 million euros p.a. in public funding (84% of their budget). Their principal sources of funds are the European Social Fund 8%; the state 40%; the regions 17%; the *départements* 5%; local authorities (singly or in groups) 23%; other public and private bodies 7%. See [www.cnml.gouv.fr/le-reseau/](http://www.cnml.gouv.fr/le-reseau/).

## **From the late 19th century to 1945: the emergence of the youth question**

The period between the late 19th century and the Second World War is characterised by four elements at least:

- From a global viewpoint, the period is largely influenced by industrialisation, constant concerns about armed conflict and the need to strengthen the sense of national identity;
- This is the period when youth is considered for the first time as a problematic and identified population (Ariès, 1960; Loriga, 1994);
- Awareness of the difficulties commonly encountered by French young people (Villermé, 1840) leads to the emergence of numerous youth organisations whose first aim was to support young people in the face of both social and health issues;
- Although many youth organisations were national (or even international) in character, what they did for young people (in scope, content and proximity to public bodies) depended largely on the district and the local community in which they operated.

In this period, one can underline the state's relative absence (except in promoting patriotism and setting up a national, compulsory, free education system) and the predominance of public figures in youth care. Another remarkable fact is the acute ideological opposition between religious and non-religious groups, which appear as rivals in a struggle to dominate youth.

### **The formulation of the youth question**

From the late 19th century, the “youth question” was being formulated. This was closely linked to the urbanisation that happened in several French regions (mainly the northern and eastern regions for manufacturing and mining, and secondarily the western region for fishing). Urbanisation generated various global phenomena (Topalov, 1995):

- a persistent problem of poverty affecting large parts of the urban population, which grows significantly and suffers from underpaid jobs and an insecure labour market;
- the industrialisation of work (difficult work conditions, strictness of managers, low pay, long hours of work), which is not yet regulated nor compensated by social benefits;
- insanitary housing and large-scale epidemics (of cholera, for instance);
- the lack of safety in work places, increasing work accidents and dramatically reducing life expectancy in the most urbanised areas.

For young people, urbanisation gave rise to various consequences:

- it led rural youngsters far from their family to cities where they knew nobody and had difficulty finding a proper (and not too dangerous) job, as well as training and housing;
- most of these young people experienced difficult conditions, poverty and insecurity;
- a decline in the traditional forms of youth culture (such as carnivals and the *charivari*) by which young people in their rural communities could express themselves and their disapproval of aspects of adult society (Pellegrin, 1979);
- in urban areas, the appearance of youth gangs that scare people (Perrot, 1986), at this date!
- some people and public bodies begin to worry about the risk to young people, in their first contact with urban life, from immorality, poor health and poor housing.

It may be worth underlining the fact that our knowledge of the effects of urbanisation came from the application of different research methods (statistics, demography and psychology among them) to data from various large cities (like London and Chicago), revealing several important features. In particular, this research brought the existence of pauperism (poverty affecting workers) into the open, giving people new conceptions of ‘poor’ and ‘poverty’ and leading to progressive acceptance of social and public intervention. Previously, poor people were divided into two categories: the good poor (the ones who had objective reasons to be poor: orphans, unmarried mothers, disabled persons) and the bad poor (the ones who were healthy and yet did not work). This new perception of poverty was to have a great impact on youth care: it justified youth organisations’ involvement in other fields than plain charity.

## Youth organisations and youth movements in competition

Youth organisations and youth movements tended to be created all over France between the late 19th century and the Second World War. They shared some particularities: they appeared to struggle with each other to dominate youth (as rivals in proselytising and in recruiting more members); they were strongly affected by hygienist and social preoccupations; and most of them were created under the influence of international movements<sup>33</sup> and represented a youth international network. Long before public authorities, they were the first actors in youth care.

We can divide the period into two parts:

- Before the First World War, a large range of youth organisations emerged in almost every part of France (but firstly in the cities). They were all different, but they were all led by adults – usually notables – who saw young people as a population to be protected, but did not take the specific character of youth into account. The organisations’ action was influenced by strong moral principles (religious, non-religious or patriotic, for instance).
- During the inter-war years, what were called “youth movements” appeared. These were all run by young people and stressed their autonomy and development. They encouraged their members to adhere to a collective identity and to improve themselves. To do so, they developed specific tools and recognition means (like uniforms, rites and songs).

They also presented strong differences, as Table 11.1 shows.

**Table 11.1: The main youth organisations in 19th-century France**

Name	Begun	Faith	Area of operation	Aims and popular appeal
<b>The UCJG (YMCA) patronages (youth clubs)</b>	1867	Protestant	international, with national organisation	co-operation in social, religious, intellectual and physical fields; elitist
	1830	mainly Catholic; some Protestant or non-religious	international, with a community organisation	no central policy: it depended on the needs of the community; mainly culture and sport; mostly populist
<b>The Catholic Association of</b>	1886	Catholic	national	strengthening the Catholic church; elitist

33. The first YMCA was in London in 1844 and spread to all the world’s big cities; the first patronage was that of Don Bosco in Turin in 1840; the first holiday camp was founded by Pastor Bion in Zurich in 1876; in 1907 the Scouts were started by Robert Baden-Powell in the UK and youth hostels were created by the German Richard Schirman; Working-class Catholic Youth was established by Joseph Cardjin in Belgium in 1926.

<b>French Youth The Education League</b>	1866	non-religious	national	supporting creation of the national school system, then organising extra-curricular activities for young people; a mix of elitist and populist
<b>holiday camps</b>	1881	Protestant first, then Catholic or non-religious too	international, several national movements and local bodies	offering healthy holidays for urban (poor) children and youth; populist

*Source:* Loncle, 2003, pp. 90-97

**Table 11.2: The main youth movements in 20th-century France**

Branches	Begun	Faith	Area of operation	Aims	Popular appeal
<b><i>Scouting</i></b>					
les éclaireurs unionistes	1910	Protestant	international to local	To develop young people's autonomy, resourcefulness and collective spirit	populist
les éclaireurs de France	1911	non-religious	national and local		populist
les scouts de France"	1920	catholic	national and local		populist, but more elitist
<b><i>Specialised Catholic youth</i></b>					
Working-class Catholic Youth	1926	Catholic	international to local	To develop autonomy, social class pride, self-esteem, and collective spirit	populist
Student Catholic Youth	1929	Catholic	national to local		elitist (because so few students)
Rural Catholic Youth	1929	Catholic	national to local		populist
<b><i>Youth hostels</i></b>					
French League of Youth Hostels	1929	Catholic (but open)	international and national	To sustain outdoor activities and develop young people's autonomy	populist
Non-religious centre of youth hostels	1933	non-religious (leftist)	national		populist (pacifist and promoting gender diversity)

*Source:* Loncle, 2003, pp. 96-100

Developed in a very disparate way at the beginning of the period – but all competing while keeping their distance from public authorities – these movements tended to co-operate increasingly with each other and with local and central authorities by the end of the period. In this, they played a critical role, sustaining the first public policies addressed to young people.

### **The influence of local authorities and the state**

During this period, public bodies' influence and role appeared unquestionably secondary to that of private actors. Nonetheless, local authorities were sometimes very helpful, and in 1936, for the first time, the French state set up a public agency responsible for interventions with young people.



## Two contrasted local authorities

At this period almost all actions for youth were implemented at local level by local actors. To analyse the influences and roles of local authorities in this field, we need to focus our attention on particular examples. To do so, we can compare youth actions in two contrasting cities, Rennes and Lille, under five points: the content of the local youth question; local youth organisations and movements; ideological conceptions of youth intervention; types of public interventions and realisations; and relationships with youth organisations and movements. These two cities appeared rather different: Rennes was at this time a medium-sized city, the regional capital of Brittany, an administrative city, rather wealthy and with only slight social problems; conversely, Lille was part of a huge metropolis, one of the first places in France to be urbanised, and thus at this period it had bottomless social problems. This comparison is summarised in Table 11.3.

**Table 11.3: Influences and roles of two French local authorities**

	Rennes	Lille
<b>The local “youth question”</b>	A certain rural exodus, poverty and housing problem; but overall relatively wealthy	Deep urbanisation: problems of unemployment, poverty, housing, health and dangerous workplaces
<b>The local youth organisations and movements</b>	Two main organisations, a religious and a non-religious patronage, which developed a very open approach to youth care	Almost the whole range of youth organisations, both Catholic and non-religious; a strong influence; some were very populist, others tried to develop an elitist approach
<b>Ideological conceptions of youth intervention</b>	Moralism and patriotism; Catholicism was very dominant	Anti-poverty and hygienism; leftist movements were important
<b>Types of public interventions and realisations</b>	Modest: the municipality supported the non-religious patronage by promoting its actions in the local newspaper, by lending its infrastructures (the stadium, the swimming pool, the City hall)	Substantial: the municipality founded and ran its own facilities (day care centre, holiday camp, large charity “agency”); Lille belonged to a trend that has been called “municipal socialism”
<b>Relationships with youth organisations and movements</b>	An exclusive link with the non-religious patronage	A clear preference for non-religious, leftist organisations

Source: Loncle, 2003, pp. 58 and following.

Table 11.3 shows clearly the contrast in public interventions that could be found in the two municipalities. It introduces already the question of inequalities between places, which we are going to discuss in more detail in the third part of this chapter.

## Leo Lagrange

Apart from the Vichy period, which was exceptional, the state’s intervention was not very developed in this period. However, we must mention the creation in 1936 during the Front populaire’s government of the post of Under-Secretary for Leisure and Sport, which was entrusted to Leo Lagrange. This man was commonly designated by youth movement leaders as the “Youth minister”. He had a strong charisma and has become a myth in the field of youth work and youth policy. During his three years as minister, with the close collaboration of youth movements, he encouraged many public interventions that are still considered as significant: he supported the allocation of funds to youth hostels, camping grounds and stadiums, he introduced the *brevet sportif populaire* (a fitness certificate), he negotiated with the train companies to get reduced prices for travel tickets for young people, and more.

Above all, the man was obsessed by respect for freedom and choice in youth care. He appeared as an exception in a period when authoritarian forms of youth movement were spreading in Italy and Germany. To illustrate this period, I would like to quote Leo Lagrange:

Our simple and humanistic goal is to permit the whole French youth to find, in sport practice, cheerfulness and health, our goal is also to build a leisure organisation where workers can find the relaxation and the recompense to their hard labour. ... Sportive leisure, tourist leisure, cultural leisure have to be associated and completed by the joys of stadiums, the joys of walking, of camping, of travels, of spectacles and feasts. We wish that the worker, the peasant, the unemployed will find in leisure, the cheerfulness of living and the sense of dignity. To build this immense project, to animate it with the powerful energy of popular life, I rely upon the active collaboration of all the existing organisations and especially of the working class organisations. Moreover, I rely on youth itself to create the tools of its strength, health and joy.<sup>34</sup>

## **The 1960s: professionalisation and the decline in youth movements**

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to the 1960s, because of the fundamental role this period played in the constitution of youth work and youth policies. This was a strange era in various ways.

It was a period of economic growth, when public action was greatly extended following the idea that modernity and planning would permit the eradication of poverty and all forms of maladaptation. Consequently, there was a boom in urbanisation along with expansion in social policy and the professionalisation of social workers of all kinds.

For youth, it was a period of paradoxes. Young people were seen by adults as strangers who did not easily accept mainstream norms and were potential delinquents. At the same time, surveys of them showed that this generation was extremely conservative and eager to reproduce social norms.

Youth movements and public interventions with youth seemed to experiment in a kind of honeymoon: they appeared very dynamic, proposing new principles and ideas of intervention; they worked under the principles of partnership and proposed an attempt at transversal public policy; the first attempts to professionalise youth workers were made. But the honeymoon was short: with the events of May 1968 and their consequences, youth movements were rejected by the state and began to decline.

## **Young people: a menace to social peace, a generation in struggle**

During the 1960s, there are two, successive figures of youth: at the beginning of the decade, the delinquents, the “black jackets” that haunted the mass media and traumatised public opinion; at the end of the decade, the students involved in a struggle for which part of the adult population showed some sympathy. When one examines the influence of these figures on youth policies and youth work, the situation appears a bit contradictory. Whereas the black jackets were in reality few in number, they were made much of by the press and transformed

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34. Léo Lagrange, quoted by Jean-Louis Chappat, *Les chemins de l'espoir, ou combats de Léo Lagrange*, Liévin: Editions Fédération Léo Lagrange, 1983, p. 173.

into a kind of allegory of the period, which contributed to deep changes in youth care. On the other hand, the thousands of students involved in the May 1968 events caused large changes in society but nothing very specific in the field of youth care.

The “black jackets” was the name given by the mass media from 1959 to the mid-1960s to designate youth delinquency organised in gangs. Several violent events led to the emergence of this new figure, which was largely created by the press: originally it described a handful of young people who despoiled public spaces during the summer of 1959; by extension, it became a generic term for organised youth delinquency. Few of them really wore black jackets ... but that was not the point. They were seen as “rebels without causes” and used as a metaphor to explain the social crisis: an educational crisis and a political one. If the black jackets existed, it was because their parents were permissive, equating tolerance and weakness. It was also because our country was experiencing fratricide through the Algerian war; these young people were at war against themselves, just as French society was at war against itself. In answer to this phenomenon, the state proposed a rather plain solution: youth work.

The students’ movement of 1968 appeared as a radically different phenomenon. First of all, it was real and significant, and it had its own political cause. This movement was not just a metaphor of social crisis, but a social crisis itself. The students who gathered in this movement blocked the country for several weeks, they organised strikes and demonstrations, they claimed more freedom, more tolerance, more of a place in society. They were more or less supported by working-class trade unions and gave birth to several leftist organisations. They constituted a clear rejection of the 5th Republic and General de Gaulle’s government. In the face of this, the public answer was also different: the state did not offer youth care; the problem was too big for this kind of solution. French society was transformed permanently by these events, but not the youth sector, apart from the fact that youth movements that mainly supported students lost the state’s trust.

## **Youth movements and public bodies**

For the French youth researcher, the 1960s appear as an extremely interesting and rich period: at national and local levels, many actions and initiatives were put into practice, new movements emerged and partnerships were built between public bodies and youth organisations. The new urbanisation process represented an opportunity to think about new methods, principles and places of youth care. The expansion of women’s work brought about much reconsideration of the place of children and the organisation of extra-curricular time. It was also (we will come back to this in the next section) the beginning of professionalisation. Here again we will examine separately what was going on at national and local levels (using the same comparison between Rennes and Lille).

### **Maurice Herzog**

The most interesting period, or at least the period when there was a real attempt at structuring a significant youth sector, was the period from 1958 to 1966, when Maurice Herzog was High Commissary of Youth and Sports. This man developed a real project that was both ambitious and transversal. Based on the twofold principle that youth policy had to be organised with

youth movements and also in an inter-ministerial way, he proposed partnerships with youth bodies and with related ministries like education and social affairs.

The partnership with youth bodies was close and systematic: youth actors were seen as joint producers of public action. It consisted in the creation of a High Committee on Youth that aimed at creating and co-ordinating new orientations in the field of youth policies.

The inter-ministerial approach was symbolised by the creation of the FONJEP (inter-ministerial funds for youth and popular education) which gathered 13 ministries and whose aim was to develop public actions that answered to youth needs in the framework of the planning and urbanisation process. This was underlined by Françoise Tétard:

The youth sector and in particular the popular education sector has been constituted in a reasoned and subtle articulation between associations representing various ideologies that claimed recognition and a State that needed a plural interlocutor guaranteeing pluralism. This obligated alliance has known ups and downs for fifty years but it is unquestionably constitutive of the identity of the sector. (Tétard, 1996, p. 3)

Thus, this golden age did not last: Maurice Herzog's departure in 1966 was the end of this ambitious policy addressed to youth. His successors did not benefit from the same support from youth movements, which intended to develop a policy addressed directly to young people. Under the influence of May 1968 and the changes in French society, which tended towards more individualism, youth movements and then the state itself weakened progressively during the 1970s and more dramatically during the 1980s.

### The contrasted situations of Rennes and Lille

In Rennes and Lille, some forms of partnership between the municipalities and youth bodies were also tried. Nevertheless, deep differences remained that were linked to the extent of poverty and unemployment – in Lille, in particular, where the municipality had to manage serious problems that seemed then relatively far from youth care. In Rennes, the situation was more favourable, but the trend was the same as at central level.

**Table 11.4: Local youth care in Rennes and Lille in the 1960s**

	<b>Rennes</b>	<b>Lille</b>
<b>Attitude of the municipality towards youth policy</b>	Intention to take the lead in framing local youth policy Willingness to work with the whole network of youth actors	Delegation of responsibility to youth organisations
<b>Creation and implementation of new youth organisations</b>	A multiplicity of new organisations: centres for youth and culture; the Léo Lagrange clubs, youth clubs; but the old organisations and movements remained	Old organisations remain; due to tensions and ideological battles, it is difficult to implement the new forms
<b>Quality of the youth network</b>	A very organised youth network, based on consensus and stability of a few local actors	A close network characterised by its many tensions
<b>Spaces of formulation of the local youth policy</b>	Organisation of a local network of youth actors (the CLOJEP) and a counter-proposal by the municipality (the OSCR), 1961-2006	Organisation of a Youth Municipal Agency, which lasted only six years (1965-71)
<b>Fields of action addressed to young people</b>	Arrangements in the socio-cultural field, implementation of structures in new areas	Struggle against poverty

*Source:* Loncle, 2003, pp. 249 and following.

## The emergence of youth workers as a profession

During the 1960s, in answer to the needs that emerged from the urbanisation process and in the belief that public intervention could resolve any kind of poverty or social maladjustment, a wave of professionalisation tended to affect all social sectors. In the field of youth care, two types of profession emerged.

The more organised one was the profession of special needs workers: it was formalised in 1966, but was the result of a process of negotiation between the state and voluntary associations. This process began in the Second World War, when the needs of youth delinquency and youth disability appeared in their full extent: at the beginning of the conflict, under-age prisoners and disabled children were mixed with adults in prisons and institutions in terrible conditions. As a consequence, some individuals – most coming from the Scouting movements – got organised and alerted judges to the need to find specific answers to the situation of these under-age persons. Over the next two decades, training schools were created for “special needs workers”, which led to the progressive definition and organisation of this profession.

The second profession, far less organised, though their roots were closely related, was that of sociocultural activities’ co-ordinators. The 1960s were the decade when consideration of the definition of this profession was most active, at least at central level. It came from the partnership that we mentioned and in particular from the FONJEP. Many training courses and schools emerged during this period that aimed at regulating access to the profession. The first diploma, created in 1964, was called the DECEP (national diploma of popular education counsellor). Since then, many qualifications have followed the DECEP until the DEFA (national diploma for the function of animator) that is currently in reformulation.

Nevertheless, the definition of this profession remained confusing. As an illustration, one can quote Joffre Dumazedier in 1971:

one can designate by animation any action, in or on a group, a community or a milieu, that aims at developing communication and at structuring social life, based on semi-directive methods; it is a method of integration and of participation. The animation role can be defined as an adaptation to the new forms of social life with the twofold and complementary aspect of remedy against maladaptations and of support to individual and collective development. (J. Dumazedier, quoted by Loncle, 2003, p. 198)

If it seems rather difficult to establish a clearly defined profession of co-ordinator, nonetheless national public bodies organised progressively their answers to youth needs through the collective facilities that appeared in almost all new urban areas. There was a strong belief in the capacity of public intervention to regulate youth behaviours through these facilities and their professionals. Consequently, new public youth organisations tended to increase dramatically as well as the professionals who were allocated to their management.

**Table 11.5: The belief in the state’s capacity to organise young people**

	Organised youth	Unorganised but “organisable” youth	Unorganised and “unorganisable” youth
<i>Types of youth</i>	Young people engaged in youth movements	Young people with no particular problem but with no specific activities	Youth delinquents, black jackets, youth gangs
<i>Types of organisation</i>	Youth movements	Youth and culture houses, youth clubs, Leo	Prevention clubs

<i>or structure</i>		Lagrange clubs
<i>Types of</i>	Youth leaders	Sociocultural activities' Special needs workers
<i>professional</i>	(voluntary sector)	co-ordinators

*Source:* Tétard, 1986, quoted by Loncle, 2003, p. 188.

The new public organisations were principally the Youth and Culture houses, the Léo Lagrange clubs and youth clubs. The Youth and Culture houses were very symbolic of this period: they received a significant push in 1959 because of the black jackets. The 40 Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture (MJC) with professional staff in 1959 became 517 in 1965. They were set up mainly in cities with more than 10 000 inhabitants.

To summarise this period, we can quote André Philip (who founded the MJC at the end of the Second World War) when he explained his vision of the relationship between the associations and the state in 1961:

We tend toward a contractually organised society, freely organised by its associations that engage with the State administration in the necessary dialogue on all issues; this approach permits the accomplishment of a work in which everyone participate and for which an agreement is concluded and signed. In this agreement, one can find the responsibilities of each group of participants but also trust that the tasks that have been distributed will be realised. It is this approach that is luckily becoming central in our country today and which has inspired our action in favour of popular education for fifteen years. (André Philip, 1961, quoted by Laurent Besse, 2008, p. 61).

## **Youth work in contemporary French society**

This optimistic viewpoint is no longer dominant today: youth integration and participation both appear to be problematic, if not a failure. Youth unemployment remains high, and rates of youth delinquency and risk behaviours appear to be increasing or at least to represent public problems. However, one has to be cautious in asserting these rates have risen: such statistics are rather recent, so it is very difficult to assess any actual increase. On the other hand, what is certain is that adults no longer accept these “deviant” behaviours. Regarding youth turnout at elections, one has to recognise high abstention rates and a general feeling of distrust of politicians. On all these matters, we must underline the emergence and extension of the youth age, and of the period of youth integration. Consequently, the “youth question” appears to be still developing, as are public bodies’ expectations of youth and youth workers.

## **Recent changes in the “youth question”**

Care for young people in France appears today extremely complex to describe. It seems to be strongly affected by a twofold paradox. On the one hand, youth represents one of the major concerns of public authorities at all levels of the decision-making process and in many fields of public action (security, health, employment, housing and transport among them). In this respect, youth gives rise to many passionate discourses and burning ideological stands.

We can see examples of such strongly-felt opinions about youth in the public debate that took place at the time of the presidential elections and when the Law of Combating Delinquency (5 March 2007) was under consideration. In the presidential election campaign, young people were a subject of interest to every candidate: each of them explained his/her concern about the future of youth, youth delinquency and violence. To understand the premises on which the Law of 5 March 2007 was based, the Bill preamble is very enlightening:

Particularly turned on minors, this policy [of combating delinquency] is based on a central pillar: education. One ought to teach children, from their youngest age, why some rules are necessary to live in society and why it is imperative to respect them. ... The identification and the appropriation of these limits represent an indispensable pedagogy to build oneself and to learn about life. This process supposes that all the actors in children's world are gathered together: from the education field, medical and paramedical fields, associative and judicial fields. This educative action will make it possible to explain the necessity of the sanction in order that it is accepted and in order to avoid reiterative behaviours. The protection of the more vulnerable, in particular minors, women, disabled and elderly people, is the direct corollary of this policy.

The preamble presupposes a threefold shortcut in its thinking: it is young people who are mainly responsible for delinquency in our country; among them, migrant young people are particularly involved – those who do not know the rules are migrant young people; and young people are keen to attack old ladies. The public debate is obviously hot and is kept alive by politicians, researchers and various experts (including youth workers, but also psychiatrists, judges and others).

Youth is generally credited with three dominant images. The first is dangerous youth: it is currently dominant, which explains the increase in repressive policies addressed to young people – and in particular to young people with an immigrant background. This image is promoted by rightist parties and reactionary movements, but it tends to affect the whole range of political parties. The second image is that of youth as a vulnerable part of the population. This figure is also important today because it justifies the development of most social and health policies, which suppose that young people need to be particularly protected and have to benefit from specific arrangements. The third figure is youth as a resource. In this concept, youth is considered for its potential dynamism and social renewal. This figure is traditionally defended by leftist parties; it is nowadays used by local authorities to justify their interventions aimed at young people.

On the other hand, youth policies occur to be more and more fragmented. This remark is true if one considers not just the fields covered by policies addressed to young people, but also the levels of decision-making and implementation. Youth policies have deeply changed, from a socio-cultural and social concept set in the framework of the economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s to a will to struggle against poverty and multiple forms of exclusion in a context of economic decline from the beginning of the 1980s. As for the levels of decision-making, the state has operated a strong withdrawal in two steps (in 1982-83 and in 2004 with the laws of decentralisation). As far as young people are concerned, the state's competency today covers only the education system, justice and the police (for this latter, to some extent only). Since 2004, local authorities at various levels (regions, *départements* and municipalities) are supposed to care for their young people in the other fields of public action (access to work, housing, social affairs, struggle against discriminations and so on). Health affairs are shared by the state and local authorities.

This leads to an extremely complex system in which youth workers and young people themselves are confronted by a general reduction of public budgets and by public authorities which, for the most part, avoid (as much as they can) getting financially involved.

## Local authorities and expectations of youth work

At the beginning of the 1980s, a turning point was marked in youth care. It had a threefold aspect: the beginning of the withdrawal of the state from many social affairs; the fostering of integrated and territorially-based public action; and a more systematic perception of young people as either victims of the economic crisis or potential delinquents. Because of these concomitant changes, youth policies had a new framework: they were more and more locally implemented, with a willingness to take into account local specificities. They were also less socio-cultural in orientation and more turned towards social preoccupations, in particular towards access to the labour market. From this period, most political concern concentrated on the unemployment rate of young people.

Since the year 2000 and the last decentralisation wave, these trends have been reinforced. The state went on transferring social competencies to local authorities. In particular, responsibility for all apprenticeships and parts of the *missions locales* (local institutions in charge of access to work) was given to regions; the so-called *fonds d'aide aux jeunes* (an allowance meant to support young people in emergency) and social housing funds went to the *départements*; while the municipalities remain responsible for social integration and social action in favour of young people. The local authorities for their part have developed new focuses towards young people. Central among these are the questions of unemployment, civic participation, health and repression. Again, the limitation of this trend is that these initiatives are partly discretionary and not always well conceived or properly integrated at local level. They have introduced a greater risk of territorial inequality (a “postcode lottery”): young people in one place may not benefit from the same care as those in another place.

As an example, our recent study on decentralisation of the *fonds d'aide aux jeunes* (FAJ, a social allowance for the most excluded young people) in six French *départements* highlights strong differences in access to this allowance. This is true both for the funds dedicated to the allowance and for the criteria used to determine whether young people qualify for it or not. Table 11.6 clearly establishes that the amount of the budget is not correlated to the proportion of young people in the local population.

**Table 11.6: Local inequalities in access to social provision: the *fonds d'aide aux jeunes***

	Ranked by number of inhabitants	Ranked by the age index (from youngest to oldest)	Ranked by the budget dedicated to the FAJ
<i>Département F</i>	1	1	1
<i>Département D</i>	2	2	2
<i>Département C</i>	3	4	6
<i>Département E</i>	4	6	4
<i>Département A</i>	5	3	3
<i>Département B</i>	6	5	5

Source: Loncle and al., 2008, p. 233

As shown in the second and third columns, the amount of money dedicated to the FAJ is not automatic and does not depend only on the number of young people. It is more the result of the political will of the President of the *Département*, who is a locally elected person. For instance, in *Département C*, where young people are not considered as a priority, we can see a rather low budget: it is the third *département* by number of inhabitants, but only the sixth for the budget allocated to the FAJ. In contrast, in *Département A*, which is fifth for the number of inhabitants, the dedicated amount is the third highest. Here, young people are seen as a resource for which the local authority has to mobilise itself.



Table 11.7 is focused on modalities of access and perceptions of the FAJ. One can see that three groups of *départements* emerge from our study. Their conceptions of the allowance tend to vary considerably.

**Table 11.7: Access to and perceptions of the *fonds d'aide aux jeunes***

<i>Perceived aims in groups of départements</i>	<b>Group 1: to give means of subsistence</b>	<b>Group 2: to foster integration into work</b>	<b>Group 3: to promote general social integration</b>
<i>Already on an integration pathway</i>	Taken into account but not determinant	Determinant	Determinant
<i>Social situation</i>	Determinant	Taken into account but not determinant	Determinant
<i>Parents' income, family support</i>	Determinant	Taken into account but not determinant	Taken into account but not determinant

*Source:* Loncle and al., 2008, p. 233

As shown in Table 11.7, three rather different perceptions of the FAJ can be distinguished in the six areas. For two of them, it is seen as a means of subsistence (for housing and food, mainly); for two others, it has to be used to foster integration into work (the question of social integration is put aside); finally, for two *départements* it is considered as a way to promote young people's general social integration. When we consider the criteria that are used to allow access to the allowance, here again we can underline strong differences: in some cases, being already on an integration pathway is determinant, in other cases, not; in some cases, what is predominant is the young person's social situation or his/her relationship with his/her family.

Consequently, young people are not treated in the same way from one place to another: this is true for the money that is allocated, for the perceived purpose of the allowance and for the criteria of access. In this framework, youth workers (in particular, the jobcentres' "operations managers") who are responsible for what goes into young people's files appear in some places extremely powerless to defend their beneficiaries, even if they are fully aware that in other places they would have obtained the funds.

### **The new roles and functions of youth workers**

In this framework, youth work is changing in various ways: it is evolving for the two older professions, but also with the introduction of new professions. The changes concern the professionals' profiles: they correspond to an attempt at entering into better contact with young people. It means for co-ordinators, for instance, a more systematic recruitment of youth workers from immigrant communities (the so-called "big brothers") on the basis that they are more likely to answer to young immigrants' expectations.

The changes are also thematic. At the beginning of the 1980s, under the pressure of youth unemployment, a new profession was introduced – the "operations managers" (*chargés de mission*) of youth jobcentres. Over the last five years, because of growing concern about youth health, health organisers have also been appointed. In both cases, the aim is to overcome special needs identified as not covered in the former youth care framework.

Finally, the changes are also structural, as a result of decentralisation: the funds come increasingly from local authorities but in a rather complex way (in that, most of the time, several authorities will contribute to jobs funding but sometimes with different objectives). In this regard, the case of "health managers" is very illustrative: in Brittany, for instance, they

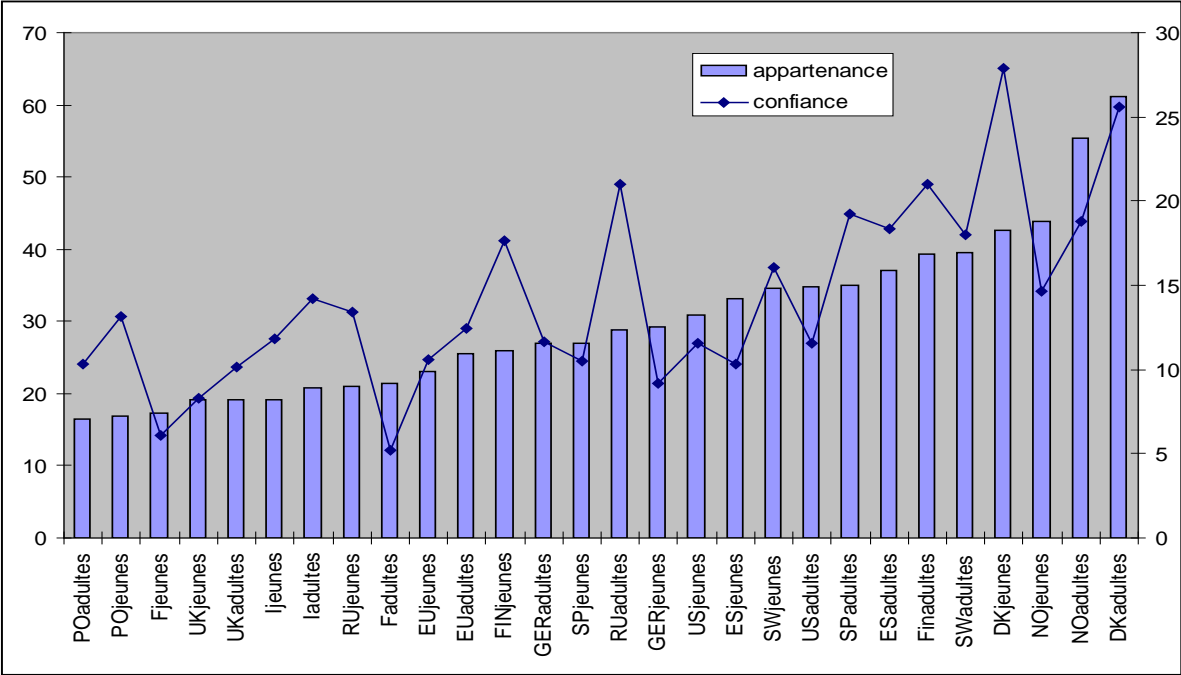
are funded by the state, health insurance and the local authority that is called the *pays*. Each of these authorities pursues its particular objective: the state aims to support health promotion; health insurance wants to foster patient education in chronic disease; the local authorities have various intentions from prevention to cure ... and consequently, health managers are placed in a very difficult situation where no one knows who has the leadership for orientating their actions and where they have to struggle with each of their funding authorities to defend their viewpoint. We could demonstrate much the same with the other three professions, as soon as they began to receive multiple funding.

This change appears very preoccupying if we have in mind the already very fragmented state of the profession. If we add the lack of unity of the profession and the multiple objectives of the funding authorities, it is easy to imagine both the complexity of action for youth workers and their incapacity to influence decisions. As long as public authorities present constructive projects, the situation is complex but not problematic, but as soon as one of them develops an expectation that does not correspond to the usual values of youth care (cost reduction or repression, for instance), youth workers may appear particularly defenceless to organise either individual or *a fortiori* collective opposition.

**The gaps between public bodies and young people**

This aspect is all the more a concern in that it echoes an important and widening gap between young people and public bodies. A recent survey of young people’s values in Europe reveals a worrying preoccupation among French young people. They appear on the one hand very pessimistic and mistrustful about society as a whole and on the other hand they do not seem to feel bound to the rest of society.

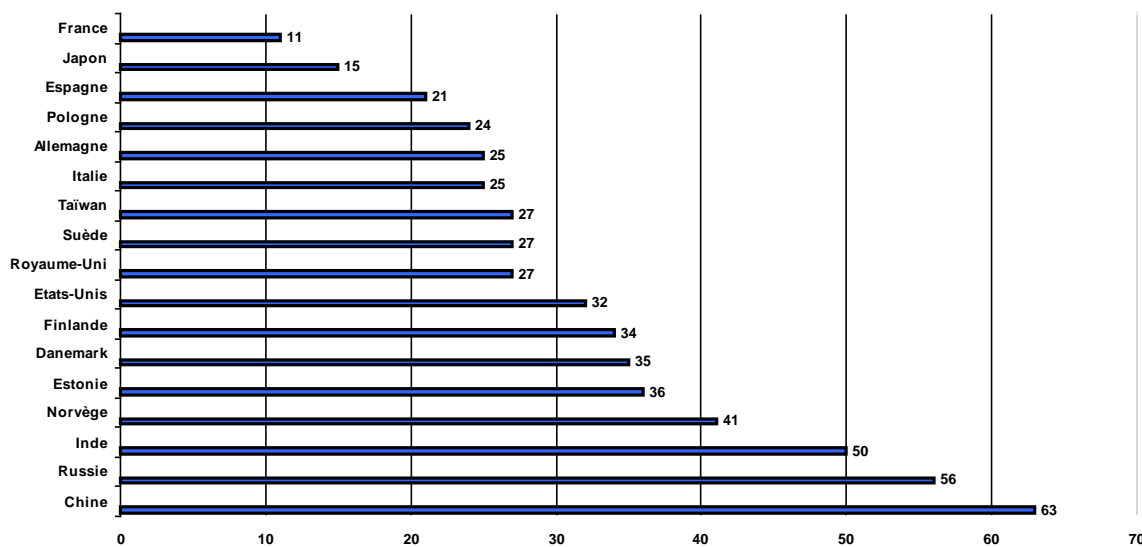
**Figure 11.1 Feelings of belonging to and trusting institutions**



Note: Left-hand scale shows percentage of people in each country/EU (bars for adults/young people (18-30year-olds) separately) who feel a sense of belonging (*appartenance*); right-hand scale shows percentage of people in each country/EU (graph point for adults/young people separately) who trust national/EU institutions (*confiance*).

Source: Galland, 2008, p. 34

**Figure 11.2: Are you ready to pay for the elderly people of your country?**



Note: Bars show the percentage of young people (18-30) who claimed to be willing to pay to support elderly people in their country.

Source: de Singly, 2008

To conclude, it appears important to emphasise that the lack of unity among youth workers represents a real weakness from several viewpoints: these professionals seem powerless, fragmented and unable to form a potential opposition; this last aspect is all the more worrying because young people are increasingly seen as a menace in contemporary French society and they are very unequally treated in some places compared to others. This statement is particularly distressing when one remembers that youth work has always stood up for young people in our country. Now it no longer seems to have the power to influence these negative perceptions.

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## **12. The history of European youth work and its relevance for youth policy today**

*Griet Verschelden, Filip Coussée, Tineke Van de Walle and Howard Williamson*

This chapter elaborates on the key questions that were raised in the contributions and discussion in the workshop on the history of youth work and its relevance to contemporary youth policies in Europe. This workshop took place in Blankenberge, Belgium, on 26-29 May 2008. The workshop was jointly organised by the Belgian Flemish Community's Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults and the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Researchers, policy-makers and youth work practitioners attended the workshop.

The workshop set out to combine the transnational perspective with a new, broader perspective on the history of youth work, by examining national youth work policies and pinpointing their inherent paradoxes. Youth work and youth work policies were situated in their broader social, cultural and historical trends. What historical concepts underpin youth work? How do they relate to the recurrent youth work paradox, that youth work tries to produce active and democratic citizens, yet it seems inaccessible to young people who are excluded from active citizenship? In other words: youth work that works is not accessible; accessible youth work does not work (Coussée, Roets and Bouverne-De Bie, 2008). Tracing the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions within and between countries can help to initiate a debate on current youth work. A better understanding of historical developments and concepts enables us to investigate youth policies today.

### **The introductory presentations**

In three introductory presentations the aims of the workshop were clearly stated.

Jan Vanhee (Flemish Community) described four aims for this workshop: asking attention for and reflecting upon the history of youth work and youth policy; identifying close links between youth work and youth policy, and socio-cultural and historical trends; building an international comparative perspective; and putting the history of youth work and youth policy on the European youth agenda.

Pierre Mairesse (European Commission) started his overview of ten years' youth policy in Europe with an assurance that the coming months would be crucial for the development of youth policies at European level, and the debates held in this workshop should inspire these discussions and the recognition of youth work at the European level.

Introducing "the function of history in the debate on the social professions in Europe", Walter Lorenz (University of Bolzano) emphasised the importance of a historical view of social problems and institutions. He argued that looking back is a starting point for reflection and provides possibilities to analyse the social professions and the concepts of childhood and youth as social constructs, by taking a critical position on prevalent values and continually

reconstructing the conditions for becoming human in a historical, cultural and social context. This creates space for questioning seemingly self-evident aspects of our practices.

This means that, while the historical approach to youth work and policy is interesting in its own right, it is even more crucial in understanding the profession (Fisher and Dybicz, 1999: 117). Youth work has a history of incomplete professionalisation. Full professionalisation often means leaving history behind and defining identity according to current criteria. The practice of youth work is then nothing more than the “outcome of a professional project” pursued by youth workers (see Harris, 2008). Lorenz outlined the engagement with history as a two-way open process: it is an interrogation of the past, which inspires us to recognise our subjectivity as a part of our youth work practice, and at the same time it is an examination of the present, which inspires an interrogation of our ideal model of youth work practice and policy by discovering the assumptions behind the so-called right model. In the process of looking back at history, we also make history, posing the interesting question of how our present youth work practice and policy will be judged in the future. Looking back at history is an essential part of the job of professional youth workers and volunteers, and thus inherently necessary in their education and training.

## **The presentations of five main issues**

The contributions gathered at these first workshop were embedded in seven different national contexts: Belgium – Flanders (Louis Vos and Filip Coussée), United Kingdom – England (Bernard Davies), Malta (Miriam Teuma), Germany (Christian Spatscheck), Poland (Marcin Sińczuch), Finland (Helena Helve) and France (Patricia Loncle). The speakers tracked aspects of the history of youth work and challenged current and future youth work practices and policies in Europe. In preparation for the workshop, the book *A century of youth work policy* (Coussée, 2008) was supplied to the participants.

The presentations and discussions in this workshop can be fitted into the frame of five main issues.

- The history of youth work: different approaches and perspectives
- The identity of youth work: is there a clear youth work identity? Or: youth work between distinct activity and contingent practice.
- The politics and policy of youth work: is it an autonomous field? Or: who defines the youth work agenda?
- The pedagogy of youth work: between individual aspirations and social expectations. Or: youth work between emancipation and control.
- The practice of youth work: between lifeworld and system/structure. Or: the increasing formalisation of the non-formal.

Firstly, we report on what the speakers had to say about these five issues. In a second part we come back to the main issues and reflect on the discussions that followed the presentations.

### **1. The history of youth work: approaches and perspectives**

Stanford made a distinction between “history-as-event”, which is about what happens in the world, and “history-as-account”, which is about the ordered arrangements of words and ideas that give a more or less coherent account of those events (Stanford, 1994, in Fisher and Dybicz, 1999: 106). Drawing on this distinction, all the contributions to this workshop gave

us a lot more than historical facts: the analysis of different national histories emphasised reflection on youth work practice and policy, from different perspectives.

### **The youth question and the social question**

Several contributors approached youth work history from “the social question”. Youth work is then described as a practice that develops within the social welfare state. Helena Helve (Finland), Christian Spatscheck (Germany) and Miriam Teuma (Malta) analysed the role of youth work in discussions and dilemmas on freedom and equality, for example. Other contributors took “the youth question” as a central focus to describe history. Youth work is then seen as an intervention that directly relates to the status of youth in society. Louis Vos (Flanders) and Marcin Sińczuch (Poland) focused on the history of student movements and described youth work as an answer to the growing consciousness of youth as a distinctive group in society. In doing that they connected the concept of emancipation to age.

Of course these perspectives cannot be seen apart from each other, and in fact both featured to some degree in all the presentations. This was very clear in the presentations of Patricia Loncle (France), Bernard Davies (UK) and Filip Coussée (Flanders). They showed how the status of youth in society shifts, referring to the emergence of and changes in the youth question. In their stories it also became clear how the youth question showed a very ambivalent approach to the concept of youth. Interventions were aimed at supporting young people to fulfil a kind of ideal youth phase. Working-class youth often stood at the centre of youth work interventions, especially in times of uncertainty. Furthermore, the emancipatory potential of youth work was dependent on the socio-economic status of youth. In more recent evolutions we can see the relationship between emancipation and youth work is now certainly coloured by ethnicity. According to Walter Lorenz, this is even an overconceptualised issue in youth work, whereas gender seems underconceptualised and class remains the hidden issue. Lorenz argues that a close examination of multiple issues of identity in youth work must be conducted in a political sense, because this reveals the underlying question whether youth work practices and policies are about the reproduction of identities or about their continual transformation based on historical reflection.

### **The magic triangle**

Youth work policy and practice were deconstructed, looking from different perspectives. Some analyses started from the perspective of youth research, handling the question how youth research helps to construct youth work practice and policy. Helena Helve pointed to the history of Finnish youth research underpinning Finnish youth work and youth policy, the three forming a “magic triangle”.

Some contributors started their analysis from the perspective of practice, elaborating on the question how youth work develops in practice and connecting history with what young people and youth workers actually do. Louis Vos took the perspective of the Catholic Flemish Student Movement. Catholicism was also central in Miriam Teuma’s story of the evolutions in Maltese youth work practice. Marcin Sińczuch made the connection between ideology and reality in Polish youth work visible.



Other analyses started from the perspective of youth policy (or even politics), considering the question how (the history of) policy and politics construct youth work practice. Bernard Davies showed how New Labour's policy in the UK is built on the use of a set of technical answers to normative questions. Filip Coussée identified two policy strategies that reinforce the youth work paradox in Flanders: the policy of "moving up" – where youth work is not considered as a means in itself, but as a platform to guide people to more mainstream youth work led by young volunteers – and the policy of "upgrading" focusing on improving the quality of professional youth work itself.

As for the relation between the youth question and the social question, it was also clear that those different perspectives are interwoven. The speakers' starting point often came from their own background and they referred to the importance of and relations between policy, research or practice in their own country. The relation between those three actors is not fixed. Some contributors switched in their story from one perspective to another and in doing so illustrated a "balance-shift" in their country. Patricia Loncle started with changes in youth work practice and gradually gave more room to analysing the influence of the state and local authorities in France. Christian Spatscheck described youth work in Germany in the characteristic social and political context of different phases in its history. For the more recent period he paid wide attention to trends and developments in modern youth work theory in Germany.

### **Continuity and discontinuity**

In general terms, the history of youth work is often described as a history of progress, marked by vital changes in social and pedagogical interventions and in provision for young people. The contributions showed continuities in the history of youth work, and across Europe. Although youth work has developed in Malta and the UK over a totally different time span, there are many similarities – in the influence of the Church and later in the professionalisation of youth work. In some countries, discontinuities are very pronounced as a result of broader social, cultural and historical facts. For instance, presenting the German perspective, Christian Spatscheck showed substantial breaks in the history of youth work by commenting on the abolition and replacement of all existing structures in different periods: around the end of the 19th century, when the first professional initiatives replaced informal meeting places, during the Weimar Republic when youth organisations dominated the youth work landscape, under the Nazi regime when all young people had to join the Hitler Youth, after the Second World War when the Americans introduced "German Youth Activities" and finally in the post-communist period when youth work in the eastern part of Germany was abruptly Westernised.

## **2. The identity of youth work: is it clear?**

In general, participants in the workshop seemed to agree that youth work suffers an identity crisis (see the introductory chapter). This crisis shows itself in different forms and seems to be nurtured by changing – but always ambivalent – attitudes towards youth work. In the search for ways to cope with this identity crisis, several contributors looked for a definition or description of youth work, aiming to explain youth work and get it recognised, and trying to distinguish between youth work and other education or social work. Although all presenters emphasised the changes in youth work, most of them pointed, more or less explicitly, to some key characteristics of youth work through the years. We could summarise them as:

- being young together,
- often (but not always) sharing an ideology or a project,
- nurturing associational life,
- providing opportunities for social contact, recreation and education.

Bernard Davies (UK) was the most explicit in defining youth work as a distinct practice in society. His definition incorporated several core features: three central values:

- voluntary attendance,
- participation,
- self-government by the members,

and one core purpose :

- the symbiosis between recreation and education.

Furthermore, Davies described youth work as a personalised practice focusing on individual needs and the building of relationships. Youth work is based on negotiation with young people in their friendship groups (see also Davies, 2005)

Bernard Davies recognised that youth work is a social construct, whose creation needs to be understood in the wider context of the political, economic and social conditions in which it developed. Nevertheless, determining a clear definition or concept of youth work seems to be important getting recognition for and proving the usefulness of youth work, because changing political priorities are causing policy-makers to narrow and even subvert youth work practice. The question was raised: would a clear definition help us to decide which features of youth work we want to defend and which we are willing to sacrifice if needed?

But the identity question in youth work is, like all identities in social professions, not neutral and distinct, but contingent and closely connected to the political nature of youth work. At this point the presentations threw a light on the social function of youth work. Several participants made the distinction between purpose and practice in youth work (the “surface” and the “reality”, as Marcin Sińczuch called them). Helena Helve (Finland) showed that there was a gap between the purpose of youth work (social education) and its practice (recreation). Evidence from other countries make clear that this gap makes youth work very vulnerable to externally imposed definitions, ones that do not always take the significance of youth work in the lives of young people as a starting point.

Marcin Sińczuch (Poland) did not describe youth work in terms of the beliefs and concepts that underpin an ideal model of youth work, but instead investigated the societal mission that was imposed on youth work. He showed that it was often reduced to a instrument of social policy. Polish youth work activities were aimed at leisure-time, but the youth work mission was ideological and appealed to nationalism.

Filip Coussée (Flanders) showed the dangers of reducing youth work to a method, which loses sight of its mandate. Such methodicalisation hides youth work’s mission by focusing on practical and technical questions, like how to increase participation in youth work. By connecting youth work practices with the real conditions in which young people live, and with broader social, cultural and historical trends, Coussée showed that youth work practices are often based on upper- or middle-class values. Under the influence of youth leaders, policy-makers and researchers, the characteristics of the student movement as described by

Louis Vos (Flanders) were very soon seen as core youth work features in Flanders. Being young together and self-education in leisure time were conceived as the basis for a youth work method aimed at smooth integration of all young people in the desired social order.

In the German case, described by Christian Spatscheck (Germany), it became very clear how methodicalisation depoliticises youth work practice, thus transforming youth work into a weapon for all targets. After the Berlin Wall came down, youth work in eastern Germany was rapidly Westernised, meaning that the methods remained the same, but the explicit ideological dimension became implicit and thus unarguable.

### **3. The politics and policy of youth work: is it autonomous?**

What is policy? Belgium has had an official youth work policy since 1945. For Germany one could choose 1911 as the starting point. One can argue that England's youth work policy began in 1939. In Malta we could see the establishment of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth Affairs, created within the Ministry of Education in 1990 and transformed in 1992 into a Ministry of Youth and Arts, as the starting point of the official youth work policy. But in a sense none of the speakers restricted youth work policy to governmental interventions.

Walter Lorenz stated that youth work is always political, and therefore the politics of youth work have to be examined critically. Youth work is an instrument, but in whose interests? Several participants mentioned the fact that youth work becomes instrumentalised, reframed within powerful economical, political and social forces. The methodicalisation mentioned above seems to restrict the youth work debate to an internal discussion and keeps the broader, underlying mission out of the picture. This makes youth work a useful weapon for all targets (Dewe and Otto, 1996; Nörber, 2005; Coussée et al., 2008). This raised the question in the workshop: how far does youth work determine its own agenda?

The UK perspective presented by Bernard Davies showed that youth work under New Labour has focused on state-defined targets, based on the idea of "joined-up" services and seamless provision: an integrated set of services governing different and diverse questions and needs of young people. In some countries in specific historical periods, the Church – as presented by Martin Sińczuch (Poland), Louis Vos (Flanders), Miriam Teuma (Malta) and Helena Helve (Finland) – or the military, as presented by Christian Spatscheck (Germany), has determined and regulated the youth work agenda. In other countries there was more space left, partly because of the principle of "subsidised liberty", for associations to work and safeguard some collective free space, as Patricia Loncle argued in the case of France.

In several countries, defining the youth work agenda from outside has led to a demand for measurable outcomes (even statistically defined targets and target areas). The pedagogical practice in most cases is left to youth workers (and young people), but the desired outcomes are clearly defined. Several speakers also mentioned the tendency to target youth work interventions on "special" groups, meaning those young people who are most in need of the valuable contribution of youth work (working-class youth, those at risk or vulnerable, ethnic minorities and so on).

#### **4. The pedagogy of youth work: individuals and social expectations**

It is not surprising that the centuries-old pedagogical paradox – emancipation and control – was discussed a lot during the workshop. Youth work supports young people’s independence and liberation from societal restrictions. At the same time it saves young people from moral decline by giving them sensible leisure-time opportunities. All presentations showed how this tension was anchored in youth work from the very beginning. Baden-Powell saw it as a form of “guidance without dictation”. With that statement he caught the youth work tension between self-organisation of young people and being organised by adults.

For sure, the history of youth work cannot be seen as a progressive story moving from control and discipline to emancipation and liberation. Youth workers are always engaged in both liberatory and disciplinary functions, but unfortunately it seems as if the specific purpose of youth work inevitably slips down to a force for social integration, and much less about how young people and youth workers themselves define their interests, concerns and priorities. Youth work is primarily deployed (and appreciated) in facilitating the smooth integration of all children and young people in the existing social order, and thus consolidates existing power relations and inequalities in society.

As a consequence, the emancipation–control balance works out differently, depending on who are the targets of the intervention and their supposed emancipatory needs. Filip Coussée (Flanders) showed that young people’s needs are defined by their distance from middle-class standards of autonomy and social integration. And so, ironically, the larger their emancipatory needs, the more controlling the interventions must be – as if we could force young people to be emancipated. Spatscheck (Germany) showed that the meaning of the concept of emancipation cannot be disconnected from the societal context. For decades, young people fought for more autonomy. Now autonomy has become a social expectation: young people are constantly encouraged to work and act as autonomous individuals. And again it is the same group of young people that is vulnerable to these societal expectations and is confronted with the more controlling side of these activation policies.

Patricia Loncle showed that in France from the 1960s on, based on a belief in the state’s capacity to organise young people through youth work, a distinction was made between different types of professionals: youth leaders in the voluntary sector working with organised youth, sociocultural activities’ co-ordinators providing leisure, cultural and sports activities for non-organised but organisable youth, and special needs educational workers working with disadvantaged young people or the so-called non-organised and unorganisable youth.

To fully understand the pedagogical paradox between emancipation and control we need to keep in mind that pedagogical interventions are not one-sided. Even if policy makers and youth workers did not have any emancipatory objectives, young people could find opportunities to develop themselves or to meet “partners in crime”. Working-class kids in France and Flanders did not attend the patronages to pray and learn, but to meet their friends. Even compulsory membership of the Hitler Youth gave young people some freedom: they could escape their mother’s wings. Davies (UK), Sińczuch (Poland) and Spatscheck (Germany) showed also that – even in periods when youth work was increasingly narrowed down to one model or one ideology – young people showed a remarkable flexibility to organise themselves in alternative forms of being young together.

## **5. The practice of youth work: between lifeworld and structure**

All the presentations showed that youth work is closely connected to the transformation of “integration problems” (seen as part of the youth question or as part of the social question) into “pedagogical questions”. This mechanism of pedagogisation constructs youth work practice as a transitional space between lifeworld and system. As Walter Lorenz explained, lifeworld plays an important role in youth work practice because it contains civil society, voluntarism shown in movements and associations, and because it opens up possibilities for cultural reproduction (including counter-culture opportunities) and for taking youth seriously as a driving force in society. Structure or system contains the concern for social order, social integration and equality. Both perspectives in this analytical distinction have pitfalls. A lifeworld perspective fosters authenticity and identity development and takes youth seriously as a force in society, but lifeworld without system can foster gang subcultures and also contains discrimination, nationalism, colonialism and racism. A system perspective is more outcome-focused and can easily lead to authoritarianism, ideological exploitation and closing down any possibilities for critical examination of living conditions. Lifeworld and system are intertwined: either without the other is unliveable.

Several speakers suggested that pedagogical concerns inevitably seem to lead to formalisation of the non-formal processes in youth work: from popular education to youth provision (Bernard Davies), from informal meeting places to public youth work (Christian Spatscheck), from youth movement to youth organisation (Louis Vos and Filip Coussée). The discussion of youth movements illustrated this evolution. Vos and Coussée made a distinction between two senses of “youth movement”. Others spoke of youth associations or youth organisations.

Bernard Davies highlighted the youth service in the UK. Situated in the analytical tension between lifeworld and system, youth associations seem to be at the centre. In the attempt to clarify this, some participants argued that associations keep boundaries open and create space to interrogate and jointly construct society. Movements are about protesting against or even abandoning society, whereas organisations – especially, as Davies showed, the actual youth service in the UK – are about integration in a predefined society. In all kinds of youth work practice, “participation” is a key word, but its meaning varies according to the position of youth work practice in the tension between lifeworld and system. If youth workers take a system perspective, then participation is restricted to taking part in predefined provision with integration in the existing society as final destination. It seems clear that youth work then is very vulnerable to the formalisation risk.

In his closing speech Rui Gomes (Council of Europe) outlined several dilemmas for youth work that touch on this formalisation risk: universal versus specific approaches, quality and recognition of non-formal education versus creativity, expert and knowledge-based versus participation and representation, and educational experience versus policy orientation. He explicitly used the word “dilemma”, thus illustrating that youth work cannot counteract formalisation by simply cutting itself loose from society. Several participants came back to that point in the discussion, arguing that if youth workers solely focus on lifeworld, then participation seems to be cut off from its direct societal significance.

## Discussion

The five issues above relate to historical, political, pedagogical and methodical thoughts on youth work and youth policy. It became very clear that these issues are interwoven. There is no way we can define youth work separately from other social interventions and professions or from its historical and social contexts, so we have to investigate how youth work functions as social actor regulating the sphere of “the social” (see Harris, 2008). Youth work as a pedagogical activity is situated within and constructed through the broader society, which is historically characterised by processes of pedagogisation. Erasing the social in these processes leads to a two-track policy that risks formalising and instrumentalising youth work, reinforcing dividing lines within youth work and between groups of young people. To go beyond this, we need to bring back a social pedagogical perspective.

### **1. A pedagogical identity: looking within youth work or looking out to society?**

Youth work actors have tried to distinguish some widely shared pedagogical features of youth work, but these definitions have mostly been restricted to and embedded in the pedagogical relationships between young people and youth workers. The Blankenberge seminar showed that it is impossible to isolate the purpose of youth work as a pedagogical action from its social context. Indeed, combining a historical perspective with crossing national borders allows us to see youth work in new ways. It draws our attention to how problems and their educational answers are constructed at a societal level.

By analysing the German Wandervögel (1901) and the English Boy Scouts (1908), Gillis (1973) shows that at first glance the German and British youth movements seem to illustrate two very different tendencies, if we look at them in a decontextualised way: “Boy Scouting, so archetypically British in its disciplined compromise between middle class utilitarianism and the sporting instincts of the aristocracy, contrasted stylistically with the Wandervögel, whose defiantly unconventional manners and appearance seemed to reflect a revival of the student radicalism that had been part of German history early in the nineteenth century” (Gillis, 1973: 249). On the other hand, by analysing these apparently so different movements in relation to the demographic, social and economic changes youth was undergoing in all parts of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century and the historical position of youth in the social and political order, Gillis shows that the stylistic differences between the Scouts and Wandervögel appear far less important in comparison to their social and psychological similarities: “Both were middle class in their values, sharing certain common attitudes toward youth’s place in the economy, the polity, and the social order. In both, the role assigned to the young was essentially that of political passivity and social dependence, the norm of adolescence that was becoming ever more widespread at the beginning of this century” (Gillis, 1973: 251).

Gillis concludes that differences in style were less the result of differences between the youth of the two countries than of the way adults handled the first appearance of mass adolescents. These two movements differ in form and style, but looking at the context in which they operate shows that the Scouts and the Wandervögel were very much alike in the way they recognised and institutionalised the dependent and passive position of a growing segment of young people (Gillis, 1973: 258).

## **2. The history of youth work: from pedagogisation to reinforcing divides**

When analysing the history of youth work, we can take current youth work definitions as a starting point and go back from there, or we can start by tracing the first social interventions that were oriented towards young people. Not surprisingly, there are differing opinions on whether it is possible to identify a moment that can be seen as the birth of youth work. Davies (UK) speaks of youth work prehistory when he mentions the youth work forms that preceded industrialisation. Indeed, for the majority of the speakers, the industrial revolution was the most obvious starting point of youth work history. This was a period of rapid social transformation leading to the social question and also largely responsible for the emergence of the youth question.

These two questions came together in the mechanism of pedagogisation, expressing the growing belief that pedagogical interventions could and should solve integration problems. Pedagogisation constructs youth work as an instrument for social policy focusing on smooth integration of young people, but at the same time youth work is also an actor of social change questioning the dominant discourses on what it means to be integrated and in what kind of society. This pivotal, ambiguous position is ubiquitous in youth work practice, but it also shows very clearly that the nature of youth work is inherently social, linking the personal to the political and vice versa. Therefore youth work is a contingent practice, and reducing youth work to an a-political (and a-historical) activity has counter-productive consequences:

- a two-track policy,
- which ends in the formalisation and instrumentalisation of youth work,
- and reinforces dividing lines within youth work and between different young people.

### **A two-track policy**

Youth work is rooted in very different practices, ranging from rather disciplined organisations protecting young people from moral decline and offering training programmes for better citizens to more emancipatory initiatives fostering participation by supporting young people's own efforts and movements. Several speakers showed that youth work should not take the shape of a formal organisation, but nor should it be a wild movement.

In most countries we can identify a two-track policy. Because youth work as a pedagogical action has been dissociated from the meanings of this action for societal relations, the only question remaining is how to make youth work a most effective means to an end, thereby subdividing the youth work field into different methods matching the supposed needs of the target groups identified. So, on the one hand are the youth organisations that have gradually emancipated themselves from their tight connections to adult organisations, schools or churches, but which in the meantime in their growing autonomous space seem to have lost their concern with larger social questions and their ability to influence the bigger social picture. On the other hand are the youth work initiatives (often professionalised), created to organise the unorganised young people, increasing the participation of young people in youth work but at the same time marginalising these young people by labelling them "irregular", separating them from their social context and reinforcing social dividing lines.

## **The formalisation and instrumentalisation of youth work**

Coussée (Flanders) linked the differentiated approach, which leads to a two-track youth work policy, explicitly to the risk of formalisation of youth work. He stated that youth work and youth work policy are driven by a belief in the superior value of non-formal learning. If the informal or non-formal climate in which young people socialise, however, does not reveal itself as a “positive, stimulating” environment, formalisation seems to be the only option left.

Even if youth work “goes beyond left or right”, it has a huge political content. This was stressed by Lorenz and illustrated by the comparison between the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) and the English Youth Service nowadays. Spatscheck (Germany) showed that this problem begins with the external defining of youth work goals. He gave the example of the FDJ, which was regarded as a key instrument for the realisation of the societal GDR-project. Youth was regarded as the future, and therefore youth work had to mould them into ideal socialist personalities that only would engage in sensible and useful activities. The main objective of youth work in the GDR could be regarded as the education and formation of such young personalities who would follow and embody the government ideology; after it became clear that not all young people were ready to become such socialist personalities, state controls were gradually increased.

That example stems from a communist state organisation, but it shows a lot of parallels with the current UK story told by Davies. The societal project is less clearly articulated, but we see the same mechanisms. If youth workers manage to reach those young people who do not meet the ideal of the autonomous “entrepreneurial self”, it seems as if activities of control and formalisation gradually take over: individualised assessment, one-to-one responses and even compulsory attendance are no longer unthinkable in the UK youth service.

## **Reinforcing divides within youth work and between young people**

Remarkably, youth work seems to be captured for purposes from social work and social policy, but at the same time it seems to be excluded (and excludes itself) from this discussion by becoming purely a social administrator for social policy instead of a social (change) agent. The question was posed: how can youth work act and interact in society if its purposes and resources are disconnected from each other? Indeed, this development seems to leave out all pedagogical concerns in favour of a more formalised, technical needs-led approach. Pedagogical support for youth moves away from structural concerns for all young people to interventions for those young people with major needs (seen as individual needs or wants, not as collective needs).

This formalisation risk does not threaten all youth work initiatives to the same degree. The participants in the workshop emphasised that all young people are different and therefore are subject to a differentiated youth work approach. The inherent risk here is twofold:

- First, the differentiated approach could reinforce dividing lines between young people and thus could increase the differences between young people – or even lead to reciprocal alienation.
- Second, the differentiated approach does not self-evidently take the needs of young people as its starting point, but inevitably seems to operate primarily in the realm of societal expectations. Young people who are in line with these expectations and develop in a successful, “normal” way can enjoy the emancipatory side of the pedagogical



paradox. Young people who do not behave in a constructive way are vulnerable to a more controlling approach. This leads to an unfruitful distinction between youth work that works with young people and youth work that works on young people.

As a consequence we can observe in most countries a widening gap between voluntary youth work and professional youth work provision, going along with the split between general and categorical youth work, universal and targeted youth work, needs-led and budget-led youth work, regular and special youth work, and so on. Professional youth work then aims at working-class people, low-skilled youth, young people from ethnic minorities and other young people that it implicitly categorises as “in danger” or “dangerous”.

### **3. Beyond formalisation and instrumentalisation: non-formal learning, cultural action and social pedagogy**

The fact that the identity of youth work is so hard to define tempts many practitioners, researchers and policymakers to focus on the methodical identity of youth work. This leads inevitably to questions of accountability and efficiency. Already in 1964 the German social theorist Hermann Giesecke drew our attention to that phenomenon, which he called *Praktizismus*. It all pretty much comes down to the same problem: the lack of a youth work theory that connects research, practice and policy and also goes beyond sectoral dividing lines, but at the same time prevents the disappearance of youth work as a distinct practice.

The contribution of youth work seems to include individual and social development: youth work provides both individual and collective outcomes. Most of the time, youth work is operating inside (not outside) society: it contributes to the social education of young people, to the social and cultural development of young people. Davies (1979) argued in a landmark pamphlet *In whose interest?* (available in the archives of the Encyclopaedia of Non-formal Education, [www.infed.org](http://www.infed.org)) that social education must be rooted in the social, economic and political context in which it operates.

In most countries we see history re-emphasising a holistic look at the individual development of young people, helping individuals to find their own way in society or even saving them from all kinds of social problems and deviations. Youth work certainly helps individuals and contributes to their social mobility, but the question remains: is society better off? The social is at the very most a derivation of the individual: the holistic look slips down to an instrument and serves the overall aim of smooth integration of individuals into (a desired) society. Youth work seems more about social integration than it is about societal change (Smith and Whyte, 2008): it is set up to stabilise power relations and the existing social order, not to destabilise or change them. Youth work provides only restricted emancipation for young people, with no collective action to change culture and structure, or redistribute power and control.

Is it possible for youth work to burst out of the functionalistic paradigm? Turning its back to societal concerns makes no sense because it cuts off young people from society. It seems better to accept that youth work is always an instrument in a specific problem definition and to elaborate further on which problem definition youth work can and should engage in. The reflections of German social pedagogues (see Giesecke, 1970; Böhnisch and Münchmeier, 1987; Thole, 2000; Cloos et al., 2007; Lindner, 2008) could inspire us to turn a critical eye on these issues, by defining youth work as social work in the broad sense of the word, as work “enacting the social” (Law and Urry, 2004). Social pedagogical thinking urges us to ask the

following questions in relation to the history of youth work and youth policy. What kind of problem definitions underpin youth work? Who defines the problem with regard to whom? Which reality does it construct and does this meet the diversity of conditions in which young people grow up?

Social pedagogy seems to be a fruitful perspective for the debate on the history of youth work and youth policy because it discusses the social, political and cultural project that underpins these developments and entails a critical reflection on the role of pedagogical institutions in society (Coussée et al., 2008; Hämäläinen, 2003; Mollenhauer, 1985), seeing “cultural action” (Freire, 1972, 1995) as questioning and changing dehumanising processes by unveiling realities and taking a critical position in realising the human in a social context. In this perspective, youth work itself – not the (relationships between) young people and youth workers – becomes the focus of analysis. This opens up possibilities of bursting out of the prevailing youth work definitions by taking youth work out of the institutions and by reframing pedagogical (and broader social work) interventions in terms of pivots in the life worlds/space of young people, supporting youth in action and gaining biographical, institutional and political competences. This is what Christian Spatscheck referred to as a social spatial approach to youth work (see Böhnisch und Münchmeier, 1990).

In that way, reflection on youth work history can also contribute to a practice-based theory for youth work, instead of an abstract theory cut loose from its historical and societal context. This is important in providing clues to how we should act in practice and in counteracting formalisation and instrumentalisation, without youth work turning its back on society.

## **Conclusions: an agenda for Blankenberge II**

In this first workshop the speakers recognised the importance of youth work’s prehistory and aspects of working with youth outside youth work, but this was done in very varying ways, which makes comparison all the more difficult. Youth work is a contingent practice. The quest for more comparability seems paradoxical, but it must be possible to have some broad lines to guide the discussion.

### **Youth work prehistory, youth work identity and non-formal learning**

The discussion on interpreting these concepts touched on a distinction between so-called real and original youth work (youth work with volunteers) and professionalised youth work (targeting and separating vulnerable youth into distinct youth work initiatives).

For sure, in most countries the industrial revolution and the related social question, the construction of adolescence, the introduction of compulsory education, the prohibition of child labour and the role of youth research and youth policy in creating the youth question have all influenced the social construction of youth work. The question is whether we should focus on the then-installed youth work definition and the internal evolutions and revisions of that definition, or whether we should also look at prehistoric aspects of working with youth to inspire and enrich the discussion? What did we lose or throw away with the pedagogisation of the lives of the young? Do we pay attention to other aspects of “being young together” or “working with youth” once we have installed a fixed youth work definition?

These queries refer to the question of whether youth work should be seen as a specific profession and/or method, or rather as a discipline. In other words, is it possible to organise youth work in sport, cultural centres, schools, detention centres, factories and so on? This discussion connects of course to the relation between youth work and non-formal learning/education, but also to the connections between care and education. It may be important to take this question into account in the next history workshop.

### **Policy-making and the role of the state**

(Youth and youth work) policy-making is a complex and layered area, with local, regional, national and European levels (and differences between countries) and a variety of actors (government, public servants, politicians, youth workers and young people). Policy-making happens in different ways: it may be based on a blueprint of society inspired by technical expertise in constructing a solution for a social problem, or it may start from an open and reflective process taking normative questions into account.

Can we distinguish historical shifts in the role of the state in relation to the social question and the youth question: from social state to enabling state or distancing state? What about centralisation and decentralisation? Can we situate the history of youth work in the context of the social and political struggle for equality, inside and outside the state? Do we need to bring the state back in, rooting youth work more in and against the state?

### **The emancipation of youth work as a professional project?**

Some questions in the discussion referred to the emancipation of youth work as a professional project. How are youth workers qualified and trained? Can we distinguish a fragmentation of the profession, and is this threatening youth work identity or is it an opportunity to create a distinct practice? Does professionalisation contribute to the reinforcement of youth work as an actor of social change addressing all forms of inequality or will further professionalisation inevitably lead us to a role in defence of the status quo in society?

### **Espousing, researching, enacting and experiencing youth work**

In the discussion, a gap was mentioned between espousing youth work at policy level and enacting youth work by practitioners. The very important role of youth workers themselves seems underexposed in youth work history. There is also a gap between enacting youth work and the experience of youth work by young people. The significance of youth work for young people is often very different from the intention of youth workers and policy makers. The perspective of young people themselves and youth work practitioners could be reinforced in the next workshop. This leads us also to the role of youth work research. What has been the role for youth work research between policy and practice? Feeding evidence-based policy or delivering policy-based evidence?

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## Appendix

### Youth movements in Flanders: a short history

*Lieve Gevers and Louis Vos*

The past and present relevance of the youth movement in Flanders is probably unequalled anywhere in the world, as is underscored by the huge numbers of members. As further evidence we can point to the very many leading religious, political and social figures who regard their time in the youth movement as a major formative experience for their later social commitment. In many countries the youth movement barely managed to survive the swinging 1960s, but it held its own in Flanders. It has succeeded in catering for the needs of one generation after another, a remarkable achievement that certainly deserves special attention.

#### The discovery of an adolescent land

Young people have not always enjoyed the same status in society; it is not even certain that “youth” has always existed, at least not in the sense people tend to assign to the concept spontaneously: a defined group of young people in a recognisable stage of life between childhood and adulthood. In earlier times most young people would be required to enter the world of production, but there has always been also a privileged group of youngsters from the higher social strata who were able to enjoy their own adolescent land. The studies and training they undertook allowed them time to prepare for later activities without being compelled to work for their living.

This state of affairs continued throughout the Middle Ages and early modern times, up until the late 18th century, when a new perception of children and young people developed as a result of the Enlightenment and then the Romantic Movement. Jean-Jacques Rousseau made a significant contribution to the tendency to idealise youthful naturalness and the belief that young people had to be allowed to be young.

This change in mentality took place against the background of a society undergoing complete transformation. People in western Europe were caught up in a huge wave of modernisation. The predominantly rural culture was gradually but irrevocably transformed into an urban and industrial one. The development of the modern state resulted in a growing need for an administrative and intellectual elite, which in turn called for the extension of secondary education. Regarding itself as the driving force in the struggle for political and national emancipation, the middle class sought the development of its own culture. The education of the young was a key instrument towards this end. The secondary education system was a pre-eminent instrument in the 19th century for training men keen on occupying responsible positions in society.

As education gradually became more widespread, so the human life cycle became clearly segmented, on the basis of a scientific definition of the concept “adolescence” that gradually became incorporated from the late 18th century onwards. According to this concept, the

period between childhood and adulthood was a kind of intermediary stage when the fundamental principles of the developing personality have to be established in the light of broad-based training. Consequently, an opportunity emerged for a separate adolescent land that gradually became to be regarded as a necessity. This continued to take shape during the 19th century but was still confined to a small group of privileged young people from the higher and middle classes, who enjoyed the opportunity to take up studies. Not before the 1920s and 1930s did a separate adolescent land become a reality for very many people, and for nearly everybody after 1945.

Secondary education in Flanders, too, was still the reserve of a tiny elite in the 19th century. Young people from the urban working class were often even deprived of any basic education because they had to join the world of work at a tender age. The first Catholic youth groups were created about 1850 because of middle-class citizens' concern for the moral, religious and intellectual neglect of these young working-class people. Parochial child and adolescent welfare drew its inspiration from the French Vincentians. Catholic youth groups would gather together on Sundays to receive instruction through games and recreation, but also through study and prayer. Catholic youth group activities flourished in particular in the Mechelen archbishopric. Umbrella federations were created in Antwerp and Brussels in roughly 1890, and subsequently in other dioceses but attempts before 1914 to set up a nationwide umbrella organisation were doomed to failure, while the Catholic youth groups' endeavours were under threat. The focus on serious activities was in danger of being sidetracked by ancillary activities, such as sports, theatre, singing or brass bands, that began springing up after 1880.

Apart from offering protective care for disadvantaged working-class youths, adults also undertook to organise youth work for more developed groups. These initiatives were often motivated by a new perception of youth as a social group with its own social contribution and an outstanding purveyor of national, social and religious values. Adults brought these young people together for the purpose of attaining religious or political objectives. An example of this was the Youth League set up in 1847 in Roeselare, a provincial town in West Flanders, with the purpose of mobilising young people against growing liberal influences. The League developed a wide range of cultural activities, such as theatre, singing and literature, and thus became a centre of Flemish Catholic affinities in West Flanders. This label also included the Catholic, Liberal and Socialist Young Guards that emerged in Belgium in the last 25 years of the 19th century, operating as the youth sections of the various parties.

## **The emergence of the youth movement**

A new kind of organised youth activities achieved a great deal of success in the last quarter of the 19th century: the youth movement. This took the form of a comparatively autonomous association of young people meeting in groups locally, on the basis of voluntary membership and active involvement in developing their own group activities. The first examples of these were the "free youth movements", meaning they were not bound to any authorities or adult organisations, although they did share the pattern of values of the community from which they hailed. The aim was the development and education of their own members through recreational and cultural activities and by propagating a code of conduct focused on specific values in life. From the very outset, the youth movements were aware of forming part of a new generation with a specific task in developing a better society. The young people

themselves were in charge, but adults were involved as mentors, kept an eye on things and stepped in to lend support to the leadership where necessary.

The history of the youth movement in Flanders is based on three pillars: the Catholic Flemish Student Movement, the German *Wandervogel* movement and the English Scouts association. Emerging from the *Blauwvoeterie*, named after the blue-footed gull whose flight announced a coming storm, the Catholic Flemish Student Movement was the oldest form of youth movement. It began about 1875 with the student Albrecht Rodenbach as its leading figure. A first over-arching association was formed in 1877, a second in 1890 and a final one in 1903. They comprised local associations of pupils, seminarians and students who mainly met during school holidays and considered themselves as part of the Catholic Flemish movement. They were run by an elite group of students and seminarians, but generally on the basis of a bottom-up policy.

One structural feature was the youth movement's alliance with the Flemish student movement at the University of Leuven. It had therefore a dual character: that of a traditional youth movement, focusing on its group life and members, and that of a university student movement with an emphasis on more direct political action, which was part of a wider emancipation movement in the 19th century, with the German *Burschenschaften* (a special type of student fraternity) being a shining example.

Coming into being towards the end of the 19th century, the German *Wandervogel* movement considered the old *Burschenschaften* as precursors but – unlike the university movement – it withdrew from the world of adults, seeking refuge in creating its own youth kingdom. The members sought to shape a youth culture marked by a natural lifestyle, an anti-authoritarian approach and a rejection of the social stratification that was such a prominent feature of German society just before the First World War. The most typical activity, as the movement's name indicates, was hiking, which was regarded as a demonstration of youth protest, so it had an ideological significance apart from its recreational and educational role.

The third pillar was the English Scouts association as developed by Baden-Powell in the early years of the 20th century. It was originally based on military and nationalist frameworks, but after its inception it was able to adapt to mainstream values and attitudes in society. To start with, the Scouts remained aloof from political, religious and cultural issues, developing a new form for everything. The movement's key innovation, the scouting method, enabled it to take root in many places. Scouting could comfortably adapt to the special national, religious or cultural characteristics of specific countries and specific periods, because it was theoretically a method, not aligned with any national structure. This was unlike the Catholic Flemish Student Movement or the *Wandervogel* movement, which were embedded in a specific national structure.

On the other hand, scouting was obviously not a completely ideologically empty concept, because it focused on good citizenship, but how exactly this should be expressed was still open to debate. In the years leading up to 1914 this could be given tangible shape via English, German or French nationalism. It was not surprising prior to 1914 for Flanders to witness various tendencies in scouting marching alongside each other: French speakers beside Dutch speakers, Catholics beside Liberals, and Flemish-minded individuals next to patriotic groups of scouts and, subsequently, girl guides. Then, during the First World War there were patriotic and anti-Belgian militant scouts; and even the Catholic Flemish Student Movement had scout sections in the 1920s.



It was mainly the Catholic Flemish Student Movement and the *Wandervogel* movement that were regarded as free movements. In the early days, the English Scouts association primarily aimed at integrating its members into society. The movement was keen to channel the sense of being young into preparation for a later period, and hence to training in good citizenship. It generally succeeded in this endeavour, making a major contribution to social stability in England. It did not need to criticise the political status quo and confined its ideology to what its patronising political, military and religious elites allowed.

Apart from the Catholic Flemish Student Movement, there were several smaller student and pupil movements of a similar type in public educational establishments. In the last year before the First World War there also started a Catholic Flemish girls' movement whose members were students and non-students alike. Both movements – the one in the public schools and the girls' movement – had a somewhat modest impact, compared with the Catholic Flemish Student Movement.

### **From a free to an integrated youth movement**

The youth movement in Flanders was in full development mode during the inter-war period. The Flemish movement continued to be the most significant mobilising factor during the 1920s. In the post-war period the pupils' movement in public secondary schools found it harder to pick up speed again. When in 1927 the Algemeen Vlaams Studentenverbond (AVS, or General Flemish Student Association) was launched as an umbrella organisation for the non-Catholic secondary schools, it covered 25 local chapters throughout the Flemish area. The association had to deal with internal divisions between the champions of a Flemish militant tendency and the supporters of the free youth movement approach. The Catholic Flemish Student Movement, organised as the Algemeen Katholiek Vlaams Studentenverbond (AKVS, or General Catholic Flemish Student Association), wielded a great deal of power during the first decade after the First World War. In 1924 it had 223 local chapters, spread throughout Flanders. It made a deep impression on Catholic Flemish pupils, students and seminarians.

Catholic youth was also organised in several hundred *patronages* – a sort of Catholic Sunday school for working-class youth, mainly aiming at morally healthy leisure activities – and a number of Scout troops. Also there were chapters of the Catholic Young Workers movement affiliated with the organisation KAJ, officially set up in 1924. In rural areas, there were also youth sections of the Catholic Belgian Farmer's League. Furthermore, there were Catholic gymnastic associations, abstinence associations and purely religious associations, such as the Eucharistische Kruistocht (Eucharistic Crusade) led by Edward Poppe, the Congregations of Mother Mary and societies for propagating and supporting missionary work.

This revival of “organisation Catholicism” has to be seen in the light of what was then – in the aftermath of the Great War – seen as the advance of secularisation. Under the influence of Pope Pius XI, the Church was built up a bulwark against secular forces: an army in battle order led by the hierarchy, where laypeople operated as *milites Christi* or warriors of Christ. To this end, the faithful – young people especially – had to be brought into line in what was officially called Catholic Action (CA). This led to changes everywhere in the adolescent landscape. In common with the rest of Europe, Flanders witnessed in the 1920s and 1930s the

disappearance of free youth movements. They were replaced by “integrated” youth organisations set up by churches and parties with a view to influencing social developments.

In Wallonia, which did not have many youth associations apart from a few *Estudiantines de Vacances* (associations for secondary school pupils in the school holidays), CA was launched in 1919 as a parochial and purely religious movement, grouping all classes in one organisation, under the direct supervision of the clergy. Student circles, Catholic youth groups and Scout groups became affiliated with these CA associations as “auxiliary works”. However, in the Flemish region Catholic youth associations were in the 1920s flourishing, even before CA was launched there. So there it was impossible to launch a completely new movement not differentiated according to class. It had to deal with the existing youth groups affiliated and adapted to the different social classes.

The debate raging around this concept – parochial unity or social context as the principle – was settled by the bishops in 1927 on the basis of a compromise. According to them, Catholic Action had to be organised according to class, while eschewing any demands for social changes and/or political aspirations. This implied that, in the future CA organisational structure in the KAJ, any trade union tendencies would be neutralised and the students’ radical Flemish nationalism would not be allowed. In 1928 the *Jeugdverbond voor Katholieke Actie* (JVKA or Youth Union for Catholic Action) was set up as an umbrella organisation for the CA movements of young people in Flanders. Associations that already existed joined the JVKA but retained their own character and activities.

What this compromise meant for working-class youth was that the KAJ and VKAJ (Women’s Young Christian Workers) began to distance themselves from the actual situation in society and in the Christian movement, and transformed gradually into movements that interpreted reality mainly in supernatural terms. In the Catholic student community, the episcopal compromise led to a conflict with the AKVS, which had adopted a Flemish nationalist stance and was reluctant to be beholden to the “Belgian” bishops. It was destined to make way for the new *Katholieke Studentenactie* (KSA or Catholic Student Action). In West Flanders and Limburg, this KSA took the form of an episcopal student movement that, in addition to Catholic Action, also considered itself to be embedded in the (non-anti-Belgian) Flemish movement. In fact, the existing Catholic Flemish student associations were converted into KSA associations. In West Flanders, the KSA was a purely religious-militant grouping under the authoritarian leadership of its chaplain Karel Dubois and Bishop Henri Lamiroy. The Flemish movement for pupils of Catholic secondary schools was there channelled into the *Jong Volksche Front* (Young People’s Front). The five provincial KSA organisations joined forces in 1943 to create the national KSA, the *Jong Vlaanderen* (Young Flanders) Federation.

Apart from the KAJ and KSA, the class-based youth organisations were the *Boerenjeugdbond* (BJB or Farmers’ Youth Union) and the *Katholieke Burgers- en Middenstandsjeugd* (KBMJ or Catholic Middle Class Youth), each with their female counterparts. These acted as the true representatives of CA. Compared to them, the parochial Catholic *patronages* felt a bit lost. The priest Jos Cleymans’ attempts in the mid-1930s to promote these *patronages* as authentic CA associations in a purely religious form failed, owing to the opposition of the class organisations. In common with the scouting and purely religious associations, the Catholic youth groups saw their activities downgraded to “auxiliary work”. Nevertheless their impact on the youth was impressive. The *patronages* boasted 23 107 members in 1937, roughly the same number as the KAJ, twice as many as the KSA and four times as many as the VVKS. Thanks in part to the efforts of A.F. Peeters, chaplain to the *patronages*, the crowning

moment of the reform process came in 1941 with the creation of Chirojeugd (XP-Youth) as a new youth movement.

Catholic Scouting continued to be regarded as “auxiliary work”. In Flanders it owed much to the firm commitment of students and pupils to the Catholic Flemish movement, with the result that in 1930 a unique Flemish synthesis was achieved with the creation of the Vlaams Verbond voor Katholieke Scouts (Flemish Union of Catholic Scouts). It was, more than the original, in tune with the real needs of the community while it emphasised its national and social emancipation. The credit adapting the originally Anglo-Saxon and ideologically neutral scouting to the Catholic and Flemish environment mainly goes to Maurits Vanhaegendoren, who before becoming Chief Scout was a member of the Leuven AKVS chapter..

The debates and controversies about the status of youth and youth organisations were not confined to the religious community. Several radical political groups emerged in the 1930s, some on the left but mostly right-wing, that sought to rally young people to one over-arching organisation within the adult structure, so as to develop their own social blueprint for winning over the masses. The extreme right-wing political parties Verdinaso, Vlaams Nationaal Verbond and Rex each created youth sections (Jong Dinaso, AVNJ, Rex-jeugd Vlaanderen). When the last members of AKVS (the General Catholic Flemish Student Association) who had resisted incorporation into the CA still refused to get involved with it, this was a final blow. The small number of AKVS members that remained decided in 1935 to change their name to AKDS (Algemeen Katholiek Diets Jeugdverband, the General Catholic Middle Dutch Student Union) and then in 1937 to Diets Jeugdverband (DJV, the Great Netherlands Youth Union), where the emphasis was on Great Netherlands and *Völkische* ideals. The Catholic orientation disappeared. The even smaller Flemish national girls’ movement evolved in the same Great-Netherlands-*Völkische* direction and adopted the name Dietsche Bond voor Vrouwen en Meisjes Ik Dien (Great Netherlands Association for Women and Girls).

New groups also sprang up on the left of the political spectrum: the social youth movement De Rode Valken (The Red Falcons) was created in 1928, followed in 1929 by Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale (AJC, Workers’ Youth Centre). The AJC became expressly Flemish, being renamed in 1937 the Socialistische Arbeidersjeugd Vlaanderen (SAV, Socialist Workers’ Youth of Flanders), but these left-wing groups appealed to only a minority of young people in Flanders.

## **The youth movement’s heyday**

Against the background of these attempts to channel youthful idealism, during the late 1930s and the Second World War a new development emerged. As a result of the strongly normative expectations by adults of young people, they acquired a new self-consciousness. “Being young” meant being in search of a distinctive “youth style”. This was discovered in existing, but previously overlooked youth movement methodologies that were originally bound up with the typical military style of the 1930s. The external elements were the first to appear: banners, uniforms, choruses, blaring clarion calls and the rhythm of rolling drums. All of these were attempts to give expression to the “new age”, but very soon other forms arrived on the scene, such as those based on outdoor activities, self-motivation and creative expression.

All of this became possible within the rediscovered small group setting, where the shared experience of being young was able to materialise. Many of these forms had been applied

earlier in the renewed Flemish Socialist youth movement, in various successful and colourful Catholic youth movements in the Netherlands, in German Catholic youth movements (whose freedom was curtailed by nationalist socialism) like Quickborn, Neudeutschland and the Katholische Jungmännerverband, and of course in the Flemish Scout movement. These forms were given renewed impetus in the late 1930s because the youth movement experience appeared to be one way out of those never-ending meetings in study circles that so often blew up into rows. The weariness with ideological debates served to highlight the potential of “the form”.

During the years of the Second World War, many local youth groups continued to operate effectively, tending more and more towards youth movement activities. However, the youth movement’s real heyday arrived after the end of the war. A rise in the number of young people who felt attracted to the mainly Catholic youth movements was a sign of this success. Membership numbers climbed among class-based youth groups (VKAJ, KAJ and KLJ) and the youth movement in the strict sense of the term (KSA/VKSJ, VVKS/M and Chirojeugd); only the first of these was theoretically a CA movement. The combined membership of the three youth movements almost tripled between 1950 and 1977 (from 79 792 to 222 904). The sharpest rise was between 1955 and 1965, when the overall membership rose by 7.3% every year on average. The growth in membership was particularly spectacular in the case of VVKS/M and Chirojeugd, and this trend continued until the late 1970s.

In 1977 – the peak year – Chirojeugd covered over half of all “Catholic youth movement members” in Flanders, boasting well over 114 000 members. However, the record level for girls’ groups was already over by then. More marked by its tradition of student associations and Catholic action, the KSA youth movement grew less quickly and even began to lose members in the second half of the 1960s. It was able to recover later on but the female branch, the VKSJ, collapsed completely, a situation that was blurred in the 1970s because the merger with the KSA meant that only the overall membership figures were published.

This was similar to the trend in membership of the class-related youth organisations, which were just as strongly marked by their CA past. Their membership figures also shot up in the aftermath of the Second World War, but this level of growth lasted for a shorter period. Membership started ebbing as early as the first half of the 1960s. The KAJ in particular, for which we have precise figures, suffered a terrible decline, losing over 20 000 members or three quarters of the total.

Interestingly enough, the Jong-Davidsfonds – set up in 1956 as the youth section of the Flemish organisation for culture extension, Davidsfonds – experienced strong growth in the 1960s, reaching the record level of 2 857 members in 1967. The Jong-Davidsfonds stood out from other youth movements thanks to its brand-new approach: no CA past, no adolescents and no inclination to become thoroughly familiar with what had in the meantime become the traditional youth movement pattern. It was also the first male–female mixed Catholic young adults’ movement. Its membership began to dwindle after 1968 when the youth association started espousing left-wing causes involving criticism of society. This resulted in a clash with the Davidsfonds leadership, which dissolved the Jong-Davidsfonds in 1973.

The 1950s and early 1960s were boom years for youth movement activities in Flanders, which were held in high esteem by both young people and educators alike. Educationalists recognised it as the “third educational environment” in addition to school and the family. As was the case before the war, it was able to count on glowing reports in the Catholic press. The

activities were constantly being fine-tuned. The pattern of camping, hiking, playground activities, games in the wood, the romantic atmosphere of the campfire and the development of unique group romanticism began to be patted into final shape. This was backed by the theoretical underpinning of a unique methodology and the promotion of leadership development, including training for chaplains or padres, tailoring activities to the various age groups, composing and improving the quality of publications, regulations for uniforms and outdoor activities. At the same time, the national and regional secretariats continued to be developed.

As for principles, the CA ideology, with the focus on personal sanctification and the religious conquest of society, continued to hold sway until the first half of the 1950s. A combination of apostolic and social concerns prompted youth movement members to join together to organise group offensives for good causes, such as aid to the Church in need (behind the Iron Curtain) or missionary work. However, this ideology gradually faded into the background, while the focal point became personality development through group activities. For many people, the Flemish orientation continued to be a self-evident reflex – albeit more emotional than in terms of calling for changes – with a few differences in emphasis according to the movement. Studies show that until 1960 the KSA was the most Flemish-minded, with the VVKS coming in second place. The Boerenjeugdbond (BJB, subsequently KLJ) focused less on Flemish training for its members but was extremely active in Flemish demonstrations such as the IJzer pilgrimage (a tribute to fallen Flemings in World War I) with flag-waving and cavalry groups and the like. The middle-class youth organisation touched a Flemish nerve in one fell swoop with its emphatic royalist attitude. Conversely, Chirojeugd made the Flemish dimension play second fiddle to the movement's religious element, in common with what the KAJ did in the case of the workers' issue.

### **Turbulent times and turning point: 1968 on**

During the late 1950s and the 1960s, the activities continued to be fine-tuned in terms of the programme, the activities on offer and development. However, there were many ideological changes. For some people this was a time for opening the Church to the world in line with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), whereas others believed major ideals were a thing of the past. The emerging folk-song scene, the *chansons*, and in its wake the creative interplay and creative expression were manifestations of a new, more relativising mentality. Society's greater affluence spawned a new youth culture, where informal meetings in youth clubs and parties had more of an appeal than a continuing commitment in a permanent group. And, within the traditional youth movements, young people were trying to find their own expression via new forms of recreation and discussion groups.

In the late 1960s, society was inevitably reflected in youth group activities. Student unrest boiled over in 1967-68. It got under way at Leuven University, where a large number of youth leaders came under the radicalising spell of the January 1968 revolt (when Flemish students protested against the dominance of the French language in their university). The revolt centred on the demands of the Flemish section of Leuven University, but soon turned into a general criticism of society as a preplay of May 1968 in France. The movement was also joined by Catholic secondary school pupils, who organised themselves into campaign committees and action groups, went out on strike (with the agreement of their teachers or otherwise) and called for the further democratisation of education. Youth movement leaders acted as key figures in this movement.

The KSA in particular appeared to recall its duties as an indirect heir to the old student movement, albeit in another age and a different ideological context. Provincial and national officials became increasingly attracted by the idea of rejecting the “youth movement” component in favour of transforming the movement into study and action groups for older members, focused on the need for a transformation of the classroom (and society as a whole) along more democratic lines. The KAJ presented itself as a radicalising movement taking a critical view of society. The 11.11.11. campaign was from 1966 a yearly national action on 11 November when from 11 a.m. onwards thousands of volunteers took to the streets in order to draw attention to the Third World and collect money to help developing countries. Until 1968 it was primarily bolstered by the Catholic youth movement, but from 1968 on many local groups carried out an anti-campaign to complain about the purely charitable nature of the initiative. A number of groups sought affiliation with the Third World Movement, spearheaded by Leuven-based left-wingers. The turn to the left of a number of movement officials also ran into opposition. In some youth movements this resulted in the compulsory dismissal of permanent members (KLJ), the dissolution of the movement (Jong-Davidsfonds) or the breaking away of certain regions (KAJ).

In the early 1970s, youth movements sought to strike a new balance, in which socially innovative values could be harmonised with youth movement methodologies. Proposals were made nationwide in favour of a more democratic style of leadership and operations, reducing the rigid programmes, offering a more voluntary range of opportunities and abandoning the military style that had characterised the youth movements for over thirty years. At local level these changes led to all kinds of crises, such as the – generally temporary – dissolution of a movement or breakaway factions that expressly continued to opt for a traditional approach and the old style of uniform. The decision by several groups to switch to gender-mixed activities encountered a certain degree of resistance, not least from parents, and led sometimes to a decline in membership. All the movements continued to lower their age limits, thereby bringing the “race to the cradle” into a new stage. The comparatively late decline in the membership figures may be attributable to various children’s movements that existed.

As for the focus on activities, one has the impression that the youth movement generally concerned itself with personal development in the 1950s, primarily social change in the 1960s and more personal and group-oriented activities in the 1970s. At the same time a more intense friction seems to have developed between the society-oriented higher tier and the personal and group-based lower tier of authority, a tension that was not really anything new. The clashes were more frequently encountered in the case of Flemish youth movements, which were more open than elsewhere to society, and keen on (helping) the drive to bring about a change. But in the 1960s and 1970s this led to diametrically opposed approaches within an organisation that was still one movement in terms of organisation. The tension subsided during the 1980s and 1990s because the society-based approach championed by the higher tier of authorities also began to ebb, whereas the personal and group-based approach was now also a key component of policymaking. The de-ideologising process continued, including secularisation, so that most Catholic youth groups nowadays retain the ideological label only as a remnant of the past, without this reflecting the actual attitudes of the members.

Completely new in the history of the Flemish youth movement is the fact that the living link with the movement’s past has almost disappeared. Instead of seeing themselves as individuals who have to complete a social task as part of an unbroken chain of successive generations, youth movement members are now aware only of their contemporaries in their own group.

This signals the end of the traditional calling to play a role in society at large. What is apparent from the continuing existence of the youth movement is that its only surviving function consists in offering a setting for being young together in a group of contemporaries, without any – or with only limited – reference to essential external values or ideals.

It is quite remarkable that youth movements in Flanders still have such wide appeal. They were able to weather the 1960s without being swept away – as happened elsewhere – or being reduced to a marginal phenomenon. They are apparently developing successful new functions, catering for the needs of young people in a different age. The trend in the Flemish adolescent landscape since the 1980s seems to suggest a new phase in the free youth movement, in common with what happened well over a century ago, but admittedly with more attention now being paid to the unique needs of young people and without them feeling called upon to become expressly involved with society at large.

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