



# EUROPEAN YOUTH STUDIES

Integrating research, policy and practice

Edited by Lynne Chisholm, Sigka Kovacheva, Maurizio Merico

Deliverable 7.1 – M.A. EYS Reader



**M.A. EYS**  
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## **PREFACE**

This Reader is one of the deliverables that have been produced in association with the development of an M.A. in European Youth Studies (M.A. EYS) by a consortium led by the University of Innsbruck, and involving 10 universities from different parts of Europe. The M.A. EYS is a fully accredited and transnational postgraduate qualification in interdisciplinary European youth studies, and thus fills a qualification gap at national and European levels. In addition it provides an anchor for the convergence and consolidation of structured dialogue between research, policy and practice, thereby contributing to the development of policy-relevant research, evidence-based policymaking and informed reflective practice. Ultimately, this Master's degree should set a quality reference point and benchmark for advancing the supply of qualified personnel in the youth field.

The M.A. EYS teaching and learning context is inherently intercultural, and its students also bring international dimensions into participating university settings. The M.A. EYS will explicitly seek to attract a balanced composition of students from throughout Europe and potentially beyond, drawn from young youth researchers, non-formal youth educators/trainers and youth workers, public administration and youth services staff. Applicants with mixed and varied educational and professional qualifications and experience are of particular interest, since this is likely to favour a critical and creative blend for intellectual, personal and professional development in the course community. The blended learning strategy of the M.A. EYS seeks to deliver a coherent curriculum and an integrated learning experience to a dispersed and multi-national student body.

This Reader is complemented by a digital library available through the virtual learning environment of the M.A. EYS at <http://dip.youthstudies.eu>.



Education and Culture DG

## Lifelong Learning Programme

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We are greatly indebted to all the Consortium members who helped us in identifying the contents of this Reader and the chapters reproduced in it, and with whom we discussed various drafts of the collection.

A special thank you goes to Filip Coussée, who developed the first concept of the Reader, as well as to our colleagues and friends – Maurice Devlin, David Jenkins and Andreas Karsten – with whom we had a fruitful and inspiring collaboration in writing the introductory chapter.

We are also most grateful to the authors and publishers for giving us the permissions to reprint the selected papers.

We wish to thank also the students and tutors with whom we shared the experience of the M.A. EYS Short Course at the beginning of 2011, interacting both virtually and face-to-face in the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

*Plovdiv, September 2011*

*Lynne Chisholm, Siyka Kovacheva, Maurizio Merico*



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# **INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**



# THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTH AND THE TRIANGLE BETWEEN YOUTH RESEARCH, YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE

*Lynne Chisholm, Siyka Kovacheva, Maurizio Merico, Maurice Devlin, David Jenkins, Andreas Karsten\**

## 1. Context and content

This Reader is intended as the first of a series of publications reflecting upon the rapidly changing world of young people in Europe and seeking to contextualise and understand those changes. It is designed to serve as a starting point of reflection for the prospective students in the M.A. European Youth Studies (M.A. EYS) as an interdisciplinary postgraduate course, as well as for youth researchers, policy makers, practitioners and all those interested in youth studies.

Its primary objective is to create the ground for the conception of European youth studies as an emerging Europe-wide integrated field of youth research, youth policy and youth work. These three vantage points, as distinctive arenas for professional thought and action, constitute the corners of what has been described as a 'triangle' that references a policy/practice/research dialogue in which the whole would be substantially greater than its parts, each area of expertise benefiting from bringing its discourse into closer collaboration with the other two.

While subsequent to this Reader further educational materials will focus on specific knowledge and areas of debate, with their associated theories and methods, this initial electronic book attempts to present the achievements of, and issues raised by, each of the three 'corners' of the triangle at the same time as improving the dialogue and the interchange between them. Our vision is that youth research, policy and practice can mutually enrich each other theoretically and practically and broaden our understanding of young people while sharpening our efforts in support of their struggle to manage uncertainty at present and negotiate successfully their life transitions into the future. In reality, however, even in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the people working in the three 'corners' of this triangle are still isolated in their thinking and acting, and there is a need for concerted efforts to do research which is applicable, practice which is reflective and policy which is responsive. This Reader is an invitation to go beyond the simple geometry into a multidimensional and diverse space of knowledge about youth in Europe.

The Reader is structured in the following way: the first three sections include papers representing the issues in and approaches to youth research, youth policy and youth work while the fourth section features papers building bridges between the previously separated fields. This introductory chapter builds upon this logic to offer a comprehensive overview of the diversity in European youth studies as an emerging specialist field of knowledge and skills.

The criteria for the selection of papers from the extensive and constantly growing literature were: high academic quality (offering critical reflection and/or innovation in content and methodology); intercultural and comparative approach (with a European perspective rather than focusing on a single country although we must note in passing that comparisons are fully possible within a country); in general recently published (although with a historical imagination in looking back and looking forward ); and available in English, the working language of the consortium. We also sought as far as possible to make a judicious balance between vantage points and authors (and in this last

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\* While this introductory chapter to the Reader is the result of collaborative work by the authors, Lynne Chisholm and Siyka Kovacheva took the lead in drafting part 1; Siyka Kovacheva and Maurizio Merico in drafting parts 2 and 3; Maurice Devlin in drafting part 4; David Jenkins in drafting part 5; and Andreas Karsten in drafting part 6.

case, between genders, national origins, disciplinary backgrounds, as well as from within and outside the consortium developing the M.A. EYS project).

The collection carries the ambition of the joint degree course to move away from canonical academic disciplines and isolated professional areas towards a new integrated field whose two main intrinsic features are intellectual and professional border-crossing and European multi-dimensionality. We invite our students, our colleagues, and all actors in the youth field to contribute to and reflect upon the integrating process.

Reading texts that present complex arguments is necessarily an active rather than a passive process with the 'critical reader' being prepared to challenge and 'take on' the text. Critical reading tries to get behind a text, the circumstances of its production and the nature of its argument; it also treats every proposition as an invitation to doubt. You might consider these questions in approaching our selected readings as well as this introductory chapter. The questions will not all be relevant to each text, so one of your tasks is to adjudicate relevance.

1. In what historical circumstances was this text written and how have these circumstances shaped its form? More generally, how do you imagine it was put together? What genre does the text belong to and what are the expectations associated with the genre?
2. No text is value-free. What are the values underpinning this one and are they declared or implicit?
3. What are the key ideas and concepts?
4. Is there an appeal to authority, to emotions, to shared values, to empirical evidence, or to a personal vision of how things might be? Are there any gaps in the argument? Are any conclusions warranted? Do other writers disagree?
5. Most texts are written from some theoretical position or vantage point. Are some approaches better than others for particular purposes and how can we judge between them?
6. Discussion is always fruitful where experts disagree. What fractures or disagreements did you pick up in the readings as a whole?
7. Where do you position yourself in the policy / practice / research triangle and what difference did it make to you as a reader?

## **2. The dynamics of the social construction of youth**

In 1978 Pierre Bourdieu teased with the idea that 'la "jeunesse" n'est qu'un mot' ('youth is just a word'), but words are never mere words and even artificial constructs carry social meanings that are real in their effects. Any discussion of youth practice, youth policy or youth research raises challenging questions about the meanings of the concept of 'youth', its social and historical construction, as well as the social and political implications for our understanding of young people's lives. In what follows, we will try to get behind that 'word', unpacking its ambivalence and shifting denotations in differing political and cultural settings. We will explore and illustrate some of the issues that lie behind the concept, and the complexity of the social, political and historical processes involved its emergence as a distinct if fuzzy social entity. In short, we address the complex dynamics of the social construction of youth.

There are, however, commonsensical limits to the flexibility of the concept. The place of youth in the life cycle, however the span is defined, means that 'youth' will undoubtedly be suggestive in any culture of physical and biological components. These latter affect our bodies during the processes of growing up and ageing, influencing and transforming our behaviour, attitudes and feelings as well as our relationships with others and with the environment. However, both the experience and the meaning of these processes, including the stage we call 'youth' will be historically and socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This 'social construction of reality' involves the idea that the meanings attributed to constructs like 'youth' are culturally determined impositions rather than attributes of the data, or to put the point in other terms we are dealing with theoretical modelling. A young person will both construct a social reality and form part of other people's constructions,

including the implicit models that underpin policy. Both what people 'are' and how they are 'seen' are tied to circumstances that differ across societies and cultures, time and history – as well as within the same society or culture over time (Wyn & White, 1997; Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Jones, 2009).

As pointed out by historians, anthropologists and sociologists, for a long time a number of societies and cultures have not recognised at all the experience of youth (Gillis, 1974). In others, the definitions and meanings of features attributed to youth varied significantly between gender and social classes (Eisenstadt, 1956; Mitterauer, 1986), being chiefly a prerogative of upper class men (Levi & Schmitt, 1997[1994]) and thus not clearly identifying agreed defined boundaries based on age (Kett, 1977). Moreover, particularly in non-Western societies, the transition from dependence to autonomy has often typically been marked by specific rites of passage (Van Gennep, 1909), accomplished in different ways, whose features – as argued by Margaret Mead (1928) – could not be understood applying contemporary Western conceptual frameworks.

The emergence of the concept of youth as a distinctive category – and subsequently of youth as a distinct stage of life within a finite time span – can be historically situated at the passage from pre-industrial to industrial society, and in particular with the advent of modernisation (Ariès, 1960; Kett, 1977). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in some regions even earlier, the notion of youth as a normal and normative stage in the life cycle became legitimate, in particular in Western societies (Gillis, 1974). This development can be attributed to several factors, including: the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation and subsequent changes in the labour market, the improvement of living conditions, the transformation of society's modes of production and reproduction, and the emerging realisation that time could usefully be calibrated, hence introducing the possibility of sectioning and structuring an individual's life into measurable units.

According to Wallace and Kovacheva (1998), a number of factors influenced the ongoing process of 'constructing' youth: educational reforms that took place in North America and Europe during this period; the beginning of state intervention; the regulation of working conditions, particularly concerning child labour; the reorganisation of criminal justice systems; the recognition of leisure as a specific feature of youth experiences; and the erosion of vertical traditional forms of social control and the consequent emergence of new horizontal socialising agencies. Of particular importance were also the middle class youth movements that arose in Europe (Gillis, 1974) and the perception of youth as a symbolic resource for social change under fascist and communist totalitarian regimes (Passerini, 1997[1994]). The combined effect of these developments, along with the 'new knowledge' emerging from 'the scientific study of the period of adolescence', was such that a conservative social commentator in the 1940s could observe approvingly that 'it is only in our time that Youth has been fully "discovered"' (Devane, 1942: 1).

In short, modernity radically transformed the ways in which people's lives were socially organized, extending the pattern of a period distinctively devoted – as portrayed by the *Bildungsroman* (Moretti, 1987[1986]) – to the exploration of the self and of the social landscape. The experience of being young has also undergone shifts in expectation due to structural changes in society. Increasingly the young have been included in educational provision, formal and non-formal, but excluded from productive activities (Berger & Berger, 1976). At the same time, sharing common cultural and social conditions that were perceived as being different from other age groups, young people gradually achieved a collective self-consciousness of their common belonging to the same life stage: thereby becoming an age group *per se* and accomplishing a common generational identity (Abrams, 1982).

Yet the aspects presented above constitute only one side of the social construction of youth. A parallel perception is the emergence, from the end of the nineteenth up to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of the view that young people constituted a "problem"<sup>1</sup> and were a cause of social disruption because of their distance and independence from established cultural patterns and norms

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<sup>1</sup> We will come back to this aspect in part 4 of this introductory chapter.

(Hareven, 1976). On the one hand, this problematic perception led to a growing role attributed to institutions devoted to supporting and enhancing people during their growing up process; from the other hand, it legitimated calls for forms of social control aimed at correcting the behavioural deficit, through the establishing of agencies to deal with youth needs and problems and of youth professions (Platt, 1969; Gilchrist *et al.*, 2009).<sup>2</sup> These moves, taken together, can be seen as a crucial step toward the institutionalising a particular construct of youth that led to a two-track policy of both 'general' and 'targeted' provision.

It should by now be clear why sociologists draw on 'social constructions' for interpreting the concept of youth and that the 'discovery' of youth (or the emergence of youth as a complex reappraised life stage) locates beyond common sense knowledge (Cristofori, 1997). The multiple discourses surrounding youth experience, youth work, youth policy and youth research all have one feature in common: they depend on invented constructs that carry deep cultural connotations and have the status of implicit or explicit theoretical models.

In arguing firmly but tentatively for the legitimacy of a European perspective, we need to remind ourselves that modernisation followed different routes across Europe. Consequently, the way in which youth was 'discovered' and constructed also followed (and continues to follow) different paths and formed different patterns (Liebau & Chisholm, 1993; see also the paper by Stafseng in this Reader). This means that, as we will see in part 3.2 of this introductory chapter, when analysing the process through which youth has become a 'social category' in Europe, as well as when analysing the concrete experiences lived by young Europeans, we must pay attention also to differences between different countries as well as, even within the same country, between gender, social classes, regions, ethnicities. Necessarily, therefore, our method will be to compare and contrast.

### **3. The development of youth research in Europe**

#### **3.1 Social sciences and the construction of youth as a concept**

Following Allen (1968: 321), we can argue that 'it is not the relationship between ages that creates change or stability in society, but change in society which explains relations between different ages'. Thus, like other life stages (Hareven, 1976; Kett, 2003), youth emerges and re-emerges, is discovered and re-discovered time after time, becoming in turns a source of hopes and fears as the rhythm of social change increases (Merico, 2002; 2004). Within this perspective, the social sciences have for over a century played a key analytical role in youth studies.

In what follows, we explore some of the main contributions proposed by social sciences since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, trying to decipher the continual (and often ambivalent) re-construction of 'youth' as uncovered by social scientists. The pattern that emerges is one of shifting definitions, attributed features and political emphasis. In the absence of agreed definitions, scholars have tended either to legislate for the field by choosing their own so-called 'stipulative' definitions or to adopt 'programmatic' definitions, i.e. definitions carrying normative assumptions that indicate preferred action, as e.g. in problematising young people as socially disruptive, thus requiring policies directed towards social control (Scheffler, 1960).

We conduct the following analysis through a sequence of snapshots of major intellectual contributions to the field. Taken together, they allow us both to follow the line of the construction and re-construction of the concept<sup>3</sup> and to identify the ways through which the social sciences have dealt with social concerns towards youth. At the same time our snapshots will outline a concise – even if undeniably incomplete – account of the pathways that lie behind the establishing of contemporary youth studies introducing scholars from North America and Europe who are usually recognised as

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<sup>2</sup> See also the selected papers on youth work included in this Reader.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, it is important to underline that, rather than proposing a single and settled definition or perspective on the concept of youth, one of the main aims of the analysis is to stress the complexity and multiplicity of that concept as disturbing the tranquillity of all models and understandings: much of the ideas and perspectives presented and discussed here are meanings equally unsettled as the ones they might replace.

the founding figures of this field of studies.<sup>4</sup> Their legacy is one of complementary and overlapping theoretical orientation, often reminding us that choosing a problem and a method is not all that far removed from adopting a political stance. The first three pictures are taken from the United States.

Granville Stanley Hall, the pioneering American psychologist, is commonly acknowledged as the first modern theorist to provide a scientific perspective on 'adolescence'<sup>5</sup>, seeks to bring together the disciplines of psychology, sociology, medicine and education. In his two-volume work, building on Darwin's theory of evolution, Hall (1904) described adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' – an expression taken from the German '*Sturm und Drang*' movement. According to Hall, adolescence is on the one hand characterised by the difficult adjustment to biological and bodily changes; on the other hand, it is an unstable and problematic life stage between the pre-rationality of childhood and the rationality of adulthood that needs supervision, protection and guidance. Hall's portrayal of adolescence as a phase of emotional upheaval has informed youth studies for a long period (Griffin, 1993; see also the paper by Stafseng in this Reader), designating at the same time the polarised positions within which future analysis can be placed: leaving young people room for an autonomous development of self-identity and controlling their potentially dangerous behaviour. This deep running dichotomy resulted in a whole series of ambivalences – between change and stability, between apprenticeship and inheritance, and between fears and hopes (Cohen, 1997; Cicchelli & Merico, 2001).

The next two snapshots come from Chicago. In contrast to the 'essentialist' model portrayed by Hall (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998), Jane Addams (1909), founder of the first United States' settlement house in Chicago and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, argued that youth is the product of the modern industrial city, where large numbers of young people were gathered together as a labour supply, thus evading the traditional instruments of social control. The social concern caused by juvenile misbehaviour and delinquency was interpreted by Addams as a consequence of young people's isolation; the city was doing little or nothing to sustain and revitalize the 'spirit of youth', its 'quest for adventure' or its 'insatiable desire for play', all of which were seen, following George Mead (1934), as key resources for building the self. Together with her colleagues in Hull House, she engaged consistently with pragmatism and the reformist spirit of the progressive era, campaigning for compulsory education and the provision of playgrounds as well as protesting against the exploitation of child labour (Rauty, 2007; 2010).

In the same context, from the late 1910s to the early 1930s, scholars of the Chicago School of Sociology investigated deviant and criminal youth behaviour from the perspective of an 'urban ecology' (Park *et al.*, 1925) paying specific attention to forms of 'social disorganisation' (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918-1920) and of 'social contagion' (Park, 1915) as consequences of immigration and mass urbanisation. In particular, using a distinctive blend of qualitative and quantitative research methods<sup>6</sup> and with the financial support of several national agencies and philanthropic foundations, Park and Burgess' graduate and PhD students collected data and life histories of hobos (Anderson, 1923), flappers (Thomas, 1923), 'taxi dancers' (Cressey, 1932) and gangs (Thrasher, 1927). They also carried out empirical studies on juvenile delinquency under the auspices of the Institute for Juvenile Research (Shaw, 1930; 1931; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Their general substantive and methodological approach broke new ground, moving away from identifying individual causes of juvenile misbehaviours (Getis, 1998). Instead they looked for patterns and spatial distributions that might indicate larger-scale causal explanations.

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the authors and schools presented and discussed in what follows are further analysed in the papers by Stafseng and Helve, Leccardi and Kovacheva included in this Reader.

<sup>5</sup> Space precludes a full discussion here of the complex relationship between the partly conflicting and partly overlapping discourses of 'adolescence' and 'youth'. In contemporary social science, these two concepts are primarily associated with the disciplines of psychology and sociology respectively; two disciplines that themselves might be termed partly conflicting and partly overlapping (see Devlin, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> For an appraisal of blended research methods in Chicago, see in particular Madge (1962); Bulmer (1984: 89-108); Platt (1994).



One achievement of the Chicago school was that it was able to demonstrate, particularly through geographical mapping and the graphical representation of statistics, that delinquency rates remained constant in socially disorganized locations, despite changes in their populations. This formed part of a more general conclusion: that all youth behaviours were the result of a 'natural history' that was a consequence of the interplay between the social, cultural and political structures in the city, individual social backgrounds and the specific environment in which young people live (Brake, 1985; Merico, 2004).

Our next 'glimpse' takes us to Europe where, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can identify contributions to youth studies in the seminal works of Anna Freud (1937[1936]), daughter of the Austrian father of psychoanalysis, Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde's *Les Jeuns Gens* (1995[1913]), as well as in 'the metaphysics of youth' of the German literary critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin (2004) and in Gramsci's reflection on 'the question of the young' published in the *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1992[1975]).

In this period, in the still agricultural society of Bulgaria, Ivan Khadzijski (1974[1943]) applied the perspectives of sociology and ethnology in the study of youth as a specific life stage. He depicted a very brief period of festivities for village youth before they needed to accept the responsibilities of the heavy agricultural labour. In contrast, youth was a longer and well-structured period for young men in the towns where it was associated with the period of mastering a craft and living in the household of the teaching master – in between a protected childhood in the family of origin and autonomous adulthood after the formation of their own family. For young women in the city, youth was in general a short period of moving away from parental care and control into the control and care of the husband. In the Soviet Union after the October Revolution youth was constructed as a highly ideological concept associated with an important socio-political mission – to build and sustain the communist society. In this vision of a socialised youth, the identity of the young was subsumed under their ascribed role as the youth wing of the mass communist organisations - the Young Pioneers and the Komsomol. Soviet psychology at the time focused on the cognitive development of children and adolescents as portrayed and theorised in the prominent works of Vygotsky (1962[1934]) and Leontiev (1981[1931]).

A significant contribution to youth studies in this phase is Karl Mannheim's 'The Problem of Generations' (1952[1928]). Trying to develop a 'dynamic' analysis from an intellectual stance critical of both positivism and romantic historicism, the Jewish Hungarian-born sociologist exiled in Germany argues that, rather than being premised on biological and demographic phenomena, the formation of a new generation is the product of relevant historical and social changes. Mannheim distinguishes between generations '*an sich*' and '*für sich*'. As social classes, 'generation locations' provide individuals and groups with few and limited potential experiences on the basis of which they can define their *Weltanschauung*. Sharing a common social and cultural horizon does not automatically imply subjective consciousness; this emerges when individuals understand themselves as sharing common experiences (thus forming an 'actual generation') and again when they engage in social action within antagonistic sub-groups called 'generation units'. Not all generation locations produce generation units; the latter emerge when the effects of rapid changes require new ways of dealing with social realities (Abrams, 1982; Chisholm, 2002).

As already acknowledged by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1923), Mannheim (1952[1928]: 296) recognises that, because of their lack of experience (which 'facilitates their living in a changing world') young people might play a crucial role in social change (Berger, 1960, Merico, 2009). Being closer to the 'present' and having as yet no vested interests, these 'outsiders' can easily accommodate new attitudes, behaviours and cultural patterns. As Mannheim pointed out in a conference delivered in the UK, where he moved from Germany following the rise of Nazism, the sociological function of youth lay in its 'openness' to innovation and in its aptitude to become an active resource for social change. According to this analysis, particularly in modern society, youth is a latent resource 'which every society has at its disposal and on the mobilization of which its vitality depends' (Mannheim, 1943: 32). Such mobilization requires not only paying specific attention to

intergenerational relationships (Mannheim, (1952[1928]): a society that seeks to build up a new social order needs to establish 'a consistent, all-round youth policy' (Mannheim, 1943) as well as engage in a 'social education' that holds the social structure together and provide younger generations with the resources to cope with social change (Mannheim & Stewart, 1962).

Returning to the United States, between the 1940s until the early 1960s, we can identify a more comprehensive and ambitious attempt to understand modern youth in the account developed by American structural-functionalism. The main aim of this attempt was to understand the changes and challenges that youth and the whole American society were facing, mainly concerning transition to adulthood, socialisation, and integration of young people (Erikson, 1963). Behind this approach was the idea that due to complex social factors, young people were in effect subject to a 'psychosocial moratorium', that is a prolonged period of situated psychological development and exploration of the relationship between oneself and the existing social order (Erikson, 1950; 1968; Keniston, 1968; 1971). For some, during this period pathological behaviour was redefined as normal.

Also from a sociological perspective, the concept of 'youth culture' was introduced, within an appraisal of the relevance of 'age and sex categories' for analysis (Linton, 1942). The concept delineated a cultural pattern the main features of which were irresponsibility, a strong emphasis on social activities and athletics, and 'a certain recalcitrance to the pressure of adult expectations and discipline' (Parsons, 1942: 606-607). 'Youth culture' was seen as characterised by a dual orientation, displaying a 'compulsive independence' to adult expectations juxtaposed with a 'compulsive conformity' to the peer group (Parsons, 1950). These aspects have been interpreted – reflecting the concerns of American society – in turn as signalling the emergence of a 'conflict between generations' (Davis, 1940), and of a distinct and distinctive 'adolescent society' with its own values, argot and symbols contrasting with those shared by the adult society (Coleman, 1961). The final manifestation in this analysis was seen as a kind of 'teen-age tyranny' (Hechinger & Hechinger, 1963).

Eisenstadt (1956) gives a historical-comparative account of the role of peer groups in supporting the transition from the 'particularistic' values of the family to the 'universalistic' values of the wider community. Moving from this perspective, Parsons' account underplayed youth rebellion or maladjustment as root causes, instead understanding 'youth culture' and its fidelity to the peer group as an outlet for tensions to which young people were exposed because of the contradictory expectations they were facing and the lack of adult emotional and normative support they could count on (Parsons, 1962). At the same time, adult permissiveness and the increasing freedom left to youth were intended as a spur to independence and responsibility, thus keeping legitimated deviance within socially acceptable boundaries. Rather than indicating a basic alienation or a passive adjustment, the structures around youth culture become, according to this perspective, a functional resource of social control by facilitating 'active adaptation' to rapidly changing conditions, thus keeping faith with the value premises of integrated American society (Parsons, 1962).

Although one of the most influential perspectives in the later development of youth research (Merico, 2004), as well as of youth policy and practice (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998), the structural-functionalist account has been criticised for two main reasons. On the one hand, as pointed out by Cohen (1997: 187), it is 'essentially about what is like to be a male adolescent in middle-class America during and after the Second World War'. It implies an essentialist construction of youth that takes on some of the characteristics of a 'myth' (Elkin & Westley, 1955), suggesting a homogeneous group with common features, strengths and weaknesses. Although some commentators (e.g. Friedenberg, 1969) supported the idea that a 'generation gap' was replacing the class struggle, essentialist accounts were mainly a-historical and disjointed from any class, ethnic or gender analysis (Brake, 1985), acknowledging neither inner differences, nor intergenerational continuities (Berger, 1963; Smith, 1976). A second criticism of structural-functionalism has questioned its normative assumptions concerning society as stable in its core values and socialising institutions, into which the young will eventually be assimilated (Mills, 1959; Gouldner, 1970).

Taking this last criticism as their starting point, during the 1950s and 1960s radical theorists preferred to emphasize the potential role of youth in initiating and promoting social and cultural change (Jones, 2009). Moving from the assumption that 'rebellious or initiating fundamental change is a social function', Paul Goodman (1956) sustained the idea that young people were becoming marginalized by society; according to his analysis the disaffected youngster, the beat kid and the juvenile delinquent were expressing in different ways that it was hard to grow up in a society which was not able to provide them with the opportunity to express their autonomy and creativity. Paying attention to the political awakening of young people, and particularly to student protests that arose from the early 1950s in the United States and in Europe, Theodore Roszak (1968) identified amongst young people the rise of a 'counterculture', the main feature of which was the rejection of the 'technocratic society', instead promoting an 'alternative society', with new values and sensibilities. Considering that young people found themselves largely excluded from economic opportunity and confined in educational institutions or compulsorily co-opted into the Armed Forces, John and Margaret Rowntree (1968) saw in the counterculture the emergence of youth as a potentially new revolutionary 'class'.

Most of these analyses were ideologically oriented rather than empirically grounded, and mainly focused on youth as an age-determined group. Nevertheless, together with the works of sociologists such as David Riesman (1950), Charles Wright Mills (1958), and Herbert Marcuse (1964), they stressed the need for a critical analysis of the role of mass consumption and mass media in the definition of youth lifestyles and cultural production, intergenerational relationships, and the role of youth in the process of transformation of advanced society.

Our last snapshot comes from Birmingham, England, where the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)<sup>7</sup>, was founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart. Under the direction of the Jamaican born anthropologist and sociologist Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, it launched a research project on youth subcultures in post-war Britain (Hall & Jefferson, 1976)<sup>8</sup> and became very influential in spite of its modest roots as a forum to continue a debate arising from the mugging of an Irish worker in 1975 (Procter, 2004). Refusing to understand youth simply in relation to the new levels of welfare, consumerism and the expansion of mass media, the CCCS popularised a neo-Marxist theoretical stance deriving from Marx, Althusser and the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony'. Hall and his colleagues analysed the shift from a 'revolutionary' to a 'ritual' resistance by British working class youth.

According to their analysis, rather than challenging class differences, young people were 'negotiating' their contradictory working class identities. This negotiation was played out in the working class youth subcultures at a symbolic level, through 'bricolage' (a concept adopted from Claude Levi-Strauss, 1962), comprising tokenistic objects, clothes, jargon, paralinguistic cues and codes, which were borrowed from the upper classes, transformed, combined and then used, disarticulating and rearticulating their original meanings, thus defining, together with music genres and gathering places, the 'style' of a specific subcultural group (Hebdige, 1979). According to Stanley Cohen (1972), at a societal level the adoption of extravagant and exhibitionist subcultural styles launched a 'moral panic'; young people were identified as 'folk devils', responsible of the corruption of societal values and made scapegoats for a wide range of social problems. For the members of a subculture, however, the subversion of conventional codes and meanings represented a reaction to the lived contradictions of their marginalised location between their working class 'mother culture' and the 'dominant culture' of adult society (Hall & Jefferson, 1976). However, rather than constituting a 'real solution' for structural inequalities in the labour market, education and leisure, the ritualised resistance of mods, rockers, skinheads, crombies, rastas or rudies resolved those contradictions only at an 'imaginary', magical, and symbolic level (Cohen, 1972; Brake, 1985). Street theatre, one might say, rather than political change agency.

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<sup>7</sup> On the activity and the role of the CCCS in the development of youth studies, see also the paper by Helve, Leccardi and Kovacheva in this Reader.

<sup>8</sup> First published as *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, no. 7/8 (1975).

According to Jones (2009: 21), CCCS moved away 'from seeing youth as a homogeneous counter-culture, or age class [...], to seeing young people's values and actions as rooted in their social class positions'. This approach, although more coherent in neo-Marxist terms, has been criticised for paying little attention to the interplay between class and age, and for confusing age and generation (Marsland, 1993). At the same time, CCCS was said not to recognize 'important cultural divisions within classes', and sometimes the notion of class seems to have been 'reified and assumed rather than demonstrated' (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998: 34). Moreover, young women and middle class youth were mostly ignored (Brake, 1985), as was the individual level of agency (Frith, 1986). However, CCCS unquestionably contributed to (re)introduce in the debate on youth and youth culture(s) a plural approach based on the acknowledgment of class, sex and 'race' differences as well as to stimulate the attention that, since the late 1970s, has been paid to the multiplicity of cultural and expressive forms that young people live through their everyday life, thus challenging the idea of youth as an homogeneous group, and recognizing the need for 'rethinking' the concept of youth itself.

### **3.2 The mosaics of youth research in Europe**

The previous parts of this introductory chapter followed the theoretical debates about the conceptualisation of youth until the 1960s and early 1970s. This overview showed that youth constitutes a social entity to which societies attach specific characteristics, roles, rights and duties, and towards which the same societies assign specific responsibilities. However, being a mobile and contested social construct, its definition and features at a given moment will typically diverge from those attached to it in previous epochs or in different social, political and cultural contexts, just as they will, inevitably, change in the future, involving a continuous acknowledgment of differences, multiplicity and plurality within youth as well as in its relations to other social groups and society as a whole (Chisholm, 1990).

At the same time, we should recognise that youth is an ambivalent concept, ranging persistently between continuity and change, between similarities and differences, between absolute and relative perspectives, and between monolithic and fragmented definitions. The fluctuations in our understanding of youth became even more apparent in Europe in the 1980s in the follow up to the work of the CCCS in Birmingham, which put in motion the process of the deconstruction of youth as a concept that has undergone a series of reinventions. Toward the end of the 1970s the restructuring of the world economy after the petrol crisis led to a rapid change in the world of work, education, family relations and demographic developments in the advanced societies in the West of Europe. A general feeling of imminent societal change and a consequent need for rethinking the strategy of welfare state provision paved the way for a wide range of youth research projects. Empirical research focused on examining the differences in the social situations and life experiences of various groups of young people. From the 1970s to the 1990s youth research in Europe filled in the mosaics of the plurality of young people's lives across the continent highlighting the contours of the various dichotomies – the divisions between East and West, South and North of Europe, and similar divisions within countries, e.g. between the North and South of Italy, the East and West of Ukraine, alongside ubiquitous cross-cutting divisions according to class, gender, 'race', ethnicity, urban and rural areas, and so on.

Even if broad shifts in the historical understanding of youth were not especially a product of abstract theorising, the conceptualisation of youth in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became more theory-led than empirically driven; and the role of this empirical research was largely to support and/or refine the emerging concepts and orientations. Ironically, youth research became the driving force of development in the field exactly at the point when the definitions and conceptual frameworks were becoming less secure as the key terms were subject to cultural and sociolinguistic deconstruction.

In the 1970s, the Birmingham School argued that youth cultures in general had a class base and that it was class and not age that turned differences into systematic inequality and created social stratification, giving rise to speculations about the end of youth as a uniquely explanatory social

category. At around the same time sociologists in Eastern Europe were faced with a parallel dilemma but found an answer attuned to the differing social contexts of their communist societies. They were culturally obliged to look for a specification of youth as a social category within an ideological framework in which only class was accepted as a stratifying factor while age and gender equality were proclaimed *de jure* rather than *de facto* as characteristics of the new social order. On the other hand, the communist political theorists had to devise a way of conceptualising and managing a social group that was proclaimed to be the active force building the new communist society and an important source of volunteer or otherwise cheap labour. Consequently youth research was stimulated by the needs of the communist states both to monitor and control young people and to make them a show case of the new regime, since the young were believed to be more optimistic and less burdened with the values of the previous regime. Bulgarian researchers came up with a socio-biological definition of youth as a social group based on age and orientation to the future (Semov, 1972; Mitev, 1982) – a theoretical construction not fully consistent with the official Marxist political ideology, which defined stratification in relation to the ownership of means of production. Similar constraints were experienced by researchers in the Soviet Union. One of the most influential theoretical constructions of youth was that of Kon (1967b; 1979) who understood the condition in relation to theories of socialisation, alienation and adolescent psychology in contrast to the dominant theory that consciousness is a product of subjective reflection of objective conditions.

Nevertheless, these theoretical compromises legitimated the development of youth research and allowed researchers to claim state funding for empirical studies. The newly-founded youth research institutes (first in Leipzig in the German Democratic Republic and then in many other socialist countries) studied young people's attitudes and life plans, patterns of transition from school to work and family formation. Despite the initial expectations of the power elite, these inquiries revealed a growing mismatch between young people's values and the official party line, a rising tension between youth aspirations and the jobs available in the planned economy leading to accumulating signs of social alienation. Studies on emerging youth subcultures, the so called 'non-formal groups' in the 1980 throughout Eastern European countries showed young people searching for meaningful identity and striving to create an autonomous territory for themselves outside of party and state control. Interpreting their research data, Eastern scholars developed concepts such as 'juventology' (Mahler, 1983; 1987; see also the papers by Stafseng and Helve *et al.* in this Reader), which suggests that young people are less likely to be conformist and more likely to be challenging established values and structures. This concept relates to the notions of 'self-determination of the personality' (Kenkman, cited in Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998) and also to the 'social autonomy of youth' (Ule, 1988).

Although Southern Europe was not as politically and economically isolated as Eastern Europe in the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, youth research in the region seems to have been less influential than one might have expected on the European scene at large. A pioneering youth theory adding a Southern colouring to the mosaic of youth research in Europe in the 1980s was that of Cavalli (1980) who explained the situation of Italian youth in terms of a shift from a supportive 'process' to a doleful 'condition', one in which the young had lost any prospects of a clearly defined future and were trapped in a long wait for an unpredictable outcome. This theory encouraged studies of the new forms of young people's identity formation and biographical construction and new patterns of transitions to independent adulthood, including blockages on the route. This period of the 80s in Italy was rich both in qualitative research on the new cultural expressions of youth and quantitative surveys on how young people experience education and work, with a crucial sponsoring role played by the IARD Institute (see the paper by Helve *et al.* in this Reader).<sup>9</sup>

However, it was in the UK that the cleavage between research on youth subcultures and youth transitions was most marked in this period. The collapse of the youth labour markets prompted by the petrol crisis in the end of the 1970s gave new impetus on research on the transitions of young people from education to employment, which aimed to 'discover who was ending-up where'

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<sup>9</sup> For a more general appraisal of youth research in Italy see also Rauty (1989); Cristofori (1997); Merico (2002).

(Roberts, 2003). Rising youth unemployment, as well as the spread of training schemes in response to demands to foster human capital for raising economy's competitiveness attracted new research funding and intensified research interest. A wealth of data was collected to illuminate the experiences of youth in the 1980s revealing the influence of different social structures. Longitudinal studies and cross-sectional analysis documented the prolongation of the youth phase in the UK with the expansion of education and training (Coffield *et al.*, 1986) and the changes into family relationships (Brannen & Wilson, 1987). Meanwhile, focusing on the conflict situation in Northern Ireland, ethnographic work by Bell (1990) made it clear that longstanding sectarian tensions based on politico-religious affiliations could have as decisive (and divisive) an influence on youth subcultures as the fissures of class.

With the expansion of youth as a distinctive consumer market, the research emphasis shifted to mainstream youth and youth cultures. It was transparently no longer adequate to explain youth subcultures only as the product of youth rebellion against capitalism and the prevailing norms of the dominant class culture (Brake, 1985; Maffesoli, 1996[1988]). Empirical research in the 1980s in England showed that there were important cultural divisions within the classes (Brown, 1987) and not only between them. Young people's identities depended to a great extent on social inequalities such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and style (see comments above on bricolage). Feminist sociologists in particular criticised the gender blindness of the male sub-cultural theorists and focused their research on girls in their domestic lives and peer relationships (Griffin, 1985). Even Paul Willis (1977) was castigated for *Learning to Labour's* exclusive focus on 'the lads'.

By the end of the 1980s youth research in Europe had developed as a rich and legitimate field of studies, if retaining the fragmented and 'mosaic' quality of many such fields of study that grew up around practical concerns with no single disciplinary base. It occupied a new territory in which the aggregate research endeavour – although not typically individual studies – combined the perspectives of sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and anthropology as well as applying mixed methods of data collection and analysis. It proved ready for the challenges that lay ahead – the high globalisation wave of the 1990s, which was speeded up by the collapse of the Soviet Block with the velvet revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **3.3 Towards an integrated field of European youth research**

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 gave new impetus to the integration of youth research in West and East Europe. Concepts and methodologies were exchanged for the study of youth unemployment and entrepreneurship, youth protest and political apathy, and localisation of global cultures, perhaps more so from the West to the East rather than vice versa. Ironically, eastern researchers found out to their cost that when the ideological and political barriers preventing the integration of research in Europe were lifted, new financial obstacles arose impeding their participation in all-European discourse on youth since the budget deficits cut the previously generous state funding for 'international cooperation'. It was the support of networks such as the Research Committee 34 on the sociology of youth (RC34) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) and UNESCO that allowed the continuing exchange between East and West European researchers in the 1990s. At the same time, behind the political rhetoric, radical changes were transforming all European societies in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century toward high-technology and service oriented, knowledge-based economies, with higher flexibility and insecurity of jobs, further expansion and pluralisation of education, diversification of family relations and the spread of consumerism. Alongside the political changes in Eastern Europe came the shrinking of 'welfare state' policies in Western Europe that led to an individualisation and privatisation of social problems (Ferge, 1997; Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). These trends have undoubtedly challenged and altered current sociological assumptions concerning the nature of the link between social and individual change (Mills, 1959).

Strongly impacting on the study of youth in this new situation were the theories of late or post modernity and the related concept of individualisation (Beck, 1992[1986]; Giddens, 1991). Under the conditions of accumulated social risks, structural uncertainties and the blurring of social norms, individuals were freer to navigate their own transitions and create their own biographies. Accepting

the argument about the role of reflexivity and the increase of personal responsibilities in the transition to adulthood, youth researchers came up with differing concepts and disparate studies on the implications of these changes on youth. One strand of youth research has focused on the widening opportunities of young people for autonomous action by conducting empirical research aimed at building 'choice biographies' (Lagrée, 2002). Others have pointed out that the resources for making choices have remained unequally distributed among young people thus allowing a distinction between 'developmental' as opposed to 'default' individualisation (Coté, 2000). Another concept developed by youth scholars was that of 'structured individualisation', the application of which has tended to reinforce the continuing underlying effect of social inequalities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Walther *et al.*, 2006).

The trend toward the prolongation of the youth phase and the consequent blurring of age boundaries have occurred alongside other cultural shifts: the spread of under-employment and general economic precariousness; the diversification of family and housing arrangements; the explosion of expressive cultural styles and multi-cultural models; genre fusion in the arts; the rise of new social movements and faith communities. All of these phenomena have been detected and commented on by youth researchers and cultural theorists. They have been explained as expressions of the process of deconstruction of youth in Europe, which has created a situation when 'it is no longer possible to have a universal concept of youth' (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998: 30).<sup>10</sup>

While youth has never been a social unit with 'common interests, strengths and weaknesses' (Jones, 2009: 3), it was at the turn of the millennium that its prolongation prompted Arnett (2004) to specify a new phase in the life course – 'emergent adulthood' – when individuals are no longer 'youth' but not yet fully adults. More critically, however, Coté (2000) conceptualised this condition as 'arrested adulthood' – a trap of accumulated risks and uncertainties.

The complexity of youth realities in Europe against the background of rapid social change has been analysed by Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002). The authors defined the main challenge for youth research as encompassing diversity with the rise of the network society which turned former boundaries between countries, social groups, values and ideas into communication arteries and flows of information and knowledge (*ibid.*). Reflecting the preoccupation of post-modernity with the 'variety of sources of difference' (Bauman, 1992), the task of youth research in Europe has been to detect and explain the many types and consequences of structured social inequalities among youth. A major source of diversification among youth is the fragmentation of life course transitions (Chisholm, 2001; Bynner *et al.*, 2002). Surveys and qualitative case studies of the different career trajectories of young people showed the role of old and new inequalities (Colley *et al.*, 2007; Williamson, 2004). After 1989 the shift in the social order of societies in Eastern and Central Europe replaced the forced homogenisation of communist rule and various constellations of disadvantage marked the employment and family trajectories of young people in the region (Ule, 2005; Mitev, 2005, Tomanovic & Ignjatovic, 2006). Contrasting patterns were detected between the early passage to adulthood in the North of Europe influenced by the comprehensive support from the universalistic state (Helve, 1993; Brannen *et al.*, 2002) and the delayed transition of young people in the South of the continent supported by the 'long family' (Donati & Scabini, 1988; Leccardi, 1995). The trend toward de-standardised and often reversible passages to adulthood throughout Europe has been captured in the metaphor of the 'yo-yo' transition (López Blasco *et al.*, 2003) turning many young people into trendsetters for new and not always comfortable ways of living in the circumstances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Transition studies have been criticised for being premised on a static and categorical account of youth as a stage between discrete essentialist categories (Wyn & White, 1997) whereas in late

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<sup>10</sup> One implication of this acknowledgement is that it admits as one possible intellectual strategy a radical 'deconstructionist' position in which the inherent ambiguities are held to be beyond tidying, rendering all European youth research at one level part of Jacques Derrida's vast sociolinguistic/philosophical project in which there is no reality beyond the hall of mirrors which is language. Less extreme positions are of course possible and many would say to be preferred, for example that phenomenological accounts need not be ring-fenced but can point, however tentatively, to 'out there' truths. Yet language remains an important issue.

modern societies youth needs to be understood in terms of fluidity and change. However, the processes of continuation and change – in youth and in society – are in fact occurring simultaneously (CYRCE, 1995; du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm, 2006). There is a continued debate over structure and agency and the increased emphasis on a perspective that studies young people as active agents in navigating their transitions; on the reflective choices expressed in their biographies, on the processes of decision making, negotiation with others and social institutions and identity formation (Machacek & Roberts, 1997; Walther *et al.*, 2009).

Identity construction is becoming more and more related to the production and consumption of culture, and although increased leisure is not a trend specific to young people as were the youth subcultures of modernity, it is youth that is leading this change, especially in using the new communication technologies. The rise of the new technologies has created a new inequality among youth – the so-called digital divide, which however is closing in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Globalization has created similarities between young people all over the world. It has also created more opportunities for local cultural expressions (Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Lagrée, 2002). What is more, youth lifestyles continue to be stratified not only between East and West, and between rich and poor countries but also within societies between different groups of young people (Pilkington *et al.*, 2002; Roberts, 2009).

Under the new conditions of de-standardised transitions and pluralisation of youth cultures gender differences have become uncertain and mutable. Intergenerational relations within families allow choice and require negotiations on the place of the former acceptance of familial roles (du Bois-Reymond, 2008b). Research on gender identities moved away from the essentialist notions of gender and showed the need for redefining our understanding of gender roles and relations in different parts of Europe and for different groups of youth (Machado Pais & Chisholm, 1997). In Eastern Europe, for example, the privatisation of welfare has hit women particularly hard (Corrin, 1992; Reiter, 2008) but young men also lost the former homogenised and standardised construction of masculinity, accelerated by the end of the obligatory military service and the new risks of the market economy. At present, instead of learning gender roles young people are actively ‘doing gender’ (Sainsbury, 1999).

Similar changes have emerged in research on ‘race’ and ethnicity, which have been studied as significant forms of inequality in charting the experiences of black and Asian youth in European countries (Back, 1996). Recent research shows that immigrants and particularly the second and subsequent generations are developing a range of hybrid identities, adopting creative styles, and mixing local, national and global cultures. Studies are being conducted on new immigrants in countries such as the Nordic or Southern European countries and Ireland (Lalor *et al.*, 2007; European Commission, 2009a). The rise of mobility in Europe has created the need for innovative concepts and methods to study ethnic and religious differentiation and the new divide – between the privileged minority profiting from European grants for study and volunteer labour and youth without experiences of mobility caught in disadvantaged positions in disadvantaged regions.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the process of integration of European youth research was fostered by three major trends: the strengthening of the networks of researchers themselves; the new strategy of the European Union to promote transnational research and the development of European youth policy as coordinated efforts of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The advent of new technologies helped to boost the activities of researchers from networks such as CYRCE, EGRIS, the Youth and Generation Network of the European Sociological Association and others. The continuous efforts of Research Committee 34 of the International Sociological Association deserve particular mention for promoting international cooperation between youth researchers and for supporting young youth researchers through training seminars and individual encouragement. The Lisbon Strategy, adopted in 2000, promoted the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) with the strategic goal of developing a knowledge-based economy. The 2007 Green Paper on the European Research Area paved the way for significant changes



resulting in a plethora of comparative research projects on youth funded under the European Union Framework Programmes.

At present, European youth research is developing as a loosely constructed practice-orientated field of social inquiry crossing the boundaries of disciplines, sectors, and specialisms and developing new theoretical and empirical frameworks capable of guiding practice and informing policy. The field is sensitive to the different forms of individualisation among young people in different historical and social contexts and its essence is in intercultural and comparative research perspectives (Bynner & Chisholm, 1998). The comparative nature of the field has always been an intrinsic feature of social studies but for European youth research it adds a further dimension of diversity. While in the 1990s volumes of youth studies contained chapters on different countries as case studies, in the first decades of the new century youth research became intrinsically comparative, interpreting results from international projects designed from the beginning with a comparative perspective (for an overview of the European youth research projects, see European Commission, 2009a).

As one would anticipate of a cross-disciplinary field, research in European youth studies is in methodological terms wide-ranging, drawing both on quantitative and qualitative paradigms, although to date there is little evidence of positivistic studies within an experimental or quasi-experimental framework. Although European youth studies has no dedicated models of enquiry or truth tests which are uniquely its own, it has rich access to the research traditions which constitute its contributing disciplines like sociology, philosophy, educational sciences, economics, sociolinguistics, psychology and cultural anthropology as well as fields of knowledge or practice like political studies, education, management or cultural studies. Many studies are broadly phenomenological, exploring lived experience through its own accounts, sometimes supplemented by video ethnography; others begin by applying existing theoretical frameworks or analytical constructs to the field or seek to evolve and test new explanatory concepts. However, its geopolitical framing as *European* youth studies unavoidably accentuates a comparative dimension which bends this methodological eclecticism in a particular direction, towards on the one hand large scale multinational survey data and meta-analysis of multiple data sources and on the other hand towards cross-site generalizations derived from accumulated case studies of youth policy and practice as well as historical and contextual studies. There is an increasing interest in various forms of participatory research including action research, often in multi-agency contexts. There have also been concerted attempts to tidy the conceptual frameworks of the field and promote a research agenda that (to use a Quaker phrase) 'talks to the condition' of both policy makers and practitioners and is coherent with our shared values and commitments, so that for example the research agenda will encompass studies aimed at addressing inequalities of gender, class and ethnicity.

Building upon the former highlighting of diverse agendas, methodologies and cultural contexts the trend now is toward the formation of an integrated research area. In aggregate, it aims to arrive at holistic understandings of the local, national, European and global youth realities and more creative and responsive methodologies whilst recognising and incorporating the views of the users of youth research (Chisholm, 2006a). A common understanding is that of young people as active agents in social change. Creating an autonomous and legitimate field of European youth research does not mean establishing new boundaries between included and excluded, a reserved terrain for chosen experts, nor does it mean a Europe-centred self-sufficiency neglecting those beyond the political, economic, cultural or imaginary borders of Europe. There are still tensions in the field between the sometimes-competing discourses and frameworks of the contributory academic disciplines, as well as inside each discipline or field between competing approaches and methodologies, not the least due to personal controversies. A complex unity of theory and research practice is developing as a 'dialogistic social co-production of knowledge' (Bendit, 2006: 114), building bridges toward policy and education and aiming to empower young people to navigate better in the complex social world.

### **3.4 Approaching our selected readings**

It is with these characteristics in mind (which are still in the making) that we selected the papers in the section on European youth research. The first three papers (Stafseng, 2001; Helve *et al.*, 2005;

Chisholm, 2006a) offer historical insights on European youth research and make prospective suggestions for its future development. Although they all address the issue of a youth research agenda, they offer different perspectives rooted in very different social contexts. For Stafseng youth research is a field of discourse and knowledge that is constructed via the dialogue between scientific disciplines and themes from youth realities. The communication, though, is not based on a balance of power between researchers from different European countries, different research traditions and different generations. This is well revealed in the study of the history of youth research in Europe which is a process of decoding work on the mix of surface and hidden agendas, continuity and change, while innovation comes not from breaking with the past but from sharing the common intellectual heritage and juxtaposing it with new theoretical and methodological solutions.

Helve, Leccardi and Kovacheva present the multiplicity of theories and practices of youth research in differing geographical and cultural regions and argue for a re-conceptualisation of youth and cross-fertilisation between the concepts and the empirical facts constructed in the research. This seems more easily done from the perspective of the thriving intellectual community and well institutionalized field of Nordic youth research than from the less visible South European tradition or the more silent efforts of East European scholars in the post communist half of Europe.<sup>11</sup> Where individual readers will locate themselves historically or geographically will influence their understanding of the ongoing debate but inevitably all will discover tensions and gaps in this exchange of ideas. The text of Chisholm joins the discussion from a new perspective – that of the forward-looking analyst overseeing the formation of a ‘consciously and specifically European youth research field’ (Chisholm, 2006a: 11). The emergence of this distinctive field of study is seen as linked to the new realities in Europe such as the evolution of a European public sphere, matched by a relevant European institutional policy and a growing sense of belonging to Europe as a community of values and practices. The author argues that the anchoring features of European youth studies are the integrated process of theory-research enrichment and the critical interrogation of research, policy and practice in studying and supporting young people in Europe. This is not to say that the field is without methodological challenges but that its conceptual capacity, methodological skills and ethical standards of social responsibility have already come of age.

The next three papers focus on some key dimensions of the agenda of European youth research as highlighted in the previous analyses. Spanring’s text (2008) starts from the concept of youth participation and develops it within the long lasting and ever changing dilemma in social research of agency and structure. Many of the challenges that young people’s engagement in politics is facing in present day European societies arise from the de-structuring of social institutions in late modernity. The author finds an explanation for the current disaffection of youth’s relationship with politics in the prolonged individualized transitions of young people to adulthood as shaped by the ailing labour markets and flexibilised and insecure working conditions in European economies. The author’s approach is cross-country and comparative, combining quantitative data from official statistics and large scales surveys with qualitative information about young Europeans’ own accounts and conceptualizations of their participation in politics.

Feixa, Pereira and Juris (2009) take a different perspective on youth participation in politics arising from cultural studies. They examine young people’s involvement in the symbolic struggle on the terrain of cultural identities, highlighting the right to difference. While the ‘new, new social movements’ are not typically youth forms of collective action as was the student movement in the 1960s and the early 1970s (Touraine, 1978) and their social base crosses generations, genders, ethnicities, territories, they show the role of young people in acquiring citizenship within the context of increasing globalization and transnationalism. What is new in the analysis of the ‘new, new social movements’ is the grasping of the dynamics of the complex and unstable geometry of these identity-based movements. For Leccardi (2006) the uniqueness of the contemporary forms of identity

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to acknowledge in this aspect the linguistic barrier that one could identify both in Southern and Eastern Europe, where English – usually recognised as the ‘common’ language of international academic cooperation and dialogue – was not widely used. It is only in the past few years that in most of these countries efforts to publish in English have been encouraged.

construction in youth comes not so much from the widening of the geographical scope of youth civic participation, as from the transformations in young people's conceptualisation of time and their representations of the future. A most significant consequence of the new global risks is making the future 'indeterminate and indeterminable' which in turn leads to an erosion of the idea of the project in young people's biographical constructions and a shift toward a life in the 'extended present'. The paper makes a valuable contribution to the debate about agency by arguing that in times of uncertainty the rational strategy for action is to turn the opacity of the future into a chance for the present exploring new frontiers that the late modern 'accelerated' society opens.

## **4. Constructions of European Youth Policy**

### **4.1 Policy, youth, European: clarifying terms (?)**

So far we have focused on the emergence and development of youth as a concept, of youth research as a coherent (if multifaceted and interdisciplinary) field of investigation, and of the distinguishing features of young people's lives and experiences in modernity and postmodernity. Parallel to and integrally connected with all of the above has been the development by government(s) of policy that is specifically concerned with, and directed towards, young people. What we now call 'youth policy' can best be regarded as a subset of social policy, which in its modern form began to emerge in 'western' societies in the late 19th century as a response to changes and challenges associated with industrialisation, urbanisation, technological innovation and intellectual/ideological ferment. Philanthropic individuals and organisations played a key role in promoting and providing new responses to pressing social problems (relating for example to poverty, health and sanitation, education, the circumstances of workers and their families), but so too did researchers and intellectuals, among them some of the pioneering figures in the development of the social sciences. However, the *institutionalisation* of social policy required above all the development and acceptance of new notions of the role and remit of the *state* as having the right and responsibility to govern a wide range of aspects of the lives of individuals and groups within given territorial borders, and this applied with particular force in the case of the emergent social category of 'youth', although at a somewhat varying pace and with different patterns of impact throughout the continent of Europe (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998).

One way of looking at social policy is to consider the major 'social services' such as health, housing, social security, education and welfare or 'personal social services'; this was the conventional approach to both the practice and the study of social policy for many years (Burden, 1997). Another is to look at the main population sub-groups that social policy is concerned with, including most obviously in the present context 'young people' but also children, the elderly, people with disabilities, the poor, one or other gender or ethnic group, people in or out of work, and so on. Clearly the two approaches are not mutually exclusive since certain types of service may be more associated with (more relevant to or required by) particular groups. Different types of care services, for example, are most likely to be needed by the very young or the very old. But for any group to be 'targeted' in this way there must first be recognition on the part of policy-makers that such a group exists and that its members have sufficiently distinctive needs or attributes to merit their being treated differently.

As was stated earlier, the idea that youth is a distinctive stage of life, and one requiring separate institutional provision and specialist support from a range of professions, can be dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, there remains considerable ambiguity regarding the delineation of this stage in terms of chronological age. Different societies and cultures have different conceptions of youth and how it relates to childhood on the one hand and adulthood on the other. But the situation is even more complex, and in a way that relates directly to policy. Even within any one European country, it is often the case that 'different administrative parts of the state define youth in different ways' (Wallace & Bendit, 2009: 448). These differences are often reflected in legislation, meaning that the laws relating to education, criminal justice, employment or health may reflect contrasting assumptions about the nature of the transition(s) from childhood to adulthood and the age at which various faculties, capacities and dimensions of 'maturity' have been attained. As

Berger and Berger write: 'the law always reflects the society in which it has its being, and in this particular area the ambiguities of the law reflect the ambiguities of the society's conception of youth.' (1976: 236).

Not surprisingly, this ambiguity extends to the European level. To take some examples from the European Union, different definitions of 'young person(s)' or 'youth' may be found in the Council Directive on the protection of young people at work, in which young persons are those under 18 years of age (Council Directive 94/33/EC), the Eurobarometer surveys, in which the youth population usually refers to those aged 15-24, and the European Commission's recent strategy document *Investing and Empowering*, in which youth is defined as 'broadly speaking teenagers and young adults from 13 to 30 years old' (European Commission, 2009b: 2). The point here is not to argue that a standard definition of 'young people' or 'youth' at national or international level is either practicable or desirable, because the increasing complexity of young people's lives and the 'dynamic heterogeneity' of youth transitions (Chisholm, 1995a: 139) would render such an exercise futile. It is simply to suggest that in considering 'European youth policy' an important, and difficult, preliminary question to address is: what is the 'youth' for which the policy is designed? The fact that the answer is not straightforward itself provides us with an important insight into the circumstances and experiences of young people, the sometimes fraught nature of their relationships with social institutions and the 'mixed messages' they may think, with good cause, they are receiving from policy makers and officialdom (Devlin, 2006).

The next important question is 'what is *European* about European youth policy?' The example just given of the EU Council Directive on the protection of young people in employment provides one type of answer: European youth policy is policy that applies across national boundaries, having been formally agreed and adopted by member states of a body that operates at a transnational level. Even if the policy in question does not have the status of law or of a binding directive we can also use 'European youth policy' in this sense to refer to the ways in which countries in 'Europe' - the Council of Europe as well as the European Union - are increasingly working together through these international bodies (and often prompted by them) to achieve common ends. The word 'European' here is therefore used in a primarily institutional sense. We can also use 'European youth policy' to refer to the type(s) of youth policy that exist in the different countries and regions of Europe, the similarities and differences between them, the factors shaping their development and implementation and the issues arising. Here the term 'European' is used geopolitically, meaning 'in Europe'. Used in either of these two senses, questions arise concerning the extent to which 'European youth policy' reflects a shared vision or shared values. Each of these 'constructions' of European youth policy is explored further below.

#### **4.2 European Union: youth policy in the 'mainstream'?**

There was a youth policy dimension even to the original Treaty establishing what is now the European Union, reflecting the concern with mobility of labour within a 'common market' (as the European Economic Community was informally known). Article 50 of the Treaty of Rome provided that 'member states shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers', and exchange programmes for this purpose were first introduced in the 1960s. It is for this reason that one author has suggested that youth policy has 'always been part of the mainstream' within the EU, although he adds that such policy has been limited to a concern with education, vocational training and employment. 'In essence the EU wants the young to be educated, skilled and then employed. Beyond that, it has paid no attention [and there are] no signs of development' (Geyer, 2000: 195, 202).

Such remarks, published in 2000, do not of course take account of developments since the turn of the century, but they also perhaps take insufficient account of initiatives before then. Mobility and exchange opportunities for young people in general (rather than just young workers) were introduced in 1988 (the first 'Youth for Europe' programme) and when the Treaty of Maastricht was signed in 1992 the chapter on 'education, vocational training and youth' was included in the main

body rather than relegated to the Protocol and Agreement on Social Policy as were most other areas of social affairs (although the Protocol and Agreement was subsequently included in the main body of the Treaty of Amsterdam; see Hantrais, 2000: 47; Sykes, 2005: 330). Among other things the Treaty of Maastricht gave the European Community (as it then became known) formal entitlement to take action aimed at 'encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors' (article 126), thereby opening up possibilities for non-formal and informal education and, crucially, non-formal and informal educators. 'Socio-educational instructors' is, in the EU context, 'the legal term for youth workers' (European Commission, 2009b: 11). The Maastricht formulation has been maintained in subsequent treaties, with the significant addition in the Treaty of Lisbon (in what is now article 165) of the words 'and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe'.

The concern with 'young people's participation in democratic life' has increasingly informed the development of EU youth policy in recent years. The *White Paper on Youth* (European Commission, 2001a) was prompted not least by the worry that there was a 'democratic deficit' in the EU and that young people were among those most affected (the link between youth policy initiatives and perceptions of disaffected youth has a long history; see Davies, 2009). 'Active citizenship' was the core theme of the *White Paper* and it remains one of the three main 'pillars of youth policy cooperation' in the EU, along with social and occupational integration (promoting education, youth employment and social inclusion) and 'youth mainstreaming' in other policy areas (see the paper by Denstad in this Reader). Following the publication of the Commission's strategy document *Investing and Empowering* in 2009, the Council Resolution on a Renewed Framework for Cooperation in the Youth Field set out a range of 'fields of action' that was much broader than might have seemed likely when Geyer suggested there were no signs of development in the 'non-traditional' areas of youth policy, namely those beyond education, vocational training and employment (Geyer, 2000: 202). The *Renewed Framework* includes actions relating to education, employment, health, participation and volunteering, social inclusion, 'youth and the world', and creativity and culture (Council of the European Union, 2009). On the face of it, this and other recent initiatives would appear to bear out the view that 'programmes to help young people' are in fact among those that 'have a 'medium or high possibility of further development' at EU level (Taylor-Gooby, 2004: 12) as well as the suggestion that a 'European perspective' enables us to see social policy in broader terms, 'involving more policy areas than the conventional classic social policy domains' (Clasen, 2008: 443).

However the question remains as to what are the concrete outcomes at national (and regional and local) level of EU developments such as those just mentioned. What can the EU actually 'do about social policy'? The focus on social issues (as opposed to, or in addition to, economic ones) has certainly increased over the years of the EU's existence, with a number of 'social action programmes', a green paper and white paper on social policy (Commission of the European Communities, 1993; European Commission, 1994), a 'social chapter' in the main body of the Treaty (since 1997), a 'Renewed Social Agenda' in 2008 (European Commission, 2008) and more recently the incorporation into the Treaty of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. However, the principle of subsidiarity, formally introduced into EU law by the Treaty of Maastricht and retained in the Treaty of Lisbon, means that the European Union cannot insist that member states implement any particular measure other than in those areas for which it has 'exclusive competence' (economic and monetary policy, customs union, competition rules and a few others). There are some areas in which there is 'joint competence' on the part of the EU and member states but they exclude most social policy, including education, training and youth. In relation to these, member states have exclusive competence and the EU's role is 'supporting'. This is why documents such as those mentioned above regularly use such terms as 'youth policy cooperation', and why the mechanism introduced in the *White Paper on Youth* (and reiterated in the *Renewed Framework*) for progressing youth policy development is the Open Method of Coordination (OMC, described in the papers by Denstad and Williamson in this Reader). This method (first used for employment policy and subsequently for education, culture, research, immigration, asylum and other areas) is primarily 'intergovernmental' in character, with the European Commission taking the role of facilitating, encouraging and supporting the development of common objectives, 'benchmarks' and 'indicators' and the dissemination of best

practice in given areas of policy. The *Renewed Framework*, for example, proposes a greater emphasis on knowledge-building and evidence based youth policy (by, among other things, further development of the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP)), mutual learning between member states through 'peer learning activities, conferences and seminars', the development of new indicators for youth policy, and the use of the structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations (Devlin, 2010).

Nonetheless, even if member states formally retain exclusive competence in relation to youth policy, this does not mean that significant progress cannot be, and has not been, made towards the establishment of a 'European youth policy' within the EU. It is unlikely that the effort of designing and developing all the initiatives mentioned above would have been expended if they were not thought to be having some effect. The same applies to other areas of social policy. Education is a good example. It is obviously an area with enormous significance for young people, and the explicitly youth-related work of the European Commission is handled by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) which has two youth units, one responsible for youth policy and the other in charge of the management of the Youth in Action programme. A recent study of the Education and Training 2010 programme (which arose out of the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 and was followed by the current ET 2020 programme, retaining the same broad objectives but with an increased focus on lifelong learning), suggests that while 'at a formal level, there is no EU policy on education, but only cooperation and inter-governmental policy cooperation', nonetheless the field of education might be regarded as 'one of the most effective European policies' (Nóvoa, 2010: 264). This is because 'the invention of comparable indicators is not only an operation to describe reality; it is also a powerful way of constructing new ideas and practices in education' (*ibid.*: 265). Nóvoa goes on to argue that this is part of a broader shift in European affairs away from *government* ('inhabited by citizens, elections, representation...') towards *governance* (inhabited by networks, peer review, agreements...); the 'new modes of governance are based on logics of contracting and networks, heavily backed up by data, assessments, impacts, benchmarking, best practices and mutual learning' (*ibid.*: 270). The overall effect is greater 'cohesion and configuration of policy', not through the imposition of sanctions but by means of a 'more sophisticated approach' (*ibid.*: 269).

The move at national and international levels towards 'network governance', specifically in education policy but more generally in social and public policy, is also documented by Stephen Ball, who emphasises the role played by heterarchies. A heterarchy is 'an organisational form, somewhere between hierarchy and network, that draws upon diverse horizontal links that permit different elements of the policy process to cooperate (and/or compete) while individually optimising different success criteria' (Ball, 2010: 155-156). It is a 'policy device, a way of trying things out, getting things done, changing things and avoiding established public sector lobbies and interests... New forms of power, authority and subjectivity are brought to bear in shaping governable domains and governable persons' (*ibid.*: 158). Social policy (including youth policy) formation in the EU might be said to display elements of heterarchy, given its 'variety of policy dynamics... the multi-level structure of the policy process, the variable relationship between national- and EU-level policy areas... [and the fact that] EU policy is becoming increasingly interest-group-led' (Geyer, 2000: 208-209). The relationship between such interest groups and the European Commission is key. 'Most EU social policy groups are funded by the Commission. They gain strength and legitimacy from this at the same time as the Commission creates a political base for its social policy activities' (*ibid.*: 209).

#### **4.3 Council of Europe: participation and partnership**

While the word 'economic' no longer features in the EU's name, economic matters of course remain absolutely central to its purpose. The overall goal of *Youth on the Move*, one of the seven flagship initiatives under Europe 2020 (the successor to the Lisbon Strategy of 2000) is 'to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union' (European Commission, 2010). The balance between, and the relationship between, economic and other objectives (and specifically 'social' ones), have been the subject of much debate both within the EU polity and on the part of scholars studying EU affairs. That balance has undoubtedly been influenced over the years by the Council of Europe (CoE).

The Council of Europe was established in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War, by ten founding member states, with the purpose of promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and cultural cooperation across the continent. Its most important and best-known instrument is the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), which established (and is enforced by) the European Court of Human Rights. For several decades the CoE's membership was confined to the countries of Western Europe but in the years following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 it grew into a genuinely pan-European organisation. Just as the European Convention on Human Rights was a key influence on the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, the CoE's European Social Charter served as a source of inspiration for the Community Charter on the Fundamental Rights of Workers, which was eventually to become the 'social chapter' in the EU Treaty (Hantreis, 2000: 2). Although lacking the legally binding status of the Convention, the Charter set out a number of fundamental rights for workers and citizens, and made explicit reference to the rights of children to social, legal and economic protection. It was revised and 'enriched' in 1996 and the Revised European Social Charter is gradually replacing the original treaty (Council of Europe, 2011: 2).

The Council of Europe was one of the first international institutions to focus in a concerted way on the needs, rights and circumstances of young people and on facilitating 'youth participation' in society. In this too it has had a profound influence on the EU. The contributions by Denstad and Williamson in this Reader link its development and its approach to youth affairs with key historical moments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as the social unrest of 1968 across Europe, the political transformations of 1989 and the impact of '9/11' and subsequent terrorist attacks on European cities (see also Williamson, 2008a). The Council of Europe's 'co-management' structure in the field of youth is designed to reflect its value commitment to youth participation, and is intended to inform the discussions at regular youth ministers conferences, the first of which was in Strasbourg in 1985 and the most recent (the eighth) in Kiev, Ukraine in October 2008 (the next is expected to be in St. Petersburg, Russia, in September 2012).

The Kiev conference proposed a long-term strategy for the Council of Europe's youth policy. Entitled *Agenda 2020*, it was subsequently adopted by the Committee of Ministers, which is the decision-making body of the Council of Europe and comprises the Foreign Ministers of member states (or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg). Its three priority themes are: human rights and democracy; living together in diverse societies; and the social inclusion of young people (Council of Europe, 2008). These overlap substantially with the current priorities of the Youth Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Union, which was established in 2005 when a single partnership agreement brought together and built on several existing areas of cooperation. For the years 2010 to 2013 the Youth Partnership has adopted priority objectives in relation to the social inclusion of young people; democracy and human rights, democratic citizenship and youth participation; and intercultural dialogue and diversity.

#### **4.4 Other constructions, diverse regimes**

On reviewing the youth policy documents of both the European Union and the Council of Europe (or even just the 'headline' terms mentioned above), the reader might be forgiven for sensing a pattern of 'circularity' whereby a small number of themes and topics consistently reappear. Howard Williamson has commented that 'the same rather predictable themes can be found repetitively in numerous resolutions and declarations by youth ministers and others: the rhetoric is easy to produce, real development and action is rather more elusive' (Williamson, 2008a: 67). Nonetheless, as Williamson adds, it is not all 'hot air': he draws attention to some 'concrete tools' that have emerged from the process, relating to both 'the overarching political and economic agendas of the European Commission (economy, education, social issues) and the more legal and cultural concerns of the Council of Europe (human rights, democracy and the rule of law)' (*ibid.*). It is certainly the case that in working together in such a concerted way the European Union and the Council of Europe have added significant weight to the idea that there is such a thing as 'European youth policy', in the sense of a policy approach to youth that is shared – even if only in an emergent way – across the continent of Europe.

However, as already noted that is not the only possible meaning (or construction) of 'European youth policy', since the term can also be used to refer to the patterns of convergence and divergence in youth policies across the countries and regions of Europe. Here too we can draw parallels with other areas of social policy and with the discipline of social policy in general. Different systems of education, for example, might be classified according to the stage at which pupils select or are selected for important transition routes, with implications for later participation rates (Chisholm, 1992). Whole 'regimes' of social policy or social welfare can be classified according to a variety of criteria. A particularly well known and influential example of such an approach is Esping-Andersen's (1990) use of statistical indicators to create a distinction between three main types of welfare state in western capitalist societies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely regimes that are 'liberal' (modest public spending, means-tested welfare benefits, selective public services), 'conservative' (higher public spending, social insurance-based welfare benefits, emphasis on the role of families rather than public services) and 'social democratic' (very high public spending, generous and almost universal welfare benefits and public services). Such categories (even when limited to one part of Europe or type of society as in this case) are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive but they can be helpful analytical tools – 'ideal types' in Weber's sense – that enable us to make sense of a range of disparate social policy data at national and regional levels. 'Regime theory' can throw light on how 'different approaches to promoting human wellbeing may be converging; alternatively, to understand how, despite...pressures [of internationalisation and globalisation], some countries may be "path dependent" and unable to change' (Dean, 2006: 32).

One example of an approach to the study of youth policy that is influenced by Esping-Andersen (1990) is Pohl and Walther's (2007) comparative analysis of different ways in which EU member states interpret and implement the concept of 'activation' in addressing the needs of disadvantaged young people. While the authors find that 'all approaches tend to reduce social integration to labour market integration and youth transitions to school-to-work transitions' (Pohl & Walther, 2007: 536) they do find significant regional differences (their study was initiated in the early 2000s and is based on ten EU member states and three accession states). The major different regimes they identify are the 'universalistic' (Scandinavian countries), with a comprehensive school system and an emphasis on education as the focus of transition policies; liberal (UK), where individual rights and responsibilities are valued above collective provisions; employment-centred (Austria and Germany), in which schooling is more selectively organised, allocating young people into occupations and social positions; 'sub-protective' (Southern European countries) in which the relative scarcity of 'standard' work opportunities means a significant role is played by the family and by informal work arrangements; and the 'post-communist' countries where the restructuring of the economy and labour market had presented people with 'de-standardisation, uncertainty and risk' to which different countries were adopting different policy responses (Pohl & Walther, 2007: 544-548). The patterns of policy and provision discerned by the authors reflect the fact that conceptions of such matters as needs, rights and responsibilities, welfare, the state and civil society are in some ways consistent and in others contrasting across the continent of Europe. This reminds us that the study of youth policy raises issues and questions that are at the heart of social policy more generally.

#### **4.5 Approaching our selected readings**

The contributions to this section of the Reader have been chosen to reflect the range of themes, issues and questions touched on above and the fact that the term 'European youth policy' can itself be interpreted and 'constructed' in different ways. The first, by Finn Denstad (2009), focuses primarily on the 'institutional' dimension: the policies and programmes implemented by the Council of Europe and the European Union in the youth field, both separately and – increasingly in recent times – through the EU-CoE Youth Partnership. The author also introduces the youth-related work of the United Nations and asks whether there is such a thing as a European or international 'standard' for youth policy development. The paper is intended both to provide information and to serve as a guide for those who might themselves be working towards the development of a national youth policy.



The paper by Howard Williamson (2007) also describes the work of the Council of Europe and the European Union and places their work in historical context. Drawing on his own earlier work, Williamson analyses the national youth policy reviews sponsored by the Council of Europe in order to develop 'the first attempt at a transversal, inter-sectoral youth policy framework'. The key elements of the framework are the conceptualisation of youth and youth policy; structural considerations; principal domains of policy; cross-cutting issues; and 'foundation stones' such as the use of research and professional training of practitioners. Further aspects of this approach are presented both in the paper reproduced here and in other publications by the same author (Williamson, 2008a; 2008b).

Williamson's framework is one example of the use of 'principles of classification' in policy analysis. Another example follows in Wallace and Bendit's paper (2011) in which the influence of Esping-Andersen's 'regime theory' is obvious and acknowledged. The authors construct a classification of 'youth policy tendencies' in the European Union (as it stood in 2000, with 15 member states) as well as Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway (European Economic Area countries) on the basis of three principles: philosophies of intervention, including the dominant concept of youth; target groups, including age groups and other sub-groups; and the organisation of the youth sector. This results in the identification of four youth policy regimes, or types of 'tendency', which are labelled 'universalistic', 'community-based', 'protective' and 'centralised'. Wallace and Bendit acknowledge the methodological difficulties in basing an analysis on individual country reports by expert correspondents who may vary significantly in how they interpret the questions posed. The attempt to deal with such difficulties is itself a useful example for students approaching the task of comparative policy analysis.

As well as reviewing the types of policy regime that exist in Europe (as Wallace and Bendit do) and attempting to construct frameworks for development based on the experience of individual countries (as Williamson does), it is possible to approach European youth policy from the point of view of the needs and circumstances of young people in Europe, their lives and lifestyles and the types of transitions that they are undergoing, and the implications of these for the policies that local, regional and national authorities and European institutions are or should be developing. This approach is exemplified by du Bois-Reymond's paper (2009). The author identifies three important aspects or 'constellations' of young people's transitions in contemporary Europe – their learning environments, both formal and non-formal; their experiences of migration and the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of young people and of societies in general; and the increasing challenge they face of finding a satisfactory 'work-learning-family-life balance' at a time of growing uncertainty and insecurity. Referring to the structure-agency dialectic in social theory and specifically in youth research, and noting that 'participation' is a key notion in European youth policy documents and rhetoric, du Bois-Reymond suggests that policy relating to young people's transitions should be judged 'according to the action space it provides for or withholds from young people'.

Helen Colley's paper (2007) focuses on another topic discussed earlier: the tension in EU policy making between economic and social objectives. Colley suggests that the tone of official documents dealing with economic competitiveness and social cohesion moved from one of 'urgency' to 'emergency' as the 1990s gave way to the 2000s, and that aspects of youth policy that do not relate directly to employment and education have had a lower status in the 'policy-making hierarchy' (this clearly echoes the view of Geyer cited earlier). She questions whether the 'less utilitarian' view of young people expressed in the *White Paper on Youth*, which she sees as striking a better balance between economic strategies and opportunities for active citizenship (and also as allowing more room for young people's own voices to be heard) will be maintained in practice. Her remarks were made before the publication of the European Commission's *Investing and Empowering* and the Council's *Renewed Framework* in 2009. The latter document recognises at the outset that 'promoting social and professional integration of young women and men is an essential component to reach the objectives of Europe's Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, at the same time as promoting personal fulfilment, social cohesion and active citizenship' (Council of the European

Union, 2009: 2). The years to 2018 will tell how well the balance between the two sets of objectives is struck.

Finally, the issue of young people's own perceptions of the policy-making process and of their role within it is considered by Laine and Gretscher (2009) who use the EU Presidency 'youth event' as a case study. This is an event for young people and the youth sector organised by each member state during its hosting of the EU presidency. Each country manages the event 'in its own way but in dialogue with the European Commission' and since 2005 the events have formed part of the 'structured dialogue' with young people. The authors point out however that the events have varied 'quite radically' in terms of the way in which 'the different actors of the youth field have been integrated' and moreover that they have had 'a very small impact on the EU level youth policy'. After a detailed consideration of the organisation of the Finnish EU Presidency youth event in 2006 (based on participant observation and interviews with young delegates) they make a number of suggestions for ways in which the event might have greater influence on policy and represent a more 'equal dialogue between young people, administrators and researchers'. In noting that 'the relationship between young people and adults is always a power relationship' they also touch on a theme that has relevance not just to policy but to all aspects of youth studies in Europe and beyond.

## **5. Practice: the realities of European Youth Work**

### **5.1 European youth work: history, scope, methods and issues**

This part of the introductory chapter features European youth work, although given the theme of the Reader as a whole the selection and treatment are not in isolation. It is an attempt to draw out and elucidate some underpinning themes and dilemmas from the fragmented discourse that charts how the field of European youth work has developed in terms of its history, scope, methods and issues. We first consider some general issues, and then briefly address the selected readings.

A first observation is that, just as was the case with youth policy, we can approach 'European youth work' either by looking at the ways in which the major European institutions are developing and encouraging a shared approach to youth work across Europe, or by considering the differences and similarities at regional and national level. Wherever we begin, we will of necessity encounter certain points of tension and ambiguity, since the efforts to promote a common approach may encounter greater interest or greater antipathy (or just apathy) from some quarters than others. In some European countries there is scarcely any historical or contemporary provision or practice that corresponds to what others recognise and value as youth work; and for that reason the term itself does not translate directly or comfortably into a number of European languages. Nonetheless those countries with a strong youth work tradition have in recent years engaged increasingly in transnational initiatives and approaches, actively encouraged by the Council of Europe and the European Union through the implementation of policies and programmes such as those mentioned in the previous parts of the introductory chapter.

On the basis of a consideration of those countries where a relatively clear understanding exists of what youth work entails, Peter Lauritzen produced a summarising statement:

*[Generally] youth work is defined as a domain of 'out-of-school' education and thus linked to non-formal or informal learning ... Most 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 (Lauritzen, 2006).*

We will return later to the tensions inherent in the twin commitment to 'personal' and 'social' aims and outcomes. First it is worth noting that the above definition refers to both 'non-formal' and

'informal' learning. While these are sometimes used interchangeably it is also possible to distinguish between them in significant respects. One formulation from a group of youth workers and youth organisations produced the following distinction:

*Non-formal education refers to learning and development that takes place outside of the formal educational field, but which is [relatively] structured and based on learning objectives. This is differentiated from informal learning, which is not structured and takes place in daily life activities within peer/family groups etc. Youth work interventions typically result in both non-formal and informal learning (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005: 13).*

In practice, the balance struck between the non-formal and informal will tend to reflect the traditions, missions and identities of different organisations and youth workers and how they see themselves relating to other professions and/or movements.<sup>12</sup>

We next consider whether it is possible to learn lessons from the way 'youth work', however understood and categorised, has been historically constructed across Europe. It is an underpinning theoretical position of this Reader that the categorical terms of the 'youth field' are not only 'socially constructed' but also at times fuzzy around the edges, particularly when we impose upon them a European dimension. This is because socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) is culture-specific and certain nuances can be 'lost in translation'. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that efforts to characterise the varied and nebulous activities that make up 'European youth work' are worthwhile and that historical understanding is an essential aspect of this endeavour alongside a critical and situated reflection by practitioners that goes beyond introspection. This is partly a question of developing 'historical imagination' (Collingwood, 1994[1946]) as a facet of professional reflective practice, partly a task for the professional historian.

Marwick (2001) is representative of those purist historians who see history as a scholarly rather than a political activity; although essential to the understanding of the present it owes no allegiance to meta-narratives that prioritise future directions in which civic society might develop, and therefore (one might infer) should be neutral in the face of the European 'ideological project' in the field of youth. Although sometimes carrying 'lessons' for the future, history does so by making us better able to grapple with contemporary issues, not by solving them. It is not a source of off-the-shelf tried and tested policies, not least because social and political situations are notoriously unique. Also, when the boundaries between the political, the educational, the economic and the social are being crossed, historical analysis runs the danger of arbitrary classification into 'periods'. A 'period' has no *a priori* existence except as an analytical tool, so a period 'making sense' for social history will not necessarily do so for political history.

The urge to synthesise or generalise in historical accounts will typically take the form of contestable meta-narratives. As we are dealing with a collocation of social constructs, the chosen task of articulating a specifically 'European' perspective on 'youth work' will constitute a difficulty, in particular owed to the potential tension between transnational, national and local perspectives, with the choice between them often implicitly political.

One text taking an explicitly European vantage point is *The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for youth policy today* (Verschelden *et al.*, 2009a) which emerged from the first (in Blankenberge, Belgium in May 2008) of a series of workshops considering the history of youth work explicitly in relation to policy both at national and transnational levels, the tension between them being one of the main issues under discussion. Subsequent conferences and seminars followed this lead, with the general purpose of encouraging a convergent meta-narrative while at the same time being acutely aware of the power of 'local knowledge' (Geetz, 1993).

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<sup>12</sup> As well as distinguishing between the non-formal and informal we should be attentive to the possible differences of emphasis and orientation between 'education' and 'learning'. For comments on such differences in the 'lifelong learning' context see Griffin (2009); Rubenson (2009).

Important methodological and substantive issues to do with the so-called 'lessons' of history are addressed by Lorenz (2009) who senses the difficulties involved in turning a complex non-linear history that embraced both the 'uniformed youth movements' of past totalitarian regimes and civilized laissez-faire voluntarism into a single European meta-narrative. His overarching question is to ask what purpose a history might serve, and the implication of his analysis is that we might together and in our separate nation states best counter oppressive or potentially dangerous cultural trends by recognizing them and opposing them. So the political and ideological drift towards a functionalist youth work 'audit culture' might be challenged by taking an iconoclastic view of history itself as a politicized narrative serving the consolidation of privilege.

This line of argument reverberates with the account offered of the German perspective (Spatscheck, 2009), where the periodisation is far from arbitrary. 'Phase 3: the National Socialists' Ideological Youth Work' depicts the HJ (Hitler Jugend) as specifically targeted to be ideological carriers. It is no surprise that subsequent 're-education' was largely emancipatory in spirit, with a concern for the 'hard to reach', although the FDJ (Free German Youth) was equally an 'ideological state apparatus' (to borrow a phrase and provocative interpretation from Althusser, 1970). Much of the current anxiety surrounding 'problematic' European youth relates to fears of a resurgence of extreme right wing politics. Under the one-party regimes in Eastern Europe the attempt was to indoctrinate youth into the 'communist ideals' but also to impose a unification by abolishing the various youth organisations that existed before World War Two and creating a singular organisation for the relevant age group; the 'young pioneers' organisation for those aged 10-14 and the Komsomol (Youth Communist League) for those aged 14-28.

The European project for youth is itself a political ideology<sup>13</sup>, rooted in a strong consensus centred on human rights and democracy. At European level, the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, created as 'laboratories of experimental learning' (Lauritzen, 2004: 54) in 1972 and 2005 respectively, have played a crucial role in translating European values into educational programmes and activities. In a unique set-up of equally shared power, the entire youth sector of the Council of Europe has been co-managed by international non-governmental youth organisations and governments signatory to the European Cultural Convention since the inception of the Strasbourg Centre, applying the values promoted by the sector to the governance of the European Youth Centres as well as the European Youth Foundation. The European Union has, from its side, contributed an operational sector programme to the European youth project, in its 2007-2013 version called the *Youth in Action Programme* with funding of 885 million euro over its 7-year duration. While the approaches of the two institutions to cement European values among young people do overlap, the Council of Europe concentrates its work on activities with and for civil society organisations, whereas the Youth in Action Programme provides opportunities for individual young Europeans to receive support, most notably for voluntary service projects.

However, the advent of the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe gave new focus and direction to the educational approach in the training of youth workers and youth leaders, establishing in ATTE (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) and TALE (Trainers for Active Learning in Europe) long-term training courses aimed at identifying a profile of key competences, particularly in intercultural learning, essential to a European level 'training of trainers' in the youth field. Both tended to define 'European youth work' in terms of a portfolio of 'competences', including specifically intercultural competences, rather than as an aggregate of task descriptions.

An attempt at an analysis of socio-economic factors underpinning youth work was produced by the Institute for Social Work and Social Education, Frankfurt in 2010. This report was commissioned by the European Commission and the Council of Europe Partnership in the field of youth in the

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<sup>13</sup> Here as elsewhere we must stress that the term 'ideology' is not intended to be read pejoratively. It refers to a 'world view', a set of consistent overarching cultural, social and political assumptions that operate as core values underpinning action. They tend to be hegemonic, infiltrating common sense.

expectation that there would be implications for policy and practice. Work with youth will necessarily be premised on some explicit or implicit models of correlates or causes, particularly within an interventionist and ameliorative social philosophy; some new tools are currently being developed using GIS (geographical information system) technology with geostatistical and visual mapping functions to plot distributions in space of specific socio-economic clusters and their associated behaviours. No doubt a funding stream for 'youth work' following the 2011 London riots will be targeted according to this principle. On the same basis, funding for TIHE (Theatre in Health Education) in Birmingham was targeted to address data on the distribution of teenage unwanted pregnancy rates.

Coussée (2009) deploys historical analysis to throw light on the current ambiguities and dilemmas of youth work, allowing a subtle interplay between situational specificity and thematic resonance. In this portrayal of contemporary European practice his method essentially involves comparison and contrast. His starting point is the 'identity crisis' of a youth work reality and practice that is located in specific external social, cultural and class-determined factors and not open to 'purification by decontextualisation'. The question is where does this leave the European meta-narrative with its paradoxical need both to locate and to integrate? Coussée identifies a number of deep running tensions in past and present provision, between the conflicting urges to control or emancipate, between the polarized cultures of professional and voluntary participation, and between the (increasingly segregated) target populations of generalized youth as against the disaffected, socially problematic or vulnerable.

Across Europe legislators have been forced by post-industrial social and cultural change and unrest to take account of the rise of an urban underclass whose behaviour is typically regarded as problematic and requiring remediation, although how this might be attempted opens up a further debate between those advocating either controlling or emancipatory approaches. The history of social policy for youth often can, as in the UK, can be charted as a series of responses to this agenda (Davies, 2009). Almost perversely, the specific targeting of vulnerable youth in the Thatcher era was increasingly underpinned by a shift from the 'permissive' approach of the 1960s to the 'new managerialism' of the audit culture, a stance that was then taken over by Blair who added a demand for 'joined-up services' to the now relatively settled – although contested -- preoccupation with 'measured outcomes'.

One underlying consideration, of course, is that of social class. There is a deep bifurcation in youth work between 'general' middle class provision where laissez-faire approaches are perfectly acceptable and 'specific' provision for vulnerable groups. In relation to the latter, 'clear results' are demanded, linked to economic models of impact and accountability. Another nicely ironic pointer is a reference to the famous conversation between Cardijn and Baden-Powell in which BP admitted that his sturdy scout organization reflected his own background as one 'not acquainted with working class life' (Coussée, 2009). As Lister (2000) implies, social inclusion policies trying to pursue both social cohesion and social justice may be facing a cross-purpose optimisation problem. Certainly current trends appear to be leading towards the institutionalization of a 'two-track policy'.

## **5.2 An agenda of contemporary issues**

The following section is an attempt to draw out from this analysis and from other evidence a number of issues that arise from attempts to understand contemporary youth work reality and practice and secure its place in the practice/theory/research triangle. Following a listing of selected issues we hope to conclude by addressing in a critical but constructive way threats to the practical validity of a functioning relationship between the 'corners' of the triangle.

There is a diversity of practice in youth work across Europe that makes comparative analysis difficult, and some fragility in the notion of a specifically European 'take', in spite of the political consensus increasingly getting behind a values-driven European 'ideological project', with cross-border inter-cultural activity underpinned by the declared European values of respect, self-determination, social cohesion, anti-racism, anti-xenophobia, inclusiveness and participatory

democracy. In the observed Europe, of course, many of these aspirant values are perhaps 'better seen as candidates for principled promotion rather than statements of core cultural values' (Jenkins, 2011a).

This diversity of practice operates within differentiated political, legislative and administrative settings that require considerable 'local knowledge' before factors like historical determinants, cultural and ideological assumptions, professional status, permissible interventions and practical constraints can be understood. The sector is characterised by Geertz' 'blurred genres' with widely divergent 'pillars' (socialist, catholic, liberal, nationalist, etc.) adding to the complexity of the mix. Indeed it would not be difficult to portray these 'pillars' (of the establishment?) as 'columns' (as in 'fifth column'). Their influence requires that any account of the underpinning values and ideology of youth work practice must include some disaggregation. Youth work in aggregate is neutral but uneasy with respect to the open sectarian agendas of these 'pillars' with promoted tolerant collaboration the order of the day.

All this implies that youth work and youth policy can only be understood in relation to their historical context, but the 'lessons' that may be gleaned from this knowledge are subtle and nuanced. The relationship between historical narrative and the espoused values underpinning policy in the youth field is both complex and problematic. Youth practice tends in many settings to be atheoretical and apolitical, based on the folk wisdom of individual contexts. There is some tension in the relationship between youth (social) work and youth (social) movements.

The discourse around youth work is fragmented, with competing definitions variously conceptualising youth workers as educators, social pedagogues, psychotherapists, ameliorative socio-educational instructors, and so on. The drift in European pronouncements towards a consensus that youth workers are primarily socio-educational instructors<sup>14</sup> is unlikely to connect with many who profess to do 'youth work'. There is also some evidence across Europe of an unhelpful increase in 'twin track' provision, with 'specific' targeting of disaffected youth whose behaviour is deemed to be problematic. Increasingly youth work practitioners dealing with this sector of the youth population are expected to report back within a managerial target-driven audit culture that is often at odds with their emancipatory philosophy. The duality is reflected in the traditions of self-governed youth organizations by an older age group of young people concerned with emancipation and participation and the professional or volunteer led 'youth work' embedded in notions of rescue, inclusion, personal development and so on.

Another issue is the crisis of professional and personal identity affecting practitioners in the youth field in that the traditional grounding of the sector in the non-formal education values of autonomy, self-determination and voluntarism are constantly being undermined by a subordination to social goals more to do with social control and 'keeping the lid on' potential unrest than civilizing the masses. The UK Government's recent reaction to the London riots may be taken as a case in point, with no hint that structural factors might be involved that require a wider response than 'the heavy hand of the law'. They have read *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), of course, but do not 'get' its implications that an inequitable society marginalising its economic underclass comes at a cost in social cohesion.

The coexistence of a tradition of voluntarism with a drive to achieve professional status for youth workers in some parts of Europe is another cause of tension and ambiguity (Coussée *et al.*, 2011, forthcoming). The commitment of much of the sector to a quasi-fundamentalist version of non-formal self-direction is inhibiting progress both towards a knowledge-based training of the trainers of youth workers and subsequent moves in the direction of full professional accreditation. There is still no agreed European core of trainer competences, although a clear value framework has been laid out and some progress was made in TALE and other initiatives under the auspices of the Youth

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<sup>14</sup> The Maastricht Treaty – which has extended, within the framework (and limits) of the subsidiarity principle, the European Union's legal basis in the fields of education and training – introduced the term 'socio-educational instructors' in Article 126 (European Community, 1992).

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe (see Fennes & Otten, 2008; Otten & Ohana, 2009). The recent Council Resolution on Youth Work (probably the most high profile recognition of youth work to date in EU policy making) invites the European Commission to develop 'instruments for the documentation of competences of youth workers and youth leaders' and invites both member states and the Commission to engage in a 'systematic assessment of skills and competences required for any form of training' (Council of the European Union, 2010: 6). However, a close reading of the differences of emphasis and terminology between the Commission's *Investing and Empowering* and the Council's *Renewed Framework* confirms that the professional status of youth work is a contentious and even 'political' issue (Devlin, 2011).

In addition, there are still ambiguous relationships between the youth work sector and other provision, e.g. formal education, counselling, social work, policing, crime prevention, employability policies. Despite heroic efforts at European level to support and nurture a tradition of non-formal learning and civic participation in the youth sector, who 'youth workers' are and what they actually do, or should do, is still badly understood outside of the youth field.

In the tension between local and European understandings of youth practice it is worth mentioning that youth work, particularly in disadvantaged urban settings, tends to validate the insights of ecological psychology (Barker, 1968) that behaviour and settings are mutually constitutive and what is often at stake is providing a psychological habitat for certain kinds of encounter, as is currently being successfully operated in downtown Budapest at locations like 'Cherry'. If such experiments are to become part of a shared European knowledge base and public tradition, the only plausible method is ethnographic portrayals (case studies) not administrative checklists.

Unlike (say) in medicine, there is no established public tradition of recording, analysing and sharing good practice in the youth field, although some inroads are being made through publications like *Coyote* and *Forum 21* and the increasing number of peer-reviewed journals including *Young*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, *Youth and Policy* and *Youth Studies Ireland*. It is also necessary to go beyond descriptions of individual projects or initiatives and bring the exercise within the framework of pedagogical research. The pedagogy of non-formal education is values-driven, personalised, at times deeply idiosyncratic, flexible and responsive to need. Although by no means the 'frozen treatment' beloved of the experimental research lobby, its principles and practices are certainly capable of some kind of cognitive ordering, but this kind of work is not currently prioritised by the research community.

### **5.3 Approaching our selected readings**

In summary, we have identified a number of inescapable difficulties that inhibit discussion of European youth work and render the field conceptually untidy despite efforts to bring it to order. Its overall scope is nebulous and subject to changes in fashion, politics or the consequence of the shifting definitions that underpin policies. Although the Lauritzen (2008) paper offers an 'inventory' of activities (including culture, leisure, religion, healthcare, political education, national identity, intercultural learning and provision for the disabled), the 'territory' of European youth work has more often been defined in other terms, either as a project transcending nation states (but one carrying confused and overlapping agendas) or as a pedagogical commitment to a certain kind of 'working' based on non-formal principles of voluntarism and association.

Verschelden *et al.* (2009b) and Coussée (2010) allow us to tidy sequentially some of the trends in the development of the idea of a specifically European youth work territory, but in general they point to a confused values debate that still continues, with competing social and pedagogical definitions and alternative theoretical frameworks. One fault line is between the notion of youth work as 'universalist' provision premised on a particular view of childhood/adolescence with respect to socialisation into civic society and the increasing tendency to 'target' interventions in order to ameliorate perceived social issues to do with the 'problematic' behaviour of an economic underclass (Bradford, 2005). Targeted young people can variously be seen as 'vulnerable', with youth workers trying sympathetically to understand their discourses of disaffection, or as proper objects of social

engineering, most aggressively under the auspices of an 'audit culture' which defines success in terms of specific outcomes. As Williamson (2011) points out, the result may be pressure to play games with this delusory version of 'research-based policy' in the youth field and actually encourage irrelevant practice.

With regard to the European political agenda, the Lauritzen paper (2008) links it to a particular view of the accession process post-1945 and the resulting tension between the idea of re-created ethnic nation states and aspirations for the new mobile Europe in which historical animosities might yield to intercultural learning, despite differential historical legacies that make for a confusing mix, as exemplified by the ideology of 'boy scout' or 'pioneer' movements in different countries.

Youth work in Europe cannot be conducted as if it were a set of technical solutions to well understood problems. Thompson (2005) reminds us of Schön's work in evolving the ideal type of the 'reflective practitioner' but the theory is useless as a model for the profession of youth work without some thought being given to the circumstances in which professional advancement might be achieved, a process typically accompanied by external recognition. This and related themes are also examined in four other papers, Bradford (2005), Spence (2007), Fennes and Otten (2008) and Jenkins (2011a). Bradford places professional aspirations in a shifting framework of ideologically constructed 'welfare provision' with the historical enlightenment consensus seeking 'a working class governed by reason' giving way to open conflict between 'liberal democratic' and 'radical interventionist' ideologies.

Two further papers deal specifically with the training of youth workers and the 'training of trainers'. Fennes and Otten (2008) address quality issues in non-formal education and training in the youth field, arguing for an agreed profile of professional 'competences'. Competences differ from what curriculum theorists would regard as 'properly formulated objectives' by being highly generalized statements of underlying skills and dispositions to be drawn upon flexibly in unpredictable situations, although it is difficult to find proxy indicators with adequate criteria for different levels of achievement that might eventually match up with the European Qualifications Framework. Jenkins (2011a) analyses the pedagogy of non-formal education as developed in TALE (the above-mentioned European programme 'training the trainers' of European youth workers) and charts some of its achievements and shortcomings against a background of its commitment to intercultural dialogue and collaborative working across member states.

Finally, and returning to the terms and concepts introduced earlier, Jean Spence argues unapologetically that in reclaiming their own intellectual and practical history youth workers should 'develop the language of informality'. From Spence's perspective the affective, emotional and interpersonal aspects of youth work need to be defended within the 'emerging professional discourse'.

*Ultimately, the successful development of youth work in an increasingly interconnected world depends not only upon the parameters of national legislation and policy, or upon the ability of workers to establish international practice networks, but also upon the identification of those universally distinctive features which delineate it from other welfare and educational professions, and which therefore enable it to be transferable across particular policy environments. (Spence, 2007)*

The critical reader of this section of the Reader can scarcely avoid forming the impression it is a contested domain with not always subtle differences of conceptualisation, emphasis, professional orientation and espoused values. Whether this diversity of testimony can be explained as an example of the many-sidedness of truth rather than deep running dichotomies is an open question. The task for our readers is to understand where each author is 'coming from' and to arrive at their own self-location.



## 6. Exploring the relationship between research, policy and practice

### 6.1 A magic triangle? Drawing lines between research, policy and practice

*Arithmetic! Algebra! Geometry! Grandiose trinity! Luminous triangle!  
Whoever has not known you is without sense! Comte de Lautreamont (1846-1870)*

In the youth field, research has in general been closely connected with policy and practice in various implicit and explicit ways. At European level, these connections are embedded in specific institutional contexts and facilitated by a wide range of networks, organisations and persons and are, as a result of this widespread support, comparatively intense, manifold and mature. In 1967, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a directive calling for the study of youth problems in Europe. In 1985, the Council of Europe convened the first colloquy on youth research. In 2001, the European Union followed these leads and made knowledge and a greater understanding of youth an enduring priority through the Commission's White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth*. In 2004, the *White Paper* was underpinned by a set of common objectives specifically targeting 'youth knowledge'.

Both European institutions have on numerous occasions since underlined the importance of a greater understanding and knowledge of youth to promote and strengthen evidence-based youth policies. In 2008 the Council of Europe reaffirmed, in its *Agenda 2020*, the role of youth research as a principal element of the youth sector's approach to generate knowledge on the situation of young people in Europe, and in its *Youth Strategy* in 2009 the European Union reasserted the importance of a cross-sectoral approach including the generation of knowledge about youth, the dissemination of youth research findings and the facilitation of youth research networks. This strong political commitment has led to a wealth of material, from comparative youth policy reports of the Council of Europe to statistical and thematic youth reports of the European Union. The Open Method of Coordination of the European Union and the National Youth Policy Reviews of the Council of Europe, introduced in the previous sections of this introductory chapter, are two complementary mechanisms actively seeking to involve, and partly driven by, youth researchers.

The pledge of the institutions to strengthen evidence-based policies translates most prominently into the activities of their partnership in the youth field. In the framework of this co-operation, the EU-CoE Youth Partnership co-ordinates the Pool of European Youth Researchers, hosts and maintains the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, organises thematic research seminars and publishes the youth knowledge series. In the context of this institutionally backed, sector-spanning and continuous social co-production and co-management of youth knowledge, the metaphor of a triangle comprising researchers, policy-makers and practitioners has been adopted as a piece of standard iconography.

In her contribution to *Dialogues and networks: organising exchanges between youth field actors*, Lynne Chisholm (2006b: 27) asserted that 'an active, positive and co-operative exchange between research, policy and practice has [...] become a routine feature of life in the youth sector.' At the same time, she suggests (much in line with the papers selected for this part of the Reader) that the sometimes advanced visual metaphor of a policy/practice/research triangle might be taken to imply equal or even equilateral relations between the various actors, whereas in fact the triangle is oftentimes scalene. Triangular configurations do not automatically lead to triangulations that take each perspective equally and fairly into account: *bringing* actors together does not guarantee they will be able to efficiently *work* together. The different logics, discourses and approaches oftentimes delineate mutually exclusive expectations and possibilities, leading to relationships of tension and ambiguity that might be considered as 'constitutive features of the triangle' (*ibid.*: 29).

Howard Williamson portrayed the frictions by arguing that in light of tough realities and challenges 'the aspirational triangle, of deeply embedded contact and communication between its three constituent corners, still remains more of a series of disconnected straight lines (Williamson, 2006).

He identified the difficulty of finding a common language as one of the crucial dilemmas of the triangular co-operation in the youth field, an underpinning issue worth some further reflection.

We have consistently indicated that the principle categorical terms of our discourse are all social constructs capable of local cultural interpretation, but the matter is further exacerbated by the legacy of historical real differences of a kind embedded in legislation and administrative arrangements. The very term 'youth work' carries many different connotations across Europe that threaten attempts to denote 'meanings' at a European level. The resulting fragmented legacy is always going to be linguistically based on shifting sands. This is why sociolinguistic deconstruction is a necessary task in understanding the full mosaic of European youth studies.

Additional tensions and disappointments evolve around each stakeholder group having some legitimacy in claiming that their voices are not always sufficiently heeded, not the least because the relationships between all actors are characterised by power gradients, and in sociolinguistic terms this affects the kinds of messages that travel the communicative system. Triangular co-operation is also not much helped by corner-specific assumptions and myths about the others; whether it is practitioners perceiving researchers as judgmental observers who have no understanding of the secret codes that govern non-formal youth work practice; or researchers entertaining suspicions that policy makers cherry-pick from research only evidence that confirms their own positions; or policy-makers nurturing a default presumption that most proposals from researchers or practitioners will be neither financially realistic nor politically feasible.

This overdrawn thumb-sketch notwithstanding, some of these stereotypical perceptions touch on inherent contradictions that remain largely unresolved. How can practitioners be the objects of study at the same time as co-owners of the data? How can researchers accumulatively theorise the expertise of practitioners, and how can practitioners be convinced that theoretical abstraction is beneficial to them? Is 'evidence-based policy' a real commitment or little more than a rhetorical gesture? How can demands for evidence capable of supporting policy be backed by commensurate resources? How can careful local studies that are necessary for tentative cross-site generalisations and subsequent cumulative theory generation be conducted without neglecting the need for defensible recommendations for action? How can the mismatch of time scales be overcome, with policy-makers being in need of immediate advice under the pressure of current political events?

All of these tensions and contradictions are tangible at practically every encounter of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, and it requires remarkable effort from all sides to turn the resulting confrontations and negotiations into fruitful and rewarding dialogues and exchanges. At best, these efforts lead to innovative thinking, inspirational prospects of serious dialogue and genuine mutual engagement, but while structured spaces for frequent negotiation between the actors do exist, in particular at European level, it is not always clear how to navigate and bridge the different discourses constructively. Chisholm has urged youth organisations to develop their capacity as 'natural brokers', facilitating 'multilogues' between actors at each corner of the triangle (2006b: 35), a call that has yet to attract a response.

And yet, despite all the challenges, Williamson and Chisholm echo the widely shared opinion of the youth field as a whole, including the M.A. EYS Consortium, when reaffirming unequivocally the shared benefits of improved relations, dialogue and understanding between youth research, policy and practice. They concede that each corner of the triangle should be ready to make some sacrifices in what will continue to be negotiations between the communities of practice – trading those in return and exchange for a more coherent and considered youth knowledge base and, in turn, a more coherent and considered set of policies and practices in the youth field.

## **6.2 Approaching our selected readings**

Chosen within this context, the papers selected for this part of the Reader illustrate various accounts of how triangular co-operation between stakeholders in the youth field can be brought to fruition.

While the first two snapshots shed light on the triangle in wider conceptual terms and consider the relation between research, policy and practice generally, the four subsequent snapshots take the triangle into more specific contexts and illustrate how the relation between research, policy and practice can be translated and applied.

Anthony Azzopardi (2001) introduces research as an educational enterprise, a perspective that implies the involvement of numerous 'stakeholders and gatekeepers', from sponsors and clients to respondents and researchers. This multi-stakeholder reality, Azzopardi argues, requires researchers to be(come) effective and efficient project managers, able to design coherent frameworks and develop coherent strategies, to oversee and conduct complex research projects, and to summarise and communicate findings well. He contends that 'research which does not stimulate discussion and which is not made subject of public scrutiny is bound to gather dust on the shelf of a library.'

For youth research, Azzopardi specifies that it should have a long-lasting effect on young people's curriculum vitae, stating that 'research is as valuable as it influences policy and practice.' He observes that youth research, while having assembled a mosaic of theoretical, methodological and empirical perspectives, has largely been unable to influence youth policies and practices. Political responses to research findings he describes as dominated by 'conventional and sluggish assent to popular remedial action.'

Azzopardi argues that 'the pervasive exercise of power at various levels' regularly leads to the 'wielding of power by a few at the expense of the many who are most concerned' and that policy is often neither formed nor informed by practice or research. He puts forward theorised practice, understood as the 'direction of one's research ambitions towards exerting influence on policy and practice,' as one approach that could help to make research more efficient and effective in generating long-lasting effect on young people and youth policy.

René Bendit (2006) approaches the relation between research, policy and practice by considering the social co-production of knowledge on youth, which he frames as the endeavour of several actors, including both youth researchers and young people themselves. He observes that 'from this point of view, youth research is one important actor in the production and management of knowledge.' Bendit gives an overview of various approaches to co-produce and co-manage youth knowledge, from bottom-up initiatives such as the International Sociological Association's Research Committee 34 on the sociology of youth to top-down initiatives such as the European Union's statistical databases and mixed initiatives such as the Council of Europe's network of youth researchers. Through the lens of the social co-production of knowledge on youth, he analyses the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of initiatives.

Bendit goes on to identify various areas and topics for future social co-productions of knowledge on youth, ranging from the changing forms of political, social and economic participation to the consequences of globalisation and Europeanisation on the identity constructions of young people. He concludes with a list of unresolved questions, highlighting inter alia the need to develop tools, approaches and methods to underpin and instantiate the philosophy of knowledge co-production and co-management.

Andreas Walther (2006) analyses the impact of different 'transition-regimes' upon young people's biographical experiences in the context of de-standardisation, individualisation and fragmentation of transitions, which he refers to as the 'yo-yo-isation of transitions between youth and adulthood.' Based on his analysis, he explores whether young people are aware of the possibilities and consequences of making subjective and subjectively meaningful choices and discusses how such decision-making processes can be facilitated and supported.

Walther underlines that the diversification and de-standardisation of biographical experiences 'tend to transgress the interpretative repertoire of national cultures' as well as 'the policy repertoires of nation states as they attempt to regulate transitions.' He suggests a typology of transition regimes in

Europe, classifying approaches as universalistic, employment-centred, liberal or sub-protective and discusses how the effects of these transition regimes on young people's biographical construction can be identified.

Walther concludes with a review of the benefit of the transition regime model, highlighting that the model explains structural differences, identifies 'climates of normality' and goes further in addressing cultural values as well as political concepts that inform both transition policies and young people's response strategies. He also applies the model to policy approaches, describing various interpretations of prevailing strategies for political intervention and showcasing that they only partly improve social integration.

Beatrix Niemeyer (2007) discusses the challenges for policy and practice when confronted with the idea of social inclusion. Drawing on findings from a research project on disadvantaged young people in the 'risk zone' of transition from school to work, she challenges the predominant economic and social perspectives on school-to-work transition and introduces situated learning in communities of practice as an alternative approach. Niemeyer also draws attention to the conflict between the popular idealised policy narrative that young people's European identity can be strengthened by engaging them as 'life-long learners' in a setting imbued with 'European values' and the contradictory on-the-ground suspicion of practitioners that the multi-faceted realities of young people leave them with little motivation for any kind of learning, and the battle is as often as not against apathy and disaffection. Confronting the pull towards a knowledge economy as well as drastic levels of youth unemployment across much of the continent, she examines how schemes and systems for school-to-work-transitions produce exclusion or inclusion, constrained by what she describes as a competition between the vocational and the educational elements of most vocational education and training approaches.

Niemeyer introduces a set of criteria for communities of social and participatory learning centred on practice. These 'learning communities centred on practice' aim to reconnect disengaged young people by situating learning in the workplace environment as well as the biography of the learner, thus helping to rebuild identities in the context of the workplace. Niemeyer discusses the obstacles and challenges of this approach and suggests that the concept of situated learning in communities centred on practice is a valid instrument to integrate formal and informal learning tracks for the benefit of young people and their social inclusion.

Walter Hornstein (2008) explores the consequences of globalisation processes for young people – on different levels and in various dimensions – and critically engages with responses both by youth policy and youth research. He dissects the notion 'globalisation' and its various meanings and connotations, noting that the absence of political goals in the economy- and power-driven process of globalisation defies research of a framework, arguing that 'social science research must develop its own political framework.'

Hornstein introduces the thesis that processes of globalisation 'create new, non-traditional constellations, frames of reference, contexts for the processes of socialization and the social positioning of the upcoming generation' and, while transcending national spheres of influence, usually act within a 'specific mixing ratio of regional, local, national and global classification factors.' They also initiate, he argues, a substantial dynamic of social change, which 'leads to the challenge of being able to understand and describe socialisation as a process taking place under the auspices of the global system.'

Hornstein calls for new approaches both in research and policy addressing the processes of globalisation (beyond comparisons between nations) and investigating and expanding the predominantly national concepts and terminologies currently in use. He puts forward a number of research topics that would add new dimensions to the globalisation discourse, including the question of how generation change is re-shaped in light of the pressures and opportunities resulting from

globalisation and the question how population composition and ratios influence the relationship between generations.

Lynne Chisholm (2008), in the final paper of the Reader and a contribution to the discourse on the recognition of non-formal learning from the point of view of researchers, considers the triangle of research, policy and practice through the lens of non-formal learning, which, she observes, remains an underrepresented area of interest within youth research rather than a distinct area of thematic specialism. In consequence, the field of non-formal learning lacks a 'strong and explicit conceptual and theoretical base,' and while youth knowledge is generally regarded as essential in the recognition process, the available knowledge base is mostly descriptive and contextualised.

Chisholm illustrates some of the dilemmas to be overcome between the various actors in the youth field, noting that many educational researchers, dependent on their discipline and school of thought, might not be interested in considering how non-formal learning contributes to, for example, competence development, whereas most educational practitioners might not be interested in conceptual and theoretical frameworks as developed by, for example, John Dewey or Henry Giroux.

Chisholm points at the discrepancy between the faith in and demand for evidence-based policy, on the one hand, and the lack of adequate frameworks for targeted systematic studies, on the other hand. Such hands-on examples, documented through research-based instruments, will, over time, lead to an accumulation of examples and in turn contribute to those kinds of abstraction that have the potential of informing policy and practice with empirically grounded knowledge. This approach, Chisholm argues, requires more communication and more cooperation between the actors in the youth field. It also requires each of these actors to take steps – informed by critical readings of texts such as those in this Reader – that help the aspirational triangle become a reality going beyond the seemingly attractive simplicity of the geometric metaphor.

# **EUROPEAN YOUTH RESEARCH**



# REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGENDAS FOR EUROPEAN YOUTH RESEARCH AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR RESEARCHERS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE<sup>\*</sup>

*Ola Stafseng*

If we should try to make up a story about the development of agendas for youth research, there are at least two dimensions to take into account. One thing is what actually happens in some real or constructed world, the other side is how things happen for me, or us. If I start with the latter side, I could emphasize how studies in the social sciences were defined for most of us who entered a Western university in the early 1970s. The main interest was in classical and modern Marxist theory, and it was quite foolish to read structure-functionalism as found in Parsons and Merton. It took some years to repair the intellectual damages of this approach, and find out why it was necessary to read. But on the other hand, there were no agendas for youth research, but just an open territory to influence through our own development (as we saw it at that time).

For those who have entered the social sciences in the 1990s, the whole world has been considered to be in a post-modern state, making it unnecessary to read literature on modernity – it has been covered by the post-modern critics. I don't envy them their efforts when the intellectual damages shall be paid and repaired in the future. On the other hand, they have come into academic work at a time when youth research consists of sets of fixed agendas. To some extent this has led to the construction of new, post-modern agendas, or entries into some of the existing agendas since they do not only consist of intellectual capital, but also attract some of the material flow of resources.

This is just the starting point for a description of how research fields are coming and going, how communities and generations of researchers are formed or constructed. A further elaboration of the particular field of youth research will need some key concepts and approaches, even if this will only be one short story among many alternative choices. I will concentrate on three main questions or headlines. The first will be on hidden agendas and the question about how to open up for transparency. Secondly, we will turn to a key question about what *is* youth research, and also in relation to this question about what is youth? The third issue will be to discuss strategies for young(er) researchers, as they might differ from strategies for the more established.

## **Part I: Transparency or hidden agendas?**

After some years of active research it is always a good idea to make the findings public in a wider, international community. The best rewards come through publishing an article in a recognized journal. It is then possible to discover for anybody who has done 10-15 years of reasonable research, let us say on youth related to education and social mobility, to experience year after year of refusals even if the articles have a perfect format and content. Most people will never discover that the real and ultimate reason could be a hidden backstage of the actual research field (not necessarily the journal itself), an inner circle of 5-10 persons who "own" the definitions of the territory and are the silent "gatekeepers".

The more normal and frequent experiences come before this level, when colleagues from peripheral countries try to submit papers or publish articles with qualified data and reflections on "the case of Romania, a.o.", and meet low interest or silence. This experience is very typical for Norwegian social sciences, and our reasoning behind "the case of Norway" is that most of the colleagues think that

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Norway is so unique and outstanding that everybody will be very happy to learn more. Unfortunately, it does not work, and leads to disappointments.

The question about who belongs to the peripheries and centres is mainly decided through language, making those publishing as mother tongue in the three leading languages in Europe into “centres”.<sup>1</sup> But there are exceptions and we are not speaking about laws or destinies, and there are no reasons to accept any of these patterns as the ultimate rules of the game. The ways to overcome inferiority are then the next step.

### **On history – and variety/unity of the field**

Youth research cannot be perceived as a homogenous field. This will always be a fact, and the main art is to develop tools or concepts that can work towards or with heterogeneity. This means that there is no fight for particular cases or disciplines, but to bring research into interdisciplinary frames of reference or discussion. This is the reason for saying that youth research is first of all interdisciplinary, and then transnational. And two of the main ways to open up a field of this kind will be through meta-scientific discourses, and through history (of science or knowledge).

Let us proceed a while on the history statement, since this is not immediately easy. Firstly, many people are engaged in youth research because it is a way to avoid history, instead youth can be used for studies of the future. Secondly, the social, political and real history of many countries has a very low status among intellectuals, for various reasons. But here we also find some of the main obstacles for a common understanding of an intellectual and scientific field like youth research in Europe.

When people are doing youth research in Romania, they may easily argue for a new historical context limited to the 1990s, and also find their wider references in a European social science that was not previously available. But as far as I can see, nobody seems aware anymore that one of the most outstanding youth researchers in Europe, until he died in 1988, was the Romanian Fred Mahler. During the last 15-20 years of his career he was the leading contributor of concepts and models for the interdisciplinary discourses in European (global) youth research, for example through his emphasis on “*juventology*” as the bridging framework. Some of his works are available in English, but his main and last books only exist in Romanian (Mahler, 1983; 1986; 1987). His frames of reference were general social science in the West and the East, ongoing youth research worldwide, and the youth analyses agendas up until the late eighties. It is a pity, a problem and a paradox if/when colleagues from Romania are ignoring his presence in the recent history of European discourses, while his ideas are used by (some) colleagues outside Romania. This is not a unique and exceptional example on how scientific dialogues are blocked because of rather peculiar, local conflicts, misunderstandings or mythological traditions.

This example is also useful as a reminder of the differences from youth research in Bulgaria. Contrary to Romania, Bulgaria did not continue any national or central institute for youth research. But in the writings of, for example Siyka Kovacheva or Petar-Emil Mitev, we find an emphasis on connecting the findings of youth research before and after 1990, even if the political circumstances of the country have changed radically. The importance of this approach is firstly to establish links that insist on a longer and deeper contemporary history of youth research within Bulgaria. The second advantage is that the linkages to the past implicate bridges to a Bulgarian youth research in European cooperation, as Bulgaria in the 1980s was the coordinating and publishing centre of comparative studies in the field (Hartmann & Stefanov, 1984).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This means English, French and German. I am aware that Spanish has quite another position in the world, but this does not count for the European context – so far, and for more than the language reason.

<sup>2</sup> Some other countries show parallel examples, like Estonia or Slovakia. The third advantage of these linkages to recent history cannot be discussed here. But it is no doubt that it is wise to make studies of the development of young people's living conditions in these countries. Even if unpopular regimes disappeared around 1990 and people in the East and West appreciate the general policy conditions now, it will still be a good idea to compare how youth lived before 1990 with the present circumstances. In many cases they have much worse conditions now, and these facts

These reminders of different ways to handle contemporary history represent a first step into the recent past. Even during the “Cold War” with a Europe divided in two blocks, it was possible to find in the 1970s and the 1980s vivid, comparable discourses based on more or less the same, main references – some standard studies or theoretical highlights (see i.e. Kreutz, 1974, a.o.). But future investigations into how they interpreted and used these common frames of reference throughout Europe will be a complex *decoding* work for researchers. But here the intentions are to underline an access approach to a common agenda of youth research, where the 1990s represent the worst period of diversifying shadows. One of my complaints comes when I observe that students and young scholars in the 1990s are studying i.e. Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens or Jürgen Habermas (and his closer circles) as if they are recently discovered cult figures. Indeed they were all present in the discourses of the 1970s and 1980s, although sometimes supporting other directions of thought than today.

The advantages of these steps into a shared intellectual history are the discoveries of a common scientific heritage. The full step backwards to reveal the longer perspectives over the whole of the last century are needed to develop a fruitful overview of how various countries or universities have developed varying agendas from the common origins. Only then can the unresolved problems return like boomerangs under new and not so (easily) understandable labels. Here are a couple of examples within the rich workshops of early social sciences.

One of the important starting points of a science on youth, was Granville Stanley Hall’s invention of the term and concept “*adolescence*” in 1904 (Hall, 1904). He made some very strong images of a personality transformation, rooted in civilization history and biology, as a “new birth” under “storm and stress” (“*Sturm und Drang*”) between puberty and social circumstances, an inside and outside “Nature”. In a historical perspective we should be aware not only of the theoretical foundations of his new concept, but his applied context: His success is only understandable if we see the connections to the contemporary, shifting paradigms within general education. The ongoing and future reform orientation moved the emphasis from curriculum and teaching (the German Herbart tradition) to the personal development of children and youth, and Hall had a strong and promising impact on ideas of the *speed* of adolescence in the mental and cognitive development.

When Margaret Mead in the 1920s made her first contribution to youth research through her study of adolescent girls in Samoa, her explicit aim was to modify Hall – by showing another culture *without* “storm and stress” (Mead, 1928; Côté, 1994). Even if she said that she wanted to prove that Hall did not show a universal psychic state related to puberty, but a certain performance of adolescence in a specific form of modern culture, today we see that this was much more a beginning of a controversy about biology and inheritance versus environment in human development. With today’s perspectives we would say that this controversy should be seen as a good beginning of diversity and interdisciplinarity in youth research, rather than something to be concluded “Hall was wrong”.

There are some doubts about Hall’s influence in Europe in the reference literature. Hall had almost all his scientific education in Europe (Germany), and the founding father of modern psychology, Wilhelm Wundt with his Leipzig laboratory, was proud of calling him “Wundt in America”. When in 1909 Hall had his spectacular celebration of the first twenty years of “his” Clark University, he had three prominent guests from Europe – Freud, Jung and the leading professor of youth psychology, William Stern (Rosenzweig, 1992).<sup>3</sup> There are a lot of other influence lines, but sometimes they are difficult to identify at local levels. Nevertheless, Hall serves here as a first check-point for the local versus European connections in the early ways to conceive modern adolescence. I have indicated here that the lines point towards the reform education movement (until World War II), and this implicates for most of Eastern and Central Europe the (hegemonic) German speaking and writing academic institutions and networks as the sources of early ideas about (modern) youth.

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should be analysed and discussed inside and outside the scientific community, and not be hidden within an ideological accept one of the permanent “history writing by the victors”.

<sup>3</sup> This visit has a particular interest, because it also was Freud’s first visit to America, and his more general and public introduction outside this specific arrangement.

The second example could start from the history, or from the present. When I choose the latter, it is only for pointing to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of (social) *field(s)*, which he admits to have learnt most about from Kurt Lewin. Lewin (1890-1947) is a very interesting door opener to our history. He came out of the German youth movement and had a scientific career in Berlin, before arriving in the USA as a Jewish refugee. From 1933 he had an even more well-known career, ending up at MIT and an untimely early death. Psychology and sociology are fighting about whose classical theorist he was/is. I was introduced to Lewin's ideas at my first training course as a youth leader, through his original distinctions between the three forms of leadership – the autocratic, the laissez-faire and the democratic – based on his studies in youth clubs.

Lewin's contributions cover a long range of issues in the social sciences, but here I shall only point at some peculiar track(s) that are still being studied in current research. One of the reasons is that after 'the fall of the Wall' Lewin was one of the accepted US social scientists in the East – for example in the GDR, even better recognized there than in the West as late as in the 1970s and 1980s. I should stress here that Lewin always stayed loyal to his youth movement experiences, and had a steady emphasis on children, youth and socialization theory, and made a strong influence with his basic *theory of activity* on social psychology, sociology and pedagogy. In these areas he was in close alliance, partnership and friendship, with Russians like Vygotsky and Luria. At that time in Berlin they were marginal(ized) by Soviet psychology, but we should be aware that this Berlin-Moscow alliance shared two opponents to their views on human development: they were against behaviourism as it was celebrated through Pavlov or taking the hegemony in American psychology, and they were against Freudian psychology because of its speculative character and lack of empirical levels or "evidence".

There are a number of steps between the basic theoretical assumptions of these orientations and oppositions and the implications for youth theories. For a long time researchers could not see the deeper differences between differing ways to conceive youth. However, during the last few years there have been many reasons to be aware of the more paradigmatic differences in the social psychology of individual/society relationships: when thinking and analysing youth attitudes, acts, etc. as superficial and individual elements without a wider whole, or instead thinking about the individual as a biographic history based on adaptations to a common bio-psychic "programme" as in the Freudian way. Both of these deterministic models ("puppets on strings") have been counteracted by a third alternative way of seeing human beings in general, and particularly youth as (*intentional*) *actors* in their own lives – as individuals or collectives (subcultures). This orientation has led to a revival of the old *theory of activity* (or "Tätigkeit" in German<sup>4</sup>), and by expansion for the old connections between for example Lewin and Vygotsky. Concurrently a lot of the old texts have been made available through translations from Russian sources, in USA (and Europe) over the last few years; the old archives reveal trends in postmodern ideas about a new type of biographical work in the youth period – where young people have to form their lives through reflexive self-constructions. However, the point here was to show one of the historical lines for a re-construction of a qualified dialogue between East and West through these Lewin-Vygotsky agendas, with a certain relevance for basic youth research.

### **On continuities and discontinuities in academic fields generally, and youth research particularly**

These brief examples from the history of youth research could also serve as reminders of how history always tends to disappear, to be closed and become forgotten – not only because of political tragedies, but also in an academic life that we like to think about as clean, open and in search of eternal truth. I have just mentioned the Eastern and Central European tendencies to set up a Year Zero around 1989/90. This might be fair enough for politics in general, but very dangerous if transferred to the development of knowledge and science. There is at the same time nothing new or sensational in these observations.

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<sup>4</sup> The activity concept in English is here a more diffuse term for this orientation, while the German term of "Tätigkeit" tells more precisely where we are going.

We could look closer at how the two Germanies developed quite differently after 1945/49, and for the next forty years. In West Germany social sciences operated as if 1945 were a Year Zero, while in the GDR it belonged to the elementary agendas to keep a critical consciousness of (social) science before and during the Nazi time (see i.e. Friedrich, 1976). At reunification both sides had great trouble making these differing worlds of thoughts compatible. The easy way out was to let the “Wessies” rape the former GDR social sciences. Now the forty years of the “Ossies” are out of their memory, and psychology and pedagogy especially are among the great losers.<sup>5</sup>

The time after the Russian revolution (1917) could also easily have been a period of dramatic discontinuities, and so it was at political and economic levels. But if we look at what was written on education or culture in the 1920s, we will for example find female authors like Krupskaya (Lenin’s wife) or Alexandra Kollontay. On the one hand we will find a strong emphasis of the best from Russian traditions, like for example the educational ideas of Tolstoy – who also were/are shared by other European reformers, and on the other hand an openness towards the international agenda of reform pedagogy or the women’s movement. The separating changes in Russia took place during the 1930s, through the poorer climate of Stalinism, also leading to great disappointments among colleagues in the West.<sup>6</sup>

These are some examples of continuity or discontinuity coming from circumstances external to the research fields. Yet there are also the internal dynamics of research which can lead to discontinuities, mainly through paradigmatic shifts or the appearance of new “schools”. For example the introduction of adolescent psychology in the studies of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s and 1960s is a paradigmatic shift within criminology, having a heavy impact on the discipline for a period. While the “Birmingham school” in the 1970s and 1980s did not bring in new paradigms, they were well-organized and consistent over a longer period with an untraditional combination of the human ecology of the former “Chicago School” and continental, humanistic fashions from the studies of literature, language and communications.

From this background of brief remarks about connections, continuities and discontinuities on a scattered European map, can be drawn a quite general overview of the main periods of youth research. I prefer a radical solution, dividing the century in two periods. Firstly, hidden in the shadows of warm and cold wars the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a very rich variety of transnational youth research, which was heavily inflicted by the creation of the new scientific disciplines, and the discoveries of “early” modernity. Erik H. Erikson’s “Childhood and Society” will be seen as the final contribution of this period (Erikson, 1950).<sup>7</sup> But then we have to move our thoughts from the fact that the book was published in the US to further reflections on Erikson’s biography. At the age of eighteen just after World War I he is the butcher’s son running as a refugee from his Danish-German parental home and having left secondary education without any exams. He became a tramp in Germany, a *Wandervogel* who joined the German *Bündische* youth movement (see Becker, 1946). Some years later Anna Freud found this handsome young man as he was working in a Kindergarten in Vienna, playing guitar and singing beautiful songs for the children. She invited him to come with her to their psychoanalytical institute and obtain his further education there. Here they were research colleagues until they had to run from the Nazis in 1938. Even if his work and further studies of children and youth took place in the US, his main framework for conceiving childhood and adolescence came through his youth experiences and research training in Vienna and Europe, embedded in the notions of early modernity. This way of seeing his book can be further strengthened by also considering the chapters containing excellent essays on the upbringing of Maxim Gorkij and Adolf Hitler – full of European culture and history.

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<sup>5</sup> While these are the general observations, it could be added that German social sciences over the last ten years have been like a waterfall of youth and youth research history from the last century, quite clearly through works by the “next generation”, who had kept silent until the most of the post-war generation of professors had retired.

<sup>6</sup> It is for example remarkable that Bertrand Russel around 1930 wrote a comparative discussion of some of the most radical educational experiments in Moscow and Chicago, at schools for teenagers (Bruhn, 1932; Russel, 1932).

<sup>7</sup> This statement implies that his later works on youth and identity crises are seen as a follow-up of his concepts and models in “Childhood and Society”.

I propose James Coleman's "Adolescent Society" where he identifies and interprets the teenager community as an oppositional counterculture towards educational values as the starting point for the next and present period of youth research. This way of perceiving history can include some important forerunners to the same period, like Mead's Samoa study, and especially Hollingshead's "Elmtown's Youth" and Eisenstadt's "From Generation to Generation" (Coleman, 1961; Hollingshead, 1949; Eisenstadt, 1956). They are all at the start of a more complex, interdisciplinary youth research agenda, where youth also is interpreted as some form of independent social entity or whole (a growing holistic approach).

Our time, with dominating models of youth in further independence and subjective self-construction, is usually labelled as "high" or "late" modernity, which is in my view a better concept than "postmodernity". There are at least two reasons for this very broad picture of a whole century's knowledge history. The first is that many actual discourses on postmodern youth easily lead into stupidities because researchers simply do not know the discourses on early modern youth. When these discourses are connected and compared one often reaches the conclusion that we are re-discovering the full implications of modernity in our times (Stafseng, 1994). The second point is that this overview is needed to develop a relaxed and creative, common agenda for youth discourses in Europe. It is necessary to find out the "what-who-when" of the hegemonic and marginalised youth discourses in countries such as Russia, Italy, France or Sweden. In scientific and/or popular literature we may find a period between the two World Wars with a hegemonic modernity discourse on youth, which disappeared and died, while the return of a similar discourse in the 1980s and 90s is nothing more than a weak continuation of this earlier discourse, as for example happened in Russia and Sweden. Or we will find that such a discourse was never established in Italian social science, in a mismatch with the hypermodern culture practices of their youth. Or as in the Swiss context we may see that Erikson's way of seeing teenagers is currently moving from the marginal to the hegemonic discourse – therefore the Swiss colleagues should be careful with the way they participate in a European discourse context on late modernity.

## **Part II: What is youth – or youth research?**

One way to approach this issue is by looking at the history of the subject and its hidden agendas. Another is to take a more direct approach, similar to what is one does when assessing if a piece of work should be defined as inside or outside given research field, and when one needs to ask *what* is really youth research? The question is nevertheless complex and has no clear cut answer. The most fruitful solution is to include such questions in the internal discourses of the field, and not look for any border police. Even then there will be many researchers who refuse that they are youth researchers, while their works are used and discussed inside as important contributions, and other people who insist that they are youth researchers without being recognized by the others.

A further elaboration of these matters can be done most easily in a pragmatic and descriptive way. This means that we could look upon the field more or less the same way as a librarian, who wants to establish a collection of publications and a thesaurus system for further classification and registration. That is the liberal, descriptive approach, before we move to a more normative step by pointing to more concentrated highlights of findings or discussions.

### **Thematic constructions of youth (research)**

We can see youth research as a voluntary and incidental *construction* of a knowledge field, also as a thematic construction of youth – or the "youth questions". In a simple description we could draw a figure within two axes. Along the first axis we can put in an incidental order various disciplines and/or sub-disciplines which are contributors to the field, like psychology, sociology, medicine, musicology, socio-linguistics, theology, etc. To be more systematic, we could order them chronologically following the historical development of the field, or use bibliographic data to produce an order by quantitative importance. We could also want to add disciplines we would wish to see as future contributors – let us say human geography or philosophy, and promise some investments for this purpose.

Along the second axis could be listed thematic issues, incidental or systematic, like delinquency, consumption, suicide, school-to-work-transition, gender issues, etc. in a never-ending row of issues. Interesting results will emerge if we try to be systematic, historical or quantitative, due to the many shifts of focus and emphasis during the last decades, including the various national agendas. For example in Poland there is a strong interest for (medical) research on fatness (not fitness) among youth, and in Albania colleagues are focused on migration and youth.

The space we have constructed in between these two axes and the meeting points between disciplines and issues, will then be the field of youth research, as a field of discourses – or a developing *youth theme*.

It is possible to imagine a central line between these two axes, and assume that a *mainstream* youth research develops along this line. This means that we expect in any country to find scientific activity and knowledge on some basic adolescent psychology, in sociology on school-to-work transitions and some basic demography, in pedagogy on school results, etc. At the same time the figure invites for reflections on how changes, progress or development could occur in the field. For example youth subcultures as an issue (and not as a sub-disciplinary perspective, just to introduce confusing weaknesses of the simple model), we know that for a long time they were studied by criminology, and therefore also conceived of as nearly synonyms for gangs and not as an everyday social formation. During the last 10-15 years we have seen that (modern) musicology has had a strong interest in musical subcultures, and this has changed the general messages and views on “normal” youth lives in *peer groups*.

This could be a start of discussions on how new or surprising combinations of disciplines and issues often are the source for innovations and new knowledge, in contrast to repeating studies. For example, around 30-35 years ago there was a short term interest in youth language within criminology, as an interest in the relationship between delinquency and knowledge of “argot language”. This interest died or dried out quickly, but during the last few years we have seen a large Nordic & UK project on *youth language(s)* based on humanistic disciplines (and linguistics) where argot language is among the central fields of interest. I look upon more of the results with high expectations, because these studies will have important impacts internally in humanities, as well as contributing to a richer agenda for youth research in general. Another question is what comes after the less powerful position of developmental psychology in youth issues. For many decades this branch of youth research held that a sane development of the personality also implied an ethical personality. This assumption is no longer valid, and we can look forward to contributions from philosophers and theologians as they enter this research field and the issues of morality and ethics.

The figure shows no limits to the research field, but rather an anarchic logical principle leading to the tower of Babel. But there are regulating principles and/or mechanisms. The axis of disciplines is mainly regulated within the academic and research communities. In some countries and institutions there are strong demarcations and competition between disciplines, which normally make for difficulties in the progress of youth research (and also for the disciplines in general) – here youth researchers will appear as unhappy and isolated individuals. In other places there are great interests in organisational development, where for example the universities themselves are the eager party in setting up centres and research environments within existing teaching departments/faculties, in order to stimulate interdisciplinary research and knowledge development. For the human and social sciences there are automatically 3-4-5 self-evident topics coming to these agendas: women/gender, children, youth, media, and environment.

The development of issues can be seen as mainly governed by the (external) society, either as moral panics or conscious policy-making. For instance Youth Ministries and/or Research Councils setting up and financing programmes for shorter or longer periods with the main purpose of concentrating on a few issues for a longer time and obtaining more coherent knowledge and scientific competence out of it. The easiest way is certainly setting up a pure youth programme, but

sometimes youth research can be a strong branch within programmes with issues such as gender, media, consumption, welfare, etc.

In the mid-1980s some of the most fruitful contributions against a destructive anarchism of youth issues, was symbolically gathered through the International Youth Year in 1985. The rhetoric of the Year was giving priority to *participation*, *development* and *peace* as leading themes, and as guidelines for a comprehensive youth policy at national (local), regional and global levels. It was not easy at that time to see if this was only short-term rhetoric, but later developments have shown that the whole issue was well analysed and prepared, and fitted into the growing agendas of youth affairs at local levels and in international cooperation (Stafseng, 1998).

At the bottom of these discussions there were parallel kinds of reasoning in public youth policy, and within youth research. Also public policies have been growing into a never-ending number of fragmented youth issues, separated in various administrative branches, and the participative dimension of youth policies has been replaced by the administrative subordination (of youth). The youth researchers' response to these developments was formulated as early as 1925 by Eduard Spranger in the first edition of his "Jugendpsychologie" (Spranger, 1924/1932). After the vivisection of the frog, you cannot expect to get back a frog by putting the pieces together, he said referring to fragmented human sciences. Using the same reasoning a mutual interdependency between a comprehensive, holistic youth policy and the participative and engaged youth was arrived at. For both policy and research, this meant a shift from a dominating problem oriented approach towards youth, to policies and research looking for the resources of youth at individual and collective levels.

Since the mid-1980s it has been easy to see how countries adapting to the modern youth policy frameworks have also been creating new and different youth discourses and agendas, as well as coming up with new interests in youth research as contributors to holistic youth policy. The outcomes have not been decreasing research on drugs, crime, unemployment, etc., but instead increasing demands for a more integrated, synthesising knowledge. At the same time the differences have increased between countries with the better conditions for youth research compared to those countries with weaker conditions. Especially countries in Eastern and Central Europe have lost a lot of strength and position during the changes of the last ten years, with some exceptions for countries like Poland, Slovakia, Albania, Slovenia, and to some extent Romania. Russia is a very peculiar and contradicting case that cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper.

### **Emphasis and highlights**

Looking back over the post-war decades we find that the research field has not analysed and discussed the same youth all the time. This is partly due to the relationship between empirical and theoretical youth and the radical changes of the real circumstances of youth life – for example a constant move from the labour market to educational institutions. But also shifting emphasis within the research field itself has been important. We shall try to figure out some main lines.

In the 1950s the dominating interest was in the new teenagers, their delinquency and general unrest as described by Helmut Schelsky in his "Die skeptische Generation" (Schelsky, 1957). The 1960s are more difficult to describe neutrally, as there emerged "the greening of America" and "the making of a counter-culture". But for anybody seriously going into the overwhelming research literature from the period 1968-75, it is quite clear that the emphasis had changed from problematic teenagers to "youth movements" and *students* in their twenties as a main focus. As these publications dried out during the seventies, they also became more "funny", airing certain despair from previous student activists who described how "late capitalism" was winning the struggle on young people's minds (I remember some German book titles that cannot be referred to here).

The emphasis on activism, movements and students represented an obstacle when the main orientations changed from the late 1970s into the main agenda of the 1980s. The youth in focus was once again the teenager, spoken of in broad lines and with some basic doubts about whether the

Western countries have experienced the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher as “the new class war – from the right”, leading to increasing and explosive youth unemployment. Or if they witnessed a certain kind of modernization or evolution of advanced economies, where new qualification demands shifted the whole youth (adolescent) period from the labour market to education. My positive evaluation of the International Youth Year, is because these new youth policies also brought some social and civilized order into these chaotic agendas – some kind of negotiating arenas into the changes that I perceived as modernising evolution. As these developmental processes are still going on in countries like Spain, Italy or Russia, I am open for discussions about alternative descriptions and interpretations.

On entering the 1990s a new agenda emerged. The 1980s closed with surprising public agreements about the positive values of modern adolescence, after decades of moral panics and difficult defence by youth research (or youth workers). Today we still find, even in education, demands for the noisy, creative and self-educating teenagers. The problem focus now has moved to post-adolescence, the pro-longed youth ages – or the lack of access to adulthood (“eternal youth”). This means once again something quite different from adolescent psychology, instead we have to look at demography, housing, student finances, welfare distribution between generations, etc. (Stafseng, 1998).

The second trend for the 1990s can be perceived as a new agenda for the discourses on youth and education. Even if Coleman is presented here as the start of the actual period of youth research – as an educational sociologist inventing the “teenage community” through studies of high schools, we have to describe the main traditions of modern youth research as something quite different. The tradition has been to stay outside and/or basically critical of education. There has been a mutual antagonism between education and educational researchers on the one hand, and youth researchers on the other – this goes for most countries.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1990s we can see an emerging agenda knocking on these traditional barriers. There are various reasons for these changes. Seen from the youth research side, schools have come to have an increasing importance in time and space, and the formation of youth and youth cultures is today more influenced by education than family and leisure. Schools are finding it more and more difficult to see the school walls as the borders for relevant learning, yet education becomes a little helpless on out-of-school knowledge. We can observe a growing importance of issues like the relationships between formal and informal education, and “learning for democratic citizenship”. The whole issue of citizenship brings up a lot of old and new questions from the history of education, the history of the welfare state, the very different views and traditions on moral and political education, and to a large extent the relationships between nationalism, globalization and multiculturalism. The implications are that the old separations of institutional worlds are falling apart, as also the division of labour between separate scientific disciplines.

These trends have occurred at the same time as the old division of Europe has collapsed, and East/Central Europe and the West are trying to find each other in a new political, cultural and scientific order, including new agendas for youth research. But for various reasons it is not easy to see how this could happen on equal terms. For many countries in East/Central Europe the main interests are nation-building within a context of bad experiences of a strong State, which is not easy to combine with the celebrated modern market economies. For the advanced European economies the citizenship discourse is combined with the aim of overcoming the traditional constraints of nation and State. Within this unbalanced framework it could be that governing policies on all sides are formulated by old and tired men, and younger generations are oriented in directions other than the leaders want – both in the West and East. This generational question related to sources of citizenship at local, national/regional, European or global levels could be one of the starting

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<sup>8</sup> I will avoid discussing the British experience on these matters, as this would entail a more complex and elaborated history, although also showing some of the same main trends.



platforms for a common European agenda, although the social conditions and potential results may be very different.

So far this analysis would sit comfortably on most official European desks, in accordance with the general policy agendas. But to become more normative and argue for socially responsible youth research, means going a little further. This means going from the general and superficial levels of a term and concept like citizenship into a more complex “hot potatoe”. This does imply returning to certain forms of critical research reports in the style of the 1970s, with their shocking stories from the backstreets of welfare capitalism in confrontation with power authorities on “ideals and realities”. There the problem was not the stories but the “half stories” in the sense of poor, irresponsible or lacking analysis. We have recently seen similar types of reports on Neo-nazi youth in some communities in the former GDR.

Starting with a positive perspective on the citizenship concept, which is a fruitful combination of traditions of ideas in education, social policy, youth policy and political theory, we could look through some leading documents on the topic to see if the superficial version leads to some future dreams of a new, European youth aristocracy – the new middle class exchange students, travellers, participants in courses of the Council of Europe and EU, etc. From there, it is relevant to continue with the concept as expressed in the Italian context in the last few years. Young people in Italy have never really been part of any post-war unrest, except for some 1968 students, they have been loyal to their families and behaved well in society. But over the last couple of years and from locally based beginnings, they have established “*youth actions*” almost everywhere and connected them in a countrywide network – all appearing rather aggressive and potent. It is interesting how far the citizenship concept can be applied in a further and deeper understanding of what is going on. And then to take the last years’ experiences in the Balkan area which is not the only place where new forms of nationalism (among young people) in Europe are emerging. Research is needed there, discussing *whether or not* these forms of nationalism are compatible with the concept of citizenship. This could easily lead to an unfruitful, superficial and moralistic discourse, which I would only complicate with historical comparisons of Norwegian nationalism at a time when Norway was a Scandinavian “Kosova” (but avoided at the last moment war with Sweden). Karl Marx said about capital that it has no *Vaterland*, and we could ask if our notions of the real citizen imply “no *Vaterland*” – or what?

I would not want to draw any conclusions now, but I do not like that “Europe” or “citizenship” lead to a discourse at the surface of silent or ticking bombs. Instead I prefer critical approaches, where youth research examines some of the worst problems with a social and political responsibility, willing to contribute to practical and political development.<sup>9</sup>

### **Part III: Strategies for young researchers?**

As I started to distinguish between a research field in itself, and what it is for me/us, we should then come to the question about what young researchers should or could do? Since I don’t believe that you have to be a woman for doing women’s research, or a child to study children, I don’t believe that you have to be young to be a good youth researcher – or that young researchers necessarily should have a strong interest in youth research. But here the relevant point is to find out the strategic agenda when young(er) researchers actually have their interest in youth issues.

As a meta-agenda I would say that they should first of all study their own situation and conditions, as the general academic problem of generations at the moment. In most developed countries there was a boom of easy recruitment to academic and research positions in the 1970s, and this (my) generation will still hold positions for another 15-20 years. So the basic, general problem of younger

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<sup>9</sup> I refer to a Round Table discussion at the last Consultative Meeting on youth research of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, in Budapest June 1999. The contribution from Johan Galtung is published on the website of the Directorate <http://www.coe.int/youth>.

researchers is the reality of academic slavery – and if former slaves can keep their minds fresh enough to get the positions when they are available?

### **Organisational orientations: between policy & academic networks**

Nobody, at least not in the human and social sciences, can any longer think about an intellectual career in splendid isolation. It is important to find fellows, identify the peers – first as a student, and later as close and distant colleagues at home and abroad. All research is a strange combination of cooperation and competition *among peers*.

This means first of all that a young researcher has to be organized in some way, or to be in continuous search of relevant organizational frameworks. These orientations can follow two tracks, carefully watching what is going on between the policy based networks, and the academic networks, and their differing implications. At local levels, a municipality or a ministry will provide entrance possibility to policy networks, while for example the Council of Europe represents the same track at the European level. The academic networks are tapped via national associations, or the ISA Research Committee 34 for overseas connections, or even less formal networks.

The relevant need situation of the younger researcher is access to the field(s), to tasks and projects, as well as the development of peer relations. When you are young without an established reputation, it is easiest to move along some policy lines – making smaller or more ambitious reports for a municipality, a ministry or an NGO. Many youth researchers have started their careers this way. By advancement this implies a stronger sponsor/client-relationship, and often also the important peer relation within administrations which may also lift the young researcher to the level of international meetings and collaboration. There is nothing wrong with this track, except the necessary protection against a “dead end track”, or ending up in the administration, which is to find a corresponding, organised life in a relevant academic network.

Currently Chinese colleagues are not only finding the right kind of sponsorship in the public sector, but also through their old friends with careers and money in the private sector. This could also be relevant for colleagues in Eastern and Central Europe, with the current distribution of economic wealth (the Soros Foundation is an interesting example).

The significance of academic networks is that they often are based on merits, hierarchies and more formal criteria for access – they are by nature “gerontocratic”. This becomes worse the more money and power we find related to the networks. However the current youth research networks are generally more open, and easy to enter.

But the main point is that these organizational considerations, whether for policy or academic networks, should not be perceived as something *external* to research. Taken as an *internal* dimension for research, networks constitute knowledge territories, or “tribes and territories”. Bourdieu’s concept of *fields*, and Foucault’s concept of *discourse* can be instrumental in reflecting and understanding the networks’ dynamics, particularly as part of a general analysis of youth research as a field of observation or personal experience. It is not possible here to open this agenda, only to emphasize that these concepts offer various ways of seeing and understanding social positions and power dynamics of intellectual fields, and the differences between doing research and controlling the results of research.

As one final point, I would say that it is a pity that so much attention in discussions on positivism have been related to methods and the internal research processes. For me the real victims of positivism are those who think it is *neutral* to be ignorant and/or passive towards their *user* contexts or discourses.

### **Academic orientations: between purists & interdisciplinary imperialists**

Young(er) youth researchers will early on in their careers discover, identify and consider a crucial dilemma in their academic orientations. The challenges from the research field itself are the emphasis on *interdisciplinarity*, and partly also the assumption that the distinction between basic and applied research has a weak meaning in the field. Youth researchers can work easily within policy issues or practice, and with vivid use of basic theoretical concepts and modes (demonstrated later by my colleague Sven Mørch). Interdisciplinarity does not mean (only) the parallel play of different disciplines, but a certain orientation and openness in each individual approach and study.

This could suggest that the *impure* research style is a virtue. This virtue can work well and without risks if people are academically established, for example in tenured jobs or as grant winners. Young researchers will not normally be this situation, but in the early phases of uncertain careers or research conditions, most often with strict disciplinary regimes – with purists and purism setting the standard and rewards. Very often this pattern comes up when people are employed on time-limited contracts in applied institutes, and at the same time are trying to cultivate the tracks back to universities and their PhD-fellowships or scholarships.

There are no standard solutions to these dilemmas. It is important to have a sincere analysis and judgement of the realities of these matters. In some countries these rules, formal or informal, are so strict that there is no idea of going for experiments, but just to accept the valid tickets for the research train, and become at least basically qualified on youth theme(s) within an individual discipline – and expand one's ambitions at later stages. In other countries or particular universities or institutes interdisciplinary development is the highest priority, but sometimes not combined with clear changes of rewarding practices. So young and enthusiastic scholars can then discover very late that they were working their seven years for Rachel, then another seven years for Lea, and what really happened in this story – if it became Rachel, Lea or nothing, I don't remember....

The general and current problem with this issue is that progress in the human and social sciences now comes through interdisciplinary research, through new and surprising combinations of knowledge/theory traditions and/or methodological solutions. Research on youth issues has special advantages and attractions since it invites for such inventions. This does not lessen the dilemma – being a part of progress at a young age is important, it helps avoid having an “old head on a young body” for the rest of one's professional life.

### **Universal theory or local storytelling – as an approach to intellectual tribes and territories?**

The hidden or open hierarchies of research communities can differ a lot, but there are frequently some main trends to observe, concerning age. For example take my student period in sociology. My teachers had a background as students in the post-war period when the subject was new at university, and they had no teachers and had to learn by themselves. As teachers, they continued to distrust teaching and they did not believe in authority, so that combined with the fact that our cohorts exploded in numbers as students, we also had to organise our own studies. These experiences included important, hidden forms of learning – not always making colleagues in all countries happy. Today a classical social order is established at most universities and research communities, but I could imagine that some East and Central European countries have some particular problems of academic generations related to previous versus present political regimes.<sup>10</sup>

A main feature of young age is the subordination in soft or brutal authority systems. Most often this leads to the rule that beginners start with the small problems or questions, they can expand to bigger questions by maturation, and/or there is a master brain who puts the smaller pieces together in the a spectacular analysis – e.g. at some world congress or so.

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<sup>10</sup> This academic generation problem of lacking confidence has often occurred in *German* history, for many reasons, and many interesting research issues about generational waves in intellectual and academic life can be particularly studied in Germany.

The playground of the younger researchers will therefore easily become the local storytelling, in concrete or metaphoric meaning, sitting in the waiting room for more global and universal research problems. This creates an obstacle to making connections and cooperating with international peers, which should always be a must at the start of any research career. This is not necessarily a physical issue, about moving and travelling, but a question about attitudes and orientations: Where do I find the leading literature and research environments of my field of interest, and what are the universal and crucial discourses? The implications are that the alternative to local storytelling is to march directly to universal or essential “theory” with a wide meaning, as a precondition for partnership in the relevant international communities. The keywords are the sharing of actual frames of reference, even with the risk of being an elephant in the rose garden on some occasions.<sup>11</sup>

When the anthropologist Gregory Bateson writes about communication and learning, he often uses a certain example from Zen Buddhism to illustrate some of his essential points. It is about the Zen teacher (priest) and his exercise for testing the maturity of his student. He is raising a stick over the student’s head, saying if he says that the stick is real, or unreal, he will knock his head, and also if he says nothing the stick will hurt. Then the matured student will attack the teacher and conquer the stick (Bateson, 1973).<sup>12</sup> Studies and research will always take place within some form of authority hierarchy, and the hidden secret about intellectual advancement is about identifying the stick, watching it, and then taking it at the right time.

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<sup>11</sup> I have had many colleagues who have said that they “wait” with their “internationalisation” till they have done their homework, and have something “to tell”. They have still not moved out of the local storytelling.

<sup>12</sup> As a model situation it is used to show the logics of Double Bind communication, and of advanced learning (a.o. “A Theory of Play and Fantasy”).



# YOUTH RESEARCH IN EUROPE \*

Helena Helve, Carmen Leccardi and Siyka Kovacheva

## Interpreting European Youth Research

The enlargement of the *European Union* in May, 2004 means that between the 25 European Union countries there are now 75 million young people between 15 and 25 years old. The White Paper, *A New Impetus for European Youth*, was accepted by the *European Commission* on November 21, 2001. In this White Paper (European Commission, 2001a) the Commission suggests a new framework for European cooperation in the youth policy issues implementing an open method of coordination. One of the aims of the White Paper is to improve public awareness of young people's concerns at the European level in the field of youth policy.

Gaining a greater understanding and knowledge of youth requires gathering information through statistical data, surveys and other forms of research, and the interpretation thereof.<sup>1</sup> However the channels of communication and dissemination on youth issues are not developed enough throughout Europe (Chisholm & Kovacheva, 2002). At present the *Council of Europe* provides contact information about researchers and institutes via its *Directory of Youth and Sport* and *European Youth Research Network Correspondents*. The purpose for this researchers' network is to reflect on the European Commission's and Council of Europe's current agendas on youth research and youth policy reviews, and to focus on how to implement the European Commission Common Objectives for a 'Better Understanding of Youth'. The aim is for correspondents to disseminate information through national youth research networks, or to spark an interest in developing national networks where they do not exist.

In fact much more effort is still needed to develop an effective infrastructure for European youth research co-operation. One important channel for the development of a youth research agenda for our continent has been the international network of the *International Sociological Association Research Committee on Youth Research* (RC34). European youth research strongly depends on forming and strengthening such research communities. At the same time social developments in Europe are moving in a more global direction, where the internationalization of cultural, economic, and political spheres means a globalization of problems like unemployment and social exclusion. At the same time we are witnessing the rise of small, local nationalistic groups among young people in some European countries.<sup>2</sup> The fact is that Europeanness is a contested concept among young Europeans.<sup>3</sup> There are many images of Europe with multiple local cultures, involving similarities and dissimilarities, and various levels of economic development, unemployment, urbanization, access to the means of mass communication and so forth.

The Eurobarometer surveys are designed to regularly monitor the social and political attitudes in EU (European Union) and in EC (European Commission) societies. For example when the European Commission examined the views of 15 to 24-year-olds on the functioning of the European Union, the survey asked two main questions: what practical measures can be taken to make young people identify more with Europe; and what are the key issues that the Convention should address? This Eurobarometer flash survey revealed that 15 to 24-year-olds feel that employment, solidarity, mobility and respect for democratic values are crucial for the European project. Survey data about young Europeans is plentiful, in contrast with the scarcity of comparative research concerning young

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Cover letter of the European Commission questionnaire on 'Greater Understanding for Youth', 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Eurobarometer Flash Survey, carried out between May 27 and June 16, 2002, with a representative sample of 7558 young people.

<sup>3</sup> The complex relation between young people and Europe is revealed by their attitudes towards the idea of a European identity. See Chisholm, du Bois-Reymond & Coffield (1995); Lagrée (2000) and Leccardi (2001).

Europeans, though at present there are also several comparative studies on young Europeans being funded by the European Commission.<sup>4</sup>

While it is not easy to find a common identity for European youth research – given the gap between different countries in terms of adequate funding in the field, and relatively underdeveloped transnational networks and professional mobility – some cooperation does exist. Since the mid-1980s already, the Council of Europe's *European Youth Centre* (EYC) has been making a significant contribution to building closer links between national youth research communities and between youth researchers and youth policy. After the UN *International Year of Young People* in 1985, the Council of Europe established an *Expert Committee on Youth Research and Documentation* from 1987 to 1989. This committee was interested in getting Central and Eastern European youth researchers to take part in European and International joint youth research conferences, and to become members of the International Sociological Association's (ISA) Research Committee 34 'Sociology of Youth'. Also in the mid-1980s the Nordic countries began to develop a Nordic youth research network through the *Nordic Youth Research Information Symposium* (NYRIS) series (Jonsson 1995; Hübner-Funk, Chisholm, du Bois-Reymond & Sellin, 1995). The *Youth and Generation in Europe* Research Network was created at the end of the Budapest *European Sociological Association* (ESA) conference, in 1993. This network uses chiefly two instruments: an e-mail discussion list and the ESA congress.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1990s some networks in the field of youth studies were developed and coordinated by the European Union, the Council of Europe and other international institutions. Themes such as marginalization, social inclusion and exclusion, citizenship and European identity (see e.g. Helve & Wallace, 2001) became themes for European discussions. In May, 2000 the European Commission sponsored a meeting in Lisbon to debate future challenges for European youth research and policy. This meeting brought together some 150 researchers and policy experts from across Europe. This shows that we can speak about European youth research. In 2003 the Council of Europe and the European Commission agreed to cooperate in the area of youth research in terms of a two year partnership agreement. This cooperation is linked to the 'White Paper' mentioned above. Briefly, European youth researchers have, since the 1990s, become experts on European youth policies.

This has helped the field of youth research to strengthen its autonomy by legitimating itself as a common field where theory and empirical research could meet. Theoretical discussions in youth research have related to social theory, globalization theory and new theoretical developments (e.g. Habermas, Bourdieu, Giddens, Beck and Bauman). Whereas earlier youth theories by Stanley Hall (and also Erik H. Erikson) from 1950s, 1960s and 1970s focused on working class boys, later youth research has also included girls. This is related to the growing participation of European and especially Nordic women in the labour market in the sixties, which has been followed by an explosion of women's participation in education. Nordic youth researchers have also been active in gender studies (e.g. Harris, Aapola & Gonick, 2000; Gordon, 1990; Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 1994; Helve, 1997). The first international girl research conference, *Alice in Wonderland*, was organized in Amsterdam in 1992.

There has always been a loosely knit network of Western-European scholars, with strong links to Australia and Canada. They share a similar approach, while still allowing for individual profiles. Western European youth research is strongly connected with the Post-War British sub-culture research tradition of the 1970s, when Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson published their book, *Resistance through Rituals* (1976) and Paul Willis did his famous study on *Profane Culture* (1978).<sup>6</sup> These researchers were all associated with the *British Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham.<sup>7</sup> The CCCS has included many different kinds of school

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Rural Young People in Changing Europe. A Comparative Study of Living Conditions of Rural Young People in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden*, Helve (2000).

<sup>5</sup> More than 200 European youth sociologists are registered as member of this e-mail forum.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s subcultures came out in new forms as fan and consumer cultures (Featherstone, 1991), and common cultures (Willis, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Willis and Jefferson had been postgraduate students at the Centre and Hall was its director.

positions: feminist, post-modern, criminologist, constructivist, etc. Some CCCS positions have leaned on older traditions (e.g. Coleman and Eriksson), and newer French Bourdieuan positions also have emerged. Although the Birmingham school never achieved an autonomous position, it has had a high status among European youth researchers, especially in the Nordic countries.

The post-Birmingham developments imply a new split between cultural and social youth studies (cf. Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). For example there have been two big research programs funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC): the 1985-1991 research program, the *16-19 Initiative*, which included an associated comparative study of the transition from school to work in England and Germany (see Bynner, 1987); and the *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change* program.<sup>8</sup> The British Youth Research Group hopes to attract existing British Sociological Association (BSA) members as well as to promote links with other disciplines and agencies involved in youth work and research. A key aim of the group is to organize a number of one-day seminars and workshops which will explore all aspects of the study of young people. The focus on cultural studies has been mostly on cultural production and innovation, whereas the focus of social science youth studies has been on social reproduction, not least on social inequalities (cf. Fornäs, 1995).

As the largest and oldest Youth Research Institute in Europe, the German Youth Institute *Das Deutsche Jugendinstitut* (DJI), established in 1963, has played an important role in bringing youth onto the European Agenda. The first female president of RC34 Sibylle Hübner-Funk came from this institute. It has actively participated in many research projects on the European level, including the multi-national report to the European Commission: *Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe* (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001), coordinated by IARD at Milano, Italy. The institute contributed significantly to the Commission's White Paper on youth and youth policy.

The European Group for Integrated Social Research (EGRIS) is an East-West European research network (based in Germany). In its more than 10 years of activities it has led several EU research projects such as: 'Misleading Trajectories: Evaluation of the Unintended Effects of Labour Market Integration Policies for Young Adults in Europe' and 'Families and Transitions in Europe'. It acts as a forum for a Europe-wide discussion on social integration and social policy.

In the 1980s youth research in Europe was mostly located in cultural studies, media studies and gender studies. However at the same time Nordic youth studies kept a broader inter-disciplinary profile, which was seen in the first Nordic Youth Research Symposium (NYRIS 1) in Oslo, in January, 1987 (see also Gudmundsson, 2000). The Oslo symposium was the cornerstone for building up an interdisciplinary Nordic youth studies community. The 7<sup>th</sup> Nordic Youth Research Information Symposium, *Breaking and Making Borders*, which took place in Helsinki in the year 2000, was a Europe-wide conference. In NYRIS 7 more attention was given to gender as a specific focus throughout the program. In Nordic countries the youth cultural studies school has been especially strong in Sweden (see e.g., Fornäs, 1994), and the theoretical concerns have been focused more on identity or culture than on general gender theory (see also Jonsson, Helve & Wichström, 2003).

### **Formal Structures of Youth Research: A Nordic Model**

Now we try to characterize the formal structures of youth research in Europe, especially in the Nordic countries, where the infrastructure of the youth research is extensively developed compared to the fact that youth research is still a relatively new research field. Researchers are dispersed through several academic disciplines and institutes. In the Nordic countries the first Nordic Youth Research Symposium, in 1987, was the start of NYRI, the Nordic Youth Research Information and Nordic Youth Research Institute. NYRI is the general organization for a range of networking activities and information systems for youth researchers in the Nordic countries: Denmark (including the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The coordination of NYRI

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<sup>8</sup> Directed by Liza Catan. The project ended in 2003. This programme involves 17 different pieces of research, ranging from social exclusion to citizenship.



activities is financed by the *Nordic Council of Ministers* through a *Nordic Youth Research Coordinator*, and by the national youth ministries through an Advisory Group (AG). This research organization and strategy has developed connections between youth administrators, youth organizations, national youth councils and youth researchers on specific topics in need of more research-based information. NYRI has also had connections with the Council of Europe<sup>9</sup> and EU youth research. About 1700 researchers and users of research based information have been linked through NYRI networks. The development of this cooperation started in 1985, and the present framework was established in 1992.<sup>10</sup>

A research project on living conditions of young people in the Nordic periphery began in 2001. This study has investigated young people living in remote regions of Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Denmark, Greenland, Norway and Sweden, using methods of secondary analysis. The research project focused on societal, individual and cultural factors that influence the development of young people into adults in the periphery. The project also analyzed processes of integration and marginalization among young people in the periphery.<sup>11</sup> A Nordic-Baltic PhD level doctoral school network of 36 youth researchers and 23 universities with workshops and summer school courses began in 2000. The Youth Research Network invites junior researchers into effective and regular cooperation with Nordic and Baltic Universities and research institutions. In the year 2003 Russia as well became involved in the network. This Youth Research Network is interdisciplinary. There are posts available for young researchers, for example, from the fields of cultural, social, psychological and educational studies. The costs of participating in the workshops and summer schools are paid by *NorFa*, the *Nordic Academy for Advanced Study Network*.<sup>12</sup>

NYRIS symposiums and the publication of the *Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, *Young*,<sup>13</sup> have been interrelated, each supporting the other and being influenced by Nordic networks of youth research. *YOUNG* has become (together with the international *Journal of Youth Studies*) one of the major academic journals in the youth studies arena.<sup>14</sup> *YOUNG* has initiated dialogue between disciplines concerned with youth such as sociology, political science, pedagogy, psychology, anthropology, ethnology, cultural geography, economics, criminology, law, history, media studies, gender studies, medicine, psychiatry, literature, musicology, film, theatre, linguistics and cultural studies.

In the Nordic countries, as well as in other countries of Europe and other parts of the world, many new things are happening in the field of youth research, youth work and youth policy: In Finland the *Youth Research Society*, established in 1987, has around 200 members. Early in 1999 the Society in turn founded a new research group called *Nuorisotutkimusverkosto* (*The Youth Research Network*), involving over 20 researchers and projects, financed mainly by the state. The network was based on the *Youth Research 2000* program, which began in 1994. The Finnish Scientific Journal of Youth Research, *Nuorisotutkimus*, had its 20th anniversary in 2003.

The Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), *Rannsóknir og Greining*, is an independent non-profit organization. The Centre analyzes the social well-being of youth in Iceland, and works closely with various governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide funding and logistic support for research regarding adolescent problems and problem behaviour.

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<sup>9</sup> On the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth in Bucharest, April 27-29, 1998, the Council of Europe Youth Directorate published an information document entitled *25 Years of Youth Policy in the Council of Europe: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead*. It points out that the years 1964-1969 were the actual stimulus for the creation of European youth policy, when the conflict between young people and society and its values had plainly manifested itself. For that reason the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided in May 1968, to regularly discuss the situation of youth in Europe and recommended that the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation be established.

<sup>10</sup> See the NYRI website: <http://www.alli.fi/nyri/index.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Helve (2003), *Ung i utkant. Aktuell forskning om glesbygdsungdomar i Norden*.

<sup>12</sup> NorFA is a network of Nordic PhD-level doctoral schools with working connections to youth policy and youth work in the Nordic countries, sponsored by the Nordic Scientific Academy.

<sup>13</sup> *Young* was originally printed in Sweden. The abstracts and articles have also been published in NYRI. The editorial board has been Nordic. Following negotiations with Sage publications, since 2003 the Journal 'Young' has been published by Sage.

<sup>14</sup> See more <http://www.alli.fi/nyri/young/index.htm>.

The Danish Youth Research Centre in Roskilde, *CeFu*, organized the eighth NYRIS Symposium, *Youth Voice and Noise*, in the year 2003. The Danish Youth Council and Roskilde University have cooperated to develop the Centre as a new structure. The Centre is closely associated with members coming from different central institutions, organizations and enterprises in Denmark, which thus play a part in ensuring that research is in contact with environments that work with young people on a daily basis.

In Norway a new Youth Research Journal, *Ungdomsforskning*, started in 2001, published by NOVA.<sup>15</sup> The youth research group at NOVA is multi-disciplinary, comprising mostly sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists. Empirical research on adolescents is based on local and regional qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as national surveys. Its main research topics are youth culture and leisure activities, school adjustment, transitions from school to employment, alcohol and drug use, delinquency and conduct problems, inter-generational relations and issues concerning ethnicity and a multi-cultural society.

In Sweden the Swedish Council for Labour and Social Science Research, *Forskningsrådet för arbetsliv och socialvetenskap*, has evaluated Swedish youth research (*Youth Research in Sweden, 1995-2001. An Evaluation Report*; Jonsson, Helve & Wichström, 2003). According to their evaluation there is a fundamental division in the field of youth research: The first section is associated with the Birmingham school Cultural Studies, which often focuses on how young people are socially constructed as youth, how they shape their identity and what lifestyles they choose. The other tradition includes studies in academic disciplines ranging from social medicine/epidemiology and psychology to social work, education, the humanities and sociology.

At the Nordic level, youth research has been active with the *Unga i Norden* (Nordic Youth) research program. The different networks have integrated platforms for knowledge-based decision making. This multidisciplinary research program has been developed in cooperation with researchers, administrators and politicians. For example the *Barents Youth Research Network* and *Arctic Youth Research Network* are new networks founded through cooperation between the Nordic countries. The key themes of these programs have been the living conditions of young people, the transition from childhood to adulthood and Nordic identity and youth culture (cf. Bjurtström, 1997). These topics embrace comparative research, evaluation research and both quantitative and qualitative research.

## **Modernizing Youth. Youth Research in Italy**

In the following chapter we focus on issues that have been at the forefront for young people and youth research for the past fifty years in Europe. Our case is taken from Italian youth research but it fits in many ways also to the youth and youth research in other European countries, especially in Southern Europe. We will see how the modernizing path that transformed Italy in a few decades from an agricultural country to a post-industrial one also thoroughly changed youth profiles. The studies briefly taken into consideration here highlight the nature of these changes and their main characteristics.

### **The Birth of Youth: The Fifties and Sixties**

The few studies done in Italy in the early 1950s (Grasso 1954; Dursi 1958) give us a fairly dull picture of youth. Young people seemed to be in a defensive position, subjected to intense forms of social control, intent mainly on introspection and uninterested in the social and political situation. This changed, however, beginning in the last years of the 1950s with the arrival of the 'economic

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<sup>15</sup> NOVA – Norwegian Social Research – is a national research institute. The board of directors is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research. The National Assembly, Stortinget, provides the basic funding. The aim of the institute is to develop knowledge and understanding of social conditions and processes of change. It focuses on issues of life-course events, level of living conditions and aspects of life-quality as well as on programs and services provided by the welfare system.

boom' – the period of rapid and intense economic growth, continuing into the early 1960s, that radically transformed the Italian social landscape (Ginsborg, 1989). The flight from rural areas,<sup>16</sup> especially by younger people, was a tool for asserting their right to an existence different from that of the older generations.

Together with the spread of consumer goods – material and symbolic emblems of economic development – this period also revealed the first forms of youth culture in the proper sense. In fact, young people used consumer goods to trace their own generational profile distinct from that of adults: from scooters to record albums, from clothing to pictures of stars, consumer goods and their symbols became an effective tool of emancipation from the world of adults. As documented by studies of the time (cf. Cristofori, 2002) – no matter whether conducted in cities like Milan (Diena, 1960) or Genoa (Cavalli, 1959) or in provincial Tuscany (Carbonaro & Lumachi, 1962) or Veneto (Allum & Diamanti, 1986) – it was primarily by means of consumer goods that young people, workers and students, were able to construct spaces of freedom and independence unknown to earlier youth generations.

New consumption possibilities also appeared to be of great importance in decoding the messages carried by the 'gangs' of juveniles who menacingly populated urban areas in the early sixties (Piccone Stella, 1993). Through various kinds of transgression, first and foremost in acts of gratuitous delinquency, groups of young people – male and mainly of working-class origin – attempted to translate into daily practice the hedonism being touted by mass culture. This is the picture emerging from a number of studies on the phenomenon of Italian *teddy boys* (Bertolini, 1964) conducted mainly by psychologists, pedagogues and criminologists. At that time, in fact, Italian sociology was only minimally concerned with this phenomenon.

Instead, sociologists in those years were asking themselves about the new generational identity of so-called 'normal youth'. Research done at the time in Milan (Baglioni, 1962), for example, identified among young people (as Schelsky had done in Germany some years earlier) a *gray* generation, the so-called generation of the three M's: *moglie* (wife), *macchina* (car), *mestiere* (job), an image that research by Alfassio Grimaldi and Bertoni (1964) would later confirm: a generation without flights of fancy and with little interest in politics, desirous only of playing adult roles as soon as possible.

In the mid-sixties a new profile of the youth world began to take shape, parallel to an increase in secondary school attendance and the spread of great optimism about the future. Meanwhile, in the years preceding 1968 the beat culture began to flourish. According to a study done in Milan in 1967 (Ardigò *et al.*, 1968), the young people in the beat movement were mainly middle and lower-middle class, anti-authority, anti-consumption and fighting against the constituted order that the adult generation embodied. Often midway between dissent and consumption, at least in its mass expressions,<sup>17</sup> the beat generation spread a message of liberation from dominant cultural schemes and searched for more authentic relations. In fact, it paved the way for the long youth movement era, which in Italy lasted until the end of the 1970s.

### **From the 'Movement Era' to the 'Era of Uncertainty'**

Anti-authoritarianism and the redefinition of the borders between public and private; the primacy of politics and the centrality of daily life as an arena in which to challenge power; a rejection of book-learning in favour of a closer relation between theory and practice; new forms of communication – these were key points of the 1968 movement. They were not analyzed in sociological research, but rather by the movement's young leaders (Bobbio & Viale, 1968; Viale, 1978). Sociological studies in this period instead focused on the change in values that involved the entire world of youth, not just the activist minority. A good illustration of this trend can be found in the results of a survey done in 1969 by Doxa on behalf of Shell (Shell, 1970). What emerged, among other things, was the

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<sup>16</sup> After the Second World War, about half the working population was employed in the primary sector.

<sup>17</sup> The reference is to the music which, through the Beatles and Rolling Stones, spread across Europe, to youth-oriented magazines, styles of clothing and looks.

conviction – shared by almost all the young people interviewed – of being involved in an authentic conflict with the adult world. Another survey, conducted by the ISVET a year later (Scarpato, 1973) painted a picture of youth in terms of an increasing marginalization. Young people suffered from this due to mechanisms of social exclusion, both at school and in the working world, where youth unemployment was on the rise. These processes went side by side with youth's rejection of the traditional channels of political participation, such as party affiliations.

Thinking in a marginal key was very popular in research on youth throughout the seventies. Aside from the specific research areas – whether young people's relations with the productive sphere (Annunziata & Moscati, 1978) or the transformation of, and crisis in, the traditional socialization apparatus (Bassi & Pilati, 1978) – most of the analysis of a sociological, political or cultural nature in those years tended to propose a similar interpretive scheme, with a conjunction of two aspects at its base. On the one hand there was the social and productive marginality of a major part of the youth world – the so-called 'non-guaranteed people': students not attending classes, student-workers doing the many little jobs that do not offer identity, unemployed young people in the suburbs (De Masi, 1978) – and on the other, the emergence of a new subjectivity. From this interweaving sprang the movement of 1977 and the social and political body that constituted its reference point: the 'youth proletariat'. A contemporary of neo-feminism, the 1977 movement borrowed from it the informal, small-group organizational structure and many of the keywords centered on beginning by oneself to understand the world, and the right to be different (Sorlini, 1977).

The youth world emerged from this period – exceptional in the intensity of its forms of protest and cultural innovation – with a profile very different from that of the previous decade. In a seminal study of those years Alessandro Cavalli proposed considering the transformation in terms of a shift in the youthful stage of life from 'process' to 'condition': while in the first case young people appear to be 'in transit' towards adulthood and their eyes are on the future, in the second youth is characterized as 'awaiting an unpredictable outcome' (Cavalli, 1980: 524) and is trapped within the confines of the present.

Meanwhile, in the late 1970s and early 1980s – the end of the 'movement era' – a portrait of youthful action in terms of a defensive individualism, inwardly oriented and indifferent to social problems, an expression of a 'culture of narcissism' (c.f. Featherstone, 1991) was making headway. But a study of students in Turin in the late eighties (Ricolfi & Sciolla, 1980) refuted these interpretations. Young people did not manifest forms of egocentric individualism or a retreat from the social. Instead, they were expressing new concepts of politics (for example, 'be yourself' was considered political); they gave great importance to relationships and criticized social conformism. Higher levels of education, interwoven with the by now vast diffusion of media networks, constituted the ideal *humus* for expanding this view. While the most radical political content was being toned down, a closer and closer connection was being forged between a 'culture of the quotidian', attention to the 'personal' and greater reflexivity, and was destined to get stronger and more consolidated in subsequent decades.

In the 1980s a great deal of research was devoted to youth and its cultural expressions (including studies by Guala, 1983; Scanagatta, 1984; Caioli *et al.*, 1986; Ricolfi, Scamuzzi & Sciolla, 1988). A backward glance reveals – although through different routes and methods – some common accents: the new youth culture's privileged relations with pragmatism and the growth of a 'subjectivity culture' (Cesareo, 1984). For example, in a well-known study, Garelli (1984) utilizes the term 'daily-life generation' to characterize the youth world of these years, distanced from ideologies and attentive to the sphere of sociality and the expression of personal needs.

Another important study in the 1980s (Cavalli, 1985; cf. Leccardi, 1990) put into focus the transformations that in the meantime had occurred in the methods and forms of young people's biographical construction and identity definition. There were two particularly innovative dimensions to this study, of a qualitative nature. First there was the choice of the theme of time (treated in the dimensions of

historical, biographical and quotidian time) as a tool with which to analyze the condition of youth as a whole; secondly, the use of time to call attention to the break in connections between routes of identity definition and mechanisms of inter-generational transmission.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the relationship between transformations in the experience of time, changes in routes of identity and the construction of modes of relating to the public sphere negotiated mainly by small groups (Diamanti, 1999) became the background for numerous studies of the condition of youth in Italy. Worth mentioning among these are the studies sponsored by the IARD research institute. Founded in 1961, this institute (now well known throughout Europe) sponsors theoretical studies and empirical surveys in the field of youth and education, with approaches that integrate the viewpoints of the different social sciences. Since starting in 1983 and at four-year intervals, the IARD has been surveying Italian youth (Cavalli *et al.*, 1984; Cavalli & de Lillo, 1988; 1993; Buzzi, Cavalli & de Lillo, 1997; 2002). Through the years this has created an authentic observatory on youth, which analyzes 'either with periodic, nationwide surveys or with specific studies, the direction, pace and intensity of changes involving the attitudes, orientations, expectations and behaviour of young people' (Cavalli & de Lillo, 1988: 9).

Among other things, IARD research has drawn a realistic picture of the transformations occurring in the past decades in young people's transition to adulthood. Following European trends, this transition has not only been extended in temporal terms but it has become more and more fragmented. In particular, in Italy as in other Mediterranean countries, this process has come to coincide with a prolonged stay in the family of origin, the so-called '*famiglia lunga*' ('long family'): at the end of the nineties, half of Italian men and a third of Italian women were still, at age 29, living with their parents.

Overall, the IARD surveys underscore how the present youthful stage of life is dominated by growing uncertainty, along with great distrust of social institutions. The values that count are increasingly the ones tied to the private sphere (family, love, friendship). Consumer culture is central to identity while decisions are experienced as revocable. The temporal horizon in which one lives tends to contract, and the present becomes the preferred point of reference for action (Leccardi, 1999).

### **Political Aspects of Youth Research in Eastern and Central Europe**

Finally we examine some political aspects of European youth research in Eastern and Central Europe. It was the proletariat, the 'leading working class,' that the early Communist regimes proclaimed as the beneficiary of their victory in the mid 20th century (see for example Sztacheiski, 1950, cited in Sokolowska & Richard, 1990: 79). The 'proletarian dictatorship' was meant to solve all social problems of the bourgeois society and the ruling parties took its realization seriously, carrying out a forced nationalization of the finance sector, industry and land in most countries, Poland being a notable exception from the latter. When the regimes somewhat softened in the late 1950s, the party nomenclature needed a new ideological construct to demonstrate the shift in their strategy. It was then that youth was discovered as the group with the most significant role in this developed stage of the Communist construction. Young people were seen as being less burdened with the values and practices of the capitalist past than the older generations, and hence more prone to build and live in the classless Communist society.

The establishment of youth studies as a legitimate academic discipline in East Central Europe and the setting up of its research agenda in the 1960s and 1970s came with the rising political concerns and mounting economic difficulties in the Soviet camp. First in the German Democratic Republic in 1966, then in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania and elsewhere youth research institutes were founded, or research centres were established at the Academies of Sciences and major universities. This strategy followed ideological considerations – youth was perceived as the most optimistic and hence the least dangerous group to be studied empirically. In countries where youth protest movements were mounting, as in Slovenia, the communist state did not develop institutional structures for youth research (Ule & Renner, 1998). Despite the ideological underpinning, the studies, which youth institutes carried out, were among the best examples of empirical research in the

eastern part of the continent during the communist regimes while most other fields of sociology were abstractly theoretical and under the strong influence of the official Marxist ideology.

The first phase of youth research in the state socialist countries also gave rise to important conceptual reflections. It started with discussions of class and age as stratifying factors and how to specify youth as a social group, given the biological and developmental components (Mitev, 1969). The work of Russian sociologist Igor Kon (1967a) provided an elaborate concept of socialisation, linking the development of the personality to the specific social relations and institutions. The Romanian researcher Fred Mahler (1983) developed the idea of juvenisation to reflect the innovation that young people introduce into society and envisioned the development of youth research into the science of juvenology (see Mahler, 1983).

In the 1980s youth studies faced new social challenges – the economic limitations of the centrally planned economy becoming more obvious, attempts were made to free space for private initiative. Young people were still the main beneficiaries of the state social policy and were expected to contribute to the intensification and technological innovation of the economy. The mounting problems and discontent among youth were interpreted as a mismatch between their growing aspirations and the ‘still’ limited job opportunities. Youth researchers have gathered much empirical information about the varying expectations and experiences of young people and started conceptualising youth as comprised of different subgroups: students, workers, peasants. The Bulgarian and Russian researchers theorised about the self-realisation of the personality (see for an overview of the concept Kharchenko, 1999) while the Baltic sociologists advanced the concept of self-determination. The latter focused on the choices young people make during their transitions through life – from one educational stage to another, from education to work, from parents’ family to creating their own, etc. Using this paradigm, sociologists insisted on looking closer at young people’s own beliefs and values, which were largely neglected up to then (cf. Saarniit 1998: 43-66).

During this second stage (1980s), youth research was already well institutionalised and abundantly subsidised in most Warsaw Pact countries. The communist regimes fostered international co-operation in the youth field in the attempt to advertise the growing successes of the state youth policy. East-West communication flourished despite the obvious barriers – the different political and cultural contexts, different themes and theoretical perspectives, even different methodologies (up to then youth studies in the eastern half were almost wholly identified with large-scale quantitative surveys while small-scale qualitative studies dominated in many research traditions in the West). Good examples were the projects dedicated to the International Youth Year in 1985. The first two presidents of RC34 came from South-East Europe – the Romanian Ovidiu Badina and the Bulgarian Petar-Emil Mitev. International conferences and seminars were organised on a regular base in Primorsko, Costinesti, Leipzig, Moscow, Bratislava. While German youth researchers from the institutes in Munich and Leipzig were not allowed officially to communicate with each other, Munich, Sofia and Bucharest had a ‘cultural contract’ to hold regular alternating conferences year by year. The only World Congress of Sociology held in Eastern Europe was organised in 1970 in Varna, Bulgaria.

The period of the 1980s was also a time of tightening of state control over youth research. When researchers turned to topics that were inconsistent with the tale of the successful youth policy and loyal youth, such as the deviant behaviour of the ‘non-formals’ (youth dissident groups), funding was withdrawn. Individual researchers and whole institutes were punished and banned from participation in international research projects or in conferences and seminars abroad. In Romania for example, Chauseshku’s regime was particularly oppressive towards the widely known youth researchers Fred Mahler and Ovidiu Badina.

The social transformation in the region after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 affected youth studies in many ways. Although young people played a prominent role in the ‘gentle’ revolutions in the Soviet Bloc countries, they lost their privileged position which they enjoyed in the ideology and social

policy of the communist regimes. A process of deconstruction of youth took place, similar to the one in advanced market societies: such as the prolongation of the youth phase and the loss of the clear cut age boundaries, the increasing differentiation and individualisation of young people (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). The dominant liberal ideology in most CEE countries stressed the social role of individualism and implied that if only all individuals, independently of their age, were left free from the party and state control, their entrepreneuring activity would alleviate all social problems. Young people were perceived as no longer needing privileges from a patronising state, what they needed were equal chances in life. The disappearance of the former mass official youth organisations is another significant factor for the deconstruction of youth under post-communism. Numerous new youth associations have a too thin spread to make a difference in public discourse and policy considerations.

In this third phase youth research infrastructure suffered a major blow – some institutes were closed as the one in Bulgaria, while others found themselves deprived of the abundant state financing as the Romanian Institute. The old research institutions had to look for new sources of funding, and many, as the Russian Youth Institute in Moscow, discovered them in teaching courses in prestigious subjects such as psychology or business studies or producing opinion polls and market research. Individual researchers also left youth studies in large numbers to go to the more profitable spheres of private businesses, politics, or advertising. As young people themselves, some youth researchers ventured upon the road of emigration abroad, as far away as the United States and Australia. Those who persisted in the youth field in CEE countries had to rediscover small-scale studies since the sources for financing large nation-wide surveys had disappeared.

The late 1990s were a period of overcoming the initial crisis in society and in youth research. Addressing the increasing individualisation and differentiation among young people, the focus of the social construction of youth was placed on the specific problems of specific groups among youth: the young homeless, the young unemployed, the young drug addicts etc. Youth started to be seen as posing problems to society and not as active resource persons. This resulted in a proliferation of agencies and state departments dealing with youth: education, health, labour, police and army, each of them with differing definitions and diverging approaches to finding solutions.

A process of institutional pluralism took place in the field of youth studies with many new centres coming into being which was not possible when there had been only one recognised state institute in each country. The new university departments teaching social sciences and the numerous marketing and polling companies also started producing youth research. The Centre for Social Psychology/Youth Studies in Slovenia can be cited as an illustration of this trend, developing into a well established and internationally recognised institution for youth research. With the generational change youth research experienced a conceptual opening up for new themes and ideas, new approaches and methodologies. Instead of expecting a 'juventisation' (cf. Mahler, 1983) of society, youth researchers revealed problems in the social integration of youth (Chuprov & Zubok, 2000) and focused on their social exclusion. A most remarkable feature of the fourth stage of youth research in CEE is the methodological pluralism. National and international surveys were matched with case-study approaches, life history and focus group interviewing.

Economic pressures account for a lot of this change. The new centres found themselves competing for scarce sources of funding. These came either directly from foreign funding agencies such as the programmes of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, national governments such as the German, Austrian, Dutch, private foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, the Open Society, or local voluntary organisations, which had the resources and skills to use research data. Again, in most cases this meant NGOs with foreign affiliations. This situation had two important consequences. The national research agenda was largely formed by the visions and perceptions of outside bodies with the risk of missing problems specific to the conditions of youth in the region. Second, there was a lot of interest in comparative studies, in Western concepts and methodologies. The East-West collaboration gave birth to innovative studies (see for example Machacek & Roberts, 1997; Bynner & Koklygina, 1995; Pilkington *et al*, 2002), on which basis many informal networks

developed. These contacts succeeded largely due (or thanks) to the personal devotion of researchers on both sides, strong enough to overcome travel difficulties, loss of mail, collapse of banks, road blockades, etc.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century started with renewed co-operation between youth researchers and policy makers in many countries in the region and on the European arena, as shown in the Council of Europe process of review of the national youth policies in Estonia, Rumania and Lithuania. Youth is studied as an active agent in European integration (Baranovic, 2002) and youth participation has become a new topic for research (Kovacheva, 2000). The European and global concerns are matched with research into local problems, such as ethnic tolerance among young people in the multicultural societies in the Balkans (Mitev & Riordan, 2004) or the relations between generations in the transforming Russian society (Semenova, 1999).

The development of youth studies in Eastern and Central Europe has been strongly influenced by the social upheavals in the region in the 20th century. Under state socialism they were under strong pressure to demonstrate the successes of the centralized social policy of the one-party regime. Nevertheless, they managed to reveal some true problems of young people and to create innovative concepts for their interpretation. In the post-Communist era youth research is in a process of reconstruction, experiencing a pluralization of scientific paradigms and institutional structures. Within individual countries youth research lost the security of abundant state support in the same way that young people yielded their privileged position in ideology and welfare. What youth studies gained was in the wider arena of European cooperation. The keywords for European youth research are: building a European infrastructure for youth research networks and forgetting pseudo-East/West borders in a 'New Europe'. For this reason, currently, European youth research cooperation is a reality and it has better perspectives than in the 20th century.

## **Concluding Notes**

In this article our focus has mainly been on the geographical and cultural regions of Europe. The discussion of European youth research cannot be illustrated only with analyses of geographically opposed regions of Europe: Northern versus Southern Europe/Eastern versus Western Europe. The fact of the matter is that the New Europe is a historical, political, cultural, artistic, technological and military entity. This should mean that the role of the EU and its institutions, and old and new ideologies in Europe, contribute to a cultural environment in which we have to define new strategies for European youth research cooperation. Since the end of the Cold War, the unification of Germany, the collapse of Communist regimes, and the violent disintegration of former Yugoslavia there is a growing realization that youth research in Europe still partly suffers from the lack of a European infrastructure, insufficient funding, lack of an environment to stimulate research and exploit results, and the fragmented nature of activities and the distribution of resources.





# EUROPEAN YOUTH RESEARCH: DEVELOPMENT, DEBATES, DEMANDS \*

Lynne Chisholm

*This paper presents the development of European youth research as a distinctive field of study. It draws attention to the socio-political context in which the field has emerged, outlines the key dimensions of the field's agenda, reports on significant facets of theory and research development to date, and briefly considers the field's methodological and professional challenges.*

The development of a consciously and specifically European youth research field is closely associated with the emergence during the past fifteen years or so of the following:

- A recognizable socio-political European-level public sphere of discourse
- The growth of relevant institutional policy action by supranational organizations
- A rising sense of contemporary Europe as a world region in the context of economic and cultural globalization processes

The societal transformation of central and eastern Europe after 1989, followed by the transition to independence of former Soviet republics in the Caucasus and central Asia, together with the restructuring of southeast Europe, added a significant dynamic to these parallel developments.

These social, political, and economic changes have led to new priorities for youth studies, both from within the research community itself and as a consequence of policy responses. The European policy level has been of particular importance in shaping the pace and direction of research priorities. This is partly because there has been an overall shift in the distribution of research budgets toward expanding the funding resources available through European Union (EU) channels in comparison with those available at national levels. Youth researchers, therefore, have considerable incentives to look for project funding beyond the borders of their national scientific communities.

Five Europe-wide research studies on the situation of young people in Europe were undertaken between 1991 and 2004 (Chisholm & Bergeret, 1991; Chisholm & Kovacheva, 2002; Orr, 2004; Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001; United Nations Children's Fund/Monitoring in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltics, 2000). Between 1990 and 2005, six Eurobarometer (the public opinion analyses sector of the European Commission) youth surveys were conducted.<sup>1</sup> Some relevant research studies (including those reported in: du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm, 2006) have also been funded through EU Research Framework Programs<sup>2</sup>, together with

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<sup>1</sup> "Young Europeans 1990" (Special Survey 51), "Young Europeans 1997" (Eurobarometer [EB] 47.2), "Young Europeans 2001" (EB 55.1), "Attitudes and Opinions of Young People in the European Union on Drugs" (EB 57.2/Special EB 171, 2002), "Youth in New Europe" (EB 2003.1, 2003), and "Youth Takes the Floor: Young Europeans' Concerns and Expectations as to the Development of the European Union" (special publication from EB 62.1, 63, and 63.1, December 2005). Previously, two youth Eurobarometers had been carried out in 1982 (EB 17) and 1987 (Special Survey 38). The survey questions posed in 1987 and 1990 were largely comparable, as were those in 1997 and 2001. The 2002 drugs survey is a stand-alone inquiry. The 2003 "new Europe" survey selects key topics from the preceding "Young Europeans" Eurobarometers to provide comparable material for young people in the member states acceding to the EU in 2004 (central European countries, the Baltics, Cyprus, and Malta). The most recent survey report, "Youth Takes the Floor," focuses on tomorrow's Europe, active citizenship, and the Lisbon Strategy's Youth Pact. All Eurobarometer reports (except "Young Europeans 1990," which is out of print and not yet available online) are accessible at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_en.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Projects are accessible at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/social-sciences/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/social-sciences/index_en.html).

European Commission education and training action programs.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the white paper on youth (European Commission, 2001a) action priorities included, for the first time, developing common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth (that is, including research-based knowledge). In the same year, the European Commission-Council of Europe Partnership Covenants on Youth Worker Training and on Youth Research was launched, which has led to regular research seminars and publications on priority topics.<sup>4</sup>

The sheer pace and scale of these research-related developments and outcomes convey the significance in the past 15 years of the emergence of European youth research as a specialist professional community. In this chapter, I detail the key dimensions of the field's agenda, present significant facets of theory and research development to date, and consider some of the methodological and professional challenges to be faced.

## **Key Dimensions of Agenda Development**

The establishment of a distinctive and recognizable terrain for European youth research can be described as a process of discursive and practical reconstruction. On the one hand, youth studies have traditionally been located in several disciplines: history, psychology, sociology, education, and more recently, cultural studies.

Interdisciplinary approaches and coalitions have been gaining ground since the 1970s, more evidently at the international level (for example, within the framework of the International Sociological Association's Youth Research Committee<sup>5</sup>) than at the national level. For the most part, Europe's youth research communities remained largely ensconced within their own languages and academic cultures, whereas four decades of political division had engendered cultural schism between western and eastern European research communities and their respective theoretical and methodological traditions. International networks had hence become the only sites for encounter and exchange: these were the areas in which not only interdisciplinary approaches but also intercultural perspectives could be imagined and piloted. Many of those who have contributed to the development of European youth research in the past 15 years were active in international networks long before then.

On the other hand, the history of youth studies has been a rather closeted affair in the sense that its focus of attention cuts across the logic of the division of labour between specialist research and policy fields that are discursively more powerful: family, education and training, labour market and employment, health, and crime and justice. From the 1970s onwards, youth cultural studies, which originated primarily in Anglo-American academic discourse and spread rapidly to the major European youth research communities in the 1980s, had done much to lend a distinctive, more autonomous identity to youth studies as a specialist field (see Brake, 1980). The massive dislocations of the 1980s (economic restructuring and high youth unemployment in western Europe) and 1990s (political and economic transformation in central, eastern, and southeastern Europe) then brought such significant change into young people's lives and prospects that the development of new theoretical and empirical frameworks became inevitable.

At the same time, contemporary modernization theory and intense engagement with understanding the formation and transformation of subjectivity in postmodern cultures brought the individual subject under the academic gaze. In effect, this prefigured a discursive shift toward observation and analysis through time and from the standpoint of the subject or, put differently, toward the study of youth within the life course as well as youth "in and for itself."

Taken together, the features underlying the construction of European youth research as a distinctive and recognizable terrain can be summarized along the following dimensions:

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<sup>3</sup> See programs and actions at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html).

<sup>4</sup> Information on events, reports, and publications is accessible online at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Co-operation/Youth/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/); see also <http://www.training-youth.net/INTEGRATION/TY/Intro/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Information is accessible at <http://www.alli.fi/youth/research/ibyr/index.htm>.

- From additive to integrative perspectives and analyses
- Linking macrostructural with microcultural approaches
- Setting youth transitions into the larger life-course theory and research framework
- Focusing on the implications of macrosocial change for youth transitions
- Bringing research, policy, and practice into closer critical interrogation
- Mapping new methodological and professional challenges.

## **An Integrated Process of Theory-Research Development**

The study of changing youth transitions has been the major theme of European youth research since the beginning of the 1990s; this section focuses on this topic but not exclusively. The anchoring feature of the process of theory and research development in European youth studies can be described as the effort to bring perspectives on and understandings of youth transitions up-to-date and to do so within the framework of making sense of great empirical complexity and in a period of rapid social change. This process incorporates a number of core thematic elements that can be approached from several different angles and that have successively shaped the overall development of youth studies in Europe.

Condensed into their essentials, these elements represent four facets of theoretical and research concern: autonomy, participation, inequality, and inclusion. Young people's access to and acquisition of autonomy translate into charting the changing patterns of transitions to adulthood. Young people's understandings and practices of participation derive from the analysis of social and political attitudes and behaviours, not only in representative democratic channels but also in everyday life. Observing and estimating the balances between chances and risks in young people's lives and future prospects – that is, studying inequalities – now gives more emphasis to region (within Europe and within countries) and to intergenerational relations (in the light of the demographic transition to aging societies). At its most general level, the extent to which young people experience economic, social, and political inclusion as citizens in their own right can be related to each of the three preceding facets of concern. More specifically, the theme of inclusion speaks to the objective recasting and the subjective reinvention of Europe as a multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic world region, both at the macropolitical level (European cooperation and integration) and in the life worlds and identities of those who live in its cities and countrysides.

The collapse of youth labour markets that took increasing hold in 1980s western Europe brought a series of disjunctions into view. In the first place, young people in much of southern Europe had never really experienced buoyant youth labour markets, no more than had their parents and grandparents before them. Patterns of youth transitions in these settings bore limited similarity to those in more affluent northwestern Europe, but these differences had played no role at all in the development of conceptual models of youth transitions. In the second place, visible structural gaps opened up between young people's transition chances and risks in northern European countries. In both the United Kingdom and in France, youth unemployment rates had soared to persistently high levels. In continental northwestern Europe, the deterioration came more slowly and later, whereas in the Nordic countries such problems remain comparatively mild.

Training and employment opportunities for poorly qualified and unqualified young people entering the labour market for the first time deteriorated most sharply, but it also became evident that cultural and normative expectations surrounding the youth phase differed among northern European countries, and these differences were reflected in theoretical approaches on youth as a life phase (Chisholm, Büchner, Krüger, & Brown, 1990). Youth researchers in continental northwestern Europe and in the Nordic countries were particularly interested in the idea and practice of youth as a moratorium – that is, a positively constructed space for exploration and experimentation. The longer the time societies could afford to give young people for personal development and autonomous cultural practice, the better. This perspective was relatively incomprehensible for youth researchers coming from the United Kingdom and Ireland, where the idea of a positive moratorium had never taken theoretical root and did not, in any case, correspond with transition patterns for the great majority of young people.

Cultural perspectives on youth existed, however, alongside a separate tradition of largely cohort-based research into school-to-work transitions. Typically more quantitative in character, these analyses not only were able to record the gradual extension and fragmentation of pathways to economic independence but also began to document differences between countries' transitions systems (for example, Evans & Heinz, 1994). On the one hand, the conceptual confrontation between perspectives that highlight subjective autonomy and those that map systemic constraints resulted in a highly fruitful theoretical dynamic during the 1990s that worked with the structure and agency dialectic to understand new and old inequalities in youth transitions in terms of complex patterns of chances and risks (for example, Dwyer & Wyn, 2001). On the other hand, the empirical confrontation between differently structured patterns of youth transitions in western Europe as compared with central and eastern Europe (in different ways, both before and after 1989) led inescapably to the conclusion that existing models could not adequately capture the European patchwork of similarities and differences (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998).

Youth studies in the 1980s had documented and understood the nature and the consequences of high youth unemployment in causing delayed and extended transitions to adulthood and hence hindering or blocking personal, economic, and social autonomy. Youth researchers identified the solution in straightforward terms: reduce youth unemployment so that youth transitions can once more take their normal course. However, by the mid-1990s, it was clear that the normal course of events would not re-establish itself anywhere in Europe, whatever this had previously implied. Rather, the emerging transition to knowledge-based economies had begun to restructure the labour market, occupational profiles, and work processes, but national education and training systems had not seriously begun to adapt. By this time, young people's education and training participation rates had risen sharply everywhere (albeit from different starting points) but more in response to the problems of the youth labour market than through recognition of the need for higher level and different kinds of qualifications and competences.

Transitions to the labour market were taking place not only later but also in more differentiated and gradual ways as young people mixed study and work in a combination between practical economic necessity, tactical career planning, and personal choices. The opening up of the new Europe, both in terms of EU-based integration and in the tearing of the concrete veil between the west and the east, set its societies and cultures into motion, both physically and imaginatively. Young Europeans could now think of their lifestyles and futures in different ways; new options for realization became practically available.

The nature and direction of these kinds of changes produced, in a first step, the reconceptualization of the character and meaning of the youth phase in terms of the destandardization and individualization of youth transitions, whether constructed positively or, more worryingly, amid an almost chaotic array of old and new inequalities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The feature that has engendered most concern in European youth research is the emergence – or probably more accurately, the re-emergence – of a severe polarization of life chances of young people from different parts of Europe and from different social and ethnic backgrounds. These differences are increasingly mediated through education and qualification but, in addition, in a context of renewed differentiation in educational provision (especially in vocational education and training and in higher education) that reintroduces greater inequalities of access and outcome value. This is especially the case in central and eastern European countries, which have experienced rapid and extensive privatization in the education and training sector.

Furthermore, the characteristic feature of tightening links between education, qualification, and labour market integration is their negative, exclusionary quality. While low qualification levels are an increasingly sure route to long-term exclusion from employment other than at the margins of the labour market, high qualification levels alone are no sure route to employment and career, whether in the short term or in the longer term. Young people in Europe today no longer can look forward to stable and secure employment careers but more likely to continuous change throughout their active working lives – and hence to the need to participate in work-related learning on a lifelong basis.

This, too, plays an increasingly important role in the ways in which young people understand the nature of life planning and future prospects as highly contingent, provisional matters, which in turn contributes to the further destandardization of youth transitions as the formation of subjectivity among younger generations adapts to new circumstances: young people come to want what they will, in any case, have to come to terms with.

In a second step, the theses of destandardisation and individualisation were empirically extended to cover the full range of young people's lives: not only education and work, but also family formation, lifestyle, and values (in European perspective, brought together in Chisholm & Kovacheva, 2002; Chisholm, de Lillo, Leccardi, & Richter, 2003; Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001). Together with a belated recognition of the potential effects of rapid demographic change for intergenerational relations and social divisions of labour, in the past few years, theoretical interest has gradually reoriented. Youth researchers are now increasingly placing youth as a concept and practice into wider sets of social relations. On the one hand, macrotheoretical discourses on contemporary modernisation in Europe insert both economic and cultural globalisation processes and technological change into the framing conditions of young Europeans' lives (for example, Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills & Kurz, 2005; Bynner, 1998; Facer & Furlong, 2001; Helve & Holm, 2005; Sefton-Green, 2003). On the other hand, the social reconstruction of the life course and age-linked identities and lifestyles means that it has become increasingly implausible to detach youth from other life phases, whose borders with each other and internal structuring and meaning are equally changing. Within this, discussion and debate over the emergence of a new life phase of young adulthood currently take a prominent place (Arnett, 2004; 2006; Bynner, 2005; and most contributions in du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm, 2006).

Finally, alongside these developments, European youth research has, from the outset and increasingly, given much emphasis to describing and analyzing young people's political engagement with national and European policy matters (see, for example, SORA, 2005; Spannring, Wallace, & Haerpfer, 2001; Wallace, Datler, & Spannring, 2005). This concern derives from two plainly observable phenomena. First, young Europeans – as do their elders – express widespread disillusion with and loss of trust in established channels and forums of political representation and social action. Second, they are little inclined to participate in organized civil society, including in traditional youth associations like Guiding and Scouting. Innumerable studies and surveys – including the “youth Eurobarometers” referred to in the first part of this chapter – attest to all this. They also confirm the subjective importance of contingent commitment: having the freedom to move in and out of sites of participation and involvement as and when one chooses.

At the same time, overwhelming majorities of young people throughout Europe continue to hold to values and principles that express attachment to solidarity and community, certainly in the broad socio-political sense and also at the local, everyday, and familiar level. Young people also express a greater degree of positive acceptance of European integration than do their elders, at least in part because they see the practical benefits in terms of wider opportunities for education, employment, choice of residence, and quite simply, mobility as adventure and excitement. Some of this is immediately explicable in terms of growing up in a more integrated and open Europe – that is, different socialisation and learning experiences in comparison with their parents and grandparents. However, much remains to be researched and understood, not least with respect to changing perspectives and practices of active citizenship in complex, multilayered European societies that are only slowly rethinking democratic governance.

In reflecting on just how much young people's lives have changed since the beginning of the 1990s, European youth studies are now approaching a conceptual watershed. The normative reference points to which empirical patterns of youth transitions have been related no longer play a theoretically useful function. Standardized life-course patterns and the “normal biography” refer to economic and social worlds that with globalisation and information technology have changed irrevocably: the linearities of the first modern era are mutating into the recursivities of postmodernity.

The concept of coherent and stable identities that can only belong, and must always belong, to some categories of experience, identification, and representation and not to others is becoming untenable.

Finally, the paradigm shift to lifelong and life-wide (work, family, education, and leisure) learning that accompanies ongoing structural change in European labour markets, employment patterns, occupations, and work processes is already palpable in policy and practice throughout Europe's education and training systems. In the posited knowledge societies of Europe's future, the fundamental character of teaching and learning changes, not least with respect to the life phase of those expected to participate and benefit (Chisholm, 2000; other contributions to du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm, 2006). From this point of view, either all must become young or youth can no longer be specially defined as "in transition" to something else. These are the kinds of questions that European youth researchers are only just beginning to formulate.

### **Methodological and Professional Challenges**

Youth studies belong to social research and therefore share its well-known methodological challenges. Researching youth also brings research ethics – a professional challenge – to the forefront in considering how young people can and should be informed and included as active research subjects in studies about youth. What are the particular methodological and professional challenges that arise when youth research bears the qualifying adjective "European"?

As noted earlier in this chapter, one of the key dimensions of the European youth research agenda lies in its ambition to deliver integrative perspectives and analyses. This means not only developing the conceptual capacity to produce holistic analyses of young people's lives and worldviews but also finding ways to reach across the boundaries of language, culture, and datasets to move toward genuinely intercultural analyses (Bynner & Chisholm, 1998).

In practical terms, all comparative researchers have to find ways to deal with disparate data sets. Noncongruence in patterns of linguistic-cultural understanding meets with nation-state-based logics of data collection and classification. The potential for cross-national comparison typically leaves space only for highly aggregated comparisons. Finding more sophisticated ways to work with units and levels of sampling and analysis is one important way forward (Bynner & Chisholm, 1998), all the more so because research communities that take Europe as their frame of reference perforce recognize that similarities and differences are at least as complex and illuminating within countries as between them; several contributions to du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm (2006) allude to these problems. They must try to work within a field of conceptual and analytical tension between globalisation and regionalisation or, put differently, in the dialectic between "bundling and unbundling."

The chapters in du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm (2006) are written in English, and all the references at the end of this chapter are English-language publications, although by no means all of them were written by first-language English speakers. These features represent, in the first instance, a practical concern for accessibility to a North American readership. They equally reflect the European dual reality of multilingualism and discursive imbalance in research communication and exchange, including in youth research. This is of particular concern because of the significance of language as a medium for the communication and exchange of cultural meaning, in academia as in everyday life (to which the introductory chapter in du Bois-Reymond and Chisholm (2006) alludes).

Not only ethnic-cultural diversity in Europe but also the increasingly global character of communication and entertainment media introduces new and widely available sources of cultural information and knowledge into everyday life. By and large, public and political debate judges the globalisation of media and markets to result in the decline of desirable cultural diversity in Europe – that is, risks the fading or adulteration of indigenous majority cultural traditions and ways of life in Europe's nation-states. Youth researchers temper this perspective by drawing attention to the ways

in which young people create new, hybrid lifestyles from a variety of cultural elements that derive from different parts of Europe, different parts of the world, and different ethnic-cultural traditions.

The discursive world of European youth research is also culturally and linguistically hybrid, certainly in professional affiliation and real-time communication. The European youth studies community recognizes itself through networking, but it lacks an institutional focus at the European level (for example, through a Europe-wide dedicated research institute), and those who belong to that community work in a variety of disciplines and types of organisations. Working in this field requires competences that go beyond those needed by researchers working conventionally in their “home” academic cultures. These correspond to the new basic competences that European-level education and training policy identifies as generally important for the future: languages, social and intercultural skills, capacity for teamwork, and adaptability to change. These competences make it possible for technical research skills to be applied appropriately, and they maximize the chances of successful project outcome in multinational research groups. In addition, many of those who work in European youth studies place importance on open and participative models of research, which means that they must be able to cooperate with those working in youth policy and practice, not least with youth nongovernment organisations and, on occasion, with young people themselves. All these competences require professional training and experience, which currently few universities provide in a systematic way.

## **Conclusion**

Having reviewed the development of the past 15 years or so, I conclude, first, that much has been achieved and, second, that the European youth research field now needs greater priority and resources to achieve consolidation. How can youth research help to develop better answers to the problems of our times? Being willing and able to answer such questions is part of the modernisation of youth research in Europe, a reflection of its own coming-of-age as a recognized specialist field as well as the expression of social responsibility.





# YOUNG PEOPLE'S MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS \*

Reingard Spannring

## 1. Introduction

Age as a factor of political participation has always been considered in a twofold way. On the one hand, it is argued that political participation is subject to change over an individual's life time. Young people only gradually develop social and political skills, world views, as well as citizenship status, which make political engagement and action both meaningful and possible. It seems plausible to assume that their participation is rather limited at first, but will increase with age. Thus, non-participation at a young age would not necessarily mean non-participation as an adult. An analysis of the European Value Survey 1999<sup>1</sup> suggests life cycle effects for certain forms of participation. Young people are less politically engaged in that they do not regard politics as important in their life as adults and they do not claim to be as interested in politics to the same extent as older people. Young people discuss politics less frequently and follow politics in the media less often than adults. The biggest difference in adolescent and adult behaviour is found with respect to following the political news daily: 28% of the 18 to 25 year olds compared to 55% among those aged 36 and over. Young people are less likely than adults to join traditional political organisations such as trade unions, political parties and professional associations. However, they are nearly as likely to join NGOs as older citizens. Here, the biggest differences (around 3%) are found in women's groups and local community action groups. Environmental organisations even attract slightly more young people than older ones. The influence of age on voluntary work in political organisations is even weaker than on membership. Among the types of political activism petitions and boycotts show very small differences between age groups, while demonstrations are clearly more attractive for young people: 36% of the 18 to 25 year olds have already participated in a demonstration compared to 29% of those aged 36 and over (Spannring, 2005).

On the other hand, the effect of age has been considered in the context of generational change. Unlike age in the context of the life cycle, generational effects imply that society as a whole changes. Putnam observed that civic engagement among those Americans born at the turn of the century and during the twenties was high and stable. The decline started slowly with the generation born between the two world wars and picked up speed with the post-war generation, the so-called baby boomers. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, continued the course of the boomers (Putnam, 2000: 250). The reasons for this development are seen in the rise in educational levels, a lack of major collective experiences and specific economic circumstances, accompanied by an increase in individualism and post-materialist values. However, the data of the 3 European Value Surveys 1982 to 1999/2000<sup>2</sup> support the call for a more differentiated picture not only with respect to a simple decline thesis but also with respect to generational change (Spannring, 2005). Overall, political engagement, i.e. importance of politics, interest in politics and discussing politics, has slightly increased in Western Europe. Among the young people, importance of politics and interest in politics has risen but political discussions with friends have decreased. There are strong country differences. In Belgium, Ireland and Sweden most indicators show increases, while Denmark, France, Germany and Italy have remained fairly stable. Spain and the UK experienced a decrease on most indicators over many waves.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Value Survey 1999/2000 covered 32 countries. In this analysis the following countries are included: Austria (n=1522/young people: 108), Belgium (n=1905/141), Denmark (n=1023/74), France (n=1615/135), Germany (n=2034/132), Greece (n=1111/210), Ireland (n=989/55), Italy (n=2000/147), Luxembourg (n=1211/212), Northern Ireland (n=965/72), Portugal (n=1000/108), Spain (n=1200/110), Sweden (n=1015/85), UK (n=971/106).

<sup>2</sup> The analysis is based on the following countries which were part of all three waves (1982, 1990, 1999/2000) of the EVS: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK.

The decrease in membership in “traditional” political parties is generally negligible. The young people’s participation has only decreased with respect to trade unions, but remained fairly stable for political parties and professional associations. Concerning country-specific differences, Belgium and Sweden are the only countries where increases predominated. Germany and the UK are characterised by the most decreases. The development of NGOs is very heterogeneous. Overall, local community action groups and Third World Development/Human Rights Organisations gained members. Environmental organisations expanded during the 1980s but lost members during the 1990s. Peace movements remained stable but membership rates in women’s groups slightly decreased. However, most changes are minimal. Young people’s participation rates show the same trends as the overall rates. The only changes of more than 2% concern Third World and Human Rights Organisations. The only changes which can be interpreted as generational change are found in women’s groups. However, this development could be seen in the light of the integration of women’s claims in mainstream social politics rather than the result of disengagement by young women. With respect to differences between countries, again, Belgium and Sweden show increases on most variables, whereas Germany stands out with decreases on most variables. Political activism has generally increased during the two decades covered by the European Value Surveys. Especially petitions and demonstrations have seen a growing number of activists, both, in the total population and among the young. Concerning country-specific differences most increases have taken place in Belgium, Denmark and Sweden; while Spain and Germany have experienced the fewest increases. The role of the young in bringing about these changes is not obvious. Statistically, there is not always a significant effect of age group and wave which could point to generational change. This would suggest that there is not primarily a generational change taking place but individual change, meaning that people change their behaviour over their lifetime according to prevailing conditions.

Seeing that neither the hypothesised relationship between age and participation nor the thesis of generational change can be confirmed without ifs and buts for all of Europe, the question must be put forward what keeps citizens from participating in general and whether there are youth specific obstacles. Whether one looks at participation in general or with a focus on youth, it is a very complex phenomenon that calls for a more elaborate theoretical framework and diverse research methods. Non-participation, for example, cannot simply be taken as evidence of political apathy. It is indeed not clear whether people do not participate because they are involved in activities not covered by research or because they are too frustrated with or alienated from politics. Even the citizens’ own conceptualisations and views on politics is relatively unresearched (cf. O’Toole, 2003). Any understanding of non-participation, however, must take into account the complex structures and processes which disable and demotivate citizens: the changing face of politics itself and its relationship with the economic sphere on the one hand and the citizens on the other hand. The citizens themselves experience social and economic change which influences their expectations towards the political sphere as well as their ability – not only their motivation – to get engaged.

The impact of the economic, social and political changes on the perception of politics and participation becomes visible in the young people’s statements of the EUYOUNGPART qualitative interviews and focus groups. Many of the young people’s comments could also be expected from adults. However, there are some youth-specific explanations for disaffection and disengagement that are often overlooked in mainstream participation literature. Before turning to the young people’s accounts of the political [...] we will therefore consider the general conditions of politics and political participation as well as the special conditions under which young people are expected to get politically engaged and active. Within the general structural conditions young people take a special position because of their membership in a particular cohort, their particular phase in the life cycle as well as their particular status in society.

## **2. Conditions of politics and participation in late modernity**

The changing forms of political participation must be seen in the context of their changing social, economic and political conditions. The latter have been discussed under the concepts of modernisation, globalisation, deconstructing, de-traditionalisation and individualisation. While these concepts cannot be discussed in detail here, a short account of the meaning of these changes for participation is in place.

The changing relationship between politics and the economy is characterised by an economisation of politics. The economic rationalisation and globalisation processes manoeuvre the nation-state into a dilemma between its industrial location policy and its fiscal crisis. This dilemma impinges on the ability of the welfare state to use resources for constructing and shaping society, in particular for ensuring the integration of all citizens, and leads to a steering and legitimisation crisis (Habermas, 1973). The seemingly inescapable crises of the economy, which the welfare state can no longer cushion, contribute to a global de-politicisation where political influence on social conditions seems no longer possible (Felgitsch, 2006). This dynamic manifests itself in a lack of public debate, a lack of system responsiveness of political institutions and a dismantling of the welfare institutions and provisions which used to cushion the impact of labour market failures. The individual is left alone with the material and social-psychological risks produced by the flexibilised and increasingly segmented labour market which it cannot translate into political action. On the one hand, dwindling social and economic security vis-à-vis an intensified competition on the labour market and the processes of socio-economic marginalisation and exclusion lead to a lack of time and financial resources for political engagement which are rather invested in individual survival strategies. Feelings of being at the mercy of market forces and of not being able to manage one's life further increase political apathy or promotes political extremism. On the other hand, the lack of public debate around social conflict leaves the individual without cognitive structures and categories to interpret his/her situation as a socio-political issue (Böhnisch, 2006; Evers & Nowotny, 1987).

Globalisation not only influences the relationship between the nation-state and the citizens via the economisation of politics but also through questioning the capability of the nation-state to solve political problems that have a global dimension. Global warming, pollution of the environment, overpopulation, food-related diseases and problems of the global economy are increasingly produced that do not respond to traditional problem-solving means and mechanisms of single nation-states. As a result, conventional national politics tends to cover only some of the citizens' concerns and anxieties, while it seems helpless in the face of many global issues. Global movements and local activities, loosely structured networks and individualistic behaviour can be seen as an answer to this shortcoming of national political bodies by opening up 'spaces for public dialogues' and putting pressure on conventional politics as well as social and economic practices (Giddens, 1994).

At the same time as the confinement of politics to the nation-state becomes difficult, so is the clear demarcation of political ideologies and the assignment of positions with respect to particular issues to political parties. The cleavages along which political parties in Western Europe define their world views and ideologies go back to at least the nineteenth century and reflect conflicting interests inherent in the social, economic and political structure, as for example church vs. state, industry vs. agriculture, workers vs. entrepreneurs. The main European parties are predominantly determined by the left-right axis which is related to class conflict (Biorcio & Mannheim, 1995). Today, this traditional political cleavage is undermined by several processes including the collapse of the regimes of "real socialism" and the end of the cold war; as well as the economic and social changes that have led to a weakening of solidarity and common interest based on social class or milieu. Increasingly, new issues enter the public discourse which cannot be accommodated within the left-right framework. Rather, they represent new dimensions that run across traditional cleavages thereby opening up a multidimensional space of policy interests. In this space it is impossible to maximise voter satisfaction even within one particular party clientele, because any policy mix will consist of policies that are welcomed by some and rejected by others. Thus, the stable pursuit of a coherent policy programme or ideology becomes unfeasible (Dalton, 2004).

The consequences of modernisation have also been discussed under the aspect of de-structuring and re-structuring meaning that social and political institutions have lost their traditional boundaries and have opened up for pluralisations (Böhnisch, 2006). The labour conditions which used to be modelled on the male breadwinner implying full-time and long-term employment with a maximum of social security are "de-structuring". This development allows for other forms of work and employment involving new chances and risks to spread. New social movements and initiatives go beyond the traditional forms of participation of representative democracy, while the politics of the nation-state

breaks up. The nuclear family opens up for pluralized forms such as the patchwork family. Life courses that used to be structured by a certain order of life phases, such as school, employment and retirement, lose their prescriptive and guiding force as they become more and more individualised. As institutions de-structure and de-traditionalise (Giddens, 1994) spaces are opened for questioning old social and political traditions and negotiating and legitimising new traditions. These processes of re-structuring create insecurities, ambivalence and new forms of risk for institutions as well as individuals in that they have to cope with an “as-well-as” rather than an “either-or” logic. At the same time they produce a mutual disconcertment between politics and citizens which manifests itself in a decrease in loyalty, an increase in political disaffection and apathy, extreme voting behaviour and attempts to open new public spaces for political conflict via new social movements and initiatives (Böhnisch, 2006: 100-103).

### 3. Conditions for youth participation

For the young people growing up during the 1980s and 1990s the social and economic conditions are characterised by de-structured, individualised transitions from youth to adulthood and by flexibilised, risky labour markets. Compared to earlier generations, their transitions from youth to adulthood have become much longer through prolonged periods of education and professional training. In 1987, 49 out of 100 15 to 24 year olds in the 15 EU Member States were in education or training. By 1995 the number had increased to 58 out of 100 (European Commission, 1997: 19). The youngest age at which at least 50% of young people have entered the labour market has increased from 18 in 1987 to 20 in 1995 (*ibid.*: 41). At the same time as educational pathways have become prolonged and diversified the start of the occupational career has become more difficult due to ailing youth labour markets and flexibilised working conditions. Compared to older generations young Europeans have to cope with longer search periods for the first job, more spells of unemployment and higher risk of long term unemployment. Thus, the average unemployment rate amongst the under-25s has increased from 16% in 1991 to 22% in 1995 (*ibid.*: 46). The flexibilised working conditions, i.e. limited work contracts, involuntary part-time work or marginal employment, also affect young people disproportionately (Spannring, 2002). These “non-standard” forms of employment are often associated with a lack of social insurance coverage for illness, unemployment and old age pensions (Talos, 1999) as well as relatively lower wages and instable, unpredictable careers.

*I have had a fixed term job for a year and so it's o.k., but there is nothing stable coming out of it. For the past 4 years I have been moving from one fixed term job to another. ... We don't get help. ... I cannot get a bank loan because they do not want any people with fixed term jobs. (France)*

The smooth transition from school to full time, long term employment is no longer the standard experience of young people. Transitions are instead characterised by discontinuities, such as unemployment and job changes, which call for an active life management and presuppose adequate financial, social and psychological support. Especially those young people with a low educational level and a poor socio-economic background are in danger of entering a downward spiral of unemployment and non-standard, precarious jobs which leads to marginalisation in the labour market or even to permanent economic and social exclusion. These risks and uncertainties have a serious effect on their objective and subjective well-being leaving the young feeling unable to cope with life (Spannring & Reinprecht, 2002). No wonder that many of these young people are angry and frustrated with the obvious neglect on the part of society and politics, and move between revolt and withdrawal (Muxel & Riou, 2004).

*What revolts me? Everything is expensive ... we are going to be in the shit; everything disgusts me, everything is going up and the ASSEDIC benefits are going down; everything that we used to get is being stopped and in a few years time what will our children have? (France)*  
*I only think about sport, my little life. (France)*

Transitions have also become more individualised with respect to the sequence of events: there is no longer a standard order involving education and training, partnering, entry into the labour market, leaving home, founding one's own family. Today, these elements are much more variable with respect to their temporal sequence. Young people move in and out of the education system, unemployment

schemes, and employment, move out and back in with their parents, or they may decide to return to the education system although they already have their own family. Like a yoyo young people oscillate between the status of a young person and the status of an adult, and at any point in time they assume different positions in different life spheres (Walther, 1996). This destandardisation of transitions implies more opportunities for self-actualisation, choice and autonomy, but also more risk of downward mobility, uncertainty and stress (e.g. Heinz, 2000). Young people are forced to actively negotiate their transitions more or less without the help of traditional patterns and collective solutions. This endeavour clearly limits the time and energy young people are ready to invest in politics.

*If something happened that did affect me like the government decided to build a motorway through my house or something ... then I'd be more likely to get involved. Until that happens ... I've got to think about like my friends, my family, getting my work done. (UK)*

Through the process of individualisation established structures of social reproduction are being fragmented (Beck, 1992[1986]). Social class, gender and ethnicity cease to determine the trajectories which used to provide the guidelines for the destination in one's life and the best route to this destination. Compared to earlier generations where young people embarked on their transitions together with their class- and gender-specific group of peers like on a train ride, young people nowadays negotiate their transitions individually as if they were all taking private motor cars (Roberts, 1996). While social structures do not completely lose their grip on young people's life chances, but rather unfold their influence in other and more complex ways than some decades ago (Wyn & White, 2000: 178), "structured individualisation" (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) does weaken collectivist experiences and traditions. The changes towards more individualised experiences and coping strategies undermine the visibility of collectivist politics, which used to be at the heart of European party politics.

In addition to the generation-specific material and social-psychological conditions for participation, young people's special status in society serves as a limiting framework for their participation opportunities. They are predominantly seen as lacking the cognitive, emotional and social capacities and in need of education, training and protection. They are seen as not having reached the aim (adulthood) yet, although notions of what constitutes adulthood nowadays have actually become very unclear under the conditions of young people's yoyo-transitions and adults' youthful lifestyles. This understanding of young people as deficient influences the ways in which young people are treated by society and institutions and thereby the young people's chances to take part in social and political processes.

One example illustrating the relationship between society and youth is the young people's access to civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1950). Citizenship rights are the precondition for full participation in society, yet the young people's status in society is defined exactly by the full or partial lack of these rights. Legal rights and obligations are age-structured. Civil rights, such as the right to property, the right to work and the responsibility under the law tend to be acquired before the political rights. Among the political rights, franchise usually comes before eligibility. Social citizenship rights, as for example social security, health service or housing benefits are spread over an especially long period (Jones & Wallace, 1992). In many Western European countries, access to a number of social security provisions (e.g. health insurance, unemployment benefits) is only possible via the young people's parents or previous employment.

It has been criticised that the ability to exercise citizenship rights is dependent on the achievement of economic independence and thus influenced by social structures of inequality. This limitation certainly applies to women who often remain economically dependent on their husbands (Lister, 1991) and to young people who are dependent on their families (Jones & Wallace, 1992). The period of dependence has been prolonged due to the changes in the education system, the difficult labour market entry and employment conditions. Further, many welfare provisions are being cut and the risks for the employees caused by the deregulation of the labour market are not adequately cushioned by employees' protection laws and social security provisions (Talos, 1999). Access to unemployment

benefits is problematic for many young people where eligibility depends on a minimum duration of prior employment and contribution record. These requirements are very difficult to meet in the face of precarious working conditions. In most countries the cover ratio and replacement ratio for young people is below that of adults (Bison & Esping-Andersen, 2000; cited in Reiter & Craig, 2005). The graduation of citizenship rights according to age is no longer in congruence with the reality of young people's "yoyo transitions" (Walther, 1996). While the temporal sequence of acquiring citizenship rights may have been appropriate for previous generations who experienced a linear transition to adulthood, young people today move forwards and backwards between dependence and independence. It is a peculiar situation for young people who have higher educational levels and more political knowledge than previous generations and who are expected to manage their lives individually, that they should not also be granted political and social rights earlier. One solution may lie in the granting of personal access to social rights rather than via their parents (Jones & Wallace, 1992). Another proposal is to link compulsory education (instead of compulsory employment-related contribution) to social rights such as unemployment benefits (Reiter & Craig, 2005).

The exclusionary legal regulations concerning citizenship rights are partly reflected in the young people's notions of citizenship. Smith *et al.* (2005) found several concepts of citizenship in the accounts of young people themselves. The model most relevant in this context is the "respectable economic independence model" which is an employment oriented model that may encompass a number of associated features such as paying taxes, paying bills, having a house, family and car. This is clearly an exclusory concept since it divides the population into "insiders" and "outsiders", "first-class" and "second-class citizens" (*ibid.*: 432). For many young people it implies that they are not citizens yet, because they are either students or unemployed. The lack of citizenship status has consequences for political participation: On the one hand, tax payers have the right to have a say in politics, on the other hand, they have a reason to be interested in political issues.

*I don't mean that only those who work should vote, but personally I am not very interested.*  
(France)

*... now that I will start my own enterprise, it [i.e. politics, R.Sp.] will become really important, because now it is about taxes and I have to grapple with the tax law.* (Austria)

The young people's position in society is also shaped by the generational relationships. They are also power relationships which determine processes of inclusion and exclusion. Hondrich (1999) sees this power relationship as based on demographic weight, i.e. it is determined not so much by the attitudes and behaviours of individuals but by their sheer number. The numerical proportion influences the relationship between social groups such as ethnic groups, social classes and generations, in at least two ways. First, minorities always refer more to majorities, so that the adult generation is increasingly impoverished with respect to contacts to children and young people. Conversely, young people have more relationships with adults and are more drawn into the adult world, both, in the private and the public sphere. The implications for young people are, on the one hand, that they have relatively more knowledge at their disposal based on the large number of instructive relationships with adults; on the other hand, they are more exposed to the adults' norms and values as well as their control. Young people do not necessarily appreciate this situation. They would like to be granted free space. While this free space used to be a matter of course in agrarian societies with many children and young people, in modern society this space can only be created by retreating into a youth culture and/or by a refusal to be interested or engaged in "adult affairs".

*Perhaps we don't care, unlike our parents. I'm not interested at the moment. ... They [the parents, R.Sp.] know where they stand, they know what they do.* (Italy)

*Today, democracy does not mean much. It is something that happens between grown-ups.*  
(UK)

The claim for free space for young people where they can pursue their own interests without interference from the adults, is certainly legitimate, however, an equally important claim has been

made arguing for more intergenerational exchange and cooperation. Some authors have criticised the separation between young people and adults and communities. As parallel worlds develop between the generations mutual ignorance and intolerance increases making it more difficult to integrate young people meaningfully and in a sustainable way in community life (Percy-Smith, 2006). While community life ideally provides a safe and secure environment for young people to make their transitions into the adult world, it is not always experienced in a positive way, but rather as ridden by distrust, disrespect towards the young and conflict. Leisure activities of the young are a particular source of conflict, since they are often seen as threatening and in need of control by adults. For young people, on the other side, the recognition and acceptance of their activities by the community is an essential ingredient in their feeling of belonging to the community. As Alan France reports of his study of a working class community in Sheffield, "... the failure of the community to recognise ... the right of young people to have some form of control over the shaping of their own lives created conflict and feelings of exclusion. This in turn led to them rejecting the notion that they should undertake certain forms of community responsibilities" (France, 1998: 104). Trust and respect is also an issue for the young interviewees in EUYOUPART:

*"The young people only drink, they never do anything positive. The Turks always bash up others" and so on. There are so many prejudices, which one has to remove first, even if you are planning something positive like painting park benches or clearing up play grounds. ...at first they look you up and down suspiciously. "Can they do that? Are they capable of that?" Really, this distrust is really bad. (Austria)*

This quote leads us far beyond the narrow notion of (political) participation as representing views in institutionalised decision-making processes and points to the need to reconsider social relationships in communities, organisations and systems and to assess the extent to which they provide space for meaningful interaction, contribution and participation. Young people's participation in everyday settings such as home, school, neighbourhood and community is too often limited either because the possibility of involving young people does not even occur to the authorities, because there is too much reliance on experts rather than on the capacity of inter-generational problem solving, or because formal youth participation structures are instrumentalised or mere tokenism (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006; Riepl & Wintersberger, 1999).

*You hardly get any information about what's really going on [at school, RS], unless your parents are members of the parents' council or teaching staff. (Germany)*

*The Government of the Federal Region listened to the wishes of the young people. That was partly very interesting. But even more interesting was what they changed afterwards. And that was zero. (Austria)*

The broad critical debate on the impact and effectiveness of participation activities and processes reveals several gaps in research. Too little is known about the impact of participation on the young people, the services in organisations and on communities; which young people are involved and which organisational, cultural and structural contexts foster or hamper participation. Most importantly, it has to be asked according to whose agenda young people participate and to what extent this participation effectively benefits the young people (Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006: 2).

Considering the problematic role of adults in determining the space young people are granted for shaping their environment and developing solutions to their problems either on their own or together and on equal terms with adults on the community level, it is not surprising to find a lack of reciprocity and responsiveness on the national level of politics. With pensions, health care and tax cuts as the dominant issues on the political agenda young people are left without any point of reference to their own everyday lives and experiences. The neglect of young people on the part of the politicians finds its response in the political disaffection among young people. The politicians, in turn, perceive young people as difficult to engage and motivate. Young people are therefore not seen as a source of



political support worth developing policies for. This sets off a “cycle of neglect” (Averill, quoted in Adsett, 2003: 260), which is difficult to break.

*You are only seen as adult when you are 26, 27. I could not remember that politics would have addressed me when I was 18, I mean really issues that would have interested me. ... and in the end the young people are again the losers of the pension reform, because they have no lobby. (Austria)*

Considering the various economic and social structures that influence the young people’s ability to participate sheds light on a broad range of meanings of participation, whereby these different forms of participation reinforce each other. On the one hand, with an eye to individualised transitions, precarious labour market conditions and inadequate welfare provisions participation implies control over one’s life course. Only the feeling of personal empowerment and social integration conveyed by a successful life management opens the space for participation in the community and society. On the other hand, the status of young people in society and community determines the extent and quality of participation as the ability to co-shape one’s environment. Here, we not only talk about political institutions such as parties, trade unions and parliaments, but about institutions that are much closer to the young people’s everyday experiences and concerns: schools, work places, welfare institutions, local authorities. While participation in political decision-making processes can be regarded as an elitist activity and far away from most of the young people’s lives, the lived practices of everyday democracy strongly influence the perception young people have of participation and the motivation and skills they develop to get engaged in the community, in society and politics.

#### **4. Young people’s picture of and relationship with politics**

The state of politics under late modern conditions and its relationship with the citizens shines through the young people’s narratives. In the following an analysis of the qualitative data of the EUYOUNGART study with respect to politics is presented. It touches on the interviewees’ concepts of politics and their styles of relating to it. If the relationship between politics and young people is characterised by disaffection and dissatisfaction – and this is what the EUYOUNGART survey data seem to suggest, albeit to differing degrees in the individual countries – there is a need to look more closely at the reasons. As the analysis reveals the young people very aptly pin down the shortcomings of the democratic system, i.e. lack of responsiveness to citizens’ needs, inefficiency in solving problems, and lack of ideals.

In general, the young people’s picture of politics hinges upon political authorities and institutions such as government, political parties and politicians. Certain political activities are also mentioned as elements of the political sphere, as for example, voting, petitions and demonstrations. Although it is true that politics is not reduced to conventional forms by the young people the recognition of different types of political players and political processes and mechanisms is not evident in most of the focus groups, certainly not among the lesser educated and non-active interviewees who tend to define politics by “*what ones sees on TV*”. It may be surmised that this implies a passive, consumerist approach to politics, like watching a football game from a distance, sometimes with disgust sometimes with emotional involvement, but mostly as something that does not include oneself. Broader concepts of the political (e.g. “*trying to get one’s way*”), including a wider range of institutions and activities (e.g. citizens’ initiatives, community councils, shop stewards) which bring in notions of individual engagement and community good (“*responsibilities for society*”, “*making laws*”, “*holding the country together*”), tend to be restricted to the politically active, better educated young people (cf. Sloam, 2004).

Four styles of talking about politics can be identified in the young people’s narratives (Paakunainen, 2004). Among the less educated, non-active young people in particular, one finds a “pejorative”, i.e. aggressively negative, style which involves a lot of cursing, metaphors and depreciative comments on a phenomenon that is vague but emotionally highly charged. The cynical style of relating to politics uses negative humour to show disapproval of politics, a dirty game consisting of mysterious machinations.

*Politics? – Bigwigs, running things. Government. Lining their pockets. (UK)*

*Lots of noise for not much impact. (France)*

*Something negative, difficult to understand. (Italy)*

However, over and against these clearly negative accounts of politics one also finds a critically distanced style of talking about politics, which goes beyond mere sarcasm and involves more knowledge of the political system and reflection on a range of issues and world views. The fourth style of talking about politics is constructive in its way of giving careful consideration to pluralistic values and political strategies (*ibid.*). Thus, the picture of politics does not only consist of negative stereotypes. There are always young people who acknowledge the regime's limited capacity to solve problems in modern society, the hard work and responsibility politicians take on, as well as democracy's constructive task to deal with society's problems.

Table 1. "*Politics...*"<sup>3</sup>

	Aut	Est	Fin	F	Ita	SK	UK
a game played by old men	9,2	7,0	3,0	28,4	4,1	9,5	5,3
means empty promises	15,6	15,8	3,7	34,0	11,3	21,8	8,7
just corrupt	6,9	14,7	1,3	25,2	10,7	33,3	5,5
way of taking care of social issues	24,0	21,0	17,8	9,3	11,0	5,7	6,3
way to solve conflicts in society	18,8	16,7	11,7	10,4	6,9	9,8	4,9
way to create a better world	10,3	7,5	5,3	7,7	5,5	4,3	4,3

Source: EUYOUNGART 2004

Table 1 above reflects this ambivalence between a negative view of politics and recognition of its merits and potentials, which can be read as expressions of general political satisfaction and perceptions of system efficacy (Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1997). In Austria, Estonia and Finland agreement with the negative statements (that is the view that politics is a game played by old men, that it means empty promises, and that it is just corrupt) is relatively low, while the recognition of its positive and constructive potential is recognised to a high degree. By contrast, in France and Slovakia agreement with the negative stereotypes is very high and recognition of its positive aspects relatively low. Italy and even more so the UK show very low figures for the negative as well as the positive statements which may point to a greater distance to the political sphere that undermines any representation of it in either way – positive or negative.

### Political satisfaction

While the legitimacy of democracy is not questioned by the young people, the remarks on the functioning of the system are highly critical and express dissatisfaction. In the participation literature, political dissatisfaction is conceptualised as an evaluation of the regime's effectiveness in solving problems which the citizen considers important (Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1997) that is the regime's performance and political outcomes. While there are only a few politically active (young) citizens who comment on concrete government activities, most young people provide a vague evaluation of the system on the basis of their perception of political processes. In the EUYOUNGART survey, this assessment of performance is gauged with the question of satisfaction with the way the country's government is doing its job. The rates of the young people's satisfaction with their regime are relatively low. Apart from Finland, where satisfaction is very high (42%), they range between 20% in Austria and 9% in the Slovak Republic (see table 2 on the following page).

<sup>3</sup> Question wording: "To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning politics? Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree?" Percentages reported refer to the answer "agree strongly".

Table 2. *Satisfaction with the country's government*<sup>4</sup>

Aut	Est	Fin	F	Ger	Ita	SK	UK
20,7	19,7	41,8	17,9	14,2	10,5	9,3	13,2

Source: EUYOUNGART 2004

The most frequently articulated criticism of the interviewees can be grouped into two categories: lack of representativity and responsiveness on the one hand and lack of political culture on the other. The former refers to the relationship between the politicians and the electorate and the lack of accountability of the former. In the young people's eyes politicians do not know or care to know the real needs of the citizens, they are not even driven by the needs of the majority but rather by self-interest.

*The point of contact between politics and society is not exactly a model for youths in their twenties. I mean, what young people see now is these people [the politicians, RS] there, caring about their interests, earning their money and that's all. ... it is a split that can't be healed at the moment, and no one is even trying to heal it. (Italy)*

Those who gain from this power structure are not only the politicians themselves but party clientele and lobbies in the economy. The issues citizens are consulted on are not the ones that are crucial for society. Those decisions which have the strongest impact are decided beforehand, behind closed doors, by the power elites.

*Business and industry are incredibly powerful and, well, I think, considering what one hears and reads, their influence is really, really unbelievable. The individual citizen, after all, does not really have such a strong lobby, he cannot really get to see politicians, he cannot directly influence anybody or anything ... (Germany)*

While this complaint may be articulated by the citizenry in general, young people are particularly affected by the lack of representation of their interests. This neglect on the part of politicians, political parties and institutions leads to the perception that the issues addressed by the politicians have nothing to do with young people's lives, that politics does not matter.

*It must be the same with all parties. You just don't get the youth element. (UK)*

*They are a long way from our needs. (France)*

*Politicians should be a bit younger perhaps, younger people would be more committed, more enthusiastic ... younger people may have a few more ideas and may identify more with young people ... because we don't really have much of a say. (Germany)*

The ideal picture of democracy which emerges in the young people's narratives and discussions is neither an instrumental one where elites are elected without being bound by any mandates of the electorate, nor is it a conflictual one in which different groups try to enforce their interests. Rather, it is the politicians' duty to respond to the people's needs, to serve the interests of the majority and to provide for a counterbalance.

*The people delegate a representative who talks on behalf of the people. ... but it should meet more than half of the needs of the people. (Austria)*

The criticism articulated with respect to the political culture is seen as impairing the efficiency of the political system in solving problems. Decision-making processes are characterised by competition rather than cooperation and are dominated by power games and quarrelling. There is no fair-play among politicians and no constructive problem solving.

<sup>4</sup> Question wording: "Thinking about the (country's) government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?" Percentage reported are answers "satisfied" and "very satisfied" of the 5-point scale.

*The way we see it, I think, there's no will to solve our country's problems, no will to face the problems of the country together. The chair is a continual fight, not working together to solve problems but a continual fight. (Italy)*

*I often think that it is too much about being right, and that good ideas are often not acknowledged because they are from the other party. (Austria)*

These comments express a desire for more peaceful, harmonious political processes. On the one hand, this desire for conflict-avoidance may be interpreted from a social-psychological perspective which argues that conflict threatens social relationships and causes stress among group members (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005) – and maybe also among the spectators of the political processes. On the other hand, it may be interpreted in the light of the actual nature of political conflict, which is obviously perceived as political argy-bargy on irrelevant details. The potentially constructive element in political conflict as a “precondition as well as a chance for a lively democracy” (Frevel, 2004; quoted in Böhnisch, 2006) and potential for integrating clashing interests cannot be recognised. It is at least partly undermined by modern “management politics” which no longer takes recourse to “grand ideologies” and no longer stresses ideological cleavages and social conflict lines. This tendency weakens the framework within which citizens can recognise conflicting interests, articulate their own problems and understand political strategies. For some young people the intolerance of controversy seems to inhibit any realistic perspective on politics.

*Before, only the king decided. Today they don't all agree and they are not all together. If everyone had the same ideas then they could take decisions. (France)*

Another reason for political dissatisfaction mentioned by the young people is the lack of idealism. Many young interviewees miss ideals and visions in politics or see them being sacrificed for power. One young Austrian Green activist explicitly referred to the German Green Party's decision to support the war in Afghanistan which was totally against their initial ideology and offended their grassroots level and many of their voters:

*... but for them it was more important to remain in power than to defend their own ideals. There I think, what kind of people are they? At that time I was so shocked that I did not want to go to the elections any more, because that [ideology, R.Sp.] just goes to rack and ruin instead of being defended. (Austria)*

*You realise that in real events or in political decisions, ideals are not always in line with what is decided. (Italy)*

In a detraditionalising society trust in political actors depends less on traditional affiliation and legitimacy, but on the citizen's perception of commitment and responsibility towards values and ideals (cf. Giddens, 1994). Politicians' authenticity and faithfulness to their own principles is of uppermost importance for the young citizens. Yet, the expectation of idealism and trustworthiness is constantly frustrated in political reality. This is particularly evident after elections:

*And always these promises before the elections ... and in the end all look stupid, because it turned out to be very different from what they [the politicians, R.Sp.] had promised. (Austria)*

Accordingly, the trustworthiness of politicians and political parties is generally rated very low by the respondents in the EUYOUNG survey (see table 3). Trust in political parties ranges between 13% in Austria and 6% in Slovakia, while trust in politicians ranges between 10% in Austria and 5% in Slovakia. The national governments and parliaments achieve slightly more trust. The Austrian (19%) and Estonian (18%) government reach the highest rates as well as the Austrian (20%), Estonian (24%) and Italian (19%) parliament.

Table 3. “Trust in...”<sup>5</sup>

	Aut	Est	F	Ita	SK	UK
politicians	10,4	8,9	7,7	6,6	4,7	9,2
political parties	12,7	9,3	8,1	11,2	5,8	6,5
parliament	19,6	23,7	14,1	19,1	6,7	17,2
government	18,7	17,6	11,9	13,8	6,5	11,4

Source: EUYOUNG 2004

Interestingly, international institutions and organisations are trusted more than national institutions. In Austria, Estonia and Italy, where trust in national institutions is already relatively high, trust in international organisations is even higher. In Slovakia, where trust in national institutions is low, trust levels in the European Commission, European Parliament, Amnesty International and Greenpeace are surprisingly high (20% and higher). In France and the UK, trust in the European institutions is low (between 12 and 17%), but trust in Greenpeace and Amnesty International is high (between 31 and 36%). It is plausible that politicians and political parties being in competition with each other, trying to maximise votes and shifting opinions in the course of political negotiations and consensus building appear more inconsistent and disloyal to their principles. Institutions, by contrast, may be perceived as more consistent, especially Greenpeace and Amnesty who do not depend on votes and do not have to compromise in political processes.

### Disaffection

While political dissatisfaction is the result of a comparison between “what one has” and “what one ought to have”, political disaffection is the consequence of an enduring sense of estrangement from political institutions and the feeling of exclusion (Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1997). Disaffection thus taps the emotional component in people’s relationship to politics when it is seen as something distant, unimportant and meaningless. This political disaffection is measured by the survey item “Politics does not deal with things that are important to people like me” (see table 4). The statement gets most agreement in France (50,4%), Slovakia (44,5%) and the UK (40,8%).

Table 4. *Political disaffection*<sup>6</sup>

	Aut	Est	Fin	F	Ita	SK	UK
agree strongly	10,4	10,7	1,9	20,1	7,3	10,1	4,5
agree	27,4	24,8	15,1	30,3	26,1	34,4	36,3

Source: EUYOUNG 2004

Disaffection is to a large extent caused by a lack of efficacy, i.e. the feeling of powerlessness and confusion with respect to politics (Gunther, 1992; cited by Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1997). Political efficacy has an internal dimension referring to the citizen’s perception of her/his own political knowledge and competences and an external dimension which concerns the beliefs about the responsiveness of the political system to citizens’ claims (*ibid.*; see also Almond & Verba, 1965). In the following these two dimensions of efficacy will be explored in more detail. One of the most striking results of the qualitative interviews in the EUYOUNG study refers to the lack of internal efficacy. There is a strong sense among many young people, especially among those with a lower level of education, that they lack political knowledge and information.

*After all, most people do not have a clue, have they? Well, I mean I haven’t got a clue. ...nobody has ever explained anything to me, I mean, what it’s actually all about, yes, that’s right, what it’s all about. Okay, somebody’s elected, but that’s all I know. (Germany)*

In many cases, schools are held responsible for this situation. Schools provide citizenship education and political education, which teach the young people the principles of democracy as well as the

<sup>5</sup> Question wording: “I will now read out names of different bodies such as the government and the European Commission. Please tell me on a scale from 1 to 5 how much you trust each of them. 1 means “not at all” and 5 means “very much”. Percentages reported refer to the answers “very much” and “much”.

<sup>6</sup> Question wording: “To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning politics: Politics does not deal with things that are important to people like me. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree?” Percentages reported refer to the answer “agree” and “agree strongly”.

structures of and procedures in the political system. This knowledge is a necessary precondition to be able to understand what is going on, to interpret political news, to judge political events and to form one's own opinion. Civic, social and political education courses exist in the EU member states, although to a different degree in different countries and across different age groups. Many member states recognise the need for a better training of teachers in these subjects (Council of Europe, 2003a). The young interviewees in the EUYOUNG project likewise criticise that teachers are not committed to the subject of political education and do not employ modern and appealing teaching methods.

However, schools are not the only institutions that are blamed. Closely connected with the issue of education is information, which is needed in order to know the possibilities available. In this context, many young people refer to the media as being rather superficial in their reports and not objective. At their best, the media make complex matters more complicated. At their worst, they are political players with their own interests (Muxel & Riou, 2004). Many young citizens have doubts about the reliability of media information.

*It requires extra effort to find what you are interested in, but ... I mean, if then I happen to say to what extent what I get to know is true, then I ...unfortunately it's difficult to say. (Italy)*

Yet, what often seems to lie beneath this complex problem is a lack of media competence and political knowledge.

*We have difficulty in deciphering the vocabulary, the language. (France)*

The costs of information are especially high for those who are disadvantaged with respect to education and socio-economic background and do not have the means and knowledge to access, process and take advantage of information. In the context of information, the Council of Europe points out that "the majority of member states do not ... have a genuine, funded, systematic, coherent and integrated youth information policy or any all-embracing youth information strategy" (Council of Europe, 2003a: 19). Youth information should be appealing to young people and take particular care of the special information needs of disadvantaged youth. Young people might actually be more inclined to political participation if the information were "presented in a different way, in a different spirit, and in a different tone" (Sloam, 2004: 11).

Part of this lack of knowledge and information may certainly be successfully tackled by improving youth information as well as civic and political education at school and non-formal education. However, another part of the young people's 'deficit' is likely to be caused by the politicians themselves who contribute to the lack of understanding by giving vague and partial answers which fit their competition strategies rather than supplying voters with comprehensive information on their political aims.

*Again and again I am fascinated by what goes on, when you see them sitting in talk shows, etc. and they are asked a very clear question, yes, they could simply answer with one sentence but then they waffle on and on, and talk for five minutes, but they don't really give an answer. (Germany)*

*My opinion on like the political broadcasts is generally they're not saying what they are going to do, but what's bad about what the other parties are arguing. (UK)*

The extent of this feeling of helplessness is reflected in the survey results (see table 5). Over one third of the respondents find politics too complicated to really understand what is going on. The proportion is alarmingly high in Italy, Slovakia and the UK.

Table 5. *Internal efficacy*<sup>7</sup>

Aut	Est	Fin	F	Ger	Ita	SK	UK
36,1	36,5	36,2	46,6	32,7	53,1	52,7	51,2

Source: EUYOUNGART 2004

The external dimension of political efficacy refers to beliefs about the responsiveness of the political system. The expectation that one's engagement and political activities have no effect on the state of affairs or decision-making is rather widespread not only among the less educated and/or non-active interviewees. Even among the politically engaged young people there is considerable disillusion. This impression from the qualitative interviews and focus groups is strengthened by the representative data. The highest rates of effectiveness are found for voting. However, there are strong country differences with Germany (64%), Austria (60%) and Italy (58%) in the top ranks and the UK (38%) and Estonia (37%) at the bottom (see table 6). Working in a political party or in a voluntary organisation is seen as the second best possibility together with drawing attention of the media. Contacting politicians, boycotts, demonstrations, petitions as well as illegal or violent activities are regarded as the least effective. As will be seen in chapter 3 the lack of political efficacy is one of the major obstacles to participation.

Table 6. *"External efficacy ..."*<sup>8</sup>

	Aut	Est	Fin	F	Ger	Ita	SK	UK
work in a political party	24,2	15,9	22,5	11,4	21,8	16,3	24,4	17,4
work in a voluntary organisations	30,8	14,6	19,7	29,7	30,9	38,3	17,5	18,5
vote in elections	60,3	36,5	47,3	48,8	64,6	57,9	48,1	37,7
work to get attention from the media	29,3	26,4	26,3	20,4	31,5	38,5	38,4	25,9

Source: EUYOUNGART 2004

## Ideologies

Another characteristic of the relationship between (young) citizens and politics which determines the form and extent of their political participation is their attitude towards ideologies. It can aptly be described with the term "generalised doubt" and consists in the refusal to take sides for a political idea or ideology without a critical distance. Young people recognise the fact that people and ideas cannot be categorised in "good" and "bad" and the world cannot be seen as black or white. Political arguments and ideas always call for counter-arguments or counter-views. Among many young people following one idea or ideology blindly is stigmatised as extremist. While this stance is understandable and not unwelcome against the background of the various experiences of totalitarianism and extremism in Europe, it does tend to cause an inability to take or support any political decision. Even if the counter-argument is not known by the individual there is an expectation that there is a "yes, but...". This phenomenon has to be interpreted in the context of the weakening of class-based ideologies and the pluralisation of policy dimensions mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. The complexity of political issues does not allow for simple solutions that are developed within one ideological framework. With respect to the party-citizens relationship this situation calls into question the capacity of traditional ideologies to foster identification, consensus and solidarity and to mobilise for participation.

This doubt seems to be supported by the findings of the EUYOUNGART survey concerning the self-placement of young people on the left-right scale (see table 7). It reveals that a large percentage of the young people position themselves in the centre. This proportion is particularly large in the UK with 76%. The Italian young people have the clearest allocation to the left and right with only 35% in the neither/nor category.

<sup>7</sup> Question wording: "How often does politics seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on?" Percentages reported for the answers "always" and "often".

<sup>8</sup> Question wording: "There are many opinions on how one can effectively influence decisions in society. I will read you some of ways that are used. Please tell me on a scale from 0 to 10 how effective you think it is: 0 means "not at all effective" and 10 means "very effective" (Percentages for the range 8-10).

Table 7. Self-placement on the 5-point left-right scale<sup>9</sup>

	left	neither/nor	right
Aut	31,5	57,0	11,5
Est	11,0	67,3	21,7
Fin	18,4	61,5	20,1
F	42,8	42,5	14,7
Ger	32,2	58,3	9,5
Ita	40,8	35,1	24,1
SK	18,1	64,0	17,9
UK	11,9	75,7	12,4

Source: EUYOUNGART 2004

The young people's self-placement in the middle of the scale may be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, positioning oneself in middle of the spectrum could hide a lack of recognition and understanding of the scheme and avoid answering the survey question with "I don't know". This interpretation is supported by the finding that the proportion of "don't know" answers declines with higher levels of cognitive skills, education, political interest and with age (Waechter, 2004). On the other hand, crowding the centre of the scale may point to political indifference or to an irrelevance of the scheme for young people. In the course of the focus groups and individual interviews of EUYOUNGART the German research team paid particular attention to this question. In general, the scheme was recognised and understood by the young interviewees and it did not seem irrelevant for their accounts of the political. The literature suggests at least two types of classifications for the meaning of left-right: it may be based on the classification of political groups and parties or on the classification of world views (Jagodzinski & Kühnel, 1994; cited in Waechter, 2004: 49). The young Germans interpreted the left-right scheme more often on the basis of ideological attributes than parties. They referred to lines of conflict such as welfare state vs market economy, political ideologies like communism, capitalism, fascism, to social groups (workers, entrepreneurs) and values (reactionary, conservative). New issues which cannot easily be accommodated in the left-right scheme tend to be attributed to the left (*ibid.*). This is consistent with the finding that supporters of new social movements tend to vote for left and green parties (Aarts, 1995). However, in the face of these new issues, the traditional cleavage between left and right loses some of its relevance for a number of interviewees.

*For me this distinction between left and right makes so little ... is so little telling. If I have an issue and, ehm, I take a side, then it does not matter to me, whether it's the left or the right side, but the one with which I can identify. And this is often ... it's difficult anyhow, because there are topics where one can argue in this or that way, where one can convince me in this or that direction. (Germany, quoted by Waechter, 2004: 51)*

The reference to ideologies rather than parties can be explained by the young people's criticism that the parties' attempt to be a centre party leads to a blurred positioning on the left-right scale. This again makes it more difficult to take the parties' positions as a point of reference for one's own self-placement.

For the German interviewees it can thus be cautiously concluded that the left-right concept is generally understood, but many young people are unsure about its application and tend to question its relevance for their own political positioning. However, the relatively low proportion of young Germans who place themselves in the centre of the scale (see table 7) goes along with relatively high levels of political skills and engagement [...]. Drawing tentative conclusions for the interpretation of the other countries in table 7, one may surmise that the high rates of self-placement in the middle are caused by low levels of political knowledge and high levels of disaffection.

<sup>9</sup> Question wording: "In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Would you say that you personally are very left-wing, left-wing, right-wing, very right-wing, or neither left-wing nor right-wing?"



## 5. Conclusion

This paper is based on the premise that a serious debate on young people's participation and an honest attempt to engage them in politics must strive for a more complex understanding of the conditions of the political in late modernity, the conditions under which young people are expected to contribute, as well as the relationship between politics and the young citizens. Rather than taking a functionalist approach focusing on what institutions need or a normative approach from what adults declare as desirable, the narratives of the young people were chosen as a starting point. They paved the way for a critical appraisal of the social, economic and political changes and the processes of de-structuring and re-structuring which are like quicksand on which the house of participation is built. Only too often, the lamento about the lack of youth participation is based on a traditional and static view of political order and civil society. The young people's accounts of the political, by contrast, reveal how the changes both within and between the subsystems of the economy, politics and society affect the possibilities and motivation to get engaged. The power of nation-states to shape society has waned vis-à-vis the power of the globalised economy. Traditional ideologies have lost their credibility in the course of Europe's political history and some of their significance in the face of new issues and policy dimensions. New lines of social conflict have only partly entered the public debate leaving citizens without the necessary conceptual tools to recognise their concerns as political and society as shapeable. The material and psycho-social insecurities experienced by young citizens in a precarious labour market and in risky transitions leads to a preoccupation with one's own life management and individualised coping strategies. Within this framework young people come to perceive politics as powerless and unresponsive to their needs. The feeling of disempowerment is exacerbated by their status in society more generally, which is characterised by a deficit orientation that is connected with programmes that act on young people rather than enabling them to actively influence their environments.

# GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE 'NEW, NEW' SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: IBERIAN CONNECTIONS \*

Carles Feixa, Inês Pereira and Jeffrey S. Juris

In this article we intend to illustrate another way of thinking about and practicing active youth citizenship in the global era<sup>1</sup>: the participation of young people in the so-called 'antiglobalisation movement', which we conceptualize here as the '*new, new*' social movements (in the plural).<sup>2</sup> We introduce this concept in order to better understand the continuities and changes across different waves of youth activism in late modernity. The rise of the 'old'<sup>3</sup> social movements in the nineteenth century was connected to the emergence of industrial society, often perceived as masculine, adult and class-based struggles, even if many of the protagonists were actually students, bohemians and young workers, giving rise to a new social actor: the *adolescent* (based on the 'Tarzan' syndrome: the youngster who tries to become an adult). The rise of the 'new' social movements in the 1960s was connected to the emergence of new modes of collective action in the era of mass media and youth countercultures. These were often multi-class and multi-gendered youth struggles, giving rise to another new social actor: the extended adolescent (based on the 'Peter Pan' syndrome – the youngster who refuses to become an adult). The rise of the 'new new' social movements in the 2000s is connected to the emergence of new modes of collective activism in an era of global networks and youth cybercultures: intergenerational, trans-sexual and cross-class struggles, giving rise to yet another new social actor: the 'yo-yo' 'adulescent' (based on the 'Replicant' syndrome – the youngster who is *in between* Blade Runner conservatism and android resistance).<sup>4</sup>

The concept of citizenship arose in the nineteenth century in a specific context: the 'imagined community' of the (western) nation-state and bourgeois revolution. At the beginning of twenty-first century, citizenship is moving from 'national' to 'transnational'. This is not only true for economic, political and corporate multinational structures, but also for the networked resistances to those hegemonic forces. As pointed out by the editors in the introduction to this running theme: 'any contemporary analysis of the themes around active citizenship should be placed within the social and political context of increasing globalisation and transnationalism' (Suurpää & Valentin, 2009: 2). In a previous article, one of the present authors defined citizenship as 'a formula for the political construction of identity' (Feixa, 1998: 54), arguing that its relevance in the youth is critical given the confluence of diverse 'identity transitions': biographical transition into adulthood, societal transition into civic rights and duties and historical transition into democracy. In the information age, citizenship has become more related to culture (from the identity of politics to the politics of identity) and to global networks (from national construction to transnational de-construction).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful for the comments by two anonymous referees and the help and patience of the editors of this running theme on active citizenship: Leena Suurpää, Tommi Hoikkala and Sofia Laine.

<sup>2</sup> Carles Feixa first employed the concept 'new new social movements' in a book about youth movements in the Latin American context (Feixa *et al.*, 2002), after a talk with Jeffrey Juris on their first fieldwork experiences in Seattle, Mexico and Barcelona. Thanks to Sofia Laine we recently learned that the Italian sociologist Donatella della Porta also used the concept in her work in the late 1990s (della Porta & Diani, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> The term 'old' social movements generally refers to the labour movement, particularly during the classic period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. In this article we are building on and playing with the opposition within the social movements literature between 'old' and so-called 'new' social movements – ecological, peace, feminist, student and other movements that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and have been associated with an overriding concern for identity as opposed to the strategic focus of older movements (Cohen, 1985). Such differences between old and new movements are often exaggerated (Calhoun, 1993), but we continue to use these categories for heuristic purposes to analyze and compare the characteristics of different movements in distinct historical periods.

<sup>4</sup> For the evolution of youth movements in contemporary society, see Gillis (1974); Feixa, Costa & Pallarés (2002) and Nilan & Feixa (2006). Of course this triadic typology is not only evolutive: in our present fieldwork we can find symbols, strategies and interpretations from the three models of social movements and juvenile actors.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of global citizenship has been used by Maurice Roche (2002) and Henry Teune (2003), among others. For a complete state of the art on the concept and its implications for youth studies, see Hoikkala (2009).

The concept of 'global citizenship' is useful for extending Marshall's classic three-dimensional definition of citizenship: civic, political and social. In the information age, the arena of citizenship is extended in three directions: first, economic and cultural rights and duties are added to Marshall's triad; second, new communication technologies are added to traditional citizenship institutions (school, political institutions and civil society) and third, the transnational level is added to classic state and intra-state nation-building. As Henry Teune (2003) suggests, 'at issue in this question is the prospect of a world with an inclusive global civilization based on diversity' (quoted in Hoikkala, 2009: 11). The participation of young people in the 'new, new social movements is a key arena for these changes, not only because they are pioneers within the digital society and the space of flows (Castells, 2004[1996]; Tapscott, 1998), but also because they are moving across national and social boundaries, living 'transnational connections' (Hannerz, 1998). This article explores one regional context: the Iberian connections that link (virtually and physically) young activists from Barcelona and Lisbon.

## **Globalization, anti-globalization and the 'new, new' social movements**

Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed the rise and consolidation of a new cycle of collective action, marked by new struggles and repertoires of resistance, by new contexts of participation and by new forms of organisation. Although, it is difficult to establish the history of this cycle of protest in the Iberian context, it is possible to distinguish three phases we can metaphorically call: latency, emergency and consolidation (Romaní & Feixa, 2002). The *phase of latency* comprises the last decade of the twentieth century. The turning point was 1 January 1994, when *Subcomandante Marcos* and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) rose against the Mexican government the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect. Unlike a classic *guerrilla* force, they fought with information more than arms (Castells, 2004[1996]), giving rise to a loose, decentralized global web of solidarity groups that would proliferate in Mexico and around the world (Khasnabish, 2008; Olesen, 2005). At the same time, international financial organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the G8, worked together to create a new economic order, suppressing the barriers against free trade at the world level. The process of globalization of capital gave rise to a process of 'grassroots globalization' (Appadurai, 2001), as social movements, networks and non-government organizations (NGOs) shed their national roots and became transnationally networked.<sup>6</sup>

The *phase of emergence* began with the first Peoples' Global Action (PGA) global days of action in the late 1990s, including the November 1999 protest against the WTO in Seattle (USA), which some consider the first globally recognized battle between representatives of the new world order and the 'antiglobalization soldiers'. The WTO had summoned the so-called Millennium Round, a set of negotiations aiming to establish new rules for the liberalization of world trade. The information circulated rapidly on the web and social movement actors around the world organized a statement against the rise of a global market dominated by corporations. With the help of a powerful Internet mailing list, a wide coalition came together, encompassing traditional NGOs, heroes of the counter-cultural activism and cyber-grunge youngsters. Some 50,000 people answered the call and demonstrated on the streets of Seattle, obstructing the meeting and helping to put a stop to the negotiations. During the year 2000, similar events occurred in cities of five continents, as each major summit became an occasion for an alternative summit and protest.

The *phase of consolidation* began in January 2001, in Porto Alegre (Brazil). Until that moment, the mobilizations had been more reactive than proactive: questioning the model of corporate globalization more than proposing an alternative. At the turn of the millennium, however, representatives from two Brazilian NGOs and ATTAC, an association created in Paris in 2000 under the initiative of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, proposed the organization of a World Social Forum (WSF) as an alternative to the World Economic Forum in Davos. The first WSF brought together 5,000 delegates from around the world, including trade unions, environmentalists, peasants, women, students, international solidarity activists

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<sup>6</sup> Social scientists have analyzed this cycle and have attempted to conceptualize it using various notions: anti (or alter)-globalization movement, anti-corporate globalization movement, radical democracy, global justice movement or Neoliberal Resistance Movement. In this paper we use the term 'anti-corporate globalization movement,' which reflects the term favoured by Iberian activists, but emphasizes that activists are against a specific type of globalization, not globalization *per se* (see Amoore, 2005; della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Juris, 2008a).

and religious networks, to develop, share and debate alternatives to neoliberal globalization. Since then, subsequent forums have drawn hundreds of thousands of participants, including 150,000 at the third WSF in Porto Alegre. The forum process has also expanded transnationally, as global forums have been held in Mumbai (2004) and Nairobi (2008), while local and regional forum events have been organized in nearly every continent. Meanwhile, mobilizations following the confrontational direct action model of Seattle have continued, but lost their militant edge after the 'battle of Genoa' in July 2001, which is remembered for producing the first anti-globalization movement martyr in the North, and for the diverse forms of the struggle on display there: the institutional sectors represented by the Genoa Social Forum; the alternative sectors reflected in new types of civil disobedience practiced by the White Overalls and the violent sectors embodied by the spectacular Black Bloc (Juris, 2005a).

The short, but intense history of the anti-corporate globalization movement reveals a series of unique characteristics that have been explored in the literature: (i) an emphasis on globalism and transnationality and their articulation with local contexts; (ii) the use of new information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet; (iii) the articulation of economic and identity-based demands; (iv) the development of innovative forms of action; (v) the creation of new forms of organization; and (vi) the gathering of diverse traditions and organizations under a common umbrella (Castells, 2001; della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Feixa *et al.*, 2002; Juris 2004a; 2005b; 2008a; Juris & Pleyers, 2009; Sommer, 2003). These analyses reflect diverse approaches and tensions: highlighting the continuity with prior forms of contentious action; emphasizing its discontinuity; taking it as a new social movement, stressing its networked characteristics or considering it as a master frame that organizes and shapes diverse struggles. In this article we argue that anti-corporate globalization movements can be understood, in analytic and theoretical terms, as 'new, new' social movements involving the rise of a new wave of contentious action and its associated characteristics. At the same time, there are important continuities between the so-called old and new social movements. Although, some have questioned whether such a distinction is relevant (Calhoun, 1993), we find it useful for our limited purposes here to highlight the characteristics associated with emerging forms of movement that combine elements of both old and new.

What have been called '*old*' social movements arose in Western Europe in the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century. The revolutionary wave of 1848, the Paris commune, the Soviet revolution in 1917 and the movement for university reform in Córdoba (Argentina) in 1918 are emblematic examples of old social movements. Their social base was defined by concrete borders of class, nation and social condition. They were often local, but occasionally involved in revolutionary or reform processes at the national and international levels. 'Old' social movements stressed economic-political protest: the primary claims are material; but can also be political and moral: democratization, the right to vote, and the equality of rights. The strike and the demonstration were the most visible action repertoires. Although, many of the participants were young, old social movements were not conceived as youth movements, but rather as adult struggles. The cultural features of these movements involve verbal language (the meeting), an aesthetic of struggle ('life is a struggle') and cultural production situated in the Gutenberg galaxy (newspapers, brochures, books). The dominant organizational model is best represented by the metaphor of the band given that old social movements were usually based in local groups with strong internal cohesion as well as signs and symbols of identity that clearly differentiated insiders from outsiders.

The so-called '*new*' social movements arose in North America and Europe after World War II (1950-1970). The student movements in Berkeley in 1964 and in Paris, Rome, New York, and Mexico in 1968 were the foundational moments. The social base of these movements moved away from class, emphasizing other identity-based criteria: generation, gender, sexual orientation, affect and ethnicity, particularly marginalized communities (Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, etc.). The territorial base of the new social movements moved away from the local toward the regional and transnational. Environmentalist, pacifist, feminist, gay-lesbian and counter-cultural movements were characteristic examples. The most visible action repertoires had a playful dimension (sit-in, happenings) although traditional activities, including demonstrations and assemblies, also had a role. Although some participants were older, New Social Movements were often conceived as youth and gender-based

movements, as they stressed youth emancipation and sexual liberation. The participation of young people gave rise to myriad youth micro-cultures, often with a transnational dimension but assuming diverse forms in each country. New social movements have been widely analyzed by social scientists, including works of great relevance (Melucci, 2001; Touraine, 1978).

What we propose to call '*new, new*' social movements straddles the frontier of physical and virtual space at the turn of the new millennium. They highlight the transformations and social conflicts associated with the consolidation of informational capitalism. Seattle 1999, Prague 2000 and Genoa 2001 are key symbolic moments, but they are rooted in organizational processes initiated more than a decade earlier. The social base of these movements crosses generations, genders, ethnicities and territories. Their spatial base is no longer local or national, but is situated in globally networked space, like the neoliberal system these movements oppose. However, their decentralization constitutes a localized internationalism (*glocality*). The '*new, new*' social movements emphasize both economic and cultural dimensions: their basic grievances are economic, but no longer exclusively revolve around self-interest; they also include solidarity with those who are marginalized by globalization. The struggle also takes place on the terrain of cultural identities, highlighting the right to difference. As with the new social movements, action repertoires involve marches and demonstrations, but calls to action are distributed through the Internet, while mass marches and actions articulate with multiple forms of virtual resistance.

Although, many of the participants in these movements are young, '*new, new*' social movements have not generally been conceived as youth movements, but rather as intergenerational struggles (see Juris and Pleyers, 2009). Still, anti-corporate globalization movements involve several key features that facilitate the participation of younger activists. First, they are organized around informal networks facilitated by new information and communication technologies (ICT). Second, they are global in geographic reach and thematic scope, as activists increasingly link their locally rooted struggles to diverse movements elsewhere. Finally, they involve non-traditional and highly theatrical forms of direct action protest. Younger activists are also characteristically drawn to more nonconventional forms of direct action protest, involving creative, expressive or violent repertoires. In addition to their utilitarian purpose – shutting down international summit meetings – mass direct actions are complex cultural performances that allow participants to communicate symbolic messages to an audience, while also providing a forum for producing and experiencing symbolic meaning through embodied ritual practice (Juris 2005b; 2008b). The '*new, new*' social movements are organized as networks, which are constituted by loose, decentralized groups and identity markers and involve both individualization and non-differentiation. These transnational '*movement webs*' (Alvarez *et al.*, 1998) comprise a wide field of individuals, organizations and structures with a strong but flexible core, a periphery that is not as active but is very diverse, and nodes of interconnection where resources and knowledge continuously flow.

This tripartite model of '*old*', '*new*' and '*new, new*' social movements is not intended as a rigid, static model. Indeed, recent demonstrations bring together young anarchists and Christian groups from the first wave of social movements, environmentalists and feminists from the second wave, and ravers and cyberpunks from the third. On one hand, '*new, new*' movement actors use tactics and ideologies that came from previous phases (the march, the boycott, etc). On the other hand, organizations born in the past are modernizing their forms and discourses, integrating themselves into the '*new new*' movements and often playing a lead role. For example, movements that were the '*flagships*' of old and new social movements (trade unions and ecologists, for example) are on the front lines of the most recent mobilizations, although their organizational forms and even their social bases have changed. Moreover, virtual communities not only offer social infrastructures for global youth networks, the Internet has generated new youth cultures. One important difference from previous movements is that, for the first time, young people are not, by definition, in a subaltern position, particularly with respect to technological change.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As Castells (2001) has noted, cyberculture itself was the creation of *hippies* and *cyberpunks* and other young people active in the diffusion of the network society (see also Tapscott, 1998).

## **Events: global demonstrations**

Our journey through the 'new, new' social movements will begin by focusing on four global mobilizations in two Iberian cities: Barcelona and Lisbon. Global protests and actions often act as historical turning points, and, as rich ethnographic moments, they can also help us begin a theoretical discussion of the rise of 'new, new' social movements. Events are unique 'time-spaces', providing a forum for diverse social movement activities and enhancing their public visibility. Despite their ephemerality, events also generate ongoing processes that begin far in advance of their public expression and that result from the interconnection of multiple dynamics, including external political issues and opportunities as well as internal identities and resources. They emerge from processes of negotiation between different, often pre-existing networks. As time-spaces characterized by a dense alignment of individual and collective actors, these episodes also produce internal 'collateral dynamics', lingering as common shared references. Meanwhile, the networks that have developed around them often continue over time, incorporating new members and organizing new initiatives. In this article we highlight four 'new, new' social movement scenes: (i) a march in Barcelona in June 2001 planned to coincide with a meeting of the WB that was ultimately cancelled before the protest; (ii) another march in Barcelona in Spring 2002 against a Summit of the EU during the Spanish Presidency; (iii) the 2007 May Day parade in Lisbon, which was part of a global day of action and (iv) another demonstration in Lisbon that year during the EU-Africa Summit.

### ***Barcelona 2001 – Sunday at Passeig de Gràcia<sup>8</sup>***

We already knew the WB meeting in Barcelona had been suspended but, even so, we decided to march. This was a victory for the movement against neo-liberalism, as the global financial leaders were unable to control their own calendar. We arrived in Barcelona on Saturday. After being picked up at Saints Station, we went directly to the Rambla del Raval for the plenary session of the alternative summit. After the initial presentations by more well-known personalities, which framed the situation, analyzed the role of the WB and IMF, and advanced several proposals; delegates from different movements spoke, expressing themselves in the diversity of languages and accents that are struggling for 'another globalization'. Although we could sense the strength of the movement, uncertainties about the following day's demonstration persisted, especially given the campaign of criminalization that had been waged. Still, the morning after, when thousands and thousands of people, with diverse styles and appearances (youngsters from diverse urban 'tribes,' musicians playing djambés of all sizes, women from Catholic action, concerned mothers, academics, feminists, a few politicians from the institutional Left, artists, lawyers, families and veterans of former struggles) gathered to begin the march down the Passeig de Gracia, all the uncertainty ended. Songs, dances and a calm determination necessary to act prevailed. We joined the last third of the demonstration and everything was peaceful until we reached the Stock Exchange, although there had been rumours that glass had been shattered elsewhere. The police blockade around the Stock Exchange was impressive. When we reached the Plaça Catalunya we left the demonstration, and shortly thereafter the police attacked, which everyone knew was bound to happen. The so-called 'forces of law and order' had the final clash they desired.

### ***Barcelona 2002 – Saturday at Passeig de Colom***

Shortly before 6 pm we exit the subway at the Rambla da Catalunya. Barcelona is calm, despite the threats of chaos. According to reports the 'antiglobalization' demonstration set to take place that afternoon would gather around 50,000 people. The atmosphere is festive. The omnipresence of new technologies is particularly apparent. Indeed, everyone has a mobile phone and is using it to find their friends among the mass of demonstrators. As in all fiestas, one can hear music and distinctive sounds: from the international to salsa, from percussion to saxophone tunes belted out by a street performer. A police helicopter is flying overhead, agitating the crowd: nothing better to encourage your own team than provocations from your opponents. The march has been coordinated by a constellation of local, yet transnationally networked social movement groups and extra-parliamentary leftwing organizations that came together as the Campaign against the Europe of Capital. The diversity of organizers is reflected in the structure of the march, composed of three distinct blocks: the first, marching under the

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<sup>8</sup> This section is derived from the Barcelona field notes of Feixa, who is the narrator (see Romani & Feixa, 2002).

slogan 'No to Europe of Capital', is the space of the Campaign; the second, with the banner, 'For a Europe of Nations', brings together separatist and nationalist militants (the pro-governmental press insists that terrorists are hidden among this bloc); the third is the bloc of the Barcelona Social Forum, which encompasses institutional NGOs, trade unions, and parliamentary left-wing parties marching under the slogan from Porto Alegre, 'Another Europe is possible'.<sup>9</sup>

A multi-coloured wave emerges from the sea below. The internal diversity is reflected in multiple styles and generations: young people with crests and pensioners with umbrellas and gabardines, young girls with coloured hair and piercings and mothers carrying babies, teenagers happy to go to their first demonstration and middle-aged women with their recycled Flower Power outfits, Latin-American immigrants selling beer, and, of course, attentive anthropologists. The protesters' imaginations are also on display in the ubiquitous signs and slogans. For example, a *drag-queen* carries a banner saying: 'Ni capitalismo, ni machismo, sólo revolución, te pone guapa' (neither capitalism nor machismo, only revolution makes you pretty). A collective of masked drummers carries a banner that says 'The happy revolution just started'. Songs and chants are also extremely diverse, opposing monarchy, supporting internationalism, and addressing a multiplicity of single issues. A car with a sound system plays music demanding the legalization of marijuana, and gay activists sing 'Contra la Europa del capital, penetración anal' (Against Europe of capital, anal penetration). Public order is not under threat, at least yet. The only sign of war are boxes painted with pink spray by the collective 'Caça lobbies' (Lobbies busters), and logos from the squatter movement painted on the traffic lights.

When we finally arrive at the Passeig de Colom, we see the illuminated multi-coloured statue of Christopher Columbus. The monument is peacefully occupied by a multitude of banners, posters, and people. It is difficult to leave, and it is already after 9 pm when we finally manage to make our way from the plaza. Then we see another – until then discreet – tribe: the anti-riot cops. In case there is trouble, we decide to enter a bar, an Irish pub in the gothic neighbourhood evoking images of the old sites where anarcho-syndicalists gathered a century ago. The battle had already begun by the time we finish our beer. The young marchers who were able to escape more easily from the anti-riot cops went to an outdoor space called the Sot del Migida on Montjuic for a concert headlined by Manu Chao, an anti-globalization movement hero.

### **Lisbon 2007 – Saturday at Avenidas Novas<sup>10</sup>**

The first Portuguese May Day began at Alameda Afonso Henriques, with a vegetarian barbecue. Similar events were taking place elsewhere in the world. The first May Day Parade was held in Milan in 2001. Since 2004 the process has spread around Europe, gathering mostly immigrants and young precarious workers for alternative May Day demonstrations to raise awareness about growing labour precarity: flexible, short-term employment; poor working conditions; minimal social security benefits; and a lack of collective bargaining. When I arrived, activists had already finished their lunch and were seated on the grass among all their posters and banners. Numerous journalists were on hand collecting statements. There was an atmosphere of expectation in the air – some young people were preparing for the event, while others were speaking on mobile phones to arrange meeting points with their colleagues. Most activists were young, but there were also many older people, veterans of past demonstrations and political leaders. I soon came across many people I knew: militants from left-wing parties and activists from several NGOs, collectives and associations. Shortly thereafter, we set off to a great fanfare. The march reflected the new symbolic logics of performative action, aiming to attract attention via spectacular street protests (cf. Juris, 2008b).

The city could not remain indifferent to the chaotic scene: streets closed to traffic, police blockades, the typical sounds of street protest (slogans, megaphone feedback, police whistles, political commentary, the voices of journalists), and the flood of protesters invading the major arteries of the city, including the Avenidas Novas (New Avenues). The march was particularly colourful, and included songs and dances rehearsed the night before at the May Day party. The demonstration in front advanced in a coordinated fashion; toward the back, participants were more dispersed. During the

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<sup>9</sup> For an ethnographic account of the complex micro-political struggles that led to the formation of the different protest blocs, see Juris (2008b).

<sup>10</sup> This section is derived from the Lisbon field notes of Pereira, who is the narrator (see Pereira, 2006).

march, the group adapted its activities to the area where they were marching, distributing leaflets at McDonalds or organizing performances in front of the Ministry of Labour. No one could ignore a caged activist proclaiming he had been arrested in a call centre or protesters carrying massive banners. The commotion was reinforced by a truck carrying a sound system at the front of the march. The mass of demonstrators was surrounded by the police, who watched the activist performances with curiosity, sometimes trying to restrain them, other times laughing quietly. At the end of Avenida Brasil, the front of the march met up with the Labour Day parade organized by CGTP-IN, a Portuguese trade union confederation. At the conclusion of the march, the precarious workers arrived at University City, where, as has become traditional, a popular fiesta had begun. The group's May Day action ended with a performance: they set up a tower of crates marked with keywords such as unemployment and insecurity, and then threw improvised weapons – rolled socks – at the tower, which collapsed as the crates flew everywhere.

### ***Lisbon 2007 – Saturday afternoon at the Chiado***

Although it was December, it was a sunny day, one of those cold and bright Saturdays that Lisbon often offers its visitors. The participants at the European Union-Africa Alternative Summit slowly finished their meal in the lunchroom at the Fine Arts Faculty. Carrying their banners they walked quietly towards Largo do Camões, one of the main squares of Chiado in the centre of Lisbon, a traditional meeting point for demonstrations. The European Union-Africa Summit was an important international event that brought together leaders from diverse European and African countries. The alternative summit, gathering a large group of Portuguese, European and African activists, included semiplenary sessions on issues such as the environment, natural resources and food sovereignty; migrations; economic development and Human Rights, as well as self organized workshops. The Summit concluded with a plenary discussion to prepare a final statement followed by a demonstration in the streets of Lisbon. The protest gathered not only participants from the alternative Summit, but also groups of activists and individuals from the alternative milieu in Lisbon. At Camões, participants organized themselves around specific groups: the Portuguese organizers walked around the square making phone calls, the foreign participants from African and European NGOs gathered in small groups displaying their banners in different languages, some addressing specific issues such as the situation in Zimbabwe or other African countries, others proclaiming universal rights. Small groups of African immigrants in Lisbon made their demands visible, focusing on housing and legal issues, while young people from diverse 'urban tribes' walked around, smoking, talking, dancing and juggling. A group of clowns gathered in the centre of the square and began playing music. When the protest finally started, the clowns went to the head of the march, together with a group carrying the alternative Summit banner: 'Europe-Africa: there are alternatives', written in several languages. A popular jazz group closed the march playing happy tunes. The march went through some of the main streets of the Chiado neighbourhood, already completely crowded with people doing their Christmas shopping. Protesters shouted multi-lingual slogans, including 'Africa is not for sale' and the traditional chant against barriers to migration: 'No borders, no nations, stop deportations'. In the middle of the demonstration, a French feminist group chanted slogans for women's rights around the world, which Portuguese women tried to repeat. The march ended at the Praça da Figueira in the core of downtown Lisbon. A yellow van was parked in the middle of the square playing African tunes, and everyone began dancing. The police kept protesters contained in the square, as they watched the diverse group of bodies moving slowly to the rhythm of 'Mornas' and 'Kizomba'.

Collective action tends to alternate between latent phases where movements develop discourses and identities and moments of greater public visibility (Melucci, 1989). With respect to the latter, social movements organize events that influence the rhythm of life in a city. Protest demonstrations and public happenings, on the one hand, forums, meetings and activist gatherings, then there are privileged times-spaces for social interaction where transnational activist networks are performed and embodied (Juris, 2008b). They also have an impact in terms of the appropriation of urban space. The four demonstrations we describe above have much in common: the heterogeneity of participants and messages, the diversity of themes and issues; media friendly actions, efforts to criminalize demonstrators, as well as a peaceful, playful character. These events can also be seen as 'glocal', anchored in a specific city, but involving a broader international context, often including solidarity



actions with other demonstrations around the world. There are also differences, of course, particularly in the number of participants and the public and police reactions. More generally, mass public protests and actions are characteristic of the action repertoire of the 'new, new' social movements, but they are also rooted in specific cultural, geographic, and organizational contexts.

### **Contexts: movements and platforms**

In the following section we examine the specific groups, networks and platforms in Barcelona and Lisbon that constitute the organizational contexts for the 'new, new' social movements, paying particular attention to different modes of participation: virtual and face to face, informal and formal, discrete organizations to broader convergence spaces.

#### ***Barcelona – the case of MRG***<sup>11</sup>

Although, young squatters and solidarity activists in Barcelona had taken part in previous globally coordinated actions against the G8 and WTO, anti-corporate globalization movements in Catalonia were largely spearheaded by a network called the Movement for Global Resistance (MRG), which was founded to coordinate the Catalan mobilization against the WB and IMF in Prague in September 2000. Prague led to an explosion in grassroots participation and media coverage, diffusing anti-corporate globalization discourses and linking local and global struggles.<sup>12</sup> MRG specifically involved the convergence of two sectors: a radical anti-capitalist bloc, involving squatters, anti-militarists, Zapatista supporters, and anti-EU organizers, and a less militant group of international solidarity and NGO activists. Many of the latter had previously taken part in a state-wide Consulta asking whether the Spanish government should cancel the debt owed to it by developing nations organized by the Citizens Network to Abolish the Foreign Debt (RCADE). Younger activists within networks such as MRG and RCADE precipitated anti-corporate globalization activism in Barcelona, but the entire Catalan Left would join the fold during subsequent Campaigns against the WB and EU in June 2001 and March 2002. Although Catalan anti-corporate globalization movements are intergenerational, younger activists have occupied their leading edge, infusing them with creative energy, a confrontational spirit, and an emphasis on technological, political, and social innovation. For example, more radical youth movements including antimilitarism (Pastor, 2002) or squatting (Feixa *et al.*, 2002) brought with them their critique of the state, focus on decentralization, horizontal relations and self-management, and experience with non-violent direct action. Meanwhile, younger solidarity activists contributed their global awareness, commitment to grassroots participation, and knowledge of development and global economic justice issues. With the founding of MRG, this focus on participatory democracy and global solidarity converged with an emphasis on local autonomy and grassroots self-management among militant squatters, anti-militarists, and Zapatista supporters, generating a unique form of activism guided by emerging networking logics and practices.<sup>13</sup>

As discussed previously, anti-corporate globalization movements involve several key features that are characteristic of the 'new, new' social movements, such as the use of new ICTs, non-traditional and highly theatrical forms of direct action protest and a global perspective (both geographic and thematic). Each of these characteristics is reflected in the discourse and practice of MRG. For example, MRG-based activists have used digital networks to organize actions, share information and resources, and coordinate activities. Although, organizers have primarily used e-mail and electronic listserves, they have also built temporary web pages during mobilizations to provide information, resources, and contact lists; post documents and calls to action; and house discussion forums and chat rooms. Indeed, new ICTs were central to the development of MRG. The MRG listserv was initially created to plan for the protests against the World Bank and IMF in Prague. By communicating via Internet, activists from diverse groups were able to share information and coordinate in a flexible, decentralized manner without the need for hierarchical structures. The Internet thus not only allowed activists to coordinate more rapidly, it also reinforced their broader libertarian ideals. New technologies have greatly reinforced the most radically decentralized network-based organizational forms within anti-

<sup>11</sup> This section is based on PhD research by Juris (2004b, 2008a).

<sup>12</sup> Many Spanish and Catalan organizations from the traditional Left had previously taken part in the December 2000 mobilization against the European Union in Nice.

<sup>13</sup> MRG was ultimately disbanded in January 2003, when activists 'self-dissolved' the network as a response to declining participation and a political statement against permanent structures.

corporate globalization movements, leading to flexible, diffuse and ephemeral formations, including MRG in Catalonia. Grassroots movements and collectives can now directly link up across space without the need for organizational hierarchy. In contrast to traditional political parties and unions, network-based politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations, collectives and networks converge around a few common hallmarks, while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Indeed, given their growing dissatisfaction with institutional politics young people are increasingly attracted to such informal, grassroots forms of political participation. In this sense, MRG was founded as a loose, decentralized space for communication and coordination, designed to mobilize as many sectors, groups, and collectives as possible around specific objectives. The network's organizational structure thus reflected the emerging networking logic prevalent among many anti-corporate globalization activists (see Juris, 2004b, 2008a).

The theatrical performances staged by activists associated with diverse networks – including physical confrontation (Black Bloc), symbolic conflict (White Overalls) or carnivalesque revelry (Pink Bloc), capture mass media attention, but also embody and express alternative political identities. MRG-based activists were particularly active within White Overall and Pink Bloc circles during anti-corporate globalization mobilizations in cities such as Prague (September 2000), Barcelona (June 2001), and Genoa (July 2001), while the network organized a successful 'Decentralized Day of Actions' preceding the half-million person march against the EU in March 2002 (see Juris, 2008b). Actions included a spoof 'Lobby Buster' tour targeting Spanish transnationals, Critical Mass bike ride and Circus against Capitalism, among many others. Beyond putting their bodies on the line to communicate political messages, younger direct action activists express themselves stylistically through clothing and bodily adornment. Style can thus be viewed as a form of intentional communication through assemblage and subcultural mixing and matching, or 'bricolage'. Young people have grown up in a more globalized world than ever before; given that geographically dispersed actors can now communicate and coordinate through transnational networks in real time. Indeed, despite their uneven geographic distribution, the transnational activist networks which MRG-based activists take part in, such as PGA, the WSF process and Indymedia provide the infrastructure necessary for the emergence of global fields of meaning and identification, which accord with the life experiences and political imaginaries of young activists in Barcelona. At the same time, MRG-based activists have also expressed utopian visions based on a global network of locally rooted communities. Beyond geographic reach, contemporary anti-corporate globalization movements are also global in thematic scope, bringing together diverse struggles in opposition to growing corporate influence over politics, society, and the economy as well as increasing commercial penetration into the most intimate aspects of our everyday lives.

### ***Lisbon – Emergent networks<sup>14</sup>***

The years 2006 and 2007 witnessed the birth of a series of different social movement platforms in Portugal, along with the consolidation of previously established ones. The incorporation of 'new, new social movement' tactics and discourses in Portuguese politics began several years earlier through the activity of organizations involved in global networks. Local faces of international movements such as ATTAC, radical left-wing political parties, and activists within emergent national movements brought anti-corporate globalization movement rhetoric and new action repertoires to the country. The Portuguese Social Forum (PSF) was one of the first efforts to bring left wing and alternative movements in line with recent global movement trends. The organization faced deep tensions between different factions inside the PSF process and after the first PSF an informal group called Afinidades (Affinities) was created as a way of gathering representatives from smaller organizations to challenge the efforts to monopolize the PSF by trade unions and parliamentary left wing parties. In 2006 the second PSF took place, and it was marked by the same kind of tensions. In the same year a network called Rede G8 (G8 Network) was formed to mobilize Portuguese organizations around the Anti-G8 protest in Heiligendam. This new network gathered activists from Bloco de Esquerda (BE), a left wing party (and particularly those linked to the Internationalist group, a more or less informal group inside the party that aims to organize and participate in international events and networks) and Gaia, an

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<sup>14</sup> This section is based on PhD research by Pereira (2009).

ecologist activist group that is playing a lead role in the Portuguese 'new, new' social movements, importing new methods and tactics. In March 2007, a European Social Forum (ESF) Preparatory Assembly took place in Lisbon, hosting activists from all over Europe, which concluded with a demonstration by the recently created Lisbon Clown Army.

As discussed previously, 2007 was also the year of the first May Day parade in Lisbon. Several days earlier, another platform was created called Plataforma Direitos e Diversidade (Platform Rights and Diversity) following the 'Multicultural Gathering' against an international meeting of extreme right wing parties and movements that took place in Lisbon. In this Multicultural Gathering, several voices suggested the need to continue the discussion and to organize further activities. The group decided to promote a meeting in the same venue, two weeks later, in order to discuss further action. In this second meeting, which was more institutional, representatives from ATTAC, Afinidades and Immigrants and Fair-trade collectives, met; non aligned individuals were also present in this meeting. Over the next few months a common statement was written, new individuals were involved, information was shared on a new mailing list, and a wiki was created to discuss the activities of the platform. Eventually, the platform began to demobilize as some of their informal promoters were involved in many other struggles and activities, and the rest of the participants could not sustain the platform. The platform is currently defunct, but the mailing list is active and is used to disseminate information. The pre-existence of other coalitions (such as Afinidades) and the formation of new ones (including the network created to organize the EU-Africa alternative summit) complicated efforts to promote a stable coalition. Indeed, the EU-Africa alternative summit, which arose from a combination of local and broader European efforts beginning in spring/summer 2007, led to the constitution of a new Portuguese network, which is still active. The official flyer of the alternative summit mentioned 15 Portuguese organizations, including grassroots immigrant and youth groups, most of them rooted in Lisbon's so-called 'problem' neighbourhoods; ATTAC and a network of collectives against racism and discrimination against immigrants, cultural groups, and ecologists, as well as fair trade, feminist, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) and student associations. An informal nucleus of activists from these groups spearheaded the alliance.<sup>15</sup> Although the contentious forms of action among the 'new, new' social movements in Lisbon are more recent, smaller and less visible than in Barcelona; they display many similar characteristics. The Internet plays a critical role, disseminating information and preparing events, mainly through mailing lists, websites and blogs. Mobile phones are increasingly being used to call for demonstrations and public happenings. Free software is gradually making its way into social movement discourse and practice, and alternative media groups, such as Indymedia, are also active. On the other hand, activists are developing new forms of political expression and action. Large demonstrations include increasingly symbolic actions and performances, and particular groups are specializing recognizable routines. The clown army and the 'Sounds of Resistance' Samba Orchestra (two phenomena that were first developed in the UK) are good examples of this trend. Recent media-friendly protests, such as the action to destroy Genetically Modified Organisms, reflect the globalization of new forms of direct action. Finally, as suggested earlier, these local movements and platforms are gradually incorporating themselves into pre-existing international networks. Portuguese social movements are thus part of a wider process of grassroots globalization: participating in international platforms, traveling to mass global events such as the ESF or anti-G8 Summit protests, and organizing global events in a local context: these are all important mechanisms that link Portuguese collectives to a broader context of collective action associated with 'new, new' social movements.

## Discussion: Iberian connections and beyond

The previous sections evoked snapshots of Iberian contentious action. Stories of global demonstrations in Lisbon and Barcelona as well as analyses of the local interaction contexts, collectives, movements, networks and platforms point to the rise of a new cycle of protest associated

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<sup>15</sup> After the alternative summit, many initiatives were organized on local, regional and global scales. At the local level, the group that had been most deeply involved in the organization of the alternative summit continued meeting to evaluate the activity and then to organize a new event, the WSF Global Day of Action in Lisbon, in January, 2008. This group also decided to create a semi-formal network called *Rede: Que Alternativas?* (Network: What Alternatives?), which helps organize and disseminate the activities of member organizations and more generally engages global issues and events in a Portuguese context.

with the rise of the 'new, new' social movements. Barcelona and Lisbon are thus linked by an invisible, yet solid connective tissue that reflects a parallel history involving similar events and processes, although with distinctive features and at different stages of development. Barcelona and Lisbon are thus caught up in a broader transnationally networked movement web involving a complex interweaving of agents, events, spaces and discourses. New kinds of social movement are emerging within this network of relations. Literature focusing on new social movements highlighted the fact that changes in the production system are associated with changing forms of contentious action. In this sense, the rise of youth, student and ecology movements reflected a partial decline of the central role of factories, the increasing importance of universities, and the rise of the middle class (Touraine, 1978). 'New, new' social movements also have to be understood in the context of broader social changes: the globalization of the economy and politics gives rise to the globalization of social movements; the emergence of a new social morphology – the network – leads to networked social movements (Castells, 2001; see Juris, 2004a, 2008a). Indeed, anti-corporate globalization movements are deeply infused with this network effect, involving an increasing confluence between network norms (values, ideals), forms (organizational structures), and technologies (notably the Internet), mediated by concrete activist practice (Juris, 2008a).

The networking logic of the 'new, new' social movements gives rise to a complex, multilayered and ephemeral structure characterized by an unstable geometry of linkages and connections between groups that coalesce for specific events. Multiple, shifting agents serve as key nodes within this never completed network. Individuals and collective actors with varying degrees of formalization are drawn together and then shortly after split apart. However, although ad hoc coalitions converge for particular purposes they sometimes congeal into enduring partnerships. In this sense, the juxtaposition of contingent platforms with more permanent alliances makes this variable geometry even more dynamic. Young people play an important role within this complex geometry. As mentioned previously, 'new, new social movements' are inter-generational, but a significant number of their protagonists are young (see Juris & Pleyers, 2009). One of the major characteristics of the 'new, new' social movements is precisely the interaction between different generations of collective action as well as different generations of individual activists. Concrete and universal demands, traditional and innovative action repertoires, old issues and new proposals are aligned under common umbrellas in a multidimensional, fractal way. 'Old', 'new' and 'new, new' social movement demands are interrelated, as are their forms of action. Strictly social questions are interspersed with more cultural and symbolic issues. Indeed, youth subcultures and counter-cultural forms exist in relation to political and economic concerns. In this sense, if new social movements were conceived as identity-based movements, 'new, new' social movements combine cultural and material demands, as well as local and global scales of action. 'New, new' social movements are also based on an infrastructural web of technical tools and new technologies.<sup>16</sup> Finally, and partly due to these technological innovations anti-corporate globalization movements are multi-scalar, active on local, regional, and global levels. In particular, local initiatives diffuse transnationally, while global events manifest themselves in diverse local contexts. In this sense, Lisbon and Barcelona appear as two axes of a broader 'new, new' social movement kaleidoscope.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Internet, in particular, has stretched the limits of interactivity among diverse social movement actors. Web-based directories, mailing lists focusing on different topics and alternative media constitute some of the most important Internet-based networking tools (see Castells, 2001; Juris, 2008b).

<sup>17</sup> As Tommi Hoikkala (2009: 9) suggests: 'As a sole rhetoric, global citizenship is doomed to remain sheer verbiage'.



# REDEFINING THE FUTURE: YOUTHFUL BIOGRAPHICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY \*

Carmen Leccardi

If in the “first modernity” the meaning of future was construed as a time of experimentation and possibilities, in the “second modernity” it is defined rather as an uncertain dimension, as a potential limit rather than as a resource. This new semantic framework also deeply shapes the ways and forms in which young people’s biographies come to be defined. These forms of temporalization do not imply, however, the pure and simple loss of the future or the giving up of a plan altogether. Rather, as recent research would indicate, at least a part of the world of young people appears to be actively involved in constructing forms of mediation between the need for subjective control over future time and the heavily risky and uncertain social environment of our days.

The mechanism called *delayed gratification* – the repression of hedonist impulses, a determination to postpone to a later date the possible satisfaction that the present can guarantee for the benefits that this postponement makes possible – is the basis of modern socialization processes. If we consider youth a biographical stage of preparation for adult life, gratification deferral looks like the keystone guaranteeing success. From this perspective, in fact, it is the ability to live the present on the basis of the future, using everyday time as an essential tool for realizing projects – and therefore sacrificing the “expressive” aspects of action in favour of the instrumental – that enables the transition process to have a positive outcome. Here the present is not only a bridge between past and future but also the dimension that prepares for the future. Thanks to the positive relation with the present, the youth period can be represented as a time of actively awaiting adulthood (Cavalli, 1980). As a consequence, identity is constructed around a projection of self further ahead in time, thanks to which frustration accompanying present experiences can be tolerated. So if the future is considered the dimension containing the meaning of action, if it is represented as the strategic time for self-construction and the vehicle through which individual biographical narrative takes shape (Rampazi, 1985), then gratification postponement can be accepted.

In this perspective, the future is by definition the space for constructing a *life plan* and also for defining oneself: while planning what one will do in the future, one also plans in parallel who one will be. In substance, the biographical perspective that delayed gratification refers to the presence of an extended temporal horizon, a strong capacity for self-control, a conduction of life in which programming time is crucial: all these traits taken together are typical of the modern conception of individuality. We need to ask ourselves if, and to what extent, the relationship between project, biographical time, and identity that delayed gratification presupposes can still be considered valid in a social climate, like the contemporary one, in which uncertainty tends to dominate and where experiences of contingency increase (Baumann, 1995; 2000; Beck, 1999; Leccardi, 2005a). When, in fact, uncertainty increases beyond a certain point and is associated not only with the future but also with day-to-day reality, putting in question the taken-for-granted dimension, then the basis of the life plan is removed. Furthermore, whenever change, as in our day, is extraordinarily accelerated, dynamism and performance capacity are seen as imperative, and immediacy is a parameter for evaluating the quality of an act, then investing in the long-term future can seem as senseless as postponing satisfaction. Instead of relinquishing the gratifications the present can offer, it appears more sensible to train oneself to “capture the moment”, keep doors open to the unexpected, and be mentally amenable to an indefiniteness that could be loaded with potential.

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In this compressed temporal horizon, desires and needs structure themselves around the present: the “good life” is no longer based on long-term commitments, and ideas of stability and control lose value (Rosa, 2003). A Constant opening to the possible takes the place, as a new virtue, of faithfulness to oneself. Even the notion of one’s own individuality changes. In this framework, we are far from the Tocqueville-esque “reflective and tranquil” feeling that allows each person to consider himself or herself separate from fellow citizens and yet feel tied to them in a shared belonging to democratic institutions (de Tocqueville, 1966[1835-1840]). Rather, the feeling of individuality spurs one to assume responsibility for “not missing the boat,” as expressed through a need to explore – appropriately and at the speed required by the new century’s pace – the map of one’s existential priorities, making adequate biographical decisions step by step. Fundamental in this framework appears to be the ability to construct cognitive strategies that can guarantee control over time of life despite increased contingency.

To adequately comprehend the depth of these transformations, I will concentrate attention on the new accents and semantic traits that characterize the dimension of the future, taking care to clarify the changes in meaning that have affected the concept of future in these past decades. I will then discuss contemporary transformations as a way of conceptualizing youth’s course of life and biographical projects. And, using the results of recent Italian research into the relationship between youth and time experience in which I was personally involved (summarized in Crespi, 2005),<sup>1</sup> I will analyze some of the new ways in which young people make plans. As it will be shown, these changes appear to be the result of the upheaval in conceiving of youth as a transition phase to adulthood and in the delayed-gratifications mechanism at its base and, in parallel, indicators of the “lifestyle individualization” underlying the contemporary processes of biographical construction (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2003).

## **Second Modernity, Global Risks, and Future Crisis**

In agreement with the analytical proposal of Beck (1999), we can define first modernity as the period starting with industrial modernity, which was dominated by the reality of the nation-state and in which the winning logic was that of progress interwoven with the idea of control (in the first place, over nature). In it, identity and social roles were closely intertwined. The second modernity, contemporary modernity, child of successful modernization, instead seems to be increasingly governed by processes like the intensification of globalization and global markets, a pluralism of values and authorities, and institutionalized individualism. On the cultural plane, it appears to favour forms of composite identity in which global and local traits mix, imposing a conflicting coexistence of several images of self (“cosmopolite identities”) (see Beck, 2006).

As we know from our direct experience and not just through theoretical thinking, this modernity is characterized by a dimension of *global risks* (Beck, 2000): environmental crises; international terrorism; economic (but also health) threats of the planetary kind; new modes of social inequality beginning with the increasing poverty of ever-vaster areas of the world; and interwoven with them, new forms of underemployment with devastating existential effects. In this scenario, the image of the future as controllable and governable time, in agreement with the first modernity’s vision, is shrinking. Whereas the latter can be considered an expression of the Enlightenment view of overcoming the notion of limits – starting with those tied to knowledge – contemporary modernity forces us to face the impossibility of realizing any control (Leccardi, 1999). If the future seen by the first modernity was the open future, the future viewed by contemporary modernity is the *indeterminate* and *indeterminable future* governed by the inter-weaving of new risks and unforeseen possibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The research, financed jointly by the Italian Ministry of Education and individual universities, involved various academic institutions: in the north, the University of Milan-Bicocca and the University of Pavia; in central Italy, the universities of Florence and of Perugia; and on the islands, the University of Cagliari (Sardinia). Whereas the universities of Milan-Bicocca, Pavia and Perugia took into consideration the relationship between young people, biographical time, and daily time, those of Cagliari and Florence restricted themselves to looking at how daily time was used and experienced. The principal instrument of the inquiry was in-depth interviews. The University of Perugia also made use of focus groups. The universities at Cagliari and Florence used diaries as well as the interviews (and avoided time budgets, considered unsuitable for the study of subjective representations connected to the use of daily time). The interviews, performed in 2002 in the cities listed above, involved 200 young people of both sexes between the ages of 18 and 29 (students, manual and non-manual labourers, young people who study and work, and unemployed youth and dropouts).

This latter aspect has strategic importance in understanding the extent of the changes that have occurred in interpreting and experiencing the future. In this scenario, risk appears to be more the result of a loss of relationship between intention and result, between instrumental rationality and control, rather than (in the common scientific meaning) of relationship between an event and the probability that it will occur. Whereas in the first modernity the term *risk* was basically used to conceptualize a way of calculating unforeseen consequences – in essence, of “making the unpredictable predictable” by calculating probabilities – in contemporary modernity, thinking about risks requires conceptual tools of another type. In fact, these risks do not appear governable through methods of instrumental rationality; they are risks of global reach, and preventing them is arduous in the extreme.

The peculiar uncertainty that these risks generate is linked primarily to their *humanly produced* character, brought about by the growth in knowledge that characterizes our age: climatic mutations (think of the ozone hole), risks tied to nuclear weapons and power plants, and diseases like bovine spongiform encephalopathy (“mad cow disease”) and severe, acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. Therefore, in an era of global risks like ours, the enormous process (begun by the first modernity) of “colonizing the future” is interrupted. The future tends to escape our governing, with profound repercussions in the political and social spheres. The new reality generated by the spread of global risks transforms the future from the “promised land” to a scenario that is uncertain, if not openly menacing to collective and individual existence.

It is important to emphasize the close tie that exists between the spread of these particular types of global risks and a vision of the future. By their very nature, in fact, these risks are actually constructed and nourished by their relationship with the future, although they tell us nothing about what we should pursue in future. These risks do not speak to us of “the good” but concentrate exclusively on “the evils” the future can bring. So the idea of the future is simultaneously undefined and fraught with a diffuse sense of alarm together with a feeling of impotence.

## **New Forms of Conceptualizing Time**

The scenarios of overwhelming risks we have mentioned – among other things, able to project themselves over long periods of time; the time gap between acts and their effects can, in the “global-risk society,” be very long (Adam, 1998) – have fallout in ways of conceptualizing time that are worth dwelling on. If by temporal perspective we mean that perspective through which past, present, and future, memory, experience, and expectations are constantly and reciprocally related and coordinated, then in an age of diffused risks, the ability to live temporally passes through a crisis. A future horizon occupied by the risk dimension impedes, for example, the construction both of biographical narratives in which the dimension of continuity (each event is linked to another, and one can sensibly imagine influencing them) plays a strategic role and of an image of the present as a dimension that prepares the future.

This pulverization of the experience of time brings with it a special attention to the present, “the only dimension of time that is frequented without unease and on which attention dwells without difficulty” (Tabboni, 1986: 123). Once again, young people are a barometer especially sensitive to these transformations. As early as the 1980s, research into young people’s time (Cavalli, 1985) revealed, for example, a shift from future to present, in particular the “extended present,” as the area for potentially governing social and individual time. The term *extended present* means the temporal area that borders on the present, a space that acquires new value with the growth of temporal acceleration, in turn favoured by the velocity of technological times and the need for flexibility that is their corollary. According to Nowotny (1994), who delved into this concept, once the impractical category of future has been abolished, it becomes necessary to reformulate the concept of present, making it a central reference for contemporary temporal horizons. In this perspective, it is no longer the future but the extended present – that time span short enough not to escape the social and human domain but long enough to allow for some sort of projection further in time – that becomes the new time of action. In substance, in late-20th century time frames, the present looks like the only temporal dimension available for defining choices, an authentic existential horizon that, in a certain sense, *includes* and *replaces* future and past.



In this framework, we can clearly see an erosion in the idea of a project itself, defined as a form of selection, subjectively constructed, between the many “virtual futures” available, able to distil, from the fantasies and desires underlying them, pursuable aims having a clear temporal span.

But can one still speak of “biography” in the absence of a project? The first modernity delineated a scenario in which the two terms not only presupposed one another but the collective and the individual projects were two sides of the same coin. The aims of the collective project – freedom, democracy, equality, prosperity – appeared to be basic conditions for realizing the individual project. In turn, biographical narratives were structured around this coinciding. The second modernity tends to erase, along with temporal continuity, the idea of project and biography that the zenith of modernity constructed.

Making strides in this context is a tendency to experiment – not taken, however, as the customary reference to trial-and-error method aimed at finding the paths most suitable for reaching a given goal. The process is inverted. “We tend to go on trying different applications of the skills, talents and other resources which we have or hope to have, and try to find out which result brings more satisfaction” (Bauman & Tester, 2001: 90). This leads to an orientation on the basis of which “the secret of success is not to be unduly conservative, to refrain from habitualization to any particular bed, [to] be mobile and perpetually at hand” (Bauman & Tester, 2001: 90).

### Changing Meanings of Youth

How these processes reflect on action models, lifestyles, and ways of defining identity can be easily intuited. In accord with the theme dealt with here, I would call attention in particular to the role that these changes play in reconsidering the youthful stage of life itself. By definition, in fact, this stage has a dual connection with time: on the one hand, it is considered a temporary condition, destined to disappear as time passes; on the other, as we have emphasized, young people are socially required to construct positive forms of relationships between their own time of life and social time. Until a few decades ago, for young men this took on substance in linear and easily recognizable biographical stages: first, preparation for work through education; then remunerated work, a central source of identity and undisputed sign of adulthood; and finally, retirement.

Today this biographical trajectory able to guarantee a predictable path toward entry into adult life, is no longer the rule but the exception. For young people, the process of deinstitutionalizing the course of life, bringing with it the end of the concept of the “normal biography” leads to the disappearance of an aspect that was up to now determinant in concepts of the condition of youth: youth’s identification with a set of steps, socially standardized, that progressively led to the adult world (Chisholm, Büchner, Krüger & du Bois-Reymond, 1995; Chisholm, 1999; Coté, 2000; du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006; Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997). These steps, habitually summarized under the term *transition*, identified the youth stage with a “crossing” guided by steps in status and guaranteed by the interweave between time of life and social time on the basis of an easily recognizable linear sequence. One became adult in the full sense once one had covered that route, which foresaw, in rapid succession, steps such as ending one’s studies, joining the work world, leaving the parental home for independent living, creating one’s own family nucleus, and having children (Buzzi, Cavalli, & de Lillo, 2002). Today, although these events are destined to happen sooner or later, their order and irreversibility seem to have been lost, along with the social framework that guaranteed their overall meaning.

Even more than from the sequentiality, linearity, and rapid succession of the single steps, this framework of meaning resulted from the *symbolic value* that these had as a whole in the life of a young individual. Through them, in fact, while confirming the “set-time” nature of the youthful stage of life, the two poles of autonomy (inner) and independence (social) could enter into a positive conjunction. In a word, youth conceived of as a transitional phase made it possible to think of the relationship between individual identity and social identity as of one between two dimensions not only complementary but also almost perfectly superimposed. Inner autonomy was achieved by the progressive passage to ever

greater degrees of independence, made possible by the relationship with social institutions sufficiently credible and nonfragmented.

This scenario has now changed. Social institutions continue to pace the timing of the quotidian, but there has been a considerable weakening of their ability to guarantee a dimension fundamental to constructing individuality: the sense of biographical continuity. As a socially standardized trajectory toward adulthood slowly disappears, biographical continuity becomes the result of an individual ability to construct and reconstruct ever-new frameworks of meaning for one's own decisions despite the present-based time frame.

As a consequence, the obligation to individualize biographies – searching for biographical solutions better suited to resolving the moment's systemic contradictions – characterizes the phase of history in which we live (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2003). This implies a new emphasis on self-determination, autonomy, and choice (without, obviously erasing the ruts made by differences in class, ethnic group, and on a perhaps less apparent but no less powerful plane, gender). For young people, all of this translates into conquering new areas of freedom and experimentation but also into a loss of the taken-for-granted character of a positive relationship with social time frames.

Although it is true that the lengthening of the youth stage is certainly the most obvious aspect nowadays, the decisive transformation consists nevertheless of the loss of an ability to anchor the experiences that young people go through to the world of social and political institutions. The crisis of the future, and of the project, that we have looked at is a direct expression of this difficulty.

### **Redefining the Future: Youthful Biographical Constructions in a Time of Uncertainty**

For young people, at the core of this crisis is the disconnection between life trajectories, social roles, and ties to the universe of institutions able to give a stable shape to identity. Thus, for example, one can enter the job market, leave shortly afterward, and then re-enter it without being able to identify in these exits and entrances a progression toward the assumption of adult roles. Or university studies can be concluded without having the acquisition of degree credentials represent a true milestone on the biographical plane, an empowerment able to open the way to new existential situations: not only to a career but also, for example, in Mediterranean Europe, to opting to live alone or with a partner or to creating one's own family. In a word, existential autonomy is increasingly disassociated from the acquisition of social and financial independence.

However, it is essential not to limit thinking solely to the aspects of loss: of fewer chances to act that are associated with the second modernity's processes of redefining time. In fact, there is also another side to these self-same processes, a visible one that deserves equal attention. On it are drawn the strategies that people construct to deal with these transformations and, where possible, control them. As also shown by the aforementioned recent research into the changes in how young people relate to time (Crespi, 2005), the outcome of these important processes of restructuring the relationship between young people, biographical time, and social time does not boil down to making the immediate present absolute, to glorifying the here and now. Identities are not based solely on the present. Although this option does transpire from a number of interviews, it does not exclude other responses. Some young people seem, for example, to be involved in a search for new modes of relating the process of personal production and creation (in any case associated with the future) to the specific conditions of uncertainty in which the future is now experienced (Leccardi, 2005b).

The future is, therefore, viewed in relation to potential openings – more than ever today, the future is an area of possible becoming – and at the same time to an indeterminateness increasingly felt as insecurity. In other words, within the virtuality that, by definition, characterizes the future is delineated a peculiar interweaving between the “anarchization” of the future, to use Grosz's expression (1999), and hesitation, anxiety and the desire, more or less unconscious, to substitute dream for project. Faced with the future's increasingly ambivalent traits, fundamental is a person's ability to work out cognitive strategies able to guarantee control over time of life despite the increase in contingency.

In recent research conducted on French and Spanish young people from which a similar biographical orientation emerged, this was effectively defined as an *indetermination strategy* (Lasen, 2001). This term is meant to underscore the growing capacity of young people with greater reflexive resources to read the uncertainty of the future as a multiplication of virtual possibilities and the unpredictability associated with it as added potential instead of a limit to action. In other words, faced with a future less and less traceable to the present through an ideal line uniting them and reciprocally heightening their meaning, a number of young people – perhaps not the majority, but certainly culturally mobile – work out responses able to neutralize a paralyzing fear of the future.

Likewise, some of the young people we interviewed (young men and young women to the same extent) clearly expressed a tendency to be open in a positive way to the unexpected, reckoning in advance with the possibility of sudden changes in course, of having to construct responses “in real time” as occasions present themselves. The speed training that social rhythms impose is, in this case, exploited for the best: being quick becomes a must, enables one, in a positive way, to reap opportunities, to begin experimentation that can have a positive effect on time of life as a whole.

For these young people, the uncertainty of the future, therefore, means a willingness to encounter the accidental, the fortuitous: an opportunity that many of our interviewees seem to like. Here control over biographical time is not identified with the ability to go ahead with specific projects, neutralizing any unexpected things encountered along the way. Rather, control is equivalent to the will to reach the general goals one has set: most young people, while lacking life projects proper, have one or more broad goals located in the future in regard to work or private life – in other words, “taking care of oneself” Foucault-like (1987). The innovative aspect of this new biographical construction – at whose centre is a tending toward a “future without project” but not without control – is the ability to accept the fragmentation and uncertainty of what surrounds us as an irreversible reality to be transformed into resources by constantly exercising awareness and reflexivity.

It should immediately be stressed that the young people expressing this temporal strategy seem to be especially rich in cultural, social, and economic resources. If today’s elite is distinguishable for its ability to make good use, for power purposes, of speed and mobility, these young people appear to be part of its wake. On the other hand, those with meagre social and cultural resources seem above all to suffer from the loss of the first modernity’s progressive future and traditional project creating. For these young people, the future, outside of control, can only be annulled or cancelled out to make room for an unappealing present. In their case (as well-described by Castel, 2002, reflecting on contemporary individualism), we are faced with a form of individualism by default: here individuals do not possess the supports needed to construct their own autonomy and are flattened into an identity lacking temporal consistency. Social speed-up thus patently becomes a source of social exclusion translating into suffered stasis.

In response to highly insecure and risky social conditions, most young people – men and women – take refuge mainly in short- and very-short-term projects, taking the extended present as the temporal area of reference. They react to the short time frames of acceleration society with a *sui generis* type of project creation that is expressed in minimal time spans and, also because of this, appears malleable. In some cases, it appears to be essentially configured as a reaction to the unease that the idea of the future itself evokes; in others, it assumes the characteristic of projects imprinted with concreteness – mostly tied to successfully finishing activities already commenced – able to respond both to the need to master biographical time in a fast-paced and uncertain environment and to social pressure for short-term results. In this latter case, “short project” typology looks like a sort of middle road between the special ability to manage complexity proper to the first kind of biographical orientation considered (able to relate to the future without formulating projects) and the exclusive reference to the present of those unable to construct reactions adequate to the growing uncertainty of the future.

In fact, concentrating on a temporally limited area makes it possible to construct an experience of time as a unified and continuous field that is subjectively controllable; in turn, dominion over times of life is striven for not by working out goals distant in time (an unrealistic aim in an age of uncertainty) but by

engaging in them here and now. This middle-road strategy looks especially attractive because whereas it does not entirely impede a projection into the future through the project, it is in tune with the flexible orientation made necessary by an era in which the processes of change are rapid and often unpredictable.

## **Conclusion**

At a time when the medium- to long-term future cannot be discussed without creating unease or actual dread, a method of action based on a case-by-case assessment – on “when doors open for me, I try not to shut them” or on reaping opportunity as soon as it appears – can be a rational strategy for transforming unpredictability into opportunity, the opacity of the future into a chance for the present. For being disposed to becoming.

Although in this scenario the delayed gratification mechanism confirms its inadequacy as a reference standard for social action, a growing number of young people nonetheless appear able to replace it with models of action built around new forms of temporal discipline, of planning and control attentive to everyday time, for example, for brief and fixed-term but intense periods.

In a historic period of future crisis – and of upheaval in conceiving of youth as a transition to adulthood – there is appearing a new way to regard time. At its heart is the need to be at ease about the speed of events, to control change by equipping oneself for prompt action instead of “letting things happen”, to overcome a diffuse feeling of insecurity. Even if the time being lived in is terribly uncertain, what appears to be important is above all staying on course, not losing one’s inner direction. Control over time is no longer exercised by means of life plans as traditionally understood (goals related to time of life; the ability to pace, on this basis, short, medium, and long times; and the ability to accept current frustration with the view of achieving future goals). Rather, it seems to result from the ability to keep open the horizon of the possible, creating the conditions for revising the priority of action in the light of arriving changes.

In this scenario, it is not only the meaning of time and of the future, in particular, that is transformed. There is also consolidation of a different conception of action and strategy, a construction that requires individuals to think of themselves as autonomous centres; to take permanent responsibility for themselves; and to feel ever ready for battle, ready to transform, in real time, potential constraints into as many resources. A new figure – that of the permanently active individual, able to work out a personal biography in an activist way, always ready to explore the new frontiers that accelerated society opens – is particularly in tune with this redefinition of the future.



# **EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICY**



# YOUTH POLICY IN EUROPE \*

Finn Yrjar Denstad

## ... and is there a “European” or “international” standard of youth policy?

“What is the European standard of youth policy and what do we need to do to reach this level?” This question is often asked by youth policy activists and government officials who want their country to get on the path to membership of the European Union, or who otherwise have an ambition to increase the quality of their national youth policy and would like to see a blueprint for the necessary requirements for living up to a “European” or “international” standard of youth policy.

So, is there a blueprint or a formula, with clear goals and objectives, for what a European or international youth policy is, or should be? Inevitably, there is no short or simple answer to this question. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a national youth policy depends on the context and reality of each and every country. Priorities and challenges will obviously differ in the countries of Albania, Austria and Armenia – three countries which are all member states of the Council of Europe. Having said this, however, the European intergovernmental institutions (the Council of Europe and the European Union) have become strong advocates of the development of national youth policies in Europe – in particular over the last decade – and a number of decisions have been taken and resolutions and documents adopted, which suggest that it does make sense to talk about a European standard of youth policy. And while these documents, decisions and practices do not lead to a blueprint for a national youth policy, they do suggest certain criteria, indicators and lists of areas to be covered within such a policy.

At the international level, a number of documents relating to youth policy have been developed and/or adopted by organisations within the United Nations system as well, suggesting that there is also an international standard of what should be considered a national youth policy.

Let us take a closer look at the European and international organisations in question, and see how they address youth policy issues through their decisions and practices. By doing so, we can learn a lot about what can be considered “European” and “international” standards of youth policy, and how they can be guiding principles for national youth policy in Europe and beyond.

## 1. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 as an intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy, rule of law and human rights, based in Strasbourg, France. At that time, however, it became entangled in the realities of the Cold War, and up until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Council of Europe only consisted of what were then considered western European countries. This all changed with the fall of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. During the decade following 1989, the organisation became the first pan-European intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy and human rights. At the time of writing (spring 2009) the Council of Europe has 47 member states.

The organisation was first among the international institutions to develop an agenda focusing on the interests of young people and youth participation. Partly as a response to the social unrest of 1968 across Europe, which engaged young people in particular, and the recognition that addressing young people’s interests and concerns had to be done through cross-border co-operation, the Council of

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Europe established a European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, the European Youth Foundation was also set up, as a means of fostering the voluntary sector in Europe by providing financial support for multinational activities, run by non-governmental national and international youth organisations.

While 1968 can be seen as having triggered the development of a focus on youth participation, two other years hold particular significance for specific areas of the youth and human rights agenda of the Council of Europe. The year 1989, which symbolises the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, led to an increased focus on intercultural learning, as a common challenge for a united Europe inside the organisation.<sup>2</sup> The terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, on the other hand, led to an increased fear of radical Islam and suspicion towards people of Arabic descent throughout Europe. The Council of Europe responded to this by increasing its focus on mobility, intergenerational and intercultural co-operation and by focusing on faith within the context of human rights.

The 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, which took place in Kiev in October 2008, adopted a long-term strategy of the Council of Europe in promoting youth policy in Europe. The document, entitled *The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020*, outlines three areas that the organisation will prioritise in the next decade: human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and social inclusion of young people.

### **1.1 The decision-making structure of the Council of Europe youth sector**

Recognising the importance of involving young people in making decisions on issues that concern them, the Council of Europe has applied a rather unique decision-making structure, labelled “co-management”.

On the one side, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) brings together representatives of all signatory countries to the European Cultural Convention (currently 49 states)<sup>3</sup>, and is the intergovernmental body consisting of senior governmental representatives. It encourages closer co-operation between governments on youth issues and provides a forum for them to compare national youth policies and learn from each other's experiences. The CDEJ also organises the European Youth Ministers' Conferences. On the opposing side is the Advisory Council on Youth, made up of 30 representatives from non-governmental youth organisations in Europe. The Advisory Council gives its input and opinions on a range of different issues and ensures that young people are involved in all matters relating to the Council of Europe youth sector.

When these two bodies meet together they make up the Joint Council. The Joint Council decides on the work programme and budget of the Council of Europe Youth Sector and the European Youth Foundation. The Joint Council is especially significant because it involves sharing decision-making powers equally between representatives of governments and non-governmental youth organisations. This is what is called co-management.

The Programming Committee on Youth is a subsidiary body of the Joint Council, consisting of eight members each from the CDEJ and the Advisory Council. It establishes, monitors and evaluates the programmes of the European Youth Centres and of the European Youth Foundation.

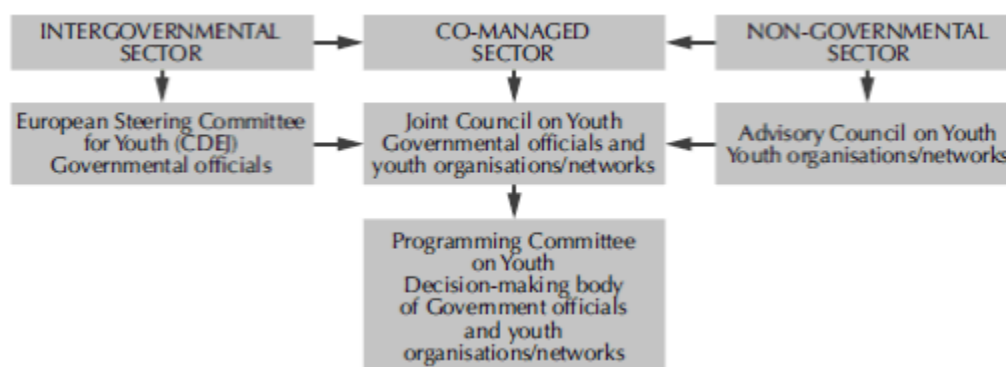
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<sup>1</sup> A second European Youth Centre was established in Budapest in 1995.

<sup>2</sup> The opening of the second European Youth Centre (in Budapest in 1995) signaled a new pan-European focus and membership of the Council of Europe. During that same year, the Organisation carried out the first European “All Different – All Equal” campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

<sup>3</sup> As of April 2009, Belarus has not been admitted into the Council of Europe because of issues related to democracy and human rights. It is still represented within the CDEJ, however, since the country has ratified the European Cultural Convention. Also the Holy See has signed the Convention. Thus, the countries represented within the CDEJ are 49, while there are 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

□



Source: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe\\_youth/co\\_management\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp)

This co-management model carries wider significance because of its strong recognition of the right of young people to take equal part in decision making on issues that affect them. The fact that an international intergovernmental organisation can go so far in formally involving young people in deciding on activities and budgetary issues has made many young activists (and some government officials, too!) question why the same model cannot be applied at a national level. This co-management system, therefore, as well as its potential applicability at the National or local levels, continues to be a model for discussion in Europe.

## 1.2 Youth Ministers' Conferences

For a number of years, the work of the Council of Europe in the youth field focused primarily on giving recognition to the non-governmental youth sector, youth participation and the promotion of civil society through training and education of youth leaders in non-governmental youth organisations throughout Europe. With time, the Council of Europe has also come to focus on strategic policy development with regard to young people. The first Youth Ministers' Conference was held in 1985, and consecutive Youth Ministers' Conferences have been held every two to four years since.<sup>4</sup> These conferences and their final declarations have played a role in identifying youth issues as a policy dimension with transnational and cross-border significance, and have been instructive in developing common principles of youth policy.

### Excerpts from the Final Declarations of some Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conferences

#### From the 5th Youth Ministers' Conference in Bucharest, 1998:

"We call on the Governments of the Council of Europe ... to encourage equality of opportunity by recognising training and skills acquired through informal education as an intrinsic element in vocational training and finding various ways of endorsing experience and qualifications acquired in this way..."

#### From the 6th Youth Ministers' Conference in Thessaloniki, 2002:

"Youth policy should ... be anchored in human values of pluralist democracy and human rights, ... have a cross-sectoral dimension, ... integrate the educational dimension, taking into account young people's commitment through volunteer work, ... facilitate active participation of young people in decisions which concern them, ... facilitate the access of young people to the labour market, ... facilitate the access of young people, notably from disadvantaged groups, to information which concerns them, ... promote youth mobility, ... and promote non-

<sup>4</sup> Youth Ministers' Conferences held under the auspices of the Council of Europe have been held in Strasbourg (1985), Oslo (1988), Lisbon (1990), Vienna (1993), Bucharest (1998), Thessaloniki (2002), Budapest (2005) and Kiev (2008). In addition, an informal meeting of Youth Ministers was held in Luxembourg in 1995.

formal education/learning of young people as well as the development of appropriate forms of recognition of experiences and skills acquired notably within the framework of associations and other forms of voluntary involvement, at local, national and European levels.”

**From the 7th Youth Ministers’ Conference in Budapest 2005:**

“We recognise ... the need to develop violence prevention strategies based on the specific approaches of youth policy and youth work, in particular [those of] non-formal education/learning; and in this context, the importance of actively promoting education, for citizenship and participation ... We furthermore recognise the need to implement policies in the area of violence prevention with the active participation of non-governmental youth organisations and networks, whilst encouraging them to develop partnerships with other civil society actors ...”

**From the 8th Youth Ministers’ Conference in Kiev, 2008:**

“We, the Ministers responsible for Youth from the 49 states party to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe ... are committed to actively promote ... the development of youth policies which are likely to result in the successful integration of all young people into society.

In this regard, we are determined to pursue the objective of ensuring young people’s access to quality education and training, to decent work and living conditions, as well as developing the conditions to enable them to contribute to the development of society.”

### **1.3 European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress), which is one of the pillars of the Council of Europe, stepped into the youth policy arena in 1992 when it adopted the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (usually referred to as the European Youth Charter). This document was again adopted by the Congress in a revised version in 2003, but this time it was accompanied by a recommendation from the Committee of Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the Council of Europe. The charter stresses that young people and non-governmental youth organisations have the right to be consulted and take active part in decision making on issues that affect young people at the municipal and regional level. Giving the European Youth Charter the status of a recommendation signals that the Council of Europe considers youth participation in policy development and decision making as a European standard that all member states should adhere to.

#### **Implementing the European Youth Charter in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Around the time when the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life was adopted in 2003 (Council of Europe, 2003a), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina entered into a partnership with the Council of Europe Field Office in Sarajevo to promote the European Youth Charter. Together, they co-financed the translation of the charter into local language and printed more than 10,000 handbooks that were distributed to non-governmental youth organisations and government officials at all levels. They were also distributed to school classes across the country. Around 30 OSCE field offices across Bosnia-Herzegovina organised awareness sessions on the charter with youth NGO representatives, and trained them on how to use the charter as a lobbying tool when addressing local politicians and government officials.

Promoting the European Youth Charter across Bosnia-Herzegovina raised awareness around issues relating to youth participation and young people’s rights to be consulted on issues that have an impact on them. It also reminded government officials of their country’s responsibilities in becoming a member state of the Council of Europe in 2002. Very concretely, the charter helped youth NGOs at the local level in approaching local government officials, made municipalities allocate small budgets for youth NGO activities, was instrumental in convincing local government to establish youth clubs, and so on.

The European Youth Charter can be a powerful tool in promoting youth participation in policy development in the youth field. It can illustrate to local government officials and politicians that youth participation is indeed a European standard. And since almost all countries in Europe are members of the Organisation that has adopted the charter, they should feel bound to comply with its principles. The Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe has developed a manual on the Youth Charter called *Have Your Say!* which explains in more detail what youth participation is and gives good ideas and examples of how the charter can be used to promote youth participation.<sup>5</sup>

The European Youth Charter, as well as resolutions and follow-up documents related to the charter, can be downloaded from the Internet at the Council of Europe's website and the European Commission Youth Partnership (see address at the end of this paper).

#### **1.4 National youth policy reviews**

In 1997, the Council of Europe developed a mechanism or system for reviewing and evaluating the national youth policies of its member states. The system was established upon a recommendation from the member states themselves, and is initiated following an official request from a particular member state. The international review team of each country being assessed usually consists of recognised youth researchers, an official from the Council of Europe as well as representative(s) of the statutory organs of the Council of Europe youth sector (Williamson, 2002: 5). At the start of 2009, 16 member states of the Council of Europe have been subject to an international youth policy review.<sup>6</sup>

This mechanism has become an important tool for assessing youth policy in Europe, and for giving constructive recommendations on the future direction of youth policy in the specific countries in question. It has also given us a wealth of valuable information about the situation of young people in Europe. A natural question is therefore "what can these national youth policy reviews tell us about what should be considered a 'European standard' of youth policy?" Howard Williamson, in his synthesis report of the first seven Council of Europe international policy reviews, *Supporting young people in Europe* (Williamson, 2002), summarised a number of domains and issues that, in his view, need to be addressed within a youth policy framework:

Key policy domains:

- education (schooling and non-formal learning/youth work);
- post-compulsory education and training;
- employment and the labour market;
- health;
- housing;
- social protection and income support;
- welfare and family;
- criminal justice;
- leisure (including sports and arts);
- national defence and military service;
- values and religion (the church)\*.

Key policy issues:

- opportunities for participation and citizenship;
- safety and protection;
- combating social exclusion and promoting inclusion;
- the provision and use of information (including new information technologies);
- mobility and internationalism;
- multiculturalism;

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<sup>5</sup> The publication *Have Your Say!* can be ordered from the Council of Europe at <http://book.coe.int>.

<sup>6</sup> In alphabetical order: Armenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

- equalities;
- radicalisation/reaction of segments of the youth population versus conformity\*;
- local versus global pressures\*;
- centre – periphery\*;
- urban – rural polarisation\*;
- elites and outsiders\*;
- environmental issues\*;
- the role of the diaspora\*.

\*These were added as supplementary bullet points in the second synthesis report of the international youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe. (See Williamson, 2008b: 25-37).

In his second synthesis report, analysing the international youth policy reviews carried out until spring 2008, Howard Williamson reflects upon whether or not it is meaningful to speak of a “European” or “international” standard of youth policy and how appropriate it is to assess the youth policies of emergent European and other developing countries towards such standards (Williamson, 2008b: 53). He argues that there is not a given set of measures that should be considered to make up a European youth policy, and that there can be no universal benchmarks for thinking about youth policy achievements. He does refer to one model or framework for further deliberation and judgment, however, namely a Council of Europe report on youth policy (2003b) indicators developed by a group of youth policy researchers in 2003. This work has also been highlighted by other experts in the youth policy field since it was published, and merits a closer look.

### **1.5 Suggesting a “European standard” of youth policy within the Council of Europe**

From around year 2000, a whole new dynamic had been created in Europe around the theme of youth policy. The United Nations held its first ever Conference of Ministers for Youth in Lisbon in 1998. A specific reference to youth had been made in the Declaration of the European Council in Laeken in 2001<sup>7</sup>, and the European Commission launched its White Paper on Youth in November that same year. The 5th and the 6th Conferences of European Ministers responsible for Youth were held in Romania in 1998 and in Greece in 2002, respectively, and the Council of Europe and the European Commission launched in the same period a new partnership in the youth field. Furthermore, the Council of Europe had developed a mechanism of international reviews of national youth policy, which was becoming well established. In South-Eastern Europe, the Stability Pact Working Group on Youth, consisting of European and international organisations and national governments, was established in 2000. The strongest point on its agenda was to promote the development of national youth strategies in the region. This contributed to the first national youth action plan of a country in the region – Romania, in 2001.

Within this context, a discussion of what should be considered a “European standard” of youth policy had become ever more relevant. The Council of Europe therefore decided to invite a group of experts with a research profile to come together and make some policy recommendations to be addressed to the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. This resulted in a report which has since been cited by many as providing the best model so far for what should be considered a more universal standard of youth policy, at least for Europe (Council of Europe, 2003b).

According to this expert group, a youth policy should have the following objectives:

- a. *to invest purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, wherever possible, through an opportunity-focused rather than a problem-oriented approach;*
- b. *to involve young people both in the strategic formulation of youth policies and in eliciting their views about the operational effectiveness of policy implementation;*

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<sup>7</sup> The “European Council” is the highest political body of the European Union. It comprises the heads of state or government of the Union’s member states, along with the President of the European Commission. It should not be confused with the Council of Europe. The “Laeken Declaration” carries particular significance because it outlined the future of the European Union and necessary reform of its institutions.

- c. *to create the conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part both in the labour market and in civil society;*
- d. *to establish systems for robust data collections, both to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth policies and to reveal the extent to which “policy gaps”<sup>8</sup> exist in relation to effective service delivery to young people from certain social groups, in certain areas or in certain conditions;*
- e. *to display a commitment to reducing such policy gaps where they demonstrably exist.*

The group emphasised that youth policy development should be seen as a process of creating “packages” of opportunity and experience, again stressing that youth policy should primarily be focused on creating possibilities and opportunities for young people to achieve their full potential, and seeing young people as a resource. The following different areas were identified as important components of such a youth policy:

1. *Learning (lifelong, formal and non-formal) education and training, recognition of informally acquired skills and competencies;*
2. *Access to new technologies;*
3. *Specialist personal advice and support, career guidance;*
4. *Information;*
5. *Access to health services and social protection;*
6. *Access to housing;*
7. *Access to paid work;*
8. *Mobility;*
9. *Justice and youth rights (to assistance, for example);*
10. *Opportunities for participation and active citizenship;*
11. *Recreation: cultural and social;*
12. *Sports and outdoor activities;*
13. *Away from home, youth exchange and international opportunities;*
14. *Safe and secure environment.*

The Council of Europe youth policy experts’ group furthermore identified three cross-cutting themes:

- *information;*
- *participation and active citizenship;*
- *power (both in relation to age limits governing rights and responsibilities of young people, and in relation to budgets available for certain youth policy issues).*

Together with the bullet points provided by Howard Williamson in his two reports on the international youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe, these points make up a valuable list of issues that should be covered by a national youth policy in Europe.

The Council of Europe has a long history of promoting youth policy, compared with the European Union and UN organisations. However, it is not alone in advancing what should be considered a European standard of youth policy. Let us look at what is being done within the context of the European Union to promote youth policy, and how its work contributes to the perception of a European standard of youth policy.

## 2. The European Union

The day-to-day involvement of the European Union on issues relating to youth policy is handled by the European Commission, more specifically the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG

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<sup>8</sup> The overall assumption is that a youth policy will fulfil the needs of young people and that all young people will be fully equipped to meet the challenges of adulthood. This is a utopian assumption, and there will be weaknesses in any policy designed to meet those needs. It is “shortfalls like these” in the effectiveness of policies which are referred to as “policy gaps”.

EAC). One unit within DG EAC is responsible for the Youth in Action Programme, while another takes care of youth policy issues. In addition to the responsibilities of the Commission, the youth policy of the European Union is shaped by decisions and resolutions made by the European Council and the Council of Youth Ministers as well as the European Parliament.

Up until the decision was taken to develop a White Paper<sup>9</sup> on Youth (adopted in 2001), the involvement of the European Union on issues relating to youth policy was primarily limited to the administration of the European Commission's youth mobility programmes, the first of which was established in 1988. The EU youth mobility programmes have increased young people's possibilities for working abroad as volunteers, carrying out group exchanges to other countries and getting funding for youth activities that involve participants from the different EU member states, other programme countries and so-called partner countries.

Today, the European Union is widely involved in advancing youth policy in the member states. There are different components to this involvement.

- *Promoting young people's citizenship and active participation in all areas of society (through the policy priorities of the Commission, the Youth in Action Programme and the European Youth Portal; see the links below);*
- *Promoting education, youth employment and social inclusion, in particular stressing the transition phase from education to employment which is often precarious for young people (through the implementation of the European Youth Pact)<sup>10</sup>;*
- *Advocating for the inclusion of a youth dimension in other sectoral policies.*

In November 2008, the European Council adopted the first ever recommendation in the youth field<sup>11</sup> on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union. The recommendation seeks to boost co-operation between organisers of voluntary activities in the member states of the European Union. This has increased the attention to youth policy on the EU agenda.

## **2.1 The dynamic between the EU institutions and the member states**

Understanding the roles of the different institutions of the European Union, the dynamic among them and between them and the member states, is indeed something that can take some time to learn. The situation in the youth field can also be complicated. With regard to how youth policy is promoted and developed in the European Union, it is essential to understand the mechanism called the "Open Method of Co-ordination" (OMC, see below). Through this mechanism, the European Commission and the Council of Youth Ministers are the dominant players – together with the member states, of course, which all meet within the Council.

The Commission maintains a close dialogue with the member states and is responsible for co-ordinating and processing the feedback it receives from them. It also makes proposals (called communications) and reports to the Council of Youth Ministers. The Council, which consists of all youth ministers in the member states, plus the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, adopts resolutions (called council resolutions) calling upon both the EU member states and the Commission to initiate action and report back to the Commission and the Council, respectively. The European Parliament does not play a strong formal role in the OMC process, but can comment on the reports of the Commission and produce its own reports whenever it deems it relevant. It also adopts resolutions in the youth field.

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<sup>9</sup> Commission White Papers are documents containing proposals for action to be taken by the European Union in a specific area. Each presents a detailed and well-argued policy for discussion and for decision and can lead to an action programme for the Union in the area concerned.

<sup>10</sup> The European Youth Pact was integrated into the Lisbon Treaty when the treaty was revised in 2005, and focuses in particular on the social dimension of youth policy (education and training, youth employment and family life).

<sup>11</sup> A Council Recommendation carries even more weight than a Council Resolution, sending a strong signal to member states about a preferred action to be taken or policy to be adopted.

## 2.2 The European Commission White Paper on Youth

The White Paper on Youth, entitled “A new impetus for European youth” was launched in November 2001 by the European Commission. It was preceded by a consultation process which was by far the most comprehensive in regard to any white paper that had been launched by the European Commission. This illustrated the strong commitment of policy makers, at the European level, to consult young people and involve them in decision-making processes on issues that have an impact on them. This commitment sent powerful signals to the central European countries in particular, which were then candidates to join the European community.

Through the White Paper, the European Commission recognised that the area of youth policy is very diverse and primarily a responsibility of the respective member states. However, the policy document identified four different areas where the EU member states were invited to co-ordinate their policies in the youth field. These areas were participation, information, volunteering/voluntary activities and greater understanding of youth. The Open Method of Co-ordination was introduced in order to achieve closer co-operation between the different member states’ youth policy in these areas.

## 2.3 The future youth policy of the European Union

The youth policy co-operation framework outlined in the White Paper on Youth was set to expire in 2009. It was therefore natural to assess and evaluate the existing framework and suggest improvements in a revised youth policy framework that should be effective as of 2010. The new framework, called “An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering”, was adopted by the College of Commissioners in April 2009. The time span of this Commission Communication is nine years, from 2010 to 2018.

As with the process leading to the White Paper, a comprehensive consultation with young people and other stakeholders was carried out before the drafting of the Communication. In addition to involving non-governmental youth organisations, youth researchers, government officials and other experts in the youth field, the Commission organised an online consultation with young people. This consultation brought in more than 5,000 responses from young people across Europe, who in this way identified what the major challenges for young people in Europe are today and what their own countries and the European Union can do to address them. Through this comprehensive consultation, the Commission again stressed how important it is to involve young people in policy development at all levels.

What is new with this nine-year strategy is a set of new priorities and its strong focus on the cross-sectoral and transversal nature of youth policy. The Communication proposes three long-term goals for an improved youth policy in the European Union. Furthermore, it suggests two or three “fields of action” which link up with each goal and are to be reviewed every three years. The new priorities are as follows:

- *Creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment. Fields of action: education, employment plus creativity and entrepreneurship.*
- *Improving access and full participation of all young people in society. Fields of action: health and sport plus participation.*
- *Fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people. Fields of action: social inclusion, volunteering plus youth and the world.*

Under the new framework, the Commission has at its disposal primarily the same tools as before: the Open Method of Co-ordination, the European Youth Pact, the Youth in Action Programme and the “structured dialogue”.



## 2.4 The Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC)

The Open Method of Co-ordination is used in several policy areas where the European Commission has limited competencies, meaning that member states set their own national policies rather than having an EU-wide policy laid down in law. However, under the OMC, governments learn from each other and share best practices, enabling them to focus on improvements in their own domestic policies.<sup>12</sup> In general terms the OMC in the youth field works like this:

1. *The European Commission identifies its long-term priorities in the youth policy field through a policy document (the White Paper on Youth in 2001 and the Communication on a new youth policy framework in 2009);*
2. *Through a dialogue with the member states, the European Commission proposes common objectives for each priority;*
3. *The Council of Youth Ministers then adopts common objectives for the priorities;*
4. *Member states are then responsible for implementing the common objectives. They report regularly back to the Commission on what they have done to implement them;*
5. *On the basis of these reports, the Commission prepares progress analyses which are then presented to the Council of Youth Ministers;*
6. *The Commission also makes proposals to the Council of Youth Ministers on how to advance the priorities further;*
7. *The Council of Youth Ministers then decides on the proposed new follow-up. In this way, the process continues by going back to stage 4), in what is being called the “rolling agenda”.*

It is important to mention that even though there has been no formal minimum requirement for what each member state has to achieve within the different priority areas, the member states' obligation to report back to the Commission on their achievements certainly implies a degree of responsibility and commitment. Resolutions adopted by the Council of Youth Ministers also have to be followed up by every member state. Member states agreed in 2008 to define concrete national measures and set up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the common objectives, committing themselves further to streamlining their youth policies in different policy areas.

Through the OMC, every member state is required to consult young people before they submit their national reports to the Commission. This re-emphasises the strong focus on youth participation which the member states have committed themselves to.

## 2.5 The European Youth Pact

In terms of identifying elements of what can be considered a “European standard” of youth policy, it is also relevant to look into another of the tools of the European Commission in the youth policy field: the European Youth Pact. The European Youth Pact was developed as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy for promoting growth and jobs<sup>13</sup> when the strategy was revised in 2005. This brought the area of youth policy to a level previously unseen in the European Union. Within the European Youth Pact, a range of policy measures were introduced to address the following three strands:

- *employment, integration and social advancement;*
- *education, training and mobility;*
- *reconciliation of family life and working life.*

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<sup>12</sup> Developing common practices through co-ordination, co-operation and examples of best practice, which is what the OMC methodology in principle consists of, is considered by many to be the future of policy making inside the European Union. This is because the increasing number of member states makes it more and more difficult to reach unanimous decisions on EU legislation.

<sup>13</sup> The Lisbon Strategy, also known as the Lisbon Agenda or Lisbon Process, is an action and development plan for the European Union. Its aim is to make the EU “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010”. It was set out by the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000 (<http://www.wikipedia.com>).

Among the specific policy priorities mentioned in the strategy which should be given particular attention are the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the need to increase focus on these areas.

Once again, the European Youth Pact re-emphasises the need to consult young people and their organisations on the implementation and follow-up of the Pact at the national level, and that national youth councils shall be among the actors consulted. It also draws attention to the fact that a number of different policy areas should have an integrated youth dimension.

The member states of the European Union report back to the Commission every year on their progress in implementing the Lisbon Strategy.

## **2.6 The Youth in Action Programme**

Youth in Action is the name of the European Commission's mobility programme for young people, which runs from 2007 to 2013. The programme aims at inspiring a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans. The main target group is young people aged 15-28, with some possibilities for participation offered for the expanded age group 13-30. The programme supports five different categories of youth activities, called "actions" (Action 1, Action 2, etc.), and is implemented through national agencies in all programme countries.<sup>14</sup>

The current programme is a successor to previous mobility programmes of the Commission, going back to 1988.<sup>15</sup> In other words, promoting opportunities for mobility, exchange and co-operation among young people has been a priority for the European Commission for more than twenty years.

The Youth in Action Programme is an integrated element of the Commission's youth policy through the mere fact that it provides tens of thousands of young people every year from across Europe with opportunities to develop active citizenship and participate in society. A large majority of projects funded also refer to youth participation as among the main aims. One of the five categories of youth activities that can be funded through the programme, called Action 5, offers concrete support to youth policy development in Europe. The general objectives include: encouraging the exchange of good practice between policy makers and young people; supporting structured dialogue between young people and policy makers; fostering a better knowledge and understanding of youth and promoting co-operation with international organisations active in the youth field.

## **2.7 The "structured dialogue"**

To highlight the importance of maintaining a close dialogue with young people within the framework of the European Union, the Council of Youth Ministers adopted a resolution in 2005, which invited both the Commission and the member states to develop a structured dialogue with young people and their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policy makers. The need for a structured dialogue was also supported by a Council Resolution in November 2006 and by the Communication on "Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society" adopted in September 2007.<sup>16</sup>

The "structured dialogue" is a mechanism for ensuring a comprehensive dialogue with young people at all levels within the European Union. Governments and administrations, including EU institutions, discuss chosen themes with young people, in order to obtain results which are useful for policy making. The debate is structured in terms of themes and timing, with events taking place on a regular

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<sup>14</sup> An important distinction is made between programme countries and partner countries. In the Youth in Action Programme, there are 31 programme countries; the 27 EU member states plus the four non-EU states Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Turkey. There is currently (spring 2009) a process under way to also establish national agencies in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Croatia. All actions within the programme are open to these countries. The so-called "partner" countries also have opportunities to take part in the Youth in Action Programme, but their opportunities are more limited and they have to be invited by partners in the programme countries.

<sup>15</sup> The first of these was Youth for Europe (1988-1991) followed by Youth for Europe II (1992-95) and Youth for Europe III (1996-99), European Voluntary Service, EVS (1996-99, later integrated into the consecutive youth programmes), the YOUTH Programme (2000-06) and, finally, the current Youth in Action Programme (2007-13).

<sup>16</sup> See links at the end of this paper.

basis where young people can discuss the agreed themes amongst themselves and also with local, national and EU politicians.

Youth organisations play a particularly important role in the structured dialogue, as they speak on behalf of a great number of young people. The main partner of the EU institutions is therefore the European Youth Forum. However, the structured dialogue also aims at reaching youth that are not formally organised and young people with fewer opportunities.

## **2.8 The Renewed Social Agenda**

When providing an overview of how the European Commission promotes improved living conditions for and the active participation of young people in society, the Renewed Social Agenda must also be mentioned. Proposed in July 2008 through a Commission Communication, the agenda puts children and youth among its seven priorities when outlining policy areas which the Commission will prioritise when addressing the social challenges in Europe. The Renewed Social Agenda is based on three interrelated goals of equal importance: creating opportunities, providing access and demonstrating solidarity. One should note that these three goals have also been translated into the goals of the renewed EU youth co-operation framework presented in the Communication “An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering”, adopted in April 2009.

## **3. The Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe**

The European Commission and the Council of Europe first entered into a formal partnership in the youth field in 1998, in the area of European youth worker training. This co-operation has since then expanded to youth research and Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, and ten years after its establishment, it now covers five different areas: European citizenship; human rights education and intercultural dialogue; quality and recognition of youth work and training; better understanding and knowledge of youth; and youth policy development.

The Youth Partnership has in particular developed a focus on youth policy development in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (EECA) and in South-East Europe (SEE). In both these regions, conferences and seminars brought together representatives of governments, non-governmental youth organisations and researchers in the youth field. The agenda at these events focuses around closer regional co-operation, sharing information and examples of best practice, and building partnerships for further enhancing youth policy development. Events are organised in partnership with the EECA and SEE SALTO Resource Centres, respectively.

Training of youth leaders, youth workers and activists is also high on the agenda for the Youth Partnership. A number of training seminars and related events are organised every year, many of them with SALTO Resource Centres and local partners. Two of the main priority areas are training in European citizenship and training for trainers. Information about past and upcoming training events can be found at the Youth Partnership's web portal (see the link below).

Also on its web portal, the Youth Partnership has developed a virtual Internet-based European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. It summarises the policy positions of the European institutions in a number of different areas, among them youth participation, information, social inclusion and young people's health. It also includes a comprehensive database with information about youth policy status in most of the countries in Europe. Country by country information papers on youth policy and on different specific themes of youth policy have been compiled by so-called national correspondents, who are youth researchers or civil servants in the respective countries nominated by the governments. The database comprises a comprehensive amount of information and best practice examples, and is a good place to get an overview of youth policy in Europe. The web portal also includes a database of European youth policy experts.

## 4. The United Nations system

The main bodies of the United Nations consist of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Committee and the International Court of Justice. The UN family is much larger, however, consisting of more than 15 agencies and a number of programmes, missions and projects.

In this short brief, which outlines how the United Nations has contributed to the development of what can be called an “international standard” of youth policy, however, it is natural to focus only on the most significant documents that have been adopted by the General Assembly and the ongoing efforts of the Secretariat and different UN organisations/agencies.

Promoting youth participation in government decision making and in society in general, has arguably been the main pillar of the UN's effort to influence national youth policy in the different member states. As articulated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, all children (up to the age of 18) shall be provided with the means to participate in society and be consulted on issues that concern them.

### 4.1 World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals

The UN General Assembly observed 1985 as International Youth Year, bringing the issue of youth participation to the fore as a means of achieving the United Nations Charter. Ten years later, in 1995, the organisation strengthened its commitment to young people and the promotion of national youth policy further by adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY). WPAY is an international strategy still operative, and the UN Secretariat is responsible for the review and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme. Through the WPAY, UN member states committed themselves to follow up on 10 identified areas for priority action:

1. *education*
2. *employment*
3. *hunger and poverty*
4. *health*
5. *environment*
6. *drug abuse*
7. *juvenile delinquency*
8. *leisure-time activities*
9. *girls and young women*
10. *the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making.*

The WPAY was followed in 1998 by a World Youth Forum, (Braga, Portugal) and the first World Conference of Ministries Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, Portugal). The conference re-emphasised the importance of the WPAY priorities and specifically emphasised the formulation of comprehensive national youth policies and action plans through the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.

The commitment to the WPAY strategy was again confirmed at the UN General Assembly in 2005, where five additional areas were added to the list, bringing the number of areas by which the UN member states should prioritise their efforts to improve the situation of young people to 15:

11. *globalisation*
12. *information and communication technologies*
13. *HIV/Aids*
14. *armed conflict*
15. *intergenerational relations.*

Also in 2005, it was decided to mandate the UN Secretariat to establish a broad set of verifiable indicators that could be used to monitor the progress achieved in these priority areas. Such a list has been established, and is available at the UN web portal (see the address below).

The Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that the member states of the United Nations agreed to achieve by 2015 at the UN Millennium Summit. The goals are as follows:

- *eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;*
- *achieve universal primary education;*
- *promote gender equality and empower women;*
- *reduce child mortality;*
- *improve maternal health;*
- *combat HIV/Aids, malaria, and other diseases;*
- *ensure environmental sustainability;*
- *develop a global partnership for development.*

Governments have committed themselves strongly and publicly to achieving these goals, and the issue is high on the UN agenda. During the World Summit in New York in 2005, which leaders of all 191 member states of the United Nations attended, a renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals was made. Additional funds were also allocated to different UN agencies towards this end.

Recognising that youth policy is a transversal and cross-sectoral policy, which should be an important component of all the Millennium Development Goals, an independent group of youth experts, young people from across the world, took upon themselves the task of developing a manual on how youth policy can be promoted nationally through applying the Millennium Development Goals. The manual, entitled *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals*, was released in spring 2005 and can be downloaded from the Internet (see address below).

#### **4.2 The UN Secretariat and different UN agencies**

The focal point of the UN Secretariat on youth issues is the Programme on Youth [...]. The Programme on Youth is located in the Division for Social Policy and Development within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Its website provides valuable information on different opportunities for youth participation at UN level, as well as for the development of youth policy. Due to its very limited staff and resources, however, the UN Programme on Youth is not sufficiently able to interact with youth organisations around the world. During the last decade, a number of the different agencies of the United Nations have developed mechanisms for involving young people and youth organisations in their work and policy priorities. They typically take the shape of special working units or youth advisory boards. For example, the Youth Co-ordination Unit of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addresses issues and organises actions for youth within the scope of the organisation, and hosts a Youth Forum every two years. Similarly, the following UN agencies and organisations have special co-ordinating bodies on youth (Ashton *et al.*, 2005: 32). UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), UN Programme for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT), UN Population Fund (UNFPA, focusing on youth policy), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDCP), as well as through agencies for children, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Other organisations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) do not have such youth advisory boards, but are still active in addressing youth issues as part of their policy agenda. Many of these organisations have a national office or representative in different countries, and can play a supportive role in the promotion, development and implementation of youth strategies at the national level.

## 5. Web resources

### Council of Europe:

The Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport: <http://www.coe.int/youth>

Final declarations of the European Youth Ministers' Conferences:  
[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/IG\\_Coop/ministers\\_conferences\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/IG_Coop/ministers_conferences_en.asp)

Council of Europe Experts on Youth Policy Indicators, Final Report (2003b):  
[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2003\\_YP\\_indicators\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2003_YP_indicators_en.pdf)

Information about the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and follow-up documents:  
<http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/BGKNGE/Participation>

Information about the co-management system:  
[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe\\_youth/co\\_management\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp)

### European Union:

The Youth Sector of the European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/youth>

The European Youth Portal (information portal for young people): <http://europa.eu/youth>

The European Commission White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" (2001a):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc26\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc26_en.htm)

Overview of EU legislation in the youth field (communications from the Commission to the Council of Youth Ministers, resolutions by the Council): <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/s19003.htm>

Commission Communication on the implementation of the European Youth Pact (COM(2005) 206):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0206:FIN:EN:PDF>

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for participation by and information for young people (COM(2003) 184):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2003:0184:FIN:EN:PDF>

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for voluntary activities among young people (COM(2004) 337):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0337:FIN:EN:PDF>

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth (COM(2004) 336):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0336:FIN:EN:PDF>

Council Resolution defining common objectives for the participation by and information for young people (November 2003):  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2003:295:0006:0008:EN:PDF>

Council Resolution defining common objectives for the participation by and information for young people (November 2006): <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st14/st14471.en06.pdf>

Council Resolution defining common objectives for voluntary activities for young people (October 2004): <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/04/st13/st13996.en04.pdf>

Council Resolution defining common objectives for voluntary activities for young people (November 2007): <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14425.en07.pdf>

Council Resolution defining common objectives for better knowledge and understanding of youth (November 2004): [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1052\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1052_en.pdf)

Council Recommendation on mobility of young volunteers across Europe, (November 2008): <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st14/st14825.en08.pdf>

Information on the Renewed Social Agenda: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547>

### **Youth Partnership of the European Commission and the Council of Europe:**

The Council of Europe and European Commission Youth Partnership:  
<http://www.youth-partnership.net>

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy:  
<http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index>

### **United Nations system:**

Youth at the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/youth>

United National Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www.unicef.org/crc>

World Programme of Action for Youth: <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>

Youth Development Indicators (for all 15 WPAY priority areas):  
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthindicators1.htm>

Youth and the Millennium Development Goals:  
<http://www.takingitglobal.org/themes/mdg/youthinpolicy.html>

## A COMPLEX BUT INCREASINGLY COHERENT JOURNEY? THE EMERGENCE OF 'YOUTH POLICY' IN EUROPE \*

Howard Williamson

*The story of 'youth policy' development at a European level has been one of complexity and incoherence. The two major European institutions, the European Union and the Council of Europe, have both become increasingly committed to a youth agenda but their focus has often been on very different priorities. Not until after the turn of the millennium did they start to work more collaboratively on a framework of 'youth practice' incorporating youth work and training, youth research and youth policy. This paper charts the range of disparate initiatives that have slowly converged into that framework – which may, with some legitimacy, now be considered as a youth policy framework for Europe. New partnership arrangements between the European Union and the Council of Europe hold the promise that such a framework can be developed and sustained, though much remains at the drawing board [...].*

All countries have a youth policy – by intent, default or neglect. Whatever a country may do, or not do by way of its provision and practice with young people, inevitably has an effect on them, and on their futures and possibilities. Some countries do very little for young people: a policy of neglect. Some countries may be reducing or diminishing their active focus on young people: a policy of default. Most countries subscribe to the age-old truism that their young people are their future, and so endeavour to frame policies purposefully on their behalf: a policy of intent. That intent may, however, be as much to do with regulation (of unacceptable, deviant or anti-social behaviour) as with positive participation and engagement. So even where one can detect that an *intentional* policy framework for young people prevails, one has to consider the extent to which it emphasises the control and perhaps prevention of negative issues as opposed to the encouragement and promotion of more positive features of young people's lives. A 'youth policy' is the overarching framework of governmental (and sometimes non-governmental) activity directed towards young people: at, for and with them. It has generally been regarded as, and restricted to the authority and autonomy of nation-states but, under the twin influences of globalisation and geo-political collaboration, one can see that 'youth policy' now potentially transgresses national borders. This is, indeed, the case in relation to the European context, in which both the 'social condition' of young people in many corners of Europe and the social, economic and political objectives of the countries of Europe often converge to produce a shared agenda. Such convergence should not, however, submerge the equally important issue of *difference*, for the 'social condition' of young people in different parts of Europe and the social, political and economic circumstances of the countries in which they live also produce *different* issues and priorities. The integration of youth in the European community has, therefore, to take account both of many shared features, experiences and needs and of persisting inequalities and differences both within and between its member states.

Not that the embryonic post-war 'Europe' was always so actively committed to young people. Many arguments and explanations have been put forward for this, not least that there were fewer challenges around the successful transition and integration of young people into 'adult' life and that the institutional framework of Europe' was itself so much younger then. Moreover, nation-states were largely both capable and effective in 'making' their young people whereas, under later conditions of globalisation, as Lauritzen and Guidikova (2002) have pointed out, they were no longer able to make and shape their youth. In fact the reverse was starting to apply: young people have to make their own futures, with a range of consequences both for the ways in which they should learn and for the geographical and political boundaries of their lives. Indeed, it is often argued that the starting point for youth policy development *in Europe* (as opposed to within specific countries, for different social,

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economic or ideological purposes) were the events – or '*les evenements*' – of 1968, during which the political establishments realised and recognised that something had to be done to accommodate and incorporate the aspirations of young people in wider structures of governance.

Shortly after the events of 1968, both the European Community and the Council of Europe (both relatively small 'associations' of countries at the time) embarked on what was to become a long, and often quite separate, journey in the forging, shaping and defining of something that would come to be known as 'youth policy'. The EEC held a youth colloquium and the Council of Europe opened its European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The language at the time was one of radicalism, revolution and social change – and young people were viewed as the vanguard of that movement.

By the 1980s, the language had mellowed, the focus had changed, and European engagement with young people had widened. Young people were but one of a range of social movements (alongside women, peace and environment, for example) seeking participation, dialogue and influence in an increasingly inter-connected world. For young people, this became more pronounced during International Youth Year (1985), which saw the first European Conference for Ministers of Youth (in Strasbourg) and an increasing interest and concern with intercultural learning and tolerance. The 1980s saw youth organisations becoming more prominent and actively associated with the political transformations that took place at the end of that decade, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall, that led to the dramatic and rapid expansion of the Council of Europe and the steady increase in the membership of the European Union over the next fifteen years. And this in turn led to a more systematic *European* focus on young people and youth policy.

## **Background/Context**

Today, the enlarged European Union has a membership of 27 countries (since January 2007) and the Council of Europe a membership of 47 countries, stretching from Iceland to the border with Japan. More countries are candidates for EU membership, and others benefit from what is known as the 'neighbourhood policy' of the EU.

In some respects, though, the emergence and development of 'youth policy' is not so much a product of the European situation per se. It is more a consequence of the wider issues in the lives of young people. These clearly bear on, and invite a response from the social and economic concerns of individual countries and on the European context more generally.

First, there is the question of 'youth transitions' that, for many young people have become prolonged, significantly more complex, and sometimes reversible. No longer are they the relatively straightforward (literally!) linear process of leaving education, finding work, leaving home and starting a family. Transitions in the labour market, in personal relationships and in housing are far less certain. And though far greater opportunities now exist for more young people than prevailed in the past, there is also a significantly greater set of risks, to which more vulnerable young people in particular are susceptible.

Second, therefore, is this issue of what has been referred to as the 'youth divide' (Jones, 2002). For many similar, and sometimes different reasons, throughout Europe there is growing evidence of increasing inequalities between a majority of young people making a purposeful and positive transition to adulthood and a significant minority who are falling to the margins and succumbing to circumstances involving educational drop-out, early pregnancy, unemployment, substance misuse and crime.

Third, there is a huge debate about the parameters, definition and causes of what has come to be known as 'social exclusion', though others still favour arguably more precise terms such as poverty. Nevertheless, there is some consensus that such exclusion and social marginality includes a clustering of disadvantages that can be self-fulfilling in their impact as a vicious circle turns and exclusion is reproduced over generations. Those trapped in such circumstances become cut off from any possibility of mainstream participation, both in the labour market and in the wider society.

And this produces the fourth contextual point: what is required to address and redress such processes and circumstances in order to promote a stronger probability of employability and civic participation? The debate revolves around the balance to be struck between creating greater opportunities for autonomy and individual responsibility, and ensuring more possibility of access to support and public services.

These, then, are the background issues which set the scene for thinking about appropriate 'youth policy' responses at local, regional, national and supranational levels – including the European community.

## Developments

There have been a host of varied developments that could all be viewed as having contributed to the 'flow' towards a more unified and coherent idea of 'youth policy' at a European level. What follows are some 'headline' contributions.

Lauritzen and Guidikova (2002) draw attention to what they refer to as 'official' developments in the youth field, starting with the declaration by the United Nations in 1985 of the International Year of Youth and its three governing themes: peace, participation and development. They move on then to 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and then 1992 and the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, a declaration of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe [CLRAE]. They also move through other material, including various resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Youth within the Council of Europe and the final text of the First World Congress of Ministers of Youth of the United Nations, which met in Lisbon in 1998. Of most significance, however, is their observation once they have mapped such developments:

*These texts are what people make of them. Even if there is no army behind them to make sure they are followed to the letter, why would youth ministers and authorities, NGOs, and parliaments agree on them when they have already decided to ignore them afterwards? (Lauritzen and Guidikova, 2002: 373)*

In other words, Lauritzen and Guidikova are asserting that those who allege that such documentation pays no more than lip service to the ideas underpinning youth policy and participation are missing the point that, even if one cannot necessarily trace direct action flowing from it, it still serves as a significant signpost for more concrete development.

It is tempting nevertheless, to adopt the more sceptical position, since virtually all high-level meetings necessarily emerge with a set of high-level aspirations, many of which do not appear to come to fruition. The Council of Europe's Conferences of Ministers of Youth, from the first in Strasbourg in 1985 to the sixth in Thessaloniki in 2002, are a case in point. Over those years, all the predictable rhetoric has been invoked: participation, the need for 'comprehensive' youth policies, gender equality, meeting the needs of young people at risk, promoting youth mobility, cultivating enterprise, improving training, ensuring youth rights, enhancing access to information, and so on. At the meeting in Bucharest in 1998, there was a resolution defining 'The Youth Policy of the Council of Europe':

- Help young people meet the challenges facing them and achieve their aspirations
- Strengthen civil society through training for democratic citizenship, in a non-formal educational context
- Encourage young people's participation in society
- Support the development of youth policies
- Seek ways of promoting youth mobility in Europe

Even sceptics will detect immediately that some of these laudable aspirations *have* been assisted through various European level initiatives and activities. The European Union established its youth programmes in 1992 – Youth for Europe, the 'YOUTH' programme, and, from 2006-2013 the 'Youth in Action' programme. These have had different and incremental features, but have included youth

exchanges, youth initiative projects, the transfer of expertise and knowledge through support for study visits by youth workers, and the European Voluntary Service programme (EVS). The Council of Europe has run a range of training courses on a host of trans-national issues, governed by its principles of human rights, democracy and tolerance and its practices of co-management. During the mid-1990s, it ran a huge anti-racism campaign across Europe under the banner of 'All Different, All Equal'. When one starts to explore the detail of *practice* that has been established under the auspices of both of these European institutions, it becomes rather more difficult to sustain the view that the pronouncements and documentation from high-level European meetings are only vacuous rhetoric, even if there is still most definitely a case for narrowing the gap between politics and practice. To some extent that gap has come to be filled by meetings of senior officials responsible for youth issues within national Ministries. Within the EU, the Directors General for Youth meet twice a year, under each Presidency. Within the Council of Europe, government youth representatives meet (at least) twice yearly as the CDEJ, the inter-governmental steering group for European co-operation in the youth field. It is their role to interpret political pronouncements and aspirations, and to contribute to decisions as to what are priorities for practice. It is these two (overlapping<sup>1</sup>) groups of senior civil servants who, in fact, have served as the engine for the most recent developments in the youth field, which may reasonably be seen as moving towards a more coherent and integrated 'youth policy' in Europe.

### **Towards a focus on 'youth policy'**

The developments outlined above therefore comprise some of the building blocks and signposts that slowly gelled into a more comprehensive view of 'youth policy'. Initially, there were separate – and quite distinctive – pathways being followed by the two European institutions (despite, as I note above, the common personnel involved!) but slowly this work has converged and there is now, increasingly, a shared agenda being followed, notably on account of an integrated partnership agreement between the European Commission and the Council of Europe that has been operational since May 2005. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1990s, rather different youth policy foci were in train.

### **The European Union (Youth Unit)**

In December 1999, the European Commissioner for Education and Culture announced that a White Paper on Youth was to be prepared. This set in motion a series of consultations with governments, young people and – significantly – youth researchers, and a sequence of conferences and events which at first invited ideas as if the White Paper was an open book and then sought to turn them into more realistic propositions. The rules concerning levels of European 'competence' and principles of 'subsidiarity' meant, in fact, that the scope for a White Paper on *youth policy* was heavily circumscribed. It could not, for example, directly address issues such as formal education or employment, nor could it require member states to act on its propositions.

The White Paper (European Commission, 2001a) was launched in November 2001. By some, it was considered to be a rather damp squid, lacking teeth and dwelling on issues that appeared, perhaps, to be rather peripheral to the central needs facing young people at the turn of the millennium. For others, however, it was a major achievement; there had not been so many White Papers in the history of the European Commission, and for 'youth' to have such dedicated attention reflected a significant level of political commitment. Both views are, in fact, legitimate positions to adopt. The White Paper has produced concerted political effort that would almost certainly not have materialised had it not existed. But it has largely been restricted to the four central themes of the White Paper that, although important, are perhaps not the most urgent issues in the lives of many young people in Europe, especially those who are more disadvantaged and excluded.

Those themes are participation, information, voluntary services, and a greater knowledge and better understanding of youth. Since the launch of the White Paper, each has been subjected to intensive bi-

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<sup>1</sup> The Directors-General for Youth at European Union Presidency meetings comprise the D-Gs for the 27 countries of the EU, plus the D-Gs for the European Economic Area, which includes Iceland, Switzerland and Norway. The members of the CDEJ are usually also the D-Gs from the EU and EEA countries, plus those from the 20 other members of the Council of Europe. Occasionally, they may not be (or may no longer be) government officials. The CDEJ member for Lithuania continued with the CDEJ after he terminated his work for the government; the same is true of the current CDEJ member for Armenia.

lateral consultations with member states through a process called the 'Open Method of Co-ordination'. This has requested member states to respond to a detailed questionnaire on each theme. All country questionnaires have subsequently been collated and analysed, leading to a composite report by the Commission that, in turn, has generated a set of 'common objectives' that are then agreed by the Ministers for Youth. Once agreed, they then have to be acted upon. Five years on, it is not particularly clear how much progress has taken place on these common objectives across the European Union and whether any such progress has produced a greater evenness in provision and practice on these themes, or possibly simply widened the divide.<sup>2</sup>

Once more, it is possible to see the glass both as half full and half empty. Despite weaknesses and reservations in the process, there *have* been useful and important aspects of progress. Issues concerning youth participation have been strengthened by further declarations during different EU Presidencies – in the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the UK. Indeed, in the UK, young people argued that participation had a key role to play in advancing employability and citizenship, and in combating exclusion. The partnership with the Council of Europe has led to significant progress on the theme of a 'greater understanding of youth', notably through a series of research seminars that have taken place.<sup>3</sup> The European Voluntary Service programme has been strengthened within Action 2 of the new Youth in Action programme of the EU, on account of its central position within the White Paper and subsequent debate about the importance of youth volunteering for personal transition and social citizenship (see Williamson & Hoskins, 2005).

The other important 'youth policy' development within the European Union has been the European Youth Pact, established in 2005 mid-way through the 'Lisbon Strategy' at the instigations of the political leaders of Sweden, Germany, France and Spain. The Lisbon Strategy of 2000 aims to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. There always was within it some recognition of the role of non-formal education in fomenting active citizenship, but the 'European Pact for Youth' emanating from the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy strengthens its focus on young people: it calls for urgent action in response to demographic change (the 'generational contract') and emphasises the need to give young people a first chance in life and the skills to contribute to competitiveness, growth and social cohesion. In short, it underlines the view that the Lisbon strategy needs the support of young people to succeed – and for this to materialise, member states need Action Plans to show how they plan to support young people to succeed.

The 2005 European Pact for Youth, in effect, therefore builds from, and broadens the youth policy focus established formally by the European Union through the 2001 White Paper through encompassing considerable additional territory, including 'the fields of employment, social cohesion, education, training, mobility, as well as family and professional life' (Council of the European Union, 2005). Indeed, reporting on the Pact, the European Youth Portal (<http://www.europa.eu.int/youth>) comments that 'This is the first time that youth policy has featured so visibly at EU level.'

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the White Paper on Youth and the European Pact for Youth were the EU's only contribution to European youth policy. Many other areas of EU activity – notably various training and enterprise initiatives promoted by CEDEFOP, the Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programme, and the Socrates and Erasmus mobility programmes in higher education – clearly impact on (some sub-populations of) young people in various ways. The White Paper and the Pact are simply the most dedicated and discrete manifestations of the European Union's specific policy focus on young people.

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<sup>2</sup> An evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and the construction of common objectives on the four themes of the White Paper is currently being conducted by the Finnish Youth Research Society. The European Youth Forum has produced a strongly critical 'shadow report' on the implementation of the first two priorities of the OMC in the youth field: information and participation (European Youth Forum, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> This would typically comprise a member of the CDEJ (who would chair the process), a member of the Youth Directorate's Advisory Council, composed of representatives of youth organisations, three youth researchers, one of whom would be the rapporteur general, and a member of the Youth Directorate serving as the secretariat. The CDEJ and the Advisory Council are the statutory organs that co-manage the work of the Youth Directorate.

## **The Council of Europe (Youth Directorate)**

The Council of Europe's Youth Ministers' Conference in 1998 may have set out a resolution on the 'youth policy' of the Council of Europe (see above), but the flesh for those bones started to be produced a year earlier. In 1996, the government of Finland had proposed that the Council of Europe, following a model already in place in relation to cultural policy, should embark on a process of reviewing national youth policy. Finland offered to be the first country for such an international review and an embryonic process was established. The country concerned would produce a national youth policy report, while the Council of Europe would compose a review team that would visit the country on two occasions before producing an international report based on its findings. There would then be an international 'hearing' at a meeting of the CDEJ to consider the conclusions. Subsequently this model was both developed (into a more sophisticated process) and occasionally corrupted (in that the sequence was increasingly not followed) but the essence of the approach remained the same.

The objective of this process was threefold: to provide a critical eye on the country concerned, to provide ideas and lessons for other countries within the Council of Europe and – significantly for this article – to start to construct some shared parameters within which a European level 'youth policy' might be considered.

The Finland review took place in 1997. Since then there have been a further eleven completed reviews, and others are in the pipeline. This has built up a body of knowledge about numerous principles, policies and practices in relation to young people across many cultural and political contexts, which were first 'synthesised' after the first seven reviews (Williamson, 2002). A second synthesis review is currently being undertaken, which may add to the structure and content of the youth policy framework advanced by Williamson in 2002<sup>4</sup>, as well as exploring the efficacy of the ways in which the reviews are currently conducted.

In addition to the public international reviews of national youth policy (there are now open national hearings in the country's capital as part of the process), the Council of Europe has also been engaged in more private 'advisory missions' to countries, including Slovenia (the first in 2002), Croatia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine. Topics for consultation are specified by the inviting government, and the international team is committed to confidentiality, but nevertheless their general thoughts and reflections, suitably anonymised, can (and do) feed into discussions in wider contexts. This, therefore, has also contributed to thinking about youth policy within the Council of Europe.

The Youth Directorate has also produced a document considering 'Youth Policy indicators' and the CDEJ has published a document on some of the standards that it believes should inform youth policy development within the member countries of the Council of Europe. Both of these pieces of work have sought, in different ways, to consolidate and contribute further to 'youth policy' development within the Council of Europe (see Council of Europe Youth Directorate, 2003, and European Steering Committee for Youth, 2003).

Finally, more recently, through the partnership arrangements between the European Commission and the Council of Europe (see below), there has been a series of research seminars convened by the Council's Youth Directorate but focusing on key issues of concern to the Commission, including some of the themes of the EU White Paper. Whatever the substantive focus of these seminars (such as voluntary activities by young people, or the social exclusion of young people), the contributions of academic youth researchers and policy analysts has undoubtedly assisted in making progress on the overarching fourth pillar of the White Paper – that is, the greater understanding and knowledge of youth. Further developments on this front are discussed below.

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<sup>4</sup> After Finland: the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, Spain, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Cyprus, Slovakia. A review of Armenia (the first CIS state to be covered in this process) is currently in progress; Hungary and Latvia are being reviewed during 2007.

## **An emergent framework of ‘opportunity focused’ youth policy**

A reading of the material emerging from the first seven Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy produced the first attempt at a transversal, inter-sectoral youth policy framework that could – perhaps should – be a guiding model across Europe. That synthesis report (Williamson, 2002) was completely grounded in the seven national and seven international reports on Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, Spain, Estonia and Luxembourg – a reasonable spread of European countries with very different traditions, cultures and contexts. It revealed some very dramatic differences (such as in policy approaches to substance misuse and the drugs culture) but also some very strong similarities (such as the policy commitment to education and lifelong learning). It did not set out a blueprint for youth policy but it did suggest an ‘ideal type’ in relation to the conceptualisation of youth policy, structural questions, principal domains, cross-cutting issues, and foundation stones for effective practice. The model would necessarily require, indeed demand, adaptation according to particular circumstances but it has, so far, stood the test of time and informed the international reviews that have subsequently taken place (of Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Armenia).

The framework asks first how a country conceptualises the idea of ‘youth’ and the idea of ‘youth policy’. This may appear self-explanatory, but the changing condition of ‘youth’ demands a changing consideration of ‘youth policy’ – something that now requires far more breadth and depth than the leisure-time (youth work) provision for teenagers that is still sometimes taken as a proxy for youth policy!

Secondly, there is a focus on the legislation, structures and budgets that exist for the delivery of youth policy. What are the laws that govern interventions with and for young people? Are these enabling or restrictive? Which ministries are responsible for youth policy? How do they relate to each other? Does one have a dominant lead? How does the central administration relate to regional and local governance: in other words, how does central desire, demand or prescription actually ‘reach the ground’? What kinds of budgets are available, across departments and between different levels of administration? How are these resources determined and allocated? And, finally, where do youth organisations fit in? Is there a National Youth Council? To what extent is it involved in discussions of policy and decisions about priorities and funding? The answers to these, and more, questions provide a map of the terrain on which youth policy is positioned and provide some very real clues about its likelihood of reaching the young people at whom different strands of policy may be directed.

Those strands are themselves located within different policy domains, often predominantly but never exclusively within (formal and non-formal) education and the related fields of training and employment. Beyond these, however, are the domains of health, housing, social protection, family policy and child welfare, leisure and culture, youth justice, and national defence and military service. All have a bearing on the lives of young people and may promote or constrain their prospects and possibilities.

There are, moreover, a range of issues that cut across, indeed cut *through*, these policy domains. These include questions of participation and citizenship (are young people involved in public decision-making?), of combating social exclusion and promoting inclusive practice, and of the provision of youth information. There are further, related, cross-cutting questions to do with multiculturalism and minorities, mobility and internationalism, safety and protection, and, fundamentally, equal opportunities. All of these issues merit both empirical inquiry and more conceptual debate within the framework of any youth policy.

Finally, there are foundation stones that promote and produce better policy and practice. These include the commissioning and use of youth research (how does research knowledge inform policy development?), the training of professional practitioners who work with young people (what level of training do they receive and what is the content of the curricula?), and the dissemination of good practice (are there conferences and publications that enable people to learn about what is going well?). Without such approaches in place, youth policy development and implementation can end up being a somewhat hit and miss affair, and more likely to be subject to changes in the political wind and the vagaries of political whim. Indeed, these latter points informed two further models concerned with

youth policy that are simple in conception but are considered very valuable in stimulating reflective and reflexive discussion.

## Checks and balances

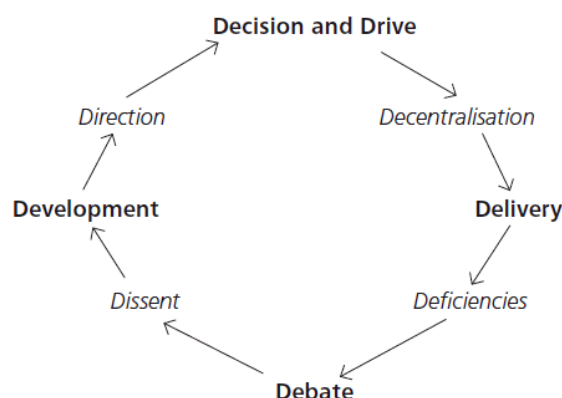
During the process of writing the synthesis report on the Council of Europe international reviews, it became apparent that there was a relatively simple checklist of the *components* that are necessary if youth policy is to have any likelihood of moving from political rhetoric and aspiration to grounded effectiveness. There was also a relatively simple *dynamic* that illustrated how youth policy might make effective and improving progress or, conversely, grind to a halt. These have become known as the five 'C's and four (or eight) 'D's of youth policy in Europe. Both are designed to stimulate reflection and discussion about the progress and 'state of play' of youth policy rather than produce definitive conclusions.

### The five 'C's

1. Coverage – This is concerned with three different dimensions of 'coverage': geography, social groups and policy issues. First, in spatial terms, how far does youth policy *reach* – from the centre of administration? In particular, to what extent are dispersed rural areas reached by a range of policy opportunities and possibilities, or do these tend to be restricted to more concentrated population areas, where 'economies of scale' are more likely to apply? Second, do policy initiatives and measures actually reach all the young people at whom they are directed, especially when core objectives of particular policies are concerned with equalising opportunities or combating social exclusion? Too often, new initiatives get 'consumed' by other groups of young people before they make contact with those young people who may need them most. Third, what is the 'reach' of youth policy? Is it conceived within relatively narrow parameters, or does it embrace all those areas and aspects of policy that impinge on young people's lives?
2. Capacity – Do the structures exist to 'make youth policy happen'? What are the relationships between central administrations, and those at regional and more local levels? Where does authority lie? Is that the appropriate place for effective action? And what is the *structural* relationship between governmental processes and practices, and non-governmental activity, and youth organisations? In short, are arrangements in place to make the very best of the circumstances available?
3. Competence – Are those in the youth policy field suitably skilled to deliver effective services? What is the relationship between professionals and 'volunteers' (a concept well understood in some countries and completely unknown in others)? How do those working with and for young people build their knowledge, skills and attitudes – and keep them up to date?
4. Co-ordination / Co-operation / Communication – What is the nature of contact between different levels of administration and across different domains of youth policy? Put crudely, do people talk to each other! What is the effect of that discussion? If people work in narrow 'silos' of activity, then there is serious risk of different elements of youth policy development bearing absolutely no relation to one another and, at worst, working in completely opposing directions (criminal justice and employment policies are typically guilty of this).
5. Cost – The human and financial resources available for discharging the responsibilities of youth policy are clearly very important, if never the only factor in generating effective practice. Securing a sense of resource allocations and distribution, priority activities, and core and more discretionary budgets is a critical benchmark for exploring the issues within the other 'C's above.



## The four (or eight) 'D's



This model is concerned with the dynamic of youth policy development and implementation – how youth policy can experience catalysts of progress and, equally, obstructions that can sometimes put progressive policy into reverse. It can start and stall at any point in the cycle, for although usually initiatives *appear* to derive from the ‘top’ of the cycle – from political decision and drive – they have sometimes been cultivated and nurtured elsewhere in the cycle: in, for example, professional discussion or experimental practice projects.

The point about the model is that youth policy requires political championship but, for political rhetoric and even legislation to convert into service delivery, there have to be structures that enable policy aspirations to be decentralised. That process of decentralisation carries with it a wide range of governance and delivery questions: management, monitoring, workforce development, grant allocations, and so on. Inevitably, however well thought through any policy initiative, there will be unforeseen and unintended consequences – deficiencies in programmes and practice. Such weaknesses demand attention through critical reflection and evaluation (debate). That, in turn, is likely to produce different perspectives, explanations and interpretations. At some point, however, such ‘dissent’ (competing viewpoints) has to be reconciled if useful proposals for development are to be constructed. Those development ideas comprise possibly new directions in youth policy and certainly small turning points, which require political championship and drive.

The whole process should be one of creative interaction between politics (politicians and civil servants), professionals related to the issue in question (including youth researchers), and young people (not just youth NGOs). The best practice is only likely to emerge from a youth policy forged on the anvil of mutuality between these three constituencies. Youth participation and the involvement of young people in public decision-making has a range of rationales and benefits: not only is it compliant with Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child but it provides a platform for the exercise of active citizenship and, critically, provides a ‘user perspective’ on the policy issues under consideration. There may be questions about the *type* of youth ‘participation’, but that is another matter. Similarly, the involvement of youth researchers with both general and specific knowledge of the topic being discussed provides a more dispassionate angle and potentially an ‘evidence base’, even if other factors ultimately inform future directions. And while researchers may be more distant, professional practitioners have a ‘hands-on’ understanding of challenges at stake. Governments and politicians ignore these constituencies at their peril, for without them, weak and ineffective policy is likely to ensue.

## Moving forward – partnerships and protocols

Youth policy within Europe is clearly not a static issue, whether at the level of municipalities, member states, the EU, or the Council of Europe. A municipality in England recently decided to abolish its statutory youth service (the provision of non-formal education); Lithuania has retracted on its much-celebrated system of ‘co-management’ of youth policy and absorbed its State Council for Youth Affairs within the government; Wales has taken a similar action in transferring the functions of the quasi-



independent Wales Youth Agency into the Welsh Assembly Government; the EU is showing a commitment to a stronger commitment to a 'structured dialogue' within the triangular relationship between research, policy and practice (see Milmeister & Williamson, 2006); and in September 2006 the Council of Europe launched its second major 'All Different All Equal' anti-racism campaign under the banner of Diversity, Human Rights and Participation.

Many 'pillars' have already been put in place at a European level, building from both within and outside the key institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe. The following are but some of the most prominent examples. It is important to note that these are not 'stand alone' trajectories; indeed, most are integrally linked through historical development, the personnel involved or the issues on which they have a shared agenda.

Within the field of **training and practice**, there have been significant developments since the signing of a training covenant in 1999 between the European Union and the Council of Europe. This led, most significantly, to a two-year programme of training for European level trainers in youth work on the question of European citizenship. This was the ATTE course (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) that ran from 2001-2003 (see Council of Europe, 2005; Chisholm *et al.*, 2006). Its participants have since engaged in a range of multiplier activities. A more modest trans-national contribution during this time was the long-term training course 'Madzinga', on intercultural learning, funded through a number of European institutions, which was the subject to an intensive external observation and evaluation (see Williamson & Taylor, 2005).

In the field of youth **research**, through the increasing practice of partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe, the somewhat dormant *European research correspondents' network* of the Council of Europe has been resurrected. A correspondent is nominated by each country and they meet once a year to exchange knowledge from their own countries as well as to consider the wider youth research context in Europe and their contribution to the even broader youth policy agenda. Closely related to this group is the 'knowledge centre' correspondents' network (some are the same people). These individuals were nominated by governments to contribute to the development of the *European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy* (EKCYP) which is viewed as a major instrument for advancing the fourth pillar of the EU White Paper ('greater knowledge and better understanding of youth'), for bringing research findings closer to the 'applied' world, and for providing individuals with access to relevant comparative and substantive data on a myriad of issues in the youth field. It is still relatively early days in the establishment of EKCYP and clearly its success will depend on partnerships and co-operation between member states and the energy and motivation of the knowledge centre correspondents to their task. Behind these 'front office' activities, in the realm of research, lies the youth research committee of the International Sociological Association – RC34. *Research Committee 34* (Youth) has members throughout the world, but one of its activities has been to run international training courses for young researchers on comparative and intercultural research. Three of these took place in Budapest (at the European Youth Centre there, which was opened in 1995) between 1999 and 2001, and one in Moscow in 2002. (Another took place in South Africa in 2000.) In some respects they have now been superseded by the research seminars organised through the EU/CoE partnership, but it is important to recognise their place within the evolution of the research contribution to youth policy at a European level. It is also important to note the place of RC34 at a more global level, of which its European activity is but one component.

At the level of **politics and policy**, the European Youth Pact illustrates clearly that young people and youth issues remain high on the European policy agenda. Beyond the meetings of the EU Directors-General for Youth, the meetings of the CDEJ at the Council of Europe, and the roughly biennial meetings of European Ministers for Youth, there are recurrent 'high-level' conferences and symposia considering a range of issues that are usually clustered around or within three overarching political challenges for Europe in relation to young people: the labour market and employability; participation in civil society and democratic renewal; and the promotion of integration and social inclusion. These challenges are themselves related to even wider political concerns around global economic competitiveness, human rights, the intergenerational contract, mobility, migration and the promotion of

intercultural tolerance and understanding. It is young people who hold the key to sustaining a Europe characterised by democracy and diversity, in the face of competing and countervailing tendencies.

On account of these significant developments in the youth field over the past decade, there are now plans amongst various academics at different universities across European member states to develop a **learning** programme at Master's degree level in the field of youth studies. This will draw significantly from those developments in youth research, in governmental and European youth initiatives (policy), and in youth training and practice. It is likely to start running in the autumn of 2008 and hopes to attract students from all three dimensions of what is sometimes, perhaps slightly flippantly, referred to as the 'magic triangle' of research, policy and practice.

These broad pathways of youth policy direction are currently anchored significantly by an integrated partnership agreement on youth issues between the EU and the Council of Europe, and to a much lesser extent, by the debate that will follow the production of a second 'synthesis' review of the Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy. The EU/CoE partnership was concluded in May 2005 and consolidated three partnerships and covenants that had existed previously – on training, on research and on Euro-Med co-operation (co-operation in the youth field amongst the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea). Senior representation of the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe is invariably present at any discrete European Union events concerning young people, and the reverse also applies. The European Ministers for Youth meet next in Kiev in 2008.

## Conclusion

Some forty years ago, student unrest across (a much smaller) Europe activated political attention to young people and established some of the early pan-European arrangements for youth involvement and exchange. Some twenty years ago, with the sudden and dramatic enlargement of an accessible and at least theoretically democratic Europe, that agenda took on new challenges, both in substance and scale. Initially, the two major European institutions – the European Commission and the Council of Europe – adopted quite different emphases in their position on 'youth', largely reflecting their own different priorities. The Commission promoted programmes that would support learning and qualifications that, over time, would enhance European economic competitiveness; the Council promoted training on topics that connected closely to its priorities around human rights and democracy.

During the 1990s, however, and particularly since the turn of the millennium, these different strands of activity have not only developed for themselves but have increasingly overlapped and interacted with each other. New processes and practices have come on stream, and the concept of 'youth policy' – a cross-sectoral, integrated approach to addressing the needs and accommodating the wants of young people – has slowly secured the European imagination. The concrete manifestations of this achievement lie in the EU's White Paper on Youth Policy, and the Council of Europe's programme of international reviews of national youth policy. These have been supported and taken forward by an increasingly sophisticated web of policy, research and practice activity, as exemplified through the EU's Open Method of Co-ordination on the White Paper process, the establishment of the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy, research seminars convened by the Council of Europe on topics such as culture and inclusion as well as EU White Paper themes, and accounts of training and practice such as ATTE and Madzinga. All such measures and initiatives have a twofold objective: to provide the evidence and ammunition to sustain political commitment to youth policy, and to ensure the integration of young people in an enlarging Europe through promoting their employability, participation, and tolerance and understanding. The partnership arrangements now in place between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field reflect the convergence of commitment to this agenda and, where possible, the sharing of expertise and resources to achieve these ends.



# TRENDS TOWARD EUROPEANISATION OF YOUTH POLICY \*

Claire Wallace and René Bendit

*This article attempts to classify youth policies in the European Union according to a variety of dimensions: the organisation of the youth sector, the target groups for youth policies, the definitions of youth and the main purposes of youth policies. One problem in undertaking this exercise is that not only are youth policies highly diverse between countries, but they are also diverse within countries, being de-centralised towards the regional/local level and the voluntary sector in many countries. The paper goes on to look at aspects of the “Europeanisation” of youth policies.*

In many European countries youth policy is a rather marginal field of social policy and the idea of youth as an object of social policy is hardly acknowledged at all. At a European level however youth issues enjoy perhaps a higher profile through the EU and the Council of Europe than they do in many (but not all) national contexts. A unit for youth exists as a sub-unit within DG Education and Culture and youth have been the focus of a number of the calls in the targeted research framework programmes, which has generated a considerable body of research over the last twenty years (See European Commission, 2009a). In this paper we explore this paradox firstly by looking at the types of youth policies that have emerged in Europe in different national contexts and then we consider the initiatives in youth policy at a European level.

As there is little overall grasp of youth policies in Europe, we begin with an exploratory descriptive typology in which we try to classify youth policies along different dimensions to show the similarities and differences between European regions. Even the most recent books about youth or books claiming to cover youth in Europe, tend to focus only upon particular countries or upon issues that arise from particular country perspectives (see for example Bradley & van Hoof, 2005; Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006). There is no real synthesis or approaches to youth and youth policies. One reason is that youth policies in the European Union are highly variable, being embedded in different welfare regimes, different traditions of youth policies and different concepts of youth. Furthermore, there is often no consistent national youth policy because this field of state regulation is frequently delegated to the local or regional level, depends heavily upon the activities of the non-government sector (different NGOs, youth organisations or churches each having their own regulations) or is divided between different ministries that might themselves have different target groups, concepts and definitions which are not necessarily consistent with one another.

There are also different actors and institutions involved across Europe. It is therefore no surprise that attempts to analyse the patterns of youth policies in the same way that has been done for welfare regimes (Bonoli, 1997; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi & Palme, 1998), labour market policies (Crompton, Gallie & Purcell, 1996; Gallie & Paugam, 2000) or family policies (Hantrais & Letablier, 1996; Lewis, 1993; Pfau-Effinger, 2003) are lacking. Our analysis builds upon the study carried out by IARD<sup>1</sup> (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001) as a contribution to the White Paper in 2001 “A New Impetus for European Youth” (European Commission, 2001a). Despite the lack of detailed information about some member states, enough material was collected to enable an outline analysis, one from which typologies could be developed. In this paper we describe the various youth policy regimes, the characteristics and principles that distinguish them from one another. At the end of the paper we discuss the Europeanisation of youth policies and the impact that this might have had.

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\* This paper has been revised especially for this Reader. A previous version was published as Wallace, C. & Bendit, R. (2009). Youth policies in Europe: Towards a classification of different tendencies in youth policies in the European Union. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 10(3), 441-458.

<sup>1</sup> IARD research institute, Milan, co-ordinated the study with a number of team members, including these authors.

## Methods of research

The paper summarises a report carried out for the European Commission, DG Education and Culture in the year 2000 (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001) which in turn is based upon reports written by national youth experts in 18 countries, including the 15 EU countries (Ireland, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Greece, Italy) plus the European Economic Area countries (Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway). National experts were asked to consider the organisation of youth policies according to a number of questions set by the co-ordinating committee. The reports themselves are the property of DG Education and Culture, but the Executive Summary and comparative report was published on the DG Education and Culture website. Whilst based upon these reports, this paper reflects the views of the authors and not that of the Commission or other colleagues involved in writing the reports.

We acknowledge that there are a number of problems associated with this methodology. In considering so many countries, it is sometimes difficult to find the whole picture among a mass of details (although this is a problem for comparative research more generally). The reports were written by national correspondents according to a set of questions or headings formulated by the authors that to some extent reflect the organising principles that we have set out in this paper. The template was revised several times in iteration with the authors of country reports. However, national reports still varied substantially since they depended upon the interpretations of the writers as well as the “facts” of youth policy. In the on-going dialogue between the report writers and the collators of the reports some anomalies were straightened out, but even then the interpretation and collation of these reports from 18 countries, which were more or less detailed on various points, represented a serious challenge. The results have been widely presented and reported but not written up as an academic paper until now. The problem of how to carry out comparative policy analysis is an acute one in the European context and this project was confronted with all the problems of the comparability of assumptions and cultures that this implies.

Addressing this problem we attempt to create typologies of policy regimes. A classification of youth policy regimes across Europe can serve a useful purpose for understanding European policies and societies in comparative perspective. Typologies should be regarded as a useful heuristic device for international comparison and not a rigid classification. Rather, we see them in the spirit of Max Weber's concept of ideal types. Whilst some countries may fit well and others less well into categories, we can see this as a loose set of categories based upon historical and cultural developments that arise out of institutional variations such as the role of civil society in the form of youth movements, the nature of family, educational and labour market arrangements and the development of the welfare state. The kinds of typologies that are developed depend upon the assumptions and classifications underlying them. Here we have endeavoured to make clear these assumptions before showing how they can be used to build a classification of youth policies.

Creating a typology of welfare states has been a challenge for many since the original publication of Esping-Andersen's “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism” in 1990 (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gelissen, 2002). The variations in these classifications tend to reflect the organising principles that are used in the classification – hence, when there is a different focus, a different classification emerges. Sometimes countries may fall under several categories in the classification or not fit neatly into the typology and this is certainly the case with youth policies. Therefore it is important to make clear the principles upon which the typology is built. There is some discussion as to whether there are indeed three worlds or more. Many have argued for a Southern or Latin Rim group of countries and even for an Eastern European cluster (Ferrera, 1996), even with respect to youth policies (Jones, 2005). However, even Esping-Andersen himself has later rejected the idea of the southern cluster of countries (the Eastern cluster of countries is even more heterogeneous) (Esping-Andersen, 1999). As we shall see however, with respect to youth policies these Southern countries definitely do form a distinct cluster, since the family patterns and orientations to youth are distinctive.

We distinguish three general organising principles of classification.

- Philosophies of intervention, including the dominant concept of youth and the aims of the intervention and problems associated with young people
- Target groups, including which age groups are the focus of youth policies and which sub-groups of youth are most targeted.
- The organisation of the youth sector as a field of social policy.

We start by describing the different dimensions in turn and then go on to develop a typology of how at least some of them fit together. The different factors are summarised in the chart (Table 1) on which we draw in the following description of youth policy regimes. While the situation of young people varies between different European countries (Bradley & van Hoof, 2005; Iacovou, 2002), our focus here is upon the youth policies as such and not their impact or origins.

## Philosophies of intervention

In youth policies philosophies of intervention are important because they influence their direction. Philosophies of intervention are developed historically from different welfare contexts as well as from the different traditions of youth movements and the different institutional histories of youth in each country (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). One particular factor that distinguishes youth policies in different parts of Europe is the concept of youth – the extent to which young people are seen as a *problem* or as a *resource*. In countries where young people are seen as a *problem*, there is a focus upon issues such as unemployment, homelessness, AIDS, drug abuse and prevention of youth delinquency. This is very clearly the case in the UK and Ireland for example where youth policies are discussed in the context of social exclusion at a national level. At a local level the concern is often with the problem of preventing crime before it occurs.

In countries where young people are seen as a *resource*, there is a focus upon youth policies helping to develop young people as a resource for themselves or as a resource for society as a whole. In these countries there is therefore a strong emphasis upon stimulating education, training and especially the participation of young people. Hence, in these countries, the empowerment of young people plays an important role. The best example of this approach can be found in the Nordic countries, so for example, in Denmark and Sweden youth is seen as a human and a societal resource, defining youth broadly as encompassing the whole generation of youth.

However, many countries do not fall easily into these two categories. Thus, we can find countries that draw upon both models of youth as a resource and as a problem. Countries where youth are seen as a mixture of resource and problem would include Germany, the Netherlands and Greece. In these countries, the principle target group is both youth in general and specific groups of youth who may be identified as problems (or as having problems). In Germany and the Netherlands we find both of these models because “youth” covers a very wide age group. Hence for children (that are included together with youth) there is a tendency to see them as in need of protection, whilst for older younger people they are more likely to be viewed as a resource and the focus as they grow older changes from employment concerns towards housing and welfare.

An additional differentiating factor in this aspect are the major aims of youth policies. One major aim of youth policy in both the Nordic countries and in the Southern European countries is the promotion of *youth autonomy*. In the Nordic countries, young people are rather independent of their families, since they tend to leave home and live independently relatively young compared with other European regions (Iacovou, 2002). They are effectively “paid to be young” and supported as such by the welfare state. However, in the Southern European countries concern with youth autonomy comes from a different direction. In these countries there is a lengthy dependence upon the family and most young people live at home. One way youth policies (especially in Spain) have tried in the last years to counteract the long dependency of young people from their families, was to promote and to support the flexibilisation of certain segments of the labour markets in order to reduce youth unemployment and so to allow the labour market and social insertion of young people. In Spain and Portugal there are

also measures to provide affordable housing for young people outside of the parental home. Hence the extent of youth autonomy and what this actually means in practice is relative, depending upon which part of Europe we are starting from and the reasons for seeing it as important differ.

A major aim to emerge from the comparative analysis of youth policies was that of *political and social participation*. This was to a great extent the aim of all the regions of Europe, but the actual extent of youth political participation is highly variable, ranging from very high in the Nordic countries to very low in the South and East. The extent to which, for example Youth Councils were developed and who becomes involved in them was quite variable. Again, whilst the participation of youth in their societies as active citizens may be a general policy goal, the development of civil society and political parties through which they can be active is highly variable as is the extent of their participation (Kovacheva, 2002; Spannring, Wallace & Haerpfer, 2001). Whilst in some countries there is a well established tradition of youth organisations (for example Germany and Austria), in other countries such organisations hardly exist (as in the Southern European countries). Even in those countries where they do exist, only some youth become involved in them whilst many stay away. Youth participation could be said to be something far broader than simply joining organisations. It can also concern lifestyles and new social movements such as animal rights, ecological movements, forms of consumer activism and so on. Increasingly, it can mean electronic networking and mobilisation. Hence, the concept of social and political participation needs to be broadened to include the variety of youth activism.

Another aim of youth policies is that of the *integration* of young people into the adult society. Whilst this may be seen as a goal of youth policies in general, again it takes different forms depending upon the social and political context. In the Central European countries of Germany and Austria the idea of integration reflects a rather paternalistic role of youth as citizens to be protected and promoted and is found most often in the Central European regions, such as Germany and Austria where youth policies are well established. However, it also more recently forms part of the youth policies of the Southern European countries where large numbers of young people are excluded from the regular labour market and unable to leave home.

In addition, we considered philosophies of intervention in terms of the *issues and problems* that were seen as important in each country. In the Nordic countries the main issue was the participation of youth in the society and how to turn them into active citizens as a resource for society. In most countries there is a concern about the extension of the youth phase which as a result of increasing levels of education and training, unemployment, the changing funding of education, the increasing costs of leaving home, postponement of family transitions and so on has lead to its prolongation. The same trends are also visible elsewhere but in the UK this trend runs counter to the expectations of many parents (especially working class ones) leading to family tensions and sometimes homelessness (Jones & Rouse, 2002). In the Nordic countries the integration of policies for supporting families, education and employment mean that this is no longer a problem for families but rather something which the state supports. In family-centred European countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands or indeed the Mediterranean regions, the continued support of young people by families leads to lengthening dependency too, but this is more a problem for the young people who are not able to leave home rather than for the families themselves. In the South by contrast, social exclusion did not necessarily only focus upon unemployment, but also upon problems of homelessness, problematical transitions and so on (Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006). Alternatively, in countries such as the Netherlands, where there was more or less no youth unemployment at the time that the report was undertaken, casual employment is often something that students do to finance their studies rather than a labour market ghetto leading to social exclusion (Bradley & van Hoof, 2005). The social exclusion of unemployed youth along with high levels of unemployment is an emerging problem in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria as well as most of the new member states. Therefore, although similar problems of unemployment, leaving home, access to the labour market, social exclusion of ethnic minority youth and so on are confronting all European countries to a greater or lesser extent the extensiveness of these problems and the amount of attention they attract from policy makers is more variable.

## Target Groups

The target groups for youth intervention derive partly from the conceptualisation of youth as an age group. This varies substantially through different countries, but again, we can distinguish certain patterns. Here we need to distinguish between target groups by age range and target groups by specialised policy concerns.

Since youth is an indeterminate category, reflecting social construction by historical processes (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998), the age group identified for intervention is quite variable. Here we can distinguish between countries according to how wide or narrow is the age range by which youth is defined. Countries with a wide age definition ranging from birth to age 25 or 30 are Austria, Belgium, Germany and Finland. Countries with a medium age definition of youth ranging from early primary school to 25 years include Ireland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Countries with a narrow age definition of the youth age group, extending from 11 or 13 years to 25 years include France, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. Countries with a very narrow concept of youth, meaning those between the end of lower secondary education and 25 or 30 years are Denmark, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Sweden. We can see that there are a variety of definitions of where youth begins and ends and classifications between countries are contingent.

Another dimension of the wide and narrow concept of youth is in terms of particular target groups within the age range - that is whether youth in general (i.e. the whole generation of youth) are the targets of youth policies or only certain groups. For example, in the UK and Ireland it is more often the problem groups or disadvantaged youth that become the targets of intervention, whilst in Germany, Austria, and France, all youth are targeted, although there may be special programmes for disadvantaged youth too. In the limited youth policy model currently practiced in Greece, Portugal and Spain, it is usually particular groups of youth which are targeted, because they have particular problems that have been identified.

In countries with a narrow age conception of youth, it is more likely that there will be more homogenous models of youth policy. In countries where there is a wider age definition of youth, there are necessarily much more heterogenous policies because they apply to different sub-groups. For example, in the UK and Ireland it is a relatively narrow age group of young people from 13 or 15 years to 25 that are seen as the main targets of intervention (until the 1980s youth would have been seen mainly as an age group only during their teens and this was extended later in response to the prolongation of youth and the need to re-calibrate social policies). However, the main targets of intervention are the disadvantaged youth, which corresponds with the view of youth as a social problem. In the Central European countries youth are defined as a group from the age of birth until they are 25, 27 or 30. This is partly why there is a more paternalistic, protective orientation towards youth in youth policies. The targets of youth intervention include all of the young people and children in these age ranges but there is also a focus on particular groups of disadvantaged young people, such as ethnic minorities, girls and the unemployed. With such a wide spectrum of people included in the definition of youth, youth policies are necessarily more heterogenous. In the Southern European countries, youth were seen as those young people between aged 15 to 25, 28 or 30 and youth policy focuses upon specialised groups of youth such as early school leavers or those leaving school without certificates, the unemployed, homeless young people, etc. rather than upon the whole generation of youth. Youth policies are therefore more homogenous again.

Hence, the target groups for youth policies can be either a small range of young people or a wide range of young people and this tends to relate to the philosophies of intervention and the dominant images of youth that we have discussed so far. However, we should note that in many countries, different administrative parts of the state define youth in different ways – there is not necessarily a consistent pattern within each country. Hence, in the Criminal Justice Department we can find one definition of youth that may not coincide with educational definitions. These different departments might have also different view of youth – one seeing them as people to be “protected” and another seeing them as people to be “promoted” or even potentially dangerous. This is one of the problems of trying to develop a general framework of youth policies, as we are attempting to do now – there are



always many exceptions because youth policies are in most countries not a coherent set of concerns. Issues that are seldom addressed directly in youth policies are gender and ethnic minorities. In many countries ethnic minorities are seen as “foreigners” and therefore not an aspect of national youth policy. It is possible that this attitude is gradually being reassessed.

## **The organisation of the youth sector**

A number of variations exist in the way in which the youth sector is organised. In some countries there is a dedicated youth ministry or directorate and in other countries, youth policies can be found scattered around a number of ministries or agencies, with no special responsibility for youth. In some countries youth policies are decentralised and in others more centralised. Countries in Europe can be distinguished according to whether they have a *major* or *minor youth sector*. Countries with a major youth sector, where youth policy is primarily concentrated within the limits of a well defined and well organised set of institutions include Austria, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Germany, Spain, Greece and Portugal. For example, in Austria there is a youth Ministry (together with several other fields of welfare – i.e. “Youth and generations” covering families too). Furthermore, there is a youth research institute responsible for carrying out youth research and maintaining a library, which can be called upon to produce reports or comments for the government on youth issues and policies. In addition to that there is an umbrella organisation bringing together all the youth organisations and most of the youth sector is de-centralised to the different federal regions. This is not dissimilar to Germany, which has an even more extensive and better resourced structure including a youth institute with large teams of researchers and regular surveys. Countries where there is mainly a minor youth sector which is partly dispersed among a number of traditional sectors such as education, employment, urban planning and so on, include the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Norway. This means that the responsibility for youth issues lies in different ministries and organisations, although there may be *transversal* youth co-ordination of some kind. Countries where there is no special youth sector at all, but where policy is fractured into other administrative sectors without a co-ordinating centre would be the UK, Iceland and Denmark.

Other factors in the organisation of youth policies are the public institutions that are responsible for youth policies. Once again, we can distinguish several patterns. First of all there are countries with a specialised youth ministry and youth directorate (or similar administrative structure) and this group includes Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. Secondly, there are countries where youth policy is allocated to one ministry and where youth matters are handled by a youth directorate. This group comprises Sweden, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Belgium, Finland, and Norway. Thirdly, there are countries with a youth directorate, but where the responsibility for youth matters is shared among a number of ministries. Only the Netherlands belongs to this group. Fourthly, there are countries where youth policies are co-ordinated among several ministries, but where there is no youth directorate (or similar authority). This is the situation in Denmark. Finally, there are countries without a youth directorate and in which youth policies are not co-ordinated among different ministries. This situation applies to the United Kingdom and to Iceland.

## **Youth Policy Regimes?**

Youth policy regimes can be clustered according to the welfare regimes defined by Esping-Andersen (1990) but there are also some important differences. Here we would re-name and re-define these clusters in relation to youth policies. The overall results are summarised in Table 1.

### **Universalistic youth policy regime**

The Nordic countries form part of a universalistic youth policy regime which offers rights and benefits to all young people and where young people are effectively state subsidised. It also aims to help young people live autonomously, which fits with the family models in those countries. However, youth policies are a relatively new phenomenon and have been introduced mainly in the last 10 to 25 years, partly in response to rising youth unemployment. These countries are characterised by a state-directed form of policy, but civil society organisations are also highly involved. The policies are based upon a narrow age definition of youth, that is youth aged between early teens and 25 years of age, but within this group it is the whole generation of youth who are the objects of youth policy. In these countries youth

are seen as a resource that needs to be developed through youth policies - both a resource for themselves and a resource for society as a whole. The participation of youth in the broader society is seen as an important factor and in these countries, the participation of youth is already at a high level.

Table 1. *Typology of youth policies*

<i>Model of youth policy</i>	<i>Countries</i>	PHILOSOPHIES OF INTERVENTION			TARGET GROUPS		
		<i>Dominant image of youth</i>	<i>Major aims</i>	<i>Major problems</i>	<i>Target social groups</i>	<i>Target age groups</i>	<i>Youth Sector</i>
Universalistic model	Denmark Finland (Iceland) Norway Sweden	youth as a resource	Autonomy independence development political participation	participation of youth	whole generation of youth	13/15 to 25 years	minor or no youth sector
Community based model	Ireland United Kingdom	youth as a problem	Prevention of social problems political participation	Prolonging of youth social exclusion Participation of youth	Disadvantaged youth	Primary school to 25 years	minor or no youth sector
Protective model	Austria Belgium (France) Germany Liechtenstein Luxemburg Netherlands	Vulnerable youth youth as a resource youth as a problem	Integration Prevention of social problems political participation	Participation of youth Social exclusion	Whole generation of youth Disadvantaged youth	0 to 25/30 years	Major youth sector
Centralised model	Greece (Italy) Portugal Spain	Youth as a problem youth as a resource	Autonomy Independence Integration Political participation	Prolonging of youth social exclusion	Specialised groups of youth	15 to 25/30 years	Major youth sector

### Community based youth policy regimes

The countries corresponding to the liberal/minimal welfare state regimes as defined by Esping Andersen are the ones where youth policies are delegated mainly to civil society (the church, volunteers) rather than carried out directly by the state. Local authorities and communities are seen as dominant actors. There tends to be a rather narrow age definition of youth, one where young people are seen as those from those leaving primary school to those aged 25 and much of the provision is for the teen age group. In these countries, youth policies are not seen as being directed at the whole range of youth, but rather at youth who are seen as a problem. Therefore youth policies are directed at young offenders, potential offenders, ethnic minorities, the homeless and so on. The aim of the youth policies is problem containment.

### Protective youth policy regimes

The protective youth policy regimes correspond with the corporatist – employment based model of the welfare state. The countries covered are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In these countries there has been a long tradition of youth policies and youth institutions. The result is that well established youth ministries or directorates have been introduced and in some countries there is also a Youth Institute for carrying out research for the relevant ministries. They are termed protective because they aim to promote and support young people from birth upwards, so they have a wide age definition of youth, including children and young families. These youth ministries cover issue such as adoption and fostering, young people in care, leisure and so on. Therefore, they have a much wider remit than, for example the community based regimes where such services are found elsewhere in the welfare state. Therefore there tends to be a rather paternalistic view of state policies *vis a vis* young people. The target groups are all youth within the given age range and the aim is to “promote” youth generally as well as cope with problem youth. In these countries, youth policy can be both centralised and de-centralised, delegated to the Federal regions, who might have their own Youth Directorates, often developing different measures and even

laws pertaining to youth. Civil society in the form of churches, welfare institutions, youth associations, NGO's and other organisations are heavily involved in the provision of youth services, although these organisations are more or less incorporated into the state structure as institutionalised vehicles of welfare rather than being independent of it.

### **Centralised youth policy regimes**

These correspond with the Southern European, Mediterranean or Latin Rim welfare states. The countries referred to are Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy. The welfare state does not provide general coverage and is sometimes seen as "sub-institutional" because social policies are less extensive in their coverage than in Northern Europe (Gallie & Paugam, 2000). In these countries (with the exception of Spain), youth policies are relatively recent in origin, often introduced as a response to European initiatives, which we will discuss later. In these countries the central state has developed a range of initiatives in a field that was previously the responsibility of the church or the family, thus a private issue, rather than one of public responsibility. In the past, as well as to a great extent now, young people lived in their family of origin until they got married (late in the case of men, earlier in the case of women) and then became a new family. Traditionally, the state was not involved, although this is now changing. The concept of youth that has been introduced is rather the narrow age definition of youth (from 15 to 25 or 30). Civil society is little involved in youth policies, and civil society is rather under-developed compared to other countries, a legacy of the years of authoritarian rule, although there is evidence that there is some quite dynamic growth in this respect. There is generally a low level of participation in youth organisations and youth policies are targeted as special groups of youth. The general aim of youth policies in these countries however, is to promote associative life of young people in order to make a contribution to the development of civil society at this level. The late development of youth policies in these countries also means however, that they have a rather dynamic trajectory of change.

The different trends and policies summarised in Table 1 do fall into the familiar welfare typology schemes, but we need to re-label the various elements. The universalistic model refers to a policy that promotes the independence and autonomy of young people and their contribution to society, but only for a relatively narrow group. Iceland is included in brackets, since it does not fit very comfortably with this group and there are important internal differences within the group as well. The community based model corresponds with the anglo-saxon liberal welfare states and in these countries youth issues are devolved to community level, whilst the state is mostly concerned with youth as problems or potential problems. We should remember that there are important differences within this group as well. The protective model corresponds with the continental welfare systems and in it are usually countries with youth ministries at a central level and a long tradition of youth policies – but ones that are concerned with a wide age range and therefore encompass a broad range of problems. Although France is usually included in this group, it does not fit so well with respect to youth policies. Furthermore, Germany and Austria have a range of regional variations in legislation regarding youth. What we have termed the centralised model refers to the Southern European countries, and whilst in traditional welfare discussion it is argued that these do not represent a distinct group, with respect to youth policies they do. In many of them youth policies were introduced recently, as a result of stimulation from the EU – youth were traditionally defined as part of the family and not an object of state policy. Where policies have been introduced they are centralised and focused on the particular problems of young people in these countries.

These different forms and traditions of youth policies have arisen from different historical circumstances in European countries. However, more recently, we can see a greater trend towards a more common understanding on youth issues across Europe, partly on account of the **Europeanisation** of youth policies in recent decades. It is to this issue that we now turn.

### **The Europeanisation of youth policies**

A number of initiatives to europeanise youth policies have gathered force since the late 1990s. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have been concerned with youth issues, often developing programmes in parallel (Williamson, 2007). Beginning with consultations with youth

ministries in 1988, the European Commission published a Memorandum examining the feasibility of a European Youth Policy, with goals such as promotion of creativity and self-initiative, mobility and exchange, training of youth workers, access to information, creation of Youth Forums and associations and relationships with international organisations. This formed the basis of a report to the European Parliament and European youth ministers met together in 1991 at a conference which approved priority measures concerning youth that were later known under the name of “youth policy.” However, European youth policies could only act as complementary measures to national youth policy and this principle of subsidiarity was corroborated in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 which also provided the legal basis for European action programmes in the field of youth..

These initiatives emerged in the *Youth for Europe* programme implemented by DG XX11 (Education and Culture) in 1988 followed by a second phase in 1995. This programme was designed to implement exchange and youth initiatives outside of formal education, as a third educational pillar complementing the *Leonardo* and *Socrates* programmes, which were concerned with formal education. The *Youth for Europe* programme, followed by the *Youth* programme aimed to promote intercultural experiences and intercultural competencies (such as tolerance, putting own beliefs and concept into perspective, promoting language skills) which were considered a necessary condition of European citizenship and identity-building. They also enabled member states to share information and experience in the field of youth. However, the programmes were criticised by member states for interference at a local level which was seen as going beyond the scope of the European Commission. A recurring problem has been how to address the needs of young people in Europe, with problems that are increasingly common to all European countries, but not to interfere with the policy integrity of member states.

The White Paper on European Youth Policy “*A New Impetus for European Youth*” (European Commission, 2001a) aimed to lay down the framework for co-operation between Member States and the Commission through an extensive consultation process. The White Paper covered fields such as participation, voluntary service, information and greater understanding of youth – all traditional fields of national youth policy as well as representing a continuity with previous European-level programmes. Although there had been attempts to pull together youth policies in the past (Chisholm & Bergeret, 1991), the White Paper on youth represented the most ambitious attempt to develop an instrument of youth policy at European level. Following the principles of the Open Method of Coordination there were a series of rather vaguely formulated aims or benchmarks, such as “youth participation” to which countries are asked to respond. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) means that EU member states present reports on targets and action lines set by the Commission, while it remains up to the country concerned to find policies to do this.

A further impact of the White Paper has been to encourage awareness of youth in other social policy fields as well as inter-sectoral or transversal co-operation. Given the wide range of ways in which youth policy is situated in member states, this represents a considerable challenge. However, the wide ranging scope of the White Paper means that inevitably it has disappointed many people and the Open Method of Co-ordination means that it can be implemented in very variable ways.

The consolidation of social and economic strategies within the EU resulted in the *Lisbon Agenda* and related to this was the *European Pact for Youth* agreed by all 25 Member States (at the time) in the context of the mid-term evaluation of the Lisbon strategy in 2005. As a response to continuing high youth unemployment in some countries, it aimed to enhance the professional integration of young people into the labour market, strengthen the coherence of European measures (i.e. professional training, education, research, mobility, culture, entrepreneurialism etc.) and develop new measures to improve the compatibility between professional development and family life. We see here therefore a shift towards more “productivist” social policies, or ones that are concerned with labour market and employment, reflecting the priorities of the Lisbon Agenda, especially after 2005.

The enlargement of the EU to include 12 additional countries in 2004/2007, most of them being Eastern European ones, changed the situation once more. In those countries the strong forms of

intervention characteristic of the communist years (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998) have been replaced with a relative neglect of youth, although some countries, such as Slovakia, continued to have a strong state-dominated youth policy. However, the goals of such policies have changed. They were latterly more focused upon youth participation and the involvement of civil society-type institutions. Up to this time, we could say that developments in youth policy represented a “levelling up” rather than a form of “social dumping” (Deacon, 2000) and countries that previously did not have youth policies, such as Greece, tried to conform to the European norm. Therefore, there has been a certain harmonisation in youth policies through European initiatives partly through examples of good practice. Before initiatives of the European Commission such as the one that gave birth to this research project and therefore this paper, there was no comparison of youth policy regimes in Europe and no data from which to do it. This in itself has had some effect.

In 2010 the *Lisbon Agenda* was replaced in 2010 by the *Europe 2020 Strategy*. This Strategy, in the context of the on-going economic crisis and spiralling youth unemployment, set out new economic targets, two of which were the reduction of the share of early school leavers to less than 10% and the increase of the share in Higher Education to 40%. It also laid out 9 flagship initiatives, one of which was “Youth on the Move” to encourage the mobility of young people along with stimulus for them to embark on training, education and starting businesses. However, the fields of participation and intercultural understanding remain part of the policy focus. This clearly highlights the fact that the EU sees the economic and educational engagement of young people as a way of tackling economic recession. Furthermore, it represents an effort to put youth policy at the heart of the European agenda,

It is important to remember that the European Commission has no mandate to create a European youth policy replacing national policies – it can only complement them. Youth policy remains essentially a national task. Other treaties do provide the EC with a basis to intervene directly or indirectly in fields such as European citizenship, discrimination, education and employment. Until the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, youth policy at a European level had tended to focus upon measures to encourage mobility, intercultural exchange, co-operation, citizenship and voluntary work. These policy concerns had been criticised as not being the most pressing ones facing young people, many of whom have difficulty securing a place within the labour market, leaving home or finding accommodation (Williamson, 2007). However, their very vagueness may be the reason why they are the focus of European policy – they are not likely to cause any serious conflict with national policy priorities. More recently we have seen a shift towards the economic integration of youth, albeit with rather narrow policy targets.

A parallel set of European policy initiatives have been developed by the Council of Europe over the same period of time. The Council of Europe represents a far wider range of countries and has less legislative power and far less resources than the European Commission. Its activities are focused upon the themes of promoting democracy, human rights, solidarity and tolerance among its members. At the Council of Ministers Conference in 1998 decided to develop a youth policy. The Council of Europe has consequently set up two European youth centres – first of all one in Strasbourg and later one in Budapest – within a Youth Directorate. Since 1996 it has carried out a number of reviews of youth policy in member countries in order to build up an understanding of principles, policies and practices regarding young people in different countries (Williamson, 2002). The aim has been to create standards of youth policy and to monitor progress in different countries. However, not all countries have been reviewed to date (the Council of Europe consists of 47 member states in comparison with the 27 of the EU so reviewing all countries is a drawn-out process).

The Council of Europe and the European Commission have been increasingly co-operating in their actions for youth in recent years, although they still represent parallel activities. It remains to be seen whether their policy strategies actually come together in the end. The promotion of youth exchange and youth participation as well as concern over ethnic minority youth (such as Roma), have been common elements in their programmes. We might ask why European youth policies do not focus upon the main problems facing young people such as lack of access to regular jobs or lack of housing? One answer is that these issues are tackled by other branches of the European Commission and are not within the remit of the Council of Europe anyway. Another answer might be that by promoting vague

yet positive-sounding ideals such as “participation” and “communication” the European Commission as well as the Council of Europe can avoid accusations of overstepping the limits of their powers and interfering in national fields of policy.

## Conclusions

Youth policy regimes do tend to fall into distinct clusters, which are similar to, but not precisely the same as, the welfare regimes identified elsewhere. The criteria for distinguishing different youth policy regimes are first of all what we have termed philosophies of intervention, including images of youth, the aims of intervention and the major problems identified. Secondly, there are the target groups of young people, which relate to the definition of youth and here we can distinguish policies according to whether a narrow or wide concept of youth is employed (in terms of both age and social groups). Thirdly, there is the organisation of the youth sector itself which can include a youth ministry, may have transversal agencies responsible for youth or may have no particular policy institution responsible for youth at all.

Whilst it is heuristically helpful to classify youth policies in the same way as other aspects of welfare policies, we should bear in mind that in many ways they do not fit other aspects of the welfare state. Youth policies are especially difficult to classify because they are often scattered around different institutions and ministries who themselves do not have consistent models of youth and frequently they are decentralised to a regional or local level. Even within each cluster of countries we find important differences – for example between Denmark and other Nordic countries with which it has been classified.

With the Europeanisation of youth policies we are finding a greater homogeneity, especially as countries in the South and East try to “catch up” with developed countries such as Central European and Nordic ones where there has been a strong tradition of actions for youth and identifying youth as an object of intervention. However, we can identify two major trends in this process: Europeanisation and transversalism. The former trend reflects the increasing shift towards Europeanisation of social policies more generally through the exchange of information, examples of good practice and use of European Commission guidelines and benchmarks. The second tendency is to try to bring together initiatives and policies that affect youth across different ministries and policy areas as well as levels of government. However, the economic crisis along with the enlargement of the European Union has led to greater emphasis on economic rather than social goals and young people feature as a method of tackling the economic crisis through greater participation in education, training and mobility. How far countries of the East and South can sustain the newly introduced youth policies is questionable in the face of budget cuts.

At a European level youth have been identified in a range of policy initiatives by both the European Commission and the Council of Europe. These have tended to stay away from intervention in labour market or other aspects of social policy and focus instead upon ideals such as promoting youth participation, communication and understanding using “soft” policy instruments such as reporting through the Open Method of Coordination and various consultation exercises. Whilst not offending any established interests this has also meant that European youth policy remains unspecific and ineffectual. However, youth are now seen as being a central element of European policy focus as “Youth on the Move” is a flagship initiative within the latest *Europe 2020 Strategy*.

We have not discussed very much the role of the New Member States, nor how they fit this classification. That is because they were not part of the original project and we lack sufficient information to be able to include them. We would hope that these lacunae will be filled by other researchers and other reports and the Council of Europe has been carrying out a range of country-by-country reviews of youth policies. Here we have made only a preliminary attempt to bring together youth policies within the general field of welfare policies.

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# INTEGRATED TRANSITION POLICIES FOR EUROPEAN YOUNG ADULTS. CONTRADICTIONS AND SOLUTIONS<sup>\*</sup>

Manuela du Bois-Reymond

## Introduction

We have gotten used to thinking of youth and young people not only in national categories – for example, young English, young Poles – but also in the European context. The White Paper, ‘A New Impetus for European Youth’ (European Commission, 2001a), is an influential document for envisioning a comprehensive policy framework for the 75 million young Europeans presently living in the twenty-seven EU member states. It has since been cited as a key to integrating educational and youth policy under the umbrella of participation and social inclusion. Another growing concern of the European Union (EU) is how to make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world no later than 2010, as outlined in the Lisbon Summit of 2000 (European Commission, 2001a). The new generation of EU educational and youth programs for 2007-2013 and the emphatically stressed commitment to do everything possible to implement the Lisbon goal expressed in the ‘Youth Pact’ all testify to that concern.

In this chapter, I discuss three constellations of young people in transition and the implications for youth policies and future research (du Bois-Reymond & Chisholm, 2006). The first constellation concerns young people’s learning environments that, although different in the various EU member states, nevertheless have common features, a most significant one being the erosion of the school-to-work transition. Educational policies on national and European levels promote new combinations of formal and non-formal learning-teaching approaches to repair old and to build new bridges between educational systems and labour markets. Will these policies succeed in making the school-to-work transition easier for young people and draw them closer into the knowledge society?

The second constellation addresses the fact that even though there are major differences among the EU member states, few if any European countries have a homogeneous indigenous population. In general Western European societies have become more ethnically diverse, not only regarding non-white people who continue to immigrate mainly from Mediterranean, African, and increasingly other non-European countries; but there are also and especially more recently, immigrants from the new EU member countries including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States. The new-comers are not always welcomed by established inhabitants; new fears and xenophobia is a problem among various societal groups. Educational and labour-market policies, both national and European, are ill prepared to mitigate the tensions and ascertain the learning and working potential of the new generations. How can the receiving countries make the young migrants feel at home and allow them to participate in the labour market and society at large?

The third constellation refers to young families who must cope not only with the transition to occupational careers but also with multiple transition demands: finding adequate housing, maintaining their partnerships while raising their children, improving their qualifications, updating their networks and social contacts, engaging in their neighbourhoods, and participating in the cultural opportunities of a consumer society. In brief, young couples and parents must fabricate a satisfactory work-learning-family-life balance while facing growing insecurity about their future careers and life prospects. Aging European societies have become aware of problems resulting from distorted population pyramids and have begun to develop more active policies for young parents.

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In this chapter, I expand on the inherent contradictions in and between these various youth transitions and comment on existing youth policies. I finish by drawing conclusions for a better integrated European transition policy.

## New Learners in Old Schools

Let me first offer an explanation for the adjectives *new* and *old*. In this chapter, *new* refers to three different aspects of young people. First, it refers to the students as members of new cohorts who enter and leave the educational system. Second, *new* refers to students from different countries and cultural backgrounds that meet in classrooms and other learning sites. Finally, *new* refers to new learners, meaning that today's children and young people use learning environments, formal as well as informal, in new ways and also relate to their teachers and pedagogues in new ways.

By contrast, *old* has basically only one meaning, albeit with complex and far-reaching consequences for students: the educational systems in most European member states are ill equipped to face the challenges of the knowledge economies and civic societies. It is common knowledge by now among educational practitioners and researchers, as well as a growing number of politicians that contemporary schools no longer productively and adequately relate to the social and cultural worlds of its student populations. The rift broadens between the educational system and new cohorts of the 'digital generation' students with new learning requirements and capacities.<sup>1</sup>

Schools in most EU countries are organised in such a way that the eagerness of students to learn is smothered in the course of their educational trajectory.<sup>2</sup> This is manifested in the embarrassingly high dropout rates and low qualification levels for substantial numbers of students, mainly those who achieve relatively low grades.<sup>3</sup> However, many more fortunate students also find school boring and uninspiring, especially when it comes to their own interests and hobbies which are more likely realised outside than inside school (Diepstraten, du Bois-Reymond, & Vinken, 2006). Finally, despite the fact that European schools have been populated for more than thirty years with migrant students, educational systems have not proved able to develop convincing models to integrate these young people into the educational and social system of their respective new homeland (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Inasmuch as international benchmarking becomes widespread, educational systems which score at the lower end of the scales of excellence get pressed into reforms. Pressure is mounting from two sides: from above, the EU and the OECD; and from below, the nation-states that compete among themselves. The solution is sought in enriching formal with non-formal education which should result in lifelong learning and which is therefore propagated as the most promising strategy for young people to enhance their chances in the labour market and react to the destandardisation of modern life courses. The OECD in particular is promoting the linking of educational aims to the requirements of a knowledge economy and pushing for benchmarking (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006). Although the ideological superstructure spreads optimism, the basis (i.e., school administrators and teachers) remains reserved towards far-reaching educational reforms. What happens instead is selective modernisation of the old school, setting into motion new forms and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>5</sup>

Present-day neo-liberal ideology and policies tend to place responsibility for school success (or failure) on the shoulders of individual students (and their parents), thus relieving the school from its societal

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<sup>1</sup> The latest 2007 UNICEF report computed PISA figures for twenty-five OECD countries about the educational achievement of fifteen-year-olds in the subjects of reading, mathematics, and scientific literacy. Although Finland scores the best, many European countries score below average, among them such developed and rich EU member states as Germany, Austria, and Denmark. Southern European countries score especially low (i.e., Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece).

<sup>2</sup> See Lave & Wenger (1991); Evans (2003) and *The Handbook of Experiential Learning* (Silberman, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> See OECD (2005c) - Chapter C, Access to Education, Participation and Progression.

<sup>4</sup> In the Netherlands, 70 percent of all Moroccan 17- to 23-year-olds finish their 'education' without having gained sufficient starting qualifications (NRC Handelsblad, 5 April 2007).

<sup>5</sup> In a mind-searching article on changes in knowledge production and its implications on curricula, Young cites Apple's concept of 'conservative modernisation' that refers to the fact that innovation is by no means always progressive (Young, 2008: 9).

task to guarantee adequate and democratic education for all.<sup>6</sup> Students with little social and cultural capital are still caught in the trap that Willis (1977) described thirty years ago, except that the premise of getting a job, regardless of how bad one's grades were in school, does not hold in post-Fordist societies any longer.<sup>7</sup>

The problem that existing educational systems must solve is how to motivate today's young people in such a way that they *all* learn more – and more extensively than they did in the old classroom and do in the present school system. Giving low achievers bad grades and placing responsibility for their learning careers on them does not satisfy the needs of knowledge societies in the long term or those of the students in the short term. Knowledge societies need students who acquire a learning habit early in their young lives that becomes deeply rooted in their personality and lasts a lifetime. In other words, learning is not supposed to stop at a certain moment and then be transformed into working routines; it must be kept active throughout one's working life. Inasmuch as today's work and private spheres tend to be less separated from one another, learning readiness pertains not only to work but to other life situations as well.

The growing economic demand for a more flexible labour force is observed with trepidation by social scientists – including Sennett (1998) among many others (Edwards, 2002) – as well as politicians who fear uprooting and a loss of commonly shared values. The EU discourses on lifelong learning and non-formal education are now entering national reform agendas (Nicoli, 2006). The following three points in the educational system are targeted:

- enlargement of preschool education (Education For all [EFA] Global Monitoring Report 2007; EURYDICE, 2004)
- introduction of non-formal elements in the formal curricula (first stated forcefully by the EC, 2001)
- better preparation of vocational students for the labour market and increasing the rate of students in higher education, preferably in the natural sciences (Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] studies; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005a; 2005b).

The EU is committed to achieving the following main educational goals by 2010:

- The average proportion of young people who leave school early should not exceed 10 percent.
- At least 85 percent of young people at age twenty-two should have completed upper-secondary education (EURYDICE, 2004: 13).

The recent arguments of educational psychologists as well as practitioners and politicians for more and better preschool education have been stated more urgently than in previous years. First, there is the renewed insight that learning drawbacks resulting in failing school careers and consecutive transition problems begin early in school and, therefore, should be addressed early. This is especially true for children from migrant families in developing language proficiency. Second, there is the growing pressure of young mothers in tandem with labour-market needs to facilitate childcare outside the home (see subsequent discussion). Although concrete EU policies for better preschool education are not distinct and powerful – small children are attached to families, and family policies fall outside the scope of direct EU intervention – some initiatives to establish a safety net for early childcare are occurring on a national level in many European countries; however, by no means are the costs of quality care met.

Regarding the second point, the relationship between formal and non-formal education, EU policies are more explicit, propagating a better integration of the two since the PISA studies demonstrated severe deficits in many European educational systems. There are many variants of attempts to reform the old school by enriching the formal curriculum with non-formal elements. In its successful variants,

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<sup>6</sup> Social analysts of the New Deal policy of the United Kingdom speak of the 'responsibilised citizen' (see Clarke, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Closer analysis of the living conditions of young people shows that a categorisation according to the welfare-state regime is only a first rough means to indicate educational and work opportunities of young people in Europe.

the new comprehensive school is part of active community life; it is open not only to students but also to parents and other community members as a place to exchange ideas and participate in civic activities. The Netherlands and other countries are successfully developing such schools (du Bois-Reymond, 2008a; Wetzel, 2006). However, that should not obstruct the view on the structural shortcomings of these renewals: the problems of segregated educational career paths and wasted talent remain despite the entrance of non-formal learning opportunities in the 'old school'.

The modernisation of vocational education and a better output of students who go on to higher education comprise the third target point of EU educational policies. The measures taken are closest to problems of young people in transition and, therefore, dominate national as well as EU agendas, because at this point in the youthful life course, it shows who can and cannot find work related to their education.<sup>8</sup>

The YOYO project<sup>9</sup> demonstrated under which conditions young people can be motivated and reassured to turn misleading school and working careers into trajectories which give them more self-satisfaction and opportunities for social inclusion. The project showed that the chances lie more outside than inside formal education; that is, in contexts of non-formal education provided by youth employment and participatory requalification measures. Yet, formal vocational education could – and occasionally does – apply methods which are traditionally rooted in youth-work and other non-formal approaches, taking into account the needs and capacities of students. There are also experiments with local community alliances, bringing together educational institutions, local enterprises, non-governmental organisations, and other societal actors. These are promising initiatives which resonate with EU prospects and expectations. Conversely, social scientists and youth researchers point to the growing tendency to misuse non-formal education for workforce approaches which hamper the effects of voluntary learning (Bekerman, 2006; Colley, 2003c; Davies, 2000; Field, 2000).

A resolution of the EC<sup>10</sup> refers to the Joint Report of the Council and the Commission, *Modernizing Education and Training*, which emphasises the importance of achieving a balance between the social and economic objectives of education and training policies and of developing diverse learning partnerships which include those engaged in both formal and non-formal sectors. However, the same resolution makes it clear that the relationship between formal and non-formal education must be complementary and not of full integration; the general and vocational systems will remain separate, and young people's personal needs and interests should be addressed mainly in the non-formal rather than formal sector. On the local level, there are experiments with the integration of general and vocational education, but there are no general EU policies that promote a hybridisation of educational systems.

EU agencies are bound to the principle of subsidiarity and therefore have no means other than benchmarking and the 'method of open coordination' to influence educational policies of the member states. There is a growing trend of a further separation and subcategorisation of student populations and the semi-privatisation of educational facilities.

In summary, selective modernisation means, first, that the educational systems of the EU member states respond to economic and other systemic pressures and demands not with a thorough renewal from preschool to vocational and higher education. Rather, they concentrate on the solution of selected problems, such as renewing curricula in specific subject areas and adding non-formal elements to the formal learning structure. This contradicts the need of knowledge societies for a more extensive exploitation of learning capital.<sup>11</sup> None of the proposed and partially realised reforms have

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<sup>8</sup> Youth unemployment in the EU amounts to about 20 percent – with fluctuations over short periods and significant variations among countries.

<sup>9</sup> See Walther *et al.* (2006) and Walther (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Resolution 2006/C 168/01 of 20 July 2006. See Forum 21, *European Journal on Youth Policy*, No. 7-8, 11/2006, 165-169.

<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that knowledge societies do not also need low-qualified personnel for repetitive labour. However, people who must stay their entire life in that sector will be at risk of temporary or permanent exclusion, as Gallie (2002) and others have pointed out saliently.

led to a democratic education for *all* children and students, which contradicts and undermines the legitimating ground of civic societies.

The perspective of the student – or of the teacher, for that matter – is not prevalent in reforms. It seems that the potential of non-formal education is realised where the roles of students and teachers/coaches are not fixed in a rigid manner but rather allow for situational crossovers; where there is more room for relevant learning experiences in such a way that the drawbacks in formal education – that is, too little durable motivation on the side of the student *and* the teacher – can be mediated.

Taken together, the efforts of modernising European educational and vocational systems do not prevent misleading trajectories of young people, and more could be achieved if the reforms were tested more thoroughly.

## **The Established and the Outsiders**

When Norbert Elias and his English colleague, John Scotson (1965), wrote their book about the established and the outsiders more than forty years ago, they described the world of a small English town. Today, the established and the outsiders populate European societies in all types and combinations. It is only recently that EU educational and labour policies have focussed attention on young people with a migrant background – and that attention is minimal.<sup>12</sup>

However, there are efforts being made by EU agencies to assemble data on the life situation of migrants in the member states. The primary problem with the data is the lack of comparability and relevance. Comparability depends on equivalent datasets, which not all countries can provide. Relevance depends on the ability to contextualise data, which runs counter to the quantification of data. Also, there is the problem of too few respondents per country, which prevents the comprehensive analysis of subgroups in the population. Although well-known studies such as the Eurobarometer do not consider migrants and the European Social Survey (ESS) has too few numbers, there are two interconnected projects to produce relevant comparisons: the European Monitoring on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) and the European Information Network on Racism and Xenophobia (RAXEN). Taken together, these projects provide the EU and individual member states with reliable data on racism and all types of overt actions against foreigners. Both function as a monitoring system and provide examples and models of ‘good practices’ (Siegert, 2006), as well as information on the life situation of young migrants in particular.

Until the 1970s, European educational systems were ill prepared to take in large numbers of migrant children with various levels of language deficiencies in the dominant teaching language. These students began to populate the lowest layers of the educational system, together with other low achievers. In essence, that pattern remains today, despite the growing educational achievement of migrant students (EURYDICE, 2004; Skrobanek, 2006; Vedder, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Nickmans, 2006). The majority still enter the labour market with not enough knowledge to compete with the better-educated workforce. Not only are unemployment rates in the EU consistently higher for youth than for the entire working population, they are double for migrant compared to non-migrant youth.

An OECD study on achievement and motivation of immigrant students revealed puzzling results: whereas in some EU countries, second-generation immigrant students did better than the parent generation – which is to be expected – in other EU countries, Denmark and Germany among them, second-generation students did *worse* than the parent generation (PISA, 2006; Kalami, 2000). If nothing else, this demonstrates how extremely vulnerable country comparisons are; so many variables are involved that controlling them over a large number of countries is almost impossible.

The EURYDICE study (2004), which lists the types of educational measures the respective EU member states have issued and introduced to integrate immigrant children into their school systems,

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<sup>12</sup> EU immigration policy in general should be seen in the light of the Lisbon Summit 2000 when the EU set the objective for the decade ahead of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

shows the many national-level differences and how differently they are handled. At the same time, it is the explicit aim of the EU to develop common indicators, laws, and measures to make educational systems and their integration policies more alike and comparable.

So far, integration policies have largely failed in practically all European countries dealing with large and diverse numbers of immigrants and migrants. PISA data from 2003 (PISA, 2006) estimated that between 25 and 40 percent of fifteen-year-old first- and second-generation immigrant students<sup>13</sup> performed below the established basic level 2 in mathematic skills, although the same study found that immigrant students have a stronger learning disposition and a *higher* level of motivation than the native school population. 'The consistency of this finding is striking given that there are substantial differences between countries' (PISA, 2006: 8).

The formerly silent outsiders have developed a double identity which makes them feel 'in' and 'out' at the same time, and they begin to have their voices heard by the majority society. Also, they have become a much differentiated group in themselves, including the children and grandchildren of the first and second generations, nationalised versus not yet nationalised groups, immigrants from the new member states (NMS) EU countries asylum-seekers from war areas, and an unknown number of illegal young people, with or without their families.

All these different groups and in-group differences make integration a hazardous affair: new political constellations, new identifications, new reactions of the host society to migrants due to changes in the labour market - all these forces influence the sphere of living apart or together. For example, in the Netherlands: within seven years, between 1999 and 2006, feelings of alienation of young Turks and Moroccans (eighteen to thirty years old) in Dutch society increased rather than decreased, notwithstanding the fact that these young people had acquired more language proficiency and were better educated than their contemporaries in 1999. According to a study by Enzinger and Dourleijn (2008) in Rotterdam, one of the four major cities with a significant proportion of migrants, 'Integration makes progress while the cultural distance grows'.<sup>14</sup> The 1970s idea of multicultural optimism – that integration of immigrants would progress in a linear way and in the direction of adaptation to Western values and practices – has proven much too simplistic for contemporary complex European societies. A growing body of social-science literature has produced new concepts<sup>15</sup> to describe that complexity (Berry, Phinney, Sani, & Vedder, 2006; Kymlicka, 2007; Laden & Owen, 2007).

Young immigrants search for new identities and many find them in religion. Feelings of alienation are intensified when young people with migrant backgrounds experience severe discrimination in the labour market – which many do as demonstrated in project UP2YOUTH (du Bois-Reymond, 2008a). Not only do low-educated young migrants have more difficulty in finding training programmes and jobs, the well-educated immigrants are 'hitting the glass ceiling' (Heath & Cheung, 2007). The previously mentioned projects, EUMC and RAXEN, stress the general importance of education and labour-market factors for the integration of migrants, but make no reference to specific needs of young migrants and do not differentiate, on an aggregate level, between the genders. Also, the highly relevant meaning of peer groups and other social contacts which help or hinder social integration is neglected.

Recently, the EU commissioned a study on policy measures concerning disadvantaged youth (Institute for Regional Innovation and Social Research, 2006). Educational, vocational, and other transition policies for these young people are described and evaluated for thirteen countries.<sup>16</sup> Two features emerge: (1) most countries do not explicitly differentiate between disadvantaged indigenous and disadvantaged migrant groups; and (2) as an implicit consequence, migrants therefore are subsumed

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<sup>13</sup> First-generation students were born outside the country of assessment as were their parents; second-generation students were born in the country of assessment and their parents were born in a different country.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in NRC Handelsblad 6 April 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Foremost is the notion of 'multiple identities' – which itself is a dubious concept because it may refer to more than one identity (e.g., Dutch *and* Turk) but also to partial identities (e.g., a Dutch in the labour market and Turkish in a partnership).

<sup>16</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, UK.

under the broad category of 'disadvantaged'.<sup>17</sup> Briefly, it can be stated that all the problems non-migrant students have in and with school are doubled for migrant students, making their transition to the labour market more difficult. When they make that transition, they have more risks than non-migrants because they must struggle not only with educational drawbacks but also with overt or covert discrimination from potential employers. The problem is aggravated by the tendency of segregated neighbourhoods and housing markets, with well-to-do families leaving the 'coloured' innercity quarters and finding better housing and education elsewhere.

In the IRIS study, good examples of EU policies aimed at disadvantaged young people are described for each of the researched countries. The policies address essentially three target points: preschool education, formal/non-formal education, and vocational measures, giving each a different emphasis. Preschool measures are mentioned only sporadically, while most emphasis is given to approaches addressing incomplete school trajectories and facilitate labour-market entrance through additional training and counselling as well as other non-formal learning opportunities, among them providing work experience. The most convincing examples reported in the IRIS study are those which develop holistic pedagogical and political approaches with a cross-sectional policy perspective.<sup>18</sup> That is, the educational system must be heavily supported through outside measures in order to disclose wasted or never exploited learning capital; evidently, it cannot do the job alone any longer.

The 'solution' to the problem of multicoloured and multicultural European societies remains the selective social inclusion and exclusion in school and in the labour market by increasing the pressure to perform according to achievement standards of the respective institutions of host countries: the school, the training and job centres, and the firms. Those young migrant people who are able to make use of institutional and informal support systems will be included; those who cannot will continue to be excluded.

## **New Families in Aging Societies**

Since it became evident that Europe's societies are below the reproduction level, young people are seen not only as a resourceful or problematic group regarding their future work careers and labour-market integration but also as potential parents who will contribute to a better population balance.<sup>19</sup> The fact that in all European countries, birth rates are falling and the age of first-birth rises points to structural as well as individual changes (Bradshaw & Hatland, 2006; Lutz, Richter, & Wilson, 2006). Although not exclusively, due to longer educational trajectories for the majority of young people and especially young women, parenthood is generally delayed. Most young female Europeans become mothers in the second half of their twenties, increasingly their early thirties. Young women want to convert their educational capital into careers that pay off before having children. The window for bearing children is thus narrowing. Promising careers develop between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, precisely the typical childbearing years.

Young women who want to have children may suffer from threatening career drawbacks, pay gaps, and rigid work schedules. They also are confronted with opposing expectations to be a full-time mother, on the one hand, and by labour-demand implications, to be a full-time employee on the other (Casey & Alach, 2004; McKie & Cunningham-Burley, 2005). These difficulties and dilemmas are less harsh for young men and fathers who still contribute less than an equal share of household chores and child-care. However, they are also under pressure and now are more often (and encouraged by their female partners) participating in household tasks and childcare. There is a growing body of literature on this 'new father' model, its strengths and limitations (O'Brien, 2006).

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<sup>17</sup> Research on 'gifted disadvantaged', gifted minority students among them, pays attention to a group of students who are not represented in international educational comparative studies, as usually a deficiency perspective is applied (Wert & Pennel, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Connexion Service of the UK is an example of such an holistic joint up policy perspective which cuts across traditional departmental boundaries of education, youth work and labour market policies and which is applicable in principle to all 13-19-year-olds to provide general career, education and training information with more specific intervention for those deemed most at risk. It also has a participatory element in it in that the projects involve young people in the design and delivery of the respective measure.

<sup>19</sup> MacKellar (2006) draws the conclusion that only substantial immigration can slow down the trend of declining birth rates.

The 'contract between the generations', by which the younger generations are large enough to carry the costs of the older generations, is in danger of breaking; European societies are aging faster than they are producing children. At the same time, international migration causes *selective* population growth in Europe, albeit with different impacts in the respective twenty-seven EU member states and locations<sup>20</sup> which have different migrant groups and immigration policies. For the future prospects of knowledge societies, this development has far-reaching consequences. As discussed earlier, educational policies are not geared to disclose the learning potential of migrant students; the majority end up in lower educational tracks and insecure jobs. Growth in this part of the population could mean growth of a low-qualified workforce – an insight pointed out by demographers much sooner than educational politicians realised.<sup>21</sup>

Demographic dynamics with decreasing fertility rates and increasing aging populations set in motion active family policies in many European countries.<sup>22</sup> Two main strategies, which are interconnected, are being discussed to work out a reversal of the trend of declining birth rates: (1) help more (young) women to enter the labour market, and (2) provide more childcare facilities outside the family, thus reconciling labour-market demands with individual life plans (Pfau-Effinger & Geissler, 2005). Although European countries differ as to preferred family-work models and availability of day-care facilities, most countries share the problem of not enough part-time jobs and publicly financed facilities available to enable a satisfactory combination of work and family for both young mothers *and* fathers. At the same time, there is a political-ideological switch in countries that lack childcare facilities, including the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Italy. The change is from strongly held traditional motherhood ideologies to more liberal attitudes and policies vis-à-vis working mothers, leading to a policy of providing more facilities and extended parental leave.

The transition to parenthood takes place within these demographic variables, labour-market logics, national policies, cultures and ideologies, and the life plans of young people, especially women. A recently EU-commissioned project addressed that topic.<sup>23</sup> By focusing on the transition to parenthood, we paid attention to the complex transition patterns of modern young people. It is in planning for parenthood that the simultaneity of status passages most significantly impacts the life courses of young people. They have to work for a living, they may still be in higher education and/or need further qualification to advance their career, they begin to look for more permanent housing on a market disadvantageous to new starters, they are seeking a permanent partner, and they begin thinking about starting a family (or have already done so), and they are inexperienced with all these new tasks and obligations. The transition to young parenthood demonstrates the complexity of postmodern life courses.

The goal of the project 'Young Parenthood' (du Bois-Reymond, 2008b) is to compare individual strategies of young parents and childcare policies in six countries, representing different welfare-state systems.<sup>24</sup> Initial results show that despite major differences among the research countries, all young Europeans in transition to parenthood face similar difficulties: none of the countries has solved the work-life balance to the satisfaction of the young parents. There are too few part-time jobs to allow young men to become 'new fathers', thereby balancing the uneven task loads between the genders. In addition, there is too little flexibility in part-time as well as full-time work to allow for nuanced time schedules to be negotiated among employers, young parents, and their colleagues in the workplace.

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<sup>20</sup> In the three biggest cities in the Netherlands, migrant youth is in the majority already. Almost two out of three children with migrant background are born in the big cities (SCP, 2004), and that is the trend in many other countries as well.

<sup>21</sup> Heinsohn (2003) shows the relationship between wars and differential birth rates in old and young continents, the latter of which having exceeding birth rates and being unable to 'insert' all young males into profitable societal positions with the effect that there is a huge surplus of young males ready for militant violent actions in absence of viable alternatives.

<sup>22</sup> Europe-wide demographic changes will lead to a 44% increase of the 65-79-year-old population between 2005 and 2050, while the rate of young people will shrink by 25% in the same period (quoted after Rappenglück, 2006); see also van Nijmegen & Beets (2005).

<sup>23</sup> UP2YOUTH. Youth – actor of social change. Contract Number 028317 (2006-2008). The project deals with three interconnected themes: participation, ethnic minority youth and young parenthood. In total, fifteen EU countries participated. It is conducted by the EGRIS group (European Group for Integrated Social Research) which is specialized in transition research (see Walther, 2009; du Bois-Reymond & Christholm, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia, UK, Bulgaria (du Bois-Reymond, 2008b).

The term *work-life balance* used in the discussion of demographic decline, gendered labour markets and flexible work schedules, public care and intra-family negotiation for a more egalitarian distribution of workloads has become a catch-all phrase and should be differentiated according to the specific aspects under discussion. However, the basic notion underlying the term is the idea that in late-modern societies, the former gender division – that is, women take the role of mother and housewife, while men are the full-time breadwinners – is under pressure. The boundaries between formerly neatly separated life spheres – work, family, private life, and public life – tend to blur (Jurczyk & Lange, 2007). That may be an advantage for young parents (e.g., working at home with self-administered work schedules), but it also maybe a disadvantage (e.g., when work flexibility is enforced by the employer and work intrudes into private life).<sup>25</sup>

In many European countries, a battle with many actors is being fought for a more even work-life-family balance. The combatants are young mothers and fathers, fighting for a more family-friendly policy in the workplace, employers that do or do not comply with such wishes, and politicians who look for solutions to the shrinking population growth.

### **New Transition Policies for Young Europeans**

If we view the three transition constellations of education/labour market, migrant youth, and young parenthood in light of transition policies, we find that there is no coherent policy to interconnect these constellations, neither on a European nor a national level. Yet, there is growing recognition of the necessity to do something about it, as becomes evident in the intentions of the Youth Pact and other recent documents of the EU. Since the White Paper of 2001, youth has been defined not as problem category but rather as a resource, and European initiatives are reiterating that continuously.

The EGRIS project UP2YOUTH departs precisely from this notion of youth as a resource and young people as actors. The relationship between structure and agency lies at the core of youth research: What are the chances and barriers for young people when they shape their life courses in post-industrial societies? What does ‘participation’ – a key notion in EU documents and rhetoric – entail for their transitions? Contemporary European societies all produce a tension between neo-liberal labour markets and welfare policies, and they seek to ease that tension through activating their populations, young people in particular. Young people are not only identified as responsible and capable workers with corresponding neo-normal life courses, they are also addressed as citizens who must give meaning to active citizenship in their lives and in society at large. The crucial question arises whether young people in transition have enough power and resources to accomplish all that. Here transition policy enters the scene; it should be judged according to the action space it provides for or withholds from young people.

The first part of the chapter concluded by stating that European educational systems modernise selectively, not thoroughly. Convincing new curricula that systematically combine formal, non-formal, and informal learning in order to disclose as much hitherto unused or underused learning capital as possible are scarce. It does not appear that such integration is intended, despite much rhetoric about lifelong learning. The EU youth programs could and should be used by formal and informal educators for advancing models of non-formal learning which might also be introduced into formal education. This would be particularly advantageous for the integration of migrant and non-migrant young people.<sup>26</sup> Information about long-term effects and the surplus value of the programs regarding informally acquired knowledge and integration of different groups is scarce (Thomas & Chang, 2006). Here is unused potential for a European integrated transition policy as well as further research.

The second topic of this chapter – migrant youth – was concerned with the lack of data on the European level and the absence of a coherent policy to promote full integration of migrants in their respective host societies. However, the EC apparently is beginning to focus on the problem. The chap-

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<sup>25</sup> See the EU project ‘Transitions’ about the work-family boundary (Lewis & Smithson, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Neither national nor EU-financed youth projects are visited by migrant youth proportionally to their percentages in the whole population.



ter touched on the danger of growing, not diminishing, tensions between outsiders and insiders. What specifically is missing is educational and youth-related policies to create sites and situations for young people of different origins and cultures to meet and spend time together. The notions of participation and citizenship, which figure so prominently in European discourses (Lister, Middleton, & Smith, 2002), must still be translated into concrete policies and politics to counteract threatening social exclusion and to promote social inclusion.

Finally, we discussed new tasks and obligations of young parenthood which demand a new work-life-family balance. We explained the great urgency on a national as well as an EU level to work out a new balance and how many diverse and sometimes controversial actors and actions are involved in its realisation.

Two strong concepts take the lead in national and European discourses which are relevant for integrated transition policies: transitional labour markets and 'flexicurity' (van Lieshout & Wilthagen, 2003), as well as work-life balance (Flagan, 2003). The idea behind transitional labour markets and flexicurity is a greater permeability of labour markets to allow for combinations of paid employment with other useful activities, such as volunteering and parenting. In this way, various income sources are combined – for example, labour wages and state benefits. Transitional labour markets imply that there are legally enforceable entitlements for young people to choose among different options according to their needs; fiscal incentives should encourage employment rather than state-financed unemployment. By applying these principles, various transitions become possible and young people can switch between them, depending on their life situation. This includes transitions between part-time and full-time employment, which would facilitate wishes or demands from an employer for acquiring additional qualifications; the decision to begin a family while temporarily stopping work; and transitions between wage work and self-employment. Transitional labour markets in this sense strengthen participation and citizenship *and* are prone to integrate different transition statuses of young people. Related to the transitional labour market is the concept of flexicurity, which provides a basic income for young people in transition who are confronted with the insecurities of flexi-jobs and who are denied working contracts (Stauber, Kovacheva, & van Lieshout, 2003). This policy concept – with which the Netherlands, among others, has experimented – has great potential for integrating various transition constellations. Flexicurity in combination with transitional labour markets lowers the barriers among education, vocational training, and work; it facilitates labour-market entry for migrant youth by allowing for alternative routes; and it would be a solution for young parents who want to adjust their work life to changing family needs.

Work-life-balance policies aim for similar solutions. Family and gender relationships are more directly addressed, especially the relationship between female work and female childcare relative to male work and male childcare. However, work-life-balance policies should not only emphasise the relationship and tension between childcare tasks and work demands; they also should address other life areas of young parents, such as the needs for adequate and affordable housing and for more flexible childcare arrangements. What is painfully missing is how work-life-balance policies work out for young migrant parents who often adhere to non-Western cultural norms and values and are predominantly found in lower labour-market segments with less secure work contracts.

Overall, it seems that the EC and associated institutions would have to develop a reflective attitude to create a viable European Social Model (Giddens, Diamond & Liddle, 2006) and to reflect their actions and measures more deliberately in terms of integration and participation, especially where youth in transition are concerned.

# EUROPEAN POLICIES ON SOCIAL INCLUSION AND YOUTH: CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND CHALLENGE \*

Helen Colley

## Introduction

Like a number of those who contributed papers to the Youth Research Partnership seminar and chapters to this book, many youth researchers and practitioners have devoted their efforts to supporting the fight against poverty and social exclusion within the framework set by European and national policies. They work to advance the *realpolitik* of which Howard Williamson speaks in Chapter 2. But as Williamson also points out, deeper theoretical understandings – however taken for granted or tacit – serve to shape both policy and practice in fundamental ways. The way we think about social inclusion shapes what we do about it. There is, then, a parallel need to consider research which engages in critical analysis of policies on social inclusion for young people, making explicit and questioning the assumptions that underpin them. If social exclusion can be seen as a “box” in which young people become trapped, we need to ensure that social inclusion policies do not become another type of “box” in which our ideas and practice can become trapped. We need to “think outside the box” on policy as well, and to do so, we need to understand how that “box” too has been constructed.

Some previous work in the Youth Research Partnership (Lentin, 2004; Colley, 2005) shows that this requires a historical perspective. By this, I do not just mean giving a chronological account of these policies over time, but resisting ahistorical accounts that would strip policies of their social, economic, political and cultural context, and of the complexities and contradictions in their development. This is a two-way process. Many stakeholders and voices input into European policy, and, of course, the principle of subsidiarity emphasises agreement across all the member states. But there are concerns that not all stakeholders or voices are heard or attended to in making policy, and that once policy has been made at European level, it can drive practice at the national and local level, particularly through funding mechanisms and auditable targets (Brine, 2003).

This chapter discusses some of the issues that are often taken for granted or obscured when we locate ourselves and our practice within the social inclusion policy “box”. It reviews some of the research that has tried to unpack that “box” and make its construction more visible, through critical analyses that highlight questions of social justice. I hope that these critiques will help those working with less advantaged young people, by providing a sense of both the limitations and opportunities that European policy currently provides. Inevitably, my remit here can only summarise briefly a few important areas of research, but I hope it can point readers in the direction of more specific lessons related to their own particular area of work and concerns. It should be our job to “think outside the box” in terms of our own practice, as well as in terms of young people’s experience of being boxed into a position of social exclusion. Let us begin, then, by looking back in some detail at the policies which first placed social inclusion centre stage on the European scene.

## Early policy: the inter-relationship of social and economic strategies

Ruth Levitas (1996) offered an early overview of early policy on social inclusion, which I draw on substantially here. Two White Papers, one on economic and one on social policy published respectively in 1993 and 1994, can be seen as landmarks in establishing social exclusion as a key issue for European governments. *European social policy – A way forward for the Union* (European Commission, 1994) noted a growing social crisis which had to be addressed:

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*The marginalisation of major social groups is a challenge to the social cohesion of the Union ... At present, with more than 52 million people in the Union living below the poverty line, social exclusion is an endemic phenomenon ... It threatens the social cohesion of each Member State and of the Union as a whole (European Commission, 1994: 36-37).*

At the same time, it treated these concerns as inextricably connected with the threat of economic crisis:

*This is not just a question of social justice; the Union simply cannot afford to lose the contribution of marginalised groups to society as a whole ... the Union needs to ensure that the most vulnerable ... are not excluded from the benefits of – and from making an active contribution to – the economic strength of a more integrated Europe (European Commission, 1994: 37).*

Explanations for the cause of this double threat were located in contingent factors, specific to a period which had seen a series of co-ordinated global recessions, from the oil crisis of 1973 to the latest downturn starting in 1991; and in which new technology had come to play a crucial role.

*It is clear that contemporary economic and social conditions tend to exclude some groups from the cycle of opportunities ... social exclusion stem[s] from the structural changes affecting our economies and societies (European Commission, 1994: 36-37).*

Accordingly, the twin responses proposed were “competitiveness” and “social progress”, presented in harmony as “two sides of the same coin” (European Commission, 1994: 4):

*Continuing social progress can be built only on economic prosperity, and therefore on the competitiveness of the European economy ... While wealth creation is essential for social progress, the social environment is also an essential factor in determining economic growth. Progress cannot be founded simply on the basis of the competitiveness of economies, but also on the efficiency of European society as a whole (European Commission, 1994: 4-5).*

The overwhelming emphasis of policy solutions was clear. The first guiding principle established was: “Social and economic integration: employment is the key” (European Commission, 1994: 4). Welfare assistance was to be replaced as a priority by employment generation, and the first full chapter of the White Paper was entitled “Jobs: the top priority”.

*For the Union to reconcile high social standards with the capacity to compete in world markets, it is therefore necessary to give the highest priority to creating new jobs, enabling everyone to integrate into the economy and society (European Commission, 1994: 4).*

This White Paper on social policy noted risks in pursuing economic competitiveness as the route to social inclusion, since increases in productivity and efficiency might result in job losses rather than job creation. Nevertheless, the key underpinning of the strategy was an approach of human capital development targeted at the supply side of the labour market:

*All Member States have expressed their determination to improve the quality of their education and training systems to better meet the challenge of long-term competitiveness, and to provide the supply of a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. A qualified and well-motivated workforce is a cornerstone of a competitive economy. This is vital as individuals will in future have to change careers or jobs more frequently during their lifetimes (European Commission, 1994: 15).*

It is here that the White Paper located young people. Although young people were not mentioned as being among the most vulnerable groups in society, the document stated that “unqualified school-leavers inevitably become the hard-core of the long-term unemployed” (European Commission, 1994: 15). Priorities therefore focused on the extension and improvement of vocational training and

apprenticeships, along with other measures such as tackling illiteracy, vocational guidance provision, higher education and business partnerships, and an emphasis on the need for young people to acquire foreign language, entrepreneurial and information technology skills.

The strategies proposed for social policy therefore drew heavily on the economic White Paper “Growth, competitiveness, employment” (European Commission, 1993). Here too, the social and the economic aspects of both the problem and its solutions were presented as inseparable. The central goal to ensure Europe’s future prosperity was:

*... finding a new synthesis of the aims pursued by society (work as a factor of social integration, equality of opportunity) and the requirements of the economy (competitiveness and job creation) (European Commission, 1993: 3).*

Such a goal was, however, threatened by the effects of globalisation, especially increased competition from the US and Japan. Unemployment was presented as the most serious block to combating this threat, along with the drain that it represented – through welfare assistance – on public resources which could otherwise be “channelled into productive investment” (European Commission, 1993: 40). The emergence of “the knowledge economy” and information technologies was seen as creating challenges for transformation that European businesses have to seize, in order to stimulate growth and expand employment. Here, even more explicitly than in the White Paper on social policy, it was young people’s lack of skills which was viewed as a prime cause of social exclusion:

*... too many young people leave school without essential basic training ... the failure of education ... is a particularly important and increasingly widespread factor of marginalisation and economic and social exclusion. In the Community, 25 to 30% of young people, who are the victims of failure, leave the education system without the preparation they need to become properly integrated into working life (European Commission, 1993: 118, original emphasis).*

This was to be addressed as a dual social and economic problem, through the elevation of skill levels:

*The basic skills which are essential for integration into society and working life include a mastery of basic knowledge (linguistic, scientific and other knowledge), and skills of a technological and social nature, that is to say the ability to develop and act in a complex and highly technological environment, characterised, in particular, by the importance of information technologies ... People’s careers will develop on the basis of the progressive extension of skills (European Commission, 1993: 120).*

The Youthstart Initiative (discussed further below) was central to this policy, promising a guarantee of further education, training, work experience or voluntary activity to all young people under 18. More than ten years later, both socio-economic conditions and policies have moved on in Europe. In what respects has policy altered in this time, and in what respects has it continued in the same vein?

### **Policy on social inclusion and youth today: continuity and change**

If the White Papers of 1993 and 1994 had a strong sense of urgency in relation to economic competitiveness and social cohesion, the most recent European policy documents on these issues are marked more by a sense of emergency. In 2000, with the adoption of a new strategy at the European Council in Lisbon, the EC looked optimistically to a “European renaissance” in which Europe “can be a beacon of economic, social and environmental progress to the rest of the world” (European Commission, 2005a: 4). In the face of a “quantum shift” in the economic landscape, the Lisbon Strategy aimed to make the European Union ‘the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’ (European Parliament, 2000: 11).

However, explicit concerns were voiced by Nicole Fontaine, President of the European Union in 2000, in her speech on the original launch of the Lisbon Strategy. She argued that Europeans:

*... are scandalised by untrammelled capitalism, whose relocations, social dumping, ruthless exploitation of the disparities between the social and fiscal legislation of the Member States and remorseless pursuit of profit at the expense of working men and women have a direct and traumatic impact on their lives, both as communities and as individuals (Fontaine, 2000: 5).*

She went on to provide a very different explanation of some causes of social exclusion:

*Unregulated mergers, based merely on dominant capitalist concerns, have a devastating effect on the Union's social cohesion. That face of the European Union is unacceptable to men and women who wake up one morning to discover that the company they work for has changed hands and that they are at the mercy of their employer's economic strategy options. The effect on the lives of those people, their families and their entire region is traumatic and, let's face it, inhuman (Fontaine, 2000: 7).*

This very blunt rejection of the capacity of economic market functioning to create the conditions for social inclusion, and the naming of capitalism as fundamental to the problem of social exclusion, poses a major challenge to those who focus on the development of human capital as the key to both economic and social policy. However, by 2005, the strategy was relaunched in the face of deep concerns about its progress at the midway stage:

*Today, we see that progress has at best been mixed ... there has simply not been enough delivery at European and national level. This is not just a question of difficult economic conditions ... it also results from a policy agenda which has become overloaded, failing co-ordination and sometimes conflicting priorities ... Time is running out and there can be no room for complacency (European Commission, 2005a: 4-5).*

The response has been to reassert the priority, established in the earlier White Papers discussed above, of employment strategies as a means to address both economic and social problems:

*... renewed growth is vital to prosperity, can bring back full employment and is the foundation of social justice and opportunity for all ... We need a dynamic economy to fuel our wider social and environmental ambitions. This is why the renewed Lisbon Strategy focuses on growth and jobs ... (European Commission, 2005a: 5).*

*Growth and jobs are the next great European project (European Commission, 2005a: 13).*

Apart from the tone of alarm, then, there is considerable continuity between this communication and the White Papers of 1993-94, in the assumed unity between social and economic spheres of life, and in strategies which prioritise economic responses as the solution to social problems. Accordingly, proposals still focus strongly on "investing more in human capital through better education and skills" (European Commission, 2005a: 10), and this remains the key concern with regard to young people, particularly given the persistence of high drop-out rates from education and training, through a new European Youth Initiative.

There are, however, also changes as well as continuities in recent policies, and three are particularly significant here in relation to social inclusion for young people. First, the Lisbon Strategy itself places far greater emphasis than the previous White Papers on the role of the "knowledge economy". Its importance is no longer seen primarily as the technological facilitation and competitive advantage of businesses, but as fundamental to social inclusion through not just "more" but also "better" jobs (European Commission, 2005a: 26ff.). This draws on a widespread and dominant discourse about changes to the world of work since the decline of the manufacturing sector. In this new scenario, the knowledge-based service sector promises higher skilled and higher paid jobs that are also attractive and socially inclusive because they are creative and empowering. It is couched in exciting and optimistic terms, referring to "the European adventure", and contrasting it favourably with old forms of production:

*In advanced economies such as the EU, knowledge, meaning R&D [research and development], innovation and education, is a key driver of productivity growth. Knowledge is a critical factor with which Europe can ensure competitiveness in a global world where others compete with cheap labour or primary resources (European Commission, 2005a: 21).*

Within this scenario, young people will benefit through the opening up of “new career prospects” (European Commission, 2005a: 27). We can also note here the change to more favourable economic conditions at the start of the 21st century than prevailed in the recession of the 1990s: “The Union is experiencing its best macro-economic outlook for a generation” (European Parliament, 2000: 11).

Second, following the Kock report in October 2004, there was a concerted attempt to place the difficulties young people faced through unemployment more centrally to the Lisbon Strategy, and to create greater coherence across a range of policy fields in order to address this matter. In early 2005, the initiative was taken to develop a European Youth Pact (European Commission, 2005b), promoting specific measures to improve employment, social cohesion, education, training and mobility, as well as the reconciliation of family and working life. Youth policy was operationalised within the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion Strategy, and the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme.

The Youth Pact is certainly the most high profile youth policy development in Europe to date, and the first time that youth policy has focused on employment for young people in addition to its traditional emphasis on active citizenship. While those practitioners involved in youth work and informal education may find this focus a challenge to their traditional remit, it also opens up opportunities for them to bring their expertise in the sectors of education and training to an unprecedented degree, and Chapters 7 and 8 by Beatrix Niemeyer and Andreas Walther in this book testify to the potential of this synergy. However, as the editors of this book point out in Chapter 1, there are significant questions posed by the content of the Youth Pact, in particular whether the same balance that the document proposes between economic strategies and strategies for active citizenship will actually be maintained in practice.

Third, a White Paper on the specific subject of young people, “A new impetus for European youth”, was published by the EC in 2001, after wide consultation across the youth sector. This not only represents a much stronger and more comprehensive policy focus on youth than was evident in the 1990s. It also represents a rather less utilitarian view of young people than is expressed either in those early White Papers or in the recent Lisbon Strategy documents. This is signalled by four key messages, which emphasise the need to recognise and provide material support for: the active citizenship role that young people wish to play; their non-formal learning; their autonomy; and their demands for social inclusion and human rights for all.

While the White Paper on youth acknowledges employment as crucial to social inclusion, it highlights that, despite improved economic conditions and two decades of policy focused on social inclusion via employment, “young people are willing to work, but finding a good job is getting harder” (European Commission, 2001a: 38):

*the transition between education, training and the labour market ... has objectively deteriorated in the past 20 years ... Youth unemployment rates remain high compared with general employment rates ... Precarious forms of employment have become more widespread. Wages have decreased compared to those of adult workers ... Even a good educational qualification does not automatically guarantee them a job, as competition for employment has become fiercer (European Commission, 2001a: 38-39).*

A further significant change is that this White Paper discusses young people’s political dissatisfaction with both national and European governance, and economic globalisation. In at least partial contrast to both the Lisbon vision and the statement of “European values” contained in earlier social inclusion

policies, which emphasised the market economy alongside other factors, young people give primacy to ideals of peace and democracy:

*It is obvious to all that the clear affirmation of an area of rights and freedoms is much more necessary today than that of an economic Europe (European Commission, 2001a: 53).*

The youth White Paper indicates the tensions between broader policy and the views of youth, especially in relation to the supposed harmony of economic and social objectives. In a highly prescient passage, it notes that young people's mistrust of traditional democratic structures and governmental institutions might "even encourage protest" (European Commission, 2001a: 10):

*Young people in Europe form part of societies which are open to outside cultural and economic influences. The world is their frame of reference ... At the same time, they dispute some of the consequences of globalisation on grounds of social justice, openness and 'sustainable' development ... This relationship between young people and globalisation, which is mixed to say the least, is a sign of malaise and must not be ignored (European Commission, 2001a: 10-11, emphasis added).*

In the light of these tensions, we can ask an important question that formed a powerful theme in a previous Youth Research Partnership seminar: when a particular issue (such as social inclusion) becomes the focus of policy attention, what becomes visible and what becomes invisible?

### **Social exclusion: a problematic way of thinking about society?**

Ruth Levitas (1996) provided one of the earliest critical analyses of the social and economic White Papers of 1993 and 1994. She argued against the way in which these documents elided economic efficiency and social cohesion, particularly their tendency to define social exclusion as being outside the labour market, with the parallel definition of social inclusion as being in paid employment. While making aspects of the problem visible, this dissolution of civil society into market relations rendered others invisible:

*It is a discourse unable to address the question of unpaid work in society (work done principally by women), or of low-paid work, and completely erases from view the inequality between those owning the bulk of productive property and the working population, as well as obscuring the inequalities among workers. It presents 'society' as experiencing a rising standard of living by defining those who have not done so, who have become poorer, as 'excluded from' society, as 'outside' it (Levitas, 1996: 7).*

On the one hand, Levitas highlighted the danger of ignoring the poverty and social problems facing employees in low-quality, low-paid work: we cannot assume that all "inclusion" in employment is beneficial, as Fahmy's chapter in this book also suggests. This concern for the working poor has been borne out by subsequent evidence. Five years later, the annual report on employment trends in Europe (European Commission, 2001b) showed that a quarter of the workforce were in "dead-end" or "low pay/productivity" jobs, with young people disproportionately represented in this category. Only around 13% of young people in "dead-end" jobs were transitioning into better jobs a year later, while almost 30% were dropping into unemployment or inactivity. "Bad" jobs represent a real trap (see also Capillari, 2002). A more recent Eurostat report (Bardone & Guio, 2005), using data from the 15 EU member states in 2003, shows 11 million workers living in poverty, with a further 9 million household members affected by it. Once again, young workers are at higher risk than adults. Although Nicole Fontaine (2005) pointed to the need for a redistribution of wealth in order to combat such "inhuman" aspects of capitalism, the main redistribution proposed by the economic and social policy White Papers is from spending on welfare assistance to subsidising the low wages offered by employers.

On the other hand, Levitas (1996) also warned against a way of thinking about "socially excluded" people as an underclass outside of the "mainstream", or treating social exclusion as "their" problem rather than a problem at the heart of our whole society (see also Jarl-Aberg, 2005). Though often excluded from paid work, women are integrated into society (unequally) through their unpaid work as

carers. Though often excluded from welfare benefit rights, many migrant workers are integrated into society (unequally) through precarious, low-paid work. Though areas of employment like the financial and “dot.com” sectors may represent the most advanced expressions of the new service economy, they also integrate (unequally) large numbers of poor and marginalised cleaning, catering, delivery and maintenance staff, often from Europe’s former colonies – we have to consider all of the workers in a sector, not just the most visible and successful (Sassen, 1996; Nolan, 2003). In a previous book in this series, John Wrench (2004) has shown how anti-discrimination measures to increase under-represented minority ethnic groups in employment may be diluted by newer “diversity management” approaches that sound inclusive but avoid confronting racism. The work of Shahrzad Mojab (2006) and Jackie Brine (1998; 1999) reveals how disadvantaged women, both native-born and immigrant to Europe, are in practice more often treated as “trainees” rather than “learners”, and may even find themselves deskilled rather than better educated, because of the impact of European policies and their funding mechanisms on vocational education and training programmes. Without taking these issues into account, calls for social solidarity are reduced merely to individualistic moral exhortations, rather than ensuring that solidarity is actively fostered by the structures we create for our society (Levitas, 1996).

Byrne (1999) has argued that this social segregation is increasingly becoming a problematic reality, as the end of the economic expansion following the Second World War has resulted in new socio-economic conditions. In the language of chaos theory and complexity, society has shifted from a “torus” (doughnut) form in which most people were able to benefit from incremental upward mobility. It has now bifurcated into a “butterfly”: contiguity of social positions has disappeared, and conditions of social inclusion and exclusion are quite separate; minor changes can propel people into poverty; and it can be very difficult to return back across the narrow boundary. Such an analysis resonates strongly with the accounts of “yo-yo” transitions by Kovacheva and Pohl and by Walther in this book.

This analysis, however, resists presuppositions that such conditions lie somehow in the abstract functioning of socio-economic structures beyond the realms of agency. As Gorman also argues in her chapter, such an ahistorical view of social exclusion as “systemic” ignores the use of state power by the capitalist class, and the practices at every level by which people enact its relations of ruling. Both the development of part of the working class and the underdevelopment of others, to form a reserve army of labour, are complementary and active strategies for capitalism, which reproduce the same hierarchical division among workers in Europe as they do for the Third World (Byrne, 1999). What, though, of the Lisbon vision, which promises that growth will bring social inclusion through not just more, but better jobs? What evidence does the last decade offer that this promise can be kept?

### **Social inclusion: can the promise of more and better jobs be kept?**

The policy linkage between economic growth and social cohesion is heavily reliant on the optimistic forecast, central to the Lisbon Strategy, that a “paradigm shift” has taken place in the world of work; that new, post-Fordist forms of work organisation and information-based services now dominate the economy; and that the “knowledge society” will foster a virtuous high-employment, high-skills, high-pay, and high-trust economy (Brown & Lauder, 2003; Capillari, 2002). Debates on this paradigm shift have polarised this extreme against an opposite, cataclysmic prophecy that predicts social antagonism and collapsing employment in the grip of a vicious, low-skill economy. Both positions, however, have been criticised for being ahistorical, lacking empirical evidence and ignoring global tendencies – the “ungrounded predictions of the visionaries” (Nolan, 2003: 479, see also Thompson, 2003). More nuanced and partial accounts of shifts in the nature of work may be far more accurate.

What, then, of the “better jobs” promised by the knowledge economy? First, the growth in “knowledge work” has to be disaggregated in order to get a true picture of the situation. An expanding body of evidence from some European countries, the US and Australia (Fleming *et al.*, 2004; Felstead *et al.*, 2002; Nolan 2003; Thompson *et al.*, 2001) shows that most occupational growth in knowledge-based services is dominated by jobs which entail low-grade, routinised handling of information, such as keyboard operation and data inputting, often with high levels of workplace surveillance and control. These are a far cry from the autonomous, creative and empowering jobs in knowledge production and



management, which are implied by the “knowledge economy” rhetoric, but enjoyed only by a small minority of professional and managerial-level employees. Even in the fast-growing “dot.com” sector, the largest increases in employment are to be found among shelf-stackers, warehouse keepers, drivers and telephone operators: namely, those who facilitate the delivery of goods for e-commerce (Nolan, 2003). Moreover, the other fastest-growing occupations in the UK, for example, are in low-paid personal services such as hairdressing, care of children and the elderly, and domestic house-keeping. This expansion is fuelled by the polarisation of unequal incomes: many poor people now rely for work on servicing the personal needs of those who are better-off.

If the promise of better jobs may be exaggerated, can we at least hope for more jobs? Thompson (2003) argues that policies on economic growth as the route to social cohesion hark back to the reciprocity of the social contract that existed as a result of the post-war settlement and Keynesian economic strategies. This has today been replaced by a new and more tenuous type of settlement, related to so-called “knowledge work”, and based on the development of human capital through lifelong learning. However, tensions in this settlement are produced by the actual conditions of the labour market. The operation of capitalist markets, and especially the dominance of finance capital, continues to result in overproduction and downsizing, rather than growth in jobs, or continuity and stability of employment for workers. At the same time, work has qualitatively intensified, especially through the demand for greater employee commitment in the form of emotional and aesthetic labour – but such commitment is difficult to maintain in conditions where labour is becoming ever more exploited and ever more contingent. These pressures are becoming evident even in Germany, which arguably contrasts most in its high-skill/high-pay strategies with, for example, the UK. Thompson suggests that employers may want and intend to keep their side of the growth-cohesion bargain, but are increasingly unable to do so.

Such evidence and analyses point to a contemporary context in which globalisation, shareholder interests, and systemic rationalisation disrupt the very connectedness of the economic and social on which European policy for social inclusion is founded. They resonate more with the political cautions expressed in the White Paper on youth than with the other policy documents we have considered here. But education and lifelong learning for employability are the cement which should bind the social and economic in these policies. Do they offer to re-knit the disconnection?

### **Can employability link economic and social goals?**

Employability has become a key concept in a situation where employment itself cannot be guaranteed. It was central to the Youthstart Initiative funded by the EC from 1995-99 to improve young people’s school-to-work transitions and their social inclusion through labour market integration. A distinctive aspect of Youthstart lay in the “comprehensive pathways” and “stepping stones” approach it took to overcoming complex social and economic disadvantage. The policy documents outlining the initiative focused on empowerment for young people, client-centred support for their individual goals and a holistic ethos:

*The empowerment stage concerns activities that give young people the tools and confidence to take control of their own pathway ... It is about empowering young people to plan their own future and to understand and capitalise on their own potential (European Commission, 1998: 12).*

However, the key funding targets set for Youthstart projects defined these pathways in terms of their employment-related direction and destinations, without taking account of the low-quality training and low-paid jobs that were often the only options available to many disadvantaged young people (Colley, 2003a). This rather undermines claims for their empowering effect.

Official documents from the Youthstart Initiative spelled out its “holistic” approach:

*Each of the stages of the pathway is associated with bringing about a significant shift in the values and motivation of the young people, their skills and abilities and in their interaction with*

*the wider environment. The overall objective is to move the young person from a position of alienation and distance from social and economic reality, to a position of social integration and productive activity (European Commission, 1998: 6, emphasis added).*

“Empowering activities” such as mentoring were supposed to “reinforce the acceptance of values and attitudinal change amongst the young people” (European Commission, 1998: 12). As the largest Youthstart mentoring project in the UK put it, “the mentors’ primary task of influencing behaviours, and by implication attitudes, is a fundamental one” (Ford, 1999: 18). Such an approach contains questionable normative assumptions, however (Colley, 2003a). Which values and attitudes are to be inculcated? In whose interests? What of the economic and social realities that do confront these young people? Or the poor communities in which they are, for better or worse, integrated?

Some have argued that such a view of employability has “more to do with shaping subjectivity, deference and demeanour than with skill development and citizenship” (Gleeson, 1996: 97). Indeed, it can be seen as a very narrow instrumental view of young people’s transitions and learning, in stark contrast with the emphasis on active citizenship in the White Paper on youth (European Commission, 2001a):

*... so commonly expressed now in the reductionist terms of the requirements of international economic competitiveness, [current policies on youth transitions] are almost exclusively concerned with the production of future workers with particular skills or dispositions ... [T]he work ethic and human capital theory generate between them a very utilitarian version of what it is to be a young person in contemporary society (Maguire et al., 2001: 199).*

There is, then, a tension between the Youthstart Initiative’s claim to promoting holistic support for young people, and its economically instrumental vision of education and training. Holism treats the person as an organic and complex whole, connected in dynamic ways with their environment. By contrast, the pursuit of “employability” seems to atomise young people’s dispositions, and dictate their responsiveness to already-prescribed categories of ideal-typical employee attributes determined elsewhere (Colley, 2003b). As we have already noted above, an increasing element of employability is a willingness to deploy one’s very emotional and aesthetic self at work. The danger is that hearts and minds become the raw material of professional “support” and “guidance” interventions, which aim to reform young people as saleable commodities in the competitive labour market.

## **Conclusion**

If the critiques reviewed in this chapter hold true, employability can represent only a weak link between the labour market and social inclusion. Defining employability in terms of individuals’ characteristics obscures its dependence on conditions in the labour market, and their role in determining the chances of getting a job (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2002). As Niemeyer explains in her chapter in this book, at best this risks simply changing the order of the queue at the factory gate, without reducing it substantially. At worst, it risks placing the blame for “social exclusion” at young people’s own feet. The White Paper on youth seems to offer the potential to open up broader discussions and different perspectives on social inclusion, most importantly from the point of view of young people themselves (du Bois-Reymond, 2004). But the lower status of the youth sector in the policy-making hierarchy, compared to both employment and education, makes it less likely that this potential will be fully exploited.

One thing that all the researchers reviewed here have in common is that they highlight practices which contribute to social exclusion, including those which are sedimented even in policies, structures, institutions and practices which are supposed to promote social inclusion. By better understanding the assumptions that underpin European policy, and being able to think about them critically, we will be better equipped to engage in the *realpolitik* that is so necessary: to influence policies and shape our own practice in ways that really do break down the barriers facing disadvantaged young people.



# WHOSE ARENA IS THE EU YOUTH POLICY? YOUNG PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE IN THE EU YOUTH POLICY FROM THEIR OWN POINTS OF VIEW: CASE OF THE EU PRESIDENCY YOUTH EVENT IN HYVINKÄÄ, FINLAND \*

Sofia Laine and Anu Gretschel

## Introduction

The European Union (EU) is today a transnational democracy for 27 countries, each of which has a very different history and present condition of national democracy as well as level of participation possibilities for young people in local and national decision-making. According to Richard Corbett *et al.* (2005), the recognition of the need for common policies and rules led national parliaments, when ratifying the founding treaties, to confer legislative power on the EU in limited but important areas. Initially, these powers were given to the European Council, composed of ministers representing national governments. The European Council is acting on a proposal of the Commission, a collegial European executive appointed by national governments. There is also the elected European Parliament, which has developed from a largely consultative assembly to a genuine co-legislator in the EU. The Parliament and Council now form a bicameral EU legislature (Corbett *et al.*, 2005: 2-3).

Today the scope of EU policies includes also the youth field and one of the most important aspects of the European youth policy is that the young people themselves would need to be more involved in order to foster the 'young people's active citizenship' not only in the member countries but also at the European level (European Commission, 2001a: 16; Treaty of European Union, 1992: article 126; Treaty of European Union, 2008: article 165). We need to underline the speciality of youth policy in comparison to other EU policy sectors: The member states cooperate in the youth sector but they do not have a common European youth policy; there are no directives but the member states can agree on common objectives. There are instruments in use to foster young people's active citizenship such as the Youth in Action programme, the Youth portal and the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). Since 2000, each EU Presidency has organized a youth event, which has served as a political discussion space where current EU Youth Policy topics could be discussed with young people. In this article we study the EU Presidency youth event as an instrument for this kind of interaction, which can be seen as a consultation channel between young people and decision makers or even as an attempt to give young people an opportunity to participate in the actual EU policy-making. The interaction between the EU and young people is assumed to happen in the form of *structured dialogue*. For example, the EU Presidency youth event is also named as an existing instrument of structured dialogue (Council of the European Union 2007b: 6). The Commission of European Communities has defined structured dialogue as follows (2006: 3):

*[Structured dialogue is] open and should bring together **all actors dealing directly or indirectly with youth** (i.e., policy makers, youth people, NGOs, youth workers, trainers, youth information networks,<sup>1</sup> teachers, youth experts/ researchers etc.). This should enable to have a coherent and cross sectoral approach to youth issues.*

*The structured dialogue should be **organised in an efficient way and produce concrete results** in terms of 'youth declarations'<sup>2</sup> or 'action plans'. The latter have to be taken seriously*

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Eurodesk, ERYICA and EYCA. [Note of the original quotation.]

<sup>2</sup> In many EU Presidency youth events youth representatives have written a declaration as a final document of the meeting. This document could be described as an emphatic formal public statement by a youth.

*and should have a direct impact on youth policy shaping. Any 'false dialogue' or tokenism should be avoided since it undermines the credibility of the involved authorities/EU institutions and leads to frustration, especially among young people. [emphasis original]*

Our perspective to structured dialogue is to consider the sociological and pedagogical aspects of what is successful structured dialogue. To do that we try to answer the following research questions: Did the young participants feel they were involved as accepted and competent subjects in the Hyvinkää EU event?<sup>3</sup> Did they feel they had an influence on the EU youth policy? To answer these questions we also need to find out what functions the EU Presidency youth event presently has and what functions it should have in the future.

Political participation is context- and problem-based and it thus makes sense to use a case study to study it (Lappalainen, 2007: 192). Our data was gathered through a triangulation. In order to ensure the reliability of our results, we also used triangulation of method (mostly qualitative but also some quantitative), theory (influence tool and democratic miniature society) and research (two researchers). Each of these followed each other in cycles (Laine *et al.*, 2007: 24-27). The study started with participatory observation in the EU youth event in Hyvinkää. Both authors got the insider's view to the process as Laine worked there as a meeting coordinator<sup>4</sup> and Gretscher as a working group rapporteur.<sup>5</sup> After the event we started to interview the young participants as we were interested in their views.<sup>6</sup> It soon became evident that we also wanted to bring the reflections from the European Youth Parliament (EYP) and the European Youth Forum (YFJ) to this article and we therefore interviewed some key actors of these two institutions. This study is written mainly from the points of view of the young participants, based on 11 individual interviews.<sup>7</sup> To understand the speciality of the Hyvinkää meeting we needed to investigate the role of the EU youth events in general. The young people whom we interviewed gave us many answers but we also gathered information from the adult stakeholders, documents and web pages related to our case. We also used some data from the questionnaire carried out in the Hyvinkää meeting.<sup>8</sup>

It is possible to answer the above-stated questions by using two perspectives. After a short background on the methodology and the Hyvinkää case we will first analyze how the EU Presidency youth events function as tools of political influence in the making of EU youth policy. Second, we look at the Hyvinkää youth event as a democratic miniature society. To show the variety of youth participation in the different political arenas of the EU, we bring reflections from the YFJ and the EYP<sup>9</sup> to our analysis.

During the writing process we analyzed the role of ordinary young people in the EU youth policy processes. Further on we call these participants 'young-young' to differentiate them from the so-called 'adult-young' referring to those youth representatives who got a special role in the Hyvinkää meeting. The third group, 'adults', consists of the researchers and administrators who attended the Hyvinkää meeting. Here we want to raise the following question: If these youth events should enable the political growth of the participants, which of our three groups should benefit most from it?

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<sup>3</sup> Based on Gretscher, the sense of involvement (*osallisuuden tunne* in Finnish) is well described by the Finnish translations of the word empowerment, that is, *voimaantumisen* (getting strength, see Siitonen & Robinson, 1998; Siitonen, 1999) and *valtautumisen* (getting power, see Antikainen, 1996: 253) which describe the combination of feeling and competence contributing to the sense of involvement. An involved person feels competent and regards his own role as significant (Gretscher, 2002: 203).

<sup>4</sup> Sofia Laine will continue the research and analysis of this topic in her PhD study.

<sup>5</sup> Rapporteur was a role offered by the organizers to those youth researchers who wanted to participate as 'a researcher'. This was because the organizers had planned that rapporteurs would contribute to a scientific publication after the event. Therefore they saw it as relevant to familiarize the researchers to the working group material as well as possible, that is, by writing the notes of the discussion in the working group.

<sup>6</sup> Laine interviewed all the young people marked with codes HEU or YFJ and Gretscher interviewed those with a code EYP. Personal communications were gathered together.

<sup>7</sup> See the full description of the interviewees from Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Sofia Laine carried out a questionnaire survey on the last day of the Hyvinkää EU meeting with the assistance of Saara-Maria Juvonen. 64 per cent of the youth participants answered the questionnaire.

<sup>9</sup> See boxes 1 and 2 for more detailed background information of the EYP and the YFJ.

## The logic of the EU Presidency Youth Events

The origins of this article are in the Finnish EU Presidency youth event 'Young Active Citizenships – EU Meeting', organized in the city of Hyvinkää in July 2006. The previous youth event was held just a few months before in Austria, Bad Ischl, and the youth event on 'Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth' was held in Cologne, Germany, from 13-16 April 2007. In every youth event there have been approximately 100 to 200 young participants representing the different EU member states, acceding countries, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and some other countries (for example, the Russian Federation). The funding for the meeting comes from the European Commission and EU Presidency's Ministry responsible for youth policy.

Typically, every country has organized the event in its own way but in a dialogue with the European Commission. In June 2005, during Luxembourg's Presidency, 'the magic triangle of youth policy' between research, policy and practice was emphasized (Chisholm, 2006b; Bendit *et al.*, 2006). Subsequently, however, the events have varied from each other quite radically by the way in which the different actors of the youth field have been integrated. Every country has the liberty to define what kind of participants they wish to take part in their event. The variety of youth participants was exceptionally wide in Hyvinkää because the organizers had invited two kinds of youth representatives from each country: Since one of the aims of the meeting was to define the concept of *young active citizenships*, a representative of National Youth Council or other traditional youth NGOs was invited along with a representative of a group or network where a new kind of active young citizenship is represented.<sup>10</sup> This setting did not work out as the organizers had wished. Despite the fact that in the questionnaire 89 per cent of the youth participants defined themselves as acting primarily in a youth NGO, the widest discussion that took place in the Hyvinkää meeting and its aftermath was related to the question of what kind of young people should participate in these youth events and who are capable of representing the youth. At a more general level most of the youth representatives who participate in the EU Presidency youth events are selected by national youth councils. Most of the participants are over 18 years old.<sup>11</sup>

*[The one-off nature and lack of continuity of the EU presidency events] has led to a situation where national youth councils consider it to be an insignificant arena of political debate. So they don't bother to send the right sort of people to take part in the debate. In fact the chairing countries don't usually want to invite them either. Finland didn't want to invite them. [the interviewee is referring to the fact that Finland wanted to invite also youths who were not members of youth organisations] [...] this produces the psychological and political effect that citizens' organisations feel that they are not welcome and not wanted in the discussion on these issues [nor are they] then committed to the decisions made during these meetings. Also another issue linked to this is the fact that the member states are not too eager to go much further in this [European] youth policy. (YFJ11)*

As our young interviewee complains, the power of the individual member states can be seen as one of the major problems why the EU Presidency youth events do not form a process but are just single spots of political participation. In the Hyvinkää meeting, the aim was to strengthen the tripartite cooperation between youth administration, youth research and young people in European decision-making. After separate pre-meetings of youth representatives and the researchers, all three parties came together for a two days' Joint Meeting. Almost 200 participants, half of them youth representatives, were divided into 12 working groups. The meeting was like a working seminar with the aim to produce conclusions on the question of 'What are the forms and contents of young active

<sup>10</sup> In addition, members of the YFJ are always invited to the Presidency youth events. In the Hyvinkää event 8 bureau members of the YFJ were invited as chairs, rapporteurs or commentators. The YFJ also launched an open call for its International Non-Governmental Youth Organizations and selected a certain number of participants from the applications, 6 persons, to the Hyvinkää meeting. It should be kept in mind that all national youth councils in Europe are members of the YFJ too.

<sup>11</sup> There was only one youth representative in the Hyvinkää EU meeting who was under 18 years old. All the participants under 18 years of age needed to have a written permission and be accompanied by a responsible adult, whose expenses were not reimbursed by the Presidency. The oldest youth representative was 32.

citizenships and how can they be promoted by the tripartite cooperation in the youth field at the local, national and European level' (for more information see Finland EU Presidency youth event, 2007).

The tripartite co-operation was present already in the planning process of the Hyvinkää meeting as the meeting was organized by the Finnish Ministry of Education, the Finnish Youth Research Network, the Finnish Youth Cooperation-Allianssi (that is, Finnish National Youth Council) and the City of Helsinki Youth Department. There were also two representatives of the YFJ taking part in the steering committee meetings. The Finnish Youth Research Network had the main responsibility for coordination. In addition to the young people, youth NGOs, researchers and administration there were a few youth workers and a 4-person delegation from the UN youth sector participating in the Hyvinkää meeting. The facilitators, that is, the adults representing different youth-related organizations, were in charge of the youth pre-meeting. The idea of the youth pre-meeting was to empower the voices of the young people by teambuilding and by providing them with new information relevant to the topics of the Joint Meeting working groups. There were no pre-tasks stated for the participants before arriving to Hyvinkää. In the Joint Meeting working groups the chairpersons and the rapporteurs were researchers (12 persons<sup>12</sup>), administrators (6 persons) and representatives of the YFJ (6 persons). Their responsibility was to chair and summarize the discussion of the working group.

### **Feelings of influence and the real impact of the young people on the EU youth policy**

At this point it is already clear that the EU Presidency youth events have a very small political impact on the EU level youth policy.

*These [events] never really turned into meetings where we could really discuss this policy's contents and how it should be developed. They have been more like general open events geared at young people [...] (YFJ11)*

Our data tells us that if the young participants are informed that the event will be influential, be it however small, or if the young people are advised that an influencing channel exists, this will have an enormous impact on the motivation of the young participants in the political events.

It would be important that the events acted as arenas of learning-by-doing in the growth of the 'young active EU policy citizen'. It is important to raise the interest of young people in the future of the EU. However, some of our informants were critical of this kind of interest-raising project as such: Why is the EU opening its doors to young people? Are the EU presidency youth events and EYP sessions just the older generation's strategy to make the EU economy even more effective in the future (HEU2)? Some of our informants were more optimistic, they felt arenas such as the EU Presidency youth events could also produce stronger political and social bonds to Europe among young people. They could also give a deeper understanding of the role of mankind to young people, who, based on Fabienne Goux-Baudiment (2006: 83), have all the rights and very few duties towards the community nowadays. Events could serve as arenas for deeper personal growth. Civic oriented education should teach not only what liberty is but also how to practice it, for the youth to become efficient citizens, informed consumers and positive humanists (Goux-Baudiment, 2006: 83, 86).

To analyze the influence young people had in the events we will use Jan Teorell's (2006) threefold conception of political participation as influencing attempts, direct decision-making and political discussion. *Influencing attempts* aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel, which allows citizens to express their preferences over the choices made by the government personnel (Teorell, 2006: 789). In participation as *taking part in person in the decision-making process*, the authority of the individuals is not delegated to some representative but is exercised directly by them (Teorell, 2006: 789-90). Participation as *political discussion* (rather than deliberation, that is, a process of opinion formation rather than a procedure for decision-making) is a way of finding out what to say (Teorell, 2006: 791) but from our point of view it also has an important function in the participant's self-

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<sup>12</sup> One of the researchers worked as a chair and in one of the working groups, the rapporteur was a representative from the administration.

development. From Teorell's three-fold conception, the amount and success of 'influencing' and 'taking part' attempts are quite easy to recognize from the interview material. It is more difficult to estimate the level of political discussion.

Young people are not involved in the situations of decision-making on the EU level,<sup>13</sup> so we actually analyze their influencing attempts and involvement in political discussions. Also, at the European level, the Commission highlights the importance of seeking ways of achieving more active participation of all young people in the discussion and decision-making processes concerning them (Council of the European Union, 2007: 7). The presidency youth events could also be a more effective instrument of active participation in the future, but there should be a political desire for that. Keeping Teorell's threefold conception of political participation in mind, we assume that the EU Presidency youth events are places for political discussion and the participants can also have some influence on the EU youth policy by active participation in them.

This is partly true in the case of Hyvinkää. After Hyvinkää the conclusions of the meeting were published on the website of the event and they were adopted in the actual working process of the Presidency (that is, the Ministry of Education of Finland) and the European Council. In the Resolution (Council of the European Union, 2006d) there are clear definitions of active citizenship that were presented already in the thematic conclusions and the background papers of the Hyvinkää event. One of our interviewees identified familiar material with pleasure at the stage of proposal of Commission to Council (YFJ7). Unfortunately, this kind of happiness is mistaken. The definitions of active citizenship were actually already made by the Commission with the cooperation of the steering committee well before the Hyvinkää event took place as clarified by Seija Astala, Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, Finnish Ministry of Education, Youth Policy Division in a personal communication on 14 June 2007:

*The youth events [...] are unofficial and so you can't just send everything they produce directly to the Council of Ministers [...] we used certain elements from there and we prepared a resolution on active citizenship, being the EU chairing country at the time and we managed to get the bottom to the top approach included. The [messages from the youth events], don't even necessarily reach the Council of Ministers at all. It is actually an ideal case when they do get there. [...] Actually this is the biggest challenge, how can the scheduling of the youth events and [...] the Council of Ministers meetings scheduling and agendas that are fixed one and half years in advance become more compatible? [...]*

One of the problems in the influencing attempts at this point from the participants' point of view is that there is no feedback procedure to inform all the event participants personally (for example, by email) afterwards on what kind of effect the conclusions of the event have had on the EU youth policy. What makes the feedback even more problematic is that the EU youth policy processes are quite slow. According to our research data, very few of those young people who participated in the Hyvinkää meeting are aware of the whole political decision-making process where the EU Presidency youth events form one step. Especially, they lack the information of their own influence on this process (that is, to what extent the young people's opinions are present in the concluding documents). In order to create a sense of involvement among young people, an impact analysis of the event should be carried out and distributed to the participants after the events in the future.

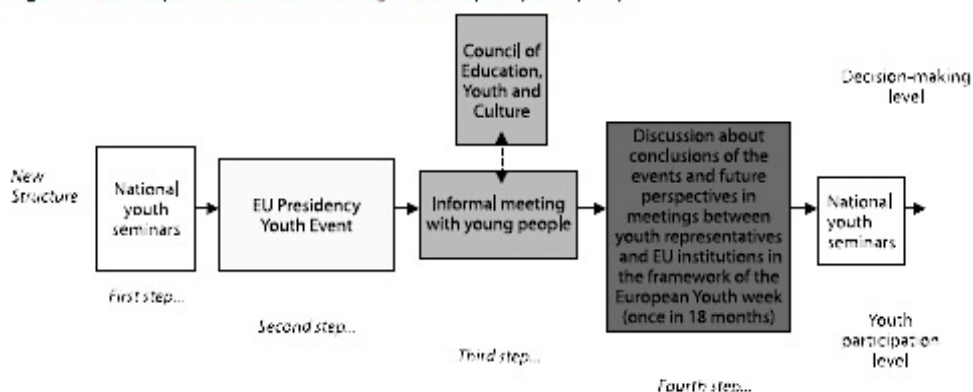
As a basis of young people's call for continuous, credible and constructive spaces for dialogue, the Council of the European Union (2006a) has come up with the following description of the structured dialogue of European youth policy. In all four steps political discussion will take place. In the first step young people may have political influence on national youth policy, while in the other three steps the influence is possible at the EU level (Figure 1).

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<sup>13</sup> Still some decision-making can take place with and by the young people in these processes, but the level of influence is lower (for example, decisions made in individual working groups of the events, etc).



**Figure 1** Four steps of the structured dialogue of European youth policy



The first step is the organization of youth seminars at national level. These events would be organized by the national youth councils in cooperation with youth NGOs, schools, youth information centres, etc. Spaces (for example, seminars and events) for dialogue at the local, regional, national and European level would be open also to those young people who do not belong to any structure and would have the particular task of providing access to young people from less privileged educational, socio-economic, cultural and geographical backgrounds. 'These structured spaces are timed in accordance with the European political agenda, starting chronologically from the local level to ensure timely and effective input from young people to EU debates' (Council of the European Union, 2006a: 8, 9, 11; 2007b: 3). Selected representatives of these events should in principle be invited to participate in the events at European level (Presidency youth events + European Youth Week) allowing them to present the results of their national youth seminar (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 5-6).

The second step in the new structure is that 'the results of national youth seminars would feed into the debates at the Presidency youth events. The Presidency youth events would have the objective of preparing a synthesis of national debates and draw common conclusions at European level [...]' (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 6).

The third step includes the conclusions of the Presidency youth events that would be discussed 'at informal fora between Presidencies, Commission, European Parliament and youth representatives of previous, existing and the following EU Presidency country, so-called "Troika", before the Youth Council<sup>14</sup> meetings' (Council of the European Union, 2006a: 12). 'To this end a delegation composed of representatives of the Presidency youth events and the European Youth Forum would be invited to come to Brussels in order to present the main results of their work to ministers. Whenever possible and appropriate the Council of Youth Ministers would put the conclusions of the youth event on its agenda, discuss them and ensure a follow-up' (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 6-7).

This kind of informal forum was organized for the first time at the end of the Finnish EU Presidency. A delegation composed of representatives of the Presidency youth events and the YFJ were invited to come to Brussels in November 2006 in order to present the main results of their work to youth ministers. YFJ has a special role in the informal forums, as it should always be present in them. Three of our young informants who were invited to this first informal forum were very convinced by the experience:

*[Informal forum] I see it as the best channel of influence, as of course it is. There was this agenda, it was a one-hour meeting where I must have spoken for about ten minutes, I was the only one to take the floor for a longer time...it only included this presidency event and then we discussed this structured dialogue idea but I've never had the chance to speak to such important people about these issues before. (HEU3)*

<sup>14</sup> Youth Council (Council of Youth Ministers) stands for national Ministries responsible for youth policy and European Commission.

*[Informal forum] ensures continuity, it increases mutual trust [...] because all three presidencies were there and the Germans will deal now with that issue and how can the next ones follow up, so it is all more structured, more continuation. [...] We as the Youth Forum we sometimes feel like doing mantra, when repeating the same things every time and now when all are in the same room, you only need to say it once and hopefully everyone understands or they disagree or what ever but at least you don't have to meet them separately. It shows seriousness and commitment on the high level [...]* (YFJ6)

*The national youth councils of troika countries had been invited to take part so there was all this background and commitment. There was a real dialogue. It was the first try, but even so an important signal to citizens' organizations that the Council takes them seriously. For example this is a totally normal routine in the field of employment. Before every council of employment ministers' meeting each presidency troika organizes this kind of meeting [...]* (YFJ11)

Finally, the model of structured dialogue culminates in the fourth step that could be called face-to-face discussion between the youth representatives and EU institutions. 'The Conclusions of the Presidency youth events would also be discussed at particular meetings between youth representatives and the EU institutions in the framework of the European Youth Week. [...] The results of these debates would have an impact on the EU policy-shaping debates. They would be presented at the next youth seminars at national level and feed into the next round of debates during the Presidency youth events' (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 7).

In conclusion of this section it can be said that the Commission has really started to work on the structured dialogue of youth policy and how it could be organized in the youth policy-making process at the EU level. It now seems that the single spot youth events of political discussion with small influence have come to an end and better continuity and more structured political process is on its way to the Presidency youth events.

### **Hyvinkää event as a democratic miniature society?**

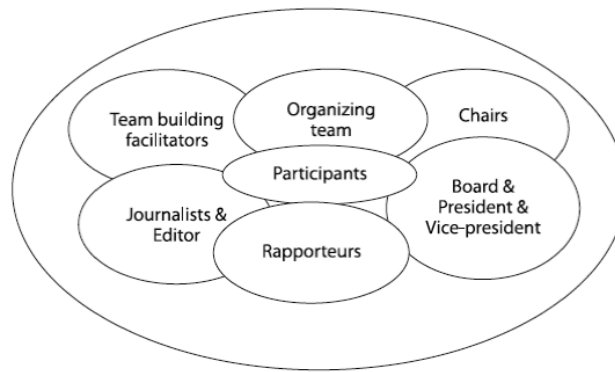
In this section we look deeper into the dynamics of the Hyvinkää event. Our aim is to get knowledge about which kind of elements are important in creating a '*democratic miniature society*'.<sup>15</sup> According to IEA Civic Education Study, learning about citizenship involves engagement in a community and development of an identity within that group. 'Communities of discourse and practice' should provide the situation in which young people develop progressively more complex concepts and ways of behaving (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001: 20).<sup>16</sup> From our point of view, a democratic miniature society exists when participants of the event form a community where equal dialogue and different roles and duties take place. Iris Marion Young has argued that the social power that can prevent people from being equal speakers derives not only from economic dependence or political domination but also from an internalized sense of the right that one has to speak, or the lack of it. If a polity is to be a communicative democracy, its members must have a commitment to mutual respect and they must agree on procedural rules of fair discussion and decision making (Young, 1996: 120, 125-26). Roles and duties should be shared equally among all participants – not only with adults. Participants should also have an opportunity to develop the event/process of events themselves. It is also relevant to notice the importance of the possibility of building networks and progressing, in the individual career of an active citizen. Our hypothesis now is that the variation of roles (learning-by-doing) offered to young people widen the possibilities of becoming more active citizens, as called for in the White Paper. We decided to evaluate the inner logic of the Hyvinkää event for two reasons: first, because of the criticism young people gave after the meeting and second, because the European Youth Parliament (EYP) gave an alternative model of how to distribute different roles in the meetings (Figure 2).

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<sup>15</sup> We formulated the term '*democratic miniature society*' from the following sources of IEA Civic Study: '...schools should be models of democracy...' (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001: 25); '...school forms a kind of miniature society...' (Suutarinen, 2006: 118; see also Dewey, 1956: 29).

<sup>16</sup> The IEA Civic Education Study 1999 (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001: 20) compared civic education in schools and its impacts in knowledge, attitudes and acting of young people in 28 countries. The study is going to be renewed in 2009.

**Figure 2** Roles offered in the EYP's international events and sessions



After the Hyvinkää meeting, our informants criticized the way the meeting was structured and the roles young people got in the meeting itself. Some of them got the feeling that the chairs and rapporteurs ('adults') of the working groups made their own interpretations of the substances the group had been discussing and that the opinions of the young people were not brought up to the front properly. Some of the interviewed young people felt that their knowledge and skills were underestimated in the Hyvinkää meeting, that they were not equal participants in the dialogue. Some of the youth representatives also felt that the representatives of the YFJ did not take into account the voice of ordinary young people.

*In the [joint meeting] working group I kind of felt as if the chair and the rapporteur interpreted the things that the group talked about to their own ends... (HEU4)*

In Hyvinkää event all the different roles presented in Figure 2 existed except journalists and editors. The steering committee of the event tried to share the roles equally between youth researchers, administrators and youth as an example of tripartite cooperation. Unfortunately there were no other realistic alternatives than to give all the roles other than 'participant' (offered to young people) systematically to the representatives of either Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi (Finnish national youth council) or the YFJ, that is, 'adult-young'. We will call these young people 'adult-young' as they had a special role in the Hyvinkää event, accepted by the 'adults' as grown-up, active EU policy citizens. In addition to 'adults' only the 'adult-young' had the opportunity to act in certain special roles. All the other youth participants – who we have also been calling 'ordinary young people' – were 'young-young'. Some of them had participated in the EU Presidency youth events before and some might have the motivation to grow up to be 'active EU youth policy citizens'.

Second, one basic circumstance of social life was forgotten in the process of distributing the roles: that the relationship between young people and adults is always a power relationship. This is even more serious a mistake when concentrating on tripartite cooperation which always is a relationship between the generations at the same time. We start opening the power relations of the Hyvinkää event with a more general notion that young people often feel that adults have an inherent need to educate the younger.

*But in the case of young people this [equal dialogue] does not happen because there's always this rearing ethos in the background in the relationship between young people and the adult involved. (YFJ7)*

*Of course there should not be an adult...as chair because that would make the power set-up turn upside down compared to the situation now when a young person is in the chair...the fact that adults should not automatically be selected for the leading positions...It's a completely different matter if he/she [the adult] sits there [on the committee] next to me discussing the issues...expressing his/her own opinion and we have a young person in the chair. Then everything is OK. (EYP9)*

When representatives of administration and research, that is, 'adults' and 'adult-young' take the positions of chair and rapporteur they also own the power of the process. The atmosphere in the Hyvinkää event interpreted by the young people in general was that the 'young-young' were minimized to passive recipients of the lessons from their elders. It is important to notice that distorted power relations are often renewed from one event to another only because of traditions and too little effort in reflection (see also Kiilakoski, Tomperi & Vuorikoski, 2005). Young people learn their lesson once more.

*[...] you need to consider that these types of policy modelling events are often informal learning events for the young people that participate in them, a sort of opportunity for them to learn how to have and maintain influence in society and also about decision making processes in society. So the picture of how and what is done has to be accurate. We can't give wrong informal learning homework. (YFJ7)*

In addition to the young people's feelings of the patronizing atmosphere, it actually remained unclear for the whole community what the representatives of administration and researches could offer to the process. Our informants felt that adults were competitors to young people in achieving roles of power.

*[...] through the inclusion of the researchers we hope that there will be more knowledge based policy making, in that sense we appreciate it a lot. I do think it's not always; it was not always clear yet, what the different roles are. For us, it's important that we are also experts, because we do work with young people, we are on the grassroots, and sometimes – or once or twice – the expression came, that researchers and academic work is valued more than practical experience. It's a bit, it was just a feeling, that it would be difficult to point it out in concrete events, it's more on the level of attitudes that research is worth more than a project. (YFJ6)*

In the interviews we actually also faced the question of why the researchers involved in the Hyvinkää meeting were only 'youth researchers' expected to study young people. Why were there no researchers, for instance, from political sciences who could help young people to understand EU policy better, asked one of our informants.

*...do young people get the feeling that they are like guinea pigs, that here are the young people, the politicians listen and then here are the researchers who study the young people and then tell the politicians why this young person's baseball cap is the wrong way round...couldn't there be political scientists who could explain to the young people why these politicians are here, so that it would become really good... (EYP10)*

Next we want to propose some alternatives for how to organize the EU Presidency events in the future regarding the roles offered in the events. Our alternative model is developed from the EYP's way of working. The EYP sessions and the EU Presidency youth events already have many elements in common. One difference is that for ordinary young people, after they have once participated in the EYP sessions, the EYP offers them responsible duties and a possibility to go on networking until they are about 25 years old. Second, the committee chairs are experienced EYP participants themselves (henceforth EYPers) and the team of chairs is in turn chaired by a 'board' normally consisting of a president and two vice presidents, also former EYPers. This is also the case with the team of journalists headed by an editor. Third, the organizing team of every session (which can here be compared to the working groups of the Hyvinkää meeting) consists of those young people who have experience of the roles from the previous sessions, and it is often augmented by 'adults', normally members of the National EYP Committee in that country. Fourth, in the EYP sessions the committees write resolutions themselves and unlike the Hyvinkää meeting, adults are not invited to participate in the writing process. The young interviewees who had participated in the EYP meetings underlined the importance of the young people in writing the resolutions (which can here be compared to the conclusions of the Hyvinkää meeting). They saw it as a very important and political step of the process. The EYPers were also convinced that ordinary young people – at least those who had participated in a similar meeting before – are able to work as working group chairs at least, after some

preparatory training. It seems that when young people take the responsibility of the process, the patronizing atmosphere can be avoided.

*Young people have the competence to be in the chair and by doing so the responsibility is transferred to them and they know that they are in charge and can ask the adult to give [someone else] the floor. The feeling is completely different straight away. (EYP9)*

*...yes the sessions are structured in such a way that you know which ones [young people] have done it before and therefore there's a certain type of serious atmosphere [no one wants to turn it into a joke or something]. (EYP8)*

Both the Hyvinkää EU meeting and the EYP sessions have offered a good networking space for young people. Networking often happens outside the official programme, during the free time or in the social events. To enable the ordinary young people to grow up to be 'active EU policy citizens', it would be important that the same individuals attend the events several times. In the EYP, even when not interested in taking responsibilities, young people can always return: the International Summer Sessions are open to all the participants who have already taken part in one international session.<sup>17</sup> In addition to participation at the national level, young people may become members in the National committee or associations (like EYP Finland). In the EU Presidency youth event 'process' there is no such procedure and returning is entirely a matter of chance.

Our data suggests that in their second event at the latest, many young people seek to meet up with other participants on purpose. After this it is possible that they stay in contact with each other. They might also start to prefer the meetings where the other person is also going to participate. From this kind of networking new influencing attempts and projects spring up. The interviewed young people from the EYP told us that they had started projects related to both traditional (for example, lobbying the millennium goals) and new forms of action (such as founding a political think tank).

From the perspective of different roles (presented in Figure 2), the losers in the Hyvinkää event were especially those ordinary young people who had participated in the EU presidency events before and who were not representatives of the Finnish national youth council or the YFJ. There were no responsible roles available for them<sup>18</sup> and they were not allowed to show their experience – their possible accumulated individual 'active EU citizen capital' – in the event. The steering committee of the Hyvinkää event made this choice consciously to build equality between the youth participants. This ideal of equality caused a situation where more experienced young people could not carry the responsibility of building community or good conclusion papers but stayed on the sidelines of the process (because there was no room for them in the core) and used their capacity to criticize. In fact, the first timers were as good at criticizing the event as the more experienced:

*The way the young people were made to participate was frustrating. The discussions during the initial meeting were of no use in the actual working groups. The questions in the working groups were no good; if you want concrete proposals you need concrete questions. The worst thing was that everything we managed to discuss in the working groups was somehow watered down into EU language so that the things the young people had wanted to say were lost for good. I think a lot of frustration was caused because many had thought of a few things that they wanted to advance but these issues were lost stage by stage until you felt as if nothing was left of these proposals in the final papers. The young people at the meeting were underestimated and our programme was too structured. (HEU1)*

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<sup>17</sup> As presented in the previous section, this is close to what the Commission of European Communities has suggested about the structured dialogue in the youth policy: those young people who first attend the national meetings are preferred to take part in the EU presidency youth events. The difference is that in the EYP every year there is also one 'extra' international meeting for all who have participated earlier.

<sup>18</sup> 24.4 per cent of the youth who answered the questionnaire said that they had participated in a Presidency youth event before, one had even participated in all of them. Less than 10 per cent of these young people had responsible roles and the remaining 15 per cent of the participants, whose experience could have been somehow recognized in the event, was not utilized.

*Practicalities ok, but more info on EU & youth needed. And more info about what we AIM AT! The point of all this and the process was not clear... It was really a shame that there was no farewell party and that we had to make it ourselves. Networking is crucial in these meetings and you need space for it. (Part of questionnaire answer from one young participant, EU Presidency youth event, Hyvinkää, Finland 4 July 2006)*

In the future, it is important that the event organizers admit that there is individual 'active EU citizen capital' gathered in the heads and souls of earlier years' participants. It should be guaranteed that these young people have the possibility to progress based on their experience, talent and preparation for the process. From this point of view the proper role for the YFJ youth in these meetings would be that of a facilitator who would support ordinary young people's possibilities to grow up as 'an active EU policy citizen'. Of course there must also be trust in ordinary young people's potentiality to grow up among the representatives of the YFJ. They must also grow into the new role of a facilitator. In addition, the YFJ youth's role should continue to be the role of an 'adapter' (Gretschel, 2002) and stakeholder between the EU Presidency youth events and the Commission, including the other actors of the EU decision making. The YFJ should also try to ensure the continuity of the EU Presidency events process. These matters are not simple. It is also possible that the YFJ, too, would need this kind of a democratic space and roles for its own growth and purposes.

What, then, should be more proper roles for the representatives of administration and research in the events? Now we know that the 'adults' should sit side by side with the young people in the working groups to provide them with hope, information and experience when needed. After an event they should use their own professionalism to improve the impact of the event in the EU youth policy. The administration and decision makers, along with the YFJ, should ensure the participants that the conclusions of the event are taken seriously. Researchers should participate in several events to gain an in-depth perspective of the process to be able to do long-term evaluation of the EU Presidency youth events in the context of the EU. Researchers should also evaluate how the (different) young people are heard in the process and how the events, as democratic miniature societies, are making progress.

*HEU5: Meetings such as the Hyvinkää EU meeting can be a way for people to advance a cause and to discuss issues. But you should also make sure that the decision makers are really involved there and are committed to these goals and that they really listen to what is being said, because this didn't happen here. This was more like a young people's debating club. Though it's good to discuss issues I still think that a meeting organized at this level would be of more use if the decision makers were really invited to take part and that they were really involved in the discussion.*

*Int: Yes now the only decision makers present were Minister Saarela and Commissioner Figel.*

*HEU5: They only visited. And during the actual event the youths' addresses were very short, during the plenary sessions. [...]*

*Int: If you could plan a similar meeting what would you develop?*

*HEU5: Well, to start with I would invite officials from the commission to attend. [...] More MEPs (Members of European Parliament) should attend. [...] And in my opinion a proper report should be made on the issues discussed in the working groups and the commission should comment on it and answer questions and so on, just as in a proper political debate.*

*...during international sessions so that we could obtain better resolutions and more from committee work there should also be so called experts who could talk about an issue for a couple of hours...something on economic policy and things like that...if there was a researcher to talk to you could get a lot of information...and if you talk to a politician or official then it's more about what you are trying to do yourself. (EYP8)*

*But if you think about researchers then it's more academic since young people and politicians are more involved in the practical side of things. And perhaps a researcher provides a more academic yet detailed and linguistic approach. Though of course hopefully there will also be some postmodernists. (EYP10)*

It is important to underline that *youth* researchers should not be the only invited type of research expertise but the type of the invited researchers should vary depending on the topics and needs of the event. *Youth* researchers should also remember to tell the young people that when researching the relationships between the young people and EU-politicians (and other 'adults' involved) then the 'adults' are also under the loupe. Based on Bendit *et al.*, 'The research community can also assist the quality of information and knowledge exchange between youth sector actors and interests: professional research skills and experience facilitate moderation between discourses and standpoints' (2006: 2). The tripartite cooperation is also named in the documents of the Council of the European Union.

*The Council (14965/06) emphasize that for the development of youth policies, it is essential to engage young people, those active in youth work and youth organizations, as well as youth researchers – recognizing their respective areas of competence – in policy shaping discussions on matters affecting young people [...] The Council agree also that fora for debate and dialogue with young people, those active in youth work and youth organizations, and youth researchers, should be better structured and further developed, from the local to the European level [...] The Council also invite member states to set up preparatory and follow-up mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of the common objectives in cooperation with the relevant actors, inter alia young people, youth organizations, youth researchers and local and regional authorities [...] (Council of the European Union, 2006b: 42-43).*

In addition to this there is a good example of the researcher's role as a question raiser or a strengthener of signals coming from silent young people in the United Nations World Youth Report 2003 (United Nations, 2004), especially the Expert Group Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth.

In conclusion of this section it can be said that the main focus in sharing the duties and roles in the Hyvinkää event was in the idea of bringing the tripartite cooperation into practice. Now, two years after Hyvinkää, that choice can be criticized for three reasons. The first point is very obvious but it should be kept in mind that always 2/3 of the tripartite consist of adults, so the feeling of paternalism develops easily among the youth participants. Second, the knowledge of the proper roles of the representatives of administration and research (that is, how they could do their best in promoting the process) was still not there at the time of the Hyvinkää event. Third, we are now wiser also because we can follow the EYP's example of the distribution of roles to young people. It must be kept in mind that the whole dynamics of offered roles will probably be changed in the future because of the four steps of structured dialogue in the EU youth policy launched by the Commission and especially because of the first step: national seminar. According to this study the important elements of civic education (that is, learning-by-doing) in democratic miniature societies are duties and roles – and unfortunately these two, which can also be seen as resources of personal growth, have been neglected in the EU Presidency youth events until these days.

## Conclusions

What functions does the EU Presidency youth event have at the moment and what functions should it have in the future? First, it has the function of an arena that should work democratically. When evaluating the success of the EU Presidency youth events in the long run it is even more important to find out if the participants felt accepted as subjects and democratically involved in the event instead of focusing on what kind of a political influence the event had. The criteria for a democratic miniature society include the variation of roles offered to young people, possibilities to grow as active citizens, the respect of the network of other young people, opportunities to progress and to take part in a series of events and the equal dialogue between the young people, administration and researches. As argued in this article, the Hyvinkää EU meeting was a democratic miniature society neither for the

'young-young' nor the 'adult-young' (from the YFJ and the Finnish national youth council). As a result of our study, we suggest some new principles for the organization of the EU presidency youth events in the future. First, those ordinary young people who have participated in similar events before should get more responsible roles than that of a 'mere participant' in order to facilitate their growing up. It is also important to notice that regional, local and national events enable participation and create possibilities of growing up for a larger number of 'young-young' people in the EU context than the EU youth events alone. In this new way of organizing the events the 'adult-young' people should train the 'young-young' and enable their growing up as 'an active EU policy citizen'<sup>19</sup> and the adults (the representatives of the administration and the researchers) should facilitate this process (for instance, by giving a lecture on their area of expertise) when asked and otherwise sit and work side by side with young people ready to give them hope, information and experience needed.

Second, the EU Presidency youth event has the function of making an impact, and this impact should be real. For young people it is important to know that the door to the EU is open for their ideas, for their efforts to make sense. There is a growing demand to integrate the young people into the EU community and therefore the EU must be reformulated. The world without young people is different from the world with the young people. Young people can be integrated only by ensuring that their fingerprints are visible in the action papers and declarations of the EU; and the young people must also be aware of it. The Hyvinkää EU Meeting was more successful than the Presidency youth events in general as some of the themes were adopted in the Resolution (Council of the European Union, 2006d) of the Council of the European Union. The adoption was in the hands of the administration and it is very unclear whose voices from the tripartite it finally represented. Further, when talking about political influence, it is still more important that those young people who participated in the event could receive an individual feedback of their impact on the EU youth policy. This is important also because the EU youth policy processes are quite slow and difficult to follow. Even when the participants receive feedback about their impact, there are still millions of young people in the EU left without any sense of making an impact. It should be made clear to all the young Europeans that some of them have already made some impact and now the arena is waiting for the next generation of young people to step in to discover what they could offer to the community of the EU and what the EU could offer to them.

During the process of writing this article (autumn 2006 to spring 2007) the EU has already developed a more complete framework for the structured dialogue in the EU youth policy processes where the EU Presidency youth events are not just single spots but form one step in the four-step process of the structured dialogue between the different actors of the EU youth policy field, especially between the 'adults' and young people.

In addition, some of our interviewees gave clear definitions of the structured dialogue in the youth field of EU policy. Here, too, the speciality of the YFJ as the official partner of the EU institutions in the dialogues between the youth and the decision makers was highlighted:

*[...] structured dialogue is not something that happens once a year for two hours, it's a continuous process of cooperation, it's more a way of how to treat each other and how to work with each other than one meeting. (YFJ6)*

*However, that kind of group [Youth Forum] really makes things easier, because you just can't march into the commission alone and start spelling out home truths, there's got to be a middleman somewhere since even if you want to listen to what young people have got to say then the message you bring with you has got to be well structured otherwise it won't have any relevance, really. And I really feel that, for example, the Youth in Action, Youth Forum has really affected this and this is great because it is for all young people and it should be within the reach of all young people, in that sense in such issues it is possible to represent others ... (HEU4)*

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<sup>19</sup> This was also the core idea of the Pre-Meeting in the Finnish EU Presidency youth event at Hyvinkää, but unfortunately it did not work out as expected.



A lot has happened already after Hyvinkää, on paper. There is a need for follow up research about the development of the four steps model of structured dialogue in practice. All the criticism reported in this article could not have been avoided by careful planning of the EU Presidency youth event in Hyvinkää. The event was planned carefully and both the Commission and the Finnish Ministry of Education were contented with the meeting. Learning-by-doing has a role in organizing the events, too. Therefore it would be important to have long-term evaluation available on the EU Presidency youth event process and its different functions and perspectives. This would be our recommendation for our researcher colleagues.

We suggest that in the future the EU presidency youth events should function as important and versatile learning-by-doing arenas that enable the growth of the 'young active EU policy citizens'. This kind of growth does not happen if the only sign or feedback of political participation given to young people from the side of the EU is the EU-voting ticket arriving in the mailbox every fifth year.

*'You are heard, regularly.'*

*(Pierre Mairesse, Director General of Education and Culture, Director for Youth, Sport and Relations with Citizen, European Commission, in a plenary session of EU Presidency youth event, Hyvinkää, Finland 4 July 2006)*

## Interview data

- HEU1 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, female, 22 years (email interview)
- HEU2 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, female, 26 years (email interview)
- HEU3 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, male, 26 years
- HEU4 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, female, 24 years
- HEU5 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, female, 26 years
- YFJ6 = Austrian participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, female, 26 years, Representative of the European Youth Forum
- YFJ7 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, member of the steering committee of the meeting, male, 24 years, Representative of the European Youth Forum
- EYP8 = Finnish, participated in several international sessions of the European Youth Parliament in the years 2005-2007, male, 19 years
- EYP9 = Finnish, participated in one international session of the European Youth Parliament, female, 22 years
- EYP10 = Finnish, participated in several international sessions of the European Youth Parliament on the years 2005-2007, male, 23 years
- YFJ11 = Finnish participant of the Hyvinkää meeting, member of the steering committee of the meeting, male, 27 years, Representative of the European Youth Forum

## Description of the codes

- HEU = 'young-young', ordinary young people who participated in the Hyvinkää event and represented European and national youth organisations or other youth related associations.
- YFJ = 'adult-young', young people who had a special role in the Hyvinkää event and were representative of the YFJ.
- EYP = Participant of the International EYP sessions.

### **Box 1 Facts about the European Youth Forum (YFJ)**

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) was independently established by youth organizations in 1996. As decided in the Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013, YFJ gets up to 80 per cent of its funding from the European Commission (not less than EUR 2 million annually). With this funding the Commission expects 'active contribution by the Forum to the political processes relevant to youth at European level, in particular by responding to the European institutions when they consult civil society and explaining the positions adopted by these institutions to its members' (European Parliament and Council 2006a). The YFJ is made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organizations, which are federations of youth organizations in themselves. In addition, YFJ contributes to the development of youth work in other regions of the world, especially through the United Nations. The task of the European Youth Forum, representing as many European young people as possible, is very demanding. It already works as a democratic space representing and owned by the youth organizations. Decisions are made twice a year either in the General Assembly or in the Council of Members. Before the decision making, a wide consultation process takes place, that is, the staff members of YFJ consult the member organizations on the topics. It is not a surprise that some of the former Youth Forum staff members have continued their career in the Commission or in the Parliament. For more information, see European Youth Forum, 2007.

### **Box 2 Facts about the European Youth Parliament (EYP)**

The Europe Youth Parliament (EYP) was founded in 1987 as the project of a school in Fontainebleau (France). The way of working in the national EYP sessions as well as in the international ones is simulation of the European Parliament, tailored to young people including the element of team building. In every session there are several committees, each of which handles a theme given to them, like 'cloning' or 'frontiers'. Participants are encouraged to study beforehand the theme they are handling. EYP is an educational project to actively engage young people in the moulding of their future society by raising awareness for European issues and intercultural dialogue and by contributing to the personal development of the young Europeans by procuring key intercultural competences (communication, language, ability to work in an international team, and so on). Nowadays there are national EYP Committees in 34 European Countries. In 2005 there were about 20,000 high school students in the 16-20 age group taking part in national and international sessions. The activities are funded by the European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Europe as well as by some EU member states, companies and foundations. After the discussion the committee will write a resolution to be discussed and maybe approved in the General Assembly, and unlike in Hyvinkää, adults are not invited to govern the writing process. From International Meetings the resolutions are sent to the European Commission but the possible impacts are not systemically followed and not distributed to participants afterwards. For more information, see European Youth Parliament, 2007.

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# **EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK**



# MODERNISING YOUTH WORK: FROM THE UNIVERSAL TO THE PARTICULAR AND BACK AGAIN<sup>\*</sup>

Simon Bradford

## Introduction

Like other public sector services, professional youth work operates in a social and institutional climate that has radically altered during the last few years. The background to this has been well rehearsed elsewhere, but includes growing inequality in general and amongst young people in particular (Ridge, 2002; Sen, 1997), fundamental changes to the fabric of the welfare state (Pillinger, 2000), the wholesale 'managerialisation' of public services (Clarke, Gewirtz & McLaughlin, 2000) and moves to new service configurations, principally those emphasising 'partnership' or 'multi-agency' approaches (Powell *et al.*, 2001; Banks *et al.*, 2003). Youth work has faced difficult tasks on this new landscape and increased demands on diminishing or reconfigured resources have meant that it has had to represent itself carefully to survive.

In this chapter we offer a brief historical exploration of recent youth work and conclude by identifying tensions between the principle of 'universal' youth work provision (i.e. that it should be accessible, in principle, to *all* young people), and the increasing managerialist demand that youth work should demonstrate its value and outcomes in relation to specific groups of young people. We suggest that, ironically youth work has become subject to a 'new universalism' constituted in part at least by the growth of managerialist practices.

## A rationale for youth work

Youth work's roots lay in nineteenth century attempts to render the working class 'governable by reason' (Donald, 1992: 23) and the bourgeois desire to mould the character and conduct of working class youth. Victorian fear and fascination with the 'perishing and dangerous classes' have their contemporary expression in popular concerns about the so-called 'underclass' (MacDonald, 1997; Institute of Economic Affairs, 1996).

Despite having achieved some recognition as one of the 'caring' professions (Malin, 2000), youth work has remained an ambiguous set of practices, pushed in different directions at different times by different interests. It appears infinitely fluid, flexible, and mobile. It has a capacity to work in diverse settings and to shift its identity in response to varying conceptions of 'youth need', either self-defined or specified by others. In one guise for example, youth work appears to be aimed at the careful management of young people's leisure time, with youth workers organising a range of activities with young people: sports, arts, and drama in youth clubs, centres, and projects. Elsewhere, youth workers touch on therapeutic concerns through their work in counselling, advice, and information services. In yet another form, youth workers take an explicitly 'educational' role, helping young people to understand matters connected with health, sexuality and citizenship. Underlying all of these activities is a professional commitment to *voluntary* and *participatory* relationships between youth workers and young people. Youth workers argue that it is the intimacy of these relationships, freely chosen by young people, which leads to their potency. Importantly for some youth workers, it is precisely this voluntary aspect of relationships that is threatened by current policy developments in the UK.

As well as its strength, youth work's flexible nature is also a potential weakness. It has never been able to colonise a distinct territory of its own, and youth workers have been forced to occupy the spaces left by other institutions: social work, schooling, or leisure for example. Over the last decade or so, youth work has become increasingly deployed in work with young people variously considered to

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<sup>\*</sup> Reproduced from: Bradford, S. (2005). Modernising youth work: from the universal to the particular and back again. In: R. Harrison & C. Wise (eds), *Working with young people* (pp. 57-69). London: Open University/Sage Publications, by permission of SAGE Publications Ltd.

be 'at risk' and whose public visibility has animated a series of moral panics. For some youth workers this raises the dilemma of whether they are 'agents of social control' or 'informal educators' seeking to engage collaboratively with young people 'on their terms' (Banks, 1999: 10). The main problem in this apparently inexhaustible debate is that the concept of social control inadequately discriminates between the multiple interventions and initiatives which attempt to enact the administration of human conduct in modern societies (Rose & Miller, 1988: 172). Youth work *is* part of a network of institutions and practices whose task has been to ensure the stability, harmony, growth, and care of the population; to contribute to the 'government' of modern societies (Foucault, 1991: 102). The concept of government in this sense denotes a characteristically modern and liberal form of political authority which is neither necessarily repressive, nor prohibitive. Rather, governmental power is intended to operate quietly and efficiently in managing and regulating populations, often through the 'technical' expertise of professionals: social workers, health visitors, and youth workers for example. Their particular contemporary role is to encourage individuals to exercise their own responsibility and freedom, in effect to 'govern' themselves. As one recent analysis suggested

*We want to help each young person to be somebody who not only enjoys life but is in good health, studying to the best of their ability, is challenged and stretched mentally and physically, is an active member of their local community and capable of understanding the consequences of their own actions. We want to develop young people who add value to their social surroundings rather than subtracting through anti-social behaviour (Department for Education and Employment, 2001: 13).*

Responsible participation, self-reflection and striving to 'become somebody' are the essential principles upon which contemporary liberal democratic states rest, by which the social body is managed, and through which 'good citizenship' is realised. These are ideas that have a long history in youth work.

## **Social education discourses and youth work**

The Thompson Committee's 1982 report on the future of the youth service confirmed that its specific task was '... to provide social education ...' as a *universal* service to all young people who might benefit from it (Department for Education and Science, 1982: 122). The concept of 'social education' has provided youth work with a relatively consistent, though shifting, centre of gravity since the late 1960s. Different nuances of social education can be discerned that are broadly associated with specific historical points.

*Liberal-democratic* accounts of social education – associated particularly with the 1970s – emphasise the (abstract) individual, and his or her relationships with others. Essentially humanist and 'person-centred', this account of social education sought to enable the individual young person to become more conscious of and better understand 'self'. One analysis suggested that social education could lead to an

*... individual's increased consciousness of himself – of his values, aptitudes, and untapped resources... (Davies & Gibson, 1967: 12).*

By fostering an 'ethics of the self' (a way of being or living 'correctly' in daily life), liberal social education aims in part at least to develop an introspective, 'reflexive' and active self, able to appraise, evaluate, and work on its constitutive feelings, attitudes, and opinions. For Davies and Gibson, social education in youth work should be initiated in the context of the personal relationships which young people form with others, enabling them to '... know first hand and feel personally how common interests and shared activities bring and keep people together and what causes them to drift apart' (Davies & Gibson, 1967: 13). Thus *experiential* and *participative* dimensions to social education emerge as its defining features. Typically, youth work activities are designed to maximise young people's participation in personal relationships, and to encourage them to reflect on and learn from these experiences.

An accommodation between individual desires and wider social responsibilities is one of social education's intended outcomes. As Davies and Gibson put it, 'truly helpful social education' must create a proper equilibrium between 'self-expression' and conformity, taking account of the demand to be' ... "loyal", "responsible", "respectful", and especially "law-abiding"' (Davies & Gibson, 1967: 17). The concern here is with the production of a particular kind of self, sensitive to social values and responsibilities, yet simultaneously active in developing its own self-defined potential. This is of prime importance in a liberal democracy (perhaps specifically so in contemporary *capitalist* democracy where the values of individual enterprise and endeavour are cherished). Thus, social education aims to ensure that individual young people learn to 'govern' themselves, to '... effect by their own means, various operations on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct ... (and) transform themselves, modify themselves' (Miller, 1987: 206-207). This is a practice compatible with and derivative of the principles of liberal democracy in which the self-regulating, rational and autonomous individual exercises choice, responsibility and freedom in the pursuit of 'good citizenship'.

Davies and Gibson's account of social education is definitive and has retained its persuasive capacity. Its dissemination in different forms over the years has given identity and meaning to youth work, although its individualistic stance and liberal outlook were subject to critique (Butters & Newell, 1978). During the 1980s this mode of social education was 'radicalised'. As elsewhere in the UK (and more widely), newly emerging 'liberationist' discourses drawing on the politics of gender, race, and disability became imprinted on youth work. The abstract subjects of earlier social education were transformed into 'young women', 'young Black people', 'disabled', or 'gay' young people. Youth workers (as social educators) came to see themselves as responding to a range of 'issues' that mapped out material and symbolic aspects of young people's lives (their life-chances and identities, for example), thus structuring the terrain of youth work. Young people, it seemed, could receive an appropriate youth work response only if they were understood as being shaped by extant social forces: racism, sexism, disability, unemployment, poverty, and so on. Youth workers became concerned with 'empowering' young people, helping them to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to become active participants in society, rather than its passive victims. Youth workers look on a more self-consciously 'rights-based' trajectory, emphasising '... a belief in justice: all people have the same rights' (Karsh, c1984), retaining an individual focus but admitting the political and social background against which young people were illuminated.

In practice, different elements from the two modes of social education – the 'liberal democratic' and the 'liberationist' – have meshed. Youth work has become a complex of ambiguous aims, techniques and initiatives drawing on both modes. Social education, now frequently dubbed 'informal education' or 'informal social education' as this, allegedly, offers clearer definition (Banks, 1999: 7), remains a consistent theme, and has marked continuities: a focus on the problematic nature of young people's transitions to adulthood, experience as the wellspring of learning, a concern with the relationship between the individual and the 'social', and perhaps above all the aim of cultivating the autonomous and self-regulating individual.

### **From universal to particular: work with 'at risk' young people...**

As part of the deepening processes of 'modernisation' that have shaped education services in the UK over the last decade (Ferguson, 2000) youth work and youth services have come under managerial scrutiny. This has entailed a growing political demand to identify *specific* young people to be targeted. However, and reflecting an underlying tension between universalism and targeting, it was *universalism* that seemed to be embodied in the following utopian 'statement of purpose' that was disseminated by the National Youth Agency in the early 1990s. Youth work aimed

*... to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people to fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and members of groups and communities and to support young people in their transition to adulthood (National Youth Agency, 1992: 21).*

Drawing on earlier social education discourse, the statement went on to argue that youth work should be educational, participative, empowering, informal, responsive, based on secure relationships, and



should provide information, advice and counselling to young people between the ages of 11 and 25, with those in the 13 to 19 age group being the priority (National Youth Agency, 1992). Despite this commitment increasing managerialism meant a greater emphasis on *outcomes* rather than on statements of professional values and belief. In the context of moral panic in the 1990s about the 'condition of youth' the idea that youth workers should target so-called 'at risk' young people became increasingly persuasive. Youth work with 'at risk' youth accorded with political priorities of the time. Great symbolic significance was attached to various 'risk' populations in the UK that had fallen under the popular and political gaze: the so-called 'underclass', young single mothers, drug abusers, truants, young homeless, and of course young offenders. Youth workers and youth services were drawn into a substantial role with such groups, exacerbating the tension between the principle of universal youth work and 'targeted' work. For some commentators, targeted work was part of a Faustian pact in which short-term funding would be paid for by youth work's long-term marginalisation (Gutfreund, 1993: 15). For others, perhaps more pragmatically, targeted and outcome-based work embodied the contemporary zeitgeist (France & Wiles, 1996: 49).

The concept of 'risk' has become influential for policy makers and practitioners. It offers infinite scope for constituting an expansive repertoire of conduct and circumstance as part of its special territory. Like other 'welfare' and educational practices, some youth work takes an approach (particularly toward 'difficult' young people) informed by the rationale that some young people are 'at risk' *rather than* simply 'dangerous'. This reworks the idea (implicit in many early accounts of youth work) that *vulnerable* young people can, without the right intervention, all too easily become dangerous. By identifying their 'at risk' status (that is, their vulnerability), early *diversionary* or *preventive* intervention becomes a rational strategy. Rather than privileging characteristics that are thought to be part of an individual's *make-up*, the concept of 'risk' concentrates attention on concrete and abstract factors (background, domicile, contacts with professionals, reputation, life-expectations, behaviour, feelings, etc.) that constitute an individual's identity as 'at risk'. Constructing such an individual (or, indeed, group or community) is part of what Hacking refers to as the process of 'making up people' (Hacking, 1986: 222). Almost anything can be plausibly incorporated as a so-called 'risk factor'. The notion of risk offers limitless possibilities for identifying new sites for expert intervention in the social and material worlds (Castel, 1991: 289), powerfully justifying professional activity, particularly 'multi-agency' approaches. The concept's utility lies in its capacity to render aspects of the domain in which the young person is situated potentially amenable to the calculus of professional evaluation and intervention. As such it greatly facilitates the expansion of governmental (professional) activity.

Work defined under the rubrics of targeting and risk is, most significantly, open to the audit and managerialist practices already flourishing in public services in the UK and elsewhere (Power, 1999; Flynn, 2000). Targeted, rather than universal, provision provides opportunities for the identification of clear 'outcomes', as well as for the deployment of apparently unambiguous 'performance indicators' in measuring these.

## **Transforming youth work: agendas of inclusion**

New Labour's commitment to youth work as a component in the regulation of youth transitions in the UK is embodied in 'Transforming Youth Work' (Department for Education and Employment, 2001; Department for Education and Skills, 2002), the policy narrative that now defines central government requirements of youth work and youth services. Transforming Youth Work (TYW) is a radical departure from the accepted, and hitherto, dominant *educational* tradition of youth work. In this, there are three main factors that determine the relevance and effectiveness of youth work (Bradford, 1999).

First, youth work is characterised by young people's *voluntary* participation in a broad range of informal leisure and educational opportunities: arts and sports, health promotion or various forms of community involvement, for example. The desire for 'something to do' is an important factor in many young people's lives and activity programmes offered by youth workers can counter corrosive boredom. They may also lead to opportunities for creative learning. Participation and inclusion (in the sense that anyone – not just those defined as 'at risk' – can be involved) have been central values in youth work. Although young people, like adults, inevitably regard these in different ways it seems that

when they experience participative and inclusive approaches in youth work they become significant factors in their involvement (Williamson *et al.*, 1997).

Second, one of youth work's principal aims is to enhance young people's ability to make *informed* decisions about their lives. This means that youth workers are often involved in the provision of relevant information (about health, educational opportunities or housing, for example) and support to young people in working out how to use it effectively. Youth workers become involved in this as a routine element of their work, particularly with older young people who may be negotiating labour market, housing or domestic transitions. When offered in a sympathetic and confidential way, such informal support may enable young people to make wise decisions about their lives.

Third, youth workers offer safe spaces in which young people can meet. This is especially important at a time when, perhaps for economic reasons, substantial numbers of young people have limited access to space in which they can meet with friends in an informal and sympathetic context. Such spaces are often established in youth centres or projects, youth information and counselling services or activity centres. Detached youth workers operating on the streets create 'virtually' enclosed spaces in which relationships between young people themselves and between young people and youth workers mark out geographical and social boundaries to create settings which young people recognise as their own. By offering accessible and responsive meeting places, youth workers can develop close relationships with young people and respond to them in ways that *young people themselves* define as important. They also support young people in their friendships and personal relationships, seeing these as enhancing and developing trust and respect amongst young people and adults. The acknowledgement of young people as *active agents* in the process of youth work is vital in achieving this.

TYW departs from this account of youth work. One way of thinking about this is to see it as a fundamental shift from *expressive* to *instrumental* functions (Parsons, 1951). Traditional youth work has seen itself as having largely expressive purposes (emphasising the possibility of emotional engagement, seeing personal relationships as a 'good' in themselves and offering spaces in which young people can convey and work with their own and others' emotions). So-called 'modernisation' in UK public services has entailed a much more instrumental view and the attempt to achieve a 'functional authority' for youth work emphasising its capacity to achieve *particular* goals, a focus on task performance and a pre-occupation with effectiveness and efficiency. We identify three ways in which this has become particularly evident on the TYW agenda.

First, the assumption is made that young people are an essentially problematic social category requiring careful management and regulation. This relies on the notion of youth as 'transitional status', a perspective developed by British sociologists in which youth's trajectories into adulthood and their associated shifting statuses from dependency to autonomy are, allegedly, the defining features of youth in late modern societies (Jones & Wallace, 1992; Coles, 1995; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). In this perspective, young people are significant only insofar as they are thought of as problematic: incomplete 'proto-adults', suffering 'cultural deficit' and subject to the exigencies of an uncertain, risky and dangerous world. Such a view makes intervention designed to render the transition to adulthood successful (in terms of young people acquiring the 'right' cultural competencies and dispositions) in young people's lives appear entirely necessary. The discourse of transition is itself contestable despite it so often being presented as taken for granted (Webster *et al.*, 2004: 2). There is little that can be isolated to define an *exclusive* transitory status to youth: not their location in education (this is shared with children and mature students), neither their dependency on family (this is shared with many others), nor their non-participation in the labour market. As Mizen suggests '... age criteria alone still provide the principal means through which [young people's] lives are organised into something approaching a coherent and meaningful category' (2004: 8). However, in *instrumental* (and governmental) terms, the discourse of transition offers a firm rationale for the 'management of growing up'.

Second, New Labour's preoccupation with 'social exclusion' (and its other: social *inclusion*) has led to youth work being incorporated into an increasingly baroque *technology* designed to secure inclusion

by countering the marginalising tendencies of contemporary society. Charles Clarke emphasised the significance of processes of exclusion for young people, knowing

*... only too well the consequences of young people becoming disaffected from their communities – the sense of worthlessness and the drift into anti-social behaviour and crime which can result (Department for Education and Skills, 2002: 3).*

However, social exclusion as a concept is amorphous, contested and highly ideological; its utility lies in its capacity for deployment in diverse ways and to support diverse positions. Ruth Levitas (1998) identifies three discourses of social exclusion currently at work in New Labour thinking:

- A 'redistributionist' discourse: poverty and economic disadvantage as the cause of exclusion;
- A 'moral underclass' discourse: exclusion is the consequence of individual (and community) inadequacy;
- A 'social integrationist' discourse in which employability and labour market participation are the principal routes out of excluded status.

It is the latter 'social integrationist discourse' (SID) that dominates current policy and practice and in which youth work has come to play a significant part. TYW has determined that youth work should be closely integrated in the Connexions strategy of managing young people's transitions into the labour market, although recent research into the organisation of Connexions may give cause for reflection on the wisdom of this (Coles *et al.*, 2004). The defining feature of the Connexions Service is its largely individualised (casework, 'key-work' or work by 'personal advisers') with 'NEETS' (those young people 'not in education, employment or training'), a group defined as particularity at risk of exclusion and requiring intervention to ensure their 'social inclusion'. Inclusion in this context is defined by the social integrationist discourse outlined by Levitas and is constituted by developing young people's employability (through education and training), emphasising opportunity and securing their labour market participation.

Third, and consistent with audit culture (Power, 1999; Strathern, 2000), youth work has become fundamentally managerialised in order to secure the accountability of youth work and youth workers. Rather than engaging with young people in ways that young people themselves partially determine, youth workers now operate in a range of pre-set targets, standards and performance indicators. For example, a new curriculum (including 'content', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment') for youth work sets a national framework against which local authorities' performance can be judged. A 'pledge' to young people further formalises what can be expected from service providers. A set of 'standards of youth work provision' goes even further in defining a shared and agreed national minimum service level (Department for Education and Skills, 2002). These practices signal a marked shift towards a range of second order activities associated with audit practices (for example, completing arcane audit returns and making statements of performance achieved). The outcomes and indicators that are defined by these will determine the way in which services and professionals undertake their work. Unless their activities are consistent with these definitions of provision (determined through an apparatus of inspection), there are, of course, serious risks to funding. Inevitably in such performative cultures it is those who are most able to frame achievement in convincing narratives (in whatever form demanded: numbers, measurements, personal accounts and so on) who will be most able to attract funding.

The TYW agenda offers a *technical* or *formal* representation of what youth work's professional culture has hitherto identified as an *informal*, (and indeterminate) *process*. It embodies a practical and procedural rationality intended to contribute to the effective (and, undoubtedly, efficient) management of youth work (at either practitioner or manager level), determined by the objectives that it specifies and achieved by carefully regulated youth worker intervention. Particular outcomes *may* coincide with interpretations of youth need defined either by young people themselves or in conjunction with youth workers. However, spaces for intervention opened up by the 'curriculum' or the 'pledge' are intended to facilitate the management of a repertoire of largely pre-determined outcomes. Thus, TYW is designed to guide the production or transformation of particular kinds of young people whose self-

formation is consistent with wider political aspirations to 'responsibility', 'active citizenship' and 'social inclusion'.

## **Conclusions: emerging 'new universals'**

In this chapter we have discussed youth work's development as part of a range of initiatives designed to manage and regulate the exigencies of 'growing up'. The significance of 'social education', its role in encouraging young people to govern their own conduct and experiences and its deployment in dealing with contemporary concerns about young people have been discussed. Some difficulties associated with the 'universal' provision of social and informal education and the political and practical utility of the concept of risk have also been highlighted.

In the context of the managerialisation and modernisation of UK public services, youth work has been drawn into a range of new settings, altered institutional and organisational arrangements and, sometimes, novel practices of audit and accountability. The historic commitment to *universal* practices (a commitment to work with 'all' young people, for example) seems to have diminished and youth work has moved into initiatives explicitly designed to manage specific groups of young people, particularly those thought to be 'at risk' in some way. Youth work's close relationship with the Connexions service, for example, has embodied these changes.

However, Transforming Youth Work should be seen as part of another *universalising* process. Its commitment to a pragmatic and technical approach, resonant of the current vogue for 'what works' and 'evidence-based practice' constitutes a move to *universal* standards and in so doing greatly increases the capacity for centralised accountability and control practices within youth work. For example, the 'Standards of Youth Work Provision' contained in Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (Department for Education and Skills, 2002: 23-26) offer a codified and formal specification that can be used to secure accountability through measurement and comparisons between different services. With an inventory of performance indicators contained in the same document, these universal definitions eschew the tacit and local knowledges that have, until recent times, characterised professionalism. The development of a 'common assessment framework', an 'outcomes framework' and the incorporation of youth services into the proposed Children's Trusts, all as part of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda will further embed these tendencies. Interesting questions are raised about the specific role and status of 'youth work knowledge' that has developed in its very particular work setting, based on specific values and incorporating distinctive approaches. It is difficult to know at this point how such knowledge will figure in the contested and shifting grounds of professional work with young people. As Newman and Nutley (2003) argue, such developments in the 'public professions' generally have already begun to disrupt existing relations and structures of professional life and have effectively re-defined what counts as professional knowledge. As such, they suggest, these new forms of knowledge (contained in standard assessment outcomes or 'identification, referral and tracking' procedures, for example) come to represent new forms of cultural capital that professionals – like youth workers – will deploy in their quest for legitimacy in the developing context of multi-agency and partnership work (Newman & Nutley, 2003: 560). How this will turn out for youth work is unknown.

Undoubtedly, young people's identity as a source of political and social concern in late modernity continues to develop in different directions, and no doubt new aspects of their lives await revelation or construction. Youth work in one form or another will continue to offer a flexible, yet changing, means of contributing to the governance of young people.



# 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 & Bouverne-De Bie, forthcoming). 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 & 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

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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 workshops 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 & 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 [...]. 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, 2005b).

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 an 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 & Otto, 1996; Nörber, 2005; Coussée *et al.*, 2010). 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, <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 & 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 & 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 & 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.*, 2010; 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 & 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?

# THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK. RE-SOCIALISING THE YOUTH QUESTION? \*

Filip Coussée

So that we may learn from our past, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, together with the Flemish Community of Belgium, organised a second workshop on youth work history in Europe. As the first workshop (see Verschelden *et al.*, 2009a), this second one did not aim at purifying an essential youth work concept irrespective of a historical and cultural context. Rather it endeavoured to identify the close links between youth work developments and broader social and cultural trends. Tracing back the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions within and between countries must help us to feed a fundamental discussion on youth work's multifaceted and multilayered identity, and to cope in a constructive way with recurrent youth work dilemmas.

Historical consciousness enables us to go beyond restrictive discussions swayed by the issues of the day. In that sense the Blankenberge history sessions aimed to clarify what youth work is, without confining youth work's identity to a description in terms of current methods. Youth work is a "social" animal (Williamson, 2008c). The current discussion, however, is mainly coloured by rather technical discussions on excluding some methods and including others, on defining boundaries between youth work and school or social work, or on (supposed) new methods to contribute to the social integration of vulnerable young people. This restriction of the discussion to rather methodical questions with a direct relevance for today's policies makes youth work a vulnerable practice to those "who would foist on it warmed-over policies that have been tried and found wanting in the past" (Gilchrist, Jeffs & Spence, 2001).

## The social nature of youth work

Although the organisers did not explicitly ask to do so, all contributors started their presentation with the questions: What was/is youth work? and Why did/do we need youth work? Throughout the presentations, youth work was shown as a social practice varied in shape and form. The flashback position obliged all contributors to sketch the broader social, cultural and political ideas and evolutions that determined the birth and growth of youth work. It soon became very clear that two societal features are of tremendous importance for the position and function of youth work in a given society: the social construction of youth as a specific section of the population and the type of welfare regime of a society. They both refer to questions concerning social integration and inclusion. The first has to do with integrating a younger age group in adult society. The latter refers to the question of how to foster social cohesion in a society that in the same time is based on exclusionary mechanisms inherent to capitalist market societies. The mandate and profile of youth work is not and cannot be the same in social democratic welfare regimes as in liberal or totalitarian regimes. Many speakers emphasised the close links between the conception of youth work and the making of democracy. This is an observation that will be repeated in this second workshop.

The conceptions of "youth" and the conceptions of welfare and social cohesion are closely interconnected and both reflect a desirable relationship between the? individual and society. Nevertheless, various contributors pointed at the fact that youth work practice and policy have been increasingly underpinned by ideas on the desired development and behaviour of youth and less by ideas referring to the democratic shaping of a society. As we concluded after the first Blankenberge workshop: the social question has been framed into the youth question (Verschelden *et al.*, 2009a).

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Developments in youth work were increasingly inspired by the ideas that live in the minds of policy makers and youth workers (and often in the minds of young people themselves) on the potential, desired, imagined meaning and significance of youth work for the positive development of young people. The individual, harmonious transformation of young people into creative and autonomous adult citizens finding their place in society became of utmost importance. These ideas were increasingly underpinned by academic research, mainly in developmental psychology (focusing on youth as a life stage) and youth sociology (focusing on youth as a social category). Policy makers, youth workers and researchers found each other in the construction of ideal developmental trajectories and transitions for the young. And so, as other forms of social work (in a broad sense), youth work has increasingly been constructed as a tool to integrate young people in the prevailing adult society. It is striking how in many European countries “social inclusion” (or exclusion) was constructed as an individual asset, not as part of the social quality of society.

## **Managing “the social”**

A collection of harmonious and healthy people does not necessarily and in itself result in a just and social cohesive society. This implies that the social nature of youth work encompasses much more than a “holistic” view on the individual development of children and young people. Moreover, the emphasis on youth work as a tool for individual development and inclusion of young people obscures two fundamental discussions: first, it obscures the question of how youth work functions or can function as a part of our “democratic infrastructure” as a forum to give a voice to young people in the making of our society; second, it leads to the obsession that young people must be given “access to youth work” and therefore no longer questions the underpinning idealised conceptions of “youth”, which are exactly at the basis of the inaccessibility of youth work.

In that sense, the historical insights from the first Blankenberge workshop reminded us very strongly that young people are not a homogeneous group and also that they are social beings and not merely social becomings. Therefore youth work policy and practice should be guided as much by (forgotten) “social questions” as by “youth questions”. These insights are highly relevant for all European countries.

Youth work is a part of the social infrastructure of a society. In most eastern European countries this social infrastructure has to be renewed after a period of state socialism in which the “social” was reduced to the state. In most western European countries neoliberalism has eroded the “social” by stressing the force of “the individual, autonomous, creative, independent citizen” investing in his or her own life. The social power of the different “pillars” (such as Catholic, socialist, liberal, nationalist) and all their associations organising social life (sports, schools, health care funds, trade unions, youth organisations, adult associations and so forth) have been questioned very critically. These criticisms were to a large extent legitimate, because the pillars divided people into social categories and avoided contact between them. Moreover, the enormous influence of the pillars on social life was not very transparent and was insufficiently subjected to democratic control.

It seems, in the West as in the East, that the “social” in society is currently more open-ended than ever, but this also means that it is more uncertain and vulnerable.

Some (young) people are increasingly left to their own devices. The reorganisation of the social is increasingly being taken over by a pedagogical and seemingly apolitical structures, subdivided in manageable sectors and controlled by social engineers. Just as the former pillarisation, this compartmentalisation has a dividing effect, although it is less problematised. “Problematic” people are divided from “normal” people. Whilst in the “pillarised” period “social and cultural work” was unified in one pillar, social work is distinguished from “regular” cultural work, which also means that deviant young people are increasingly separated from “regular” young people.

In the concluding reflections and discussions all participants agreed that these insights on the “management of the social” should feed the youth work discussion much more than they do nowadays.

In our conclusions (Verschelden *et al.*, 2009a), we tried to grasp the gained insights by framing the discussion in a social pedagogical perspective.

## **The social and pedagogical identity of youth work**

Various speakers shed light on some of the core principles of youth work identity. Bernard Davies (United Kingdom) was the most explicit on this point (see also Davies & Merton, 2009). He referred to key principles as voluntariness, group work, building relationships with young people and with their communities, participation, starting where young people are and going beyond, strong emphasis on recreation and association and so forth.

These features were confirmed in other contributions. At the same time it was recognised that a characterisation of youth work in these terms remains on a rather methodical level. It does refer to the pedagogical nature of youth work, but it does not explicitly connect these principles to the social question and the significance for society. Even if youth work meets all these core features, it can be underpinned by very diverging assumptions and aims. Throughout history we have identified conservative forms of youth work, but also youth work that was developed starting from progressive, restorative and radical ideas on the relationship between the individual and society.

These are not mere arbitrary choices. Of course, if we accept that there is no best way to organise society, then we have to accept that there is no “best” way to organise youth work. Nevertheless, we have to make the underlying assumptions to youth work practice and policy much more explicit. If they are not made explicit (or even not consciously known any more), then it is impossible to discuss youth work in its broader social functions. Perhaps that is why discussions on youth work so often stick to methodical questions focusing on how to do things in a better way.

We tend to forget to ask if we are doing the good things.

The social pedagogical framework shifts our attention from the organisation of youth work as a pedagogical practice to the tight relationship between pedagogical practices and views on the desired social order. History made this relationship very concrete. All histories identified a kind of social pedagogical “embarrassment” (Mennicke, 1937), although most contributors did not explicitly call it that. The key question thrown up by this social pedagogical embarrassment is: How can we prevent social disintegration and preserve social cohesion without eliminating diversity? This question was answered in the creation of social practices bridging the gap between the individual and society. As argued above these social practices increasingly transformed social questions into educational questions.

Youth work, being such a social practice, facilitates the negotiation between individual aspirations and societal expectations. That is why the rapporteurs of the first Blankenberge workshop explicitly chose to describe youth work as “social” work.

So youth work respects diversity and difference and at the same time has to strive for equality and cohesion.

This kind of tension – open, but not without engagement – is inherent to all practices in the “social”. Because this is the sphere where the relationship between the individual and society or between lifeworld and system (Lorenz, 2009) is constantly questioned and constructed. The intensive discussions we had in May 2008 on youth work as a practice full of tensions taught us that youth work has to be open-ended, but not asocial. Youth work initiatives that are externally shaped and where activities and purposes are defined from above, fail to appreciate that it is not possible in a democracy to define in advance the final destination of individual and societal processes. These kind of “closed” practices could be defined as asocial work; they leave out the social and emphasise the work (Bradt, 2009).

On the other hand, youth work initiatives that fail to connect their activities to the broader society may be very open, but they could also be asocial. They tend to restrict participation to participation in youth work and not participation through youth work. The first Blankenberge workshop showed that many youth work forms throughout history disconnected themselves from their social context and more specifically from the construction of a democratic welfare state. Those initiatives are youth-centred, but fail to question their significance for society.

The dialectical relations between openness and engagement are grasped in the inextricability of the pedagogical and the social nature of youth work. Through the pedagogical, youth workers foster individual learning processes and deliberately aim to go beyond young people's lifeworlds. Through the social, youth workers are mediating between lifeworld and system and aiming at societal learning processes.

### **A sustainable practice and a supportive policy**

These inextricability and dialectical tensions make it very hard to build up a clear identity and therefore also to develop a sustainable, supportive youth work policy.

Throughout many histories it was shown how policy makers (and also youth workers) often neglected these tensions. Dialectics seem to tempt (tend?) to choose between two poles. We were given different examples of youth work policies and practices overemphasising one aspect of the work and neglecting the other:

- either cutting off the social aspects of youth work: pedagogical action is then reduced to a set of methods or techniques which may well be fed by holistic, caring assumptions on children and young people, but disconnect pedagogy from society (Coussée *et al.*, 2010). This implies that the societal function of youth work (negotiating between lifeworld and system) is obscured and therefore unquestionable;
- or cutting off the pedagogical aspects of youth work: social action then is disconnected from pedagogical questions. In these views on youth work we sense a strong plea for democratisation of society and radicalisation of youth work, but youth workers themselves get no pedagogical perspectives to bring these principles in practice in their work with concrete young people.

It was the aim of the second Blankenberge workshop to make the picture of youth work histories in Europe more complete. In addition to this we hoped to elaborate further on the social identity of youth work. We tried to develop the above described social pedagogical framework as a productive frame to fertilise the identity debate rather than to sterilise it, convinced that it had the potential to accommodate the existing diversity of youth work methods, strategies and definitions and to make it manageable without trying to eliminate it. It must help us to discuss youth work identity:

- starting from a shared mission and position for all youth work forms;
- with respect to the dialectical tension between diversity and universality;
- grounded in youth work practice and not externally defined;
- based on what youth work does, not on what youth work pretends to do;
- without drawing dividing lines between youth work with young people and youth work for young people;
- in a flexible and open way;
- without neglecting the need to develop practical perspectives for practitioners and policy makers.

We elaborated further on these insights and frameworks in this second workshop on the history of youth work in Europe (and its relevance for youth work and youth policy today). We hope that these insights might further add to a fruitful discussion on youth work and its significance for young people and for society.

# EUROPE, EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT AND EDUCATION \*

Peter Lauritzen<sup>1</sup>

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends and Colleagues,*

I would like to thank the Hungarian authorities for the confidence in letting me summarize the results of this important work. That really shows that they are ready to face anything in the future.

To start, I would like to introduce a small reflection which goes a little bit beyond the youth work related reflections which will follow. I refer to the accession process of the European Union in its political dimension. What is going on? Is this the “coming home to Europe”, as was voiced many years back by Václav Havel? Is this a “European Reunification”, as was said yesterday morning by Tamás Deutsch? Is this “the first time they are taking us seriously,” as was said by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mircea Gonea, recently in a meeting which I held with the working group on Young People in South Eastern Europe in Bucharest, where he actually said,

*the West has played around with us many times, but I think this time it is serious, this time the accession story to NATO and the accession story to the European Union is serious, and that is why we also have to work differently on these agendas than we worked in the past.*

Maybe the accession process is a little bit of all that, and this is why I think we should learn to link our common work to a larger agenda.

The Cold War is behind us in terms of the running political agenda. But when it comes to memory and attitudes and even to public opinion, doubts come in as to whether this confrontational period is as far behind us as we believe, or are made to believe. For people of my generation, for instance, the Cold War and its influence on education structures and content has marked something like thirty years of our lives, on both sides of the Iron Curtain. How does one get rid of this? Overnight, having a few drinks? I mean, how does this kind of influence actually get out of you, how do you ‘de-learn’? I think certain long term effects stay with you: the way you are educated and the way you keep thinking are issues we need to discuss further, and we have to be aware of our sub-conscience, about our stereotypes and about ways to deal with this heritage positively in education.

True, it is the future that counts. But he who does not know and master the past and the related memories is not ready to face the future either, and some debates held presently in *Mittleuropa*<sup>2</sup> on nationality, forced migration, remaining rights, ‘gone’ rights and a new legal reality within the European Union are living proof to this opinion of mine. The order of the world which was created after the Second World War by the three big architects of this order, Stalin, Churchill and Truman, was also an order, that forced the creation of ethnic nation-states. What was to be prevented were pockets of German nationality populations, which might serve once again as a pretext to unite any German speaking people within one nation. Hence, through forced migration after 1945, they made sure that ethnic nation states would come into existence, thus laying the foundation for new problems to emerge, which then turn around the difficult adaptation of ethnic nations to modernity and an international competitive economy with open borders for capital flows and the labour force. Which

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<sup>1</sup> These are the concluding remarks Peter Lauritzen made at the closing plenary of the 13-4-10s (thirteen for teens) conference organized by the Hungarian Ministry of Youth and Sport for the then 13 accession countries of the European Union on the theme of ‘Youth Policy Development in the Perspective of the White Paper’. It took place at the European Youth Centre Budapest, from 18 to 21 April 2002.

<sup>2</sup> This literally translates from German as Central Europe. But the concept that lies behind *Mittleuropa* is more complex and refers to the common imperial history of the central European countries and its legacy on their social and political development.

leads to mixed populations as a kind of normality and has always done! The only state where they did not tow this line was Yugoslavia. And it is one of the biggest tragedies that I have witnessed in my lifetime that this multicultural federation did not hold: as if the country had been unduly in advance of its time and was brought back to the historic logic of nation building on ethnic foundations.

Today, talking of Europe is actually to talk of another order than the one created directly after the War. Things have evolved, as we all know. It means an order of open borders, it means an order of mobility and freedom of movement; it means an order of heterogeneous state populations. We have learnt that it is not possible to build Europe on the concept of the ethnic nation, and not even on a kind of multitude of ethnic nation-states. This would be in itself racist and all European populations who have gone through this exercise in the last fifty years know that. They face the resulting difficulties of xenophobia and aggression, which seem to be unavoidable within heterogeneous societies and keep working on the human right institutions and laws which will help maintain and protect their basic values, and intervene when these are threatened. It is also an order of supra-nationality and it is an order of community rule. This is, of course, a heavy intervention into national sovereignty in the old understanding of sovereignty as an undividable, central power. In this sense, when joining the Union, it is not possible to speak of national sovereignty in the old way any more. You may have your defined areas of competence which the nation-states will keep and these will remain extremely important, but on many other items, and these are set out chapter by chapter within the accession process, there are items where these sovereignties will have to be shared in the future. This happens by the free will of those who take part in the process; it is not something that is imposed. I say 'free will', because people believe that through the accession exercise they are taking part in the large process of creating a human, economic, social and democratic Union in Europe, and they want to be part of it. It is a voluntary process and that is the difference. I sometimes take part in activities where participants tell me, maybe at one o'clock in the morning after some vodkas, that at the end of the day, it is all the same: they were controlled by Moscow in the past, then there was a little break to let them fall on their feet again, and now they will be controlled by Brussels. This kind of statement always makes me angry and sad. This shows somehow a lack of democratic understanding when such statements are made. In this case it is simply not understood why countries are going into this accession process. There have been democratic votes on this item, there have been parliamentary votes, there have been referenda and there will be referenda again when the formal question of joining is on the agenda. Where are the battalions of the European Union, enforcing enlargement? Is it not the other way round: that the accession process meets with heavy resistance inside the old Union countries and that this resistance has to be overcome?

I think this whole process has to be kept in mind. We are not talking about simply adding opportunities for some privileged young people here. We are talking about opening future life perspectives and about involvement, so that the process of European unity, which has been clearly a 'Western' project, becomes truly pan European and this needs the support of young people, today and tomorrow. I put forward that there is a larger agenda linked to accession and I feel that it is appropriate at the beginning of this report to come up with this reflection.

The 'White Paper on Youth' is a landmark in European discussions on youth policy and this is due both to its content and to the method used, first and foremost, because it gives young people a foot in the door to the enlargement process. It allows us – at least in those countries where the enlargement process is not yet that far advanced – to say, Youth issues also belong to the agenda. It was said this morning that this argument is not possible, and that procedures are completely separate. I'm not so sure.

Take a country like Romania. I remember that Commissioner Verheugen addressed the Romanian Parliament and there he said,

*[...] if you don't solve a number of problems, such as the problems of street children and children in institutions, or the problem of trafficking of young women and other such problems of this kind, then you will have problems with accession.*

So there seems to be a link with a number of items of a societal nature and the possibility to join the Union, and these are in the area of employment, of social cohesion, in the area of human rights and civil society or in the area of respect for the rights of young women and children. These belong to any community agenda and are to be found implicitly in all the treaties. They are also mentioned in the White Paper, which gives you an occasion to actually say: these are the youth policy items of interest to us and we would like these same items to be included in the debates about the framework conditions and the political context of joining the European Union. That is at least how I would understand the political relevance of the 'White Paper on Youth' and the related open method of coordination in accession countries, once they are included in the procedure. Another effect of this approach is that this way you have direct influence on national legislation, on funding and on the status of NGOs. Hence it would be a good idea to use the White Paper as a kind of register of what is already agreed in youth policy.

Another reflection is that in the preparatory process to working with the White Paper, as this happens in and around this meeting – which I find, and emphasize again, a most welcome initiative – you actually prevent a race towards Brussels one by one, everybody being everybody else's competitor. You unite the 13 on this one occasion, which is a very constructive approach. However, what about this distinction of the 13 and the 15, which I could observe a little during your discussions? Can this not lead into a trap? Into the trap of believing that there are somewhere 15 countries who are already concerned with the White Paper for a while, and who have achieved some unity already? And then there are on the other side some 13, who maybe have to create another kind of unity in conferences such as this one. I'm not so sure whether there is any truth in this distinction, even if there is one in legal and formal terms, but with regard to contents of youth policy? I wouldn't like to see what a test on the effectiveness of youth policy institutions between Slovenia and Italy would produce. Can you really say what is significantly 'western' in a country and thus progressive, modern, post-modern, etc. and what is significantly 'eastern' and thus pre-modern, or modern for that matter? When Slovenia produced its first youth report on attitudes of young people, youth cultures and behavioural patterns in 1998 (Ule & Renner, 1998), we had a small debate within our staff in the Council of Europe about the values of young people in Central and Eastern Europe: are they different from the values in Western Europe? In the light of the sociological reports available on transition and young people we could not really find confirmation for this idea, however much our previous disposition would suggest that there have to be big differences and that these are here to stay for a long time. Research, not least the study quoted above, did not confirm this disposition either. All we could say is that there are similar values and similar ideas connected to young people in the big Europe, however much the social conditions of learning and living might differ. This is why I voice my word of caution so that you do not get stuck in this logic of the '13' and the '15', not to mention the social differences which might exist within the '13', with countries such as Malta and Cyprus being in the same process as Hungary and Poland.

We do not only benefit from the initiative of the Hungarian Government, but also from the good work of Peter Woortsch, who developed a specific questionnaire for this meeting and a method of getting quick results with it. So, what I'm now trying to do in the second part of this report is to give you a short summary of the results the way I understand them.

I must say that what has been achieved with this questionnaire is quite considerable. In the Council of Europe and its intergovernmental committee on youth (CDEJ) we have not been able to achieve anything similar. When we wanted this kind of information, you and I might address the colleagues from governments here in the room, and say: all this is quite complicated, and we have to ask the minister of this and the minister of that and the statistical office, and at the end of the day we would not get the documentation in the way we wanted it, and it would always be out of date, of course. And also, you would rightly insist on being given some direction with regard to comparability of data and truly European objectives.

Here some magic persuasion in the preparatory process to the conference has functioned and you have sent in information, which is indeed very telling and useful for getting an idea of the kind of data we would need in the future. One of my proposals is that this procedure – and this is in line with what



Peter Wootsch and László Szabó have themselves said – should be followed up and should be built upon. By working with more time and effort than has been available during the preparatory process, one could think of using this type of quantitative and qualitative data collection in a more regular and systematic manner, almost like an observatory on youth development in member countries. This kind of approach would be a prerequisite for a youth policy monitoring procedure and it should exist not only for the 13 but very much also for the 15 and for other member countries of the Council of Europe, not anywhere linked to European Union accession. I think we should welcome this initiative and method, keep it and develop it further.

From the filled-in questionnaires we received, we learn that in the candidate countries represented here we have nine countries with parliamentary committees on youth and we have ten countries which have quite explicit and detailed youth laws. Sometimes, in some of the answers, these are really outlined in each and every detail, which is a valuable resource. We are working with twelve questionnaires; one set of country information is not available.

There is one country where youth work is organized at the level of an agency, ten administrations are attached to specific ministries, out of them only two with a Youth and Sports Ministry, Hungary and Romania. And in all other countries 'youth' is integrated into ministries of education. This is an interesting and new trend, changing a practice from the past where there have been specific ministries for 'youth' or state committees at the rank of a ministry. One can see this more and more, how education ministries are taking over youth ministries in Europe – a trend. It has even happened in Russia.

I don't know what that trend really means, apart from lean government and the reduction of the number of portfolios. Sometimes people keep relatively independent youth departments inside the Ministry of Education. But very often this trend means a strong influence of formal education on youth work and it is not always clear how you can actually best work with it. At least this 'ongoing education trend' is coming out strongly from our small survey – nine out of 13.

One country, Lithuania, has a 'State Council on Youth'. I happen to be just now involved with the international review on youth policy in Lithuania and I must say that this is an impressive model of co-management at all levels – national, regional, local. This State Council is headed by the deputy minister of the Ministry of Social Affairs and includes NGOs at all levels of the decision making. There are difficulties with the required coordination between ministries, which is a more general problem. Questionnaires show that this coordination functions only in the case of two or three countries in a satisfactory way. In youth policy, this is the black hole in governmental organization. So, in some cases this coordination happens by including NGOs; in some countries this is unheard of. All countries have long term projects and one of them, Cyprus, has based its long term project planning on the White Paper already in the sense of making the objectives of the White Paper the basis of long term planning. This approach means also working with social reports and research. The range of themes covers items such as tourism, leisure time, media, regional cooperation, non-formal education, the professional integration of school leavers, the stability pact, healthy life styles and an anti-racism campaign.

Governments use and finance instruments, work formats and civil society actors such as 'Youth for Europe' Agencies, education and youth work centres, children and youth institutions, NGOs, drug and dependency centres, health promotion units, local training units and research centres. Some of these actors remain independent (NGOs); others function as an extended government service.

The emphasis is on project financing; in some cases there is no data provided; but generally speaking the trend is that projects are financed in the areas of prevention, youth work, youth centres and clubs, and civil society development through NGOs.

On local government, I'm not too enthusiastic about the results detectable. Generally, everybody says this is what working with young people is about – the local level. Surely there is some decentralization,

and there are regional offices. But when you look into the big section reserved in the questionnaire for local government questions, answers are a bit vague and woolly. I'm of course happy for the Council of Europe that our recommendation on participation in municipal life is the basis of local youth work in Bulgaria and has influenced local youth work practices in a few other countries, but on other items requested one might think that on local youth work things can be improved. Take a look at the survey yourself and make up your own mind. I underline this, because people say, quite generally and easily, that youth work in a country where it does not reach out to the local level is simply not efficient. But then there are some countries, and Hungary is one of them, where there is a whole successful policy of directing youth work efforts towards the regional and local levels.

Participation and the role of youth councils come out a little confused. Apparently there is a problem with youth councils in Central and Eastern Europe. However, looking at the questionnaires, it looks as if there are youth councils practically everywhere in the candidate countries, with the exception of Poland and Turkey. Maybe this is an area where the questionnaire does not help, because you have to know about backgrounds, assess the representativeness within the political culture of particular countries and you also need the experience of the European Youth Forum. In the Council of Europe we have identified our lack of grounded knowledge on this item and asked for a larger study on youth councils to still be produced in 2002 and presented for public debate next year.

My own impression, however superficial this maybe, is that youth councils undergo different processes of social change in different countries. What have they become, if you look only ten years back, in the United Kingdom, in Austria or in France? In the two latter countries they have even disappeared (for a while); in others they have changed function in becoming more of a service organization than a political body; in others again they function as ever: lobbying, advocating, and influencing public opinion and public authority. This change in the functions of some, but not all, youth councils, is something that goes on all the time in Europe. And on this item, again, where are the distinctions between the '13' and the '15'? I had actually planned to ask the plenary whether the more complete forms of youth democracy are not developed these days in Central and Eastern Europe. Like many, I hear quite often in more 'Western' contexts that people say, go away with youth councils, go away with organizations, this is stuff from the past. We know what to think of such superficial opinions and we keep trusting in young people to determine themselves how their interests are best articulated and defended. But I almost feel that it is in the accession countries that democratic youth organizations, multipliers and young people at large seek more intensely to find and confirm their place as social actors than in the 'old' democracies. I leave this point up in the air, like a creative doubt about ourselves and our so-called securities.

Local organizations are well spread, says the survey. And again you will see that we have a problem of data reliability when looking through these questionnaires. When it comes to questions such as, 'how many associations are there in your country?', you will find in one country figures such as 50,000, and in another country 4,000. I also think that to understand more about differences such as that, we would have to know what kind of associations are being referred to. I don't know whether it is very helpful to have these figures without them being specifically qualified.

Again, what is interesting, because it is telling about the governmental activities, is the inventory of activities. Activities under youth are registered in areas such as culture, leisure, religion, recreation, sport, healthcare, social welfare, student policy, political education, professional interest, national identity, intercultural learning and activities for the disabled. I would say that it is a pretty large range of youth work issues, and very complete, and this is what comes back from the answers on what is presented in terms of projects.

On membership in organizations, figures range from two percent to 13 percent. So there is no chance to interpret anything at this stage. This has to be followed up with further questions.

Then we can see that there is a high range of activity at a student level, among student organizations, and in higher education. The list is incomplete; maybe more is going on. The associations mentioned are AIESEC<sup>3</sup>, AEGEE<sup>4</sup> and the national student councils.

Programmes concerning citizenship: only a few programmes are mentioned, some programmes in schools, but there is not much NGO activity for the time being. And on voluntary services one has the feeling that there is a little confusion about answers. Commitment to civil society seems to overlap with voluntary service through an organization or a specific programme such as 'European Voluntary Service'.

When it comes to the part called 'key areas of activity' we notice employment, housing, exclusion, risk behaviour, poverty, participation, violence, deterioration of interpersonal relations, increase of social tensions and health policy. This refers to the question, if you had to mention five key areas of your country's work, what would you mention? This is interesting, because this is the first time that items such as violence, tensions, the decline of civil and social behaviour are actually coming up in a European survey. To be continued ...

On non-formal education: lots of activities are reported in leisure centres and clubs, teacher's initiatives during free time, non-formal education, adult education, and the general context of modernization and life long learning. More specifically on life long learning you get six more extensive answers with very interesting projects.

What else is there in this panorama? Very positive reports on e-learning and information technology, both in school and out-of-school. And then there is something which was very much resented in one of the working groups: a seemingly high insecurity about the status of a youth worker. There seem to be, within the 13, practically no standards for this kind of work; people have difficulty in saying what it should even be about. However, it is recognized that a youth training structure belongs to youth policy. So this is an item that deserves further attention.

The strong side of the summary report presented here and at your disposal is that inside the 13 there are many more well functioning youth work structures, democratic structures, and participation structures than one might have assumed. This the questionnaire brings clearly to the surface. There is a good and solid orientation and willingness for action towards developing non-formal education and information technologies. There is also a commitment to political education. There are weaknesses too: they are in the areas of coordination and governance and in the identification of central political actors. When you attempt to read between the lines you get the feeling that the hidden message is: but nobody ever really does anything! As if youth policies were by nature complex and impersonal, without clearly recognizable driving forces and outstanding people. Not that this can be taken as a general rule, particularly not here in Budapest, but there is also a melancholic melody in the air, when working with the answers given.

I will now turn to the last part of my presentation and just get on with saying what this conference proposes as a result of your work in groups, as you have heard it through the reports from the groups already.

On participation: I think that it is a very good idea to propose a training course for adults to teach them how to listen to young people. And to create access to information training and participatory structures, thus making sure that people can take decisions about their own futures themselves. It is also very right to go for empowerment and for the creation of concrete responsibilities, and I have felt that the proposals of this participation working group are very much going in the direction of active, democratic citizenship. And you will have a parallel to that, in the final text: the proposal to work with national action plans.

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<sup>3</sup> AIESEC is the International Association of Students of Economics and Commerce. For more information see <http://www.aiesec.org>.

<sup>4</sup> AEGEE is the Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe / European Students' Forum. For more information see <http://www.aegEE.org>.

The 'social factors report' shows that it is not possible to ask people to act in youth work and talk about the autonomy of young people without giving them some sort of condition so that they can handle what they are supposed to do concerning their living conditions, housing, education, and health care. This is an important starting point. The conclusions of the working group are again in the final text, where it says it is important to focus on the need for the coordination of sectoral policies affecting young people. Special mention should be made of a list of about twenty very interesting micro projects, which illustrate the link between youth work and social factors and have been put forward by the group.

The non-formal education group produced a whole number of very interesting proposals. There is no reason to believe that there is any problem between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on the type of proposals made, as some seem to believe. Sometimes I'm not so sure whether, when people in youth work are trained to work for and with Youth for Europe Agencies, we are not rather talking of vocational training, which then might be mixed up with the much bigger item of non-formal education. In fact, I would say that non-formal education is potentially the biggest growth factor for youth work. It prepares you for the information society, for a knowledge-based economy, and for the extension of the third sector, and it prepares you for the change from a pre-modern and modern society into a post-modern service society. And this is a sector which will also have its own economic weight in the future, a development of significant importance to NGOs active in delivering a non-formal education offer and practice. In this respect, I want to mention particularly the recommendation for the recognition of non-formal education presently being prepared by the Council of Europe.

The 'values of youth work group' made their proposal to hold a big forum on youth values, which should be welcomed and advocated. They had a good interactive and sometimes controversial exchange on young people's values today, which in a certain way it would have been nice to extend to the whole conference. How do you judge patriotism: a value to defend, a reactionary concept, a value to fight? This was the stuff of the debates in the group. If you take responsibility for young people as a leader, what should your code of ethics look like? What are the limits of your influence? What are the moments where you have to act, and how?

On 'cooperation', we have heard already about the information portal planned by the European Commission and we have received quite a number of proposals in the youth information field related to EuroDesk and to a Central European Information Centre. Activities have been announced linked to the White Paper and the Open Method of Coordination and particularly to other forthcoming conferences on the same issue.

What is remaining is this question: who will prepare the younger generation for the kind of Europe they will live in, and what then will their loyalty to this system be like? Can we talk of citizenship, of a sense of belonging, of some form of community attachment, and how will this be created, developed, and confirmed? Who will the actors be? Young people themselves? The schools? The parents? The media? The NGOs? Probably all of these, but how will this happen and will it happen?

The big question Europe poses to education is: We have made Europe; how do we make Europeans? Elements of an answer to this question will have to describe how to give young people a hand in the construction of Europe. The White Paper indicates the chapters of the textbook which need writing: participation, information, values, autonomy, employment, ways to live in an inclusive and democratic environment, and culture. Nobody is waiting for a ready-built European house and nobody wants to live in it. So, make them build their own house; it is their future, after all.

With a last word of thanks and recognition to the organizers, I would like to thank you very much for your attention.



# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE \*

Neil Thompson

## Introduction

The concept of reflective practice is one that is closely associated with the work of Donald Schön (Schön, 1983; 1987; 1992). It is an approach to professional practice that emphasizes the need for practitioners to avoid standardized, formula responses to the situations they encounter. Reflective practice involves coming to terms with the complexity, variability and uncertainty associated with human services work.

This chapter therefore explores the implications of developing reflective practice. It begins by addressing the basic question of: 'What is reflective practice?' From this we move on to consider the process of applying theory to practice, This involves clearing up some misunderstandings about the relationship between theory and practice, and establishing why it is important for practice to be based on theory. Finally, I shall explore the role of creativity in facilitating both systematic and anti-discriminatory practice.

## What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice begins from the premise that human problems cannot be solved by the simple application of technical solutions, People's problems are far too complex and 'messy' to be resolved in this way. Schön draws a distinction between the 'high ground' of theory and research and the 'swampy lowlands' of practice. He describes this as follows:

*In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground which overlooks a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the use of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowlands, problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution. The irony of the situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or to society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. (Schön, 1983: 54)*

One significant implication of this is that practitioners cannot sit back and wait for 'experts' to provide them with solutions on a plate. Workers have to engage with the complexities of practice and navigate a way through them. That is, reflective practice is an active process of constructing solutions, rather than a passive process of following procedures or guidelines.

In order to do this, we must first undertake what Schön (1983) calls 'problem setting'. The messy situations workers encounter do not come with clearly defined problems ready made for the practitioner to start working on. Consequently, the first task the worker faces is to make sense of the situation, to develop a picture of the problem(s) to be tackled. This, then, is the process of 'problem setting'. As Schön (1983: 40) puts it: 'Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we shall attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them'. Problem setting is part of the process of assessment and illustrates the point that assessment should not be seen as routine or mechanical – it is an active process of forming a picture, identifying problems and mapping out a way forward.

In this way, we can see that the 'high ground' of theory is not going to provide 'off the peg' solutions. Rather, what needs to happen is for the overview we gain from the high ground to be combined and integrated with the specific insights we gain by being 'close to the action' within the actual situations

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\* Reproduced from: Thompson, N. (2005). Reflective Practice. In: R. Harrison & C. Wise (eds), *Working with young people* (pp. 95-103). London: Open University/Sage Publications, by permission of SAGE Publications Ltd.

we are dealing with. That is, workers need to use their experience and expertise in such a way that it comes to be 'tailor-made' for the specific situation they are working with at any particular time.

A reflective practitioner, then, is a worker who is able to use experience, knowledge and theoretical perspectives to guide and inform practice. However this does not mean applying ideas in a blanket form, unthinkingly and uncritically, regardless of the circumstances. Reflective practice involves cutting the cloth to suit the specific circumstances, rather than looking for ready-made solutions.

To inexperienced workers, this may sound very difficult and daunting. However, it is based on a set of skills that can be developed with experience, and offers a sound basis for high-quality practice and high levels of job satisfaction.

## **Relating theory to practice**

Reflective practice involves being able to relate theory to practice, drawing on existing frameworks of ideas and knowledge so that we do not have to 'reinvent the wheel' for each new situation that arises. I shall therefore address some of the key issues relating to the application of theory to practice. I shall begin by outlining two common misunderstandings concerning the relationship between theory and practice.

First, we need to recognize that the relationship is not a simple or straightforward one. Theory influences practice in a number of subtle and intricate ways, but practice can also influence theory (Thompson, 2000). These are important points to recognize, as they help to dispel the myth that theory and practice are separate, unconnected domains. I shall discuss below the dangers of driving a wedge between theory and practice. Second, it is also important to realize that theory does not provide hard and fast answers or clear, simple solutions to problems. To see it otherwise is to misconceive the part that theory plays in guiding practice.

These two sets of issues represent the two extremes of a continuum. At one extreme, the tendency to separate theory from practice is problematic in terms of cutting off an important resource for understanding practice situations. At the other extreme, it is unhelpful to have unrealistic expectations of what theory can or should offer, as this too can have the effect of driving a wedge between theory and practice.

The middle ground between these two extremes is where reflective practice operates. It involves recognizing the ways in which the general principles offered by theory can be adopted and 'tailored' to fit the specific circumstances of each situation dealt with. The tendency to divorce theory from practice is a dangerous one in so far as it leaves us open to a number of possible difficulties. These should become clear by considering why we should integrate theory and practice as effectively as possible.

In a previous text (Thompson, 2000), I identified the following six reasons for relating theory to practice. I shall comment briefly on each of the six.

### **Anti-discriminatory practice**

[...] Discrimination and oppression are inherent in the way society is organized. We therefore need to pay attention to theories of discrimination and oppression if we are to challenge their destructive effects. A reliance on 'common sense' is likely to reflect, rather than challenge, dominant discriminatory attitudes.

### **The fallacy of theoryless practice**

Even if a framework of ideas is not used deliberately or explicitly, it is inevitable that our actions will be guided by sets of ideas and assumptions. The idea that we can have practice without theory is therefore a fallacy. A theory does not have to be a formal or 'official' theory as found in books or academic journals. Theory can refer to any ideas or frameworks of understanding that are used to make sense of our everyday experience and practice situations.

Theory is therefore inevitably applied to practice, but, if we do not apply such theory explicitly or deliberately, we are relying on untested assumptions and therefore leaving a lot to chance.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluating our practice gives us useful opportunities to learn from our experience by identifying what worked well and what was problematic [...]. In order to do this we have to draw on a theory base. For example, in evaluating a particular approach that was adopted, we need to have at least a basic understanding of the ideas on which that approach is based.

### **Continuous professional development**

[...] A commitment to continuous professional development [...] depends on a theory base. The process involves avoiding 'getting into a rut' of unthinking, uncritical routines. Continuous professional development rests on our ability and willingness to adopt a reflective approach, to think creatively and critically about our work.

### **Professional accountability**

As professionals, people workers are accountable for their actions. Consequently, we need to be able to explain and Justify the decisions we make and the steps we take, It is difficult, if not impossible, to do this without reference to a theory base. Professional accountability demands reasoned arguments to justify our actions, and this, of course, involves drawing on a set of concepts that guide and inform our practice.

### **Inappropriate responses**

If we rely on 'common sense' responses to the problems we encounter, there is a serious danger that our actions may not only prove ineffective but actually make the situation worse:

*A failure to draw on theoretical knowledge may lead to an inappropriate response on the part of the worker. We may misinterpret what is happening and react in a way which is not helpful or which even makes the situation worse. For example, a person experiencing a bereavement may express considerable anger towards the worker. If the worker does not recognise such anger as a common part of the grieving process, he or she could easily misread the situation and interpret the anger as a rejection of the worker's help. (Thompson, 2000: 35)*

Reflective practice, as these six examples illustrate, owes much to a purposeful application of theory to practice. This goes far beyond an implicit, uncritical use of theory, and involves a proactive approach to using theoretical ideas and knowledge as a framework for maximizing effectiveness.

This brings us to the question of how can we apply theory to practice – what needs to be done to draw on the benefits that theory can offer? This is a vast topic and so, in the space available, I shall limit myself to outlining the following six steps that can be taken to promote reflective practice:

- **Read** For theory to be used to best effect it is important that we break down the barriers by challenging the assumption that reading is for students or staff in training and not for fully-fledged practitioners. Unfortunately, it is commonly assumed by many people that reflecting on theory is a task for students but not for practitioners. For example, an experienced social worker once told me that he missed being a student as he had enjoyed reading widely on the subject of social work and related topics. When I asked him what was stopping him from continuing to do so, he struggled for an answer. In the end, he replied that it was because it was 'not the done thing'. It is important, then, that such a 'reading is for students only' culture is broken down. Some may argue that they do not have enough time to read. However, there are two points that need to be made in response to this. First, time spent reading is an *investment* of time and can, by enhancing our practice, save time in the long-run. Second, reading can increase our levels of job satisfaction by giving us a broader perspective and greater insights



into people work. In view of this, I feel it is worth devoting some of our own time, outside of working hours, to read about subjects related to our work.

- *Ask* 'Asking' can apply in two ways. First, in relation to reading, much of the people work literature base is written in a jargonistic academic style that makes it difficult to understand. It can be helpful, then, to ask other people about such issues so that you can get past this barrier. The danger is that some people may give up on reading because they feel uncomfortable with the style of writing being used. Second, we can learn a great deal from other people's practice. Students often learn a great deal by asking questions like: 'Why do you do it that way?' or 'Have you any ideas how I might tackle this situation?' There is much to be gained from creating an open, inquiring, mutually supportive atmosphere in which all staff, not just students, can learn from each other,
- *Watch* There is much to be learned from developing an enhanced level of awareness in terms of observational skills. Much of the time we may miss significant issues because we treat situations as routine and commonplace. We need to remember that every situation is unique in some ways, and so we need to be attuned to what is happening and not make blanket assumptions. Practising in a routine, uncritical way can mean that we are, in effect, going around with our eyes closed, oblivious to significant factors that could be very important in terms of how we deal with the situation. Theoretical knowledge can help us understand and explain our experience, but if our experience is closed off by a failure to be sensitive to what is happening, then we will not notice that there is anything to be explained. Reflective practice relies on developing a sensitivity to what is happening around us.
- *Feel* The emotional dimension of people work is [...] a very important one. Our emotional responses can, at times, be painful and difficult to deal with. At the other extreme, using theory can sometimes be seen as cold and technical. However, this does not mean that the two – thinking and feeling – cannot be reconciled. Thought can help us understand (and therefore deal with) feeling, and feelings can help bring theory to life, turn concepts into working tools, and thereby develop a reflective approach.
- *Talk* Sharing views about work situations and how these can be dealt with encourages a broad perspective. It provides opportunities for people to learn from each other's experience, to find common ground and identify differences of approach. Constructive dialogue about methods of work, reasons for taking particular courses of action and so on can be an excellent way of broadening horizons, deepening understanding and enhancing skills. Such dialogue also helps to create an open and supportive working environment, and this, in itself, can be an important springboard for reflective practice.
- *Think* There are two main barriers to a thoughtful approach to practice. These are routines and pressure. A routinized approach amounts to working 'on automatic pilot' and is clearly a dangerous way of dealing with the sensitive issues. As I mentioned earlier, dealing with situations in a routine, unthinking way leaves us very vulnerable to mistakes. Pressure can also stand in the way of thinking about our practice. If we are very busy we have to be wary of allowing ourselves to be pressurized into not thinking about what we are doing. We need to remain in control of our workload [...] so that we are able to think about our actions. Thinking time should be seen as an essential part of good practice, rather than a luxury that has to be dispensed with when the pressure is on.

These steps are not the only ones that can be taken to develop reflective practice but they should provide a good 'launch pad' for working out patterns of practice that can draw on the benefits of a reflective approach. One further important step towards reflective practice is the development of creative approaches, and it is to these that we now turn.

## **Creative approaches**

Students training to enter the human services are often anxious to be presented with ready-made techniques to use in practice, a toolbox of methods that can be applied in a simple or straightforward way. Such expectations, although understandable, are both unrealistic and unhelpful.

They are unrealistic because there are only a limited number of techniques that can be applied across a range of situations, and these will not be enough, in themselves, to provide an adequate repertoire for people workers. They are unhelpful because they are based on an inappropriate model of professional development. The worker should be seen not as a receptacle or storehouse to be 'stocked up' with methods and techniques, but rather as a generator of ideas and potential solutions. There will be common themes across the situations encountered (and this is where theory can be of great value) but there will also be features unique to each situation. People workers therefore have to be equipped to deal with novel situations by generating novel solutions. It is therefore worth considering, albeit briefly, how a creative approach can be developed.

De Bono is a writer closely associated with the notion of creativity through his writings on 'lateral thinking': 'Lateral thinking is specifically associated with the ability to escape from existing perceptual (and conceptual) patterns in order to draw up new ways of looking at things and doing things' (1986: 114). Creativity, then, involves moving away from the tramlines that lock us into routine practices and narrow perspectives.

A major barrier to developing creativity is an attitude that says: 'I can't. I'm not the sort of person who's creative'. [...] This is a defeatist attitude that confuses skills with qualities. This is particularly significant with regard to creativity, as it is sometimes seen as having an almost magical quality, as if it were a 'special gift'. However, de Bono's comments on this are again helpful: 'There is a great deal of rubbish written about creativity because – like motherhood – it is automatically a good thing. My preference is to treat creativity as a logical process rather than a matter of talent or mystique' (1986: 114).

Creativity, then, can be learned; it can be developed through deliberate effort and experience. To promote this type of development, I shall present five strategies for stimulating a creative approach. These are:

- *Changing angle* Have you ever noticed how different a room looks if you sit in a different position from your usual one? Changing our 'angle' on a situation can give us a new perspective, with fresh insights. It can therefore pay dividends to switch position, metaphorically, so that we see the situations we are dealing with from different angles. This is also an important part of working in partnership, learning to see situations from other people's points of view so that we can more effectively work together.
- *Developing a vision* Having clear objectives [...] involves developing a vision of where we want to be, the point we want to reach. This type of vision can also stimulate creativity. If we know where we are now and where we want to be in future, then we can map out the various routes for getting there, different 'modes of transport' and so on. By generating such options we are avoiding the narrow focus of seeing only one way forward.
- *Stepping back* Sometimes we can get so close to a situation that we 'cannot see the wood for the trees', and we therefore get bogged down or lose our sense of direction. By 'stepping back', we can put some distance between ourselves and the situation that we are tackling. Stepping back from a situation gives us a breathing space and helps us develop a fresh perspective.
- *Letting go* The technique of brainstorming can be a very helpful one by allowing people to make lots of suggestions without having to worry about whether they are sensible, logical or workable. In this way, the strait-jacket of conventional thinking can be thrown off and the potential for creative solutions is released. By 'letting go' in this way we generate a wide range of possibilities, many of which will have to be rejected as unsuitable. However, amongst these, there may well be a veritable nugget of gold.
- *Provocation* This is another concept from de Bono, and he explains it in the following terms:

*A patterning system like the mind creates patterns which we then continue to use. Most of our thinking is concerned with fitting things into these patterns so that we can act usefully and effectively. But to change patterns and to unlock those 'insight patterns' which are readily*

*available to us (only after we have found them) we need something entirely different. Provocation is the process. With provocation we do not describe something as it is or as it could be. With provocation we look at the 'what if' and 'suppose' ... Provocation creates an unstable idea so that we may move on from it to a new idea. (1983: 200)*

## **Conclusion**

Reflective practice involves drawing on theory, in so far as this represents the accumulated experience and expertise of others. In this way, we can use the theory base to avoid the need to 'reinvent the wheel'. However, theory does not come tailor-made for practice – the cloth has to be cut to fit the circumstances. The reflective practitioner therefore has to *engage* with theory, to use it and shape it creatively in a constructive and positive way, rather than simply wait passively for theory to provide ready-made solutions.

Reflective practice is, then, a creative and proactive practice, one that casts the practitioner in an active role. This is an approach to practice that is entirely consistent with people work, a form of work where the situations we deal with have many common themes, but are also, in some ways, special and unique., Reflective practice offers the use of a theory base to help us understand the common themes, and a focus on creativity to help us deal with the unique aspects of each situation we encounter.

# YOUTH TRAINING IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT: REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCES OF TALE \*

*David Jenkins*

## 1. Introduction

Although using my executive summary of the TALE evaluation (Jenkins, 2011b) as a starting point, these reflections carry implications beyond TALE, since many of the issues appear endemic for training in the youth sector and by extension for the conduct of youth work activity and interventions across Europe. TALE ('Training for Active Learning in Europe') was a second order initiative, being concerned with 'training the trainers' in the youth field. It was seen as a step towards the creation of a coordinated approach towards training youth trainers across Europe and consequently aspired to being not only exemplary provision but also a generative model for future provision premised on projected 'European values'.

The TALE training course took place from April 2009 through to December 2010 and involved seven phases. Like the MA EYS, it was committed to a 'blended learning' approach in which online and face-to-face elements were designed to achieve a judicious balance. The online facility utilized a specially created LOFT<sup>1</sup> platform, while the face-to-face elements were organized as three substantial residential seminars in Strasbourg, Berlin and Budapest. This combination provided a unique and innovative long-term training experience using non-formal learning methods, although there was an ongoing debate about whether non-formal education (NFE) principles needed to be adjusted for advanced training that in principle might over time move in the direction of linking up with the European Qualifications Framework

### 1.1 Specification

The original specification for TALE was as follows:

1. To serve the development of a coordinated approach for training trainers in the youth field in Europe;
2. To extend the existing group of experienced trainers able to develop and implement quality training activities in the European youth field, and to support the further development of the existing European trainers' pools;
3. To contribute to the development of a profile of youth trainers in Europe by fostering the recognition of essential competences of trainers in the youth and non-formal education fields;
4. To develop and use innovative concepts and practices for training trainers in non-formal education across Europe;
5. To highlight the values underlying European youth work and to reflect on how they can best be promoted in training activities;
6. To contribute to the quality and sustainability of the youth program of the European commission, the Council of Europe and their respective partners;
7. To make use of the existing resources of these stakeholders for a common aim and to create synergies;
8. To exemplify the beneficial interaction of youth research, youth policy and practice and its importance in the design, implementation and follow-up of training activities.

Overall the record of TALE in relation to these political and strategic objectives was a good one, although with some slippage at the margins. TALE made a significant contribution to the sustainability

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\* The TALE programme was developed and delivered under the auspices of the European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Partnership. We are grateful for permission to use the funded External Evaluation Report as a basis for this paper.

<sup>1</sup> LOFT stands for 'Learning Opportunities For Trainers'.

of the youth program, and in general has been coherent with EU political processes in the field of youth (Agenda 2020, the priorities of Youth in Action, the New Cooperative Framework etc.<sup>2</sup>) and was grounded in what is known about the political, economic and social context of young people in Europe (Institute for Social work and Social Education, 2010). The program had some innovative elements but in general was concerned with preserving a tradition of radical NFE based on a discourse of disaffection that the course team perceived as under threat, not least in relation to the vexed accreditation issue. The fear was that the baby might go out with the bathwater.

TALE was exemplary in embodying and highlighting the values that the course team felt to be the essential underpinnings of European youth work. The TALE program consistently encouraged participants to reflect on the underpinning values of practical youth activity. In general, too, the course team avoided the trap of trying to teach the values directly, although sailing a bit near the wind at times. In any responsible pedagogy of moral education the task is to interrogate values not to indoctrinate them.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Back story

TALE comes with an interesting and complex 'back story', one that has several dimensions. Since much of this background has been more than adequately covered elsewhere<sup>4</sup> I concentrate on some of the more pertinent features.

Post the Lisbon 2000 European Council<sup>5</sup> and the setting of the 2010 agenda, concerted efforts were made to bring non-formal education (NFE) within the political and economic aspirations for Europe as a dynamic knowledge economy. It was argued convincingly that this entailed extending the validation and recognition of learning to learning that takes place outside of the formal education system, including learning by disadvantaged or disaffected young people. The subsequent Copenhagen Declaration urged the development of 'a set of common principles' towards greater compatibility of the different recognition and validating approaches across Europe to take account of the variety of settings and circumstances in which learning takes place.

The Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport and the European Commission Youth Unit responded with a joint text on the validation of non-formal learning in the youth sector, looking to initiate activity towards both 'soft' recognition<sup>6</sup> and a better understanding of the quality standards applicable to NFE. Although arguing for 'greater complementarities' between NFE and formal education and training, the joint text echoed and endorsed some of the norms of the sector, particularly that learning should be 'self-organized', springing from 'intrinsic' motivation, whilst the enabling curriculum structures needed to be 'flexible'. Learning was seen as a 'collective process' needing to be pursued in a 'supportive learning environment' and in relation to which the assessment of individual success or failure was to be regarded as 'inappropriate'.

This line of argument was particularly influential since TALE implicitly endorsed the principle of 'upward compatibility' i.e. the view that even 'advanced' training of trainers for the youth sector should reflect the pedagogical norms of the sector e.g. as deployed in the sector's dealings with disadvantaged or disaffected youth<sup>7</sup> including a rejection of external validation. The question is whether these norms and this ambience should be a non-negotiable part of the fabric of programs like

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<sup>2</sup> The development was also coherent in terms of the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning within the European youth field (Council of Europe - Committee of Ministers, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> This is particularly important given the history of youth work in the communist block. Indoctrination does not become acceptable simply because we approve of the ideas being indoctrinated.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Hopkins (2004). Also Chisholm *et al.* (2005) and García López (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Lisbon European Council 23/24 March 2000. Presidency Conclusions, Section 1: Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion.

<sup>6</sup> 'Soft' recognition can be considered as public recognition acquired by informally generated public reputation based on the perceptions of various stakeholders, audiences and end-users in the absence of external validation.

<sup>7</sup> According to Chisholm *et al.* (2006) in the ATTE Evaluation Report 'youth trainers' themselves traditionally 'use non-formal educational methods, focusing on personal and social development with an emphasis on fostering intercultural competence'.

TALE as advanced<sup>8</sup> training courses. Not surprisingly a fractured discourse grew up around this issue in TALE, even among the course team.

Other trends also proved directly relevant. There was in the period leading up to TALE a determination to pursue the quality debate technically on three fronts. The first was to develop general quality criteria for organizations, events and their attendant conditions in the European youth field. This quest was unambiguously placed in the context of a values-driven European 'ideological project'<sup>9</sup>, with cross-border intercultural activity underpinned by the declared aspirant European values of respect, self-determination, social cohesion, anti-racism, anti-xenophobia, inclusiveness and participatory democracy. In the observed Europe, of course, many of these declarative values are more honored in the breach and are perhaps better seen as candidates for principled promotion rather than statements of core cultural values. TALE proved itself exemplary in pursuit of this ideological project, with its values held sincerely by the course team at the deepest level and consistently informing their practice.

The second trend was an increasingly felt need, within the overarching quality framework, to specify quality criteria for activities falling under ToT and to propose the specification of a professional<sup>10</sup> profile of trainer competences. The canonical text for this exercise, which influenced TALE although it was never formally adopted<sup>11</sup>, became Helmut Fennes and Henrik Otten's (2008) *Quality in Non-formal Education and Training in the Field of European Youth Work*. This genuflected in the direction of a politically coercive framing statement, the European Commission's *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, although Fennes and Otten wriggled a little to avoid the suggestion that post-Lisbon 'economic priorities' made youth work 'an instrument of labor market or economic policy'<sup>12</sup>. In the event, the quest for a home-grown definitive trainers' 'competence profile' became the questionable linchpin of the TALE drive towards a framework for accreditation, with what might at best be described as mixed results.

Another important and acknowledged antecedent were the ToT programs leading up to TALE, and commendable efforts were made by the Steering Group and course team to assess and incorporate their legacy, drawing on the excellent (2007) *Mapping Study for Stakeholder on European Level Training of Trainers* by team member Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez. The Lopez study examined systematically previous offerings, noting both diversity and synergies and charting challenges to quality and recognition. Various short courses under the auspices of SALTO<sup>13</sup>, the Directorate of Youth and Sport<sup>14</sup> and the Partnership<sup>15</sup> were drawn upon but the predominant influences proved to be those previous experiences where comparisons are more direct, the Partnership's Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe (ATTE) and the Youth Sports Division's Advanced Compass Training in Human Rights Education (ACT-HRE)<sup>16</sup>.

The main Lopez recommendation was that, given 'political willingness', TALE should exemplify and embody the need for a 'common strategy' in ToT 'to avoid redundancies'<sup>17</sup> and that it should also be unequivocally 'based on the principles of NFE', although elements of 'creative tension' were anticipated. This acceptance both of the need for a 'professional profile' for ToT (which was reworked

<sup>8</sup> There is a perceived problem in the use of the term 'advanced' as it implies selection and breaches the principle of voluntary open access. Although this term was reduced in emphasis between ATTE and TALE the later is unequivocally an advanced program.

<sup>9</sup> By the term 'ideological project' I mean a determination to establish a 'world view' based on projected values that are desirable but not universally held.

<sup>10</sup> As e.g. developed in ATTE.

<sup>11</sup> The course team did not endorse the Fennes & Otten (2008) paper ('not the basis of TALE'), and indeed in some respects were critical of it. Neither was it ever 'officially adopted' despite SALTO backing and a specific request from the Steering Group that they should do so.

<sup>12</sup> Several TALE participants saw a strong EC economic and social problem containment as a 'hidden curriculum' against which some traditional NFE and LLL nostrums like participant-centred learning were in danger of being bogus.

<sup>13</sup> For example the SALTO CD Short Courses in Cultural Diversity.

<sup>14</sup> For example the Directorate of Youth and Sport's ToTHE: Training of Trainers in Cultural Diversity.

<sup>15</sup> For example the Partnership's TATEM: Training for Active Training in Euro-Mediterranean Youth Work.

<sup>16</sup> See the ACT-HRE evaluation study by Andreas Karsten (2007). The questionnaire was used as a basis for the final TALE participant questionnaire.

<sup>17</sup> This was reflected in the background information that formed part of the *Conclusive Report of the Second Steering Group Meeting*, which stated that TALE 'should constitute the first step towards the creation of a coordinated approach to training trainers in Europe'.

to become the dedicated 18 TALE key competences) and the upward compatibility argument<sup>18</sup> had profound effects on the general ambiance of TALE as an educational milieu and psychological habitat.

It is also necessary to draw attention to three other background factors that proved relevant. A sustained critique over the last decade of the circumstances of mass Higher Education (Scott, 1995) had led to a reemphasis in HE on 'critical reading' and a 'constructivist pedagogy' which has contributed to the collapse from above of the conventional distinctions between formal and non-formal approaches, so that 'blurred genres' have become the norm (Geertz, 1993). Indeed analytical work (Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm, 2002) has amply demonstrated that 'formal' and 'non-formal' can no longer be considered as stable or coherent paradigms; the correct question is what balance between them is appropriate in particular contexts.

A second influence was that online or blended learning had shifted from being a subservient educational technology within a dominant 'instructional design' paradigm and was increasingly being seen as a site of potential integration/overlap between formal and non-formal approaches (Madiba, 2007; Clark & Mayer, 2003). Yet the compatibility between online learning and NFE pedagogical principles became an issue for the course team that neither the trainers nor the participants regarded as fully resolved. This remains a key question for the future.

The third challenge was that one of the sacred cows of NFE ideology appeared to be reaching the end of its milking life. The relatively unexamined orthodoxies of 'learning styles' theory (Coffield *et al.*, 2004) and its link to a 'self-directed' or 'participant-centered' pedagogy were attracting skeptical reappraisal both in conceptual and methodological terms. This debate was never seriously addressed in TALE although TALE continued to make unsubstantiated claims in this area<sup>19</sup>.

### 1.3 Recruitment

The recruitment process in TALE for the 'participant trainers'<sup>20</sup> who might replenish the core of European practitioners took account of the 'needs' expressed by relevant stakeholders (Council of Europe, European Commission, SALTOs, National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme, European Youth Forum, etc.) at different times, including during the Stakeholders meeting on European-level Training of/for Trainers, which was organised by the Youth-Partnership in Budapest (19-21 June 2007). It was clearly underpinned by the conviction that a European-level cadre of experienced and 'trained' trainers was required and that the time had come for this provision to be based on a generic model. In particular the recruits, carefully engineered to possess an aggregate European profile were expected to demonstrate 'a potential to further develop their training competences in order to act as trainers in the youth field at European level in the future'.

The call for participants emphasised that suitable applications were welcome, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation. Also, in order to further strengthen the development of the youth field in these regions, participant trainers from countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and South East Europe (whether they were nationals from or residents in these countries) fulfilling these requirements were particularly encouraged to apply.

### 1.4 The residential seminars<sup>21</sup>

A critical element in the TALE package was the series of residential seminars in Strasbourg, Berlin and Budapest. The course team handled all three seminars with an impressive collective social style, intellectual resourcefulness and considerable interpersonal skill, most notably when they expertly calmed potentially mutinous elements in the crew at the Berlin seminar during the obligatory NFE group emotional crisis.

#### *The Strasbourg residential seminar*

<sup>18</sup> The 'upward compatibility' argument is the view that the pedagogy of training the trainers should systematically reflect sector norms and not just reference them.

<sup>19</sup> Although it was never clear which of the competing models or the 4x4 dichotomies they spawned were being used.

<sup>20</sup> The word 'student' is anathema in NFE circles.

<sup>21</sup> Only glimpses are possible here. A fuller account can be found in Jenkins (2011b).

From the beginning there was a calculated use of engineered physical closeness as a proxy and bid for group harmony. Throughout the seminar a number of 'icebreakers' or 'energizers'<sup>22</sup> were interjected or encouraged from time to time, some quite curious like the participants pretending to be chickens or raunchy celebrities.

Although many of the activities set the participants upon exciting explorations in relation to which they could share experiences, training at this level surely requires academic tutor input if trainers are to negotiate a discourse gradient between the everyday, the applied, the theoretical and the critical, a journey it would be difficult to facilitate in TALE without blurring further the distinction between formal and non-formal methods (Macken-Horarik, 1997).

The theoretical justification for a competences matrix was presented exceptionally well, although a minority of participants was puzzled and irritated by its apparently coercive quality; had they not been offered control over content? ('You decide what you need and want to learn and when and how you want to learn it'). Many of the competences were impressively taught by example as well as precept. The outstanding achievements were in the *facilitation of group learning* and *intercultural learning*. The trainers came across as skilled and expert cross-cultural group facilitators, and were convincing role models. Very strong was the *facilitation of individual learning* with a high quality of pastoral concern for individual students. There was less evidence of *critical thinking*, which is a high level skill in decline. It is perhaps most likely to flourish in settings where skepticism is a cultural norm, treating every proposition as an invitation to doubt. This was a country mile from the culture of TALE, which behaved at times like a faith group.

#### *The Berlin residential seminar*

The narrative of TALE over the period up to and including the second residential seminar is easy to summarize. The participants came to Berlin with a crisis in confidence following uncertainty about the strength of the TALE community following the inability of the LOFT (as TALE online) to sustain or replicate the excitement and elation felt during the first residential seminar in Strasbourg, and uncertainties surrounding the viability of the peer trios. The extent of the disenchantment took everybody by surprise and was beginning to erode the group dynamics. The course team managed to turn the situation around by a skilled focused intervention. This pivotal event of the seminar showed a working commitment to one of the core principles of the TALE methodology:

'We will provide space for 'here-and-now' methodology. We are convinced that everything that happens during the course can be potentially a source for learning about training. For this reason we aim to promote occasions to observe and reflect on processes and events within the team as well as within the group as a whole'.

Accounts of the disenchantment varied but several participants had simply not warmed to TALE online and were beginning to question its assumptions, suspecting it of traducing core NFE values. Others who had contributed considerable time and effort felt that they had been rowing in the middle of a boat with too many no-shows or passengers. Their online posts had somehow got lost in the ether, seemingly not meriting a reply. At this point the less diligent online contributors raised the emotional temperature, claiming that they were being personally criticized and not 'shown respect' (both behaviors register high in the 7 deadly sins of NFE orthodoxy). A high-risk strategy was interjected into the program to address the issues directly.

This began with soft singing in different pitches followed by a (hopefully tongue-in-cheek) superstitious ritual that pressed multiculturalism to its outer defensible limit; the participants were enjoined to hold hands in a dance/chant asking 'the gods' to intercede and bring 'good spirits to TALE'. Following this

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<sup>22</sup> These ubiquitous cameo events struck me as often footling, although I was not able to persuade either the course team or my 'sounding board' (Andreas Karsten) that they are ripe for review.



mood music, the tutors offered feedback from the 'intense reflection groups' that had alerted them to problems in the social cohesion of the group. The 'dynamic of the group as a whole' was suffering due to 'people being at different stages of development'. In a 'culture that does not allow confrontation' what was said to be required was a 'solution-based approach to solving the problem'.

Participants were asked to place themselves bodily on an imagined continuum across the floor of the room according to the extent to which they felt 'affected' by the issue, and the line divided into three groups. The 'most affected group' were asked to describe 'what is happening' and their feelings towards it. The middle group was then to offer an analysis, following which the 'not affected' group was required to propose a solution. The assumption was that affected groups are too 'emotionally blocked' to easily find solutions but that a middle group can achieve some emotional distance. It is then up to the 'unaffected' group to turn this mediating statement into concrete proposals.

The middle group in truth did not offer much by way of analysis, except in the interesting point that the market for trainers placed the participants in competition with each other, resulting in watchfulness and petty jealousies; in general they restated the problems more moderately rather than offering 'perspective'. They also endorsed the NFE truism that groups needed to feel comfortable about 'exploring their feelings'. In terms of the dynamic of the event this middle group initiated the move towards simple exhortation ('why cannot we just enjoy and share and not be afraid?').

The third group responded to this plea and made positive suggestions of a predictable kind given the setting, accepting a redefinition of the problem as people indulging in behavior that was inhibiting the learning of *others* ('although we must respect withdrawal'). Many of the suggestions came out of a tradition of group therapy, encouraging participants to engage positively with 'challenges', accept 'responsibility', and work through difficulties as opportunities for 'growth', recognizing a collective commitment to 'inter-cultural sharing'. These solutions (unlike the problems) were codified on a flip chart and were turned into a manifesto-cum-contract that individual participant trainers were invited (quite literally) to 'sign up to' by placing a dot against each statement, thereby claiming 'ownership' of the solution.

This interesting episode fitted a line of argument in Aristotle's theory of comedy in which catharsis takes the form of the emotional purgation of envy (not of fear, as in tragic catharsis). According to Richard Jango 'comic catharsis is useful in order to achieve the middle as virtue' (Janko, 1984), as indeed occurred in Berlin, almost literally.

### *The Budapest residential seminar*

The Budapest residential seminar brought TALE to a close, 'all passions spent'. It was remarkable for concluding with a quasi-spiritual invented ceremony to achieve emotional closure. One has to suppose the purpose of all this, following Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (Douglas, 1966), was to establish TALE in the minds of the participants as so distinctive that entering and leaving it involved a category shift so profound that protection was needed in crossing the ritual impurity of the boundary zone. TALE and non-TALE are thereby treated as binary and essentialist opposites requiring rites of passage between them, a point of view that could usefully be commented on from the perspective of queer theory. Paradoxically this view was held alongside the insistence that TALE needed to be set in the wider context of lifelong learning.

## **1.5 The LOFT**

The LOFT ('Learning Opportunities For Trainers') was identified in the initial documentation as the 'e-learning platform for TALE'. In the program description, the LOFT is represented as 'serving several [different] purposes during TALE':

- To explore distance learning through the whole duration of the course, especially between the residential seminars;

- To contribute to the development of essential competences of participant trainers... [a 'specific feature' of the LOFT];
- To support communication and sharing between participant trainers and the [Course] Team... with special regard to the implementation of the e-learning thematic modules;
- To explore e-learning possibilities... within European youth work as well as the participants e-learning competence as trainers;
- To bridge TALE with the wider community of European youth work.

It is not difficult to see these purposes as pulling in different directions.

The main reasons for the shortfall of the LOFT up to the second residential seminar seem reasonably well understood:

1. A tension between the twin roles of the LOFT as the online element of the TALE curriculum (i.e. 'e-learning units') and its contrasting status as the social networking site of a 'community of practice';
2. The relative invisibility of the course team online and consequent difficulties in identifying an interactive TALE online pedagogy;
3. Issues arising from the nature and extent of the participants' online traffic, which was increasingly skewed and over-reliant on a small number of key contributors.
4. The tendency for traffic on the LOFT to backslide towards the linguistic and discourse conventions of a social networking site (i.e. 'chat')
5. The large disparity in online traffic, with participant postings varying both in quality and volume.

Although there was a consistent effort to get the participants to contribute from their own experience, they were given little training in critical reading for what was largely a text-based program. All these factors led to the emergence in Berlin of a toxic mix of envy and resentment as those whose contribution had been limited felt they were being 'personally criticized', a NFE shibboleth.

## 2. Achievements and shortcomings

The following achievements and shortcomings identified in the TALE program are seen as carrying implications for how the sector might in future handle the underpinning issues, many of which are endemic. Although the achievements of TALE significantly outweighed the shortcomings, it is important to seek to learn lessons from both.

### 2.1 Achievements

- TALE added an impressive example of advanced European ToT to the pantheon of examples<sup>23</sup> open to critical appraisal and did so in a way that kept faith with the core NFE principles and practices that the course team perceived to be under threat. It was widely and correctly perceived as a quality offering that has considerably advanced the 'soft recognition' of work in this area.
- The TALE curriculum met the conditions of a curriculum specification proposed by Lawrence Stenhouse i.e. 'communicating the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice'. This is a necessary if not a sufficient condition of its legacy being built on.
- In many respects, TALE was innovative, with the course team willing to take significant risks and push the boundaries, including of their own competences.
- Limited but nevertheless important progress was made in further analyzing competence frameworks and profiles for ToT and in considering ways in which a portfolio approach adding

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<sup>23</sup> The most striking precursor being ATTE.

evidence to declarative statements might reflect competence development using the instrument of a competence improvement map (CIM).

- Outside of the online LOFT feature, where there were some well-understood difficulties, the TALE pedagogy was in the main wholly appropriate with an adroit use of multimodalities and activities drawing on the full range of methods of internal model making<sup>24</sup>. Participant trainers were encouraged to accept responsibility for their own learning and become co-producers of the collective TALE learning experience. Tutoring at the residential seminars was flexible and imaginative as well as effective within a broadly facilitating NFE ideology, although some of its aspects might better be described as a decent compromise between formal and non-formal methods in so far as these can be distinguished (Colley, Hodkinson & Marshall, 2002). There was a pleasing embracing of direct explanation, artistic idioms, oblique approaches through metaphor, physical theatre, group activity, fervent discussion and supported reflection. TALE activities displayed a preoccupation with the body as ubiquitous metaphor' (Baudrillard, 1994) and its non-formal teaching methods interestingly visited some of the wilder shores of physical theatre<sup>25</sup>, psychotherapy<sup>26</sup>, alternative spiritualities<sup>27</sup> and ethnomethodology<sup>28</sup>.
- The LOFT was for a few of the stronger candidates the opportunity for profound peer learning, and this gave some insight into what might have been achieved had the online facilities of TALE been both compulsory<sup>29</sup> and adequately driven pedagogically. Many of the ideas could be built on, from the overall architecture to some of the more imaginative activities. Synchronous use of the LOFT in the 'open days' proved a valuable use of the platform, as did the four themed 'teatimes' in anticipation of the second residential seminar in Berlin.
- The experience of being a participant trainer on TALE, as recounted through the evaluation focus group and recorded in survey data under the auspices of the course team (with both closed and open questions) was in almost all respects a very positive one, particularly with respect to the low key but expert supportive mentoring of training projects and the fulfillment of personal learning goals.
- TALE took some of its more interesting risks with respect to the role of the emotions in learning. Although some of its moves, particularly voluntary physical theatre activities in revamped settings late at night involving the body-as-metaphor and non-Western alternative spiritual exercises were controversial, at least to this observer, they proved a major attraction, adding a distinctive frisson to the residential seminars. The occasions were conducted with due sensitivity, but there could be legitimate anxiety about their use in non-expert hands if they cascaded down to the training settings of the participants. Nevertheless, these occasions were widely perceived as significant learning experiences.
- Attention was consistently paid to participant-centered learning, what constitutes it and how it can best be achieved in settings that encourage peer learning. Although the TALE course team did not fully codify its views in this area, I believe that the collective thinking could if published in a refereed journal make a significant contribution to the analysis of learning theories in NFE.

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<sup>24</sup> In Jerome Bruner's terms, these are enactive, iconic and symbolic. Although posed developmentally and sequentially for early childhood, the terms have wider application.

<sup>25</sup> There were perceptible links to Augusto Boal's forum theatre but also to Clive Barker's 'theatre games'. See also Anderson, Gallegos & Alexander (2005).

<sup>26</sup> NFE in general is appears willing to leak therapeutic discourse into a genre where its appropriateness can be questioned, and the basis of this assumption perhaps needs to be re-examined.

<sup>27</sup> For example Eastern meditative or relaxation techniques whether or not assisted by mantras. TALE as a whole took the view that world myths, allegories and stories can be an important resource in understanding the narratives of the human condition (e.g.. the use of the Mythos cards).

<sup>28</sup> See Garfinkel (1967) *Ethnomethodology* is a form of enquiry in which social insights are gained by deliberately destabilising assumptions or breaking conventions, and analysing the effects (a kind of deviant participant observation).

<sup>29</sup> Although there was an element of ambiguity most participants thought the LOFT an optional extra.

- The course team proved to be a talented, reflective and thoughtful group of tutors with highly relevant personal experience who worked exceptionally well together as a coherent and coordinated group, honing a shared philosophy and putting it effectively into practice.
- The mentoring, counseling and pastoral arrangements in TALE were excellent, subtle, non-directive and caring, with tutors showing a particular adeptness at supporting personal learning plans and advising the participants on their individual training projects (as well as handling adroitly the occasional personal crisis). To an extent the quasi-tutorial 'facilitating' input one might have expected in the LOFT forums had been redirected to this aspect of the work.
- The competences that were addressed by TALE as a part of the identified professional profile of training competences were impressively modeled in the competences displayed by the tutors. This was particularly striking in the responsiveness to learner needs, the management of group dynamics for group learning, the design of learning experiences based on intercultural exchange, and the management of ambiguity and conflict resolution.
- TALE attracted strong participant endorsement with many participants investing heavily, both emotionally and intellectually, in its PPD potential. Several were impressive in the volume of their contributions both online and in supporting the tutors in developing the agenda for the LOFT open day. Four participants applied successfully to go on to the MA EYS Short Course without a breathing space and others have seen positive developments in their career profile.
- The participants' learning and training projects were of demonstrable high quality in conceptual and analytical as well as practical terms and there is strong evidence in a number of settings of local impact.

## 2.2 Potential shortcomings

Whether or not TALE evidenced significant shortcomings rather than routine tensions and ambiguities is a matter of debate, but in my judgment the following problems have emerged:

- There was some ambivalence in the arrangements for the governance of TALE with the patchy relations between the course team and the Steering Group being at times tense if not fraught, with its influence declining following a strong beginning. The brief for the Steering Group suggested more hands-on direction than actually occurred. One or two of the ideological fault lines between the two groups were never fully resolved, particularly over the need to specify foundational knowledge as content and whether the degree of participant choice offered was compatible with certification or its soft equivalent
- Following acceptance by the steering group of a scoping paper (García López, 2007), the idea was to design TALE as a generic model for future ToT provision in Europe. This move seems open to a number of counter arguments. Although bearing a family resemblance to its precursor ATTE, nevertheless TALE evidenced idiosyncratic features both around its cultural ambience and its 'home grown' competence mapping that might be held to undermine its potential as a common denominator. Also several of the issues raised by TALE appear to require a radical re-think that needs to go beyond TALE, particularly in the areas of online pedagogy, the formal recognition of training competences and the extent to which traditional NFE values of choice and voluntarism need to be compromised in the conditions of advanced ToT. There is a further argument that innovations like TALE should be treated as divisible rather than a package, with any future TALE-inspired provision encouraged to cherry pick. Perhaps what the future most needs is a proliferation of models, letting all the flowers grow, with 'certificated' and 'non-certificated' routes.
- TALE gave the appearance of being insufficiently alert to the legitimate aspirations of an under-rewarded occupational group to achieve professional status and recognition, or at least showed a reluctance to drive the recognition debate in the direction of robust external accreditation and the

hope that externally validated trainer competences can eventually be brought within the European Qualifications Framework. Understandable difficulties arose from the view that such a move would traduce the ethos of NFE and reduce its distinctive quality, although it could be argued that advanced ToT is a legitimate exception requiring loose affiliation. There is a need to address beyond TALE in a politically realistic way the conditions under which formal recognition might be achieved.

- It was easy to discern in TALE a cult-like over-preoccupation with creating ambiance and a leaking of counter-cultural, resolutely spiritual or implicitly therapeutic discourse into educational settings that many would regard as inappropriate for such incursions. Quasi-therapeutic ‘facilitation’ was seen as offering a more comfortable role than knowledge-based tutoring, given the NFE ideological renunciation of instruction. The paradox, of course, is that this necessarily involves an asymmetrical encounter.
- The assessment strategy for TALE remained largely trapped in a limiting NFE ideology of self-assessment. Although self-assessment no doubt has a supportive role to play in recognition, the necessary political consensus is not yet in place for an agreed solution to the accreditation issue to be currently feasible. Yet TALE did not always move in the right direction; some of the core competences were expanded in a way that unhelpfully introduced multiple or opaque criteria, making rating more difficult: (‘Devising, monitoring and evaluating group learning based on an understanding of learning as a social phenomenon’; ‘Understanding and embracing the lifelong dimension of a self-awareness process’ [sic].)
- If the competences were ‘core’ or ‘essential’, why were the participants allowed to choose which ones they wanted to pursue?
- Although TALE online (‘the LOFT’) was the only vehicle of communication outside the residential seminars (beyond email, Skype and fortuitous meetings if geography permitted in nodal points like Istanbul), the course team (although often online) curiously declined to ‘mix it’ in the discussion forums, and when they did post their contributions were not noticeably different in kind from those of the participants. This, coupled with the amount of front-loaded content on the LOFT and the general conditions of online asynchronicity, led to some rudderless discussions that lacked a guiding tutorial presence. Overall the problems of an effective online pedagogy were never satisfactorily solved.
- There was a persistent antinomy in the LOFT between two competing roles; it remained poised uneasily between its function as the e-learning wing of a program of study committed to ‘blended learning’ (and portal of first choice for accessing the European youth knowledge base), and its alternative function as a peer-driven social network supporting a community of practice.

### **3. Implications for the future**

Now that TALE has joined ATTE as part of the history of recent ToT provision it seems useful to assess its legacy and particularly the lessons that might be learned that carry implications for future provision

#### **LESSON ONE**

There is room to question the view that advanced level ToT should aspire to a generic model, whether or not TALE can be regarded as an acceptable template for future provision. In an alternative scenario complementary models might be taken further and the quest for uniformity abandoned. Such future offerings might bear a family resemblance to ensure continuity of tradition but take different views on the appropriate mix of formal and non-formal methods. This would require a pragmatic rather than an ideological approach and any residual NFE quasi-fundamentalism might prove a limiting factor. In particular, there is room for greater attention to be paid in some future offerings to foundational knowledge and the teaching of specific skills or competences.

## LESSON TWO

There is certainly room for a quality offering in a genre close to TALE as part of the mix. Indeed it is important that this continuity should be in place. The features of TALE worth preserving include its commitment to blended learning (although NFE needs a better accommodation with online learning, with which it mistakenly sees itself in some kind of tension), the use of intensely personalized residential seminars, its mix of activities both face-to-face and online, and the focused supportive quality of the tutoring with its willingness to explore the relationships between emotions and cognition. Also important were the mentored personal projects and joint delivery with other participants of a practical training experience in an intercultural context.

## LESSON THREE

Plausible routes towards the formal recognition of trainer competences in ToT need to be explored as a matter of urgency despite the inherent technical difficulties. Political consensus on the way forward is a necessary but not sufficient precondition of this. The task is a technical one that might advantageously be put out to outside tender, reconfiguring the 'expert group' first suggested by SALTO that never quite materialized in TALE. The sector needs to respond to the aspirations of an under-valued and under-recognized group for professional recognition; if there is one lesson to be learned from the history of professions and professionalization it is that progress towards professional status is typically associated with external validation and accreditation.

A related issue in TALE was the disinclination to take assessment beyond an NFE preoccupation with basing assessment predominantly on self-assessment is clearly a limiting factor. Because assessment can also be treated as a proxy for evaluation in the 'psychometric' model<sup>30</sup> this had the effect of obscuring the public recognition of learning outcomes. TALE had originally been planned largely on the basis of the NFE norm of lightly moderated self-assessment, with all the attendant problems of external credibility, but the course team's principled opposition to change weakened across time and some progress was made.

## LESSON FOUR

The 'upward compatibility' argument should be rejected. There is no logical reason why advanced ToT should be constrained to echoing the pedagogical norms and cultural ambiance of the youth sector as a whole, although of course in TALE these features co-existed alongside a challenging level of reflection. There is no suggestion that the training of primary teachers should be conducted solely within a tradition of heuristic play.

## LESSON FIVE

There is a danger in NFE (and by extension ToT offerings based on its principles) that the legitimate concern for treating participants as whole people with emotions as well as skills and understandings might spill over into an unbalanced provision that leaks therapeutic discourse into a genre where its appropriateness can be questioned and in which quasi-therapeutic interventions are undertaken by untrained tutors.

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<sup>30</sup> This has been linked to a so-called 'agricultural-botany' model, as it is analogous to crop yield studies. See Parlett & Hamilton (1977).

## LESSON SIX

There were occasions when TALE seemed to bear some similarity to a religious cult or at least appeared sectarian and evangelical in its adherence to NFE, its ideological non-conformity defining itself in opposition to a parodied version of 'formal education'. As the external evaluator I had felt a persistent general unease throughout TALE concerning its cultivated 'alternative' ambiance and its druid-like predisposition to invent ceremonies. There can be little doubt that the mentality inside TALE was often deeply sectarian; the core invitation, despite the rhetorical commitment to criticality, was to think *inside* the box. This needs to be addressed in any subsequent advanced ToT.

## LESSON SEVEN

I got the feeling that there is no particular enthusiasm in TALE for taking the 'recognition of NFE trainers' debate in the direction of eventually marrying it with European qualifications frameworks, with all that implies concerning specification of levels and what counts as demonstration. This was a serious strategic error.

In the TALE account a portfolio was not so much an artifact to be presented as evidence of competences gained for purposes of professional recognition and validation as a creative, dynamic and exploratory tool anchored in the activity of the participant trainers and facilitating their personal growth. It was a reflective diary charting the impact of TALE and motivated primarily by self-assessment driven by a desire for personal growth.

Nevertheless I remain hopeful that whatever form of ToT follows TALE that the role of the portfolio might be rethought to take it in the direction of making it an instrument of external validation, perhaps alongside other methods of assessment including monitoring participant responses in carefully designed simulations where flexible underpinning trainer competences might be put to use. The conditions under which progress might be made are not yet in place. There is no agreed competence framework for ToT and even if there were issues of the relationship between European and national qualifications frameworks would still need to be addressed.

This is one reason why the wording of the TALE Certificate was so disappointing. It is in two parts. The first part acknowledges attendance at TALE ('took part in') and describes the aim of the course ('meant to contribute...') rather than what can be read into successfully completing the course. The second part of the certificate, not underwritten by the official signatures, is for all practical purposes an internal document that lists the 18 competences 'referred to' in TALE and then allows the participants to state which competences they 'developed in particular'. They then self-assess evidence of 'learning achievements' in relation to the chosen competences, and this is lightly moderated, the mentors not so much validating the claims as acknowledging that they 'accompanied the learning process'.

Thankfully the 'soft recognition' is more convincing, with many national stakeholders testifying unequivocally to the differences made, although one discordant voice suggested that exposure to TALE had made one participant more secure in sectarian certainties and less willing to question assumptions.

# QUALITY IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK \*

*Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten*

## Introduction

[...] This [...] study [...] addresses the issues of quality in non-formal education and training within the context of European youth work from a holistic perspective. [...] Based on the principles of non-formal education, on practice and on existing *concepts of quality* in the non-formal education sector as well as in other sectors of education a set of *quality standards for non-formal and training* is outlined. [...] European youth work should be looked at as a profession and thus demanding for criteria to assess the quality of professionalism. [...]

## Youth work in a European context

Youth work in a European context has a long tradition. Numerous European youth organisations – primarily umbrella organisations of national youth NGOs – have been established during the second half of the past century, amongst others, to give youth work a European dimension and to establish platforms for European-level cooperation and exchange in the youth field, also aiming at the recognition of youth issues and at the participation of young people in public and political life.

Today, the European Youth Forum, an international organisation established in 1996<sup>1</sup>, is the biggest platform of youth organisations in Europe with more than 90 member organisations – national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations in Europe.

In the 1970s, the Council of Europe established an institutional framework for promoting European youth work and youth co-operation through the foundation of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972 and in Budapest in 1995 as well as through the establishment of the Directorate of Youth and the European Youth Foundation (both in 1972) which developed respective programmes and funding schemes in this field.

In the late 1980s, the *European Commission* established the Youth for Europe Programme (three phases between 1989 and 1999, complemented by the European Voluntary Service Programme in 1996 and followed by the Youth Programme in 2000 and the Youth in Action Programme in 2007) as well as a youth unit in the European Commission.

In 1998, the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission was established “to promote active European citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working within a European dimension”. This agreement has since been extended to human rights education, intercultural dialogue, quality and recognition of youth work and training, a better understanding and knowledge of youth (youth research) as well as youth policy development.<sup>2</sup>

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\* This paper is an abridged version of: Fennes, H. & Otten, H. (2008). *Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work* (available online at: <http://www.salto-youth.net/download/1615/TrainingQualityandCompetenceStudy.pdf>). Reprinted here with the permission of the authors and of SALTO Training and Cooperation RC.

<sup>1</sup> The European Youth Forum is the successor of the Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC) and the European Co-ordination Bureau of International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (ECB), which had been representing youth interests since the 1960s.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Co-operation/Youth/6.\\_Partners\\_and\\_co-operation/default.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/Youth/6._Partners_and_co-operation/default.asp) - TopOfPage (accessed: 10.01.2008).



European youth organisations as well as the Council of Europe and the European Commission largely share the following values and aims in the youth field and beyond<sup>3</sup>:

- The promotion of participation and democratic citizenship of young people, in particular the participation of young people in civil society as well as in public and political life<sup>4</sup>;
- the promotion of democracy, human rights, social justice, tolerance and peace;
- the promotion of equal rights and opportunities in all areas of society;
- strengthening solidarity among young people and promoting social inclusion, in particular with respect to young people with fewer opportunities and with disadvantages;
- understanding for and appreciation of cultural diversity and developing tolerance and the capacity to act in a culturally diverse society;
- combating racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

The aims outlined above give youth work in a European context a significant educational dimension since they imply the development of specific competences of young people, including key competences.<sup>5</sup> Given the context of youth work, this implies non-formal education, training and learning of young people (see definitions further down).

### **Non-formal education and learning in the youth field**

Non-formal education and learning<sup>6</sup> has a long tradition in youth work at all levels, even if it has not always been explicitly designated as such. Personal development, learning in groups, interactive, participatory and experiential learning are long established features of non-formal education and learning in the youth field. This is directly related to the aims described above which require the development of personal and interpersonal competences as well as of humanistic and democratic values, attitudes and behaviours beyond the acquisition of plain knowledge. Face-to-face interaction and a combination of cognitive, affective and practical learning are essential to achieve this.

While the youth sector has played an essential role in pointing out the relevance and importance of non-formal education and in developing its approaches, concepts, methodologies and methods, non-formal education is neither a new form of education nor is it unique to the youth field – also other sectors of education and civil society have long been applying non-formal education approaches in their work – often implicitly and not solely.

During the past decade, non-formal education and learning has received increasing attention in practice, policy and research in view of social and economic demands to consider learning as a lifelong and life wide process.

This is reflected, in particular, in the lifelong learning strategy, the Education and Training 2010 Programme, the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Youth in Action Programme and other policies and programmes of the European Commission<sup>7</sup>, in the policies, programmes and objectives of the youth sector of the Council of Europe<sup>8</sup>, in a joint working paper of the European Commission and the Council of Europe (2004), in concepts and policies of non-governmental organisations, in particular also in the youth field<sup>9</sup>, as well as in contemporary research on education and training in Europe and beyond.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See European Youth Forum; Programmes and objectives of the youth sector of the Council of Europe 2006 to 2008; Decision No. 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (2006d) establishing the 'Youth in Action' programme for the period 2007 to 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the European Union puts special emphasis on promoting European citizenship.

<sup>5</sup> Competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context (see European Parliament and Council, 2006d). Key competences represent a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment (see European Commission, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The term "education" is complemented by "learning" which reflects a shift in terminology that has taken place in research and policy documents during the past years. "Learning" is related to activities as well as individual and group processes while "education" is more related to systems as well as outcomes.

<sup>7</sup> See European Commission (2000; 2001a; 2001c), European Parliament and Council (2004; 2006a; 2006b).

<sup>8</sup> See Council of Europe (2003c).

<sup>9</sup> The non-governmental youth sector has made major contributions to non-formal education, in particular also through the European Youth Forum.

Special emphasis has been given to the recognition and validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning in general and, in particular, in the European youth field.<sup>11</sup> Two special instruments have been developed in this respect: Youthpass has been established to complement Europass in the youth field and has become a standard feature in the YOUTH IN ACTION programme for the recognition of the participation of young people in youth projects with a non-formal education dimension.<sup>12</sup> The European portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders<sup>13</sup> provides volunteers or professionals in the field with a tool which can help them to identify, assess and describe their competencies.

Contemporary research places non-formal learning in a learning continuum between formal and informal learning, where an educational/learning activity can combine a range of features, of which some are more characteristic of formal learning settings than of non-formal or informal ones and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm (2002) have developed a list of twenty criteria distinguishing between formal and informal and have grouped them in four clusters (process; location and setting; purposes; content).

In their evaluation report of the Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe, Chisholm *et al.* (2006) reformulate these criteria and place each criterion into one of the four clusters to which it is most closely related in order to analyse this specific training programme with respect to its position in the learning continuum.

The learning continuum as described above comprises three types of learning contexts as specified in the Box 1 below:

#### **Box 1: The learning continuum**

##### **Formal learning**

Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

##### **Non-formal learning**

Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

##### **Informal learning**

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random).

Source: Glossary, Lifelong Learning Communication (European Commission, 2001c), drawing on the Lifelong Learning Memorandum (European Commission, 2000).

These three types of learning are in the end neither completely distinct nor do they entirely exclude each other nor do they have clear boundaries between them. They rather represent archetypical constructions along the continuum between formality and informality.<sup>15</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that numerous definitions of non-formal education exist which differ from each other in different facets with respect to process, location and setting, purposes and content.<sup>16</sup> It can be questioned, if it would be desirable or possible to establish a commonly agreed definition for non-formal education/learning.

<sup>10</sup> See Chisholm, Hoskins, Sorensen, Moos & Jensen (2006); Chisholm, Hoskins & Glahn (2005); Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm (2003); Dohmen (2001); Dubois (2005).

<sup>11</sup> See Council of the European Union (2004; 2006c).

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/> and <http://www.salto-youth.net/youthpass/>, accessed 16.08.2008.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Portfolio/Portfolio\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Portfolio/Portfolio_en.asp), accessed 18.08.2008.

<sup>14</sup> See Chisholm, Hoskins, Sorensen, Moos & Jensen (2006); Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm (2003).

<sup>15</sup> See Chisholm & Fennes (2008).

<sup>16</sup> See Council of Europe (2001: Appendix) and Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm (2003).

The final report of the Council of Europe's Symposium on non-formal education in 2001<sup>17</sup> outlines common elements in existing definitions of non-formal education as well as essential features and methods of non-formal training and learning with a special focus on the youth sector, thus describing a range in the learning continuum that could be called “non-formal education and learning in the youth field” (see Box 2 below). Nevertheless, while some of these features are specific for the youth sector, many of them are reflected also in other non-formal education sectors, i.e. in adult education and in community education.

#### **Box 2: Features of non-formal learning in the youth sector**

##### **Common elements in existing definitions of non-formal learning**

- purposive learning
- diverse contexts
- different and lighter organisation of provision and delivery
- alternative/complementary teaching and learning styles
- less developed recognition of outcomes and quality

##### **Essential features of non-formal learning**

- balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning
- linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations
- participatory and learner-centred
- holistic and process-oriented
- close to real life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices
- voluntary and (ideally) open-access
- aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life

##### **Non-formal teaching/training and learning methods**

- communication-based methods: interaction, dialogue, mediation
- activity-based methods: experience, practice, experimentation
- socially-focused methods: partnership, teamwork, networking
- self-directed methods: creativity, discovery, responsibility

Source: Council of Europe (2001)

It can be assumed that this understanding of non-formal education and learning is broadly shared in youth work and in youth non-formal education in a European context. Therefore, it is also taken as the basis for the following considerations [...].

Trainers in non-formal education play a central role in this European educational process. It is therefore only logical that a new profession has been developing at European level which goes far beyond the voluntary involvement that experienced youth leaders showed in this area in the past. Today, trainers have an important multiplying effect at very different levels and mostly work for institutional organisations and NGOs. A sustainable qualification of these trainers to enable them to offer and conduct high-quality non-formal education should therefore also be in the interest of employers and clients. To proceed with a systematic and (due to scarce resources) preferably shared advancement and realisation of a qualification strategy for trainers adequately corresponds to this task and is therefore commendable. The study is intended to be a first step towards that objective. [...]

## **Quality in non-formal education and training in the youth field**

### **[...] Quality in European non-formal education and training**

Quality in European non-formal education and training in the youth field has been an ongoing concern for the stakeholders and actors involved:

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<sup>17</sup> See Council of Europe (2001).

- for participants/learners<sup>18</sup> in training and non-formal education activities, who want a quality learning offer;
- for trainers, organisers and organisations, who want recognition of the quality of their offer in the field of non-formal education and training;
- for sponsors and public authorities, who have an interest in an effective use of the funds and the support they provide in this field;
- for policy makers to ensure an effective achievement of the respective policy aims and objectives (see “Youth work in a European context”);
- for all actors in the non-formal education sector to gain recognition of the sector as a whole, in particular of the offers in this field and of those who offer it – trainers, organisers etc.

[...] The discourse on quality is also not new to the practice of European youth training and non-formal education: Quality standards and criteria have been explicitly and implicitly discussed and applied in practice for many years in this field, although sometimes not under the title “quality”. They are part of funding criteria, in particular of the Youth Programmes of the European Commission, of the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and of other funding schemes. But so far, there does not seem to be a coherent and agreed description of what quality in this field is in concrete terms, and how it is evaluated.

The discourse on quality in non-formal education and training is also characterised by a fear – primarily of practitioners – that measures and instruments for quality assurance and quality control will formalise non-formal education and, therefore, take away a main quality (sic) aspect of non-formal education. The potential dilemma – the quest for recognition of non-formal education through quality assurance could jeopardise the nature of non-formal education – will require cautious, sensible and creative action by all stakeholders to be resolved in a constructive way.

### Quality in education

Quality is a fuzzy and often subjective term for which each person has his or her own definition. In common linguistic usage it describes the characteristic or value of an object, service or person. It is frequently used in economic contexts where it describes the characteristics of a product or service with respect to its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. In this context, the quality of a product/service primarily refers to the perception of the degree to which the product/service meets the customer's expectations. “Quality describes the entirety of characteristics of a unit (a product, a service) with respect to its suitability/aptness to meet predefined and expected requirements” (definition according to ISO 8402).

A whole system of instruments and mechanisms has been established in the field of *quality management* for ensuring that all activities necessary to design, develop and implement a product/service are effective and efficient with respect to the system and its performance: quality control (for the detection of defects), quality assurance (for the prevention of defects) and quality improvement. It has been expanded to *total quality management* – a strategy aimed at embedding awareness of quality in all organisational procedures and, subsequently, aiming at long-term success through customer satisfaction – which found its way into manufacturing, services, government – and also education.

It can be questioned, if the interpretation of quality as described above can be transferred to the field of education. Educational work can be considered as a service, but with very special features: Each educational activity is unique due to the specific context and setting, the specific composition of trainers/teachers<sup>19</sup> and learners and the subsequent unpredictability of the process they go through.

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<sup>18</sup> In the following, both terms will be used depending on the context. The term participant is used when it refers to the general role in a training activity which is distinct from that of trainers. The term learner is used when it refers to the educational processes in a training activity where participants are the primary learners – while, of course, trainers are also learning in these processes without it being the primary purpose.

<sup>19</sup> What is outlined here applies to all sectors of education and, therefore, to teachers in formal education as well as to trainers in other sectors of education. Similarly, “teaching/training” is used in this context.

Educational processes are also determined by the interaction between the trainers/teachers and learners – and the active participation of the learners has a major impact on the success of an educational activity: The learning success does not automatically result from training/teaching, and one educational activity can have different results for different learners (see Gruber & Schlögl, 2007). Therefore, even if the quality of *training/teaching* can be assured, the quality of *learning* can hardly be assured.

In view of this, it can be said that it is very difficult to measure the quality of an educational activity as such since some of its aspects are hardly or not measurable, in particular the quality of the process or the quality of outcomes, i.e. when they refer to “soft skills”. Subsequently, the benefit of an educational activity cannot be fully measured in economic terms.

On the other hand, there are aspects for which quality can be described and measured, i.e. aspects related to the *organisation* of learning processes. The scope of this document did not provide for an extensive research on quality concepts in education in general. The following is based on reviews limited to European-level developments and primarily to German-speaking countries. There is a general and frequent demand for quality criteria in education at large in Europe, but so far only few quality concepts seem to have been established in a larger context. What could be found are:

- European quality standards for vocational education and training;
- European quality assurance standards for higher education, as well as a Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (2006c);
- some quality standard schemes for specific areas, sectors and aspects of education in specific countries or regions, i.e. for adult education, vocational education and training, E-learning/online courses, distance education, equal opportunities in education, competence assessment etc.;
- numerous quality standard schemes defined and applied by specific institutions and organisations with respect to their own activities, where each institution/organisation has its own standards.

[...] The reviewed concepts and schemes show that quality in education needs to be considered at three levels:

- the macro-level, meaning the level of educational systems and policies at regional, national and European levels;
- the meso-level, meaning the level of individual educational institutions and organisations;
- the micro-level, meaning the level of the teaching-learning processes.

With respect to the structures of quality concepts and schemes the following main models could be found:

- *Quality of structures* (also referred to as “quality of context”): general conditions under which educational institutions and organisations are working (legal, organisational and social context); human resources, including competences of teachers/trainers and training of staff; educational, financial, infrastructure, technical and other resources etc.
- *Quality of processes*: the way in which educational organisations try to achieve their objectives – selection, design and organisation of contents and methods, consideration of the learners’ needs, guidance of learners, relation between teachers/trainers and learners etc.
- *Quality of outcomes and impact*: the impact of the educational processes, such as the acquisition and development of knowledge, competences, motivation, attitudes, values etc. as well as the capacity, motivation and commitment to apply the competences acquired in future learning and work (see Gruber & Schlögl, 2007).

The second model is structured according to the chronology of an educational activity:

- *Input-Quality*: an explicit and justified concept; planning which is based on needs, learner-oriented, research-grounded and ensuring accessibility; a transparent offer;
- *Throughput-Quality*: an infrastructure which is adequate for the intended learning process and which provides the necessary services; professional staff with subject-specific and pedagogic competence; didactics which are motivating, adequate for the learners, experience- and activity-oriented, and providing for reflective learning;
- *Output-quality*: achievement and applicability of learning objectives; satisfaction with competences acquired, professional development and context; personal development (see Arnold, 1997).

Factors which obviously have an impact on the quality aspects described in the schemes above are:

- the context of the educational activity;
- the relevance of the learning objectives with respect to the needs of society and the learners;
- the implementation of the activity (including preparation and follow-up) by organisers and teachers/trainers, in both educational and organisational terms, including the provision of adequate resources;
- the format of the activity (duration and pacing, location, teaching/training/learning modalities, number of teachers/trainers and learners etc.);
- the pedagogic approach and principles;
- the pedagogic design (programme/curriculum which describes methodology, methods and the “learning architecture” – learning sites and learning activities including their timing and sequencing – with respect to content/learning objectives, learners and teachers/trainers)
- the learning setting (learning spaces, infra-structure, equipment, support)
- the relationship between learners and teachers/trainers
- the follow-up and evaluation of the activity (for future developments)

### **Quality criteria and standards for non-formal education and training**

Although there are only few explicit and comprehensive concepts or schemes of quality criteria and standards in non-formal education and training: Quality criteria and standards are already used in non-formal education, sometimes explicitly, more often in a fragmented way, and often implicitly. In order to contribute to quality in the non-formal education and training sector they need to be made transparent and organised in a systematic, coherent and applicable way, the difficulty being that they are partly relative, context- and situation-dependent and sometimes difficult or not measurable.

Some proposals and concepts for quality criteria and standards have been formulated in the context of European-level non-formal education and training in the youth field (see also European Commission and Council of Europe: 2001, 2003; Council of Europe: 2007).

The following refers to some of these concepts and provides a framework for quality criteria and standards in a sometimes generic way which needs to be specified depending on the context and specific situation in which a training activity takes place.

## Box 7: Quality standards

### Quality standards for non-formal education and training

- The activity is underpinned by the core principles and practices of non-formal education.
- The activity meets identified needs in the community.
- The activity is consciously conceptualised and framed to meet identified and appropriate objectives as well as to allow for unexpected outcomes.
- The activity is well designed, planned and carried out, in both educational and organisational terms.
- The activity is adequately resourced.
- The activity demonstrably uses its resources effectively and efficiently.
- The activity is monitored and evaluated.
- The activity acknowledges and makes visible its outcomes and results.

### Quality standards for European-level non-formal education and training in the youth field

- The activity integrates principles and practices of intercultural learning.
- The activity contributes to European-level policy aims and objectives in the youth field.

While these quality standards are presently proposed for European-level training activities in the youth field, they could partly also be applied to training in the youth field at national, regional and local levels as well as to non-formal education in general.

These quality standards primarily refer to the training-learning processes (micro-level) and, therefore, have an impact on the competence profile for trainers in the youth field as outlined in the next chapter; partly they refer to the level of the providers of non-formal education and training activities. Nevertheless, the latter also need to be met in order to provide the necessary conditions for competent trainers to work effectively and to meet the quality standards they are responsible for. With respect to the structures of quality concepts presented above the following allocations could be attributed:

	Quality of			Quality of		
	Structures	Processes	Outcomes	Input	Throughput	Output
The activity is underpinned by the core principles and practices of non-formal education.						
The activity meets identified needs in the community.						
The activity is consciously conceptualised and framed to meet identified and appropriate objectives as well as to allow for the unexpected outcomes.						
The activity is well designed, planned and carried out, in both educational and organisational terms.						
The activity is adequately resourced.						
The activity demonstrably uses its resources effectively and efficiently.						
The activity is monitored and evaluated.						
The activity acknowledges and makes visible its outcomes and results.						
The activity integrates principles and practices of intercultural learning.						
The activity contributes to European-level policy aims and objectives in the youth field.						

The table above shows quite a balance process- and outcome quality as well as between input-, throughput- and output quality: this demonstrates that all these dimensions are more or less equally important and that they are interdependent. It is not a question of process *or* outcome quality – e.g., process quality is necessary for outcome quality – it is a question of process *and* outcome quality.

The quality standards listed above are elaborated in detail in annex B which is an integral part of this document: The specifications in annex B are essential since the 10 standards above are formulated in a general way and would, thus, be meaningless.

## **Competence profile for trainers in the field of European youth work**

[...] By using the term *competence profile* we wish to make it clear that this text does *not* intend to establish a *checklist*, which is as complete as possible of single competences required of individuals working as European trainers. Instead it intends to draft a set of basic knowledge; capabilities; skills; and physical, psycho-emotional, and mental dispositions which correspond to each other.

In order to be able to take on the respective tasks that trainers in European youth work are assigned within the context of measures of the European Commission and the Council of Europe and tackle them in an adequate way with respect to subject, object, and situation, we see these as necessary prerequisites to be used according to the situation.

This kind of competence profile including different dimensions which will be explained in this text demand a high standard. Questions resulting from this may be: Has training indeed lived up to this target-oriented claim so far? Why is this the correct way to do it? And what are the means to achieve such a profile? In other words: Which measures of training and further education at European level actually lead to acquiring which competences and how is the requirement for each of these competences justified? These questions are not intended to set off a controversy, least of all a debate entailing the need for justification. Instead we wish to point out the necessity of involving a correspondingly clear European sphere of activity which is cultivated competently by the European level trainers. In this way a competence profile can be developed and explained which may serve as a European discussion reference.

## **Context**

This document is not a syllabus for a new training module but an attempt to provide preparatory mental work and structure for such a syllabus which still remains to be developed. Thus, it does not intend to draft steps for its operationalisation.

In this respect the potential effect of “constructive” frustration is quite intentional: dealing with mental approaches which may possibly be remote or unknown at first is not an insurmountable obstacle and should thus not lead to any kind of “negative” frustration – with regard to the subject addressed in this study both authors and readers are facing the beginning of new individual and collective learning processes. With reference to the context of European policy as described in the introductory part and to the remarks on the discussion of quality in the first section we formulate the following as at least a political consensus on a European sphere of activity for individuals involved in quality European training activities: Through their work, they should contribute directly and indirectly (multiplier effect) to non-formal education and training in the youth field having qualifying effects on all those involved: trainers, youth workers, and youth leaders – and in the end, above all for young people, bringing about the greatest added value for their biography in terms of new experience, insights, and potential actions.

The *qualifying effects of non-formal youth work* within the European programmes comprise above all the following: Youth work is meant to be efficient, to promote equal opportunity, encourage intercultural learning, enable personal growth and social integration, initiate and accompany active citizenship, improve employability, and contribute to the development of a European dimension for thinking and acting.

Following is a first resulting conclusion with consequences for a competence profile of the responsible players: Quality youth work has the obligation to provide active supervision and support to young people but has the additional task of mediating special objectives, such as participation, solidarity and democratic commitment in the context of an intercultural education, with such attributes as reflected



tolerance and active respect for human dignity, and thus work towards the development of a liveable European citizenship.

### **European youth work as a profession**

Even if not yet included in an official European document, there is extensive consensus amongst those who are responsible for training and further education that qualifying and thus *qualitative youth and educational work require adequately qualified personnel*. There is probably less consensus on the issue of how to define qualified personnel. We suspect even less consensus when we stipulate: Given the demands and expectations of European youth work as described above, certain professional conditions must be stipulated and demands must be formulated which need to be met by educational personnel. For example: a (specialised) scientific training beneficial to their type of work and own pertinent face-to-face experience in the field; an involvement in an organisation or at least an affiliation with a structure; a certain permanence and continuity; financial and social coverage; cooperative discourse; etc. If these (and other) professional standards cannot be demanded, quality and sustainability can hardly be requested of this work. (The discussion on these issues just got some fresh input by the European Youth Forum (2008) with its *Policy Paper on Non-Formal Education: A framework for indicating and assuming quality*).

Independently of this potentially provocative conclusion and regardless whether or not it is supported: It remains to be noted that there are *growing professional demands* on those individuals who are not only occasionally involved in European youth work but increasingly, and in a dual perspective, make it their profession: On the one hand they are expected to have the corresponding competences to follow the specific goals imminent in the respective programme systematically so that the task of providing qualifying education can be implemented as far as possible; on the other hand there are *quality standards* which must be observed in their training and further education so that the *professional qualification* is accepted as a prerequisite for future employment.

Even if the latter still poses a major challenge, clear trends to this end are discernible and especially in the context of institutionalised cooperation in the field of youth work between the European Commission and the Council of Europe paths have been taken that are hardly reversible. Not least this study is intended to contribute to the discussion on qualification and professionalizing of European non-formal education and training.

### **Definition of competence and interpretation of the key competences for lifelong learning**

Before discussing some dispositions, potentials, and knowledge deemed necessary by us in the sense of a competence profile, some remarks need to be made about the *term 'competence'* itself. Despite many different definitions competence does not only mean individually retrievable and verifiable knowledge and abilities.

Competences consist of *an overall system of dispositions, capabilities, skills, and knowledge which are used to manage and master complex situations and tasks successfully*.

In the context of vocational training one can often find a differentiation between personal, social, methodological, and expert competences, which in turn integrate all additional single competences. Today, different structural proposals for classifying competences are made, not least because these dimensions of competence are interlinked and because there is no longer such a strict separation of formal and non-formal education and learning.

The European Union defines *eight key competences for lifelong learning* and provides a general definition of competence in the context of "Education and Training 2010". It has the following dimensions: independence and responsibility; competence for learning (on one's own); social (communicative) competence; and work-related (professional) competence.

For the context of our discussion it is indispensable to study the Commission's and the Council's *action programme on Lifelong Learning* and the relevant papers – including the reasoning for the

integration of key competences in this political context. Otherwise there may be a risk that increasingly European youth work will only be regarded within the integrated Policy Framework “Education & Training 2010” without this development being questioned. The following considerations intend to underline that this is not sufficient.

The considerations for the Common Position adopted by the Council on 24 July 2006 on the action programme in the field of Lifelong Learning divides education into four fields: school education, higher education, vocational training and adult education – youth education as part of non-formal education is missing. Arguments for the promotion of business and economic development, the labour market and employment prevail. The Commission itself set this course by giving reasons for the need of lifelong learning first and foremost in the context of the Lisbon strategy and, most importantly, in the “Education & Training 2010” work programme.

The shifting of the main focus from present knowledge transfer to transferable competences is intentional; the tendency of placing an economic value on knowledge is proceeding.

All mentions of key competences and lifelong learning being necessary for social cohesion and active citizenship are deduced from this priority of economic orientation. In the public discussion it must hence be made clear that European youth work within a very limited scope and with relation to the individual (e.g. information and motivation, support and tutoring) can indeed contribute to improving young people’s employability and social cohesion. It is, however, not an instrument of labour market or economic policy. It is exactly for this reason that considerations for the development of a competence profile for trainers in European youth work need to be checked regarding the degree to which they coincide with valid European standards and to find out why and where they may deviate from them. The following provides a *brief review of the 8 key competences as regards compatibility with the profile we suggest*.

*Language competence* in one’s mother tongue and a foreign language (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> key competence) is a basic aspect of any communicative action and behaviour and is of particular relevance in the intercultural context. Ability of intercultural discourse is defined as a central dimension of competence in this text which cannot be formed without highly developed competence in one’s own (or a foreign) language and *requires adequate knowledge as an additional element* – eloquence does not replace knowledge, but knowledge needs to be conveyed in a way that accommodates the respective target group and situation. In addition: The reflections in this document are based on the following conviction supported by actual practice: the sole or dominant presence of social competences without content competences must be rejected just as much as the reverse, i.e. the exclusive or dominant presence of content competences without the relevant social competences. Only the presence of both and the ability to be able to link them together in a way relevant for the educational activity should be considered as a verifiable quality feature.

The third competence – *mathematical / basic scientific-technical competence* – integrates into our profile in an indirect way as regards an increasing need to support young people in finding explanations for an ever more complex world by teaching them to use different approaches to insights and models of explanation. In our context, we would take this key competence and define it as *undogmatic critical reason, bound to ethical principles*.

The fourth competence – computer competence – would be subsumed into it as a more “technical” variant of conveying information.

The fifth key competence – *learning to learn* – is also central to our competence profile; we would, however, broaden it and *include the aspect of training this learning to learn competence*: trainers also find themselves in a lifelong learning process, but analogous to their own growth of insights, experience and knowledge they need to be able to motivate others to engage in new learning processes and support others in developing a fundamentally positive attitude towards learning.

The sixth key competence embraces four aspects: *interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competence*. It is reflected in our competence profile but we take the idea a step further with regard to *requirements for attitudes, perceptions and behaviour* and the need for having not only empathy but to the same degree also tolerance of ambiguity and frustration in the context of intercultural learning processes. Overall, this sixth key competence is certainly the most important reference for European youth work and should be used accordingly.

The seventh competence – *entrepreneurial competence* – is the one that *includes our thoughts on professional action* (professional competence). It is mainly justified by the reasons given for the skills and attitudes it involves.

The last key competence is *cultural competence*. Its adaptation in the context of this profile certainly deserves further discussion. A first interpretation of the author marks cultural competence as a characteristic of European level trainers as to their ability to use their imagination and involves the concept of “creativity”, understanding creative action as a linking element between individuals and their environment. In other words: Cultural competence *as the ability*, very much in the sense of holistic learning and living, *to use one’s sense organs in a conscious and deliberate way, to convey aesthetic sensations, and to use the psychosocial functions of culture in learning processes*, for instance with a view to language, art and historic action.

The conclusion of this short digression: Our ideas for a future training strategy in the light of an extended competence profile for European youth work do not contradict the objectives that were set up as a European standard for the key competences in the field of lifelong learning but add to these by providing additional socio-scientific considerations and corresponding profile attributes.

### **Dimensions of a professional competence profile**

Against this background we will now proceed to specify the competence profile. In different studies and texts from the past years we have used the following dimensions to describe a professional competence profile: a cognitive-intellectual dimension; a moral-ethical dimension, an emotional dimension, and one dimension which is oriented to action and includes a whole set of single competences such as specialised and field competences, methodological and strategic competences (Otten, 2003; Otten & Lauritzen, 2004). Without giving up these dimensions we opt for a slightly different system in the context of this document: *A competence profile comprises everything which characterises the type and content of our professional action and conduct*. The basic principles / moral-ethical categories we follow subconsciously are expressly included and are thus also open to potential criticism.

The latter fact is important because when competences are discussed it happens too often that personal aspects are either widely left out (only professional abilities count) or are exaggerated (charismatic personality, “guru”) while professional deficits are slightly overlooked. Our definition of competence as a *competence of action and conduct* puts the focus on “*what I do*” while simultaneously involving “*how I do it*”. This is understood as an interpretative result of my personal analysis of principles of action, norms, rules, and other psycho-emotional factors which are specific to a situation and may also be specific to a culture.

Based on this definition – apart from action and conduct – also perceptual habits and attitudes can be discussed when it comes to developing appropriate competences. We strongly emphasise: not in the sense of depth psychological personality traits but understood as individual characteristics of professional action.

*Professional action and conduct along with the respective attitudes and perceptual processes influencing or triggering them are the parameters needed to make reasonable statements about a competence profile*. On the one hand they explain what is characteristic for this professional action, on the other hand they assess the degree of development of this action (how competent/qualified/

professional am I in my work?) and as such they describe the “what” and “how” of our definition of competence.

If we transfer the “what” definition of European youth work elaborated at the beginning to the level of competence, the generalising definition given below of trainer’s competence in quality European training activities could be expedient to further considerations:

*Adequate use as regards to subject, object, and situation, of communication (including knowledge) and interaction in the intercultural context to enable participants to learn in a sustainable way according to their own needs and capabilities and according to the respective programme goals so that they can gain optimal advantage from their participation and transfer what they have learned to their daily lives and work.*

This definition allows references to the discussion related to the relevance of the European standard of qualification in the context of European youth work. It is not only aimed at the participants who should learn in this way but also expressly relates to the trainers.

Adequate action and conduct as regards to subject, object, and situation in an intercultural context have further individual characteristics of competence in professional action. These are self-reflection, analytical skills, and differentiated self-perception and external perception learned from analysing one’s own experience.

### **Intercultural orientation and ability of intercultural discourse**

These competences would be understood as being developed and present when a practically relevant, verifiable *intercultural orientation* is given *for thinking, perception, and acting*. The orientation can be verified with a practical relevance since it translates into the ability to enter into intercultural discourse, an ability which we define as the central competence in the context of a profile. This will be further elaborated below.

First as a reminder: European Youth work – as it is understood today in the respective programmes of the European Commission and the activities of the Council of Europe – left the closer preservative sphere as a pedagogical or socio-pedagogical field of work some time ago. A critical review of the development and implementation of *concepts on intercultural learning* – which is another institutionalised key word of European youth work that has been in use since the first Youth for Europe programme – proves that these concepts were dominated by a direction which was sparsely differentiated in terms of content and perspective and instead *strongly tended towards socio-pedagogical education and corresponding methods. Theoretical approaches based on an ethical and political reflection of the correlation between society and education in a multicultural context* which tried to implement intercultural youth work in the understanding of a socio-political task as part of a curriculum *were exceptions*. It can still be observed today that some people with responsibility in European youth work find it difficult to accept that educational concepts have no day-to-day relevance and are unsuited within a concept of European citizenship if they do not consider any societal aspects.

This does not mean that intercultural learning is no longer important, but it should be made clear that both educational and socio-psychological discussions of issues with multicultural coexistence and intercultural learning concepts exclusively based on these discussions are insufficient. They will not achieve a rationally founded consensus shaping social practices on how to dissolve the *potentially controversial relation between individual freedom and social justice in a multicultural setting* in such a way that people can act accordingly to this setting, based on insights, and as such act adequately with regard to subject, object, and situation.

Even if this goal can ultimately only be achieved if all instances of socialisation take it on as a transversal task (which is not the case), *European youth work still plays a major role* because adequate preparation *for life and work in multicultural social structures* is an integral part of the concept of European citizenship. As such the European programmes include it as correspondingly differentiated objectives. This is why those who are trained for this youth work also need to learn to

deal with societal contradictions by using discourse as a means without getting lost in an arbitrariness of values.

*European citizenship* implies the obligation and the ability to actively contribute to establishing and enduringly implementing a minimum societal consensus in order to guarantee individual and social rights and obligations within a democratic legitimated frame. What needs to be achieved is the necessary balancing act: On the one hand a high measure of individual and cultural identity must be allowed to develop and thrive; on the other hand, Europe must be able to create political conditions based on legal norms which also offer a common political identity. In the European context, this crucial societal minimum consensus can only be achieved via human rights since the respect and enforcement of human dignity will then not only be an individual obligation but also express the *concept of justice* within the European political structure.

These are the conclusions from this reasoning relating to the *ability to take on intercultural discourse as a central dimension for the competence profile of trainers in European youth work*: Trainers need to actively analyse and look into the evolving European civil society, the different implicit interests, and the resulting conflicts with a view to values. They *have to know* about the dominant problems of young people in Europe. They *have to know* why emotionally structured “we-feelings” so frequently go along with the phenomenon of separation from and exclusion of others. They *have to know* why dogmatic ideas find assenting dispositions in certain groups, and they have to know why in Europe conflicts with ethnic and nationalistic roots are rather increasing than decreasing in frequency. However, they also *have to know* how access to education, training, employment, and participation becomes possible and what the European initiatives and programmes offer and under which conditions. They *should also know* their limits: European youth work cannot compensate for all social deficits, but it can point them out.

Very early on, we already pointed out the need for trainers to be able to act as “*knowledge managers*” in the future (Otten, 2003). This claim was and is deducted from objectives set by European politics (Lisbon process – Europe as the most important knowledge-based economy) but even more so from the need to clearly differentiate the concept of knowledge management as it is currently used in the business and industrial context (knowledge as a production factor) from interpretations and implications rooted in the field of European youth and educational work. It should therefore be remembered that knowledge and information are different issues. The equation of the categories of knowledge-based and information-based society, as it can be found so frequently in colloquial speech, is misleading.

Having information is not automatically equivalent to knowing something or having an insight into something. Hegel showed in his “Phenomenology of Spirit” that *what is familiarly known is by no means properly known (no cognition) just for the reason that it is familiar*. However, both are mostly equated, something that he calls the “commonest” form of self-deception and a deception of others as well. Knowledge and knowledge acquisition are necessarily bound to a process of insight and understanding and include the individual goal of wanting to find a “truth”. This is why knowledge does not need to be bound to a direct interest in being able to use it in a specific context of action. This is different for information which is procured for a certain purpose with a view to its helpfulness and used accordingly.

Irrespective of whether Europe is rather headed towards an information-based society or indeed a knowledge-based one – despite a dominating economic focus the European programmes supporting youth and educational work allow for both: better access to targeted information and necessary support for the transformation of information into knowledge with the perspective of enlarging the scope for action. This aspect is crucial in our discussion of a competence profile: *Knowledge needs to be transferred and acquired so that young people may learn to find their way in complex societies by gaining insights, understanding themselves and their socio-political and socio-cultural environment, and thus enabling them to shape their present and future*.

Youth workers, youth leaders, trainers and others with responsibility in European youth and educational work taking on the task of “knowledge manager” will then first and foremost have to initiate, support and accompany the young people’s respective processes of gaining insight and understanding (learning processes). This implication is certainly one of the issues that need to be further discussed in the context of our design of a competence profile. It means that they must also be able to communicate their knowledge in such a way that learning becomes possible and leads to a new quality of conduct and action.

This leads to an altered interpretation of *intercultural learning*: Processes of learning which systematically convey and reflect the connection between cognition, moral standards, political awareness, and political action. Conclusions for training elements result from this which convey the changed understanding of intercultural learning and enable people to initiate, shape, accompany and above all support processes of intercultural learning with a view to the necessary transfer into the daily lives of the young people.

### **New approach to intercultural learning**

This document is meant to provide reasons for a competence profile and we cannot address the particular aspects we believe to be important in the context of a concept for intercultural learning which is to be further developed. (The Council of Europe/European Youth Centre Budapest will publish a completely revised edition of the “Ten Theses on the correlation between European youth encounters, intercultural learning and demands on full and part-time staff in these encounters” by H. Otten, published before in 1979 and earlier – work is actually in progress).

The core theses showing the need for a concept for intercultural learning that is to be further developed are: It is more compelling than 10 or 15 years ago that intercultural education starts in peoples daily lives and considers other forms of transferral since Europe is facing more conflicts between ethnic groups in society than ever before. We no longer live in a “post World War II” situation when communication and reconciliation were the primary goals and intercultural learning processes were aligned with these goals. Today, we have sort of an “ante-inner-societal war” situation which needs to react to the question: How much cultural difference people can be expected to endure while still being able to deal with such differences in an active and positive way and what they need to learn in order to do so? Part of this is that any exclusive and discriminating behaviour must be considered individually and socially unacceptable while abilities like *reflected tolerance of ambiguity* become crucial. *Intercultural education is thus given an additional and clear political dimension*. It should be designed in such a way that it can contribute to any kind of education under multicultural societal conditions – as a natural part of all socialisation. The notion of *intercultural dialogue* as used by the Council of Europe in its White Paper is focusing on that political dimension and thus has to be considered within such a new intercultural learning concept. It is an integrated part of our competence profile and we call it the *ability to take on intercultural discourse*.

“Discourse ethics correlates ethical and moral questions with different forms of argumentation, namely, with discourses of self-clarification and discourses of normative justification (and application), respectively. But it does not thereby reduce morality to equal treatment; rather, it takes account of both the aspects of justice and that of solidarity. A discursive agreement depends simultaneously on the non-substitutable ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses of each individual and on overcoming the egocentric perspective, something that all participants are constrained to do by an argumentative practice designed to produce agreement of an epistemic kind. If the pragmatic features of discourse make possible an insightful process of opinion – and will-formation that guarantees both of these conditions, then the rationally motivated ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response can take the interests of each individual into consideration without breaking the prior social bond that joins all those who are oriented toward reaching understanding in a trans-subjective attitude” (Habermas, 2003: 34-35).

In order to re-enact the argumentation delivered so far from a more familiar perspective we now refer again to the *features of competence which are role distance, empathy, and reflected tolerance of ambiguity*. Their development and presence is indispensable for constructive communication and

interaction in multicultural situations and are a direct characteristic of the respective perceptual structures, social attitudes, and the resulting behaviour and as such also characterise the degree of competent, professional action of trainers. These three terms have been extensively justified and explained. As a general rule, their relevance is no longer disputed. Therefore, we refrain from further elaboration at this point and merely point out the particular importance of these factors in the context of the ability of intercultural discourse since it is impossible to initiate and accompany processes of intercultural learning without empathy, role distance and reflected tolerance to ambiguity.

## Conclusions

[...] It should have become clear that a *competence profile* as we believe is necessary for trainers includes much *more than just a few pedagogic skills, methods of animation, and moderating techniques*. Indeed, training and further education are supposed to lead to further qualification of European youth work, something we have defined to be a socio-political task with regard to developing a liveable European citizenship. [...]

# WHAT DO YOUTH WORKERS DO? COMMUNICATING YOUTH WORK<sup>\*</sup>

Jean Spence

## Introduction

Youth workers have always been keen to communicate the distinctive benefits of their professional interventions for young people. They have done so in formal and informal settings and beyond their professional boundaries. Yet they seem generally unconvinced that their work is fully understood by policy makers, fellow professionals or the public at large (Crimmens *et al.*, 2003; Spence & Devanney, 2007). Whether or not their perceptions are accurate, the anxiety of workers is evident in their need to constantly explain and justify their practice. This betrays a defensiveness which implies that despite their verbal dexterity, the problem of communication in the public sphere is real enough for them.

Partly the difficulty might be attributed to preferred forms of communication. Youth workers tend to rely upon verbal forms of communication in face-to-face situations. In a profession where conversation is the key to successful practice, where everyday realities are unpredictable, the dominance of talk is to be expected, but this is not without consequence. Talk tends to be present-orientated, anecdotal and relates primarily to the immediacy of experience. Within talk, reflection and retrospection derive largely from the practical problems and issues of everyday encounters. In contrast, written or visual texts are produced within youth work mainly for functional rather than analytical purposes; minutes of meetings, reports and information-sharing are documents designed to service the organisation, whilst photographic exhibitions, newspapers and the like are part of the productivity of work with user groups. Such texts communicate the principles of practice only incidentally. Meanwhile, critical, analytical and theoretically informed texts about practice occupy only a minor role in the communication of youth work both within and beyond the profession.

This translates into a tension between theory and practice which is unhelpful in circumstances where youth workers in different national locations are striving to establish their professional credentials under different policy imperatives and with different emphases. Ultimately, the successful development of youth work in an increasingly interconnected world depends not only upon the parameters of national legislation and policy, or upon the ability of workers to establish international practice networks, but also upon the identification of those universally distinctive features which delineate it from other welfare and educational professions, and which therefore enable it to be transferable across particular policy environments.

The pre-eminence given to conversational communication in which experiential knowledge is largely transmitted through anecdote, is at odds with the dominance of textually based theoretical and research knowledge which informs policy making and decision making (Catan, 2002). The possibility of youth work perspectives being fully incorporated within political and institutional processes is therefore weakened. When research is aligned with policy rather than practice, the difficulty is exacerbated (Issitt & Spence, 2005; Hoggarth & Payne, 2006). This is seriously problematic insofar as governments look towards youth work as one possible means of engaging young people who are resistant to, or excluded by other more formal institutional interventions. For the emphasis in this context is inevitably informed by 'evidence' derived from a problem-orientated approach to young people, which is seldom attuned to the potentiality model of youth from which youth work takes its bearings (Davies, 2005a). Unless the meaning and principles of practice are communicated to sponsors and politicians in terms relevant to practice, then the values which lie at the heart of successful youth work interventions will be continuously compromised in the process of submitting to the vagaries of political expediency and bureaucratic rigidity.

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This article argues that the forms of communication need to be brought into a finer balance by increased attention to theoretically informed meaning-making analysing what youth work is. Only when such meaning-making reaches a 'critical mass' influential outside the immediacy of youth work practice, informing other approaches to young people, and transcending national policy concerns will youth workers be able to communicate effectively what is it that they do and thereby maximise their effectiveness. The creation of research-based, theoretically developed and practiceinformed texts is necessary to the process of creating a discursive field in which the meanings, values and potential of youth work as professional activity might be effectively communicated.

To inform the discussion, this article draws mainly upon the evidence derived from research undertaken in the UK between 2004 and 2006 entitled 'An Everyday Journey: discovering the meaning and value of youth work' (Spence & Devanney, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. The research process involved preliminary discussions with five groups of youth workers and five of young people in order to identify the principal concerns of participants in youth provision. These concerns informed the questions which guided participant observation in 15 youth projects chosen to represent different geographical regions and a range of youth work approaches. During the participant observation, in addition to research diaries, researchers engaged in 51 'directed' discussions with youth workers, and undertook interviews with 105 young people involved in the projects. The insights derived correspond clearly with the evidence gleaned in other recent research projects which focus upon the question of youth work practice and the perspectives of youth workers (eg. Crimmens *et al.*, 2004; Harland & Morgan, 2006; Yates & Payne, 2007).

## Understanding Youth Work

Reflecting the structural powerlessness of the young people who are the main object of its attention (Lalor *et al.*, 2007), youth work has been amongst the least well resourced, the most poorly represented, and its workers amongst the lowest paid of professional practitioners within the educational/health/social work field. Even when youth work has statutory support as it now does in Ireland, its weak position in the panoply of statutory services, retaining significant dependence upon the voluntary sector, is characteristic of powerlessness. And even when it attracts additional funding in response to specific social concerns and questions, as it has done in Northern Ireland where the 'peace dividend' in particular has offered specific opportunities for growth and development, the conditions for such funding are time limited and instrumental in relation to goals set outside youth work itself (Harland *et al.*, 2005). Mainly youth work is perceived as supplementary to other educational and welfare services and its priorities are located in the margins of related provision.

As a consequence of its structural marginality, negative issues often dominate youth work agendas – exclusion, disaffection, young people's problems, conflict, social problems of youth. Positive youth work has been rendered inarticulate in this environment; its discourses are colonised by terms of reference derived from other professions. This is further reflected in negative expressions of what youth work is. Time and again, in the 'Everyday Journey' research, workers (and young people) described youth work mainly as not teaching. Harland and Morgan (2006: 9) have made the same point about the perspectives of workers in Northern Ireland where 'there seemed to be more consensus on what youth work was not'. Even when workers describe positively what they do, they often use comparisons with other professions in order to give meaning to their own practice:

*We don't have an agenda for them, like social workers would have, or teachers ... It's open. It's open and it gives them free space as well, that they don't get anywhere else (youth worker quoted in Spence & Devanney, 2007: 72).*

Ironically, it may be because youth workers are so verbally skilled that they experience difficulties in reaching any lasting consensus about what youth work is. Driven by the need to exploit funding opportunities wherever they can, youth workers adapt their language to conditions not of their own

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the UK's 'Big Lottery' and undertaken between 2004 and 2006 in partnership between Durham University and the voluntary youth organisation, Weston Spirit.

making. They perform for audiences who come with pre-determined agendas for their work in relation to pre-determined aspirations for young people. Thus for example, the concept of 'youth' which underlies the very existence of youth work is a universal category which is consistently contradicted by the widespread adoption of the fashionable policy language of targeting and exclusion to communicate the worth of contemporary practice. Inevitably in such conditions, the public and private images of youth work often relate in tension.

Tensions can be managed if youth workers retain control over at least some of their practice conditions, but the effect of targeting and outcome-led processes of accountability which accompany increased involvement by the state, systematically colonise the space available for worker autonomy. As one worker in Scotland commented to Spence and Devanney (2007: 119):

*There have been lots of changes in youth work in Scotland ... This shaped the way forward for youth work as part of Community Learning Development, and put them at the forefront of community planning and showed youth work as the front line partner to work with schools etc. This was nice as up until then youth work had been the poor cousin, but it was also scary as now everyone is looking at what youth work is doing. This has led to new tighter systems to justify the work.*

If youth work is to thrive, it is essential that the public language of practice and the terms of reference informing policy at least complement the intrinsic nature of the processes of practice. This does not mean that there will be one way and one way only. Nor does it mean that priorities and concepts will be static. But it does suggest that discussion should revolve around a set of central reference points and that the boundaries of the youth work constituency should be recognisable. Mainly this implies developing a theoretical and policy language which is grounded in, emanates from and connects back to the realities of practice conditions.

It is tempting to think that such a language might be derived from clear and commonly agreed definitions of youth work methods, purposes and values. However, given the fluidity of the conditions under which youth work functions, it is difficult, as Harland and Morgan's (2006) research demonstrates, to achieve consensus around any standard definition. Definitions are apt to depend upon the particular historical and organizational context in which they are created and in themselves, they can never fully represent the richness and openness of practice which calls for constant reworking and re-framing of meaning. Fixed formulations of what youth work is or is expected to be are inevitably inscribed within formal frameworks for practice. For example, in the definition offered in the Irish Youth Work Act (2001, s. 3) youth work is identified as:

*A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary involvement ... which is:*

- a) complementary to their formal, academic and vocational training; and*
- b) provided primarily by voluntary organisations.*

This particular definition is determinedly structured and firmly situates youth work as a 'complementary' approach both in the framework of institutions and in the type of institution, thus confirming the relative, and secondary, status of the profession. Nevertheless, in its recognition that young people need to be voluntarily involved, it does leave a gap for the negotiated relationship between youth workers and young people, which suggests that youth workers might maintain some control over the conditions of practice. However, the boundaries for this negotiation are restrictive, drawn in terms of curriculum planning and 'training'. Whilst the definition might be particularly reflective of, and will certainly influence the bias of development in Irish youth work, the concepts which it mobilises are all contestable. It is only if such concepts are opened to scrutiny and critical analysis with reference to other – and perhaps competing – definitions operating elsewhere that the discursive field will begin to develop as an active process of communicating universal youth work principles. Definitions in themselves are inadequate for the task.

In attempting to move beyond the negative or relative representations of youth work it is particularly important to engage continuously with theoretical principles associated with the main themes of youth work. For example, education is clearly a central theme and the terminology of social education, non-formal education and informal education has been used at different times and in different places to identify the distinctiveness of the work in English-speaking countries<sup>2</sup>. An important task of building the discursive field of youth work and to communicate its meanings is to engage with the different theoretical dimensions of these related educational approaches.

Conceptualising youth work as 'the social education of the adolescent' (Davies & Gibson, 1967) came to pre-eminence after the second world war as means of helping young people 'to develop socially during their leisure time' (*ibid.*: 1). The 'prime concern' of social education 'is with any young person's meetings with others, with his capacity in these meetings to accept others and be accepted by them, and about the common interests around which these meetings may revolve' (*ibid.*: 2). According to Davies and Gibson, the dynamic of social education is in relationships, and the primary objective of youth work is to enable young people to 'discover how to contribute as well as take from his association with others' (*ibid.*: 2).

Non-formal education refers to '... learning and development that takes place outside the formal educational field, but which is structured and based on learning objectives' (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005:13, quoted in Lalor *et al.*, 2007: 269), and it relies upon curriculum-based approaches and training. While the definition just quoted comes from Northern Ireland, this perspective seems to be shared by the Youth Work Act in the Republic. The dynamic of non-formal education lies in the ways in which young people participate in structures and programmes rather than in relationships and its objectives relate to organisational purpose as much as to the self-defined interests of young people. When the power to define the priorities of youth work is located outside the setting of everyday practice, non-formal education is promoted because it provides a framework to facilitate processes of accountability evidenced through targets, strategies and outcomes. However, non-formal education relies upon the informality of youth work relationship building for its success, especially with those young people who are targeted because of exclusion or disaffection.

The language of informal education, 'which is not structured and takes place in daily life activities within peer/family groups, etc.' (*ibid.*) is a more holistic designation of youth work. Within the 'Everyday Journey' research the terminology of informal education was most frequently used by workers to explain the dynamics of their relationships with young people. Informal education in the English context in particular appears to have become the vehicle by which youth workers seek to positively differentiate their educational approaches from those of schools. Its emphasis upon the centrality of conversation emphasises the relational principles characteristic of social education whilst accommodating but transcending the structural limitations of non-formal education. Efforts towards delineating a conceptual framework for informal education have been pursued, notably by Jeffs and Smith (eg Jeffs & Smith, 1996; Smith, 1994), as a means of asserting the central values of youth work as a humanistic practice. Its principles have been succinctly expressed by Kerry Young who considers youth work processes to be primarily 'moral philosophy':

*Education is the business of youth work. Enabling and supporting young people, at a critical moment in their lives, to learn and develop the capacities to reflect, to reason and to act as social beings in the social world. Not in any way they choose, but in accordance with the state of 'good faith' to which all human beings aspire. That state of living a life true to oneself (Young, 1999: 1).*

Young's definition is interesting for its acknowledgement that young people are social agents, not just individuals inhabiting a particular moment of the lifespan, and that the educational perspective of youth work involves invoking a set of ideals which transcend personal 'needs'.

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<sup>2</sup> In the European context, the language of social animation and social pedagogy are also important. See <http://www.infed.org> for further discussion.

Nowhere is informal education the language of policy. That English youth workers manage to maintain any commitment to informal education is partly due to unresolved tensions between policy objectives and practice realities and the inability of bureaucratic processes to deal with the dynamism and fluidity of the voluntary relationship between youth workers and young people. Within policy statements, there are gaps and contradictions. These reflect the necessity of pursuing instrumentally desired outcomes, but within conditions in the youth work field which are not in the control of policy-makers. The gap between 'planned programmes of education' and the 'voluntary involvement' of young people in the Irish Youth Work Act definition, is unacknowledged; but it is a gap which must be filled in youth work practice. Many of the young people who are the main subjects of youth work intervention would not engage voluntarily in their initial contact with youth projects if they thought they were to engage in 'a planned programme of education designed to aid their personal and social development'. Anyone attempting to uncritically follow the definition into practice, without reference to real relationships, would encounter serious difficulties.

To some extent, the tension around structure and informality is recognised in a recent pronouncement of the UK government:

*The evidence ... showed that unstructured provision attracted the more disadvantaged young people. The real challenge therefore in working with disadvantaged young people is to introduce structure and greater organisation and supervision into the unstructured provision to which they are more likely to be drawn. Other evidence shows that youth work has a crucial role to play in supporting and challenging young people to try different things (Dept. for Children, Schools and Families, 2007: 22).*

In this document, for the first time in decades, the UK government acknowledges that young people tend to access generic youth projects because they are seeking leisure opportunities, fun and recreational facilities and that it is in such an environment that youth workers can best contribute to 'positive outcomes'. Yet still, it remains unclear how the space between young people's desire for unstructured approaches can be squared with the government's desire for structure and curriculum except with regard to the 'support and challenge' that might be offered by youth workers. The source of the problem can be located partly in the underdevelopment of the discourse of practice processes and the difficulties experienced by youth workers in communicating their practice realities.

## **Developing a Discourse**

Despite gaps and contradictions, the political acknowledgement of some key concerns of youth workers, including voluntary participation and the tension between structure and informality, is important. Possibly it indicates that the increased efforts of practitioners, educators and researchers in recent years to spell out and communicate what youth work actually is has been heard at policy level. Opportunities for developing the textual field of knowledge relating to youth work practice have been growing, facilitated by the increased attention to youth policy in the global context and by the growing international contact between youth workers, young people and academics (eg. Williamson, 2007). In addition, professionalisation has resulted in an expansion of youth work education which has brought into the field increased numbers of academics, some from related fields, and a widening of connections between youth work and related professions.

Development of critical understanding has been achieved mainly through the determined efforts of independent commentators to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to use independent media to pursue ideas and debates which challenge received wisdom amongst practitioners and policy-makers, and to pursue understanding which presents a wider vision for youth work than that normally inscribed within national policies. The declared intention of Youth Work Ireland of 'promoting the interests of young people and youth services by critiquing and commenting on relevant literature and social policy developments and engaging in advocacy and campaigning' should not be underestimated in this regard (<http://www.youthworkireland.ie/strategic.asp>). Analytical work which refuses to be intimidated by more powerful voices is crucial to the development of the discourse of professional practice, because it continues to question the philosophical and ideological basis of policy, to explore the limits

and possibilities of practice, to engage in debate and present new and imaginative thought which draws from knowledge gained from an understanding of a dynamic and distinctive practice tradition.

In the pursuit of a theoretical discourse relevant to practice realities, the establishment of academically rigorous journals sympathetic to youth work is crucial. The recent establishment of Youth Studies Ireland is part of the trend, as too is the longterm survival (against the odds) of Youth and Policy and the recent revival of Scottish Youth Issues. These journals offer space for practitioners, researchers and policy makers to engage in analysis and debate which relates directly to youth work, which does not categorise it as but an offshoot of another profession, and which does not understand youth work merely as a technique for delivering government policy. There is still some distance to travel before youth work journals and related texts achieve equal status to other academic publications, but the movement is in a positive direction. What is particularly important is that such journals offer the opportunity for the distinctive youth work voice to be heard, linking professional practice with policy issues through intellectual debate and discussion.

Youth and community work has been in the forefront in exploring and making use of the potential of new communications systems. These are particularly sympathetic to the informal conversational bent of youth work and to its responsiveness to young people's interests. The Informal Education Website (<http://www.infed.org>) is making a major contribution to the reclamation of youth work history as well as to the communication of youth work theory and practice. The more recently created 'Critically Chatting' website devised in response to the interest in a series of seminars is in turn challenging conventional wisdom and pursuing a collective and critical analytical approach to policy and practice (<http://critically-chatting.0catch.com>). Meanwhile the websites of national and local agencies and organisations similar to Youth Work Ireland (<http://www.youthworkireland.ie>), such as the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies (<http://www.acys.info>), and the related sites of trades unions (eg. the British Community and Youth Workers Union, <http://www.cywu.org.uk>), and voluntary or specialist organisations (eg. Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association <http://www.nidya.org.uk>), are communicating a wealth of up to date information about activities, policies, practices, training and publications, contributing to an expanding arena for conversations about youth work and its meaning.

This emerging textual field, reflected and affirmed in the oral tradition by increased conference and workshop activity, speaks across the theory-practice divide. It pays attention to the realities of practice as much as to the intellectual challenges of theory; it points to the insights of history as well as to contemporary issues; it considers the meaning and criticises policy in addition to revealing issues raised in policy implementation. It is out of this range of work that textual authority for the narrative claims of practitioners might emerge. Such developments need to be nurtured in order to facilitate the growth of an assertive practice-based language in which the oral and the textual have at least equal weight.

## Communicating Practice

It is no accident that Youth and Policy had the privilege of publishing a short article which might lay claim to being one of the best pieces of writing about youth work practice ever produced and which seems expressive of the development of a selfcreated professional discourse. It was written in 2004 by Jeremy Brent<sup>3</sup> in response to the debate about the role of accreditation and curriculum in English youth work. Entitled 'Communicating what youth work achieves: the smile and the arch', the piece is drawn from Brent's long experience of employment in a youth club in Bristol. It is worth quoting extensively from the part about 'The arch':

*Over the years, there have been a number of deaths of young people who have attended the youth centre: car and motorbike accidents, drug-related deaths, suicides, a collapsed trench on a building site, cystic fibrosis. Young death is particularly hard to deal with, and deaths that occurred 20 or 30 years ago still bear a great burden of grief. So the idea grew of converting a*

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Brent died in 2006. See obituary in the Guardian and Rapport.

*scrap of land outside the building into a garden of remembrance with, in its centre, some kind of monument ...*

The project employed a sculptor who engaged the young people in the design work. A design was chosen of a young man whose brother had died on Christmas day from a drugs cocktail. Brent describes the construction of the arch:

*The project was very physical. One young man, whom I had seen self-anaesthetised with drink and drugs at the funeral of his brother (killed in a motorbike accident) was dripping with sweat as he sawed through chunks of steel to give the arch the fruit of his effort. This was doing something, creating something, not just talking about it. It was the first time that I think he had properly grieved.*

The description of the creation of the arch is followed by a commentary on policy:

*This has been a powerful piece of youth work ... The product did not get in the way of the process, and the project can partly be judged by its product. The value of the arch far outweighs the value of any accreditation that could have been given to young people for having taken part. In fact, accreditation in this context would have been demeaning. Certificates would have detracted from the importance of the arch as something worth doing for itself, and devalued the emotional depth of its content.*

*We could surmise the learning outcomes of the young people involved, but that feels almost sacrilegious. They were personal to them. I would not dream of asking them, let alone giving them a questionnaire to fill in. The project had, as so often in youth work, unrecordable outcomes, outcomes that cannot be encompassed by an evaluation form (Brent, 2004: 71-72).*

This piece finely illustrates both what youth workers do and the problem of formally communicating what they do. Using a practice-based story to make his point, Brent refers to deep emotion, to the personal, and to his own sensitivity towards the value of the project to the young people involved. So often these are the terms within which youth workers verbalise the meaning of their practice and so often these are the terms excluded from textual communication. It is instructive that Brent does not tell this story in a vacuum but with critical regard to a particular dimension of policy which he believed was impacting negatively upon practice.

There is a long tradition of youth workers using stories from practice to communicate the meaning of their work. A story told by a youth worker-coordinator of a young people's motor project lay behind the development of the 'Everyday Journey' research project. Based in a factory unit on a small industrial estate this project worked mainly with groups of young people defined as problematic and referred by schools. The arrangement between project and schools was formal, but the young people's participation was by agreement. Using old cars donated by local garages, the young people were taught basic safety techniques, the use, organisation and care of tools and how to strip down and repair car engines. In the process they produced a portfolio of their work and received a certificate of achievement at its completion. This non-formal educational programme was supplemented by informal activities and outings. The co-ordinator was very proud of the formal outcomes and placed great emphasis upon the young people's portfolios. However, within informal conversation, his emphasis was completely different. He told a story of a girl working in a group which was otherwise all male, who was unable to relate to anyone and who constantly suffered verbal abuse from a stepfather. The girl attended regularly, but seldom communicated or even raised her eyes. Then the group was taken go-karting. The track was wet and slippery, and she skidded into a ditch. The workers ran to her to make sure that she was not hurt and found her sitting in the ditch, covered in mud, but looking up and laughing with her hands outstretched and cupped together. In her hands there sat a frog. The story ended there. No further explanation was deemed necessary. The narrator, communicating with an 'insider' knew that the fundamental meanings conveyed would be implicitly understood.

This story and its telling highlighted the gaps between the public presentation of the work which referred to its material and structured elements of learning, and the central meanings which were apparently located in the secondary and supplementary aspects of the project, in its accidental moments and in its emotional outcomes.

Inspired by this story, the 'Everyday Journey' research was designed partly with the intention of collecting stories from youth workers and young people in order to find a way of adding their voices authentically to the developing discourse of youth work. It was anticipated that in a collection of stories it would be possible to find commonalities and differences, to critically analyse them as 'texts' and in so doing articulate some of the key meanings and priorities which emerge in the real conditions of youth work practice.

Not as many stories were collected as anticipated. This seemed to be related to the semi-formality of the research situation and the expectations which youth workers have of the role of research vis-à-vis policy. Nevertheless, the stories told had a clear function. They were mobilised largely to legitimise claims that youth work interventions could be critical in changing the lives of young people. There seemed no other means of communicating the full meaning of critical moments of change because these would seem either mundane or inappropriate if translated into more formal language. Making eye contact, smiling, or grieving can find no comfortable place within a set of directives which stress 'life and social skills' or 'sex education'. Yet youth workers want to communicate that when a young person cannot usually smile, the mundane act of smiling becomes hugely significant. The critical interventions of youth workers can make a mundane nothingness into something extraordinary.

What usually appears ordinary, must be always open to question for youth workers. For example, the following extract is from a young mother who talked to the researcher about the effect of the young women's project on her life:

*Researcher: And what sort of changes were you starting to see?*

*Laura: Well just being able to go out the house. I mean I couldn't get on buses. I couldn't even go to the corner shop whereas I was starting to take little steps to go to different places like that. And now I can go on a bus, I can go on the train, I mean I can't do it by myself, well I probably could do it by myself because I would challenge myself to do it.*

Young people articulated their understanding of what youth workers do and their gains from youth work according to their particular circumstances. Always this was relevant to their personal needs and interests, and always it added to the stock of happiness in their lives as they were at that moment. Undoubtedly this would have consequences for the future, but young people are interested in their own here and now as much as in their transition to adulthood (Anderson *et al.*, 2005). A young man from Northern Ireland expressed this very clearly:

*Craig: It's really different, cos it's really laid back and relaxed, it's more about what we would want to do and things we enjoy doing. Like I absolutely adore skating and since we came here it's all been centred about that, and it's been what we want to do in the skating. It's just been thoroughly enjoyable from the start, like two and a half years and I haven't been annoyed once; I've never come out of this place angry. It's always been a cheerful mood and I can't wait until next week.*

What Craig does not reveal in this extract is how, from the participation in skating, the young men involved were enabled to meet young people across the community divide, were kept safe, discussed the need for public provision for skaters, worked alongside local councillors to achieve that, and in so doing began to learn the arts of democratic engagement. All these things were relevant to the skaters and of long term importance for their democratic participation, but far and away the most important to them in the immediacy of their everyday lives is 'I've never come out of this place angry'. It was necessary to establish this before anything else could be pursued; creating and maintaining the



conditions for its achievement were the first and principal concerns of the youth workers, underpinning all other development.

The oft-repeated youth work mantra of 'starting where young people are at' is a phrase which rather clumsily covers a complex, sensitive and highly skilled process of intervention. Starting there creates the conditions in which some young people will voluntarily and actively engage with a youth project, eventually communicate positively with youth workers, and through them learn to actively participate in wider social issues. This process of intervention involves understanding the socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of young people's lives in a general sense whilst simultaneously having the capacity to respond sensitively to the differences between individuals and groups on an inter-personal level. The primary skill which is used to 'start where young people are at' is that of listening. Because youth workers listen in an informed but open way not only to words, but to silences and absences, conversation and dialogue can emerge. The following exchange is between the researchers and a group of young women involved in a youth project sited within a school:

*Researcher: Can you say a bit more about what you think youth workers do?*

*Mary: They keep people off the streets.*

*Chrissy: They're like teachers, they teach us but in a more fun and exciting way and they respect us.*

*Rosie: And they listen to you when you want to talk to them.*

*Leanne: Teachers are boring.*

*Mary: And they shout at you.*

*Researcher: And you think youth workers are different to that then?*

*Rosie: Yeah.*

*Chrissy: Maureen [the youth worker] listens to us and helps us.*

The following is from a young women's project:

*Researcher: What about the role of the workers, what do you think the workers do and what do they help you with when you come to the project?*

*Jane: Dead friendly, always friendly every time you come in. Always smiling.*

*Katie: Always smiling.*

*Kelly: Dead supportive and encouraging really I think.*

*Helen: And if you need somebody to listen to you they're always there to listen to you.*

*Katie: If you need help with anything you can always just phone them. Like you know they're not going to be funny with you, they're 'I can help you do this and do that'.*

*Jane: They just seem interested.*

*Researcher: So like having time for you and that sort of thing? I mean is that different to your other experiences or ...*

*Katie: And they treat everybody equal.*

The process of making young people happy, of being friendly, involves youth workers in a whole person experience in which the personal cannot be entirely separated from the professional. Their professionalism of necessity involves communicating something personal. In order to commit their trust, the young people need to believe that the youth worker cares about their welfare not just as a professional matter, but at a personal level. And just as significantly, most of the youth workers involved in the research believed this too; just as they believed that 'relationships' were at the core of their practice. Yet youth workers also know that personal and relational language is a deeply problematic area of public communication. So for instance, in response to declarations of friendship from young people, workers needed to explain that they could not be a personal friend, that they were just 'like' a friend. One worker talked apologetically about the importance of 'love' in her work:

*Claire: It's giving them that sort of, love's probably the wrong word to use these days, because it's taken far too much out of context but they do get that to an extent. One of the main things folk need and it isn't just young folk it's everybody, they need that certain extent of love and*



*somebody that's really caring for them. I know so many people like, 'I'm going to kill myself, nobody likes me', and some of them are just making it up; but other ones maybe there isn't actually anybody there. They've maybe got friends but maybe they can't interact that well with their friends and they need that.*

*Susan: It's acceptance isn't it? And it's also about, you're accepting that person. And sometimes you'll pull them up because you'll see aspects of their behaviour are unacceptable but it's not about saying you're not acceptable.*

Ultimately, it is in this difficult area of relationships, love and friendship that the language of youth work is most underdeveloped. In the professional discourses which flow from statutory support, the language of emotion is ruled out of court. It is too messy for bureaucracies and policy makers, too unruly for power brokers, and too disruptive for the rationalities of academics. Yet it is in this untamed area that the heart of what youth workers do in their work with young people is to be found. For youth work to be fully recognised as a professional activity, it is essential to create a language to express this. This implies a critical challenge to the dominant meanings of professionalism and of the definitions of youth work associated with policy.

## **Conclusion: What can be done?**

In order to communicate effectively what youth workers do, a number of significant issues need to be addressed. These are not exhaustive, but they are crucial to the future of the profession as informal educational practice.

Firstly, although information about the dimensions of what youth workers do is already in the public domain, some key elements of meaning are silenced in that domain. Structured and formal elements of intervention are easily understood in the public sphere and are prioritised in the formal discourses of professionalism. It is necessary to address silences, to adopt a critical approach to policy language and to develop more fully the language of informality. Here, real relations of power are at stake, for the language is representative of such relations. It is therefore necessary to consider the way in which youth work is constituted in systems of power between fellow professionals and policy makers.

Secondly, youth workers need to reclaim and develop their own intellectual and practical history. No activity can claim professional status and public trust if it does not have a body of historical knowledge to give authority to its current actions and to inform current debates and discussions. There are important classic texts, research reports, recordings, films and archives which speak of a coherent and international body of knowledge which is underused as youth workers attempt to deal with the pressing realities of the present and perform for the latest policy priority. Historical texts often use a language of practice which is not only relevant to former times but has universal validity. The reinstatement of the textual history of youth work is crucial to establishing the claim to a distinctive professionalism and to the communication of a dynamic professional identity. The gap between theory and practice in youth work must be bridged and it behoves the academics associated with youth work education in particular to pursue the intellectual task and to enthuse their students to consider practice, theory and the pursuit of knowledge to be indistinguishable in furthering the interests of the profession. Reflection in itself is insufficient.

Thirdly, those connected with youth work have a responsibility to engage critically with policy to encourage a dialogue in which politicians are consistently reminded of the realities of the practice situation. Without a direct debate with politicians, the work will be shaped according to a version of reality which does not take into consideration the views and perceptions of those young people who are most excluded from the benefits of citizenship, participation and positive social relationships. Youth workers do not need researchers to communicate the values and meanings of their practice. They can do this themselves but a first stage in affirming the value of what is meaningful in practice involves youth workers communicating with each other and acting collectively. Time must be made for such activities outside the pressures of the everyday isolated situation.

Fourthly, reading and writing for the youth work journals can help build a critical mass of intellectual dialogue. It is necessary to consider too the value of related texts from other professions and within other media in communicating the values and processes of youth work. Youth work is not self-contained. There are disciplinary fields which overlap with it and with which it is necessary to communicate in language which can be commonly understood. Only by recognising the possibilities and priorities of related professions will it ultimately be possible to be clearer about the professional boundaries and challenges of youth work. Only by communicating with fellow professionals on an equal intellectual level will it be possible to situate youth work equally in the panoply of educational and welfare professionals.

Finally, it is imperative that the emerging professional discourse should not be distorted or imbalanced by ignoring the affective, emotional and interpersonal aspects of the work. Addressing these requires energy, time and great skill. There is a language of practice, at present implied in the anecdotes of workers and hidden in the pages of historical texts which is crucial to the health of the profession. In contemporary discourses such language is to be found mainly in faith-based approaches: it is allowed in that context. If youth work is to flourish, such language must also be embraced and asserted in the secular field. Otherwise, what is central to the youth worker's identity is displaced. And ultimately without such language, communicating why youth work is useful and beneficial for young people will become simply a matter of accident dependent upon the personality, charisma and bravery of individual workers. Without the affective aspects of practice which such language expresses, youth work does not and cannot work.

### ***Acknowledgement***

I would like to thank Mary Mescal for giving me the opportunity to speak at the conference of the Ossory Youth Service, Kilkenny in September 2007 which stimulated the thinking behind this paper.



# **EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE**



# RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE: SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP \*

*Anthony E. Azzopardi*

## Introduction

A research project is fundamentally educational in nature and it comprises many of the characteristics usually associated with an enterprise in which a huge amount of investment has been made. Like many other terms used in the sphere of education, “educational enterprise” has been borrowed from the discipline of economics. We speak of “investment in our children’s future”, “curriculum product” and “education as consumption”, among others. In other words, research as an educational enterprise implies the presence of a number of stakeholders and gatekeepers: the researcher himself, the views of respondents involved in the data collection process, the agency sponsoring or commissioning the research, the university awarding the degree in the case of a submission of a thesis at the end of the project and the clients, or service users, if the proposed study aims to make an impact on the implementation of a policy or mission statement, for example. In such a view, the concept of partnership also enters the fray.

The presence of partners requires of the researcher effective and efficient management skills. As a consequence, the researcher becomes involved:

- a. in constructing a coherent and feasible overall strategy;
- b. in specifying a clear conceptual framework;
- c. in adopting an ethically correct system of approach to sensitive data and to the confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed to respondents;
- d. in using good communication and negotiation skills;
- e. in formulating a plan through which the final report is disseminated to the targeted audience and to the public in general;
- f. in producing a valid, reliable and readable report that would eventually lend itself to an increase in knowledge or to the promotion of change.

To borrow another term from the economics field, “selling one’s product” then becomes the final stage that seals the research process. Indeed, selling calls for a promotional campaign. While for the award of a higher degree, the researcher seeks to surprise his supervisor and potential examiners with a good dose of diligence, hard work and academic excellence, in the case of a commissioned piece of work the agency must be left in no doubt about the researcher’s ability to communicate ideas and the eventual publication of the final report. Therefore, in any case, both overt and covert negotiation on the degree of freedom over the scope of the study and the dissemination of its findings are essential. That research which does not stimulate discussion and which is not made subject to public scrutiny is bound to gather dust on the shelf of a library. It will remain a memento of the time and energy used (wasted?) in a process that could have helped change the direction of a course of action. Perhaps, it could have helped an agency from reneging on its mission statement or a public service department in formulating a customer care policy.

## Youth research

More specifically, however, research work into issues concerning young people must be integrated into a concrete, unifying process that translates perceptions and expectations into a dynamic and

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deep-rooted action that proffers lasting effects on young people's curriculum vitae (Azzopardi, 1998). The implications that immediately emerge at this point revolve around the three-legged stool that underpins one of the main purposes of research, namely: "Research is as valuable as it influences policy and practice." Literature about the inability of youth research to influence youth policies and practices throughout the past three or four decades is fairly abundant (Hurrelmann & Engel, 1989; Coleman & Warren-Adamson, 1992; Fornas & Bolin, 1995; Garratt, Roche & Tucker, 1997; Wyn & White, 1997; Cohen & Ainley, 2000). This is not the same as saying that a mosaic of theoretical, methodological and empirical perspectives has not been assembled in the meantime. However, it is equivalent to saying that policy makers have not been stimulated enough to act upon and to put into practice what, among others, American, English, French, German and Scandinavian scholars have been theorising since perhaps Stanley Hall's *On Adolescence* in 1904. There is evidence of reaction, at various periods of time, to 'moral panics', 'immoral crusades', 'wrongdoings', 'deviant activities' and 'punitive sanctions'. But, consent to change, in view of historical transformations, and to embedding principles, in policy and practice, has been overshadowed by conventional and sluggish assent to popular remedial action on research findings on themes, such as, the family, the school, leisure, the media, substance abuse and the working life of young people.

Remedial action is not to be condemned. It is very effective in the short term and it may well satisfy the immediate needs of victims of abusive, discriminatory or criminal acts. It may also satisfy the political needs of the state or an agency in terms of being seen as sharing the concerns of social actors in general or service users in particular. Actions, such as changes in the subject content of a school's curriculum, harsher penalties for, and the provision of preventive measures against, substance abusers, or the setting up of representative bodies, such as a national youth council, fall under this category. Such actions may also be interpreted as genuine efforts to promote consultation or to curb abuse. What such actions blatantly fail to recognise is the pervasive exercise of power at various levels. While some teachers are usually involved in the development of a school's curriculum or of a national minimum curriculum, students are completely ignored. Substance abusers are, more often than not, first punished and/or placed under care and, maybe later rather than sooner, consulted while undergoing treatment. And, in the case of representative boards, one may ask: "Are 'unclubables' ever represented on national or local youth councils?" If one were to raise similar queries within the context of any remedial action taken, no doubt answers will be forthcoming. However, what remains unanswered is the question regarding the responsibility for decisions without any wielding of power by a few at the expense of the many who are most concerned - which backtracks the discussion to the need of long-term, conceptually framed and theorised practice in the form of a policy which goes beyond the remedial and which grounds the stated and the written versions (Fulcher, 1995 in Clough & Barton, 1999). That is to say, policy should be formed and informed by practice, and by the genuine participation (Nias, 1972 in Thorp, 1987) and 'competent influence' (Kinlaw, 1995) of those who matter most.

It is the author's view that what appears to be a complex situation may be made less so with the assistance of 'research ammunition'. Experience, with the results obtained through the use of such ammunition against a plethora of traditionalism, paternalism and ambivalence in a youth-related field, has further strengthened my view that the exploration of possibilities is neither anathema nor panacea. It is praxis.

### **Theorised practice**

Theorised practice or praxis, includes the direction of one's research ambitions towards exerting influence on policy and practice in spite of the fact that this is hardly ever within one's absolute control. There are innumerable constraints; and the availability or the creation of a favourable environment is one of the first issues a researcher has to consider with a view to making an impact through the initiative taken.

A favourable environment is one in which social and political agendas are ripe for an attempt to introduce innovatory views and/or fundamental changes. If the researcher happens to be in the right place at the right time, then, equipped with all the research ammunition described in the previous

paragraphs, he must act quickly. If this is not the case, then action rests on the creation of an environment which shows that it is accepting of challenges in arenas which, at the time, may have been considered forbidden territory. Of course, here the reaction could be one of questioning how favourable such an environment is. There is no escape from the fact that a professional researcher's findings do not speak as loud as dramatised media headlines or emotionally-charged official pronouncements. As Theodore Roosevelt put it: "The most successful politician is he who says what everybody is thinking most often in the loudest voice". For 'politician', read 'newspaper headline', 'official statement' or 'popular perception' ... and translate the rest of Roosevelt's words accordingly. Yet, the favourableness of a challenging environment lies in the researcher's ability to create a process of critical reflection on control systems, managerial and institutionalised reforms, or covert alliances whether intended or unintended.

Paraphrasing what has been said so far:

- a. research is as efficient and effective as the researcher's ability to deploy his ammunition;
- b. research as valuable as it influences policy and practice;
- c. remedial action is fragmentary and non-emancipatory because it only hopes to satisfy
- d. immediate needs and it ignores the grass-roots of society;
- e. theorised practice does not hesitate to unveil the politics of power inherent in scenarios of
- f. convenience where decision-making is the prerogative of a few.

## Implications

In attempting to evaluate what has been written so far, one may find that more questions have been revealed than answers provided. The implications that emerge out of 'theorised practice', as the cornerstone of influence on policy, require in-depth study both in terms of the researcher's own baggage of experience and skills and in terms of contextual variables which may be either favourable or constraining.

In this respect, two categories of issues are being presented for consideration by the readers, both on an individual level and as a workshop task.

### A. The Researcher's Predisposition

1. *Do you agree that the results of a research project should not be considered as private property? To what extent does the concept of 'partnership' enter in your vocabulary?*
2. *Do you agree with the list of 'research ammunition' listed in the Introduction? Would you add or delete any of the items? Do you feel equipped enough?*
3. *How would you rate your 'sales' skills? What strategies would you adopt in your promotional campaign? Can you envisage any particular difficulties in the acquisition of funds for your research project? If yes, how would you tackle the situation?*
4. *With regard to your research in particular, are you convinced that your published work, if adopted in or adapted to a policy, will have lasting effects on young people's curriculum vitae?*
5. *Can you assess the extent to which the work you have produced so far, or you are in the process of producing, has added to 'moral panics' or 'remedial action'?*

### B. Contextual Variations

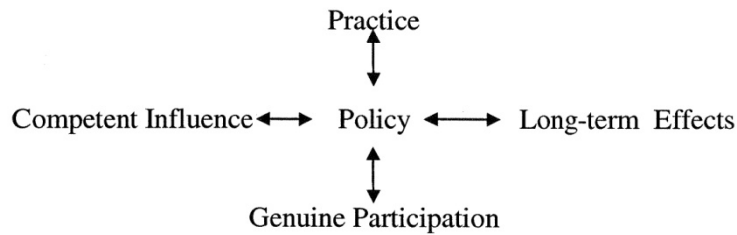
1. Any action proposed in one's research and which is intended to influence policy may be considered as a 'political minefield'. You may find yourself demolishing a popular perception or an official pronouncement. You may also inadvertently be supporting a particular strand of opinions and beliefs.

*Do you agree?*

*Do you feel confident that your research results may be acclaimed for their relevance and validity?*



2. What can you make out of this diagram?



3. In the last sentence of the first paragraph, the 'exploration of possibilities' has been described as 'neither anathema' (a detested thing) 'nor panacea' (a universal remedy). It was defined as 'praxis' (theorised practice, that is, theory underpinned by practice to the same extent that practice is underpinned by theory).

*What are your views on this matter?*

4. The availability or creation of a 'favourable environment' has been labelled as of primary importance for the success of a research project.

*How would you describe a favourable environment?*

*Have you ever worked in such an environment?*

*Do you feel that your present research project is situated in one such environment?*

5. What policy-makers often lack in their endeavour to formulate or rather to agree to a policy grounded in thoroughly-researched data is time for reflection on their action. They may also be constrained by political and economic pressures.

*Imagine yourself a politician with authority to advise government on the implementation of a youth policy. How would you go about it?*

# THE POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL ACTORS TO YOUTH KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION \*

René Bendit

## 1. Introduction

To reflect about sources and methods of social co-production of knowledge on youth in Europe means to think about the possible contributions different social actors, first of all youth researchers, but also practitioners working pedagogically with young people and youth politicians, can offer for a better understanding of young people's life in the EU Member States. Knowledge generated by young people themselves must also be a relevant aspect in this context. To think about sources and methods of social co-production of youth knowledge demands, as a first step, a precise definition of what is to be understood by the concept of "social co-production" of knowledge: What does it mean? Can knowledge on youth and on youth policy be coproduced by different social actors? If we give an affirmative answer to this question, what roles may the different actors (youth researchers, politicians, youth workers, young people, etc.) play in this process?

Other presenters at this conference have been analysing and discussing these questions. In particular, Lynne Chisholm has offered us in her introductory presentation an interesting theoretical framework, which is also useful for the purposes of this chapter. With the metaphor of a "magic triangle", Chisholm describes a "field of tension" in which different social actors, such as politicians, researchers and practitioners, are involved when generating different forms of knowledge on youth. This field of tension is characterised by permanent dynamics of "confrontation and consensus-building", of "distance and engagement", processes in which all partners involved have to learn to use these differences positively for change and innovation. According to Lynne Chisholm, while learning to use difference is also an institutional competence that facilitates network and trans-sectoral cooperation, the aspect most relevant for the social construction of youth knowledge must be seen as the construction of "spaces of structured negotiation between research, policy and practice – between communities of practice and on the basis of established, accessible and productive partnerships of mutual trust and respect".<sup>1</sup> In Chisholm's words, achieving more knowledge and a better understanding of youth "demands building the foundations for knowledge-based multilogue"<sup>2</sup> and according to this, the future promises of such structured spaces of communication and negotiation are to be seen in three main horizons (or dimensions as I would call them): the recognition of practice-based knowledge and competence; taking advantage of the potential of e-based communication and dissemination systems and the creation of a greater synergy between research and policy, on the one hand, and research and practice on the other. To create a greater synergy between the social actors involved, more "training of young researchers in intercultural-comparative perspectives and methods; a dedicated and widely accessible youth research publication series and a real-time European Youth Affairs Hub that complements the EKCYP to create a common culture"<sup>3</sup>, are needed.

As we can see, the theoretical definition of conditions contributing to a new social co-production of knowledge, are mainly based on the hypothesis that the construction of knowledge on youth is not only a matter of research but also the result of the activities of other actors, including young people

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<sup>1</sup> Lynne Chisholm: Youth research and the youth sector in Europe: perspectives, partnerships and promise. Keynote address at the EU-Conference: *Organising Dialogues Between Youth Field Actors Through Networking and Transsectoral Co-operation* (abstract to the keynote session). Luxembourg, 16-18 June.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

themselves.<sup>4</sup> From this point of view, youth research is one important actor in the production and management of knowledge but not the only one involved and responsible for this process. Nevertheless and besides producing new knowledge on youth, they have the additional responsibility of making research results understandable for all other actors, since missing competences and knowledge on the side of non-researchers puts limits to the “multilogue” Lynne Chisholm is proposing.

For the purposes of this paper, the reflections and commentaries discussed until now are clear enough to understand what lies behind the concept of “social co-production of knowledge” as well as to identify theoretically the potentials of co-operations that could be developed between the different actors in the youth field. It seems to be unnecessary here to continue searching for further definitions and answers to the above mentioned questions. Therefore I will mainly focus in this chapter on four aspects:

- the concrete forms in which specific actors of the “magic triangle” have been acting, such as, e.g. the historical development of researchers and practitioners networks at the European level, as well as the strategies they have been developing until now to produce more knowledge on youth;
- the advantages and disadvantages linked to each of these initiatives and strategies;
- the areas and topics for a future social co-production of knowledge and European comparative youth research;
- some general conclusions and open questions that could constitute the point of departure for the discussions in this working group.

Before doing this and in order to gain a better understanding of youth and of the social problems with which young people, politicians, practitioners and researchers are confronted nowadays, it will be necessary to characterise summarily the structural conditions in which young people grow up nowadays in most European societies, as well as the challenges with which they are confronted in the context of globalisation and Europeanization. In my opinion, a reflection on the social co-production of youth knowledge has to start at this point and must consequently be extended to the consequences that such macro-social phenomena have for young people and society in general.

The contextualisation of youth in the framework of changing European societies makes it possible to define the relevance that the co-production of knowledge on youth may have for the further development of social policies in this field, as well as to underpin the contributions the different actors can offer for a better understanding of young people and their needs.

On this basis, we will be able to properly describe and to evaluate the central sources of knowledge on youth, as well as the methodological approaches, instruments, and networks already existing and we will also be able to identify the possible research issues and questions considered today as relevant for European and national youth politics by most scholars engaged or interested in European comparative investigations on youth as well.

## **2. The context: changing societies – the effects of social modernisation processes on youth**

For some decades and especially since the beginning of the 1990s, Europe has been going through accelerated processes of economic, technological, political and social change. These processes have been so radical that some authors, such as Beck (1992[1986]) and Giddens (1990), describe and analyse them using concepts like “post-industrial society” and even “post-modern society”; and although not all scholars accept these concepts, most of them acknowledge that contemporary societies are quite different from the industrial societies of the post-war period, i.e. from 1950 to 1975.

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<sup>4</sup> At this point I would like to advance the idea, that the kind of information and explanations to be produced in the context of a social co-production of knowledge does not refer only to analysis and comparisons of young people's life circumstances, attitudes and value orientations but also to the different meanings young people themselves as well as other social actors (e.g. youth workers) give to certain developments in society and of course in the youth field; relevant e.g. are also the ways the different social actors “re-construct” young people's “realities” in their own and highly differentiated complexity. And relevant is also the knowledge coming from practical work and its evaluation.

The societies of EU-Europe, in which today's young people and young adults live, can be characterised as “modern-modernising” societies with predominant service economics, in which accelerated structural and technological changes induce deep social modernisation processes. Obviously, the most radical changes are taking place in the new EU Member States of Central and Eastern Europe, where in a relatively short period of time, structural transformations from a closed state economy to open modern capitalism have been undertaken. Of course, all these changes have had repercussions on youth conditions. Yet not all scholars agree on the intensity and the consequences of the changes experienced by young people, considered as a social category.

For young people all over Europe, perhaps the most important of the changes commented here is the prolonging of school education since the 1950s. This development has had two main consequences: a delay in young people's entry into the labour market and the postponement of family formation and the birth of first children. The delay in the transition to work has also lengthened the duration of the economic dependence of young people on their parents.

Another dominant feature of social modernisation processes happening in Europe since the 1960s are changes within the family. Over recent decades the dominance of the typical nuclear family has been eroded by post-nuclear families, that is, families formed by divorced or single (usually female) parents. This development goes together with the fact that post-industrial societies are characterised by a fragmented value system, in which individuals' rights and freedom of choice, rather than responsibilities toward the community, are the nucleus around which interpersonal relationships are defined. And this is also true for parent-child relationships.

However, despite all these developments and the increased material dependency on their families of origin, young people today are sexually, culturally and psychologically more independent than in the past. This emancipation is a result of both changes in educational values and styles inside modern families and the higher average age of individuals who have yet to complete their transition to full economic and residential emancipation, i.e., to “complete adulthood”.

Summing up, technological and economic modernisation processes have profound consequences not only for the labour market but also for the everyday life and personal opportunities of European citizens and especially for young people. So, for example, according to authors like Münchmeier (Münchmeier, 1992) the Europeanisation processes taking place in all EU Member States will bring more and better life opportunities for certain groups of young people, e.g. for the well qualified, while for the less qualified groups, risks of unemployment and labour market exclusion and/or social marginalisation, will probably greatly increase. According to this hypothesis, the accentuation of economic and social disparities already existing between different European countries and regions will probably generate a greater accentuation of social differentiation in all European societies and this differentiation, especially experienced by some groups of young people, may undermine social cohesion in Europe (Hübner-Funk & du Bois-Reymond, 1995; Sellin, 1995; Walther *et al.*, 1999).

### **The social effects of modernisation processes and the relevance of more knowledge on youth**

The changes described above have several social effects and consequences with which most of today's European societies have to cope. Among these, the most relevant are: negative demographic developments in most EU-countries and growing disparities between young (grown-ups) and older population groups. This disproportion has consequences for the “inter-generational contract” in most EU Member States and their societies. Further, changes in family structures as well as in inter-gender and inter-generational relationships are being observed all over the EU Member States.

The differentiation and prolongation of the educational and professional training careers of young people, conditioning their late entry into the labour market, generates for its part the necessity to update educational and training systems in most EU-countries, in order to make them fit for the demands of modern information-societies and post-Fordist economics. Moreover, the precarious situation of certain groups of young people in the different national labour markets within the EU

Member States and the disproportionate rates of youth unemployment in many countries, seem to be a common tendency, especially in South and Eastern European societies.

The prolonged cohabitation of young people with their parents and the problems arising for both generations in the context of a situation of “cluttered nest” families, in which young people continue to depend on their parents without reaching full adult status, as well as the difficulties young adults have, trying to combine their professional career (often requiring geographical mobility) with starting a family of their own, are also problematic issues common to many European societies. Common to most European societies are also changes in the value orientations of young people in the context of individualisation processes and of a “trans-nationalisation” of consumerist cultures and life styles encouraged by the mass media. These individualisation processes can be also linked to the development of negative attitudes towards traditional forms of social and political participation and towards national and European institutions.

Other social effects of modernisation processes in Europe can be seen in the development of regional, gender and ethnic disparities so the economic situation and living conditions of young people, as well as new forms of social and cultural inequalities, notably concerning poverty, social exclusion and the marginalisation of certain groups of young people, especially members of ethnic minorities and young people of migrant origin.

Finally, increased tendencies towards different forms of unhealthy or risky behaviour (smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, traffic accidents, suicide, violent behaviour, etc.) can be observed within certain groups of young people in different European countries.

All these trends and their consequences for social integration and social cohesion in European societies constitute the context from which the political relevance of a European social co-production of knowledge and especially of comparative youth research can be deduced. They confront both the EU Member States and the institutions of the European Union themselves with new political challenges and therefore also with the necessity to generate more and better knowledge in order to understand the new questions arising in relation to young people’s life in Europe today (as is acknowledged in the European Commission’s White Paper on youth – European Commission, 2001a).

These considerations lead us to hypothesise that youth policy, youth work and youth research in most of the EU-countries must be made conscious of the above-mentioned European trends and especially of some basic questions that, in our opinion, are relevant not only for actual social developments but also for the social co-production of youth knowledge in all EU Member States, such as, for example:

- How do processes of economic and political transnationalisation influence living conditions, educational and labour market opportunities as well as the consciousness of young people in Europe?
- What new social problems and conflicts will emerge out of such processes in the different European societies?
- What new forms of identity formation will arise in such a context and how can such new identities be linked to more traditional, national, regional and local identities?
- What new challenges and impulses for national and European social politics and youth policies are already arising out of the described trends?
- What will be the future role of national and European political interventions in the youth field, especially when it comes to the development of different regional, economic and social living conditions?
- How can such policies be developed taking into account the necessary balance between the requirements imposed by globalisation and the respect for local and regional traditions?

These general questions should be understood as indicators leading to the identification of specific thematic issues for the social co-production of knowledge on youth and especially for future European comparative research.

### 3. Sources and methods for the social co-production of youth knowledge in Europe

As we have seen, globalisation and European integration processes have determined similar social trends and problems across different European societies. This has generated the creation of transnational political, practitioners and researchers networks in order to cope with these developments. In the last 13 years there has been a growing tendency towards the Europeanisation of youth policy and youth research. Thus, for example, at the end of the 1980s, a "Memorandum" on youth policy and youth research was produced by the European Commission's "Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth", in which for the first time some general ideas for a common European youth policy were adopted (Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, 1990). In the meantime European, national, regional and local institutions responsible for youth policy are already evaluating the implementation of some of the priorities and general aims formulated and defined within the context of the EU White Paper process and the Open Method of Co-ordination for European co-operation in the youth sector. Together with this, and in the framework of the renewal of the EU Lisbon strategy, a new Youth Pact has also been signed by all EU Member States.

All these new political frameworks are making increasing demands on researchers and other social actors, including young people themselves (see the White Paper consultation processes). A lot of items are needed: more reliable and comparable information on the social living conditions, needs, wishes and value orientations of young Europeans as well as reliable information on innovative "good practices" in the field of youth policies and youth work. In other words, the modernisation process of European societies has been progressively increasing the relevance and demand of Knowledge on European youth (Bendit, 2004; Berg-Schlosser & Muller-Rommel, 1987) and it is up to the different social actors and their communities to answer these demands.

This new situation has been leading to the further development of researchers and practitioners networks, to new forms of consulting and involving young people in the construction of youth knowledge and to new research instruments and databases developed by specialised institutions on behalf of the European Commission. As Wallace<sup>5</sup> has stated, these demands have been answered by a series of bottom to top initiatives, as well as by others initiated at the top, e.g. by the European Commission, such as the EU Research Framework Programmes and the EUROSTAT surveys. To this classification I would like to add a third type of initiatives that may be called "mixed" initiatives, in which political institutions, together with researchers, youth workers and other practitioners who are active in the youth field, develop new forms of knowledge production on youth and youth policy. This is the case, for example, of the European Knowledge Centre now being created in the context of a common initiative of the "National Youth Research Correspondents" at the Council of Europe, organised within the framework of the Council of Europe Youth Directory and the European Commission. A short historical summary of the constitution and main achievements of some of these initiatives will be presented in the following pages.

#### **Bottom to top initiatives: networks and research groups**

According to Wallace, the first networking initiatives in the field of youth and youth research were started in the late 1970s and 1980s by "Research Committee 34" – Sociology of Youth – of the "International Sociological Association (ISA)". This Committee has had a highly strategic role in bringing together European youth researchers of both sides of the "iron curtain", either on the occasion of European conferences or on the occasion of the regular World Congresses of Sociology (in a four-year rhythm). Thanks to the efforts of its first three presidents, it had a very good standing in Central and Eastern Europe at the time of the Cold War. This research committee has most recently contributed to the development of youth research in Southern European countries.

Wallace also suggests that a further bottom to top initiative undertaken by youth researchers and practitioners in order to generate and to disseminate more knowledge on youth was the creation of the "Circle for Youth Research Cooperation in Europe (CYRCE)". This was founded in spring 1990, in

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<sup>5</sup> C. Wallace: "Perspectives on youth research in the New Europe". Keynote address at the 18th DJI Symposium, 24 June 2003.

Berlin, by four (former and later) RC 34 presidents as well as representatives from both the Council of Europe and the EU. This group became – for one decade – a professional “training ground” for incentives towards a Europeanisation of youth research. This circle, active in many relevant fields, helped to bring together different aspects of youth research and policy in Europe and produced two excellent “European Yearbooks on Youth Policy and Research”: “The puzzle of integration” (1995) and “Intercultural reconstruction: Trends and challenges” (1999). But since the turn of the century, the CYRCE network has stopped its activities and actually been closed down.

Another very relevant bottom to top initiative is the “Nordic Youth Research Information (NYRI)” network<sup>6</sup>, founded at the beginning of the 1980s with the aim of stimulating and co-ordinating youth research in this European region.<sup>7</sup> In this context and with funding from Scandinavian governments, Nordic researchers from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland have for the last two decades been creating joint structures for youth research between their countries, which have allowed these countries to take a sort of leadership in the construction of youth research know-how across Europe. This experience has also led them to become rather self-sufficient in terms of networking. Their experience has been disseminated across Europe and has mainly contributed to create youth research expert networks, especially in the framework of Council of Europe activities.

During the mid-1990s, the “European Sociological Association (ESA)” was founded, which holds its conferences every two years and has an excellent youth-related network existing mainly in electronic form for the exchange of news and papers. For this reason, the ESA “Youth and Generation” network is more inclusive than most other networks; it is not necessary to be a member of the association to join.

Further bottom to top initiatives can be seen in the creation of instruments supporting comparative youth research in Europe, such as, for instance, the creation of specialised journals, regularly publishing youth research results in the English language, as well as the national reviews edited in different EU Member States, publishing articles on youth and youth research results in their own languages.<sup>8</sup> Since the mid-1990s, a new journal, the *Journal of Youth Studies*, has appeared. Although based in Glasgow (UK), it has increasingly become a forum for European youth research. A second forum is the (much older) Nordic journal, *Young. Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, which is produced in English and is now published by an international publisher accessing a wider audience. These two initiatives are helping to create a better exchange of youth research across Europe. However, the first journal still presents rather Anglo-centric approaches, while the latter is mostly concerned with specific Nordic youth trends and problems. Neither has fully captured the developing trans-European research community until now, although this might yet evolve.

Beyond these existing resources supporting European comparative research we have also to count several university research programmes and “youth observatories”, as well as the public and private non-academic research institutes specialising in youth and youth policy research, some of them also participating in cross-cultural or transnational European research projects. More specific information on this issue can be found in the 2001 IARD report (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001).

### **Top to bottom initiatives: the EU statistical and empirical databases**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, we can welcome a considerable improvement in quantitative instruments concerning not only the harmonisation of social indicators and variables, but also the quantity, quality and availability of statistical data at European level, which thus enhances the quality of

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nyri.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Some 1.700 researchers, documentalists, users of research knowledge etc. are linked through this network. The development of this co-operation started in 1985, and within the present framework NYRI has appeared since 1992. The NYRI secretariat is the co-ordinator, producer and organiser of a variety of activities.

<sup>8</sup> Some of these journals are: *Young*, edited by NYRI since 1993; the *Journal of Youth Studies (JYS)*, edited at the University of Glasgow and published by Carfax Ltd.; the *Journal of European Social Policy*, edited by the University of Bath (Department of Social and Policy Sciences) and published by Sage Publications Ltd.; the *Journal of Education Policy*, published by Taylor & Francis in London and Washington DC; and many other international specialist journals and quarterlies in Europe periodically publishing articles on youth and policy research, that cannot all be mentioned here. Most of them focus their editorial work on topics like adolescence, education, employment, youth transitions to the labour market, health and child or youth related social policies.

the information obtained (Bendit, 2004). Different EUROSTAT initiatives in this direction lead both to a significant improvement of comparative European social statistics in different areas in which young people play an important role (like education, employment, housing, health, etc.) and in the development and quality of surveys, focusing directly or indirectly on the living conditions of young people in the EU. Among these surveys, we can mention: the “European Community Household Panel” survey, the “European Labour Force Survey”, the “European Social Survey”, the Eurobarometer 47.2 (“The young Europeans”), the “European Values Survey”.

These specific EU information and data sources are being complemented by other, non-specific European surveys, such as the “International Social Survey Programme” and the “World Values Survey”. To these improvements we must add those other quantitative and qualitative approaches, data and research results obtained by several European comparative investigations, implemented in the context of the EU Commission’s research programmes, particularly the Fifth and Sixth Framework Programmes.<sup>9</sup> By means of such quantitative and qualitative comparative data, knowledge on youth in the EU Member States has significantly been improved, deepened and spread.

### **“Mixed” initiatives**

The Council of Europe used the 1985 event of the UN-International Youth Year on “Participation, Development, Peace” as a starting-point for putting in place several far-reaching initiatives for furthering and documenting European youth research generated by social and political changes. With this aim, the Council of Europe, strongly influenced by the experience of the Scandinavian countries, installed and institutionalised the “Experts on Youth Research and Information” network, sponsored and co-ordinated by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The central aim of this network was to support the work of the European Council Youth Directory. The members of this network exchanged information upon youth research activities and research results and disseminated this knowledge in their respective countries. In the context of this network several important initiatives were also implemented. These included:

- establishing a specialised library on youth and youth research at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg;
- drawing up and implementing an electronic database on youth research and youth policy in Europe;
- publishing statistical and analytical reports on the situation of young people in Europe;
- running seminars on youth and youth research for young researchers.

The youth policy of the Council of Europe has also carried out reviews of national youth policy in which members of the youth researchers’ network have been involved.

These initiatives of the Council of Europe have helped to set the scene for identifying European “youth” since the mid-1980s. Most recently (2002), Lynne Chisholm and Siyka Kovacheva have explored the “European youth mosaic” – i.e. the social situation of young people in Europe – with regard to the Council of Europe’s then 44 Member States.<sup>11</sup>

After a period of stagnation at the end of the 1990s, the “National Youth Research Correspondents” network was reactivated within the framework of the Covenant between the European Commission

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<sup>9</sup> Social scientists not only from Europe but also from other world regions can have access to the data sets originated in the context of the above mentioned surveys stored in different sociological archives like for example those of EUROSTAT; the Central Archive of Cologne; databases of the University of Essex; sociological data archives of the University of Mannheim; databases of the German youth institute DJI.

<sup>10</sup> This network is made up of “national correspondents”, nominated by the different governments to support and co-ordinate youth research in Europe. They are nowadays focusing their work on the construction of a European database on youth and youth policies in Europe (<http://www.coe.int/youth>).

<sup>11</sup> Chisholm & Kovacheva (2002). The Council of Europe has been also involved in campaigns against racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance and xenophobia. It has been concerned with promoting democracy, tolerance and human rights. However, like the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission, it has been mainly concerned with funding youth exchange projects rather than youth research projects.



and the Council of Europe. Its main task since then has been to contribute with information and other kinds of support for the implementation and testing of the European Knowledge Centre (see chapter by Bryony Hoskins on the launch of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy).

In more specialised terms and supported by EU-research funding, we can observe a growing tendency since the mid-1990s, in the western part of Europe, to more networking in the field of youth research. This has been expressed, for example, in the constitution of informal networks or in consortia grouped around specific thematic issues and research projects, mostly funded by the EU Commission Framework Programmes or by the “European Science Foundation”. One example of such a research network in the youth field is the “European Group for Integrated Research (EGRIS)”, established in 1993 as a (German-based) European research network. It was founded with two aims: to develop a European concept of “young adults” and to integrate the European dimension into social research on youth. Ten years on, EGRIS has now become a forum for a Europe-wide discussion on social integration and social policy as well as a research network which tries to develop empirical methods for inter-cultural approaches.<sup>12</sup>

Similar mixed initiatives focusing mainly on youth employment issues were the networks YUSEDER, working on the project “Youth Unemployment and Risk of Social Exclusion”, or CATEWE, focused on the project “Comparative Analysis of Transitions from Education to Work in Europe”, based on the “European Community Labour Force Survey”. Other important networks created during the second half of the 1990s were the “European Research Network on Transitions in Youth”<sup>13</sup>, and the IARD network “Task Force for Research in Europe (TREU)”.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to these examples of youth research networks, we can mention those conceived as virtual information and co-operation networks focusing on the documentation of data on youth, youth policies and good practices. These include the “European Youth Observatory” network, the “Youth and Generation” network<sup>15</sup>, and the “Virtual Community of Young Researchers” network.

Another successful network that has appeared in the last two years is the “International Council for National Youth Policy (ICNYP)”. Although mainly concerned with creating policy networks rather than research networks, this organisation has expanded enormously and made very successful international contacts outside as well as inside Europe. This helps to define the idea of youth and bring it onto the policy agenda, thus affecting the directions transnational youth research may take.

As we can see from this short historical summary, there were many strategies and initiatives to develop different forms of knowledge co-production on youth and youth policy in different institutional contexts before the idea of a European Knowledge Centre was born.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.iris-egris.de/egris>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ces/tiy/summary.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.istitutoiard.it>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/esa/youth.htm>.

#### **4. Advantages and disadvantages of the different forms of knowledge co-production on youth**

With reference to a social co-production of knowledge, the different initiatives and strategies outlined above present, of course, several advantages and disadvantages that have to be considered when we try to construct spaces of dialogue and co-operation. Among the advantages of European bottom to top initiatives and strategies, we can observe that: They allow the development of theoretical discourses with people who have the same general aims and a more or less common technical language. They stimulate a free dialogue with other social actors (researchers, politicians or youth workers) and allow or facilitate new insights on social and youth developments; they are therefore also very useful for the construction of new research questions and political or pedagogical interventions. They further allow a better knowledge of youth political structures and the problems of foreign societies and young people, but also promote a better understanding of our own structures and youth problems, by contrasting and reflecting our own situation in the “others” mirror. Therefore, they also stimulate the development of a less ethnocentric view on youth and youth policies in the different EU Member States. These bottom to top initiatives also generate the subjective and objective (psychological, informational and organisational) conditions for a better European co-operation in the fields of transnational/transcultural youth research and youth work. And finally, they allow a much better dissemination of youth knowledge in different spheres, e.g. among politicians, youth workers and researchers.

Among the main disadvantages that have to be considered with reference to such bottom to top initiatives we can mention the following: Researcher and practitioner networks show a tendency to develop their own discourses, sometimes in considerable isolation from other social actors, thus losing contact with the social perceptions and perspectives of stakeholders, youth planners, youth workers, practitioners in other fields (e.g. teachers) and young people themselves. In such contexts, professionals also show a tendency to see young people mainly as a “research object”, as a “field of action” or as a “problem group” demanding political, social or pedagogical “interventions”. In this perspective, youth researchers and youth workers also take too much distance from the subjects they mean to work with. Researcher networks sometimes also show a tendency to develop highly academic attitudes, without sufficiently considering the practical or political implications of the knowledge they produce. In such contexts, researchers are sometimes more interested in their own academic careers than in influencing society and politics. Researchers and researcher networks have almost no presence in regional or local youth political structures. The reasons for this must mainly be seen in the lack of local youth political initiatives to integrate them and to use their resources and maybe also in the absence of financial support on the part of local authorities and other institutions funding at this level.

Among the advantages of top to bottom initiatives we can observe that: They allow the construction and development of large and reliable statistical databases from which many researchers and other social actors can also profit. They stimulate co-operation between larger academic and non-academic research institutions existing in the different countries and thus generate the basis for regular social reporting. Political institutions at European, national, regional and local levels can profit from the results of this type of co-operation, especially at the moment when they have to identify relevant social problems, define and legitimise political options and aims as well as courses of action and social programmes. Because of the advantages mentioned above, the kinds of networks evolving from such initiatives have closer links to political actors at national and European levels. They consider the data and the knowledge generated by such research institutions and networks as the main source for scientific policy counselling.

Among the disadvantages they have, we should mention the following: The data and panoramic views and interpretations they produce are heavily determined by the kind of quantitative and standardised instruments being used. This means that they generate a knowledge based on general social indicators and answers to issues and topics formulated from the researchers’ perception and

structured previously in questionnaires with mostly closed questions. These kinds of instruments are not in a position to capture the subjective side of the problems to be answered or to be solved and of course not to integrate the perceptions and interpretations of other social actors. In this type of institutional networking initiatives, the contact to other social actors during the process of knowledge production is very reduced or almost non-existent, so the data interpretation and explanations offered mostly have a strong technocratic bias. The knowledge produced in the context of such approaches and networks is often used by political actors to legitimise political options and decisions they have already made or would make anyway, on the basis of their own political interests; this is to say that this knowledge can easily be used for political ends. And finally, they demand substantial financial resources for their work and are therefore highly dependent on the political “functionality” of their conclusions.

The advantages of mixed initiatives can be summarised as follows: At European and national level they mostly (not always) bring researchers together with other actors, such as national civil servants, European Union and Council of Europe officials, representatives of youth organisations, etc., thus offering the possibility to learn from each other and to transmit their own knowledge into other contexts. On the basis of this reciprocal knowledge, they offer possibilities to engage in new common projects and to test, monitor or evaluate innovative practices. They also open up possibilities of participation in interesting European projects, conferences, seminars, publications, etc. And they offer links to a broad scene of social actors and to a wide spectrum of information that can be very well used for dissemination and further networking purposes.

These mixed initiatives have their own disadvantages, of course, which include: They can very easily turn into “discussion clubs”, without real theoretical relevance or practical consequences. EU-funded networks (especially researcher networks) are too much dependent on the changing priorities of the European Commission (especially those of the Framework Programmes) and therefore risk disappearing once the project funding runs out. European networks of this type are also confronted with difficulties when it comes to the introduction of discourses developed at European or transnational level into national discourses. By accomplishing this task they often run the risk of stigmatisation by national research or practitioners communities that often consider them as “fair weather” initiatives that are irrelevant for the solution of acute problems at the local, regional or national level or as not sufficiently based on classical scientific criteria.

## **5. Areas and topics for a future social co-production of knowledge and European comparative youth research**

The definition of relevant research areas and issues of present and future European comparative youth research is possible, firstly, by taking into consideration some strategic documents of the European Commission, such as the White Paper on youth policy “A new impetus for European youth” (2001a). This produced, on the basis of a broad consultation of youth politicians, experts and young people themselves, youth policy specific issues like “participation”, “information of young people”, “civil engagement/voluntary work” and “more information on youth”, together with other youth-related issues, like “education”, “employment”, “housing” and “health”, which have been defined as priority action areas for future youth policies in the EU Member States.

Another important source for the identification of relevant research issues focusing on youth in Europe are the European Commission sponsored programmes (especially the Fifth and Sixth Framework Programmes). By considering the political and research priorities fixed in these programmes and linking them with other, more general, but also relevant European social issues like “social cohesion”, “migration”, “education and the knowledge society”, “education and lifelong learning”, “the role of welfare regimes and social policies” etc. (European Commission – Directorate General for Research, 2004), we can conclude that the following areas and issues will be the most relevant for future knowledge demands in the EU:

- factors leading to solidarity or to tensions in intergenerational relations, for example those concerning social safeguards, gender roles, family structures, lifestyles and transmission of knowledge between generations;
- the knowledge society and the role of information, communication and lifelong learning in the life of modern youth;
- education in the knowledge society and strategies for inclusion and integration of young people of different social and ethnic origin;
- the changing forms of social capital and political, social and economic participation of young people in Europe;
- the modernisation of economic structures and new forms of employment and unemployment and social inequality; consequences for young men and women in Europe;
- autonomous life and societal factors promoting/inhibiting the emancipation process of young people in Europe;
- the consequences of globalisation and Europeanisation on young people's identity constructions;
- the economic and societal effects of young men's and women's delayed entry into the labour market and the impacts this has, especially on family formation and fertility rates;
- risk behaviour and the state of young people's health in Europe; prevention policies and good practices;
- the comparison of different youth policies and of policies targeting the management of intergenerational relations at national and European levels, including also the assessment of "good practices".

In the framework of this article, it is obviously not possible to discuss the particular contents and meanings of each of these areas and thematic issues, from which questions for future European comparative research and the social co-production of knowledge on youth could be deduced. A certain degree of concretisation of these issues and questions can be found in the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission.<sup>16</sup>

## 6. Summary, conclusions and open questions

As this chapter has indicated, contemporary societies are characterised by processes of accelerated economic and social change. These changes have their most visible manifestations in different phenomena affecting young people, such as, for example, the extension of the length of time spent by people in the youth situation, that is to say, in a condition in which biological and intellectual adulthood is not matched by social adulthood. This makes it difficult to determine with certainty in individual cases the length of time during which a man or woman can be considered as "young".

Although the modernisation process has a strong impact on the life of young people, it does not put young people all over Europe on an equal footing. As pointed out earlier, the modernisation process is a source of diversification and individualisation of social life in itself. In this sense, even if the structural living conditions of young people in Europe have been less frequently investigated from a comparative perspective than other social issues, statistical data and existing empirical comparative research have shown that the structural aspects of youth conditions currently vary significantly within the European Union – and, of course, in comparison with the situation of young people in non-EU countries. In a certain sense, the latter also applies to the cultural aspects of young people's circumstances as well. We have further seen that during recent years, the European Commission and the Council of Europe have been strongly interested in supporting different forms of knowledge production on youth, also by the integration and strengthening of a European research community in the field of youth research. With this aim, research programmes and researcher networks interested in cross-cultural/transnational youth investigations have been established and funded by the European Commission and other European institutions. In this context, European comparative research has made some important

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<sup>16</sup> See European Commission – Directorate General for Research (2004). Among other aspects, this programme also focuses on issues affecting intergenerational relations as well as on attitudes, lifestyles and forms of participation of young people and their consequences for European society and economy.

progress since the 1990s, even if it has mainly been focused on the development of quantitative surveys providing standardised statistical information at European level. But research alone is not enough if we want to reach a better understanding and knowledge of youth.

As stated by Lynne Chisholm in her introductory presentation, a better understanding and knowledge of youth demands the construction of social spaces and structures allowing knowledge-based dialogue between different social actors involved in the production of youth knowledge. This also includes considering the fact that with reference to young people, there are manifold forms of knowledge (theoretical, empirical, practical, subjective, etc.) that have all to be accepted as relevant for youth policy and youth work and must be brought to each other if a dialogistic social co-production of knowledge is to be made a reality.

From this perspective it is obvious that the different actors involved in such dialogistic processes look on youth from their own perspectives, their own logics and interests and that therefore relations of tension between the actors will always be constitutive of a “pact for more knowledge” on youth. What seems to be important in such a “pact” is that each actor must have its own place and its own role in the process of knowledge co-production so that confusions might be avoided and of course, bridges be built between these different positions, interests and roles.

Further, it is also necessary to define what is to be understood by the term “co-management of knowledge” on youth. Are we thinking here of common initiatives with young people in order to generate new knowledge on youth (e.g. youth consultations, action research, etc.) or are we reflecting on activities and new projects originated as a result of youth research, such as the construction of databases on youth and youth policy, a European Knowledge Centre, or specialised home pages giving information about youth and youth politics and policy?

From the analysis of the different initiatives presented in the second section of this chapter we can conclude that developing new structural spaces of exchange and negotiation with other actors – thus to be actively involved in the “magic triangle” – offers the opportunity to develop new ideas for both research and practical work. We can also conclude that to be involved in such initiatives as well as in youth consultations may give researchers and practitioners a deeper significance and another kind of motivation for their own work. On the other hand, the problems and unresolved questions linked to the implementation of a strategy aiming at the social co-production of knowledge are not negligible:

- How can dialogistic networking and communication between the different relevant social actors be organised at local, regional and national level? And how can disadvantaged young people be involved in these processes?
- Is it possible to generate “pacts for more knowledge on youth” at different levels? In other words, how can we bring organised and non-organised young people, youth workers and youth researchers, as well as policy-makers and officers responsible of youth projects together in order to develop common initiatives of knowledge co-production, through, for example, structured youth consultations and methods of open co-ordination as means for the implementation of the White Paper priorities; for the development of qualitative or quantitative research projects oriented on specific issues relevant for local or regional or national youth work and youth planning or for the production of local, regional or national youth reports?
- Is it further possible to generate a “pact of knowledge on youth” also with reference to other relevant aspects of youth policy like, for instance, the conception, monitoring and evaluation of innovative practices in the youth field, or the development of pedagogical materials as well as the dissemination of information relevant to youth, elaborated by young people for young people themselves?
- How can the young people concerned themselves become involved and integrated in youth research projects and what role could professional researchers play in this respect?

- What strategies and methods should be developed by youth researchers themselves in order to present their results in such a way that they can be understood by all the other actors?

As we have seen in this paper, existing strategies to develop the social co-production of knowledge are very different and all of them have their advantages and disadvantages. We have to learn to live with these ambivalences and contradictions. The problems and questions presented in this concluding section are thought of as inputs for our common reflection in the context of this workshop. Their intention was to stimulate the imagination of the participants in order to start dialogues that can help us to improve the structures of knowledge co-production already in existence.



# REGIMES OF YOUTH TRANSITIONS. CHOICE, FLEXIBILITY AND SECURITY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES ACROSS DIFFERENT EUROPEAN CONTEXTS \*

Andreas Walther

## Introduction

European research on change in young people's transitions from youth to adulthood in general, and from school to work in particular, largely agrees upon a diagnosis of ongoing de-standardization, individualization and fragmentation of transitions. Inasmuch as transition destinations, in terms of adult status and social positions, have diversified, it is further agreed that understanding these changes requires analysis of youth transitions in relation to structure and agency. This means that young people's biographical perspectives – their subjective appropriation of their own life courses – have to be taken, more seriously, into consideration. The diversification and uncertainty of biographical destinations related to the process of de-standardization tends to transgress the interpretative repertoire of national cultures. Consequently, this applies equally to the policy repertoires of nation states as they attempt to regulate transitions, especially in preventing and combating attendant risks of social exclusion. From this perspective, and related to these demands, this article concerns itself with contributing to the exploration of comparative research perspectives on youth transitions.

In the meantime, many of the intricacies of comparative research have been identified such as the ambiguous comparability of indicators or the problem of identifying 'the national' in the complexity of factors involved in biographical processes. This applies for quantitative surveys, biographical studies applying qualitative research methods, and of course even more so for approaches aiming at combining both perspectives (Bynner & Chisholm, 1998; Chamberlayne *et al.*, 2002; Giele & Elder, 1998; Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001).

In this article, to best investigate and potentially identify variations in the interplay between structure and agency in different transition contexts and to ascertain the extent to which young people's subjective perspectives reflect these contextual structures, a model of 'transition regimes' is suggested that claims mid-range theoretical validity. These reflections are based on the findings of three EU-funded comparative studies carried out in the framework of the EGRIS project (European Group for Integrated Social Research) network between 1998 and 2004. These projects share a subject-oriented approach, analysing the actual scope for active biographical construction among young men and women in different contexts. This is important to note as comparative analysis, in particular, strongly relies upon the underlying interests of research and expectations.

The article is structured in four stages: firstly, the perspective on young people's subjectivities is related to the de-standardization of transitions; secondly, a typology of transition regimes is suggested, combining the economic, institutional and cultural aspects upon which different contexts of youth transitions can be modelled; thirdly, how these constellations are reflected in the biographical accounts of young people is analysed; and finally, reflection is made on what this means for transition research and transition policies in Europe.

## De-Standardization of Transitions

In the last few decades, youth transitions have not only been considerably prolonged but also de-standardized. This process is related to factors such as extended periods spent in education, pluralization of lifestyles, growth of female employment, labour market flexibilization and the overall trend towards individualization. Transitions are also increasingly characterized by their reversibility –

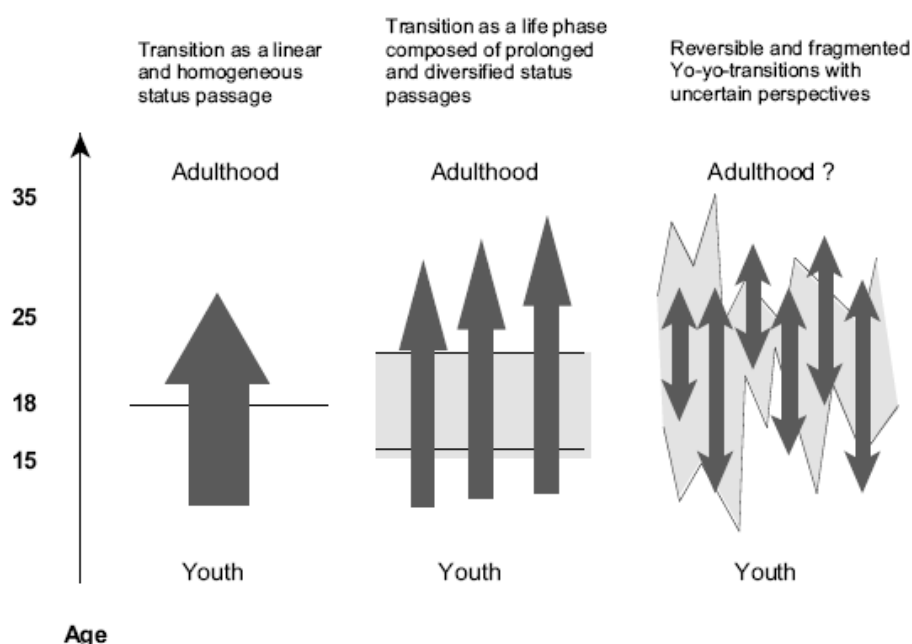
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as opposed to their linearity – with transition steps being withdrawn either by personal choice or forcibly as a consequence of, for instance, unemployment or partnership breakdown. Owing to the prolongation of passages from school to work, transitions in other life strands – family, housing, partnership, lifestyle and so on – are also increasingly revealed to have followed different logics and rhythms rather than being automatic consequences of labour market entrance. Youth transitions have hence become fragmented, and situations of youth-like dependency and adult autonomy may co-exist simultaneously within the same biography. This is reflected in the self-concepts of young men and women, who find it increasingly difficult to decide if they are ‘young’ or ‘adult’, and in fact may prefer to locate themselves in an ‘in between’ category, for example as ‘young adults’ (du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Plug *et al.*, 2003; Walther, Stauber *et al.*, 2002; Westberg, 2004).

Correspondingly, these characteristics of de-standardized transitions have been referred to using the metaphorical term of *yo-yo transitions* representing the, perhaps significantly long, period of time shift between youth and adulthood for young people (EGRIS, 2001; Pais, 2003) (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1** The ‘yo-yo-ization’ of transitions between youth and adulthood  
(Walther *et al.*, 2002)

The fact that *yo-yo transitions* either evolve from individual choice or are imposed as a result of failing to enter a standard biography points to the persistence of ‘old’ inequalities according to social background, education, gender, region and ethnicity underneath these ‘new’ transition structures (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Despite unequal access to resources and opportunities young people are increasingly confronted with situations where they have to make their own decisions. With this responsibility, individual subjectivities – the motivation to take one decision or another – are of heightened importance.

For what seems a long time, this de-standardization has been neglected by transition policies more orientated towards a standard or normal biography, reducing social integration to labour market integration (one may further argue that referring only to ‘youth’ is a reduction in itself inasmuch as other life stages and transitions in the life course are being de-standardized as well). A symptom of this mismatch between lived realities and institutional assumptions is the increasing withdrawal and dropping out of young people from schemes and programmes intended to integrate them, initially, into the labour market and then, as a consequence, into society. The *yo-yo model* in Figure 1 illustrates how policies that isolate one of the arrows representing the different transitions young people pursue risk neglecting the interrelation of different transition strands and, thus, the complexity of the realities of lived transitions. We have referred to such policies as ‘misleading trajectories’ because they – consciously or unconsciously – counteract the objective of social inclusion (EGRIS, 2001; López

Blasco *et al.*, 2003; Walther *et al.*, 2002). This corresponds to Peter Kelly's observation that transitions have increasingly changed into 'wild zones', parts of society less controllable with regard to integration and predictable outcomes (Kelly, 1999). Owing to the strategic function of transitions to work in ensuring societal cohesion, state institutions react by attempting to turn them into 'tame zones', channelling young people into systemic trajectories regardless of socioeconomic viability and subjective relevance.

Erving Goffman (1962) introduced the concept of 'cooling out', which refers to the fundamental contradiction within democratic market societies between the principle of equal opportunities and the scarcity of recognized social positions. This is even more obvious under conditions of decoupled education and employment, wherein uncertain employment prospects demand accumulating as much cultural capital as possible. As individual efforts do not pay off for all, mechanisms are needed to 'cool out' the aspirations of the losers; either institutionally, through professional gate-keepers persuading them that their failure derives not from the injustice of the system but from their unrealistic aspirations compared to their abilities, or by the unregulated force of labour market competition, which is buffered or reinforced according to differentials in availability of family resources.

Whereas attempts at normalizing and re-standardizing youth transitions fail to compensate for the effects of globalization and demographic change on the welfare state, transition policies are shifted towards 'activation'. In principle, this means self-responsibility for individuals in attaining success or failure in transitions to work through the creation of – positive or negative – incentives for active transition behaviour (van Berkel & Hornemann Møller, 2002).

In opposition to this, it is argued that young people's subjectivities in late modern societies and their motivation to take decisions and perform actions form an 'objective' part of social reality. This requires, firstly, possibilities of identifiable *choice* in a trajectory, while the denial of choice may be interpreted as a denial of citizenship, especially in societies which describe themselves as democratic and in which consumer choice is a feature of everyday life (cf. du Bois-Reymond, 1998). The recognition of choice as an integral aspect of individualized culture and lifestyles is paradoxically reinforced by the current movement towards increasing self-responsibility through activation policies, as much as possibilities of choice are being restricted by coercive measures. Secondly, respecting subjectivities implies a balance between *flexibility* in order to reconcile different demands in fragmented lives and forms of *security* allowing risks in trajectories with uncertain outcome to be taken (cf. Bauman, 2001; Stauber *et al.*, 2003).

Until now the de-standardization of youth transitions has been conceptualized as a general phenomenon regardless of context. From this perspective, transitions are part of institutionalized life course trajectories (Hagestad, 1991), and structural and cultural differences in transition systems impact upon young people's transitions themselves. In the framework of the European research network EGRIS, several EU-funded studies have been carried out dealing with the de-standardization of transitions, its effect on young people's biographies, how institutional policies respond to such developments and how this in turn adds to de-standardizing pathways towards adulthood. In the following, reference will be made to three research projects:

- *Misleading Trajectories* (1998-2001) was a thematic network based on secondary analysis of integration policies for young adults, dealing with unintended effects of social exclusion; comparative analysis was mainly concerned with finding concepts of transnational validity, explaining 'traps' in policies intended to lead young people into social integration but (re)producing social exclusion instead (Walther *et al.*, 2002);
- *Integration Through Training?* (1999-2001) compared national programmes to combat youth unemployment developed in the context of the European Employment Strategy with regard to differing objectives and effects, and trends of convergence and divergence; based on the analysis of national transition systems and the programme guidelines of recent policies, expert interviews with policy makers and professionals, such as trainers,

counsellors or youth workers, were carried out (cf. Furlong & McNeish, 2001; McNeish & Loncle, 2003);

- *Youth Policy and Participation (yo-yo)* (2001-2004) was concerned with young people's motivational careers in relation to their transitions to work and the potential for participatory approaches to enhance processes of motivation in active engagement. In biographical interviews young people were asked to elaborate on their transition experiences, especially experiences with institutions. In 28 case studies, projects that were aimed at addressing youth transitions in a participatory way were analysed; case studies consisted of document analysis, expert interviews and a second round of interviews with young people on their experiences in the case study projects (a total of 365 young people were interviewed, 70 per cent of them twice, along with 140 experts) (cf. Walther, 2005; Walther *et al.*, 2006).

Altogether, these three studies cover 11 countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK (however, owing to a lack of previous comparative research and background literature, the case of Romania is not dealt with in this article; see below). All projects referred to the life situation of 'being in transition' between education and employment rather than to a clear-cut age range. In fact, the age range was between 15 and 35, whereas those between 18 and 25 represented the majority of interviewees and were also the main target of analysed policies.

In the following sections, a model is introduced in which the complex interaction between structure and agency can be analysed from a comparative perspective. The question is asked, to what extent – and how – do different socio-economic, institutional and cultural contexts allow for choice, flexibility and security, by looking at both the structural level of life course regulation and the subjective level of biographic construction. This includes examining mechanisms of cooling out and current activation policies in terms of how they are perceived by young men and women. This model starts by clustering countries according to institutional and socio-economic structures, and in a further step, the extent to which these differences are reflected in young people's transition biographies.

## **Transition regimes in Europe**

Transitions between youth and adulthood are structured by a complex system of socio-economic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns. While these constellations are subject to constant change, for instance, by the universal processes of globalization or policy reforms, at the same time, structures of 'path dependency' are at work; existing structures emerge from past decisions and developments while processes of change can only start from and, step-by-step, transgress these existing conditions.

In comparing life course structures – and social policies are central in this regard – one necessarily relates to Gøsta Esping-Andersen's seminal 'three worlds of welfare capitalism', within which social-democratic (Nordic), conservative (Continental) and liberal (Anglo-Saxon) welfare regimes are distinguished (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The notion of 'regimes' relates to existing institutional settings that have a history structured not only by conflicts and the interests of specific social actors but also by the set of values and interpretations which they constantly reproduce. Institutions and concepts merge into what is conceived of as a 'normal' in a given context, which also includes a 'normal' relation between individual entitlements and collective demands. Herein, cultural and social patterns are also concerned with influencing individuals' biographical orientations. In the following, reference will be made to the development of Esping-Andersen's model by Gallie and Paugam (2000), who split the conservative regime type into employment-centred and sub-protective welfare regimes (of Mediterranean countries in the latter case, with its particular role of the family and informal work), while they refer to the social-democratic regime as universalistic, with social rights defined by citizenship status (see Table 1).

This model is limited to the ‘Western’ world. Asian and African contexts, and also Eastern European transformation societies, have not as yet been the subjects of systematic comparative research. Tentatively, ‘post-socialist’ regimes can be characterized by their shift away

from a socialist heritage, with universalistic and employment-centred aspects, towards either a more employment-centred or an increasingly sub-protective present (Wallace, 2002).

**Table 1** Welfare regimes according to Gallie and Paugam (2000)

<i>Welfare regime</i>	<i>Characteristic of coverage</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Sub-protective	Very incomplete and very weak	Italy, Portugal, Spain
Liberal/minimal	Incomplete and weak	Ireland, Great Britain
Employment-centred	Variable and unequal	France, Germany, Netherlands
Universalistic	Comprehensive and high	Denmark, Sweden

Applying a typology of welfare regimes to the comparison of youth transition contexts requires an extended perspective. Whereas social security compensating for a lack of income through employment remains important, structures of education and training also need to be considered – especially according to dimensions of stratification and standardization (Allmendinger, 1989) – likewise their relation to concepts of work and structures of employment (Shavit & Müller, 1998). Employment and welfare, along with education and training, include mechanisms of doing gender through which the relation between men and women is shaped in particular ways (e.g. Sainsbury, 1999; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). The combination of these structures results in the particular design of programmes for unemployed youth. A comparison of such policies at the same time provides evidence of dominant interpretations of youth unemployment and ‘disadvantaged youth’ – in terms of ascribing disadvantage to either individual deficits or structures of segmentation. Policies also depend on and reproduce context-specific notions of youth, reflecting the main societal expectations towards young people (McNeish & Loncle, 2003; Walther *et al.*, 2002).

A regime type model, rather than describing specific national systems, clusters groups of countries according to overall rationales. This necessarily implies generalization in terms of ideal types, while differences between countries of the same regime type and the fact that national transition systems contain traits of all regime types, yet to different extents, are both neglected. Another limitation concerns the issue of time. Such an ideal type model risks reproducing structures of transition regimes in a static way, hence neglecting universal processes of globalization and individualization, the transformative powers of which are especially visible in Central and Eastern Europe.

The interpretative value of a model of transition regime can, thus, be characterized as a heuristic compromise of medium range validity. The strength of such a model lies in referring to the ‘Gestalt’ of the different models through which young people’s lives are regulated (cf. Kaufmann, 2003). Taking these limitations into account, in the following, the main traits of four transition regimes are briefly outlined, starting from their socio-economic and institutional shape (see Table 2).

The *universalistic* transition regime in Nordic countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, is based on a comprehensive school system. Post-compulsory level routes of general and vocational education lead almost 80 per cent of school leavers to a certificate giving access to higher education (restricting school leavers from vocational routes to specific subjects). National frameworks set standards in education and training but are flexible enough to allow for individual learning and training plans. At welfare level, the relation between individual rights and responsibilities is embedded in collective social responsibility. Linked to citizenship status, the right to social assistance applies to young people from 18 years old onwards regardless of the socio-economic situation of their families. If participating either in formal education or training they receive an educational allowance. The employment regime is characterized by an extended public sector, which goes along with broad access options. High rates of female employment are facilitated by a system of public childcare, meaning young women do not have to anticipate a high burden of reconciling family and work.

**Table 2** Transition regimes

<i>Regime</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Social security</i>	<i>Employment regime</i>	<i>Female employment</i>	<i>Concept of youth</i>	<i>Concept of youth unemployment</i>	<i>Concept of disadvantage</i>	<i>Focus of transition policies</i>
Universalistic	Denmark, Sweden	Not selective	Flexible standards	State	Open, low risks	High	Personal development, citizenship	'Not foreseen'	Mixed (individualized/ structure-related)	Education, activation
Employment-centred	Germany, France, Netherlands	Selective	Standardized	State/family	Closed, risks at the margins	Medium	Adaptation to social positions	Disadvantage (deficit model)	Individualized	(Pre-) vocational training
Liberal	UK, Ireland	Not selective	Flexible, low standards	State /family	Open, high risks	High	Early economic independence	Culture of dependency	Individualized	Employability
Sub-protective	Italy, Spain, Portugal	Not selective	Low standards and coverage	Family	Closed, high risks, Informal work	Low	Without distinct status	Segmented labour market, lack of training	Structure-related	'Some' status: work, education or training

Counselling is widely institutionalized throughout all stages of education, training and transition into employment, and is primarily orientated so as to reinforce individuals' motivation for personal development, which is these societies' primary definition of youth. In this constellation, 'youth unemployment' is often referred to as a paradox, since young people not in employment are expected to be in education. Education in the wide sense of personal development is therefore the focus of transition policies in Denmark, whereas in Sweden this is interpreted in terms of a comprehensive youth policy. These policies not only interpret youth as a potential resource for the future of society but also aim to support young people in being young, which is reflected in policies for those struggling to complete secondary education: while 'disadvantage' is ascribed individually in terms of not being ready to engage in an individualized choice biography, most 'second chance' measures aim at (re-)opening access and developing individuals' orientation towards regular and recognized options, rather than downsizing aspirations and adaptation to low status careers. Activating labour market programmes also implies individual choice as being of central importance in order to allow for a maximization of individual motivation. However, although 'activation' for a long time was understood in a broad sense either in terms of education for one's own biography or voluntary work for the community, including self-chosen or self-initiated projects, it is increasingly interpreted in a more strict fashion. In general, it can be said young adults are encouraged and supported in experimenting with yo-yo transitions by individualized education and welfare options – as long as they do this within the system's framework. While this does not exclude the risk of 'revolving door' effects between low status programmes and unemployment for the so-called 'remainder group', recent policy changes might also indicate that in the universalistic transition regime, the focus on individualized labour market integration is being strengthened (Bechmann Jensen & Holmboe, 2004; Furlong & McNeish, 2001).

The *liberal* transition regime model predominates in the UK and – less accentuated – in the Republic of Ireland, and values individual rights and responsibilities more than collective provisions. In most parts of the UK schooling is largely organized comprehensively until the age of 16, whereas in Ireland differentiated routes exist. In recent decades, the post-compulsory stage has been considerably developed and diversified so as to enable a more flexible space for vocational and academic options to be created, with a variety of entrance and exit options. This can be interpreted as an initial investment to prepare individuals, who are conceived as 'entrepreneurs' of their own labour force, for self-responsibility. This system has replaced a situation where, until the early 1980s, the majority of young people would directly enter the labour market after leaving school at the age of 16, a change that has been marked by postponing benefit entitlements from 16 to 18. While the jobseeker's allowance is tied to citizenship status, the level of benefits is low, increasingly limited in time and conditional upon active job search, so that universal access is under pressure and does not contradict a highly privatized responsibility for compensating for social risks. The assumption of youth as a transition phase that should be replaced as soon as possible by economic independence is still reflected by ascribing youth unemployment or disadvantage to a culture of dependency. In youth unemployment programmes, straight labour market entrance is still the main objective, whereas

education and training options are short-term and often lack reliable quality standards. Individual responsibilities are claimed through workfare policies such as the New Deal, in which, after a gateway phase for orientation, the positive incentive of choice between options of inclusion (employment, training, voluntary or environmental engagement) is rewarded by allowances but counteracted by coercion and sanctions in cases of refusal.

The labour market is characterized by a high degree of flexibility while the level of qualification of the work force is rather low. This makes the labour market fluid, with many access options, and has led to a high rate of female employment, with women's unemployment at a lower rate compared to that of men. However, the trend from male full-time manufacturing jobs to female part-time service jobs means that increasing numbers of the population, especially women, are confronted with precarious conditions. This includes the responsibility for childcare, which is organized to a larger extent by the private market and in the Irish context is reinforced by the heritage of a strong Catholic family ethic. In the context of the liberal transition regime, *yo-yo* transitions result from the flexibility of education and employment and from the risks young people encounter in their transitions (Burgess & Leahy, 2004; Furlong & McNeish, 2001; Hayes & Biggart, 2004).

The *employment-centred* transition regime accounts for the continental countries, such as Germany, France and the Netherlands. Here, school is organized more selectively to allocate the younger generation occupational careers and social positions in different segments. As a consequence, in Germany, one third of school leavers hold only a compulsory education certificate while, at the same time, those eligible for higher education make up no more than another third. Vocational training plays a central role and is relatively standardized, which can be school-based as in France, company-based, like the dual apprenticeship system in Germany, or mixed, as is the case in the Netherlands, and, thus, reproduces a highly regulated employment regime (in Germany, this is even more rigid owing to the Protestant normative heritage of the concept of work as 'vocation'). Labour markets are divided into a highly standardized and protected core – with women being clearly underrepresented – and precarious peripheries. This is reflected by the structure of social security, distinguishing between a high level of compensation of those included in standard work arrangements through social insurance and a residual social assistance system. With the exception of the Netherlands, young people are not automatically individually entitled to benefits if they have not paid enough social insurance contributions. These social security systems, however, are challenged by the recent introduction of workfare elements. The concept of youth, in the first place, means allocation to social and occupational positions while youth unemployment is interpreted as young people not being ready for this socialization and allocation process, owing to learning or social deficits (in Germany those failing to enter regular apprenticeship training are referred to as 'untrainable'). Programmes aim at compensation for these deficits – often without providing allowances or benefits – rather than providing access to regular training and employment, except in the French 'emploi-jeunes' programme that creates jobs in the public sector.

*Yo-yo* transitions in this regime mean that young adults are torn and/or navigate between restricted options for individual choice and strong demands and implications of standard trajectories, a process of reconciliation which they have to pursue individually against the normative power of institutional facts. Among these countries, the Netherlands has to be considered the most hybrid transition system, including traits of the liberal as well as the universalistic regimes, such as a flexibilized education and training system, a citizenship-based social assistance model, workfare policies, and especially, a high share of (female) part-time employment (Furlong & McNeish, 2001; Pohl & Stauber, 2004).

The *sub-protective* transition regime applies primarily to the southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal. Clustered among the conservative welfare states by Esping-Andersen, the low percentage of standard work arrangements and the high rate of unprotected living conditions has created a specific 'dualistic' welfare regime in which the family and informal work play a significant role.

School is structured comprehensively until the end of compulsory education. Until recently, nevertheless, the rate of early school leaving was high, with a phenomenon of child labour, especially in Portugal. Vocational training is weakly developed and largely provided by professional schools, while the involvement of companies is low. Owing to the economic weakness of many regions and the orientation of labour law towards (male) breadwinners, youth transitions are structured by a long waiting phase. Young people are not entitled to social benefits and therefore engage in precarious jobs – either in the informal economy, such as in Italy, or in fixed-term contracts, which are extremely prevalent in Spain. Labour market segmentation and a lack of training contribute to very high rates of youth unemployment, especially affecting young women. Owing to a scarcity of public childcare facilities, they face particular difficulties in developing individual careers.

Higher education plays an important role in providing young people with a status in this waiting phase, with many dropping out before reaching the end of their degree (e.g. in Italy) or becoming over-qualified (such as in Spain). Policies addressing youth transitions can be characterized by the discrepancy between comprehensive reform plans and the heritage of structural deficits in implementing these reforms. Most important policy objectives aim at prolonging school participation and integrating and standardizing vocational training, with labour market policies focused on job creation, including incentives for employers, development of career guidance and assistance into self-employment. The general objective behind such policies can be characterized as providing youth with a regularly institutionalized status – be it in education, training or employment. Unlike in other regimes, yo-yo transitions do not develop against dominant assumptions of youth but rather emerge in a social vacuum. One might state that the transition system does not provide choice, flexibility or security; they depend on the extent of family support (Furlong & McNeish, 2001; Lenzi *et al.*, 2004).

### **Biographic effects of transition regimes**

How do transition regimes affect young people's biographical construction and how can such effects be identified? In this section, this issue is discussed, exemplarily, with regard to Denmark for the universalistic transition regime, the UK for the liberal, Germany for the employment-centred and Italy for the sub-protective model. A first, more general, perspective is one of considering young people's living situations as reflected in indicators of economic and residential dependency versus independence. A second, more individualized perspective, is to look into the experiences of young people who fail to progress smoothly through their transitions and the perspectives they see for themselves.

### **Dependency and autonomy: security of income and living arrangements**

The 'Study on youth and youth policy in Europe' (Schizzerotto & Gasperoni, 2001) has been concerned with collecting indicators regarding the economic and residential status of young people. Also relating to the mid-1990s and more recent studies suggesting some convergence (cf. Biggart *et al.*, 2002), these indicators can be interpreted as confirming the typology of transition regimes. They show a high rate of young people living on their own labour income or on social benefits in the UK, while the share of parental support is at its lowest. The latter is highest in Italy, as well as the income from informal and casual work, while benefits are almost non-existent. In Germany, employment, parents and training allowances all play a significant role without reaching the highest score in any category. Finally, in Denmark, young people primarily live on their job income or training allowances, which have to be distinguished from benefits inasmuch as they represent a regular income for what is supposed to be young people's regular status: to be in education. However, it has to be taken into account that these figures document only the major income source, whereas there is no information about 'typical' combinations between different sources. With regard to their living situations, the percentages correspond to the broad shape of the transition regimes, with young Italians showing the highest rates of those living still with parents, while cohabiting is most common in Denmark (see Table 3).

**Table 3** Economic and residential indicators of young people's autonomy/dependency in the UK, Italy, Germany and Denmark

	<i>UK</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Denmark</i>
<i>Main source of income</i>				
Regular employment*	56.8	26.1	51.2	<b>64.9</b>
Informal and casual work*	6.7	<b>19.1</b>	18.2	7.7
Benefits*	<b>18.3</b>	0.1	7.8	8.5
Training allowance*	2.8	1.3	5.8	<b>28.2</b>
Parents*	17.3	<b>67.6</b>	37.7	18.7
<i>Living arrangements</i>				
Living with parents**	47.0	<b>87.0</b>	55.0	n.a.
Cohabiting**	19.0	1.0	13.0	<b>37.0</b>

Source: IARD, 2001.

Note: \* Data for 1997, 15–24 year olds, Eurobarometer; \*\* Data for 1994; 1995, 20–24 year olds, Eurostat.

### Scope for development and maintenance of subjective aspirations

The *yo-yo* project, in particular, focused on the analysis of how, in different transition regimes, young people who fail to enter regular careers subjectively experience their possibilities of biographical agency in integration measures. The extent to which such measures respect their subjectivities are of interest; whether they allow for choice and the development and maintenance of biographical aspirations; how security and flexibility are balanced; whether transitions to work can be reconciled with individual lives; and whether they imply processes of 'cooling out' and what mechanisms actually account for downgrading aspirations. These constellations are, of course, not representative and relate to young people interviewed in the specific institutional contexts of case study projects within the *yo-yo* study. Similar accounts can be found in other regime contexts as well. However, it is argued that they reveal a clear relation to the above outlined socio-economic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns by which different regimes are characterized.

In *Denmark* young people at risk of early school leaving or registered unemployed find themselves in a situation one could call a 'caring siege'. Of course, they profit from the fact that material subsidies for education and for training partly compensate for not receiving an adult wage. Although it is not sufficient to afford independent housing, state funding provides the basis for a youth lifestyle. Owing to the individual being the main unit of orientation for social policies and the education system prioritizing intrinsic motivation, personal choice and development, young people appear to be quite free in making decisions.

Most young people have a differentiated view of the transition system and the rights and possibilities it provides. They perceive second chance offers such as the pre-vocational Production Schools as possibilities to 'try out to find out', while the former Open Youth Education also encouraged choosing alternative educational pathways. Information and counselling for such possibilities is available, although dependent upon the quality of the relationship with individual advisors. The following accounts relate to young people who attended Open Youth Education, a programme for potential early school leavers in which school was organized in a youth-work type setting. It provided possibilities for non-formal, explorative and peer structured learning programmes on the basis of individually designed educational plans. It has to be said that, in the meantime, the programme has been stopped. One can assume that this was partly due to one of its strengths, that it was not restricted to a particular target group in order to avoid stigmatization and allow for peer learning in heterogeneous groups thereby,



however, risking not reaching those most in need. This reveals the restricted perspectives of lifelong learning policies – even in a universalistic transition regime (cf. Field, 2000).

The findings show that the interviewed students – from different socio-economic backgrounds and with different school careers prior to entering the programme – appear to have adopted perfectly the objective of an individualized and flexible biographical approach:

*It is my education, and I have to use it for something, so I have to work it out . . . it is me who decides. (female, 18)*

*I look at it this way: I am 19 years old; I am young. As long as I can I want to keep my life going and make out of it what I want. I would start at the Grammar School now, then I might get tired of it and probably get depressed. (female, 19)*

*In order to guarantee biographic openness, the programme implied flexibility, for instance, in terms of allowing change in individual educational plans:*

*A lot of students did that: changed their plans. And this also shows that you have matured and developed . . . and then it is good that you can change it. (female, 19)*

At first sight, it seems as if the Danish transition regime leaves space for subjective expression and choice. However, criticism is raised with regard to the risk of activation for activation's sake, meaning schemes often do not guarantee biographic progress, and the persisting phenomena of early school leaving among the so-called 'remainder group', with a significantly higher share of ethnic minority youth, suggests that profiting from the resources and spaces provided by the system requires the internalization of a particular cultural model of participation and individualized biography construction:

*It is very free, it is only up to yourself what to make of it, if I wanted to criticise something it had to be myself, because maybe I did not do something. It only sets the scene for you to do something, to try out different things. So you cannot criticise it, it is just an empty box, which you yourself have to fill out. (male, 19)*

Obviously this cultural model cannot be taken for granted. This may be seen as the limitation of the Danish system and explain why risks of marginalization among the most disadvantaged groups persist (Bechmann Jensen & Holmboe, 2004; Böhnisch *et al.*, 2002).

In the *UK*, a great number of young people make use of extended access to further education and training. However, work orientations are dominated by instrumental values – especially for those from lower class backgrounds – reflecting the dominant concept of youth entering adult status in terms of economic independence as soon as possible. 'Fairness' is the main value by which career opportunities are assessed and, in most cases, pay is first and foremost in this regard. Yet, this is not how everyone thinks in terms of what they perceive as appropriate careers, and as further education implies a break with the patterns of working class culture and lifestyles, there is a large group of 'status zero' youth (Williamson, 1997). They mistrust 'the system' in general and many of them renounce engaging at all since they are convinced they do not have a fair chance. They state that they are openly discouraged by the careers service:

*He told me, 'you have no hope, son'. (male, 17)*

*This also characterizes their experiences with the employment service:*

*There's nothing in there . . . You fill in forms and talk to one in there, like, and then you hear nothing, unless they have a poxy job going where there's no money and you're treated like a slave. (male, 18)*

Programmes such as the New Deal are characterized by ambiguous experience. On the one hand, young people perceive the possibility of paid options positively – at least in local contexts where a considerable range of options is available. On the other hand, there are also contexts in which the programme has not succeeded in overcoming the strong distrust against the system.

This system undermines young people's self-confidence but reinforces strategies of self-defence:

*Being on benefits for three years I had began to lose sight of my personal goals. I was afraid to come off benefits; to go back to work; afraid to set goals, but most of all afraid to fail. (female, 23)*

This can also take a more offensive form, where individuals 'cultivate' their dependency on benefits. In Sheffield, it is reported that young people, as they near the end of the sixth month of benefits – when the New Deal becomes operative – 'resign' from unemployment, are assisted financially by friends for some weeks, then sign on again to 'enjoy' another six month benefit period (Alan France, referred to in Biggart *et al.*, 2002). This can be interpreted as an illustration of how coercive policies drawing on a culture of dependency – as in a self-fulfilling prophecy – contribute to the generation of the latter. In general, there are few mechanisms that allow for the maintenance of aspirations. Obviously choice, flexibility and coping with risks and precariousness are a matter of individual responsibility and therefore divided along lines of social inequality (Biggart *et al.*, 2002; Furlong *et al.*, 2003; Hayes & Biggart, 2004).

In *Germany*, young people's orientations reflect the highly normalizing character of the transition system. Reinforced by the stigma attached to claiming social assistance, young people are highly committed to a 'normal biography' based on the 'right' vocation and standard employment after regular training. This often means writing more than 100 applications to companies for an interview – and rarely getting any answer. Those with only a compulsory school certificate have to trade down their aspirations (and they do so) to avoid unemployment at any cost. Those who fail to enter the core sectors of segmented training and employment are kept in dependency without options for choice of individual pathways.

*Yes, in secondary school you get pressure. They always tell you, you must have vocational training, training, training, without it you will never make it. And they don't tell you about other pathways . . . There are so many young people, who really only because of pressure or being anxious just start any vocational training. (female, 21)*

This process is guided by vocational guidance at the employment service that, consequently, is not experienced as help either. In contrast, hostile expressions, especially by young males, reflect the need to protect the own identity against what they perceive as alienation and humiliation:

*We did a class visit to the job information centre and what did we do? Nothing! We did steal a few things, that's what we did . . . it is simply too boring there. (male, 18)*

*It is an administration after all. They are not in the mood for working. Just staring into your file, going bah, bah, they treat you like a cow. (male, 23)*

Young people who fail to find qualified employment or regular training are channelled into pre-vocational and training schemes and accept them even when they offer few genuine opportunities in terms of certification or employment, and where participation has also a strong stigma attached.

*Some of this [pre-vocational] course made it into an apprenticeship . . . if you were lucky enough, I simply wasn't, but some of us were. (male, 19)*

With the increasing duration of such experiences, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between their inability to adapt to work situations and the lack of any motivating perspectives when they drop out from schemes and practice placements.

The structure of the German transition system requires heavy investment in education and training. Without the possibility of easily adjusting aspirations provided in a flexible labour market or a cushion of natural family support, subjective risks in terms of de-motivation and frustration are very high among German youth (Biggart *et al.*, 2002; Pohl & Stauber, 2004).

In *Italy* it is more difficult to distinguish disadvantaged young people from others as unemployment is more of a normal feature of transitions across all education levels. Non-existent access to benefits makes young people dependent upon the family and few families would compel their offspring to work at a level below their education. Living in the so-called 'long family' is no longer considered a moratorium in the sense of postponed independence but a condition of living, reproduced by both parents and young adults for emotional and economic reasons. These young people declare themselves to be content with family support:

*They have always supported me with everything. (female, 21)*

The 'long family' also implies very low rates of cohabitation, as moving out coincides with family creation. Family resources and the structure of local labour markets, therefore, determine whether or not young people can maintain their aspirations. However, there is a clear north-south divide in this regard. And gender difference has to be considered, especially in the south, in the sense that young women succeed even less so than young men to enter the labour market, while family dependency more often means control for young women? than for young men. Owing to the lack or underdevelopment of public structures adequately regulating transitions to work, informal structures become important – not only the family:

*We are alone! If you are lucky enough to have some friends, fine . . . otherwise. (female, 19)*

In recent years the role of the so-called third sector of non-profit organizations for youth transitions has increased significantly. Young people engage because it provides them with the possibility of actively doing something with their lives in a safe space, but still in a career perspective. They perceive it as a field of orientation, training, a springboard to other opportunities. A young woman from northern Italy, who is involved in the organization of a self-directed youth centre, hopes:

*From this responsibility something bigger can be born. (female, 19)*

Others also strategically combine certain studies with voluntary work in order to gain work experience and upgrade the value of their studies. However, in parts of the south, the third sector is not only a springboard. It even replaces – or constitutes – a part of the labour market:

*Oh sure, it is well known that in Palermo [capital of Sicily] there's no work, but to keep saying 'there are no opportunities' and still be day-dreaming about the so called 'permanent job' seems to me a waste of time . . . you have to create your job by yourself, inventing new professions, considering your own wishes. (female, 21)*

Incidentally, policies to assist self-employment are one of the few successful transition measures in southern Italy. One could argue that young Italians face high risks of exclusion without options for subjectively relevant life perspectives, but at the same time – compared to the employment-centred regime – the lack of highly structured institutions leaves space for own activities. However, depending on class, gender and region, these are considerably precarious (Biggart *et al.*, 2002; Lenzi *et al.*, 2004; cf. Leccardi *et al.*, 2004).

The general differences in the selected accounts of these young people might not be representative as they emerge from exceptional project contexts. Nevertheless, they reflect structural differences with regard to the mainstream transition systems which constitute the structural 'material' of young people's biographical construction. This is supported by the findings of another EU-funded study, analysing the relation between young people's unemployment and risks of social exclusion using a qualitative

paradigm in six European countries. Using the multi-dimensional concept of exclusion developed by Martin Kronauer (1998), consisting of economic, labour market, spatial, cultural and institutional exclusion and social isolation, the YUSEDER (Youth Unemployment and Social Exclusion: Objective Dimensions, Subjective Experiences, and Innovative Responses) project assessed in qualitative interviews the risks of social exclusion for young people who had been unemployed for one year or more. The findings of this study suggested that risks were highest in countries which, in this article, have been allocated to the employment-centred regime (Belgium and Germany). Medium risks were characteristic of Sweden, representing the universalistic regime, and Spain, representing the sub-protective regime. Low risks accounted for Greece and Italy, both belonging to the sub-protective transition regime. The main dimensions of social exclusion which made the difference were social isolation and institutional exclusion (e.g. selectivity and stigmatization; Kieselbach, 2003).

However, there was one observation from the interviews carried out in the yoyo project across the various regimes, which corresponds to other research findings suggesting gender-specific differences in young people's perception of and dealing with transition structures. Young women appear to be more competent in managing differences between own aspirations and external demands and possibilities than young men. The latter are more likely to leave a job or scheme due to a lack of experienced respect or a low wage which they consider beneath their dignity. Protecting their (male breadwinner) identities contradicts with participating – if only temporarily – in what they perceive as exploitation. Young women, in contrast, more often manage to maintain motivation over a longer period and to accept deviations on the way. Of course this does not necessarily mean that they succeed more often in realizing their dreams and plans, owing to the boundaries of segmented labour markets (du Bois-Reymond & Stauber, 2005; cf. Leccardi, 1999; Oechsle & Geissler, 1998).

## **Conclusion**

Does the regime model provide any advantage for comparative analysis and provide evidence with regard to young people's subjective experiences of choice, flexibility and security in their transitions to work and adulthood? In terms of comparative analysis, the regime perspective allows us to not only explain structural differences but also outline 'climates of normality'. It provides a perspective that goes beyond institutional structures and includes ideological concepts and cultural values that inform both transition policies and young people's orientations and coping strategies. Of course, the comparison of subjective views of young people on their biographical perspectives gathered from qualitative data is difficult due to the variety of contextual factors influencing them. The regime model represents a way to deal with problems of comparability which conventional approaches of 'direct' comparison often encounter. It provides an interpretative background – or 'glossary' – for the translation required to explain commonalities and similarities in findings within different contexts. As young people's orientations and strategies reflect the resources and opportunities they can 'normally' expect and the 'legitimacy' of their aspirations, transition regimes represent the different realities in which young people's biographies are embedded and become visible in their accounts of experiences with institutional actors in transition systems.

The value of the transition regime model also applies to the policy level. Constraints and pressures that are exerted by the structures of a transition system can increase subjective risk in different ways and cushioning mechanisms can serve to increase space for subjectively meaningful transitions. Whereas transition and welfare policies can in fact support delayed transitions and lead to the maintenance of strong aspirations, the mere existence of benefits and training schemes, even if part of a differentiated system, does not necessarily provide spaces for subjectivity. In particular, the conditioning of social security benefits to young people as well as normalizing and selective approaches can also be seen as reinforcing 'cooling-out' processes. In contrast, lacking support structures while leaving young people in a precarious status vacuum can also be seen as spaces for action beyond stigmatization, at least for those who can afford to take the risk of precarious trajectories. In a similar way, this shows different ways in which the current trend towards 'activation' can be interpreted. Depending on whether the application of negative or positive incentives, of sanctions or support and rewards, prevails it does not necessarily imply a reduction in spaces for subjectivity, as individuals accept obligations for as long as they have quality options to choose from.

On the other hand, it has been shown that the level of policy differentiation only partly improves social integration while other factors such as social isolation are not directly influenced by policy intervention. Comparing transition regimes is, therefore, a key to relating present policies to the implementation of structures and the emergence of patterns of normality in the past and it provides a key to the relationship between structure and agency in the transitions of young people whose needs and orientations necessarily develop and are informed by what is seen as normal in a given structural context.

### ***Acknowledgements***

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# IS THERE A PEDAGOGY OF SOCIAL INCLUSION? CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON EUROPEAN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION \*

*Beatrix Niemeyer*

## Introduction

This chapter will discuss how the idea of social inclusion represents challenges for educational policy and practice in Europe, drawing on findings from a European research project on reconnecting disadvantaged young people with vocational education and training (VET). It focuses on the “risk zone” of transition from school to work. In many European countries, this transition takes place via an intermediate stage of VET, but the most disadvantaged may experience problems of exclusion from VET itself. The chapter therefore examines school-to-VET transitions specifically, and the “system of schemes” which has been established in almost every European country to bridge the growing gap between general education and the labour market.

At the macro- as well as at the micro-level, the problem of school-to-work transition is often viewed from an economic perspective, highlighting employers’ demands for vocational skills and employability, and active labour market policies for achieving these. A second common perspective focuses on the social effects of exclusion, highlighting pedagogical support and educational strategies in general. In contrast with these two prevailing approaches, I will explain the concept of situated learning in learning communities centred on practice as a model to re-think and re-conceptualise policies and practice, by aiming at both social and vocational integration. In this model, learning itself is considered as a social process: learners and those who facilitate learning are engaged in common activities, and learning itself is viewed in terms of social participation – belonging and becoming – rather than simply acquiring knowledge and skills. The idea of situated learning therefore helps to overcome the limitations of thinking about informal and formal learning as separate and distinct, and encourages us to see them as closely inter-related dimensions of the same process.

In addition to this multidimensional perspective on learning, the European context also means that the transcultural dimension of school-to-work transition and VET arrangements needs to be included in a context-sensitive way, since policies and practices have to be adapted to specific national and cultural settings. Moreover, I will end by suggesting that this concept of a community of practice is also helpful as an analytical framework for critically examining current European policies for social inclusion, and for identifying key areas for improvement.

## The problem of social inclusion in learning

“The question is outstanding on how to encourage young people’s sense of belonging to the European project and how to get young people to believe that being a citizen of Europe offers the security which is desperately sought by young people in the increasingly individualistic and globalised world.”

This is how the problem of social inclusion was outlined in the call for Youth Research Partnership Seminar on Social Inclusion and Young People on which this book is based. From this point of view, the problem seems to be how to mediate the “European idea” to young people. But the reciprocal relationship between macro-level European policy and micro-level individual lifecourses seem to drift into opposite directions for many young people. What does lifelong learning mean for somebody whose motivation to learn has come to an early end in the institutions of formal education? While learning is believed to open the door to the knowledge society, which type of knowledge and which

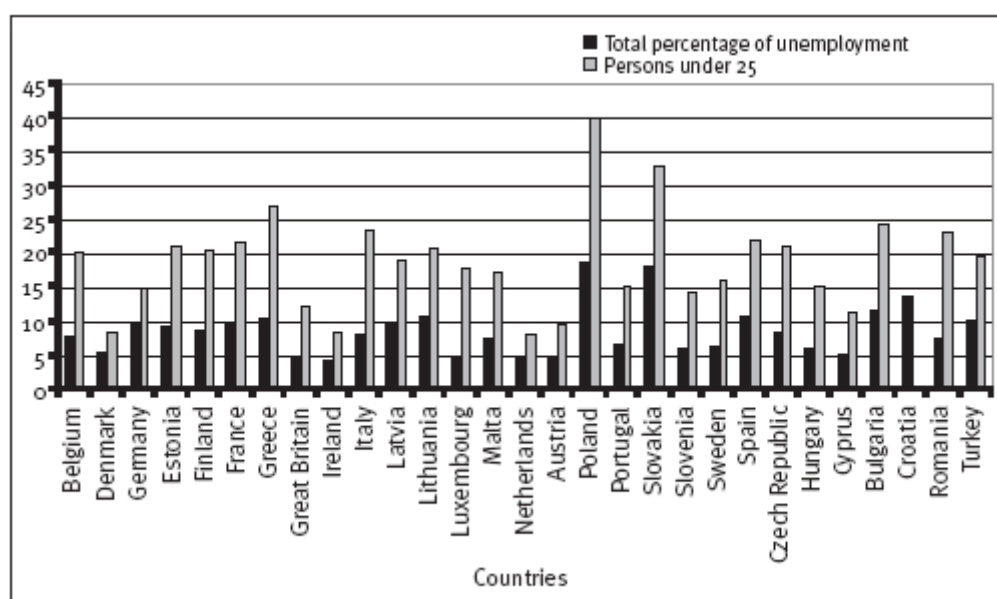
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ways of learning will be valued there? Who holds the keys to this door, and thereby rules on inclusion as well as on exclusion? These are crucial questions, not only for European social policy, but also for national and regional level policies, where social inclusion should be enacted in institutions and programmes and experienced at the micro-level of educational practice.

The focus of my reflections will be on school-to-VET transition as a decisive process for social inclusion, from society's as well as from the individual's perspective. In particular, I will examine the "system of schemes" which has been implemented in most member states to bridge the gap between general education and entry into the labour market. As Helen Colley points out in her chapter in this book, existing policies and programmes build on two presuppositions: firstly, that job placement is the one and only indicator for quality and success; and, secondly, that individual success in learning creates the one and only entrance ticket to social and vocational participation. However, there is a structural as well as an individual dimension to the problem of social inclusion. Consequently, we have to ask not only if young people are adequately prepared for VET systems, but also if VET systems are adequately prepared for young people – especially for those who are disadvantaged in relation to the mainstream. We should keep in mind, however, that educational systems have a selective function, and themselves produce social exclusion. Given a drastic lack of training places and jobs in a restructured labour market throughout Europe, and the high level of youth unemployment (see Figure 1), the establishment of schemes and special support programmes may change the order in the queue at the company gates, but it will not broaden those gates to let more young people in (Galuske, 1998).

*Figure 1 – Youth unemployment in Europe, 2004*



Source: Eurostat 2005.

If the labour market and institutions of formal education both produce and maintain excluding effects, how could the idea of social inclusion as a political target make any difference? The expression "social inclusion" is an original European invention, introduced by politicians in the European Commission because "the Member States expressed reservations about the word 'poverty' when applied to their respective countries. 'Social exclusion' would then be a more adequate and less accusatory expression to designate the existing problems and definitions" (Berghman, 1995: 5). In the policy arena, social inclusion tends to be downsized into a technical problem: identifying significant indicators, measuring and reporting on them. It is treated in a way that renders personal problems invisible. This also tends to be the approach in the academic field. A lot of effort is put into the description of significant indicators, main target groups, etc., yet little is known about how social inclusion could positively be achieved. There are not many researchers who dirty their hands with participating in field research to learn about the subjective dimension of exclusion: the personal challenges young people face every day in dealing with the multifaceted effects of a risky life.

With the focus on risky transitions from school to work, inclusion is often reduced to the issue of job placement. In vocational education and training, this results in an emphasis on technical skills development and qualification in response to the requirements of the economy. VET is supposed to support young people with qualification deficits to become adequately prepared for the labour market. However, in contrast with this narrow and functional understanding of qualification, VET may also aim at more holistic personality development, which corresponds to the notion of citizenship. Such an approach presupposes a type of VET which is more adequately prepared for young people, and for their expectations and needs within their complex life worlds. In line with this, Andreas Walther (2007) prefers the concept of citizenship, which incorporates the subjective dimension of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society, to that of inclusion. “Citizenship” points to the competence and ability, as well as the right, to participate and engage in social processes and systems. By contrast, the concept of inclusion does not make visible or challenge the existence of an excluding social system, and thus reproduces the boundaries of that society. In summary, then, social inclusion has been developed as a political goal rather than an analytical concept, and the notion certainly needs further unpicking. For the purposes of this chapter, though, let us see how an economic view of social inclusion impacts upon VET provision.

### **School-to-VET transition as a risk zone: pedagogical answers to economic questions**

Becoming an actively participating citizen includes more than just negotiating a successful school-to-work-transition. Indeed, Kronauer (2002) has identified six different risks of exclusion:

- exclusion from the labour market;
- economic exclusion, which does not necessarily mean the same;
- social exclusion;
- cultural exclusion;
- institutional exclusion;
- spatial exclusion.

It is without doubt, however, that labour is a key element for social inclusion. It should allow for economic independence; in addition, the position in the labour market is closely linked to the social status of a person and also shapes personal identity. For the majority of young people, therefore, becoming an adult means finding an appropriate place in the labour market.

Parallel to changes in educational policy, the context and rules of work, patterns of employment and the utilisation of human resources have also changed. The intensity of work is growing rapidly, the risks of market fluctuations are increasingly delegated to individual employees and teams, and organisations are becoming the prime reference for individuals’ identification (Field, 2000; Silverman, 1999; Heikkinen & Niemeyer, 2005). This is the context in which the “problem groups” of mainstream education and employment are defined and diagnosed, and measures for solving the problem in a most “cost-effective” way are developed.

In the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in May 2003, we read that: “The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies” (Council of Europe, 2003a: 2). Concerning sectoral policies, the Charter argues that youth employment should be promoted and unemployment combated, because:

*When young people are unemployed or living in poverty they are less likely to have the desire, resources and social support to be active citizens in local and regional life. Young people who are unemployed are likely to be among the most excluded in society and therefore local and regional authorities should develop policies and promote initiatives to reduce youth unemployment (Council of Europe, 2003a: 4).*



The EU Council explicitly recommends the elaboration of accompanying programmes for the members of socially disadvantaged groups leading to employment and to avoid an interruption of career through enhancement of employability, administration of human resources, organisation of work processes and lifelong learning. The approach of social inclusion policy should be multifaceted and focusing on target groups such as children in poverty (Council of Europe, 2003a: 11).

These statements quite clearly describe a policy of programmes and schemes, with the effect of establishing special pathways – offering “special” access for “special” people. There is a basic pedagogical dilemma resulting from this. School-to-work-transition can be identified as being of critical importance for social inclusion and participation; but although there are strong structural reasons for the emergence of this “risk zone”, the approaches to meeting this challenge are mainly training initiatives aimed at improving the individual. Responding to this mismatch is difficult.

The majority of the member states have launched specific programmes to support young persons at the risk of being excluded from the labour market. However, these programmes differ great in terms of duration, funding and pedagogical approaches. We can identify four main aspects of these differences:

- how programmes are generally situated in the respective national landscape of education and labour;
- how programmes are legitimised via prevailing paradigms of disadvantage;
- dominant expectations that society has of young people;
- how youth unemployment is perceived.

In relation to these aspects, the following types of programme can be distinguished:

- programmes which aim to open up alternative individual experiences and broaden the mainstream pathway of schooling, building on the idea of individual personal development, with high options for occupational choice to be achieved by general education;
- measures aiming to compensate structural deficits and shortcomings of the apprenticeship market. Usually, access to these programmes is linked to the identification of individual deficits, thus stigmatising the participants;
- “workfare” programmes oriented to improving employability with varying combinations of general and technical education, building on a model of early economic independence and a comparably short period of youth;
- programmes which aim to address the shortage of workplaces as well as a lack of training, with an extension of schooling and emphasis on work placement.

At the conceptual level, programmes and schemes mostly seek to build on a combination of general education with workplace experience and/or training and social support, although the relation of education and training varies in quantity and quality. In practice, however, this “alternance principle” can be difficult to maintain, as we can see from a previous period in which school-to-work transitions first became risky.

Alternance seemed to be an appropriate solution when the first post-war wave of youth unemployment challenged established educational systems in the late 1970s. At that time, it involved alternating periods of training, education and work experience that were deemed necessary to bridge young people into mainstream VET and labour market positions from which they had been displaced by social and economic conditions. Such programmes were established in the German-speaking countries, France and the Benelux countries, to overcome the fact that mainstream educational routes were too narrow, unattractive, or difficult to access for young people. But in the following period, continued displacement and disappointed expectations created motivational problems that a simple application of the “alternance” principle could not tackle. From the case of Germany, we can learn that alternance, as a basic principle of VET, may guarantee a high quality of training. However, since it depends on the economy offering sufficient places for work experience and training, it is difficult to

implement when unemployment is high. As such, it cannot help to prevent large-scale youth unemployment (Dietrich, 2003; Hammer, 2003).

At the same time, another branch of theory and practice focused on the underlying causes of disengagement, building on social theory, and using the methods of “social pedagogy” and youth work (Evans & Niemeyer, 2004). For example, in Germany in the early 1990s, social workers became regular members of the staff running re-integration programmes. They offered general support with social problems as well as guidance and counselling of vocational orientation processes (Eckert, 1999; Biermann & Rützel, 1999). While these approaches were able to demonstrate theoretical coherence and practical successes in engaging young people (at least in the short term), vocational achievement and recognition in the labour market were lacking.

Reconsidering this history of school-to-work schemes, the “V” and the “E” of VET – the vocational and the educational – appear like competing elements. The vocational approach focuses on matching individual competences to the needs of the labour market; building on the assessment of qualifications, acquired in modular forms of training; and enhancing employability. The educational approach, on the other hand, is more holistically aimed at personal development, by offering social support and including multiple contexts of learning and activities.

After a subsequent period of serious practical attempts to integrate social and vocational support and training, today the gap seems to be becoming wider again. This gap can be identified at the micro-level of educational practice as well as at the macro-level of policy and planning. Training geared to enhancing employability seems to be counterposed to education aimed at creating an emancipated citizen. One of the most basic contradictions is that ever more training programmes seek to enhance young persons’ employability, while there is simply too little employment available for all of them. So such programmes, apart from their filtering effect and their fine-tuning of the selective mechanisms of the general educational system, have the important task of preserving the ideology of the labour society – one which sees the important task as training young people in the virtues of the labour market, such as punctuality, courtesy or accurateness.

### **Situated learning: changing the perspective**

The concept of situated learning in learning communities centred on practice has been developed in the context of an EU Socrates project, ‘Re-enter’: improving transition for low achieving school-leavers to vocational education and training, which I undertook with partners from Finland, UK, Belgium, Portugal and Greece from 1999 to 2001 (Evans & Niemeyer, 2004). This project analysed best practice examples for re-engaging young people with learning and training. Its findings highlight the social nature of learning processes, thus building on the original model of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), but also showing how it should be adapted to the specific needs and conditions of the target group: young people who experienced serious troubles with learning in formal contexts.

Socio-anthropological perspectives came into the frame for understanding learning in the 1990s, with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) influential study of workplace interactions and the ways in which workers’ skills were constructed, recognised and ascribed value in workplace settings. This social process of learning can be considered as a gradual process of growing participation in communities of practice. Originally, a “community of practice” was seen as a group of experts collaborating to accomplish a common aim. According to this concept, learning is a simultaneous process of belonging (to a community of practice), of becoming (developing an identity as member of this community), of experiencing (the meaning of the common work task) and doing (as practical action contributing to the common work task) (Wenger, 1999: 5). While this social theory of learning was developed in the context of workplace learning, building on ethnographic research, the Re-enter project showed that it also provides valuable insights for programmes aiming to counter social and vocational disengagement.

Theories of learning have been developed predominantly in the context of established learning settings. Yet in many cases, these are exactly the learning contexts in which young people have

previously experienced failure. This means that they are unlikely to be the best places for positive engagement, or for forging a new sense of themselves or their abilities. The concept of situated learning questions schooling as the unique location of learning processes, and stresses the importance of other learning environments. It values informal ways of learning, and emphasises the potential of settings in which learning may be unintentional. It is based on the importance of work experience and practical action for enhancing processes of learning and understanding (which is, of course, a common theme in existing theories of vocational education and training), but crucially it shifts the focus from the individual to the social components of learning. This allows for an extended view of competences and competence development: situated learning is not about the specialised training of particular skills, but about experience and competence in participation. It includes the process of coming to share in the cultural attributes of participation: values and beliefs, common stories and collective problem-solving strategies of the learning community centred on practice.

While theories of situated learning appeared promising in offering the potential for a more holistic formulation of VET, one that could go beyond the former twin-track approaches of vocational and social pedagogy, we have worked towards an expanded set of ideas that differ from Lave and Wenger's (1991) framework in some significant respects. Based on the analysis of good-practice examples in the six participating countries we have developed a set of criteria for learning communities centred on practice, which combines the social aspects of learning, the crucial element of participation and the time and space for reflection. Our approach highlights the following features, while recognising the socially situated nature of the learning:

- the individual biography of each young person is highly significant for their engagement in the learning environments and "communities" in question;
- the programmes' explicit goals are to foster learning, in order that people can move through the programme and move on beyond it. The communities are therefore communities of learners, and the primary goals are learning and moving on;
- the concepts of "novice" and "expert" do not have the same salience as in Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of communities of practice, which focuses mainly on the integration of novices into an existing group of experts. In the context of VET for young people, newcomers bring capabilities with them; they participate, move through, and eventually move on with strengthened capabilities which they share along the way. Expert status here comes with the responsibility for creating and maintaining the environment for full participation.

Engagement in intended learning is often the single biggest challenge, since without engagement there is no motivation and no learning. Our expanded concept thus sees learning as situated in three ways:

- in practical activity;
- in the culture and context of the workplace/learning environment;
- in the socio-biographical features of the learner's life.

Our concept of learning communities centred on practice thus builds on the importance of situated learning, with the core idea that learning is an interactive social process rather than the result of classroom instruction. The four dimensions of learning as doing, experiencing, belonging and becoming seem crucial to reconnect young people at risk of becoming disengaged. Throughout our project, it was a common international experience that work-related forms of learning which go beyond mere technical qualification, and which promote these dimensions of learning, help considerably to increase the motivation of young people for education and training. Participating in a work process encourages young people to take on responsibility and to develop commitment. Practical work in a team helps to make learning success visible, and to experience one's own contribution to it as personal success. Working in an authentic, rather than simulated, context highlights the importance of one's own work. Authentic training places, which have a close link to the local labour market and offer customer contact, help to provide evidence of the significance and importance of the individual's work,

provided these places have been chosen properly according to the interests, abilities and needs of the young person.

Effective engagement and learning therefore requires a balance between the challenges of authentic work contexts and the time and space necessary for reflection on that experience. It also requires an approach that integrates the development of technical, practical, basic and personal skills. I turn next, then, to look at the ways in which learning communities centred on practice can offer such a balanced approach.

### **The learning community centred on practice**

The concept of learning communities centred on practice builds on the outstanding importance of the community itself for processes of situated learning. To reconnect disengaged young people, it is crucial that they share the meaning of a common activity. Furthermore, they need the opportunity to experience their participation in a very practical sense. The learning community centred on practice plays such an important role, because it helps to rebuild an identity in the working context. It also serves to support problems in learning, and as a means of social background, ensuring appropriate behaviour. In addition to this, the idea of a learning community views young people as potential experts, thus focusing on learners' abilities rather than their deficits. It highlights the common efforts of both co-learners and adults, who interactively frame and shape this process as it develops.

The learning community centred on practice is not only a working team, but a group of members with different individual bodies of competence. The development of the individuals, as well as of the group, arises from the heterogeneous structure of the learning community centred on practice and the specific conflict-solving strategies within the group. Learning is understood primarily as participation. The novice is taking part in the activity of a learning community centred on practice. His or her status as a learner is accepted by other members, and more experienced members are ready to allow novices access to themselves and their community in order to make learning possible.

Communities of practice exist not only among young learners and their trainers, but they can be identified on the institutional and at the structural level as well. Here, they are shaped by interactions among the community of educational staff in particular institutional contexts. For example, the staff working on a programme – teachers, trainers and social workers – can be seen to engage in a common process of sharing competence, experience and expertise amongst themselves. Their opportunities for participation in decision making impact upon their motivation to work. The institution's affordances for – or constraints upon – flexible and open learning practices are significant influences on learning. Where an institution promotes and supports a common aim of cross-professional collaboration, individuals' perspectives are enriched, as is the educational approach of the team. It can itself operate as a learning community centred on practice. Its members profit from each other's practice and know-how, and through shared reflective processes, they are able to accumulate a common body of experience and knowledge and create a common history. New programmes are built on the experience of earlier ones, and this history itself becomes a database of know-how and good practice. A culture of self-evaluation and reflection seems essential to this process.

Situated learning, in this sense, is not limited to the organisation of learning situations and the delivery of vocational qualifications, but also relates to the structures of the institution in which it takes place, and the readiness to learn of its employees and co-workers. In the case of schoolteachers, for example, it is evident that the professional actions, norms and values that individuals adopt are related to the institutional setting in which they work. Distinct professional models of practice also operate at the structural level, and can be seen in the division between the academic disciplines of vocational and social pedagogy. In addition, those who represent institutions, and who are concerned with the planning, funding, and researching of re-integration programmes, also form a community of practice. Well-situated learning should aim to link all these levels of community together and be ready to develop, re-new and re-adapt continuously the social body of competence among its members.

A further challenge is how to transform this accumulated experience into a more general pedagogy of social inclusion. Communities of practice, and (we might add) collaborative networks between them, depend on relations between persons (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and between individuals' experiences and programme histories. But unless they are stabilised by adequate structures and maintained by adequate resources, they are likely to remain weak and sporadic, to depend on the efforts of individuals and to lack a sustainable perspective. The quality and history of communities of practice in VET can therefore be taken as an indicator of the degree to which national policies for re-engaging young people are inclusive. While inclusiveness has been widely accepted as a shared vision at the policy level and among most practitioners, still the realities of collaborative structures and arrangements all too often show that this vision is not carried into practice. To do so would, of course, imply rethinking the problems of school-to-VET transition, not only in the field, but also in terms of funding and legislation. Only a joint effort will help to progress towards the aim of assuring the right to participate in the social community at all levels.

### **Challenges in thinking about situated learning**

There are also other challenges in developing this social theory of situated learning, and putting it into pedagogical practice. On the one hand, the approach assumes that the community is ready and willing to open itself up to newcomers or learners; on the other hand, it also assumes a willingness to share the meaning of the common activity and the community's underlying values. This concept of a learning community centred on practice therefore has three presuppositions:

- that the aim is commonly shared, and that all members of the group will identify with it – which is more likely to be achieved for a work task or a material product than for a school test, for example;
- that the common expertise is able to achieve this aim – which is more easily arranged outside of a classroom;
- that structures promoting hierarchy and competition do not work against this common aim.

In these terms, the theory appears to be highly idealistic and optimistic. While it highlights the social dimension in the process of learning, it does not sufficiently reflect a number of related issues:

- questions of power and hierarchies;
- questions of selection and exclusion;
- structures of educational systems;
- and questions of individual abilities and limits to learning.

Certainly these aspects need further research. Furthermore, the concept of situated learning has been subject to critique, because it is not clear how it allows participants to move on and beyond a community, or whether they are limited to remaining within and reproducing its social boundaries (Heikkinen, 2004). Thus the concept of situated learning itself is socially situated. If applied uncritically, it can help to serve strategies for new qualification policies dominated exclusively by workplace and employer demands, and neglecting any responsibility on the part of the established agents of education. It is self-evident that the problem of social inclusion will be sharpened rather than solved by such arguments and strategies. Our expanded concepts of situated learning have to include the critical dimension of social participation. Participation thus includes the right to criticise, the ability to learn how to criticise constructively, and thereby the opportunity to influence and shape the values and strategies of a learning community centred on practice. If this critique can be addressed in these ways, our project findings suggest that learning communities centred on practice have great potential for creating social inclusion, and can usefully serve as a model to foster reflective processes about VET at all levels: policy making, institutional arrangements and practice.

### **What about European added value?**

The approved strategy to achieve social inclusion are common agreements and national action plans building on human resource development, IT competences and lifelong learning, which altogether are expected to lead to economic growth in a prospering Europe with free markets and social justice.

These instruments of national action plans present a new dimension of political strategy as the EU level impacts on national policies. Projects and initiatives are competing with – or may be even replacing – established structures in the area of youth work as well as in VET (Heikkinen & Niemeyer, 2005). The unification of scales, measures and money seems to be the model for further standardisation in the field of education. In this process, established national welfare systems, which have in the past been capable of addressing social inclusion, lose some of their significance and are increasingly determined by a common set of indicators imposed from above. Norms and values rooted in national culture are marginalised in favour of the common goal of creating the European project. But can this strategy be successful? The idea of an “enlightened”, reflective Europe inhabited by emancipated citizens is competing with a concept of short-term campaigns, projects, reports and initiatives.

I argue here that this also entails a transcultural dimension of learning. Since national integration practices are rooted in their typical cultural contexts, this needs adequate identification and consideration, and their specific value should be acknowledged. Recommendations for improving VET programmes should therefore take thorough account of cultural differences, and of national particularities in educational and welfare policies, and of practitioners’ established approaches and needs. Such consideration might be effected in the context of joint activities like exchange visits, research projects or research seminars. It is in itself an ongoing practical process that allows learning from each other’s experiences, while avoiding simplistic borrowing of policies and initiatives.

However, there remains “the problem with the apples and the pears”: as noted above, all these types of school-to-VET support programmes differ greatly in terms of duration, funding and pedagogical targets from country to country. They are influenced by each country’s respective historical, economic and political structures, and by the specific cultural concepts of youth and education that have emerged from these. The political and educational responsibility for re-integration programmes, and for the pedagogical approach they promote, are shaped by two main factors: the prevailing welfare policy on the one hand, and the established mainstream routes of education (that is, in the case of disadvantaged youth, primarily the system of VET) on the other. Welfare systems and VET structures determine the ways in which alternative trajectories from school to work are provided for young people at risk of social exclusion (Walther, 2007). They influence the ways in which disadvantage is defined, as well as the pedagogical approach of support programmes (cf. Pohl & Walther, 2003; and Evans & Niemeyer, 2004). There are four different models of welfare and VET systems to be distinguished in Europe, which carry specific – and differing – risks of exclusion (Stauber & Walther, 2001). Figure 2 presents a model of the relation between the types of re-integration programmes, the types of welfare systems and the types of VET systems in the countries participating in the Re-enter project.

This may serve as an analytical framework for further transnational considerations, but it should be kept in mind that it presents an abstract typology, and that in practice, mixtures of all types are more likely to occur. We should also note that re-integration programmes aiming to support transitions from school to VET are situated in a field of educational policy and practice, which is itself subject to constant change and development. Given these widely differing contexts, each model is challenged by the concept of situated learning in a specific way. Consequently, different conclusions need to be drawn, and different focuses will be set in policy as well as in practice. Some examples may illustrate key areas for improvement at different levels (for a fuller discussion, see Niemeyer, 2004; 2006).

At the macro-level of policy and planning, in countries with a strong school-based VET system, an approach based on situated learning challenges the established institutional barriers. Re-integration activities need to provide more authentic working experience and reduce the impact of classroom learning, which provides certification for some young people, but is not necessarily a positive learning environment for others. By contrast, in countries with a strong non-formal VET system and little institutionalised VET, learning seems to be more closely situated in communities centred on practice. However, assessment of competence and acknowledgement of informal learning need to be further developed.

Figure 2 – Four models of transition regimes in Europe

Type of model	Welfare paradigms	Organisation of VET ⇕ Resulting risks	Intention of programmes
<b>Scandinavian model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social security and education as a civil right</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school based VET</li> <li>⇕</li> <li>• transition into the labour market</li> <li>• chill out at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancement of individual development</li> <li>• broadening of the mainstream</li> </ul>
<b>Liberal model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• free individual in a flexible market economy</li> <li>• high risk of social exclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market dependent</li> <li>⇕</li> <li>• risky transitions</li> <li>• Level of qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting employability</li> <li>• bridging function</li> </ul>
<b>Corporatist model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems and access to social security depend on position in the labour market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dual system</li> <li>⇕</li> <li>• conditions of access</li> <li>• drop out rate</li> <li>• lack of training places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compensation of structural deficits</li> <li>• establishment of a parallel system</li> </ul>
<b>Mediterranean model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• partial systems of social security</li> <li>• high importance of informal structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school based and/or market dependent</li> <li>⇕</li> <li>• not very formalised</li> <li>• weak structures</li> <li>• little esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledgement and valuing of VET</li> <li>• introduction of formal structure</li> <li>• enhancing job placement</li> </ul>

At the meso-level enacted by institutions and programmes, in countries with a strong school component of VET (the Nordic countries as well as Germany, with its strong formal structures and in-built hurdles), the community-of-practice aspect needs to be strengthened. Collaboration between schools and out-of-school institutions should be encouraged in order to open up broader options of choice, and to provide more supportive approaches, both between institutions and for individual learners.

At the micro-level of educational practice, in countries with a strong tradition of informal learning, this offers good opportunities for young people who have difficulties in more formal settings. It is often in small enterprises that these young people can start to become more and more engaged. A relatively strong culture of self-employment, especially in the countryside, will also provide much family support. This form of parenting provides surroundings which are safe, but also normative and disciplining, possibly with too little tolerance for non-traditional behaviour (see, for example, Daniel Blanch's and Amineh Kakabaveh's (2007) texts on Galician and Kurdish youth-family relations). So in the southern European countries (and, we might add, in migrant communities), where the family plays a strong role in social support for young people, improving social inclusion could also mean allowing for more economic and social independence among youth.

## Is VET adequately prepared for young people?

To return to the initial question in the title of this chapter: is there a pedagogy of social inclusion? I think there is still a big gap between theory and practice in providing answers to this question. While there is a broad collection of good practice examples from all over Europe, their effect on mainstream educational policy and practice is not as evident. At the conceptual as well as at the practical level, different approaches to vocational training and social pedagogy seem to be acting in different spheres. VET research does not tend to consider issues of social inclusion, nor does VET practice usually address excluded youth. On the other hand, social work and youth work activities tend to neglect the importance of employment for social integration. Thus the distinction between formal and informal learning is maintained.

I argue strongly here that we need to think about bringing both approaches together. I therefore suggest the concept of situated learning in communities centred on practice as an instrument to

integrate both tracks, to develop a common perspective and to adjust their respective activities. To engage in meaningful socially situated activities is essential for young people at risk of becoming disaffected. Rediscovering the educational potential of meaningful work helps greatly to motivate this engagement, though this presupposes an acknowledgement that work has a value in itself for the attainment of citizenship. The actual shortage of training places in a restructured labour market with scarce opportunities, however, makes it necessary to develop a wider notion of work, including voluntary work. For example, in a society where inclusion builds exclusively on employment, there is virtually no opportunity for the legitimate participation of newcomers – not even at the periphery. While different national and cultural contexts also value differing strategies of participation and inclusion, various possibilities of engaging in meaningful practical activity can be provided, as Walther (2007) has shown.

Although this specific concept of situated learning has first been elaborated with a focus on the micro-level of integrative work practices (Evans & Niemeyer, 2004), the idea of learning communities centred on practice may also be transferred to the context of planning and decision making. Here it could serve as an instrument to foster self-reflection among both learners and those who facilitate learning, and to develop indicators for socially inclusive policy strategies and programmes. The central challenge, then, in relation to learning communities centred on practice, is to develop a pedagogy for social inclusion that links broad experiences of practice to a pedagogical theory that integrates both social and vocational learning. There is already important evidence that more socially inclusive approaches to VET can be advanced through such efforts – even in the current labour market context – if resources and encouragement can be provided at the European level for developing practice and for further research.





# YOUTH, YOUTH POLITICS AND YOUTH RESEARCH IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION\*

Walter Hornstein<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Understanding Globalization: Approaches to the Process of Globalization and the Question of the Role of Youth in this Context

### Attempt at clarification: What is globalization?

In order to be able to discuss the objectives, role and function of youth and youth politics in globalization processes – at least, from specific points of view and certain aspects – it is essential to have an elementary understanding of what is to be understood as globalization within the framework of this investigation.

This is not a simple problem to solve. On the one hand, globalization is an omnipresent notion but, at the same time, one with an extremely ambiguous character. It is a concept which, to a large extent, permits its user to determine precisely what is meant. Most commonly, globalization is connected with the process of transferring workplaces to low-wage countries and flooding western markets with cheap products from the Far East. Here, and in other instances, globalization appears to be everywhere and there has even been a publication dealing with the subject “Globalisierung im Alltag” (Globalization in Everyday Life) (Kemper & Sonnenschein, 2002).

On the other hand, there is no lack of definitions in the torrent of literature on this subject. Antony Giddens’ classic states that globalization “is the intensification of global social relationships through which distant locations are collected with each other in a manner whereby occurrences at one location are influenced by those at another many kilometres away, and viceversa” (Giddens, 1990: 85). According to Giddens, it is also important to realize that globalization is a dialectic process between local and global moments.

In this connection, I consider the attempt made by the Group of Lisboa to clarify the understanding of globalization by describing its dimension, exceptionally helpful. According to this, a distinction must be made between:

- The dimension of financial and capital relationships and money flow becoming independent of the real economic processes.
- The dimension of globalization on the level of management strategies and markets.
- Globalization as the spreading of technology, research and development.
- Globalization as the spreading of consumption patterns, lifestyles and cultural styles.
- Globalization as the formation of trans-national political structures.
- The globalization of consciousness and perception (Group of Lisboa, 1995).

However, even these proposals have their own drawbacks. They result from the fact that, on the one hand, this approach makes the multi-dimensionality of what is hidden within the term of globalization graphically clear with the various dimensions depicted individually, but neglects the problem of the interrelations between these as well as some other connections. And, it is precisely these interrelations and competing influences which add up to the dramatic-dynamic aspects of globalization.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a shortened and revised version of a lecture given by the author at the symposium on “Youth, Youth (aid) Research and Youth Politics in the Global World”, held in Munich on 21 May 2007, on the occasion of the retirement of René Bendit from the *Deutsches Jugendinstitut* (German Youth Institute).

The Group of Lisboa also provided what I consider to be a quite justified indication that the globalization of today is developing more and more into a “truncated form of globalization and that the attention paid to where globalization actually takes place should lead to globalization being replaced by the term of “triadization” – a term indicating that there are three major economic blocs: Japan and the recently industrialized nations of South-East Asia, Western Europe, and the USA between which economic integration processes take place with the result that the “rest of the world” is becoming increasingly ignored and left behind. Data on the investments, economic and trade relationships between the blocs and the “rest of the world”, show and prove that a new division is developing between the increasingly integrated global world (the big three) and the increasingly neglected other areas of the world and, in many respects, already exists (see Altvater & Mahnkopf, 1996; Gray, 1998; Hübner 1998; Beishem *et al.*, 1999).

The evaluation of the processes addressed is even more disputed than the question of the reality of what is understood under the term of globalization. The evaluations fluctuate between those which invest globalization not simply with the rank of a “global formula” providing the key for understanding everything that is happening in the world today. The economist Friedmann (1999) even sees it as the only path to prosperity, happiness and peace on earth promising any success. This is opposed by those who see globalization as an “attack on democracy and prosperity”, as a “trap” we are all falling into and which will bring downfall in its wake (Martin & Schumann, 1996).

### **Key points of the subject: youth in the processes of globalization**

I would like to use the following five points to summarize the consequences for this subject which result from these considerations and statements:

1. It is an underestimation and drastic misinterpretation to speak of globalization as a continuation of something already known that has always existed – at the latest, since the discovery of America and the age and forms of colonization, etc. – or when McDonald’s in Hong Kong, Moscow or Cape Town is seen as the most crucial aspect of the process of globalization (and we are talking about processes, not a condition!). That is inadequate: Globalization as the global division of labour in real time – the conquest of space and time, “global real-time processing” (Kernig, 2006: 195) – is a much more central aspect and this, again, is tied to those modern information and communication technologies which have only existed for a few decades – NOT since the discovery of America.<sup>2</sup>
2. In keeping with everything which has been stated so far, it is clear that, when speaking of “the youth” in the age of globalization, or something like that, it can never mean that there is a homogenous, globalized youth, as it were, in the same way that there was a “youth in the industrial era” (but, that is also a characterization added at a later date which can possibly be accepted as a label – but nothing more!). Seeing that globalization is constantly taking on various manifestations and its influence is confronted with the way these various forms and patterns are processed, it is out of the question to speak about globalized youth. The first discussions on the situation of youth in the GDR immediately after the reunification provide a fine example of the misjudgements lurking about. Because it was known that young people in the GDR had already assimilated western popular culture by way of television and other telecommunications media, it was assumed that they had practically anticipated the reunification. Way off the mark! In reality, this proved to be a very partial phenomenon at best (see Schefold & Hornstein, 1993).
3. The fact that globalization takes place on various levels and has differing dimensions has consequences for young people which need to be considered from the very beginning. It is certain that pop-culture, as well as films and products of Internet forms of expression (see the girly band Tokio Hotel) are irrefutably global even where other global developments play no role at all. Therefore, participation in global developments and globalization processes occurs

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<sup>2</sup> In this connection, it is also important to differentiate that which is understood as globalization from those phenomena and processes which, at first sight, appear related but are actually different from globalization; these include international comparative analyses and views; these can have nothing at all to do with globalization; the same applies to the whole field of migration; globalization processes are completely different from migration processes; culture shock is also not the same as globalization.

area-specific and dimension-specific. Those excluded and a bit out of the way can get in on the act through the media.

4. The following also applies for the area of youth and youth politics: Globalization is never a one-directional process; it does not sweep everything local out of its path but creates special amalgamations with the local and national (Münch, 1998). This is expressed by the neologism “glocal” and, even if this word appears not to have asserted itself (thank heaven for that; we have enough artificial words of this ilk), it does explain what is meant.
5. *The political dimension*: Globalization is a process which is principally driven forward by the dynamism of economic interests and power. It is inadequately accessible to political structuring, shows only limited commitment to – and distrust of – social problems and justice. Seeing that globalization is principally a result of economic dynamism, this leads to the dynamism of competitiveness assuming the highest position hereby creating a kind of logic; this is particularly evident in the changed logic of education politics. On the other hand, it is politics which makes all of this possible: globalization is not a political programme in this sense even though it also developed through the political programmes following the Second World War. The stations of these politics are well known:  
1944 – The Bretton Woods Conference which led to the foundation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.  
1974 – The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).  
1995 – The World Trade Organization (WTO) as the successor organization to GATT.

In this regard, the fact that the institutions which were developed during this process have been confronted with a progressive loss of importance faced with the dynamism of global process is noteworthy; this is particularly clear in the case of India and China whose actual economic power is not adequately reflected in these bodies.

The problems (and the hidden pitfalls) can be clearly seen in a comparison with the European process of unification. A political goal – with a process targeted towards achieving this goal – is the concept behind the EU process. This creates a political context within which research can take place, define its goals and scrutinize them. It can make a contribution to this by examining the stipulations for the realization of these political goals, describing the actual achievements, noting deficits, etc.

There is nothing like this in the context of globalization: postulations such as the demand for a “globalization with a human and social character” are not a framework for scientific research.

Among other things, this means that social science research must develop its own political framework, as it were.

## **2. Topics and Questions: Globalization as a Frame of Reference**

The basic thesis and perspective of the following chapter is that globalization processes create new, non-traditional constellations, frames of reference, contexts for the processes of socialization and the social positioning of the upcoming generation and, therefore, at the same time, for the process of generation change which – and this has to be mentioned (at least in parenthesis) – on the other hand, represents a substantial element of social change.

From the outset, it is necessary to consider that globalization affects the individual countries and regions of the world differently: by becoming a radically effective factor of economic, social and cultural development or by excluding regions and entire countries from this process and – from the point of view of world politics – condemning them to a marginal existence.

But even where globalization has an effect, it does not act without boundaries but in specific mixing ratios of regional, local, national and global classification factors. Seeing that this assumption, based on the idea that globalization processes change the framework and, thereby, the development of integration for the upcoming generation in society, has a certain plausibility, it seems appropriate to

make the question of how this issue continues to be present in youth research programmes, at least in individual cases as a subject of investigation (see Hornstein, 2001).

First of all, it is necessary to discuss the limitations: there is no research in the indicated area; initially, one can only undertake a first attempt at identifying the problems and issues which are making themselves felt to be investigated. There can be no discussion of already existing enough in-depth research in this field.

This assumes that it is necessary to make a decision, based on criteria of relevance, on those topics and issues which are important and to examine the concepts and theoretical perspectives which were implemented in the, previously national, investigations and to which extent – and how – it is necessary to expand, replace or adapt them to include the dimension of globalization which must now be introduced.

Renate Nestvogel presented one example for this kind of procedure – at least in dealing with the question of how changes in the socialization conditions which result from globalization processes can be the subject of analysis (Nestvogel, 2000). She followed a quite similar approach to that proposed here and her example can also serve to make a better evaluation of the chances of success and examine the plausibility which speaks in favour of the procedure.

Renate Nestvogel suggests adding a fifth level to the four-level Gueulen and Hurrelmann model – that of the “global system” to the levels of the individual, interaction, institutions and, finally, “society” (which I consider an unfortunate expression, if this is understood as unity, unambiguity, etc.) – in order to do justice to the reality of globalization in socialization research.

Here, it must be taken into account that, under present conditions, socialization-relevant factors result from the “global system level”, which transcend national-social influences.

However, it must be made clear immediately that these do not have the same effect, but are completely different, depending on regional, socio-structural and national influences; they result in marginalizing processes, produce new weightings between individual locations and regions, etc. (For example: Indian cultures in the USA and Central and South America; it also has something to do with intercultural relationships in European societies).

In a manner of speaking, this leads to the challenge of being able to understand and describe socialization as a process taking place under the auspices of the global system. Secondly, this results in the necessity of extending the socialization models and corresponding terminology so far used in the investigation of socialization processes to include the dimension which has now become the focus of our attention and possibly even replacing them!

This leads to the following tasks for a project revolving around the subject of “youth”:

*Firstly*, the point is to establish the “global level” (I think that I will stick to the globalization term – principally, because it indicates a process and not a stationary condition; globalization is essentially a process!) as the relevant level for youth research going beyond the (usually national) society level. Of course, the international aspect previously played a role – in the sense of a comparison between nations – in connection with the migration problem. However, it is obvious that this does not address the process of globalization.

*Secondly*, it is necessary to investigate and – if necessary – expand the terminology and concepts used in connection with the theory of youth studies, which are basically national (such as, youth as a potential for mutation, youth as a moratorium, the concept of youth culture<sup>3</sup>, the role of age-homogeneous groups in youth culture, etc.).

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<sup>3</sup> The anthology *Globale Jugend und Jugendkulturen. Aufwachsen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Global Youth and Youth Cultures. Growing Up in the Age of Globalization) by Dirk Villányi, Matthias D. Witte and Uwe Sander did not

This would lead to a discourse on theory and research which would be suitable for opening up the limitations which are inherent in the standard, nationally orientated, discourse on youth for a new discussion, linked to globalization and reacting with the appropriate research activities.

### **3. Social Intercourse and the Political Appropriation of Youth in the Context of Globalization**

One additional principal area of research results from the question on the manner of social intercourse with the upcoming generation and the way youth is made use of by the adult society in the age and context of globalization. Here, it is necessary to analyze and to discuss the following:

*Firstly*, which are the national societal forms of interaction with young people and which are the forms of political organization and structure of youth, that receive a new framework, a new frame of reference, through the globalization processes taking place? These questions should be the subject of research – and, once again, here not as a general magnitude of influence acting universally in the same direction but, according to the position in the globalization process, varying according to the pattern of globalization. If the activities of international organizations such as the United Nations are drawn into connection with globalization, the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and its effects on and in youth politics in Germany, as an example and case study, can serve as an illustration of these circumstances from which many aspects could be studied.

*Secondly*, no matter how “political” is defined and no matter how political processes manifest themselves – it is beneficial and rewarding in all cases to pose the question how procedures, through which social politics function, are transformed into subjects of political programmes and solutions and how these procedures are altered in connection with the way globalization processes affect generational changes. This is important on the national as well as transnational level (see Hornstein, 2001; 2007, for information on the fundamental problems of youth politics in the age of globalization).

*Thirdly*, in the sign, and as a consequence of, deregulation and liberalization, the capitalist market economy has liberated itself, to a large degree, from national, social and political relationships in a way “that national political protagonists have no interlocutors for their democratically formed interests in the economic sphere” (see Hübner, 1998: 354).

At the same time, we all know that social and political players are not heavyweights in the globalization process – and the consequences of this are, that we are far away from having a kind of global domestic policy based on social justice and peace as an addressee for our research. Criticism of this radical vacuum has brought the opponents of globalization onto the streets and, recently, to Genova, Barcelona and Heiligendamm.<sup>4</sup> Only when this dimension becomes a component of “global politics” will there be a chance for a global policy having the possibility of setting the goals which should be followed by politics targeted on social justice.

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appear until after this manuscript was completed. With its contributions, the volume gives an insight into the manifold aspects and research questions which result for youth and (stressed in the volume) youth cultures under the influence of globalization. Therefore, the statement in the text that there is almost no research in this field needs to be, at least, modestly qualified. The article by Roth (2002) is also relevant.

<sup>4</sup> Places in which 6-8-Meetings were run.

#### **4. Results and Perspectives: On the Sense, Function and Goals of Research in Connection with Youth and Youth Politics under the Conditions of Globalization**

Speaking emphatically – and a little bit arrogantly – the research and discussions proposed here could add a *new dimension* going beyond the customary discourse on globalization.

To close, I would like to draw attention to two research topics and areas – as examples for many others – which I feel to be particularly important in this regard:

The first, with a plethora of questions, is concerned with the connection between generation succession and social change in times of globalization – the question of how the process of social and generation change is being reshaped, confronted with the pressures and opportunities resulting from globalization and, in the context of the changes in subject modelling connected with this – not merely when dealing with young people but also the relationship between the generations. The question of the “globalized person”, and what this means for the future of society, is the notion behind this (see the literature by Rifkin, 2000; Sennet, 1998; Koch, 1995; and others).

There can be no doubt that there is at least the tendency for globalization to create new mentalities which, however, can not be brought down to a common denominator. An open, not nationally orientated, form of identity could typify one new character; new, stronger forms of prejudice, with ethnic rejection could be another variant. On the other hand, this also depends on what globalization means in the concrete case and how it is perceived – as a threat or opportunity! Here, we are also dealing with the question of how globalization interacts with other processes, such as the transformation of work, “embedding” (Giddens) and the demands and forms of communication of the knowledge society.

In this connection (of globalization), there are good reasons for dealing with the age structure of societies, the role and function of the upcoming generation and, in particular, with the interaction and “battles” between the different age groups. Gunnar Heinsohn (2003) was certainly exaggerating – but it was still pertinent – when he demonstrated the connection between male descendants and terrorism. Kaufmann (2005) went to the other extreme when he made the “lack of offspring”, as a result of the continuously sinking birth rate, as well as the consequences of this process and the measures taken against this development, the subject of his analysis.

On one hand, the influence of globalization processes (which are always effective with attendant factors) and, on the other hand, the effects of the population composition and ratios, as well as the relationship between the generations and age groups, on globalization processes should become the subject of research.

In a certain sense, understanding the condition of the global population and its reproduction and who has which problems in this respect – and the possible importance and consequences of this – is part of the “global knowledge” of the globalized world. The question then arises of how, for example, the two demographically extreme situations – namely, the “lack of offspring” (applies to Germany), on the one hand, and “overpopulation” (India) – on the other hand, have an effect in the global context and area of competition. This then leads to the question about political control on the national and global levels. Here, it is necessary to once again draw attention to a previously mentioned problem; that a political structure, capable of implementing the findings and insights of the kind discussed here on the global level, is lacking.

In my opinion, there can be no talk about a “global domestic policy” eager and lying in a waiting position to take advantage of the results of this kind of research; this is different to research in the EU/EC zone, where politics are also not so keen, but where there is a kind of politics which *could* be waiting – if it *did happen*.

There can be no discussion, when dealing with globalization – in his case, the occasional talk about global domestic policy, global politics, etc. (Beck *et al.*) – that the issue has too little political social reality. But, there is also the question of whether the gigantism of the world organizations is absolutely necessary! The question is whether globalization itself could not improve the chances of liberating fixed opinions, seeking and finding new solutions for problems by integrating an increasing number of people into global communication, more than would be possible in a bureaucratic, statically organized large-scale organization. Of course, this takes it for granted that greater participation also leads to better solutions. If this were to happen, we would be justified in hoping that globalization is not only something unavoidable, rolling over our heads, but also an opportunity.





## **CONTINUE THE PATHWAY TOWARDS RECOGNITION: RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN THE YOUTH FIELD: THE POINT OF VIEW OF RESEARCHERS \***

*Lynne Chisholm*

This workshop is being held under the title 'Continue the *pathway* towards recognition', but I would like to begin by saying that I would always prefer the plural, that is 'pathways'. I asked myself whether perhaps the singular was used in the title to suggest that it is important that people work together to move forward on achieving specific aims, so that energies are not dissipated by going off in different directions. On the other hand we also know very well that there is more than one pathway to recognition – a phrase which you can approach at different levels and in different dimensions. I would prefer to say that there are several relevant pathways; we have to identify them and to work in a coordinated way to pursue them in coherent ways, each contributing from our own corners.

What follows is not the 'Ten Commandments', but two sets of five points that I would like to make. The first five points are of a general nature, in response to the task of giving the point of view of researchers. The second five points are areas of action that may be worth considering in continuing the pathway towards recognition.

In brief digression at the outset, I am sorry to say that I shall be unable to stay for the whole workshop: formal educational institutions and those who work and study in them cannot always be as flexible as we might ideally wish, so that it is extremely difficult to re-arrange one's term-time lecturing schedule once the semester has begun. The main reason for this is because today's university students cannot easily change their daily and weekly time schedules – at least this is so for those studying educational sciences (who will become, or already are, community education workers, youth workers, counsellors, educational administrators and similar). Many of our students take up degree studies in education after having several years work experience, either in educational and social fields or in quite different fields of work; some of them will already have begun degree studies in another subject, some will have completed a degree in a different field altogether. For a range of reasons they will have decided somewhere in the middle of their lives that they want to change their occupation, or perhaps to begin a serious career for the first time. So, many of our students are older than average and many have to juggle family, employment and studies all at once. But those who are younger and do not have family responsibilities are still very likely to have to earn money to finance their studies. Our students' lives are busy and complicated; when they have organised their course schedule for the semester, they usually find it very difficult to shift pieces around if their professor has to go somewhere else at the time when the course is usually held.

I mention all this because it is indicative of what it means to be a young adult today – being young does not stop when you reach the age of majority at 18, after all, which is one reason researchers have begun to use the term 'young adults' to signify a period of life that stretches across 'youth' and 'adulthood'. Juggling with many unknowns, contingencies and incoherencies is a complex game – constructing a life that puts all the pieces together, at least provisionally, is a major challenge. This has consequences for what young people experience and learn as they are growing into young adulthood – and it therefore has consequences for what young people need to learn and to be able to do in order to construct and manage a life in a very complex society. We should be thinking about the exploding discussions on competence and competences, both as a concept and as lists drawn up by experts and

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policymakers, from this point of view – from the perspective of the real-life conditions in which young people are positioned and with which they must negotiate and come to terms, hopefully positively and creatively.

## **Take five: researchers' point of view**

### **1. Who are the researchers in the first place?**

The request to contribute with the researchers' point of view made me feel rather helpless, because I am not sure who the researchers would be or whose point of view I am supposed to be expressing. I certainly do not know of any collective view of what researchers might think, so I can only really say what I think, which might provide some clues, having worked with lots of other researchers for many years. To be honest, the best answer I can offer with respect to researchers' point of view on the recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field is to reply: 'I draw a blank'. There is no clear group of researchers who address themselves to this issue. There are individual researchers working in many different disciplines in many different kinds of institutions with many different kinds of interests. Sometimes those things all come together, but most of the time they do not. You could surmise that this is an inevitable characteristic of any specialist field as it develops – it takes time to differentiate out into definable thematic sub-fields – as, for example, in the case of European youth research, whose first twenty years or so have been spent establishing the field as such. On the other hand, one would have thought that by now, the topic of non-formal learning would have become a distinct thematic specialism within youth research, rather than just a few individuals who are involved with the topic, but not necessarily as the main focus of their research and writing.

On reflection, I think one reason could be that few youth researchers are specialists in educational science; the majority come from sociology, social psychology and political science – this is also true for me, I am a sociologist who has always worked in education, but in fact most sociology of education is about *formal* education and training settings, processes and outcomes. On the whole, few youth researchers are centrally interested in educational questions at all, so very few are likely to place non-formal learning at the centre of their activities.

It has also proven very difficult to recruit young and upcoming researchers to specialise in this field, because it does not deliver the opportunities and rewards they need to build an academic career. For example, the SCI (Science Citation Index) is becoming an increasingly powerful indicator for evaluating where researchers stand in relation to each other – it provides a 'points system' for publications in specific peer-reviewed journals according to their (apparent) professional prestige, as adjudicated by senior academics. It is not relevant in all disciplines, but it is very important in some (such as psychology) and it is increasingly used in universities and ministries to evaluate individual and institutional performance and quality. These kinds of indicators can make a real difference to whether someone is able to get and keep a job or not – most young researchers are on temporary contracts and must ensure they fulfil a set of formal expectations, typically in competition with their peers, in order to stay in the game. To put it simply and clearly: a journal like *Coyote* is not even on the list of SCI-reputable journals – but nor are the peer-reviewed youth research journals that are the main orientation points for European youth research, whereas a publication with the Council of Europe or the European Commission may count amongst the real specialists, but is meaningless for most standard research assessment exercises, whether individual or institutional.

In effect, young youth researchers who invest in and engage with the field are unlikely to receive professional rewards for doing so; this is a demotivation to stay in the field. In a feasibility study I undertook last year for the youth affairs department of the Austrian Ministry for Health, Family and Youth, analysis of the authorship of reports and articles showed that most people had contributed to only one or two research or writing projects and had then disappeared from the youth research field altogether. My hypothesis is that the situation is similar in most, if not all countries in Europe. With the lack of a clear and stable reference group, with the lack of rewards and prospects, it is difficult to establish a stable professional community of belonging and identity – except amongst those who are already well-established and do not have to worry about the SCI or the next month's income.

If I reflect on the four years that have passed since the first 'Pathways' document, then it is quite correct to identify an enormous dynamism, so much so that it is fully justified to ask whether things are happening so quickly that there is hardly time to digest and understand what is happening and what should now happen. The statement is correct with respect to policy and practice in the field of non-formal learning and its recognition. It is incorrect with respect to research into non-formal learning and its recognition. Little serious research has taken place and no coordinated research as taken place. The immediate reason is that there is little dedicated funding to do so, but the more important point is to ask why the priority attached to this topic is so low that little funding is made available. What lies behind the fact that there is little concern to establish a credible evidence base?

## **2. What is it we want to know about?**

To achieve greater recognition for non-formal learning, the first step has to be that one knows the nature of the beast, that is, what it is that requires greater recognition. What is non-formal learning? Recent years have seen considerable progress in constructing definitions of non-formal learning, but we still know very little about non-formal learning processes, that is, what actually happens in non-formal learning settings. Do we really know what we are looking for?

When we begin to study strange cultures, we understand very little of what happens, why it happens and what it means; with time, we begin to understand, to decode the images, the words, the episodes, the ways of doing things. This all takes time, and there are no short-cuts; one can turn to insiders to ask for help and explanations, but as often as not they will scratch their heads and reply that they do not really know, they have never thought about what this or that means and why they do things this way. Understanding non-formal learning is like discovering and exploring a strange culture, in this case, a half-submerged culture of teaching/training and learning that exists both inside and alongside the mainstream of formal education and training. Learning about non-formal learning requires time, systematic application and conceptual analysis – these are, in other words, research-based activities that can produce a knowledge-base, which can then be exchanged and shared with others and can contribute to building a collective knowledge-base about non-formal learning as a distinct category of goal-directed human and social activity.

There will always be someone who is interested to invest time and effort into gaining a particular kind of knowledge, and this is valuable in itself. But the lone non-formal learning researcher is unlikely to be able to produce a knowledge-base of sufficient weight to carry the whole field forward. For non-formal learning to act as a thematic magnet that attracts a large number of researchers, it has to be seen as an important and valuable topic – something that everyone wants to know more about, that is useful to know about, that there are good reasons for knowing about. Until now, this has not been the case, though the development of National Qualification Frameworks in the EU Member States may raise the value attached to understanding both non-formal and informal learning. These frameworks are intended to establish sets of equivalences on the basis of the nature and quality of learning outcomes, whereby the ways in which specific kinds of knowledge and competences have been acquired are not the main factor. The frameworks are also intended to improve the variety and accessibility of pathways and progression through the sectors and levels of education and training systems. This all means that knowing the 'what, how and why' of non-formal and informal learning is becoming more important in the sense of their integration into a broad-based system of recognising learning outcomes.

## **3. The need for a conceptual and theoretical knowledge base**

In our societies, valued and recognised bodies of knowledge display explicit conceptual and theoretical qualities. To some extent, this is a purely normative expectation, that is, knowledge that is tacit and (presents itself as) practical is simply less highly valued, even though it may well be equally as important and useful as codified and theoretical knowledge. However, it can be argued that all knowledge must necessarily encompass conceptual and theoretical qualities, though these may be developed and expressed in different ways, and may remain highly implicit, as in the case of knowing how to act in the everyday.

The field of non-formal learning does not display a strong and explicit conceptual and theoretical base; in contrast, it overflows with an abundance of localised and practical knowledge. This means that the field in itself faces a recognition problem in the research world, whose trading currency is the development and exchange of explicit, codified knowledge. Those researchers who have addressed themselves to the topic of non-formal learning in the youth sector therefore call on concepts and theories that derive from other specialist areas. The concepts of tacit, implicit and hidden curricula and knowledge derive from workplace learning and from theories of the production and reproduction of (school) knowledge in the sociology of education. Concepts of competence and skill derive from psychological learning theories and from theories of labour process and capital formation. The popular concept of communities of practice derives from cultural anthropological approaches to social learning theories, whereas concepts of innovation and expertise were largely developed in management studies and organisational science.

Indeed, key concepts like these are highly contested, that is, there is little consensus over their definition and implications, not only between disciplines but also within them. Educational scientists, for example, take sharply diverging positions on the meaning and significance of competence. Many who work within a humanistic tradition of educational studies decry the term altogether as a highly mechanistic notion that undermines the essential meaning of education as personal and social development. Such researchers would not be in the least interested in looking at how non-formal learning contributes to (any kind of) competence development amongst young people. The blindness is mutual, however: most people working in the youth sector have heard of John Dewey's pioneering work in establishing a conceptual and theoretical basis for the philosophy and practice of progressive education in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, we are more likely to use the term critical pedagogy, which derives from contemporary theories of resistance and change in education – yet I have never seen the work of writers such as Michael Apple, Stanley Aronowitz or Henry Giroux cited in the youth sector with respect to non-formal learning, though they (and many others) have made key contributions to modern educational science.

Non-formal learning in the youth sector is a field that has long since begun to borrow concepts and theories that were developed in other contexts for other purposes, but which has not seriously begun to weld these together and adapt them for its own context and its own purposes. It is also a field that has restricted its vision with respect to where relevant and useful concepts and theories can be found and re-tooled. The time has come to realise that conceptual and theoretical development *inside the field itself* is essential for the field's capacity to improve the quality and reach of its work. It is also the means by which the field can establish its own legitimacy within the broader field of education and training with which it is rapidly developing closer links. Without solid research-based knowledge, which by its nature must entail conceptual and theoretical development, it will remain difficult to achieve greater recognition of non-formal learning in the youth sector.

#### **4. Research and practice**

In the past five years or so we have seen the rapid development of a series of portfolio-type instruments for documenting and presenting non-formal and informal learning participation and outcomes, not least those supported through the European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Partnership and the development of Europass as a differentiated set of components for use throughout Europe. Gradually these instruments are becoming better known and more widely used (although it never fails to surprise me how few of my own students have ever heard of them). At the same time, we know very little about how these instruments are really being used in the everyday, and we know nothing at all about how the different instruments measure up to one another in terms of their respective relevance and effectiveness. In order to know more, targeted systematic studies are mandatory; only then can we begin to understand how best to use and improve these instruments in everyday practice.

Evaluation studies of examples of non-formal educational practice are becoming more widespread, if only because EU programmes increasingly require monitoring and evaluation not only on a summative but also on a formative basis. The ATTE study (the report is available via the Youth Partnership

website) is probably the largest and best-known example to date in the youth sector. In educational practice, professional development and quality improvement typically occurs through learning from concrete experiences and examples, resulting in transferable knowledge and competence that can be adapted and applied to new situations and problems. Building up research knowledge typically works in a similar way: individual studies provide examples, which are accumulated into sets of examples from a range of studies, from which potentially transferable interpretations and abstractions are drawn.

The problem in the field of non-formal learning is that we have little accumulation of examples: few studies take place and they do not 'speak' with each other in an active community of research-based discourse. It is the accumulation of examples and their reflection within a scientific community that drives conceptual development and analysis at a level beyond that of the individual thinker or context. In order to strengthen the theoretical foundations of non-formal learning in the youth sector, we need more hands-on examples that are documented and interpreted through research-based monitoring and evaluation studies.

## **5. Evidence-based policy and action**

Subscribing to the importance of evidence-based policymaking and professional action is virtually an article of faith in expert circles at European and, increasingly, national levels. One wonders how policy and action could ever have proceeded without evidence, but what the phrase actually means is that systematic, empirically grounded and (within the limits of what is epistemologically possible) objective knowledge should underlie the formulation of (in this case) social and educational principles, measures and practices. There are, of course, other categories of evidence, not least those founded in extant values, norms and beliefs. Quite apart from the debate over whether science (including natural science) is or can ever be genuinely value-neutral, it has to be said that research-based evidence does not ultimately replace decision-making. It can only provide a range of more or less well founded information and insight that lends a rational basis for deciding what to do and how best to do it.

Good quality research-based knowledge is most useful for policy and action when it comprehensively describes and documents situations, processes and outcomes; and when it is able to demonstrate conclusively what is *not* the case and what does *not* work. Research-based knowledge operates through negation, not through confirmation, so it is not necessarily a clear and reliable guide for decision-making, which must focus on knowing how best to respond to given problems and issues. Nevertheless, if research-based knowledge can draw accurate maps and indicate where the crevasses are located, this is actually quite useful for those trying to find their way. The basic point is that evidence-based policy and action requires, above all, evidence, and collecting evidence to draw the maps requires exploration and discovery, that is, research. And as a rule, research requires resources.

Non-formal learning is only one topic amongst many in educational research generally, and in general educational research does not attract large proportions of science budgets, neither at national nor at European level. Research funding at EU level for the humanities and social sciences was first introduced in the mid-1990s, which means that this was the point at which educational research could, in principle, have received funding, with the exception of isolated studies for particular purposes that had been commissioned in preceding years in connection with specific education and training policy questions (such as Erasmus student mobility or transitions between school and work).

The new EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme (FP7), which runs from 2007 – 2013, has a total budget of 50,5b€, which represents a large increase over the previous FP6 budget of 17,5b€. The largest action line under FP7 is 'Cooperation', which has a total budget of 32,5b€; it is the action under which multilateral (transnational) research projects can be funded. The Cooperation action covers ten thematic research fields, one of which is for research in the humanities and social sciences. This field has been allocated 623m€ for the seven years of the FP7, which represents just 1,9% of the total Cooperation action budget – and of course a miniscule proportion of the total FP7 budget. The 2008 Work Programme for the humanities and social sciences thematic field runs to 61 narrowly-typed pages; these pages contain a total of just 18 mentions of the words education, training or lifelong

learning. None of these mentions occur in a sub-theme title or specific topic; the words all appear in the middle of paragraphs of text whose specific focus lies elsewhere. It is clear that educational research plays a very marginal role in FP7, and this will not change unless there is a radical shift in thematic priorities.

Analysis of the place of educational research in previous EU framework programmes since the mid-1990s shows that in general, about 10% of the available funding for the humanities and social sciences went to projects that could, on a broad definition, be categorised as educational research. To my knowledge, no FP project has ever been funded that has focused on non-formal learning, with the partial exception of one project under FP6 that was concerned with the biographical development of active participation and associated non-formal learning amongst adults. But this is undoubtedly also due to the fact that few applications for research projects on non-formal learning have ever been submitted, as well as there having been little explicit emphasis given to this topic in the annual work programmes to which potential project applicants orient themselves.

Against this rather dismal picture, it should be added in more positive terms that the new EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which also runs for the period 2007 – 2013, will extend the opportunities for accessing funding for applied and policy-relevant research in education and training, both under the specific actions themselves and through the transversal and complementary measures, which also enable studies to be carried out across education and training sectors. It remains to be seen how these opportunities will be used by those working in the non-formal research field, most particularly in the youth sector. This brings me to the issue of what we should think about doing in coming years.

*One interim remark as a preface to the second five points:* Many of the issues that are being discussed in a routine way at this workshop and which are taken as matters of consensus amongst researchers, policymakers and practitioners would not have been so only a decade ago. It is very important to keep this in the back of our minds. Significant changes in perspectives have certainly taken place, but in the day-to-day the changes are imperceptible; only those who have been working in the field for a very long time can register the extent of change and development that has taken place in these past fifteen years or so.

## **Take five again: continuing the pathway to recognition – action points**

### **1. Conceptual and theoretical development**

As pointed out earlier, conceptual and theoretical development is essential for strengthening the capacity and the recognition of non-formal learning as a field of research and practice. Significant development requires a critical mass of information and reflection; a coordinated applied research programme, anchored in the 'magic triangle' between research, policy and practice, could deliver that critical mass. This is the route towards the consistent exchange and accumulation that the field needs to build up a solid raft of specialist knowledge that can carry high-quality evidence-driven policymaking. Clearly such a programme must pay attention to designing and conducting policy-relevant research (and this is distinct from policy-driven research, which leaves little room for critique and innovation). It is likely to have to assemble its funding from a variety of sources, but the important strategic point is consciously to design a coordinated programme of studies that relate to each other.

### **2. Exchange and cooperation across sectors**

Those working in non-formal and informal learning in research, policy and practice must not only communicate more amongst themselves, but also much more across education and training sectors. This means strengthening exchange and cooperation between different kinds of formal, non-formal and informal learning settings that serve different groups of people – that is, for example, not only young people. This is necessary not only to develop the knowledge base, but equally to dismantle the continuing barriers of ignorance and prejudice between formal and non-formal/informal communities of practice. Communication across boundaries encourages the discovery of commonalities and complementarities, as well as lending impulse to critical reflection and quality improvement in all kinds of learning contexts.

Work placements and exchanges, job shadowing, joint professional development courses, shared curriculum development projects and similar activities are by no means unusual proposals in themselves, but it remains unusual for these activities to take place across occupations, sectors and settings. The EU LLP certainly offers ways of organising and funding such initiatives, and there is no reason why educators and trainers in the non-formal youth sector should not apply for and participate in LLP-projects across a whole range of its actions.

The readiest cross-sectoral links for the youth sector would be with adult education, where established perspectives and practices are in fact quite similar, and work-based learning, for which learning processes as embedded in everyday tasks and problems is a central guiding idea. Higher education is probably the most challenging sector with which to establish common understandings, although there are obviously universities that are very progressive and open-minded with respect to access, pedagogy and evaluating learning outcomes. Here we hope that the M.A. in European Youth Studies, which is currently under development (information is available on the Youth Partnership website), will contribute to a breakthrough in the coming five years or so.

### **3. Alliances with other sectors and fields**

Extending the reach of recognition means building alliances and strengthening levels of trust between people working in different sectors of education and training, but also employment; this should be one of the main outcomes: more exchange and cooperation between the respective actors. Employers and Social Partners, agencies that validate and accredit courses and qualifications, university admissions tutors – they all belong to the broader field of relevance for those working in non-formal learning in the youth sector. They are direct gatekeepers to education and training opportunities and to employment and careers, but they are also gatekeepers on the pathway to greater social recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

### **4. Stocktaking of recognition instruments**

It is time to take stock of the nature, purpose and effectiveness of the recognition instruments that have been developed in the past five years or so. What do these instruments aim to achieve and what do they actually achieve? Who uses them and for what purposes? How are their contents understood and interpreted by different categories of users, including young people themselves? Stocktaking is a relational mapping exercise that can suggest future directions for further development and minimises too many isolated re-inventions of the wheel. The aim should now be to consolidate what has been developed so far and to build a recognised body of tried and tested good, holistic learning assessment practice that can stand its ground against fragmented and mechanistic assessment technologies.

### **5. Revitalise quality frameworks**

Quite a lot of pioneering work on defining and characterising quality in non-formal youth education was initiated in the first half of the current decade; after an interlude, interest is rising again, with new links to forge between quality criteria and training methodologies as well as with more complex conceptualisations of learning outcomes. The development of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) together with the (voluntary) development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF; as noted earlier) is strategically of great importance here. It is crucial that the youth sector participates actively in the process of setting up equivalences by clearly specifying and demonstrating the quality of non-formal learning processes and outcomes. We can register a clear shift of perspective at European level, by which what has been learned and how this can be demonstrated are more relevant than where and how the learning has taken place. This works to the advantage of non-formal and informal learning settings. However, the shift is not necessarily taking place at national level in all countries, and for the most part it is certainly not taking place at institutional level. There is clearly a need for a well-designed information and sensitising initiative in the coming two or three years – a very good road show that offers practical workshops and expert training seminars for gatekeepers and multipliers, so that the potential of non-formal and informal learning is well and truly brought home, not only for enriching the quality of life and personal development but also for the range and quality of learning outcomes highly relevant for living and working in contemporary Europe.





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