Emerging Multi-Professional Assemblages of Youth Guidance and Support Producing the Resilient and Future Oriented Citizen

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RESEARCH

Emerging Multi-Professional Assemblages of Precision Guidance Producing the Resilient and Future-Oriented Citizen

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In this paper, we examined how EU-initiated 'integrated approach' to youth social exclusion is manifested in local contexts and in the ways in which youth problems and solutions come to be defined in particular schemes of thought. Inspired by assemblage theory we looked at local multi-professional youth guidance networks as assemblages consisting of multiple organisations, interests, steering, discourses, and knowledge formations. In this article we were especially interested in seeing which 'lines', understood as trajectories of assemblage components, produce both 'problems' and 'solutions' for seemingly complex life situations of young people considered at risk. This article is based on the analysis of interview data produced in the context of an ongoing Academy of Finland project *Interrupting Youth Support Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability* (2017–2021) exploring cross-sectoral policies and practices of youth support systems in the ethos of vulnerability. Based on our analysis, the new assemblages framing multi-professional guidance and support have given rise to more precise neoliberal governing mechanisms that we have named precision guidance. Precision guidance focuses on young people's vulnerability, resilience and future potentiality while leaving societal and structural problems largely unaddressed.

Keywords: Multi-professional actor networks; youth guidance; youth transitions; 'at risk' young people

Tiivistelmä (in Finnish)

Tässä artikkelissa tarkastelemme, miten EU:n ajama 'integroitu lähestymistapa' nuorten syrjäytymisen ehkäisemiseksi, näkyy paikallisissa konteksteissa ja tavoissa, joilla nuorten ongelmat tulevat määritellyiksi tiettyjen ajattelumallien kautta. Soveltaen Deleuzen ja Guattarin inspiroimana teoriaa sommitelmista (engl. assemblage), tarkastelemme paikallisten moniammatillisten nuorten tuki- ja ohjausverkostojen taustalla olevia sommitelmia, jotka koostuvat erilaisista organisaatioista, intresseistä, poliittisesta ohjauksesta, diskursseista ja tiedonmuodostelmista. Tässä artikkelissa olemme erityisen kiinnostuneita tarkastelemaan 'linjoja', jotka jäsennämme sommitelmien eri osista koostuvina samansuuntaisina kehityskulkuina, joissa sekä ongelmia että ratkaisuja tuotetaan 'riskinuoriksi' määriteltyjen nuorten näennäisen monimutkaisiin tilanteisiin. Artikkelissa hyödynnetään haastattelu- ja dokumenttiaineistoa, joka on tuotettu Suomen Akatemian projektissa *Nuorten tukijärjestelmät haavoittuvuuden eetoksessa* (2017–2021). Analyysimme perusteella uudet sommitelmat, jotka kehystävät moniammatillista tukea ja ohjausta ovat avanneet mahdollisuuksia uusille uusliberalistisille täsmähallinnan mekanismeille, jonka olemme nimenneet täsmäohjaukseksi. Sen keskiössä on nuorten haavoittuvuus, resilienssi ja tulevaisuuspotentiaali ja se jättää yhteiskunnalliset ja rakenteelliset ongelmat laajalti huomiotta.

Asiasanat: moniammatillisten toimijoiden verkostot; nuorten ohjaus; nuorten siirtymät; "Vaarassa olevat" nuoret

Introduction

Over the last two decades education, employment and youth policies have paved the way for multi-actor arrangements and inter-professional efforts to govern youth transitions from school to work and to tackle the 'complex problems' faced by young people in transition (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020; Lundahl & Oloffson, 2014; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015). The European Union has been one of the key orchestrators in transforming youth guidance services to networked and hybrid services (e.g., European Commission, 2009, 2018a, 2018c; Määttä, 2019). These policy and funding schemes have supported the establishment of multi-sectoral and public-private partnership, co-operational youth support and guidance mechanisms in Finland and other EU countries (Määttä, 2019).

Recent research on inter-professional collaboration has argued that collaborative and tailored approaches are effective in helping young people with complex and multiple needs (Anvik & Wahldahl, 2018; Helander et al., 2018; McCarter, Maschi, & Morgen, 2014). While focus has largely been on the professional, institutional and societal aspects of these arrangements, there is room for critical inquiries about the kinds of knowledge, interventions and youth subjectivities collaborative approaches support in tackling the problems and barriers young people face in their transitions.

Our research questions are motivated by findings from previous research on youth studies and youth guidance, which have shown that despite the various guidance and support services on offer for young people in school-to-work transitions there are consistent mismatches between the agendas of these support systems and young people's interests. Especially those young people belonging to minority groups or labelled as marginal or vulnerable are faced with challenges in getting their interests and experiences heard (Brunila et al., 2019; Haikkola, 2019; Krinovos, 2019; Masoud, Holm, & Brunila, 2019; Souto, 2020). As we have argued elsewhere, youth support systems have a tendency to position young people as 'vulnerable', psychologically 'abnormal', 'deficient' and prone to 'disaffection' and delinquency (e.g., Brunila et al., 2019).

In this article we continue this problematisation and take a closer look at transnational policies and local actor networks. We shall also examine the emerging knowledge and youth subjectivities these policies and networks mobilise in the context of guidance and support aimed at young people considered 'at risk'. In this article we consider these 'lines' of new and emerging assemblages of power, agency and knowledge in the context of youth transitions (see Brunila & Lundahl, 2020; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015, p. 120).

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage we examined cross-sectoral youth policies and multi-professional actor networks as assemblages in which various professional discourses and social and cultural representations come together (see also Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015). In this article we are especially interested in how both 'problems' and 'solutions' for youth 'at risk' are produced in these assemblages, by mobilising particular expert knowledge, interventions and particular youth subjectivities.

These aims and objectives are organised in the following two research questions: What a) *expert knowledge and interventions* and b) *youth subjectivities* are called upon, normalised, privileged and mobilised while representing both problems in and solutions for 'at risk' young people's life circumstances and their transitions.

Multi-professionality in Youth Guidance and Support

What characterises guidance especially in the Nordic context is that it is rarely a service provided by a single group of professionals but it is always a result of collaboration between several actors (Haug, Hooley, Kettunen, & Thomsen, 2020). Guidance and support as an inter-professional effort is therefore a joint learning and knowledge-sharing activity which is informed and framed by various institutional and organisational interests and profession-specific approaches which the different the actors bring with them (Helander et al., 2018).

Collaboration in the context of youth guidance and support services has been contextualised in various ways, such as multi-agency (Määttä, 2019), transdisciplinary (Helander et al., 2018), networked (Nykänen, Saukkonen, & Vuorinen, 2012) and as a transition machinery (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020). At the core of these various definitions is the idea of inter-professional collaboration, which we understand as a collective approach that incorporates the perspectives of each professional (McCarter et al., 2014, p. 64).

Developing youth guidance services via multi-professional and networked service provision in Finland is not new (Nykänen, Saukkonen, & Vuorinen, 2012; Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). Multi-professional student guidance and support has a long history within the Finnish education system, dating back to the 1970s. All educational actors such as teachers, special education teachers, career counsellors, school nurses, school social workers and school psychologists must participate in the multi-professional welfare work in comprehensive and general upper secondary education (Student Welfare Act 1287/2013). Followed by Youth Guarantee initiatives, outreach youth work has become more closely involved with the student welfare

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multi-professional network in schools (Savolainen, Virnes, Hilpinen, & Palola, 2015). In the context of public employment services (PES), multi-professional collaboration takes place through the Multisectoral Joint Service for Enhancing Employment, which is an operational model involving PES, municipalities and the National Social Insurance Institution in co-operation, in order to help people facing multiple challenges to find a path towards work (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020, p. 135). Among the newest arenas for multi-actor guidance services for young people in Finland are One-Stop Guidance Centres, which have been developed following both EU-initiated youth policy strategies and national strategies for lifelong guidance (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). The centres work trans-professionally with private, public and third sector actors involved with issues concerning employment, education, social work, youth work and health (Kettunen & Felt, 2020).

The multi-professional 'turn' in youth guidance and support has occurred hand in hand with neoliberal Nordic welfare state reforms. The effects of neoliberalisation on social, youth and career guidance services has attracted criticism from multiple directions (Healy, 2009; Lohmeyer, 2017; Reid & West, 2011). One commonality across the various professions is the pressure towards deprofessionalisation, which quasi-marketisation, privatisation and projectisation of public services have paved the way for. Guidance and support services built from the 'bottom-up' with public-private-third sector partnerships have reported to have multiple positive effects – but at the same time there are broad local variations in the services offered as well as in the qualifications different professionals have (Helander et al., 2018; Kettunen & Felt, 2020; Määttä, 2019, p. 208). Empirically-based scepticism has been raised about how de-professionalisation might lead to the deterioration of a critical and emancipatory part of the work, integral to various academically-grounded professions such as teaching, youth work, social work and career guidance (Lohmeyer, 2017, p. 1270; Reid & West 2011, p. 399–400; Wallace & Pease, 2011).

In this article, we investigate multi-professional youth guidance and support networks, as well as the policies enhancing these, as emergent products of broader assemblages. We understand assemblage in line with Deleuze and Guattari (1987, fr. agencement), as situational and temporal constellations of different actors, knowledge, discourses and material objects which momentarily gain agency and power in relation to each other. In the context of youth transition, assemblages can be understood as various policy initiatives, discourses, projects and actors which by coming together, form dynamic and productive-governing machinery. As Marcus and Saka (2006, p. 102) invite us to think about assemblage as "a material, structure-like formation, a describable product of emergent social conditions", we deployed the concept to identify something which is an emerging and productive system of relationships in the context of governance of youth transition. As we understand them, assemblages create the conditions that make it possible to both *understand* the challenges young people are considered to face in their assumed/expected transitions, and to *act* on them. These theoretical ideas of the assemblage are connected to a Foucauldian thinking in their productiveness of certain 'truths' or domains knowledge while silencing others. As Rabinow (2014, p. 206) notes, the ways assemblages come together will inevitably make "some things and events possible and others improbable". In the context of 'at risk' youth guidance, the idea of *assemblage* offers a novel theoretical and critical framework and a tool to map and understand the apparently disparate dimensions of various policies, projects, actors and practices that come together as productive entities in the context of youth guidance. Following Rabinow (ibid.), we understand that these are not neutral structures or components but demonstrate the flow of *particular ways* of reproducing both knowledge and practices upon young people to 'support' their transitions. In line with this thinking, we are interested in the productive forces of the lines of the assemblages we investigate. In the next section we will describe in more detail the data as well as the methodological steps taken to answer our research questions.

Data and Methodology

First, this article is informed by research results and cross-sectoral youth policy and youth support systems analyses in an ongoing Academy of Finland project *Interrupting Youth Support Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability* (2017–2021). The project has explored array of cross-sectoral policies and practices of youth support systems in the ethos of vulnerability (e.g., Brunila et al., 2019, 2020). The data produced within the project previously and to be re-analysed include more than 400 interviews with both professionals and young people coming from different backgrounds, primarily outside education and professional life. The dataset also includes policy documents, statistics and media presentations. For this article, we have chosen to use EU-level policy documents concentrating on three major policy programmes which have acted as – according to the EU's 'open coordination method' – guidelines for drawing national policies and framing practices related to NEET or 'at risk' youth in Finland, namely the *Youth Guarantee* (Council of the European Union, 2013), *Youth Employment Initiative* (European Council, 2013) *and the European Youth Strategy* (European Commission,

2018). We have also analysed Finnish project descriptions (data openly accessed from www.eura2014.fi) that have received funding by the European Social Fund during 2014–2020 and were connected to the following themes: *Youth Guarantee* (n = 34) and *Youth Wellbeing and Active Participation* (n = 14).

For the purpose of this article have also re-analysed interviews of various professionals working with young people. The interviews have been conducted during 2014–2018 and they have taken place in South and Eastern Finland and in the context of activities aimed at helping unemployed young people to enter education, training or work. The professional interviews used in this article consist of three group interviews and four individual interviews with 18 professionals from different sectors working with 14–30-year-old young people. The interviewees included: a career counsellor from basic education, career counsellors from vocational secondary education (n = 2), a school social worker, outreach youth workers (n = 2), youth work-shop coaches (n = 4), social workers (n = 2), a psychologist, an employment officer from the employment agency, an employment officer from a public agency combining social work and employment services, and a representative from a criminal sanctions agency and project workers (n = 2). The themes of these semi-structured interviews included one's perceived professional role and position in the regional youth support network and the perceived challenges of both young people and institutions and within the region that made it difficult for young people to enter education and/or work. Group interviews varied between 2–2.5 hours and the individual interviews lasted 60 minutes and 110 minutes respectively. The interviews were audio and video recorded (individual interviews only audio recorded) and the data has been transcribed (241 pages) and anonymised.

Methods of analysis

In this article we have adopted a Foucault-inspired discursive approach as our analytical strategy (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). Foucault refers to discursive practices as *both* symbolic and material practices concerning how knowledge is formed and produced, and what consequences these practices have (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 174). Through a discursive reading, we have attempted to identify the flow of various domains of knowledge and their consequences: what becomes represented as possible, desirable, or impossible or undesirable in both policy and professional discourses in the context of youth 'at risk'. We have incorporated Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage thinking in our analysis by following what we call 'lines', which we understand as the trajectories of different discursive components of the assemblages (Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015, p. 120).

We conducted our discursive reading of the data in three phases; the first phase included analysing policy and project documents with a specified focus on descriptions of problematic, inactive or 'at risk' youth. The analysis focused on two dimensions: 1) What knowledge, expertise and interventions are constructed as relevant and important in guiding and supporting these young people? 2) What un/desirable subjectivi-ties were produced for young people in these documents? The second phase included an analysis of the interview data and identifying themes (n = 65) with the following guiding questions: a) What professional knowledge and expertise did the interviewees identify as important and relevant in helping and support-ing young people considered 'at risk'? b) What subjectivities were constructed as desirable or undesirable for young people in the interviews? In the third phase we combined these two levels of analysis, arriving at three broader categories or 'lines' of assemblage which we named *vulnerability line, life skills line* and *future-orientation line.* Here, the aim was to identify points of connections of policy discourses to the discourses, representations and narratives in local practice contexts where youth 'at risk' were helped.

Results

In the next sections of this article we will further explore how the three 'lines' of assemblages we identified – the vulnerability line, the life skills line and the future-orientation line – produce both problems and solu-tions for youth 'at risk' and what they say about the broader cultural, societal and discursive changes taking place in the context of youth and transitions.

Vulnerability Line

'A key obstacle to engagement and activation of young people in vulnerable situations is related to issues of low trust and low confidence. Offering additional engagement activities such as motiva-tional workshops and psychological/social assistance, as well as more intensive personalised sup-port, are therefore crucial for service providers to be able to reach and activate those facing multiple obstacles.' (European Commission, 2018b, p. 16.)

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We start with what we call a vulnerability line, suggesting certain ways of sense- and reality-making, as well as understanding and interpreting young people and their life circumstances. As a line, vulnerability calls together actors – broadly from the public, private and third sector – with expertise in health, social work and education/employment issues (European Commission, 2018a, b). The vulnerability line in our results enables the mixing together of different approaches, concepts, ideas, interests, affects and expertise through which 'complex' wider structural and social problems become intelligible, recognisable and communicable as therapeutic, psychological and highly individualised and personalised problems (Brunila et al., 2019). Regimes of knowledge mobilised and produced within the vulnerability line were demonstrated in the discussions of the multi-professional actors we interviewed: problems were often framed as 'problems of the mind', such as anxiety, social fears, exhaustion, and depression. Some young people were perceived as being psychologically frailer than others through having 'low self-esteem' or being victims of 'emotional abandonment'.

> Youth worker: 'Young people are vulnerable, fragile and highly sensitive. They need to be handled with care.' (interview 2016)
> Youth worker: 'Young people have so many personal problems. They have low self-esteem, mental health problems, learning problems, attitude problems, all kinds of problems.' (interview 2018)

In our jointly analysed data from the interviews, youth policies and youth support systems' documents, young people were often described as being psycho-emotionally vulnerable. This narrative framed young people as victims of various setbacks and disappointments in their lives. One recurring theme was bullying at school. Instead of considering school bullying a structural, social or cultural problem or an issue of power, it was most often recognised through psychological, therapeutic and individualised vocabulary, as a process of 'wounding' some young people, and hence, endangering their full participation in the society and economy (Lohmeyer, 2017, p. 1270):

> Psychologist: 'That fact of being bullied at school --- it has traumatised many [In the former job] almost always one saw that those who had been excluded from the labour market, there was experiences of school bullying in the background. It seems to make them very vulnerable on the path to full participation in society.' (group interview 2014)

In our interview data, young people's problems were often traced back to unsupportive or emotionally harmful family relations, with parents having problems in their personal relationships, health and/or life management (McLeod, 2012, p. 24). Within the vulnerability line structural problems, such as unemployment and poverty, are recognised but these problems are often psychologised as, for example, parents' insecurities:

> Career counsellor: 'What we have also noticed is the parents' own insecurity, that their own situation, the life situation is such, that there is no job and the income is very meagre. They themselves may have problems of a psychiatric nature, depression, or some other thing. And then they sort of give up. So, there are no resources left to be interested in that young person.' (professional group interview 2014)

The vulnerability line worked by forming a dominant consensual understanding of the need for more and earlier expert interventions on the psycho-emotional vulnerabilities of families and individuals. According to our data, guidance and support interventions – be they individual-, group- or community-based – were not considered to have an impact at a broader level, such as the community or public sphere, but as means of helping the *individual*: as ways of behavioural training or ways to enhance the social and communication skills of the young people.

According to our results, the vulnerability line enhances specific domains of expertise and interventions that are also connected to neuro-biological or neuro-psychiatric-psychological disciplines. In the vulnerability line, the problems of the young people and their families become recognisable, and also 'solvable', through a neuro-psychological diagnosing:

> 'The project offers young people neuro-psychological coaching implemented by a multi-professional team. It is a guidance-based rehabilitation method that complements other public services.

Coaching is aimed at people with specific neuropsychiatric difficulties (ADHD, Asperger, autism spectrum disorder, Tourette, etc.). Neuropsychological coaching tools are applicable and workable for all adolescents with life management challenges, even without a background in neuropsychiatric diagnosis.' (Description of an ESF-funded project targeted at young people between 15–29 years at risk of social exclusion and with life management problems)

Young people's neuro-psychological problems and neuro-psychological coaching has attracted new actors in the field of youth guidance and support, and it has become a popular theme among various training programmes targeted at professionals working in multi-professional guidance and support networks (Brunila, 2012, 2014). When wider problems are psychologised or neurologised, future trajectories seem rather deterministic:

School social worker: 'It is really hard if the child has faced a lot of difficulties from early on. Starting from the time before they were even born and followed by a childhood with stressful times in the family. With these cards laid in your hands it is really challenging to make it at school.' (Professional group interview 2014)

The vulnerability line also calls in professional authorities that have the power to diagnose various problems. The practitioners we interviewed were in consensus that getting a proper diagnosis for young people with mental health problems, learning difficulties or other possible problems of 'the neurological sort' was helpful for solving their problems (Brunila, 2012). According to various project descriptions as well as professional views 'getting diagnosed' was seen as unquestionably soothing and supportive for the young person in helping them to recognise and communicate their special needs for support in education and working contexts. While practitioners in the group interviews were in consensus about threshold being too high for young people with mental health problems to be psychologically or neuropsychiatrically tested there was little critical discussions about the structural and societal issues causing some young people mental problems.

However, among the professionals there was also criticism towards the dominant individualising discourses within the vulnerability line. Professionals' and employees' roles and organisational cultures were seen as important factors in supporting young people's access to education or work. Professionals recognised how typical education institutional environments were not meeting the needs, aspirations and ways of learning of several young people. They discussed about the need to develop and restructure the current educational pathways offered for young people and called for more workplace-based learning. They also saw that there would need to be more flexibility to change one's direction within secondary education. Some emphasised the need to find ways to give educational credits for the work the young people were doing in the youth workshops.

Life-Skills Line

'Life skills are important for all young people but have particular significance and importance for young people at risk and those with fewer opportunities and for their employment needs, social inclusion and democratic participation.' (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 31.)

Another line of assemblage which we identify, partly cross-cutting and overlapping with those of the vulnerability line, is the life-skills line. The life-skills line can be followed from political initiatives to specific funding initiatives and local projects, and it opens up avenues for various actors, activities and expertise around the production of specific knowledge, behaviours and subjectivities. The Council of the European Union (2017, p. 31) identify life skills as: 'positive, affirming and problem solving behaviours used appropriately and responsibly in everyday life'. These skills are needed in various life domains such as 'home, on-line, in the community, in education/training and in the workplace'.

Within the life-skills line young people's problems are connected to a lack of social skills and 'risky behaviour', such as drug use, having personal debt, homelessness and violent behaviour, which, if there is no intervention, may even lead to radicalisation and violent extremism (European Commission, 2017a). Within this line, youth work approaches and expertise are produced as valuable in supporting especially 'at risk' young people to acquire a set of skills and behaviours needed in education and in the labour market (Council of the European Union, 2017; European Commission, 2016b; Nikunen, 2017, p. 671).

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According to the analysis from the interviews and project descriptions, the life-skills line seems to enhance identifying and managing the young people's life challenges as personal motivational or skills challenges and, hence, as matters of learning, training and coaching:

> 'The project aims at strengthening the life skills of young people so that their self-knowledge, social skills, goal-setting skills, ability to make commitments and accomplish things, self-confidence and faith in the future will develop and young people are ready to engage in education or employment and take concrete steps towards active participation in society.' (Goal description of an ESF-funded cross-sectoral project targeted for the 'hard core' of socially excluded young people)

Young people's problems are regarded as lacking the right skills, and therefore, the solution is to practice these with the help of professionals or peers:

> Outreach youth worker: 'In the bigger picture, some youths really have problems with everyday life management and personal life in general. In other words, with some, we start building the day rhythm and that you can leave your home and take care of ordinary things.' (professional group interview 2014)

Professionals saw that young people needed support in learning how to manage everyday life matters such as waking up in the morning, taking care of one's home and wellbeing, visiting an employment office and other bureaus. Money was also seen as an issue for many, either with a low threshold to take on debt or being used to living on social benefits, which was seen as a personal choice:

> Criminal sanctions representative: 'But why are they [young people] content with so little? That always gets me thinking. Why is it not interesting to get a vocation? What motivates that person to apply for social benefits, but not pursue study or education?' (professional group interview 2014)

In the life-skills line parents become responsible for failing in socialising their child into aspiring for what are considered 'normal things' in life. In our interview data, parents were described as lacking resources and being either ignorant or helpless with their child's situation. Parents were seen as neither setting boundaries nor supporting the professionals' efforts in trying to find ways for the young to either stay in school or find other solutions to keep them on track. Instead, they more often represented problematic cultural models such as living on social benefits:

> Career counsellor: 'They [young people] somehow know where you get the money from. The social welfare office is somehow terribly familiar to them, and it just gets me thinking, that it must be a kind of place where they have been accustomed to visiting from an early age.' (professional group interview 2014)

Professionals were critical towards the high skills demands placed on young people in both education and workplaces. For example, apprenticeship training model, one of the work-based training options being offered as a solution in public debates for young people lacking secondary education, attracted criticism. Apprenticeship was seen as too demanding for young people in general, and especially for the target group of 'at risk' youth, mainly because of the high levels of individual management and other skills and resources needed to coordinate the combination of studies and work:

> Psychologist: 'It is even more challenging than normal vocational education. You have to be very self-managing, coping and skilful, to manage a palette like that. It really is not for the young people but it is now aimed as a solution.' (professional group interview 2014)

Concerning more institutional-level solutions, after 2015 in Finland, new one-year preparatory training programmes have been introduced within the Finnish secondary education system, and currently more than 70 vocational institutions are offering training. The aim of these programmes is to strengthen the basic academic and workforce skills of the pupils so that they enter vocational education and obtain career guidance and everyday life practical skills (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018). This kind of training was also seen by the interviewed professionals as a way of helping those youngsters who after starting secondary

education are at risk of dropping out. Additional individual skills-focused courses and training are offered as a public solution. However, what the professionals talked very little about is the role of schools as communities with specific cultures and practices have in engaging young people or pushing some of them out from the educational track.

Future Orientation Line

Within this line, which we have described as the future orientation line, young people's problems and solutions are connected to a lack of a future horizon. The forces and various resources mobilised within this line are fuelled by a neoliberal logic underlining young people's employability and entrepreneurship, in other words their potential as educated, trained and flexible human capital and a workforce which will ensure economic growth (European Commission, 2016a, 2017b; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Within this neoliberal logic, the lack of future orientation becomes problematic as interest in one's future potential is the foundation of various activation, guidance and coaching activities, which are based on and aim to produce entrepreneurial subjectivities (Paju, Näre, Haikkola, & Krivonos, 2020; Mäkinen, 2016). The lack of a future was also problematised by the professionals we interviewed through their observations of young people not having any 'dreams', 'aspirations' or long-term life goals. The lack of future visions was also associated with a lack of trust on account of various setbacks in the past.

> Project worker: 'I think a kind of general hopelessness and lack of future vision are typical of our clients, if one can make any generalisations. It is a lack of vision concerning one's opportunities to become employed, establish a family, and have a quality of living considered normal in society. The generally considered good things to have in life. And with these young people, they often feel that it is not possible for them.' (professional group interview 2014)

Future orientation is to be considered as a responsibilising and individualising regime of thought, within which the problems can be seen as the fault of the young individuals themselves. Young people were accused of not investing in their future, their yet-to-come potential, which is the currency of value-exchange within the capitalist systems of labour and employment (Paju et al., 2020).

> Career counsellor: 'And then one cannot even think further than tomorrow. That somehow you cannot… Is it lack of planning, or something? When you try to think about what are you aiming for in life and what could be that next step? But it's like, no, the next day is the most that we can think about.' (professional group interview 2014)

The future orientation line is cross-cut with that of the vulnerability line and discourses of marginalisation. Professionals' problematisations concerning the lack of 'hopes and dreams' of young people reflect broader normative and political ideals which set imperatives for young people to dream, aspire and stay positive about the future – as they are the makers of the future. In our data, normative future orientation discourse was often adopted without criticism. Conversely, the lack of a future orientation seemed to legitimise the need for therapeutic interventions:

> Social worker: 'I just gave feedback to one girl in grade nine, that she has no dreams. No happy and positive things in life. 'You must be pretty worn out and tired,' I said. And I did recommend her taking part in some psychological sessions and therapeutic conversations.' (professional group interview 2014)

What became clear but was not mentioned explicitly in the interviews is the way the Finnish social benefits system divides up horizons for future action among those who are dependent on these on these benefits. One of the professionals from the employment office sector noted that his task is to make an evaluation about who is 'ready' to plan a future along what can be called the employment or the 'active' line, meaning undertaking fulltime education and/or finding routes to the workforce, and those who are more occupied with health issues and therefore directed to more rehabilitative and therapeutic activities and services:

> Employment officer: 'I work with these kind of issues with young people, so, of course my own role is to bring the employment agency perspective to the client's, the young person's awareness,

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namely the employment and education perspective. And also to set some boundaries if it looks like work or education are not relevant issues for the young person in the near future. But instead, the emphasis is more strongly on health issues, a strong emphasis on that side.' (professional group interview 2014)

In 2013 Finnish employment agencies underwent a major organisational reform with an introduction of three 'service lines' into which clients are now being channelled into either jobseeker/entrepreneurial, training or rehabilitative lines, which all differ in their type of services and support. As Haikkola (2019, p. 344) notes, youth 'activation' in employment office services covers a broad array of attempts to take control of the time and behaviour of young people considered inactive, which happens by assigning young people to *any* available service which is supervised or government-sponsored. While channelling young people into different service lines and activation solutions in accordance with their perceived inactivity, young people's personal plans and aspirations might be overridden (Haikkola, 2019, p. 344).

Borlagdan (2015) has noted that one's socioeconomic position determines the 'employability' of young people, and especially those with less 'right' forms of capital have to manage with high levels of flexibility and innovativeness in the face of 'symbolic violence'. In this way young people positioned as marginal in society are faced with heightened demands for agentic resourcefulness in their transitions to work. This also seems to be the case when talking about the disappearance of jobs, which was recognised by the professionals as a structural problem in the region. Here, training young people to become mobile and autonomous in order to leave the region was represented as the solution:

> Youth support project worker: 'Probably the best service we could do for young people in vocational education is to coach them to leave. There will be no more industrial jobs soon, and the service sector will shrink as they have supported the industrial jobs. What do we want to train these people to do? Probably not to be unemployed. Better to have competencies for internationalisation, or at least for moving south and perhaps to western Finland, where there are jobs.'
> Psychologist: 'And here again differences come up. Those who function well will manage. It's self-evident that they leave and act. And then there is that group which stays here.'
> (professional group interview 2014)

According to our interpretation the above statements resonate with the Finnish and European youth policy landscape, where marginalisation is associated with social and spatial immobility, and where marginalised youth are categorically presented as those who are 'stuck' in their locality (Nikunen, 2017, p. 672).

Lines For What?

The lines of assemblages we have identified here should not be considered to be discrete entities with hierarchical or fixed relations. Our analysis is to be understood more as an attempt to disentangle and map the different productive and forceful enmeshed elements – policies, discourses, representations and narratives that are mobilised in the political, public, practical and local spheres of guidance and support for young people constructed as 'at risk'. We want to underline that the assemblages we have identified here are interrelated. They also divide up and deviate among themselves within various contexts. Their discursive components are entangled and constantly converge with each other.

However, the lines we have identified demonstrate the assembly of particular practices and discourses which make some schemes of thought and subjectivities more possible and desirable than others. Particularly buoyant across all these assemblages is a neoliberal logic. This logic has effectively penetrated various institutional practices with a combination of psychological, therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses and an insistence on young people becoming future-oriented and proactive about the various negative and positive potential futures hold (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020). Here, problems are recognised in terms of individualised and precise expert discourses and as neurobiological, psychological or life management problems. Moreover, solutions are offered through a combination of life and behavioural coaching, therapeutic discussions, cognitive psychology and neurochemical interventions (Brunila & Ylöstalo 2020; Brunila et al., 2019; Wright & McLeod, 2015).

Through the different domains of knowledge mobilised in these assemblages, young people are provided with nothing more than a widened array of discursive practices focusing on self-conduct. With the help of professionals and coaches, they are made responsible for managing a constantly-widening array of personal domains including neurological-biological, mental, physical, social, economic and

practical levels of self-conduct and self-care (Rose, 2006). We call this phenomenon precision guidance, which we identify as one form of the emergence of precision education governance (Brunila et al., 2019).

Conclusion: multi-professional blindness to structural and institutional problems?

In this article we identified several elements of the productive forces that come together and 'flow' in the context of multi-professional guidance and support for young people considered to be 'at risk'. We have not attempted to present a thorough analysis of all the discipline-specific traditions and institutional-specific interests which the various professional actors inevitably also represent and bring to the table in multi-actor networks. However, our analysis demonstrates that despite of institutional and disciplinal differences, shared and dominant ways of understanding the problems and solutions for youth 'at risk' emerge. According to our findings, the neoliberal individualised, psychologised and therapeutic way of identifying problems as deficits of the young person is well on its way in becoming the new, powerful and shared multi-professional language across various professionals working with young people.

This new shared multi-professional language seems to do little to address what Ronald Sultana (2014) recognises as societal and organisational/institutional level problems that shape the opportunities for action for young people. This critical and emancipatory interest is an integral part of several disciplines among professionals who work with youth – such as youth workers, social workers and career guidance counsellors (e.g. Lohmeyer, 2017). The results of our study support and extend on previous studies (Reid & West, 2011; Lohmeyer 2017), demonstrating the effects of neoliberalisation of youth and guidance services and their deprofessionalisation. As Lohmeyer (2017, 1270) states, "the deprofessionalisation effects of neoliberalism reinforces an understanding of young people as incapable, dependant economic citizens in training."

What are we suggesting to counter and unmake these emerging forms of governing youth? The transformation starts from allowing more space for the experiences and narratives which challenge and disrupt the dominant 'truths' and deviate from them. Within the current practices and interventions offered to youth at the margins, there is great potential to give more room for young people's localised and embodied experiences, knowledge and counter-discourses. It now seems that this potential is largely lost, if community or group-based interventions are focused on individual outcomes: improvements of the social skills of young people or building their psycho-emotional courage.

Interventions co-produced in real-life contexts and with the participants and informed by critical social justice tradition can offer fruitful avenues for addressing and acting on the various cultural, social, structural and societal barriers young people face in their life transitions. There is a need to secure spaces for critical reflection for both professionals and young people. Critical reflection can open ways to examine the effects which labelling young individuals or groups and their situations according to dominant 'truth regimes' have, to choose alternative ways. These approaches can raise critical awareness about the broader societal and political structures in which youth transitions take place.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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