The history of youth work in Europe
and its relevance for today's youth work policy

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INTRODUCTION

This report elaborates on the key questions that were raised during the contributions and discussions 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, from 26-29 May 2008. The workshop was a co-organisation between 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 are the historical concepts underpinning youth work? How do they relate to the recurrent youth work paradox, meaning that youth work endeavours to produce active and democratic citizens, while at the same time seems inaccessible to young people who are excluded from active citizenship? Or in other words: youth work that works is not accessible, accessible youth work does not work (Coussée, Roets & Bouverne-De Bie, 2008). Tracing the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions within and between countries can help to initiate a debate on current youth work. A better understanding of historical developments and concepts enables us to investigate youth policies today.

In three introductory presentations the aims of the workshop were clearly stated. Jan Vanhee (Flemish Community) described in his introduction four aims for this workshop: (a) asking attention for and reflecting upon the history of youth work and youth policy, (b) identifying close links between youth work and youth policy, and socio-cultural and historical trends, (c) building an international comparative perspective and (d) 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 by assuring that the following months are crucial for the development of youth policies at European level and that the debates held in this workshop should inspire these discussions and the recognition of youth work at the European level.

In his introduction on "*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 on social problems and institutions. He argued that looking back is a starting point for reflection and provides possibilities to analyse the 'social professions', and conceptions of childhood and youth , as social constructs, by taking a critical position towards prevailing values and continuously co-constructing the conditions for 'becoming human' in a historical, cultural and social context. This creates space for questioning seemingly evident aspects of our practices. This means that the historical approach to youth work and youth policy is interesting in its own right, but even more crucial for the understanding of the profession (Fisher & Dybics, 1999: 117). Youth work has a history of incomplete *professionalisation.* Full professionalisation often means leaving history behind and defining identity according to current criteria. The practice of youth work is then nothing more than the 'outcome of a

professional project' pursued by youth workers (see Harris, 2008). Lorenz outlined the engagement with history as a *two-way open process*: it is an interrogation of the past which inspires us to recognise our subjectivity as a part of our youth work practice, and at the same time it is an examination of the present which inspires an interrogation of our ideal model of youth work practice and policy by discovering pre-assumptions of the so-called right model of youth work and youth work policy. In the process of looking back at history, we also *make history*, posing the interesting question on 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 consequently also inherent to their education and training opportunities.

THE PRESENTATIONS in FIVE MAIN ISSUES

The contributions gathered at these first workshop were embedded in seven different national contexts: Flanders (Louis Vos and Filip Coussée), United Kingdom – England (Bernard Davies), Malta (Miriam Teuma), Germany (Christian Spatscheck), Poland (Marcin Sinczuch), Finland (Helena Helve) and France (Patricia Loncle). The speakers tracked dimensions in the history of youth work and challenged the current and future youth work practices and policies in Europe. To prepare the workshop the book '*A century of youth work policy*' (Coussée, 2008) was provided to the participants.

The presentations and discussions in this workshop can be framed into five main issues.

1. The history of youth work: different approaches and perspectives
2. The identity of youth work: is there a clear youth work identity? Or youth work between distinct activity and contingent practice.
3. The politics and policy of youth work: is youth work an autonomous field? Or who defines the youth work agenda?
4. The pedagogy of youth work: youth work between individual aspirations and social expectations. Or youth work between emancipation and control.
5. The practice of youth work: youth work between lifeworld and system. 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: different approaches and perspectives

Stanford made a distinction between '*history-as-event*' and '*history-as-account*': history-as-event is about the events that happen in the world, whereas history-as-account is about the ordered arrangements of words and ideas that give more or less coherent account of those happenings (Stanford, 1994 in Fisher & Dybicz, 1999: 106). Drawing on this distinction, all of the contributions of this workshop provided us with a lot more than factual knowledge about the history of youth work and youth work policy: the analysis of the histories in the different national contexts 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 which 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 approached as an intervention that directly relates to *the status of youth in society*. Louis Vos (Flanders) and Marcin Sinczuch (Poland) for instance focused on the history of the 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 both perspectives cannot be seen apart from each other. In fact both perspectives featured to a certain degree in all of 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 became also clear how the youth question showed a very ambivalent approach to 'youth'. Interventions were aimed at supporting young people to fulfil a kind of 'ideal youth phase'. Working class youth often stood in the centre of youth work interventions, especially in times of uncertainty. Furthermore the emancipatory potential of youth work was dependent on the social-economical status of youth. In more recent evolutions we can see that the relation between emancipation and youth work certainly also can be coloured by ethnicity. According to Walter Lorenz this is currently 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 practice and policies is about the reproduction of identities or about their continuous transformation based on historical reflection.

The magic triangle

Youth work policy and practice were de-constructed looking from different perspectives. Some analyses started from the perspective of *youth research*, handling the question how youth research helps to construct the youth work practice and policy. Helena Helve pointed at the history of Finnish youth research underpinning youth work and youth policy in Finland.

Some contributors started their analysis from the perspective of *youth work practice*, elaborating on the question how youth work develops in practice and connecting history with how young people and youth workers proceed in their practices. Louis Vos took the perspective of the catholic Flemish student movement. Catholicism was also a central issue in Miriam Teuma's story concerning the evolutions in Maltese youth work practice. Marcin Sinczuch made the connection between ideology and realities in Polish youth work practice visible.

Other analyses started from the perspective of *youth policy (or even politics)*, handling the question how (the history of) policy and politics construct youth work practice. Bernard Davies unveiled 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 which 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' focussing on improving the quality of professional youth work itself.

As for the relation between the youth question and social question it is also clear here that those different perspectives are interwoven with each other. The chosen starting point often refers to the background of the different speakers and to the importance of and relations between policy, research or practice in each 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 evolutions in youth work practice and gradually gave more room to the analysis of the influence of the State and local authorities in France. Christian Spatscheck described youth work in Germany within the characteristic social and political context of different phases in 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 process of progress, characterised by vital changes in the social and pedagogical interventions and in the provisions for young people. The contributions showed *continuities* in the history of youth work, also across the different countries. Although youth work developments in Malta and in the UK show a totally different time span there are many similarities in terms of the influence of the church on youth work and its professionalisation later on. In some countries *discontinuities* are really pronounced due to 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 the informal meeting places, during the Weimar Republic when the youth organisations dominated the youth work landscape, during the Nazi regime when all young people had to attend the Hitler Youth, after the Second World War when the Americans introduced the 'German Youth Activities' and finally in the post-communist period when youth work in the eastern part was abruptly westernised.

2. <u>The identity of youth work: is there a clear youth work identity?</u>

In general participants in the workshop seemed to endorse the fact that youth work suffers an identity crisis (see introductory chapter). This crisis shows itself in different forms and seems to be nurtured by the changing -but always ambivalent- attitudes toward youth work. In the search for coping with this identity crisis, several efforts to look for a definition or description of youth work popped up, trying to explain youth work and get it recognised, and trying to distinguish between youth work and other educational or social work practices. Although all presenters emphasised the changes in youth work, most of them, more or less explicitly, pointed at some key characteristics of youth work through the years. In general we could describe them as follows:

- **being young together**,
- often, but not always, with a shared **ideology or 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. In his definition he incorporated a number of defining core features: **voluntary** attendance, **participation** and self-government by the members are central values and the symbiosis between **recreation and education** as a purpose. Furthermore Davies described youth work as a **personalised practice** focussing on individual needs and the building of **relationships.** Youth work is based on the negotiation with young people in their **friendship groups** (see also Davies, 2005)

Bernard Davies recognised that youth work is a social construct, whose creation needs to be understood in the contexts of the wider political, economical and social conditions in which it developed. Nevertheless, determining a clear definition or concept of youth work seems to be important for the recognition and proving the 'usefulness' of youth work, because due to changing political priorities policymakers are seeking to narrow and even subvert youth work practice. The question was raised if a clear definition helps in deciding 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 Sinczuch called it). Helena Helve (Finland) showed that there was a gap between the purpose of youth work, i.e. social education, and its practice, i.e. recreation. Evidence from other countries make clear that this gap makes youth work very vulnerable for externally imposed definitions, i.e. definitions that do not always take the significance of youth work in the lives of young people as a starting point. Marcin Sinczuch (Poland) did not describe youth work in terms of beliefs and concepts that underpin an ideal model of youth work, but investigated the societal mission that was imposed on youth work. He showed that youth work was often reduced to a instrument of social policy. Polish youth work activities were leisure time oriented, 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 made disappear the mandate in youth work of discussing on structural lines and social function. The 'methodicalisation' hides the youth work mission by focussing on practical and technical questions like how to increase the participation in youth work. By connecting youth work practices with 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 impulse of youth leaders, policymakers and researchers the characteristics of the student movement as described by Louis Vos (Flanders) were in Flanders very soon considered as core youth work features. Being young together and self-education in leisure time were conceptualised as the basis for a youth work method aimed at the smooth integration of all young people in the desired social order. In the German case described by Christian Spatscheck it became also very clear how the 'methodicalisation' depoliticises youth work practice, thus transforming youth work to a weapon for all targets. After the Berlin Wall came down, youth work in the Eastern part of Germany was rapidly westernised, meaning that the methods remained the same, but that the explicit ideological dimension became implicit and thus **unarguable**.

3. The politics and policy of youth work: is youth work an autonomous field?

What is policy? Belgian has had an official youth work policy from 1945 on. For Germany one could choose 1911 as the starting point. There are arguments to start England's youth work policy 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 not any of the speakers did restrict youth work policy to official 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 times participants mentioned the fact that youth work becomes instrumentalised and reframed within powerful economical, political and social forces. The methodicalisation mentioned above however seems to restrict the youth work discussion to an internal discussion and keeps the broader underlying mission out of the picture. This makes youth work a useful weapon for all targets (Dewe and Otto, 1996; Nörber, 2005; Coussée et al., 2008). This raised the question in the workshop to what extent youth work determines its own agenda?

The UK perspective presented by Bernard Davies showed that youth work under the New Labour period focuses on **state-defined targets**, based upon 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 also the **church,** as presented by Martin Sinczuch (Poland), Louis Vos (Flanders), Miriam Teuma (Malta) and Helena Helve (Finland), or the **military**, as presented by Christian Spatscheck (Germany), determines and regulates the youth work agenda. In other countries there was more space left, to a certain extent due to the principle of 'subsidised liberty', for associations working and safeguarding some collective free space, like Patricia Loncle argued in the case of France.

In several countries the determination of the youth work agenda from outside leads to the demand for **measurable outcomes** (even statistically defined targets and target areas). The concrete 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 (youth 'at risk', working class youth, vulnerable youth, ethnic minorities, …).

4. The pedagogy of youth work: between individual aspirations and social expectations.

It is not surprising that the centuries-old pedagogical paradox between **emancipation and control** is discussed a lot during the workshop. Youth work supports the independence and liberation of young people from societal restrictions. At the same time youth work saves young people from moral decline by giving them 'sensible' leisure time opportunities. In all presentations it was shown how this tension was anchored in youth work from the very beginning. Baden-Powell saw youth work 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 from control and discipline to emancipation and liberation. Youth workers are always engaged in both liberatory and disciplinary functions, but in general it seems as if the specific

purpose of youth work inevitably slips down to a force for **social integration.** Unfortunately, it seems less about how young people and youth workers themselves define their interests, concerns and priorities. Youth work is primarily deployed (and appreciated) to facilitate 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 the target group of interventions and their supposed 'emancipatory needs'. Filip Coussée (Flanders) showed that young people's needs are defined according to their distance from middle class standards of autonomy and social integration. And so, ironically, the larger the emancipatory needs, the more controlling the interventions must be. As if we can force young people into emancipation. Spatscheck (Germany) showed that the meaning of the concept of emancipation cannot be disconnected from the societal context. For decades young people have fought for more autonomy. Now autonomy has become a social expectation. Young people are constantly activated to work and act as autonomous individuals. And again it is the same group of young people who is vulnerable to these societal expectations and is confronted with the more controlling sides of these activation policies. Patricia Loncle showed that in France, based on the belief in the state capacity from the sixties on 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' coordinators providing leisure, cultural and sportive 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 the compulsory membership of the Hitler Youth gave young people some freedom, they could escape their mother's wings. Davies (UK), Sinczuch (Poland) and Spatscheck (Germany) illustrated 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 presentations showed that youth work is closely connected to the transformation of 'integration problems' (either from the perspective of the youth question or from the perspective 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 contains civil society, voluntarism pronounced in movements and associations, and plays an important role in youth work practices because it opens up possibilities for cultural reproduction (including counter-culture opportunities) and for taking youth seriously as a driving force in society. 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 serious as a driving force in society, but lifeworld without system can also foster gang subcultures and contains receptacles of discrimination, nationalism, colonialism and racism. A

system perspective is more outcome-focused and can easily lead to authoritarianism, ideological exploitation and the closing down of possibilities for critical examination of living conditions. Therefore lifeworld and system are intertwined: system without lifeworld is unlivable, the same goes for lifeworld without structure.

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 on the topic of the youth movement illustrated this evolution. Vos and Cousssée made a distinction between **youth movement** in a first and youth movement in a second sense. Other participants spoke about **youth association** or **youth organisation.** Bernard Davies highlighted the **youth service** in the UK. Situated in the analytical tension between lifeworld and system it seems that youth associations are at the centre. In the attempt to clarify this, some participants argued that associations keep boundaries open and create space to interrogate and co-construct society. While movements are about protesting against or even abandoning society, and organisations - and as Davies showed especially 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. The meaning of participation however 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 a 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 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 orientations. He explicitly used the word 'dilemma', thus illustrating that youth work can not counteract formalisation by 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 with each other. There is no way we can define youth work apart from the other social interventions and professions and apart from its historical and social contexts, therefore 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 risking the formalisation and instrumentalisation of youth work, reinforcing dividing lines within youth work and between different groups of young people. To go beyond these formalisation and instrumenalisation of youth work we need to bring a social pedagogical perspective back in.

1. A pedagogical identity: looking within youth work or looking outside to society?

Youth work actors have tried to distinguish some common and shared pedagogical features of youth work, but these definitions have mostly been restricted to and imbedded 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 concordant 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 histories of the German and British youth movements would seem to illustrate two very different tendencies, when 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 twentieth 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 with 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 dividing lines

When analysing the history of youth work we can take the nowadays youth work definitions as a starting point and go back from there on or we can start by tracing the first social interventions that were oriented towards young people. Not surprisingly, there are differing opinions on the question if it is possible to identify a moment that can be seen as the 'birth' of youth work. Davies (UK) speaks of the youth work *prehistory* when he mentions the youth work forms that preceded the industrialisation. Indeed, for the majority of the speakers the industrial revolution is the most obvious starting point of youth work history. This was a period of rapid social transformation leading to the social question and for a large part also inducted the youth question. Both questions came together in the mechanism of 'pedagogisation', expressing the growing belief that pedagogical interventions can 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 counterproductive 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 going from rather disciplining organisations protecting young people from moral decline and providing training programmes to become better citizens to rather emancipatory initiatives fostering participation by supporting young people's own initiatives and movements. Several speakers illustrated that youth work should not take the shape of a formal organisation, nor should it be a wild movement. In most countries we can identify a 'two-track-policy'. As youth work as a pedagogical action was 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 in differentiated methods according to the supposed needs of distinguished target groups. On the one hand there are the youth organisations that gradually emancipated themselves from their tight connections to adult organisations, schools or churches, but in the mean time in their growing autonomous space they seem to have lost their concerns with larger social questions and its ability to influences the bigger social picture. On the other hand often professionalised youth work initiatives are 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 as 'irregular', and by separating them from their social contexts, and reinforcing social dividing lines.

The formalisation and instrumentalisation of youth work

Coussée (Flanders) linked the differentiated approach that 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 is driven by the belief in the superior value of non-formal learning processes. If the informal or non-formal climate in which young people socialise, however, does not reveal itself as a 'positive, stimulating' environment it seems as if formalisation is the only option left.

Even if youth work 'goes beyond left or right' it has a huge political content as 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 is initiated by the external defining of youth work goals. He gave the example of the FDJ that 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 the youth work in the GDR can be regarded as the education and formation of such young personalities that would follow and embody **the governments ideologies,** but after it became clear that not all young people were ready to become such socialist personalities the state activities of **control** were gradually increased.

The example stems from a communist state organisation, but after all shows a lot of parallels with the actual UK story told by Davies. The societal project is less clearly outspoken, but we see the same mechanisms. If youth workers manage to reach out to those young people who do not seem to 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 not any longer unthinkable in the UK youth service.

Reinforcing dividing lines within youth work and between different 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 from and excludes itself from this discussion by becoming a social administrator for social policy instead of a social (change) agent. The question was posed how youth work can act and interact in society if its purposes and resources are disconnected from each other? Furthermore, 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 the 'major' needs (conceptualised as individual needs or wants, not as collective needs).

This 'formalisation' risk however is not threatening all youth work initiatives to the same degree. The participants of the workshop emphasised in their contributions 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 potentially increases the differences between young people or could even lead to reciprocal alienation.
- Second, the differentiated approach does not self-evidently take the needs of young people as 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 at young people.

As a consequence we can observe in most countries a widening gap between voluntary youth work and professional youth work provisions, 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, ... Professional youth work then aims at working class people, low skilled youth, young people from ethnic minorities, … and implicitly categorises these young people 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 concerning accountability and efficiency. Already in 1964 the German

social theorist Hermann Giesecke drew our attention to that phenomenon which he called 'Praktizismus'. It al 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 in the same time prevents that youth work vanishes as a distinct practice.

The contribution of youth work seems to grasp **individual and social development**: youth work provides both individual and collective outcomes. Most of the time, youth work is operating inside (and 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?* (published in the archives of the Encyclopaedia of Non-formal Education, 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 during history a re-emphasis on **a holistic look at individual development of young people**, helping individuals to find their own way in society, or even to prevent individuals from all kind of social problems and deviations. Youth work certainly helps individuals forward and contributes to individual social mobility, but the question is if society is 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 individual integration 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 in **society**, not to destabilise and change it. Youth work provides only restricted emancipation for young people involved, without collective action to change culture and structure, to redistribute power and control.

What are the possibilities for youth work to burst out of the functionalistic paradigm? Turning the 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 will and should engage in. The reflections of German social pedagogues (see Giesecke, 1970; Böhnisch and Münchmeier, 1987; Thole, 2000; Cloos et al., 2007; Lindner, 2008) could inspire us to turn a critical eye on these issues, by defining youth work as 'social' work in the broad sense of the word as work 'enacting the social' (Law and Urry, 2004). Social pedagogical thinking urges us to ask the following questions in relation to the history of youth work and youth policy : *What kind of problem definitions underpin youth work?, Who defines the problem with regard to whom?, Which reality does it construct and does this meet the diversity of conditions in which young people grow up?* Social pedagogy seems to be a fruitful perspective for the debate on the history of youth work and youth policy because it discusses the social, political and cultural project that underpins these developments and entails a critical reflection on the role of pedagogical institutions in society (Coussée, et al., 2008; Hämäläinen, 2003: Mollenhauer, 1985), referring to '**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, and not the (relationships between) young people and youth workers, becomes the focus of analysis. This opens the possibilities to burst out of prevailing youth work definitions by taking youth work out of the institutions and by reframing pedagogical (and broader social work) interventions in terms of pivots in the life worlds/space of young people, supporting youth in action, and gaining biographical, institutional and political competences. This is what Christian Spatscheck referred to as a social spatial approach to youth work (see Böhnisch und Münchmeier, 1990).

In that way the reflection on youth work history can also contribute to a **practice-based theory for youth work** in stead of an abstract theory cut loose of the historical and societal context. This is important to provide clues for acting in practice and for counteracting processes of formalisation and instrumentalisation without turning its back to society.

CONCLUSIONS: an AGENDA for BLANKENBERGE II

In this first workshop the speakers did recognise the importance of youth work 'prehistory' and the 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 question 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 the interpretation of these concepts refers also to 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 the creation of the 'youth question', … have all influenced the 'social construction of youth work'. The question is however if we should focus on the then installed youth work definition and the internal evolutions, revisions of that definition or should we also look at 'pre-historical' aspects of 'working with youth' to inspire and enrich the discussion? What did we loose 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' after the installation of 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 sports, cultural centres, schools, detention centres, factories, … ? This discussion connects of course to the relation between youth work and 'non-formal learning/education', but also the connections between care and education. It may be important to take this question into account for the next history workshop.

Different approaches in policy making and the role of the state

(Youth and youth work) policy making is a complex and layered area, containing the local, regional, national and the European level (and the differences between the countries), and referring to different actors (governments, public servants, politicians, youth workers and young people). Policy making happens in different ways: based on a blueprint of society inspired by technical expertise in constructing a solution for a social problem, or starting 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 both 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 professional project?

Different 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 defragmentation 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 a policy level and enacting youth work by practitioners. The very important role of youth workers themselves seems underexposed in youth work history. There is also a gap between enacting youth work and the experience of youth work by young people. The significance of youth work for young people is often very different from the intention of youth workers and policy makers. The perspective of young people themselves and youth work practitioners could be reinforced in the next workshop. This leads us also to the role of youth work research. What has been the role for youth work research between policy and practice? Feeding evidence-based policy or delivering policy-based evidence?

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