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THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE

Volume 6

Connections, disconnections and reconnections –
The social dimension of youth work
in history and today

Youth Partnership

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

EUROPEAN UNION

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THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE

Youth work and social work
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Volume 6

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Preface

Tanya Basarab, Hanjo Schild and Jan Vanhee

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." (L. P. Hartley)

I n order to learn from our past, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth has co-organised since 2008 a series of seminars on the history of youth work in Europe, initiated and supported first by the Flemish Community (the first, second and third conferences in 2008, 2009 and 2010), then by hosts in Estonia (the fourth conference, in 2011) and Finland (the fifth conference, 2014). In 2016, Malta took the initiative to hold a sixth conference on the History of Youth Work in Europe, looking at youth work and social work, organised jointly by the European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership and Aġenzija Żgħażagh (the National Youth Agency) of Malta.

As outlined in the concept papers for these history workshops, they do not aim at purifying an essential youth work concept irrespective of historical and cultural contexts. The aim from the outset has been rather to identify the close links between youth work developments and broader social and cultural trends, and how external factors have shaped the way youth work takes place today in Europe. The exercise of tracing back the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions, and sometimes revolutions, in youth work within and between countries has helped to feed a fundamental discussion around youth work's multifaceted and multilayered identity. It has also helped to cope, in a constructive way, with recurrent youth work dilemmas, such as targeted versus universal provision, agency-driven priorities or a more lifeworld-oriented focus. Historical consciousness and cross-sectoral reflections also enabled us to go beyond restrictive discussions driven by the issues of the day and highlighted the way similar dilemmas have been reflected upon in education, social pedagogy, social work or other fields intersecting with youth work. In that sense the history workshops tried to clarify what youth work is, without confining youth work's identity to a description in terms of methods. Workshop after workshop, national historical contexts and cross-sectoral reflections shaped the building blocks of what is understood by youth work today, in a format driven by knowledge, evidence and analysis, and not constrained by policy pressures. As a result, today's policy makers, practitioners and researchers can draw on that body of common knowledge to define values, interaction, developments, policy contexts, methods and impact of youth work practice.

From an institutional perspective, the history workshops aimed to contribute to the following European political objectives:

▶ "to promote and support research in youth work and youth policy, including its historical dimension and its relevance for youth work policy today" as highlighted in the Resolution of the Council of the European Union on youth work;[1] and

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1. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work (2010/C 327/01): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A42010Y1204(01).

▶ "fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work and their value, impact and merit" as stressed in the recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work.[2]

Or, to put it more simply, as Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said in her speech at the Culture Forum in Brussels on 20 April 2016, we should be "proud of our heritage, open to the world. There is no other way to navigate a globalised world. If you don't know where you come from, you get lost very easily."[3]

Yet only if knowledge is shared will it start to multiply and support people in learning from this knowledge. Historical knowledge contextualises and makes issues socially relevant, and that is what the history workshops, and their resulting publications, have aimed to achieve.

Current discussions of youth work in many countries are coloured by rather technical questions on, for example, excluding some methods and including others, on defining boundaries between youth work and school or social work, or on (supposed) new methods to contribute to the social integration of vulnerable or "excluded" young people. Alternatively, such discussions are simply motivated by strategic reflections that result in "functionalisation" or "instrumentalisation" of youth work, for example, setting out its potential role in the "de-radicalisation" of young people. These restrictive discussions – limited only to methodological or strategic questions that relate directly to today's youth policy challenges – make youth work a vulnerable practice, especially in these times of austerity, and have a direct funding and resource implication. Although it is understandable that youth policy makers need to define and clarify the function of youth work in broader policy and programme terms, the history series has clearly elicited the universal dimensions of youth work that have withstood time and political contexts, and has articulated both its uniqueness and "distinction" as well as its purposeful and positive interaction with other fields.

The sixth conference on the History of Youth Work in Europe (Connections, disconnections and reconnections – The social dimension of youth work in history and today) looked at the relationship between youth work and social work and the role they play in social inclusion of young people. The conference aimed to identify concepts, tools and support measures for socially excluded young people and promote a common understanding of youth work as social practice. For the European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership, the focus on youth and social work, and on social inclusion of young people, was closely related to the project Mapping of Barriers to Social Inclusion for Young People in Vulnerable Situations and the role of youth work in supporting these young people.[4]

This thematic workshop sought to understand, from the origins and development of youth work, whether youth work positioned itself more as a non-formal educational

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2. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work: http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/new-recommendation-to-the-council-of-europe-member-states-on-youth-work.
3. http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2016/160420_03_en.htm.
4. http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mapping-on-barriers-to-social-inclusion.

practice or as a social one, and where the balance between these two dimensions lies. While there was agreement that youth work needs to be further defined as a practice or profession in itself, and that the process of building its identity is ongoing in different countries, it became clear that when it comes to cross-sectoral perspective and interaction with social work, the picture is significantly more complex, much richer and considerably more dynamic than might have been foreseen.

Three broad pathways of youth work development in relation to social work can be identified across the countries that participated in the history workshop in Malta. In the first pathway, though with firm roots in social work, youth work has evolved into a separate, independent practice. Social work remains a state-guided, sometimes statutory, intervention that deals with young people as "clients", while youth work is more young-people-led and depends very much on voluntary engagement and on trust. In some countries, this separation has helped to establish the profession of youth worker in its own right, with a clearly described remit.

In the second pathway, youth work has been generally initiated by social work practitioners and has continued to operate within those remits, as a subsidiary support activity. It keeps a social work objective while using a mix of non-formal learning, social, therapeutic or interventionist social work or social pedagogy methods. This pathway inscribes youth work as a marginal, dependent dimension fostering experimentation within social work practice, and has been mutually enriching for the two, especially when social or youth workers cross the invisible "professional" divide.

Finally, there is a third pathway, where youth work may have (as in the first pathway) grown from social work or possibly originated and evolved as a separate practice with different objectives, values and outcomes. Today, however, youth work has returned to social work as an equal partner, contributing in a complementary way to the lives of more challenged and challenging young people. This can be mutually enriching for both "professions" as they address social pathologies in different ways and contribute to social inclusion; indeed, sometimes even more so than the first pathway, the third pathway can lead to stronger recognition of youth work (see also *The history of youth work in Europe – Vol. 5*). However, this pathway can result in youth work failing to reach out to and engage with more "ordinary" young people, who may need and want purposeful out-of-school activities but who do not present any social problems and nothing is offered to them.

Additional country (hi)stories from Spain, Croatia and Slovenia challenged workshop participants to look further at the implication for today's youth work in those countries in the context of their particular centralised (authoritarian) pasts.

This sixth volume of *The history of youth work in Europe*, in the series of Youth Knowledge books published by the European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership, documents many of the contributions on the social dimension of youth work that formed the main focus of the Malta history workshop and also includes two of the country (hi)stories of youth work that have, hitherto, not been covered in earlier publications in this series.

There is still a need to explore and collate some of the missing pieces of the history puzzle from a few more countries in Europe and from particular thematic areas in

which youth work takes place. The history of European/international youth organisations or social movements in which young people play a particular role also needs to be explored. These European and global youth (work) movements are, after all, emblematic of what youth work can achieve. That, however, is an aspiration for the future. For now, those who wish to explore further the history of youth work in Europe are invited to visit the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (http://pjp-eu. coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/knowledge-/-ekcyp), where all the individual contributions and the series of publications are available.

Introduction

Howard Williamson

In the 150 years that something called "youth work" has existed, in at least some parts of Europe, there have always been efforts to proclaim its educative, "opportunity-focused" and emancipatory elements and potential. Yet there is an equally powerful, if less often spoken, association with social work, "problem-solving" and regulatory traditions. As we have often registered, throughout this *History of youth work in Europe* series, youth work in different countries often simultaneously delivers practice that both produces autonomy for young people and constrains the lives of the young through protecting them or seeking to proscribe some forms of behaviour (the "cultural rescue" that underpinned British youth work in the 1950s, to "save" the young from contamination by American youth culture, is a case in point).

Sometimes these paradigms of youth work converged, blending in particular ways, permitting learning and development within strictly enforced parameters. More often, they diverged and ran quite separately, with more libertarian youth work available for those young people who were already accepted and acceptable, and more guided and directed youth work for those young people considered to still be troubled or troublesome.

That youth work is a child both of education (as non-formal learning) and of social work (as correctional or therapeutic intervention) is not in much doubt. The question is what kind of child has been produced, at different times, in different contexts. To what extent has youth work run in parallel with either, or both, of its "parents"; to what extent has it been harnessed and controlled by either of them; to what extent has it sought its own independence and matured in more hybrid ways?

This collection of papers is firmly positioned on the "social" (and social work) side of youth work. For a change, we are less interested in youth work as an educational or educative practice and more interested in it as a social and social work practice, in the way it has reached out to more marginalised, excluded, troubled and challenging young people – or at least has been expected to. Inevitably, we encounter very diverse accounts of the connections between youth work and social work (especially in the "early" days, whenever those happened to be), the disconnections (particularly as youth work strove to establish a distinctive identity through recognition that its practice differed clearly from social work), and sometimes reconnections (as youth work sometimes came to understand that its political credibility often rested on its capacity to contribute to some of the old goals of social work with young people, such as delinquency prevention, combating substance misuse or building self-efficacy and personal strengths).

The book derives from a seminar held in Malta in September 2016, at which the keynote speaker was Axel Pohl, talking about his seminal work with Andreas Walther around "youth welfare regimes". In Chapter 1, Pohl considers the place of youth work for both "mainstream" and "marginal" youth, and the idea of social work as both an institution (a distinctive professional practice) and an intervention (a style of engagement for particular purposes). Youth work can be seen as concerned with both developmental issues (thus bordering on a social work interventionist agenda) and questions of facilitating the agency and autonomy of young people, when perhaps youth work and social work part company.

Similar issues are addressed and discussed, though in different ways, by Christian Spatscheck in Chapter 2. In the context of Germany, he asks how broad and progressive social work can be, or needs to be, if it is to accommodate "youth work". Conversely, however, it also needs to be asked how eclectic and individualised youth work is. Youth work can, of course, be concerned primarily with emancipation, education and liberation, but it can also be focused more on control, regulation and correction. This is a dichotomy observed in many histories of youth work, whether or not it is embedded in discussions of relationships with social work. What is distinctive about Spatscheck's contribution is that he feels that there can be shared "anchoring points" and common ground under the umbrella of social pedagogy, thereby strengthening the potential for mutual support and development towards progressive democratic practice, which he argues is much needed today. It is a message that may take us by surprise but one to which other authors in this book also subscribe.

In Chapter 3, Ádám Nagy and Dániel Oross inform us that youth work in Hungary has inherited a strong legacy from the therapeutic and pathologising social work that prevailed in former times, though in more recent times there have been efforts to establish a social pedagogy based on "bottom-up", more client-centred practice rather than one determined and dictated from the top down. They make it clear, however, that youth work has, like social work, persisted with performing a compensatory role, not playing a part that is supplementary to formal education. In advancing their "onion model", they set out their vision of how youth work can be connected, holistically, to the broader context of youth policy, putting young people centre stage and detaching youth work from its traditional suffocation by social work on the one hand and simply "cultural" pursuits on the other.

There are strong parallels in the youth work story in the Slovak Republic, in Chapter 4. In their very detailed history (the privilege, perhaps, of speaking during the Presidency of the EU), Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová, Peter Lenčo and Jana Miháliková suggest – and this may of course be the result of even deeper probing – concurrent and complementary "crossover" developments in youth work, being attached differentially and simultaneously to ideas and aspirations for child rescue, the promotion of health and hygiene, care and development. Only in recent times have more educative and liberating conceptions of "youth work" taken hold. In both fascist and communist periods of Slovakia's history, the authors maintain that "youth work" and "social work" remained very separate. In their very different ways, neither was participative nor democratic, yet both could be viewed as constructive and supportive. Since 1989, both youth work and social work have undergone "dramatic changes"; the authors now see the possibility, both practically and philosophically, for youth work and

social work to come closer together as they work on shared agendas around the provision of support and the encouragement of autonomy and self-determination.

In Chapter 5, we return to western Europe, where Mick Conroy considers the specific youth justice elements of social work and the place and role of youth work within it, in the context of the United Kingdom. Historically, there have been times when both have held similar positions and perspectives, and times when they have been poles apart in both philosophy and practice. Conroy confirms the findings of many other contributors to this book: that there have been many overlapping and interweaving moments in the histories of youth work and social work, and asks whether the separation and distinction between the two have, too often, been spurious – or sacred.

In relation to Italy, Daniele Morciano and Armida Salvati also discuss, in Chapter 6, convergence and divergence between youth work and social work, invoking imagery of a see-saw, whereby at times youth work has been submerged in what might be considered social work agendas, such as health and hygiene, and at other times has sought independence, recognition, qualification and professionalisation. The picture is a complex one. Disconnections long ago changed with the fascist regime that forged close and uncontested links. They separated again after the Second World War, when social work focused on individual casework and youth work on collective association. There have been other changes since. The major divide between the two, however, has been in professional recognition: while social work is firmly connected to a legislative framework, youth work remains in legislative limbo, searching for resources and recognition wherever it can find it. In its favour is the growing convergence of opinion that young people are a resource to be cultivated (a classical position for youth work) and a policy framework that seeks to promote greater interprofessional collaboration.

The varied and various relationships between youth work and social work are, of course, even more difficult to debate because of the different understandings of these concepts within each of them, over time and in different contexts. In Chapter 7, Juha Nieminen and Anu Gretschel interrogate the concept of "social" in youth work, in the context of Finland. Youth work has struggled within itself, and in relation to external expectations, to balance if not reconcile universal and targeted provision, and to work out the extent to which it should remain separate rather than connected to other forms of provision. Historically, what counted as the "social" imperative in Finland has changed over time: nation-building, reconstruction, communality, social inclusion, citizenship. Youth work has played its part in all of this, through both a general practice and one concerned (most recently) with outreach and attention to exclusion, marginality and disadvantage. For the authors of this chapter, youth work has never been "unsocial"; it has always contributed to a distinctively Finnish understanding of "social" work.

Across the Gulf of Finland, in Estonia, another relationship has prevailed. Unlike many other countries where youth work has often been subordinated to social work priorities, youth work in Estonia has become more prominent and pivotal, with social work more in the background. In Chapter 8, Edgar Schlümmer argues that far from youth work being subsumed within social work, it is youth work that should display and demonstrate its capacity and capabilities for doing social work. The strength

of youth work in Estonia means that it should be engaging in both educational and developmental practice, and in more compensatory and therapeutic activity. In contrast to many other countries in Europe, youth work in Estonia approaches its collaborative practice – including its contribution to what might conventionally be thought of as social work – from a position of strength and recognition. The contemporary challenge for youth work is to ensure that new convergences and perspectives around such collaboration maintains an appropriate balance between the more educational and more social-work dimensions of youth work practice.

The view from Estonia would, until quite recently, have been anathema to Malta. As Miriam Teuma explains in Chapter 9, there has been an historical struggle to keep youth work clearly separated from any associations with social work. Youth work fought for a distinct identity that was patently not about resolving social problems or engaging in individual casework. It was, moreover, structurally and institutionally insulated from social work precisely because of its lack of recognition by or support from the state. Youth work was a voluntary endeavour delivered primarily by the church; social work had a formal statutory base and professional purpose. However, over time, there has been greater convergence, though a distinction in the value base of each profession remains. Nonetheless, youth work now holds much greater parity with social work in Malta, following the establishment of the Maltese Youth (Work) Agency, Aġenzija Żgħażagħ, in 2010. The state-funded agency has promoted statutory youth work, established it as a profession with corresponding training, and has overseen a national youth policy. But its model has, paradoxically, been social work; developments in social work in Malta have served as a blueprint for the evolution of youth work there.

The "see-saw" analogy advanced in relation to Italy might well be applied also in France. But the bridging of education and social work suggested for youth work in Estonia, according to Laurent Besse and Jérome Camus in Chapter 10, could definitely not be applied in France. Nevertheless, there have been times in France, notably in the post-Second World War period, where youth work (*animation*) had its moments of domination and social work was largely sidelined. There has since, however, been a resurgence in what Besse and Camus call "social youth work", focusing on young people perceived to be problematic for a variety of reasons. As a result, "youth work" in its various guises has settled into what must increasingly be viewed as its default dichotomous position: regulatory and diversionary practice (social youth work, if you like) for difficult young people and emancipatory practice (educational youth work, it would seem) for more privileged young people. Those in the middle, and – significantly, because gender has rarely been discussed in these debates – young women, remain largely ignored.

In Chapter 11, Björn Andersson suggests that there has never been any real "youth work" in Sweden (I am sure that other Swedish colleagues on the European stage would disagree!). There is, however, a long tradition of "social work", or "social" work, with young people. Andersson posits six varieties of what might be described as "youth work"; as these move from youth associations to residential care, they get closer to conventional conceptions of social work. This diversity of practice with young people, conducted in different ways in different settings, is to be celebrated. It is also difficult to distinguish on the ground, in Andersson's view, where youth work

stops and something else – social work perhaps – begins. Certainly, as elsewhere, there are clear organisational, regulatory and institutional differences between youth work and social work. However, in reality, much greater convergence and blurring of the boundaries remains routinely unacknowledged.

The history of youth work in Europe series started with an endeavour to map histories of youth work in different countries. The series has evolved to explore not just country histories but also the history of youth work's relationship with political regimes, other agencies and practices (such as education, health, justice) and the consequences for youth work in terms of subjugation or independence. Hence this volume's preoccupation with the legacy of social work, and contemporary relationships between youth work and social work. However, not all country histories have yet been gathered, and two more appear in this volume. Chapter 12 is an extensive and illuminating history of youth work in Croatia. Much is, of course, until relatively recently, general to the whole of the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Kosovo,[5] Montenegro, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia). Marko Kovačić and Bojana Ćulum make many interesting observations. In the context of the current development of the European Solidarity Corps, they remind us of the work camps that were ubiquitous under state socialism but which produced important opportunities for association and for social mixing, the need for the former being flagged by the 2nd European Youth Work Declaration and the Council of Europe Recommendation on youth work (the importance of "space" for young people to come together). Furthermore, they reinforce the argument made forcefully in Volume 4 of the *History of youth work in Europe* series – that youth work can never be divorced from its political context. In Croatia, for stark and tragic reasons, youth work has emerged from the war of just some decades ago.

The other country history emanates from Spain. In Chapter 13, Rafa Merino, Carles Feixa and Almudena Moreno confirm the typical position in southern Europe, that there is little specific tradition or support for youth work, despite a tradition of youth associations and youth movements. Youth work on a broader front emerged following the end of the Franco regime and was considered, for a while, to be a significant policy area. It has, however, been adversely affected by the economic crisis in Spain and the austerity measures that have resulted from it. Merino, Feixa and Moreno suggest that, in the context of huge challenges for youth policy in Spain – economic conditions, political participation and third-sector decline – there is a need, more than ever, for forms of youth work developed by young people themselves in order to ensure that they can influence positively and purposefully their own and their country's future.

Whether or not youth work is umbilically attached to social work or actively detached from it, or was in the past, is not a matter just for academic debate. The many country histories reported throughout this *History of youth work in Europe* series and the wider debates in which the series has engaged illustrate the different ways in which youth work has played a part – and continues to play a part – in the lives of young people

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5. All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

and in the countries in which they live. In relation to this volume, we see that youth work has been connected and disconnected, in myriad ways, to social-work-related issues such as healthy lifestyles, youth offending, youth care, social inclusion and therapeutic intervention. This may not be music to the ears of some involved in youth work, who would like to think of youth work practice as some kind of autonomous, young-person-centred, opportunity-focused provision forged on the anvil of voluntary relationships and governed by principles of equality, empowerment, participation and inclusion. Sadly it is not. The trouble with interrogating history is that it exposes some of the myths and fallacies of contemporary assumptions; it brings to the surface issues that, sometimes, we would rather leave submerged. Not that there is anything wrong, necessarily, with youth work engaging with problems, with health and hygiene (as it was once described), with rescue or even with regulation. Even today, these are issues which youth work is sucked towards through political expectations and sometimes through professional volition. And why not? Young people in challenging conditions and circumstances, like all young people, need youth work and the opportunities, experiences, support, information and advice that it provides. Everything hinges not so much on what is done, but on how it is done. That is what we can learn from history. Youth work's connection with social work is not in or of itself a bad thing. Youth work cannot sit smugly on an educational platform alone, disconnecting itself from working with social problems and social pathology. Youth work, as I have written many times, is essentially a social animal. But it does have to work out how it seeks to forge the links – connecting with the issues but not compromising on its principles. As we will note by way of conclusion to this volume, the strength of new and renewed convergence between youth work and social work, evidenced by the contributions to this book, somewhat took us by surprise, but we have been happy to seize the baton and argue that the alliance or enmity should be not between youth work and social work – where there have often been strong and positive connections over time – but between progressive and reactionary practice in either youth work or social work (and both can be present in both). Social work and youth work that share an aspiration towards individual autonomy, human flourishing and social cohesion should work together; social work and youth work that engage in individualising, pathologising and labelling young people should be opposed in both camps. We say more about this in our closing words. A better understanding of youth work's historical links with social work can help us to shape its relationship with social work in the future.

Part I

Youth work and social work

Chapter 1

Youth transition regimes and youth work

Axel Pohl

Introduction

How is youth work connected to social work? Or to social (work) and youth policies? What are the connections between youth work and the "social"? How is youth work linked to the fabric of our societies? There are many ways to answer these questions. Some writers have focused on the history of ideas and philosophies that have guided the out-of-school and outside-of-family lives of young people – the milieu in which "youth work" takes place. Some start to reconstruct these links from political or faith-based movements, with a certain idea of what it means to be a young person. From structuralist or Marxist standpoints, answers start from (class) societies' distribution of labour and resources and link societies' answers to their analysis. Most of the resulting concepts of what youth work is or should be have three elements: an idea of what it means to be young (an epistemological claim), an idea of what outcomes of youth work are desirable (a normative claim) and at least an implicit idea of how the nature and methods of the work are related to certain outcomes (an explanatory claim).

The main argument of this chapter is that these are empirical questions that need to be answered by looking into historically contingent configurations of structures, practices and discourses in each country. The chapter proposes a theoretical and conceptual framework of analysis to study the history of youth work and its connections with social work and societal structures in the tradition of life course research, which has been taken up by comparative social policy research, and a specific strand labelled here as youth transition regimes research. As there is not enough space to summarise even the major strands of these traditions (though see Arts and Gelissen 2010; Lorenz 2006), only a couple of central aspects of this line of thought are referred to, for the contribution they can make to the debates around the above-mentioned questions.

The aim of this contribution is to approach these questions in order to:

- ▶ reflect on the genesis of the three concepts in life course and comparative welfare research;
- ▶ point to some of their strengths and weaknesses;
- ▶ explain some of their developments in recent times; and
- ▶ discuss what benefits the study of youth work can have from framing analysis in this way.

Youth transition regimes

Comparative research on youth policies and youth work is often done in a descriptive way that juxtaposes findings from different contexts. Often there is a lack of systematic comparison – and often this is related to the lack of a theoretically grounded "tertium comparationis", a common "scale" against which data and findings from two entities can be compared. Comparisons of youth work and youth policies have always drawn on aspects such as the institutional and organisational arrangements of youth work, the definition of its objectives and target groups (cf. Wallace and Bendit 2009). One approach to theoretically and methodologically frame these aspects is the "regimes of youth transitions" theory developed in the context of the European Group for Integrated Social Research (EGRIS). To understand the concept, it is necessary to embed it within its roots in life course research and comparative social policy.

Starting points: life course regimes and comparative welfare research

Some people ground youth work in the sociological account of youth as a phase in life that has some distinct traits that distinguish it from all other phases in life. An historically informed account of its origins will always centre around the emergence of the idea of education and the development of societal institutions to organise and frame the need to introduce newcomers to society. And there is a large consensus that youth work belongs to this "third sphere" or "third milieu", beyond the family and the school system, that comprises modern society's answers to the problem that, unlike in pre-modern circumstances, simply inheriting adults' roles and positions was no longer working.

The starting point of the research network EGRIS was to better understand the changing transitions from youth to adulthood across different European countries. The Misleading Trajectories project (EGRIS 2001; López Blasco, McNeish and Walther 2003) sought to shed some light on the institutional regulations of school-to-work transitions and their apparent contradictions with the emerging in-between situation of "young adults" as not yet adult and no longer youths. Youth Policy and Participation (YOYO) was a research project to study the scope for active engagement and self-determination in education and training programmes organised both in youth or social work settings in eight EU countries (Walther et al. 2006). The Thematic Study Concerning Policy Measures for Disadvantaged Youth, commissioned by the European Commission's DG for Employment and Social Affairs, looked into the labour market policies for young people in 13 EU countries (Pohl and Walther 2007; Walther and Pohl 2005). From the overarching analysis of the empirical data, Walther (2006) developed a comparative model of youth transition regimes in order to systematise the discovery of differences and similarities in different types of regimes.

The model drew on previous work in the field of life course research which is based on the assumption that the life course is the central arena where the individual biographies, societal divisions of labour and other goods, and state policies are connected in modern societies through the regulation and institutionalisation of life phases (cf. Heinz et al. 2009). The core of life course policies is the education and training

system and the welfare state regulating employment and social security through pensions, benefits and social services (cf. Lorenz 2006). The central question of life course policies is what is to be regarded as a "normal" life course and how deviations from it should be addressed – either by support or by negative sanctions. In many European countries the standard life course with its implied social integration seemed to be at least attainable by large proportions of the population during the post-Second World War period of the *trente glorieuses*, the 30 years when in large parts of western Europe economic growth and expanding welfare states were boosting high levels of labour market inclusion and welfare. From the mid-1970s on, however, some links between life phases, like the one between education and employment, were severely broken for a considerable proportion of the young generation. So, at the heart of understanding different life course policies lie the differences in socio-cultural constructions of "normalities".

Comparative welfare research was deeply marked by Gøsta Esping-Andersen's *Three worlds of welfare capitalism* (1990) (Arts and Gelissen 2010). Esping-Andersen's seminal work is deeply rooted in the analysis of the political economy of the welfare state. Its basic idea, though, remains a powerful tool for the analysis of the foundations of all public policies: the basic question he was posing was how states cover the costs of welfare: is it left up to the market and the individual to cater for, or is the state responsible for accommodating things like pensions, public health, insurance against the other risks of life? Or to put Esping-Andersen's thesis into simple words: which parts of life are considered a commodity with a price tag within an assumed free market and which parts are taken out of the market and taken on as a responsibility of the state?

We will see later on whether this is still an important issue or question for youth work. I also skip the extensive discussions on the validity of Esping-Andersen's typology and numerous criticisms that have been expressed, such as the static nature of the model and the unreflected underlying male breadwinner model. The model was further developed, for example, on the question whether one can put the welfare models of Germany and Italy into the same "conservative" regime type or whether it would be more appropriate to speak of four worlds and keep the two apart, as Gallie and Paugam (2000) did.

Regimes of youth transitions

The model of youth transition regimes combined and applied these concepts to the transition to adulthood. Important dimensions of this "tertium comparationis" are the structures of education and training systems, the nature of forms of entry to the labour market, and other socio-economic indicators of the societies under study. The second layer is the institutional arrangements of support, like the rights to benefits. And the third layer that emerged from the studies was that historically grown cultural patterns were important, such as the dominant meaning of "disadvantage" in youth transitions. A central role could also be found in a society's prevailing concepts of youth. Through an exploration of these items, four different regime types emerged:

▶ The *universalistic* regime type, most clearly visible in the Nordic countries, is based on the idea of individual social rights with ample opportunities

provided by the state with support mostly built into inclusive education and training systems.

▶ In the *employment-centred oriented* regime type of western Europe, selective education and training systems are guided by the central idea of youth as a stage for labour market positioning. "Disadvantage", therefore, is interpreted as a lack of training.

▶ The *liberal* regime type, to which the UK and Ireland can be associated, puts the goal of the economic independence of youth. Those who face difficulties in reaching that goal are perceived in terms of a lack of "employability".

▶ In the *under-institutionalised* regime type, composed mainly of southern European countries, there is a structural deficit in state policies leading to longer dependency on the family. Youth in general are seen as a disadvantaged group.

Post-socialist societies from the eastern parts of Europe, it should be noted, were empirically very hard to place into this typology.

Criticism and shortcomings

Of course, the main criticism one can raise against this model is its lack of dynamics – as with all typologies it lacks a longitudinal perspective and does not include a clear vision of change. One could also go one step further and claim that its validity is tied to a certain historical period. And of course, there are empirical signs of this, especially with the decline of the welfare state affected by neo-liberal governments or the financial crisis after 2008 that has led to what has been called a "hybridisation" of social models (Rubery 2011).

Another critical point can be made about the role of the nation state. Is it still appropriate to conceive of regimes as being bound to the nation state and are we not falling into the trap of methodological nationalism if we do so?

Applications and evolutions

Empirical tests of the model have been applied to the field of labour market entry to see whether the regime typology can explain different performances of countries in the integration of young people into the labour market (EUROFOUND 2014; Hadjivassiliou et al. 2016). Other fruitful applications brought to light new dimensions that can extend or modify the original model. Chevalier (2016) extended the model to "regimes of youth welfare citizenship" using welfare support and the selectivity of education as dimensions. Soler-i-Martí and Ferrer-Fons (2015) recently could show that "centrality" in regimes of youth transitions is a very important contextual predictor for explaining different forms of political participation among young people in Europe.

The model of youth transition regimes also is open enough to incorporate new insights from inequality research. These insights show that categories of inequality such as "ethnicity" need to be analysed in their intersection with other categories