The Impact
of Youth Work in Europe:
A Study of Five European Countries

Edited by Jon Ord with Marc Carletti, Susan
Cooper, Christophe Dansac, Daniele Morciano,
Lasse Siurala and Marti Taru

Erasmus+

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Dedicated to
all the young people
who shared their stories

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Introduction

By Jon Ord

Background to the project

This book is the culmination of a European project funded by Erasmus + Key Action 2 in the field of 'Strategic Partnerships for Youth', and the title of the key action was 'Co-operation for innovation and the exchange of good practices'. The project was entitled 'Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe', and the reference number was 2015-3-UK01-KA205-022861. The project aimed to independently identify the impact of open access youth work in each of the following five European countries – the UK (England), Finland, Estonia, Italy and France. It applied a participatory evaluation methodology entitled 'transformative evaluation' which collated young people's own accounts of the impact of youth work on their lives – collecting their stories. The data was analysed independently in each of the five countries and then compared and contrasted across them.

The lead partner was Plymouth Marjon University, which also lead the UK element of the project undertaken in the south west of England. The project was coordinated in each of the other four partner countries by coordinators from the following universities: Finland – Helsinki University of Applied Sciences (HUMAK); Italy – University Degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro; France – University of Toulouse Jean-Jaurès (UT2J); and Estonia – Tallinn University, where implementation was also supported by the Estonian Youth Work Centre.

In four of the countries (the UK, Finland, Italy and France) three youth work organisations were enrolled as Erasmus partners, and lead youth workers from each of those organisations coordinated the collection of stories in their organisations. In Estonia the youth work partners were national umbrella youth work organisations, and they coordinated the collection of stories across four regions of Estonia.

The project commenced in February 2016 and had three distinct phases, each enhanced by an Erasmus-funded 'transnational learning activity',[1] which was a week-long training event.

- Training phase, February 2016 – August 2016

The project was facilitated by the first transnational learning activity held in Plymouth in June 2016. This enabled the group to agree roles and responsibilities, and also involved training in transformative evaluation. This was followed by the translation of training materials into partner languages.

- Implementation phase, September 2016 – August 2017

This involved a year-long process of story collection in the group's respective organisations, through three separate cycles of transformative evaluation. The project coordinators and lead youth workers from each of the youth work organisations attended a second

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[1] Each of the three transnational learning activities also involved study visits to the youth work organisations in the host region.

transnational learning activity in Helsinki and Tallinn in February 2018, to share their reflections on the implementation process and learn any lessons for the second and third cycles.

• Analysis phase, September 2017 – August 2018

The third transnational learning activity was held in Toulouse and Figeac in September 2017. At this meeting the process of analysis was agreed and country groups began to analyse their data independently. In the autumn of 2017 the coordinators independently wrote separate national reports which collated their findings. In March 2018 at a project meeting in Amsterdam these findings were shared, and the process of comparing and contrasting data began. The project culminated in an international conference at Plymouth Marjon University in September 2018.

This project is a small-scale study of youth work. It does not attempt to draw a representative sample of the diversity of youth work practice across Europe. It focuses on secular (non-faith-based) publicly funded youth work. All but one of the projects are open access club-based projects. The single exception is a targeted French project (see Chapters 6 and 12). However, all the projects involved are based on young people's voluntary participation. All the projects also accord with the broad parameters of youth work as defined by the Council of Europe (2018), which defines youth work as 'a relational, critical and youth centric practice'.

Introduction to the book

The book is in two sections. Section 1 begins with a chapter providing the background to European youth work policy and argues that the EU and the Council of Europe have played an important part in defining youth work across a broad spectrum of member states. However, it has also been quite explicit in its policy priorities such as increasing employability and social inclusion, as well as more recently in its focus on combating extremism. The chapter argues that as a result of the explicit setting of policy priorities a tension arises, which has the potential to run counter to the autonomous actions of youth workers and youth work's person-centred practice, the aims of which emerge out of the engagement of youth workers with young people and which cannot be prescribed in advance.

The book then has five distinct but related chapters on the context of youth work in each of the five partner countries – the UK (England), Finland, Estonia, Italy and France. Each of these chapters plots the development of youth work in the respective countries and draws out the key policy priorities. Section 1 is completed by an introduction to the methodology of transformative evaluation which has been utilised in this project.

Section 2 focuses exclusively on the findings of the project. After a brief introduction to the approach taken in the analysis of findings there are five distinct chapters focusing on the findings from each of the five countries. It is important to point out that there was considerable coordination of the project in the initial establishment and implementation stages (for example, through the first and second transnational learning activities and the production of a training manual). However, the countries operated autonomously, and in particular the analysis was done independently. This met the specific intention of ensuring the assessment

of the data was not influenced by any of the other four country groups. The book culminates in a comparison of youth work across the five countries, and offers some tentative conclusions as well as some recommendations for further research.

References

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Section One:

The Context of Youth Work

Chapter 1:
European Youth Work Policy Context
By Manfred Zentner and Jon Ord

Introduction

In the last decade youth work has become increasingly prominent within European policy discourse, not only as a means of implementing the youth policy strategies of the two European Institutions – the European Union and the Council of Europe – but also for other policy areas such as health. Two Conventions on Youth Work have been held in Belgium (2010 in Ghent and 2015 in Brussels), and a third is under discussion. Meanwhile, at the EU level a council resolution was signed (European Commission, 2010) and youth work was given importance in a variety of EU policy documents (e.g. *Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people*, OJ C 168, 14.6.2013:5–9). A definition of youth work has been produced and a discussion of its role has been the topic of various expert groups (e.g. the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States). In the Council of Europe, a new *Recommendation on Youth Work* (2017) was presented, and the recognition and professionalisation of youth work have been raised as a policy priority.

Importantly, it has not only been policy makers but also practitioners, researchers and young people themselves who have been involved in these developments. Despite this, however, a number of questions still remain, about both the definition of youth work itself and its occupational profile. This chapter will discuss some of the main themes and priorities within European youth work policy, and will argue that despite the considerable progress made in establishing youth work at a European level and supporting its development, much work still remains to be done.

Developing an understanding of youth work across Europe

When discussing youth work the national realities are of utmost importance. These include understanding both the similarities and the differences in approaches and methods across national contexts, as well as the differing national recognition of youth work. Different forms of youth work are dominant in different European countries, dependent on the history, culture and tradition of education, pedagogy, as well as formulations of social work and the different political context. As a result, Williamson argues that 'youth work is routinely defined in terms of what it is not rather than articulating more precisely what it is' (Williamson, 2015: 7). In the early twenty-first century within the EU, much of the focus for youth policy makers, experts from youth work and youth work academics was to encourage the formal recognition of youth work. However, it rapidly became apparent that attempts to promote the recognition of youth work were dependent upon establishing a definition, or at least a description, of youth work itself.

In a White Paper entitled *A New Impetus for European Youth* (European Commission 2001) – the document which is commonly perceived as a new starting point for youth policy at the level of the European Union in addressing these definitional concerns – youth work is

initially mentioned as part of various organisations providing education (EC, 2001: 33), and later seen as a 'supportive element for the personal development of young people' (EC, 2001: 47). However, no further description is provided, and this is far from establishing a definition of youth work.

The late Peter Lauritzen, former Head of the Youth Policy Department and Deputy Director of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, pointed to some elements of youth work in an attempt to make it more concrete. He mentioned that youth work is a:

> *Summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. ... Youth work belongs both to the social welfare and to the educational system. ... The definition of youth work is diverse. While it is recognised, promoted and financed by public authorities in many European countries, it has only a marginal status in others where it remains of an entirely voluntary nature. What is considered in one country to be the work of traditional youth workers – be it professionals or volunteers – may be carried out by consultants in another, or by neighbourhoods and families in yet another country or, indeed, not at all in many places.*
> (Lauritzen, 2008: 371)

A study entitled *The Socio-Economic Scope of Youth Work in Europe* (Bohn, 2008), commissioned by the Partnership of the European Commission and Council of Europe in the Field of Youth,[1] went even further, claiming that 'there is no consistent definition of youth work either in all European countries or even in any single country. Youth work is a summary expression shaped by different traditions and by different legal and administrative frameworks, and it is used for a wide range of activities' (Bohn, 2008: 21). This statement might appear to be blunt and even a bit exaggerated (especially if one reads it as applying to all of Europe and forgets the fact that the study covered only ten countries), but it was becoming obvious that the often-used term 'youth work' at the very least lacked a concrete definition. Nevertheless, the same study also pointed to similarities in the aims of youth work, where for example the personal and social development of young people was identified as a common factor. Another important common aim was the promotion of social inclusion and the prevention of exclusion, as well as a focus on the participation of young people.

The Convention of Youth Work, organised by the three Belgian communities in Ghent during the first trio-presidency of the European Union in 2010, brought together more than five hundred youth workers, practitioners, youth policy makers, researchers and young people from all European Union member states. The outcome of the convention both proclaimed the diversity of youth work while at the same time trying to formulate a description of youth work. For example, the convention produced a declaration stating that youth work:

> *Provides space for association, activity, dialogue and action. And it provides support, opportunity and experience for young people as they move from childhood to adulthood.* (Declaration of the First Convention on Youth Work, 2010: 2)

At this Convention the different forms of youth work, the different traditions and regimes were highlighted, and emphasis was placed on the different approaches and their roots in a variety of ideologies and schools of thought. The importance and eligibility of each of the

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[1] The partnership of the European Commission and Council of Europe in the field of youth is most commonly referred to as the 'Youth Partnership'.

various methods was also celebrated, which include traditional youth organisations, youth-led organisations, open youth work, youth information and advice, outreach and mobile approaches, socio-pedagogical approaches, community work, leisure time activities and international youth work. This richness and diversity of traditions and approaches was praised as a strength of youth work across Europe. Similarly, a European Union study entitled The *Value of Youth Work*, with a reference to Coussée (2009), points to the fact that the richness of approaches is valuable, stating that 'while youth work can suffer from its own diversity, it is also one of its key strengths' (European Commission, 2014: 40).

However, despite this acknowledgment of the importance of the diversity of youth work practice, the concept of youth work itself can seem fragmented, and therefore the Second Convention on Youth Work (2015) attempted to find common ground in establishing commonalities between different interpretations and formulations of youth work. The focus of the second convention was to establish common core elements and find a form of identity of youth work that would dispel the suspicion, even among youth workers themselves, that youth work has multiple personalities. First and foremost, the convention tried to hold the ground against monopolisation from various sides, as well as rally the youth work community against instrumentalisation and claims from a variety of policy agendas. The driving force behind the convention was that it should be clear and possible for any youth worker, from whatever tradition and utilising whatever method, to explain what the essence of youth work is, what can it do, and what it cannot do. The results of the Second Convention are impressive, and are summed up very well in the report that provides not only the background and context but also the recommendations for further steps, as well as a clear recognition of youth work as a distinctive practice. For example, the report clearly states:

> *Youth work engages with young people on their terms and on their 'turf', in response to their expressed and identified needs, in their own space or in spaces created for youth work practice.* (EU/Council of Europe, 2015: 4)

The work undertaken at the two conventions has been acknowledged within policy discourse, and has begun to further cement youth work within European Policy discourse. For example, in the recent Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio (Council of Europe, 2015) – now an online instrument for self-assessment of youth workers – youth work is described as:

> *Commonly understood as a tool for personal development, social integration and active citizenship of young people. Youth work is a 'keyword' for all kinds of activities with, for and by young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. It belongs to the domain of 'out-of-school' education, most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning. The main objective of youth work is to create opportunities for young people to shape their own futures.* (Council of Europe, 2015: 7)

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Youth Department also highlights that youth work is value-driven, youth-centric, voluntary, developmental, self-reflective and critical, as well as relational (Council of Europe, 2015: 8).

While these predominantly specialised 'top-down' formulations and policy developments are welcome, it should be recognised that at the local level youth workers are often seen

merely as 'playing with children' (see Petkovic and Zentner, 2017: 33). As the ongoing multi-national project *Europe goes Local*[2] also demonstrates, in large parts of society there is no clear understanding of youth work or its impact on young people and the wider community.

It often seems that not only is the broader audience and society at large unsure about what youth work really is, sometimes it seems that youth workers themselves are not entirely sure about the principles upon which their profession is based. As a result they can be too eager to agree to whatever new requirements are stipulated by policy makers – be this in terms of preventing drug abuse or risky behaviour, promoting sexual health, fostering the participation of youth in society, enabling intercultural exchange and mutual understanding, enhancing the mobility of young people, fostering creativity, imparting media literacy, communicating values and attitudes, increasing solidarity in society, enabling global citizenship, providing space and time for young persons, providing non-formal education, increasing young people's employability, or – more recently – de-radicalising extremist youth.

At the heart of this problem is the conflation of both 'what' youth work should focus on (its content) and 'what' it achieves (its outcomes), on the one hand, and 'how' youth work operates (its methodology) on the other. This fundamental distinction is what Ord (2016) refers to as the difference between 'product and process', commenting that it is often the process of youth work that is little understood by policy makers. The process is important regardless of whether youth workers are focusing on a particular issue or not. At the heart of this process is an autonomous practice that unfolds in negotiation with the young people. It is not a pre-ordained programme delivered to achieve a set of prescribed outcomes.

The impact of European youth policy on the development of youth work in Europe – lessons from recent history

Even though youth work is often seen quite differently across Europe, it fulfils its respective role successfully in most countries. It is however important at both a European and an international level to foster a common understanding if supra-national strategies and policies are to be both meaningful and effective. Although youth work has been mentioned in a variety of policy documents at a European level, as has been argued, it has seldom been described in detail (until recently, with the conventions on youth work and the declaration (EU/Council of Europe, 2010; 2015)). Furthermore, where it was mentioned there was often very little, if any, recognition of the different national traditions; either the policy makers seemed unaware of these differences, deemed them irrelevant, or merely neglected them. As a result a number of tensions emerged. A short overview of the historical development of youth work at a European level will help to communicate these tensions.

In the early discussions of youth work at a European level, youth work was a term which covered a variety of approaches and methods of 'pedagogical social work' outside the formal education system, with the broad aim of supporting young people. However, 'youth work' was not explicitly on the agenda at all – it was work with young people, organised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For example, within the Council of Europe youth work started to play an essential role in 1972 with the establishment of the European Youth Foundation. However, there was a clear focus on youth associations and youth organisations who were regarded as fulfilling an important socialisation role with their members.

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[2] This project is run by twenty-one national agencies of the Erasmus+ programme, and aims at fostering youth work at the local level since this is perceived to be the place where youth work actually happens. It therefore tries to find ways promoting the Erasmus+ programme, since municipalities are often not aware of the opportunities offered by this international programme.

Nevertheless, it was not referred to as 'youth work', but only discussed in terms of the associations and initiatives undertaking 'work with and for young people'.

The rise of 'work experience' – the precursor of youth work in Europe

One of the first, if not the first, reference to youth work in an official European Union[3] document is the *Resolution on Youth Activities* from 1981. This referred to voluntary youth work, encouraging the exchange 'of young people through European voluntary social and cultural service' (European Parliament, 1981: OJ C 77, 58), and it called 'on the Commission to examine the possibility of social and cultural projects, for example, voluntary aid to disabled people in the social field and the restoration of ancient monuments in the cultural field' (European Parliament, 1981: OJ C 77, 58).

This resolution also suggests reviving the idea of a 'European peace corps of young volunteers'. This youth corps would:

> *Help with work the host countries cannot carry out on their own; the young people would, however, have to be helped to acquire the necessary professional qualifications or experience; thought should also be given to the introduction of a voluntary year of social work for young people which could be carried out within the European Community.*[4]
> (European Parliament, 1981: OJ C 77, 58)

It is worth mentioning that this resolution primarily focuses on the exchange of young people in formal education systems, but also acclaims the European Youth Forum as a partner in youth policy issues and recommends that the Forum should remain open to all young people – 'particularly the underprivileged, who do not belong to organisations'. Other features highlighted include the topics of European values, the issue of immigrant workers' children and the misuse of alcohol and drugs as some of the challenges facing young people in Europe.

Another significant document which influenced the policy direction of youth work in Europe dates from 1983, and promoted European youth exchanges via a resolution on a European Community (EC) programme (the European Youth Exchange Programme; European Parliament, 1983). The Exchange Programme was based on the young workers exchange programmes that had been running since 1964, but this new development placed a significant value on the youth exchange's ability to develop 'mutual understanding and friendship among the young people of the Member States of the Community … [as the basis for cooperation and peace in Europe]' (European Parliament, 1983: OJ C 184, 22).

In November 1983 the Resolution on a European Voluntary Scheme for Young People (European Parliament, 1984) was adopted. Here it is stated clearly that such a voluntary service:

> *should not be considered an alternative to unemployment, nor a way of camouflaging it, but a permanent feature aimed at creating a greater sense of personal responsibility and at broadening young people's experience. Furthermore, Parliament is concerned that until the problem of youth employment is solved there is a danger that freedom of choice will be undermined and any youth service scheme may well become something "offered" (hidden unemployment) as an alternative to open unemployment.*
> (European Parliament, 1984: C 10, 286)

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[3] Back then it was the European Community with Greece as the newest of ten member states; the members were Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Denmark, Ireland, the UK and Greece.

[4] The personal benefit of the volunteers for future integration in the labour market, via increasing the employability with international experience, was only introduced thirty-five years later by the establishment of a European Solidarity Corps in 2016.

These initiatives brought about the successful introduction of both Youth Exchanges and the European Voluntary Service as important means of developing international 'youth work'. Explicit within this however was a clearly prescribed purpose in promoting European values and of educating young people in the importance of solidarity and mutual understanding. As such these initiatives provided an instrument to support the idea of the European Community.

'Youth work' arrives on the policy radar

The concept of 'voluntary youth work' found above in the influential 1981 document (European Parliament, 1981) was, however, more akin to the idea of young people's 'work experience' than to the work for and with young people that is more generally understood to equate to youth work, and which appears in the later declarations. The first recognisable appearance of the term 'youth work' in an official European Union document dates from 1990 in the *Proposal for a Council Decision adopting an action programme to promote youth exchanges and mobility in the Community* – the Youth for Europe programme (Commission of the European Communities, 1990), where for example it states in Article 2:

> *The Youth for Europe programme, in its second phase, shall comprise a range of incentive measures to promote the development of Youth Exchanges and Mobility in the Community. The measures are directed at young people (normally of 15 to 25 years of age), as well as youth organisations, youth workers, public authorities, non-governmental organisations and all other bodies active in promoting youth exchanges or mobility.*
> (Commission 1990, OJ C 308, 7)

Prior to this, explicit references to youth work were rare, and at the European level youth work tended to equate to the work associated with youth organisations such as the European Youth Forum, who were partners in programmes (such as youth exchanges). The Youth Forum would also be involved in policy development and receive specific EU/Council of Europe funding. However, within this new policy initiative the specific objectives of both the planned programmes and the study visits was the professional development of youth workers, together with the aim of encouraging collaborative action in the 'field[5] of youth work'. The policy was adopted 1991 and has been operational ever since.

Significant impetus was also provided for youth work across Europe by the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers' meeting within the Council on 26 June 1991 concerning 'priority actions in the youth field' (European Council, 1991: 1). Here a specific request was made for an 'intensification of cooperation between structures responsible for youth work' in the member states. The aim of this Resolution was to 'reinforce young people's consciousness of belonging to Europe and take account of their wish to play a positive role in the building of the European Community'. In addition to the stronger cooperation between structures responsible for youth work, other priority actions formulated included: providing information for young people; stimulating the initiative and creativity of young people; and cooperation on the training of youth workers, particularly with regard to the European dimension.

In the activity report entitled *Priority Actions in the Youth Field* (Commission of the European Communities, 1993a), a detailed description of youth workers as target groups in the

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[5] Policy priority areas in European policy discourse are often referred to as 'fields' – that youth work was now referred to as a field was a significant step.

Youth for Europe programme was provided. It mentioned that youth workers work directly with 'young people, either on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis, and other multipliers[6] working in the youth field' (Commission, 1993a: 8). Reflecting the different traditions of youth work, the fields of their work were named as 'multipliers working in traditional youth work settings, such as youth organisations, community centres, youth clubs, youth information centres, drop-in centres, and multipliers involved in predominantly detached youth work or out-reach work' (Commission, 1993a: 3). Also, in the proposal for adopting the Youth for Europe III programme the exchange of socio-educational youth workers is mentioned as an aim of Article 126 of the Treaty of the European Union (Commission, 1993b: 3).

So by the mid-1990s, for the first time in an official European document the diversity of youth work approaches – and the different formations of youth workers – was being highlighted. Although this recognition was limited and appears to lack full consideration, a shift is evident from the early years where youth work's definition at a European level failed to acknowledge this variety, and when youth work was merely seen as a method of socio-educational work with young people outside the school system, to a situation where these differences were at least acknowledged. Interestingly this only seemed to become apparent after attempts to foster cooperation and encourage the exchange of ideas between the national structures responsible for youth work.

However, despite this recognition – and the blossoming of different approaches, where a number of complementary methodologies began to gain their own importance – a potential problem has been created, in that the position of youth work now appears weakened. At a European level it is no longer seen as a distinct actor within the education and welfare fields, and as a result it is now in danger of being viewed as a more disparate entity, as well as having a potential overlap with other forms of non-formal learning or social work as the differences between them began to blur.

Recognising and defining youth work

The process of the political recognition of youth work at a European level culminated in 2010 with the adoption of the Resolution of the Council[7] and of the representatives of the governments of the member states, meeting within the Council, on youth work. Here it is formally acknowledged that:

> *Youth work takes place in the extra-curricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics.*

> *Youth work is organised and delivered in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities), and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level, dependent for example on the following elements:*

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[6] Multiplier is a term which is often used in European policy discourse to denote a person or organisation with a remit to extend knowledge, skills or understanding.

[7] NB: This is not the Council of Europe – it refers to the European Council. Rather confusingly, the latter is always referred to in official documents only as "the Council", meaning the Council of Ministers in the European Union.

- *the community, historical, social and policy contexts where youth work takes place,*
- *the aim of including and empowering all children and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities,*
- *the involvement of youth workers and youth leaders,*
- *the organisations, services or providers, whether they are governmental or non-governmental, youth-led or not,*
- *the approach or method used, taking into account the needs of young people,*
- *in many member states local and regional authorities also play a key role in supporting and developing local and regional youth work.*
(European Commission 2010, OJ C 327/2)

However, this resolution did not only name the various forms and traditions of youth work - and thereby highlight the differences - it also gave a clear idea of what unites youth work in Europe.

Youth work – which complements formal education settings – can offer considerable benefits for children and young people by providing a wide and diverse range of non-formal and informal learning opportunities as well as appropriate targeted approaches. Youth work invites young people to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions by giving them an active role in its development and implementation. Youth work can provide a comfortable, safe, inspirational and pleasant environment, in which all children and young people, either as individuals or as part of a group, can express themselves, learn from each other, meet each other, play, explore and experiment.
(European Commission 2010, OJ C 327/2)

Nevertheless, an abiding theme remains within the development of youth work at a European level, in that even with formal recognition and acknowledgement in European policy, youth work tends to receive less recognition for the outcomes it achieves with the young people it works with – outcomes which emerge from its person-centred, autonomous and democratic practice (EU/Council of Europe, 2015; Ord, 2016) – and more for what it can provide for society and the European Union as a whole. Youth work still tends to be seen primarily as a potentially powerful instrument to implement (youth) policy, to transport important messages on European identities and the values of a European community to young people as well as to youth workers.

Accrediting youth work
The last big European symposium on the Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Education was in 2011 in Strasbourg. The discussion often focused on the value of youth work for young people and the validation of voluntary activities, as well as non-formal and informal learning. This approach can be seen as a symbol of the main trends within European youth work policy. Youth work is believed to have its merits, for example in the personal development of the young people, but the learning outcomes are only really valued when they can be externally validated. An example of this approach to the recognition of learning in youth work is the accreditation of the learning outcomes of both non-formal and informal education elements of youth work through the Youthpass – an accreditation scheme developed for the Erasmus + (Youth in Action) programme.

More recently the EU publication study of *The Value of Youth Work* continued this trend, stating:

> *Taken together, legislation provides a basis to not only regulate the sector in terms of youth work provision, but in some cases to provide the necessary funding mechanisms for the delivery of services and to serve as a tool for the recognition of the work that is undertaken within the youth work arena.* (EC, 2014: 92)

Professionalisation of youth work

This Value of Youth Work study (EC, 2014) highlights the importance of recognising youth work as a profession and points out the diversity across European countries, where some have university-level training courses leading to professionally qualified youth workers (such as the UK, Finland and Estonia), while in others (where the work is primarily undertaken by volunteers) there is little if any training (EC, 2014: 115). Professionalisation is of increasing importance for youth work at a European level, and one of the main elements underpinning its professional recognition is training and education. The importance placed on professionalisation is further evidenced by the project of the EU expert group on *Quality Youth Work* (EC, 2015), which viewed professionalisation as one of the main routes to developing and improving the quality of youth work. In 2017 the European Commission also published a handbook on youth work quality systems and frameworks which further underpinned their commitment to the professionalisation of youth work (EC, 2017a). Professionalisation is incorporated in the *Competence Model for Youth Workers* driven by the Salto Youth Training and Cooperation Resource Centre. This model is intended to provide a basis for professional recognition, which is based on the following eight competences:

- facilitating individual and group learning in an enriching environment,
- designing programmes,
- organising and managing resources,
- collaborating successfully in teams,
- communicating meaningfully with others,
- displaying intercultural competence,
- networking and advocating,
- developing evaluative practices to assess and implement appropriate change.
  (Salto Youth, 2016)

The recent *Recommendation on Youth Work by the Council of Europe* (2017) also explicitly prioritises the establishment of 'frameworks, strategies, programmes and pathways for the education, training, capacity building and professional development of youth workers based on the agreed set of competences'.

The establishment of youth work and its future role?

It certainly appears that an agreement has been reached across Europe, at least at the policy level, about the importance of youth work – not only for the young person but for the whole of society, and in particular the wider needs of the European Union. It is also widely acknowledged that youth work should be promoted in a variety of ways by the member states

of the Council of Europe, with a commitment to safeguarding and improving the quality of youth work, as well as pro-actively supporting local, regional or national youth policies.

As the latest Council of Europe document, *the Recommendation on Youth Work* (2017), shows, broad definitions have been established:

> *Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.* (C of E, 2017)

It is also claimed that 'despite different traditions and definitions, there is a common understanding that the primary function of youth work is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large' (C of E, 2017). However, a potential tension remains between the establishment of what can appear like a top-down process and the need to take into account the diversity of youth work across and within member states. Moving forward, it is recommended that special attention be paid to the strategies, frameworks and perhaps legislation, as well as sustainable structures and resources, needed to create policies that promote equal access to youth work for all young people across diverse national contexts. Consideration should also be given to how effective co-ordination is with other sectors. Youth workers should actively engage young people in both the planning and implementation of any youth policies. Furthermore, the establishment of a framework for the education and training of youth workers needs to be considered within member states; as well as the establishment of rigorous research and evaluation processes.

European policy priorities and the focus of youth work?

Since the latter half of the twentieth century the Council of Europe has been a key driver in the establishment of a European youth policy. Initially this was specifically motivated by the idea of bringing the ideals and values of the Council of Europe to the populations of all member states. Youth work was seen as an important instrument in reaching this goal. Youth organisations were seen not only as partners for reaching out to young people, but also as partners in the co-management structure in the Council of Europe,[8] to bring the needs and ideas of young people to the policy makers. A consistent theme emerges out of European youth work policy documents – of the values behind the creation and development of the European Community, initially as a peace project and latterly as an economic ideal. For example, in the 1990s the creation and promotion of a European identity and support for union across the member states was an explicit aim of youth exchanges and international youth work – so much so that one could be forgiven for thinking that youth work in Europe in the 1990s only meant youth exchanges, youth worker mobility and the fostering of mutual learning and understanding among young people from different member states.

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[8] This co-management foresees the involvement of representatives of youth as an Advisory Council (AC) in the development of youth policy in co-operation with representatives of the Council of Europe member states (CDEJ) with equal rights.

The White Paper on Youth (European Commission, 2001) was a key marker in European Union youth policy, establishing a framework for further cooperation of the member states in the youth field. Although youth work at that stage was not mentioned in much detail other than as a broad educational endeavour to support young people's personal development, nevertheless European youth work policy began to recognise a number of other specific challenges for young people, such as the role of youth work in providing information on health issues and in preventing drug and alcohol abuse. Youth organisations were also seen as essential in combating xenophobia and racism. The latter is not so surprising, given that the Council of Europe began the "All Different – All Equal" campaign in 1995. The National Youth Councils and a number of youth organisations were heavily involved in the implementation of this campaign within member states to fight racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance. It is of note that in 2006 a similar version of this successful campaign was launched, focussing on the same overall aim but using a positive approach by fostering diversity or intercultural exchange.

Other priorities have begun to emerge, for example within the *EU strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering* (EC, 2009), where youth work was identified as a possible source of skill acquisition outside the classroom. Furthermore, youth work was strongly linked to employability in the stated objective to 'develop youth work as a resource to support youth employability' (EC, 2009: 6). Allied to this was the promotion of youth work's contribution to creativity and the entrepreneurship of young people. Work is continuing in this area, with two EU expert groups established to analyse the impact of youth work (and of broader non-formal education) on employability and the transition from education to employment.[9]

A clear policy direction is now becoming apparent where youth work is seen as a key agency in alleviating a series of social problems and addressing a number of wider social issues. This is made quite clear in the following:

> *Together with families and with other professionals, youth work can help deal with unemployment, school failure, and social exclusion, as well as provide leisure time. It can also increase skills and support the transition from youth to adulthood.* (European Commission 2009, 40)

These expectations and priorities for youth work from European policy makers remain consistent, and if anything they have been strengthened by the challenges of growing youth unemployment in the aftermath of the global financial crisis starting in 2008, as well as the increase of terrorism connected to Islamist (and far right) extremism. The preventative role of youth work has been recognised and given importance. As a result, across the Council of Europe and the European Union various projects have been launched, such as the EU expert group which developed a "toolbox" for youth workers tackling violent radicalisation (European Commission, 2017b).

One of the problems with this policy direction is that it potentially runs counter to the fundamental methodologies of youth work. For example, there is very little about participation – a fundamental principle of youth work, and one enshrined in the declaration of youth work and a number of EU statements about youth work. This is another example of the tension identified earlier between acknowledging and respecting youth work as a practice which

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[9] The expert groups were called 'The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment' and 'Promoting the creativity and innovative capacity of young people by identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant for employability'.

responds to issues and needs as they arise out of the engagement of youth workers with young people, and youth work as a practice designated to deal with specific 'youth issues'.

No doubt the European institutions would counter accusations of the top-down construction of policies by pointing to the involvement of youth workers, young people and youth researchers in the co-creation of youth policy at the European level – for example, through 'structured dialogue', which is described as 'a means of mutual communication between young people and decision-makers in order to implement the priorities of European youth policy' (European Commission, 2017c). It is certainly the case that EU institutions do attempt to make young people's (and to some extent youth workers') voices heard in European policy formation, thereby giving them some influence on the role youth work could and should play in the implementation of policies. However, as the description of structured dialogue implies, the policy priorities have often already been established, and the discussions tend to only concern the ways in which youth work can and should contribute. Of course, one of the problems with this policy process is the sheer size of the EU; even with the relative success of the *Declaration of Youth Work* (EU/Council of Europe, 2015), which involved five hundred 'key respondents' in its establishment, however many thousands of youth workers across the EU felt that it was a process 'done to them' and inevitably feel isolated from it.

Conclusion

It is evident that Europe has played an important role in defining youth work across a broad spectrum of member states, many of whom did not have an established tradition of youth work. However, the European Union and the Council of Europe have also been quite explicit in its policy priorities from the early days of establishing European unity to the more contemporary problems of increasing employability and social inclusion, as well as combating extremism. Europe has recognised the value of youth work, but this is often on the basis of its potential to address identified policy priorities. This clear direction of travel for youth work and the setting of objectives has the potential to run counter to the autonomous actions of youth workers and youth work's person-centred practice, the aims of which emerge out of the engagement of youth workers with young people, which cannot be prescribed in advance.

Clearly the funding structures and supporting policies of European institutions have assisted the development of youth work, and they are shaping both what youth work is and what goals it should reach, within broadly established European ideals. However, this should not be a one-way street; within this policy climate it is imperative that a bottom-up process is initiated whereby youth work and youth workers become a driving force within the development of youth work across Europe. It is up to youth workers to create their 'image', and continue to define youth work on its own terms as well as begin to set limits on how much influence from 'Europe' will be accepted. The project that this book communicates is part of this process. It attempts to communicate and develop youth work on the basis of what young people themselves say its impact is on their lives and communities.

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Chapter 2:
Youth Work in the UK (England)
By Jon Ord and Bernard Davies

This chapter focuses initially on the development of youth work in the UK as a whole. It then briefly illustrates some of the distinctive developments across the four nations that make up the UK – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – before focusing exclusively on England, since the youth work organisations within this project are based in south-west England. However, it should be noted that while there are some differences across the nations of the UK, when making comparisons between the UK and other European traditions in most cases the similarities within the UK significantly outweigh the differences.

Historical overview

In the UK, a version of 'youth work' emerged within forms of 'popular' education in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Davies, 2009). Through these 'indigenous … traditions' working class groups sought to provide education for themselves rather than allow their upper class 'betters' to do it for and especially to them (Johnson, 1970, 1976/1977). Alongside adults, young people were here likely to find themselves in settings with features that characterise what has become known as 'open access youth work': participating by choice, in their leisure time (such as it was then), and in groups which met and worked together in informal ways on personally and educationally developmental tasks. Their purposes were seen by the ruling classes as openly and threateningly political, even perhaps revolutionary, and in response the upper classes soon began to design and impose their own versions of a 'provided' education – highly disciplined forms of schooling – which very quickly rendered the 'popular' education tradition largely invisible.

Youth work can also be traced back to Sunday Schools for the children of 'the lower orders', set up by Christian philanthropists such as Robert Raikes and Hannah More in the late eighteenth century (Smith, 2002). Another significant marker was the establishment in 1844 of the UK's first clearly identifiable national voluntary youth organisation, the Young Men's Christian Association, formed with the aim of 'uniting and directing the efforts of Christian young men for the spiritual welfare for their fellows' (YMCA, 1857). This was followed by the philanthropic and religiously-inspired Boys' Brigade, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides – organisations which were very quickly exported across the world as part of Britain's colonial 'mission'. A national networks of boys' and girls' and (later) young farmers' clubs was also created, which eventually came together to form their own national associations or federations (Davies, 1999a).

The motivations of these 'pioneers' of 'youth leadership' were complex. Originating in a need to save 'poor and unfortunate' children, they were also motivated by a desire to bring them to a Christian salvation, as well as a determination to build young people's 'character' so that they developed into 'upstanding British citizens' to fulfil Britain's imperialist mission. Also underpinning these 'positive' aspirations, however, were the fears of the society's privileged groups, who often sponsored – and funded – the new organisations. Such fears

focused increasingly on the 'organised working classes' who were seeking to challenge the existing social order.[1] At this time a concern for the newly conceptualised 'adolescent' began to emerge, who might be neither in school nor at work, and who therefore had too much unsupervised and morally risky leisure time and who needed to be attracted into more 'constructive' recreational activities. This is a theme which has persisted and grown in stature in policy discourse.

State involvement in youth work

Although during the 1914–18 war the state began to seek a role in encouraging and supporting such 'youth leadership', only a minority of local authorities, through a local juvenile organisation committee, 'provided generously and pursued a vigorous policy of development' (Davies, 1999a: 15). The practical effects of state intervention across the country were therefore limited. Charitable organisations thus overwhelmingly remained the providers of youth work in the United Kingdom right up to 1939, when wartime conditions again persuaded state policy-makers that they needed to create a 'Service of Youth', although still in partnership with the voluntary sector (Davies, 1999a: 18–21). This was achieved within sections 41 and 53 of the 1944 Education Act (National Archives, n.d.a; n.d.b), where 'a legal obligation was placed on the local authorities to provide educational facilities for young people out of school' (Ord, 2016: 108). However, this legislation was limited and the question of what is adequate local authority youth service provision has plagued youth work ever since (Nichols, 2012).

Despite the creation of this nominal 'Service for Youth', overall in the post-war years the pattern of provision was largely unchanged. The dominance of voluntary organisations continued, and provision was confined to the uniformed troops and brigades and the more informal youth club settings which they had pioneered, supplemented by the occasional short-term residential event. In fact, far from creating a youth service, the UK's 'austerity' years of the later 1940s and early 1950s saw funding for youth work cut to the point where by the later-1950s its total demise was being widely predicted (Davies, 1999a).

What saved the service in England and Wales– indeed, substantially boosted it and greatly strengthened the role of the state – was the report of the Albemarle Committee published in 1960 (Ministry of Education, 1960). Set up by the then Conservative government, in part because of its doubts about the capacity of the 'traditional' voluntary sector to respond innovatively enough to the new, less deferential 'teenager', the report's forty-four recommendations were accepted by the Minister of Education on the day it was released.

However, before discussing the impact of Albemarle in depth we must first consider some of the differences across the UK. As in the post-Albemarle years, the state's role in providing youth work began to diverge in the four UK nations, especially after powers were devolved to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the 1990s.

In **Wales**[2] between 1944 and 1997 the Youth Service was inextricably linked to the Youth Service in England. However, this changed following devolution. A key marker was the specific Welsh amendments to Section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 – *Extending Entitlement* (WSA, 2002). This directed Welsh l*ocal authorities to provide, secure the*

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[1] The Trades Union Congress was established in 1868 (TUC, 2017) and the Labour Party in 1900 (Labour Party, no date)

[2] The Welsh context was provided by John Rose, who was the Head of Youth Work Strategy at the Welsh Assembly Government between 2006 and 2008 and was previously Acting Chief Executive of the Wales Youth Agency.

provision of, or participate in the provision of youth support services... [to} encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly):

- *to participate effectively in education and training,*
- *to take advantage of opportunities for employment,*
- *to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities. (WSA, 2002:1)*

To help achieve the *Extending Entitlement* outcomes each local authority in Wales was required to provide a Youth Service,[3] a key component of which was a commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). This became the foundation of principles, values and standards for dealing with young people in Wales.

The National Youth Service Strategy (WSA, 2007), a Welsh Government response to the requirement to have a Youth Service, identified the outcomes for young people as: *active participation; wider skills development; and enhanced emotional competence*. Supporting the development of the strategy were the UK-wide National Occupational Standards, which identified the generic purpose, principles and values underpinning the Youth Service. The Strategy was revised in 2014 (WSA, 2014) and set out a four-year vision, which recognised the benefits of open-access provision and identified Youth Work as being beneficial in providing safe places for young people to relax and where potentially vulnerable young people could be identified as requiring further support. The strategy also claimed that the social skills gained by young people through their involvement in Youth Service activities were essential for future employment.

In **Scotland**, as the Albemarle Committee was meeting in 1959/1960 a Consultative Council for Youth Service was being set up, which quickly began to integrate youth work with schooling and adult and community education. In 1964 this was renamed the Standing Consultative Council for Youth and Community Work, and by 1968, albeit in more modest form, it had produced its equivalent of the Albemarle Report, significantly entitled *Community of Interests* (SED, 1968). This was followed in 1975 by the Alexander Report (SED, 1975) which advocated that 'adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should, with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service' – a provision which in 2002 was renamed 'community learning and development'. Within these structures, it was still true that youth work sometimes struggled for recognition as a practice in its own right. Nonetheless, in 1983 a commitment to youth work was evidenced by the then Scottish Community Education Council, with the publication of a consultative document entitled *Youth Work in Scotland* (SCEC, 1983).

While the Albemarle report only applied directly to England and Wales, it helped shape a youth service for young people in **Northern Ireland**[4] and redefined the role of the youth worker (McCready and Loudon, 2015: 83). In 1961 a Ministry of Education White Paper entitled 'Development of the Youth Welfare Service' influenced the development of the Youth Service in Northern Ireland encouraging local authorities to take a more active role in the implementation of youth provision. However by the late 1960's the Youth Service in Northern Ireland began to take on a role distinct from the rest of Britain responding to the political and social unrest which erupted in 1969, known as 'The Troubles'. Significantly in 1972 the Education and Library Board Order created a statutory youth service in Northern

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[3] Unfortunately the notion of adequacy was still underpinned by the original rather vague 'requirement' identified in the 1944 Education Act, as mentioned earlier.

[4] The Northern Irish context was provided by Dr Ken Harland, a consultant, trainer and researcher in youth issues and a former Senior Lecturer at Ulster University, where he worked from 2002 to 2016.

Ireland, with five Education and Library Boards. A key outcome of this was the provision of full time youth clubs in many socially deprived areas deemed to be at risk from the effects of unemployment, social deprivation and 'paramilitary influence'. Another significant factor at this time was the establishment of professional training in Community Youth Work at Ulster University in 1973.

In 1987 the *Policy for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland* (Department of Education, 1987) was published in order to establish an agreed curriculum for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland. The Youth Service was defined as a free association of agencies, both voluntary and statutory, primarily concerned with the social education and personal development of young people. This led in 1990 to the establishment of a Youth Council for Northern Ireland, which included the determination and payment of grants to the voluntary sector. Importantly the 1987 policy document more clearly defined the relationship between the formal education sector and the Youth Service. It also identified core objectives for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland with emphasis on curriculum development, increased cross-community initiatives, and opportunities for active participation by young people in European and international exchanges. However, a number of Education and Training Inspectorate inspections found that the curriculum did not accurately reflect the diverse needs of young people of different ages, abilities or interests.

This was replaced in 1997 by the Department of Education's *Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice*, which recognised that it was 'neither possible, nor desirable to set out the content of a detailed Youth Service curriculum to cover the diversity of youth provision in Northern Ireland' (Department of Education, 1997: 9). The document did however identify three core underlying principles: participation; the promotion of acceptance and understanding of others; and the development of values and beliefs.

In 2013 a new policy, *Priorities for Youth* (Department of Education, 2013) outlined a new set of priorities for youth work within education. This required the proportionate targeting of services, with a clear focus on those most in need of additional support to achieve their educational potential, embrace diversity and overcome disaffection. Key priorities include

- Raising standards for all and closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest achieving young people,
- Providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that help them to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning,
- Creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and are evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes. (Department for Education, 2013: 12)

Despite years of significant policy developments creating a vibrant statutory and voluntary Youth Service, recent cuts to Youth Service budgets in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK (see below), have impacted severely upon the sector. In 2015 the five Northern Irish Education Boards merged into a single Education Authority which was established under the Education Act Northern Ireland (2014). This has been a catalyst for the demise of statutory bodies such as the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and the Curriculum Development Unit, as well as YouthNet, the umbrella organisation representing the voluntary youth sector.

Youth Services in Northern Ireland have been, and continue to be, further influenced and frustrated by the ongoing challenges for young people associated with living in a divided and contested society struggling to emerge from forty years of political conflict and move towards peacebuilding.

There are some clear differences across the four nations of the UK. For example, in relation to cuts, while open access youth work facilities throughout England were being closed down (see below), YouthLink, the collective voice of the youth work sector in Scotland, was working with the Scottish Government to produce a national youth work strategy for 2014 to 2019. (published in December 2014,Youthlink Scotland, 2014). However, it needs to be acknowledged that the similarities within UK youth work may well outweigh the differences when comparisons are made between youth work in the UK and other parts of Europe, including those partners in this comparative study.

Key policy documents which have shaped youth work in England

The Albemarle legacy in England

In England[5], and also for some years in Wales, the Albemarle Committee had a substantial and lasting legacy. Positively, the report supported a distinctive young person-centred 'social education' which assumed young people's voluntary engagement in leisure facilities offering enjoyable forms of 'association', especially with peers, as well as 'challenging' activities and programmes. Seeking to go beyond the ruling class language of the school speech day, it also defined the young person as 'the fourth partner' alongside the government, local authorities and voluntary organisations – setting an aspiration for an authentic 'youth voice' within Youth Service decision-making (and indeed beyond). A point which has been repeated regularly since and with which practitioners and policy-makers continue to struggle.

Recognising the new youth culture of the so-called swinging sixties, Albemarle also advocated support for young people's 'self-programming' groups – a recommendation which, while never being implemented as the Committee had envisaged, nonetheless during the 1960s helped to prompt some 'experimental' detached work projects. Though the youth club or youth centre remained the main way for the state to provide youth work, these helped lay foundations for detached and outreach methods which became increasingly incorporated into both local authority and voluntary sector mainstream provision. Though usually carried out as forms of street work, other approaches using adapted buses were also developed as mobile youth work facilities, especially in rural areas,. In some urban areas youth cafés and other kinds of 'drop-ins' opened, staffed by trained youth workers. Also, and perhaps unintentionally, by the 1970s and into the 1980s the Service's increased openness to more varied and innovative ways of working provided spaces within both the statutory and voluntary sectors for more political forms of 'anti-oppressive' and 'anti-discrimination' practice to take hold, influenced by the new movements for women's, Black, gay and disabled people's liberation.

Although the Albemarle report had emphasised the importance of a 'partnership' between state and the voluntary sector provision, this did not translate into reality. Indeed, the balance of power tipped significantly away from those voluntary organisations which for nearly a

[5] The remainder of this chapter primarily focuses on youth work in England because the three youth work organisations in the study are based in the South West of England.

century had assumed youth work to be their exclusive field of activity. Shaped by the dominant social democratic ideology of the time, the Committee assumed and indeed advocated strongly that the state, both national and local, should take an active role not only in funding youth work facilities but also in directly providing them, as well as the policy-making and managerial structures needed to support and develop them.

Out of the Albemarle recommendations came an advisory Youth Service Development Council (YSDC) which survived into the 1970s and significantly increased levels of state funding. This resulted in a major government-funded building programme which produced nearly 3,000 projects (Davies, 1999: 61), a doubling of the full-time workforce over five years, and the creation of national machinery for negotiating workers' salaries and conditions. The report was also instrumental in instigating a national network of qualifying courses for youth work, which in the ensuing decades moved from offering one- and then two-year diplomas to awarding three-year degrees. Many of these courses helped to endorse 'professionalised' approaches, allowed practitioners to claim considerable autonomy in their face-to-face practice, and are still in existence in many universities in the UK.

As what later came to be called by some its 'golden age' (Davies, 1999 a) was coming to an end, the Youth Service in England (and also still at this stage Wales) was reviewed again in the later 1970s by two sub-committees of the YSDC. Each had a very different, even conflicting, remit. One, chaired by Fairbairn – a Director of Education – focused on the Service's relationship with the schools and further education; the other, chaired by Milson – the head of the youth work qualifying courses at Birmingham's Westhill College – focused on its relationship with 'the adult community'. Though the final report, *Youth and Community Work in the '70s*, known as the Milson-Fairbairn Report and published in 1969 (DES, 1969), emerged as a somewhat uncomfortable integration of their work, some of its proposals were 'radical' in ways which chimed with the thinking of the time. Not only did it recommend that the Youth Service move away from 'the-club-is-the-youth-service' approach. It also asserted that in search of an 'active society', 'it is no part of our aim to achieve a comfortable integration of the youth and adult populations' (DES, 1969: 76).

Thatcherism and youth work in a cold climate

In 1979 a Conservative government was elected, led by Margaret Thatcher. This brought a profoundly significant shift in policy, from one underpinned by social democracy to one defined by Neo-Liberalism. The former approach, associated with the post-war era (during which the welfare state was created), was characterised by a broad consensus on the role of the state in ensuring the needs of its citizens were met, whereas Neo-Liberalism emphasised individualism and the pre-eminence of the market, advocating a limited role for government. Clarke, Gerwitz and McClaughlin (2000) describe this as a shift from a period of 'welfarism' to one of 'post welfarism' – where many previously taken-for-granted assumptions were questioned, including the very notion of society.

The Thatcher government had little sympathy with youth work's ideas or ideals. Politicians ignored the recommendations of the Milson-Fairbairn report. They also ignored their own report *Experience and Participation*, published in 1982 and known as the Thomson Report (DES, 1982), taking two years to respond to it –clearly a sign of things to come. One of the

key recommendations of the Thomson Report – itself a legacy of the original 1944 Education Act – was to pass legislation to strengthen the requirement on local authorities to provide an adequate Youth Service, but this was not responded to positively. This still remains a campaigning aspiration within the youth work field (McCardle, 2014).

Although youth work was largely ignored during the Thatcherite era, this did not allow it to thrive independently, as the Neo-Liberal rhetoric of reducing state intervention resulted in significant cuts to local government spending which often impacted on youth work provision. Any interest which ministers did take in the Youth Service was increasingly made conditional on it justifying greater public investment. Davies (1999b) noted that accountability had become the 'byword'. Youth work increasingly found itself required to focus on national government priorities, which at that time of very high youth unemployment concerned keeping young people in education and jobs, or supporting youth training schemes and dealing with what was perceived to be young people's 'anti-social behaviour'.

New Labour

1997 saw the election of the first Labour government in almost twenty years, and with it came a renewed focus on the needs of young people and issues of poverty, for example by setting ambitious targets for reducing child poverty (IFS, 2015). However, New Labour proved a mixed blessing for youth work. Within a year of taking office the government had undertaken the first comprehensive audit of youth services (NYA/DfEE, 1998). Youth work was back in the spotlight, and some of the initial policy pronouncements were welcomed – for example, in their statement that 'good youth work:

- Offers quality advice
- Enables the voice of young people to be heard
- Provides a rich diversity of personal and social development opportunities
- Promotes intervention and prevention to address … disaffection and exclusion' DfES (2001: 4)

However, scepticism returned with the publication of *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (DfES, 2002) which 'unmistakably marked the moment when the New Labour modernisation bandwagon rolled – some would say steamrolled – onto youth service territory' (Davies, 2008: 30). REYS, as it became known, introduced profound changes to youth work practice. Underpinned by statutory targets for both recorded and accredited outcomes, it introduced an instrumentalised form of practice emphasising programmes which led to pre-defined outcomes, leading some, including Smith (2003), to proclaim the end of youth work as we knew it.

Frustratingly, REYS did 'toy with' the idea of addressing the adequacy question, statutory youth work's holy grail, recommending a statutory minimum expenditure of £100 per young person aged 13 to 19 (DfES, 2002: 26). However, '[t]he problem was … that this was only guidance and it was never made a statutory requirement' (Ord, 2016: 116), and so although local authority expenditure on youth work increased during New labour's time in office, there was nothing to stop any future cuts when the political map shifted again.

Integrated working

One of New Labour's major influences was the establishment of fundamental changes in professional integration and coordination (Davies and Merton, 2012). Initially attempted through the unsuccessful Connexions strategy, with the *Every Child Matters strategy* (DfES, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) New Labour successfully 'integrated' youth work into multi-disciplinary teams whose overriding priority in the wake of a series of tragic child abuse scandals was the safeguarding of children and young people. This produced 'genuine fear that youth work would not be able to retain its distinctiveness' (Ord, 2016: 124) as the then Minister for Youth argued against what she referred to as the 'silo mentality' (Barrett, 2004). Integrated working placed particular emphasis on information sharing, and this in particular undermined the relationships of trust that youth workers established with young people.

Open access youth work versus positive activities

New Labour's commitment to 'things to do and places to go' for young people was enshrined in legislation in the Education and Inspections Act (2006), within which a duty was placed on local authorities to ensure young people had access to 'positive activities'. Increasingly less value was placed on traditional open access youth work provision. The approaches developed over youth work's 150-year history – enshrined in Albemarle and embedded in youth work practice – which emphasised young people's voluntary participation and the negotiated educational and developmental process were increasingly disregarded, to be replaced by a simplistic conception of the role of 'positive activities' in the lives of young people. Politicians seemed unable to grasp Rosseter's claim that '[f]irst and foremost youth workers are educators' (1987: 52), not mere recreation and leisure providers. The conception of positive activities fundamentally misunderstood how youth workers nurture young people's development or assist them in realizing their potential.

Published with the subtitle *A 10-year strategy for positive activities*, New Labour's final policy document *Aiming High for Young People* (DfCSF, 2007) did however produce the first significant capital investment since Albemarle in the construction of new youth centres, under the title of 'Myplace'. It funded sixty-three new centres by 2013, at the cost of around £240 million (CRESR/CEIR, 2013). Many of these new centres are impressive and contain a considerable range of resources, from music recording studios to construction workshops. As the evaluation report noted:'Myplace centres offer enormous potential to meet the leisure and activity interests of a wider range of young people' (Durham University et al., 2011: 95). However, the initiative still failed to fully appreciate the educational role of youth work within such spaces.

A deficit model of young people and the rise of 'targeted support'

A theme underpinning New Labour's reforms of youth work was a commitment to target provision at those deemed most vulnerable and at risk. However, it failed to appreciate how successful traditional open access youth work approaches were in meeting the needs of a wide range of young people (Richie and Ord, 2017), including many who were among the most vulnerable and at risk. Instead it choose to promote a form of 'personalised support' for young people deemed to have 'serious problems' (such as NEETs – young people not in education, employment or training – teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol problems, anti-social behaviour etc.). This specifically restricted and curtailed the expansive 'universal' aspect

of youth work and created a predetermined response to perceived 'individual' need. Youth Matters, like many of its predecessors, operated from 'deficit model' of young people (Ord, 2016; Jeffs and Smith, 2006), which pathologises young people and defines them in terms of 'problems'. As a result services focused on young people were inevitably concerned with the need to find specific solutions to such 'problems', often through one-to-one work with young people, rather than developing progressive or emancipatory group-based practice.

Conservative 'Austerity' policy

Since 2010 these policies have been developed even more systematically, with the priority being behaviour modification through 'early intervention', and the 'targeting' of young people seen as in need of rehabilitation or, where necessary, containment. However, there are even greater dangers which are continuing to affect youth work, since the financial crash of 2008 gave the newly elected Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government carte blanche to enact their ideological putsch to reduce the state . As Youdell and McGimpsey (2015: 117) point out:

> *The massive financial disinvestment in public services ... [has] continuities with the long standing political goals of neoliberalism. ... in Austerity, however, the presentation of these moves shifts from a framing of quality, effectiveness and choice to one of financial necessity.*

Due to the lack of a firm statutory foundation, youth work and youth services were left almost completely unprotected when, from 2010, central government cut its overall financial support to local authorities by some 40%. Youth Service budgets between 2010–11 and 2015–16 fell by £387 million, some six hundred youth centres were closed, 139,000 places for young people were lost and 3650 youth worker jobs were abolished (Unison, 2014. This gave further impetus to a re-launched campaign to strengthen the legislative base of the Service with some 60% of the 97 local councils responding to the government's own enquiry in 2014 admitting that they hadn't always taken into account their statutory duty – and that some never did so (Cabinet Office, 2014, para 13). Many local authorities claimed to be filling the resultant gaps by 'outsourcing' their responsibilities to local community groups, apparently assuming – often unrealistically – that a new wave of volunteers would suddenly materialise to replace 'disappeared' paid and trained staff.

Positive for Youth?

One could be forgiven for detecting overtones of Orwellian 'Doublespeak' (Ord, 2016), but just as the full force of the widespread cuts to youth work were taking effect, the government published a policy entitled *Positive for Youth* (DfE, 2011, 2012). This failed to acknowledge their responsibility for the nationwide decline in provision, denying this was the government's problem on the grounds that 'local areas are best placed to make decisions' (HCEC, Para 10: 9). It did make some positive 'gestures' to youth work, acknowledging the contributions of detached and centre-based youth workers. Significantly, however, what was most explicitly celebrated was what the services were doing for 'those young people who don't get the support or opportunities they need from their family or community' (Para 4.73). This reflected the overriding preoccupation with targeting those young people who are repeatedly

categorised as 'disadvantaged' or 'at risk', and with the services and methods it regarded as best able to divert or reform them.

National Citizen Service

What has emerged as the government's 'flagship' youth response since 2010 is the National Citizen Service, a four week 'course' specifically aimed at bringing together 15-to-17-year-old young people from different classes and ethnic backgrounds in a residential experience and a local volunteering project (National Audit Office, 2017: Para 2). Its budget in 2015 (£140 million) would have kept open most of the year-round locally based Youth Service facilities which up to a million 13-to-19-year-olds were likely to have sampled or were using regularly (NCVYS, 2013), but which by then had been closed. That year the scheme attracted just 58,000 participants – over 30 per cent short of its target, despite a marketing budget of £8 million. In the following year take-up rose to 93,000 (some 12 per cent of the eligible age group), an auditing report in January 2017 (National Audit Office, 2017: Para 12–15) cast serious doubts on whether its plans to increase this to 360,000 by 2020–21 were achievable, and the target was reduced to 247,000 (Lepper, 2017).
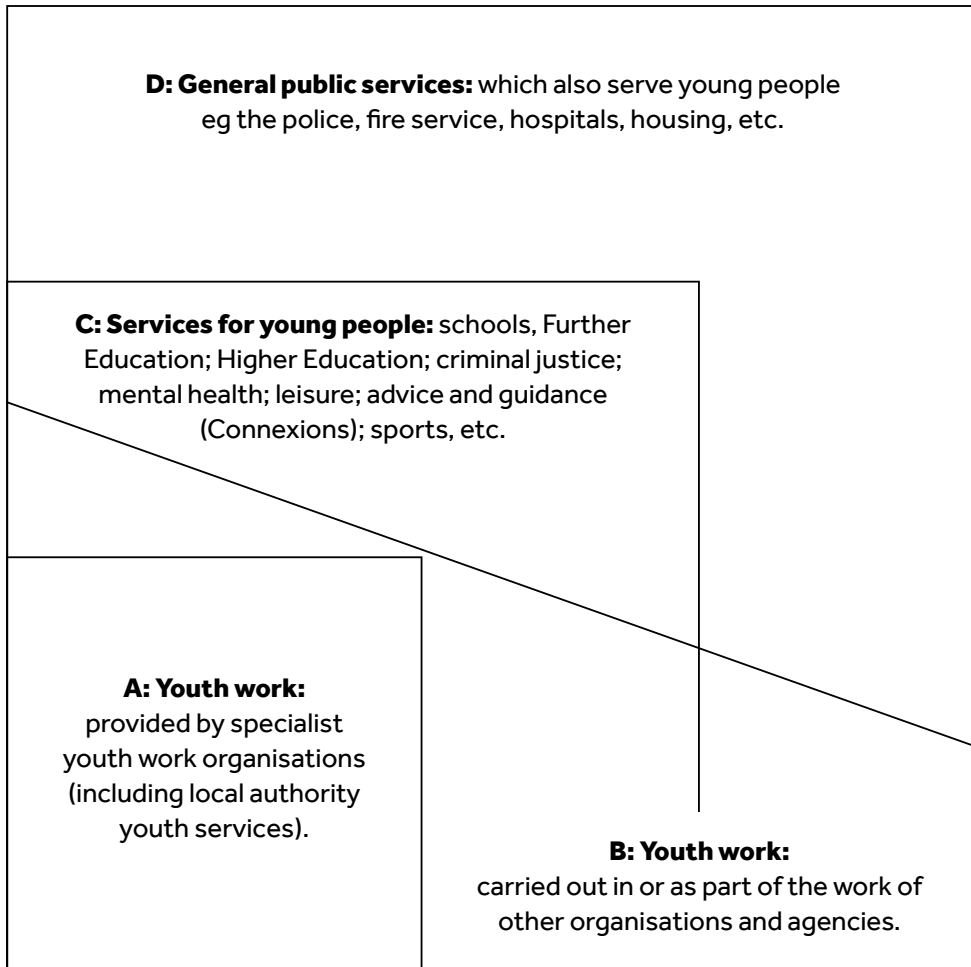
Widely regarded from the start as the then Prime Minister David Cameron's 'vanity project', in 2013 responsibility for the scheme was moved to a trust which, though formally independent, continued to be funded by the government's Office for Civil Society. By 2016, after six years of government insistence that to reduce the country's deficit it had to make major cuts in spending on public services, £1.26 <u>billion</u> of public money had been found to fund the scheme through to 2020. Also by then, legislation was going through Parliament to put the programme on a statutory basis – that is, to require local authorities, schools and other public bodies to promote and support it.

Key features of practice

The age range of youth work was traditionally between 11 and 25 (NYA 2003, cited in Ford et al., 2005). Historically a number of youth clubs may have run sessions for 8-to-11-year-olds (traditionally an age range associated with 'play work') in what were known as junior youth clubs. However, youth workers would never work with under-8s as this would be the jurisdiction of those trained separately to work with 'early years'. In 2002 New Labour specifically narrowed the focus of youth work to 13 to 19 years (DfES, 2002), and this commitment has been endorsed by the National Youth Agency (2014) although they acknowledge that this can be extended to 24 years in certain circumstances.

Youth Workers in the UK, particularly as a result of New Labour's step change in integrated working, increasingly find themselves working with a number of other professional fields that also work or have contact with young people. The following diagram (overleaf), devised by Wylie (2003), depicts the variety of settings youth workers now find themselves working in.

However, following the widespread cuts and ensuing reorganisation of youth work and youth services from 2010, this would now be more accurately portrayed with the size and number of dedicated autonomous youth workers working in open access settings (Box A) greatly reduced.

D: General public services: which also serve young people
eg the police, fire service, hospitals, housing, etc.

C: Services for young people: schools, Further
Education; Higher Education; criminal justice;
mental health; leisure; advice and guidance
(Connexions); sports, etc.

A: Youth work:
provided by specialist
youth work organisations
(including local authority
youth services).

B: Youth work:
carried out in or as part of the work of
other organisations and agencies.

Figure 2.1 Wylie's model of the locations of youth work (cited in Ford 2005: 11)

Measurement and evaluation of youth work in England

Throughout much of its 150-year history youth work in the UK has paid little attention to
the demonstration of its outcomes, although in the 1970s and 1980s some forms of account-
ability were developed in quite systematic ways within many statutory and voluntary organ-
isations, through what was known as managerial and/or non-managerial supervision (see
for example Marken and Payne, 1988). The first explicit demands on youth work to make
its outcomes explicit were made by the Thatcher government in 1989. With strong support
from the National Youth Agency, three 'ministerial conferences' sought to persuade statuto-
ry and voluntary providers to agree a 'core curriculum – that is the priority outcomes that the
youth services should seek to provide' (NYB 1990: 34). Resistance to this was strong and
sustained, and what was eventually agreed was not a core or set curriculum but a statement
of purpose (NYB, 1991).

However, the focus on 'outcomes' returned with the arrival of New Labour in 1997. The Transforming Youth Work Agenda (DfES, 2002), with its youth-work-specific targets for both recorded and accredited outcomes, brought accountability and placed a focus on outcomes 'centre stage'. Not only did it emphasise the need for youth work to be accountable for its outcomes; it also stipulated what these outcomes ought to be – specific, tangible and measurable, and often linked to young people's employability (Flint, 2005). However, what has been absent from the debate about youth work outcomes – what youth work is achieving – is any consideration of how it achieves these outcomes, and the processes that bring them about (Ord, 2004a, 2004b, 2016).

The focus on outcomes has not relented, illustrated by a House of Commons Select Committee report published in 2011 which highlighted what it described as the continuing problem facing the youth work field, namely that it had 'great difficulty in finding objective evidence of the impact of services', and declared itself 'frustrated in (its) efforts to uncover a robust outcome measurement framework' (HCEC, 2011: paras 30, 39). In an effort to solve the problem, at least on its own terms, the government provided over £1.28 million between 2011 and 2013 for a '[c]atalyst consortium' led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services. The consortium produced its own much-vaunted *Framework of outcomes for young people* (The Young Foundation, 2012). However, the kinds of open access youth work which had been developed in the UK for nearly a century thus came to be judged as unable to meet such crucial tests of efficiency, effectiveness – and 'success'.

European policy has had little if any influence on the development of youth work in the UK – although ironically, if it wasn't for the UK's imminent Brexit the recent strengthening of European policy frameworks could have been used to argue against the undermining of youth work in the UK. The UK has received funds from the European Union for a number of youth related initiatives, most notably in Northern Ireland under what is often referred to as 'peace money', across the rest of the UK resources have often been used for international exchanges.

Conclusion

As this chapter was being written, in a somewhat back-to-the-future scenario the survival of open access forms of youth work seemed to be again relying more and more on charitable – and in particular Christian and other 'faith' based – organisations and their voluntary as well as paid staff. Rapidly disappearing are the structures and facilities which, despite the increasing constraints of Neo-Liberal policies, had long been seen in the UK, and in many other European countries and beyond, as a form of essential 'informal leisure-time education', which young people chose to engage in, usually with friends, not least because the service respected and indeed built on their interests and concerns.

The struggle to defend and sustain this practice continues – nationally, for example, by some of the trade unions (Unite the Union, 2010, 2013a, 2013b) and the In Defence of Youth Work network (IDYW, 2017), and locally by groups across the country, from Devon to Kirklees, from Newcastle to Brighton, campaigning against the relentless cuts to their Youth Service's budgets.

To support these struggles, the need for credible evidence of the value for young people of this distinctive way of working with them, educationally and not just preventatively, has never been greater or more urgent.

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Chapter 3:
Youth Work in Finland
By Lasse Siurala

Historical overview

This section introduces the origins of youth work in Finland and discusses the key markers in its historical development. The history of youth work in Finland has its roots in Christianity and the agrarian youth movements of the late 1800s. The YMCA was established in 1886 (Nieminen, 1995: 29) and the rural youth organisation 'Nuorisoseuraliike' in 1897 (Helve, 2009: 118). The first Scouts groups were established in 1909 (Nieminen, 1995: 118), and during the Second World War the Scouts played a role in promoting patriotism and contributing to military training (ibid.: 199). As the Second World War came to an end both central government and local municipal youth work structures began to be formed. The City of Helsinki Youth Service was established in 1948 and by 1951 had three youth clubs. The activities consisted of a variety of hobby clubs. The first open youth centre in the city – the Hakakerho – was opened in 1957. Young people could come into an open youth café without the expectation of joining structured activities.

By the end of the 1980s the volume of municipal youth facilities in Helsinki alone had increased rapidly to 104 (Ilves, 1998: 142). In Finland there are now around 1,100 youth facilities funded by the municipalities, and 3,000 professional youth workers on the payroll of the municipalities (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2016). In proportion to the size of the population in Finland (5.5 million) these figures are exceptional, when compared with many other countries.

The period after the Second World War also saw the growth of the non-governmental youth organisations (youth NGOs).[1] This sector began to multiply and diversify, and today the umbrella organisation for national youth NGOs has 125 member organisations (Allianssi – Finnish Youth Cooperation 2016). Annually the Ministry of Education and Culture supports these organisations with approximately 12 million euros of grant funding (EKYP, 2014). Their local branches and other local youth organisations and activity groups are mainly and substantially funded by the municipalities.

It is important to understand from the Finnish context that the development of youth work practice, including the methods utilised and the qualifications frameworks developed for youth workers, reflects wider Finnish, as well as both European and international, youth policies. As we saw above, the big international youth organisations like the YMCA and the Scouts quickly spread to Finland. The same thing happened with youth policy concepts. For instance, in the late 1950s UNESCO introduced and adopted the idea of 'comprehensive youth policy' (Nieminen, 2016: 41). This was later adopted in Finland and contributed to the approach that youth work was seen as more than a leisure activity, adopting a broad responsibility for young people's living conditions in all spheres of life. By the late 1960s Kari Rantalaiho became very influential with his two books Youth and Society (1968) and the classic *Youth Policy in the 1970s* (1970). Many considered this to be the invention of Finnish youth policy.

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[1] According to the municipal rules and principles of funding, an organisation is qualified as a 'youth organisation' when at least 50 per cent of its membership consists of young people, typically those aged between 7 and 28 years.

By 1972, key youth legislation had begun to follow Rantalaiho's books. For example, the Youth Act (L7/1972) made it possible to build youth facilities, to support youth NGOs and to establish a local youth affairs civil servant; a municipal Youth Officer. Furthermore, local government (Municipal or City Council) was to nominate a sectoral political body, known as a Youth Board, to govern youth affairs in all municipalities and cities across the country. This strengthened the administrative and political position of youth work and youth policy within municipalities. At the same time the Government introduced a new instrument for comprehensive (or integrated) youth policies at a local level: the Municipal Youth Policy Plan. Model plans (Vartola, 1971; Siurala, 1974) proposed certain key elements including a survey on young peoples' aspirations and living conditions in the municipality, a three-to-five-year plan to meet these needs through the different sectors of the municipality, and a proposal for the City or Municipal Council to adopt the plan.

However, the emphasis on planning quickly faded away, in part due to difficulties with implementation both in Finland and elsewhere in Europe (Sörbom, 2003; Schillemans et al., 2003). Furthermore, the state gradually withdrew its financial support to the municipalities and the local Youth Boards lost their legal status. Today only a few big cities have a separate Youth Board as part of their municipal political decision-making structure.

Despite the significance of Rantalaiho and the developments of the 1970s, Nieminen points out that 'the genesis of Finnish youth policy is a much longer and more complicated tangle' (2016: 41). Nieminen refers to the early development of the concept in the two decades which preceded Rantalaiho. For example, prominent figures in the youth field and organisations like the Civic Education Centre had debated youth policy before Rantalaiho nailed it down in 1970. Nowadays the term 'youth policy' has gained currency across Europe and come to mean a broader societal responsibility for ensuring that both young peoples' basic and developmental needs and well-being are met, as well as that young peoples' aspirations are encouraged. This is often now formulated within 'integrated youth policies' or 'cross-sectorial cooperation' (Siurala, 2005: 11–18; Declaration of the 2nd Youth Work Convention, 2015: 9).

Since the 1990s the emphasis on comprehensive youth policies and youth policy plans as universal instruments to provide better opportunities for all young people was gradually replaced by political pressures to focus on youth at risk. Such policies were frequently formulated as measures to integrate vulnerable youth into education and working life. For example, the 2006 Youth Act (72/2006) proposed that 'social empowerment' was a key priority of youth work. The 2010 Amendment introduced detached youth work as a means to identify and locate NEET young people and put them in touch with respective services to address their needs. A generous government fund associated with this initiative led to the recruitment of detached youth workers in almost all municipalities in Finland.

Key features of practice

This section discusses the range of practices and settings in Finnish youth work. Traditionally youth work in Finland has consisted of two parallel pillars: youth organisations and municipal youth work. At the local level youth organisations are funded and supported by the municipal Youth Services. However, even if youth organisations are in receipt of public

sector funds, they are understood as independent civil society actors and have almost total autonomy in deciding what kind of activities they want to run. Still, they do have to report back on the use of the funds. Parallel to the youth organisation activities the municipal youth services run their own open youth work activities, typically through youth centres. Municipal youth work is understood to complement youth work carried out by youth organisations.

Overall, youth work in Finland is characterised by:
- strong public funding for youth organisations and a respect for their independence,
- strong municipal youth services, which, however, vary according to the size of the municipalities,
- well-resourced open access and cultural youth work,
- focus on children (7–15 years old).

National youth organisations and their umbrella organisation (Allianssi – the Finnish Youth Cooperation) are supported by the government. There is increasing discussion in Finland about the creation of 'indicators for youth work' in order for both local and national government funders to assess and make more transparent the use of these funds (Gretschell et al., 2016). Furthermore, Youth NGOs, like other youth work actors, are increasingly dependent on additional funds from a variety of other sources, which are often linked to current youth policy priorities and political concerns.

Open youth work services, such as a youth centre with professional youth workers, are available for almost all young people in Finland. In most municipalities and cities a youth centre is regarded by citizens as a basic service, like the local library or sports facilities. For example, in the city of Helsinki (with a population of 600,000) the Youth Service has around seventy youth centres or similar facilities, with three hundred professional youth workers providing a wide variety of activities (see www.nuoriso.hel.fi and www.nuorisokanuuna.fi). However, there are some areas of Finland which are extremely rural, remote, and have a relatively small and dispersed population, and in these municipalities open access youth work is less viable.

Youth work in both Youth NGOs and the municipalities in Finland is characterised by being focused on 7-to-15-year-old young people. For example, in the City of Helsinki over 50 per cent of visitors to the youth centres are below the age of 12 years. Recently there has been a conscious policy of municipal youth services in Finland to offer more activities to those over 15 years of age.

Recent developments include:
- New developments in digital youth work

In Finland there have been strong developments in digital youth work – working with young people on the internet, including online youth clubs. This is only in part a consequence of the remoteness of large parts of Finland and the need to digitally link them. The more important reasons include the fact that Finland is a frontrunner in IT, not least due to the influence of Nokia; Finnish young people are considered to be 'early adopters' of new information technology, and youth work in Finland has had the resources and the drive to innovate new forms

of youth work. One outcome and a driver of this development has been the establishment of the National Development Centre for Online Youth Work, "Verke" (www.verke.org).

- Inter-professional collaboration

To promote cross-sectoral cooperation between local authorities, recent legislation on youth (Youth Act Amendment 693/2010) stipulates that '…the local authority shall have a youth guidance and service network with representation from the local educational, social and health care, and youth administrations and from the labour and police administrations. In addition, the network may include representatives of the defence administration and other authorities'. This makes cross-sectoral cooperation mandatory in all municipalities. The tasks of the Network include compiling information on youth and promoting coordination of services, in particular to help young people integrate into education and working life. Already before this legislation most Youth Services in bigger cities had increasingly been engaged in cross-sectoral cooperation, and this has largely been a positive experience (Siurala, 2015: 50–56). A recent example has been the development of multi-professional One-Stop-Guidance Centres in the municipalities to provide support and information for young people in general, and for those finishing their compulsory education in particular.

- An increase of youth work targeted at young people with fewer opportunities

In recent years a policy priority has emerged of attempting to ensure that all young people are in either education, employment or training. This is aligned with the government's commitment to the Youth Guarantee (Youth Guarantee, 2017). As a result, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture 97 per cent of Finnish municipalities (in 2015) now have at least one or more detached youth workers (a total of 291), specifically assigned to reach out to NEET young people to offer guidance, access to public services, and attempt to integrate them into education, work or training.

Key Finnish youth work policy documents

The influence of national government in Finland is considerable through specific Youth Acts and their amendments (1972, 1985, 2006, 2011 and 2017), as well as wider government policy programmes and the government's specific youth policy programmes.[2] As described earlier, the 1972 Youth Act established youth work and its structures at the local level and provided substantial funding. Later in the 1980s, much of the funding and the binding nature of the 1972 legislation was redacted. The later 2006 and 2011 legislation focused on the integration of young people into education and the labour markets, and introduced cross-sectorial bodies and programmes as well as measures to reach youth at risk. The 2017 Youth Act fine-tuned the former measures and reformulated the role of the government in guiding local youth work. This 'reformulation of government guidance' meant two contradictory developments. On the one hand, the Youth Act clearly states that decisions about what kinds of youth services should be provided are taken at a local level, and it is therefore no longer necessary to implement the inter-ministerial Youth Policy Plan. However whilst appearing to give the impression that municipalities have more autonomy on deciding on their youth services, at the same time the government has pushed its priority plans, for example to reduce youth unemployment, on all the Ministries. The Youth Affairs section of the Ministry

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[2] For a more detailed description of the national youth policy structures, see Pulkkinen (2014).

of Education and Culture has felt this pressure, and has developed a number of strategies in response, for example to improve youth integration at a local level. This includes substantial funds for youth workshops and the development of detached youth work to reach NEET youth. With one hand the government gives local youth work more autonomy, and with the other it strongly recommends municipalities to implement national government priorities.

Overall, since 1970s there has been a gradual shift to 'targeted work' with an emphasis on 'individual youths at risk'. This is perhaps part of a wider European transition from the active citizenship agenda associated with the social democratic tradition of government to the youth integration agenda, which is associated with the Neo-Liberal and Conservative ideology. As previously mentioned, in Finland the integration agenda has contributed to following youth work approaches:

• Introduction of detached youth work to reach NEET youth individually,
• Youth Workshops, an employment measure to support education and labour market integration of NEET youth,
• One-stop guidance centres and other similar measures linked with the Youth Guarantee,
• Cross-administrative programmes to integrate youth with school-related problems and aggressive or anti-social behaviours.

Despite increased government pressure, it is still the municipal programmes and City Council strategies, particularly in bigger cities, which mainly guide youth services at the local level. In Finland 'municipal autonomy' results from the fact that services are funded almost entirely through local taxes which the Municipal or City Council then allocates to the services. Guidelines are set in annual budgets and in longer-term strategies of the City Council or the Municipal Council. Importantly, in this context the national youth policy programmes and guidelines easily become a secondary framework for youth services.

However, a challenge to this is on the horizon, since a recent government initiative plans to centralise health and social services at the regional level from 2019. While youth services will (in most part) stay in the municipalities, the creation of regional administration with respective elections and budget transfers from the municipalities may well drastically change this 'municipal autonomy'.

A recent trend in Finland in the public sector has been the arrival of New Public Management (Ord, 2012) with efforts to implement tighter strategic and operational management in the public sector. As a result, the administration and management of local government has been re-structured to improve strategic management. This has resulted in mergers between smaller services, including youth services. The administration is 'rationalised' and the management structures 'flattened'. The administrative staff of the small services are often moved to a central unit. In such cases, political bodies like the "Youth Board" are incorporated with other respective bodies of sports, culture, civic education and schools, and the Directors of Youth become down-graded to department managers. As a result, much of their decision-making power is transferred to the directors responsible for the new larger Cultural, Leisure or Educational Service. As a consequence, the independence and organisational influence and weight of the youth services is being diminished. This has already happened in the second biggest city, Espoo, and in the capital Helsinki. The city of Oulu is

an example of an even more aggressive organisational change to cut down administration and remove management hierarchies, where the entire youth service is being decentralised into district-level service units.

These tendencies towards the reduction of public funds, the rationalisation of administration and increased strategic management to a certain extent resemble what has happened recently in the UK (Ord, 2012), given that they are both underpinned by Neo-Liberalism and Conservative governments. However, there are significant differences between the UK and Finland, and one should be careful in drawing implications from what has happened in the UK to what is happening or will happen in Finland.

First, budget and staff cuts in municipal youth services have been minor or moderate, and in many cases there has been an increase of resources. In a survey entitled 'Future expectations on municipal youth work' (Allianssi et al., 2017) 75 per cent of directors responsible for local government youth work in Finland said in 2017 that the funding has "improved" or "remained unchanged" during the past five years. Furthermore, 67 per cent said the funding will be "improved" or "remain unchanged" during the next five years A clear majority of the municipalities have felt their budgets have developed favourably in the last five years, and this also represents an increase over the last two years as in 2015 the figures were 67% and 61% respectively (Allianssi et al., 2015).

Second, the municipal youth work field still feels that their public recognition is high. In the survey (Allianssi et al., 2017) 79 per cent of youth directors said the recognition of youth work has increased "significantly" or "somewhat" during the past five years, and 75 per cent felt the recognition will increase "significantly" or "somewhat" during the next five years. This compares to 76 percent and 71 percent respectively in 2015 (Allianssi et al., 2015). Furthermore, only 12 per cent said the recognition of youth work by local politicians has decreased during the past five years and believed that it will decrease during the next five years. Nevertheless, nearly half said that recognition had improved during the past five years and would stay that way during the next five years. This significant recognition of youth work is also anchored in the general expectation of citizens that youth centres and youth workers should establish a basic local welfare service, like a library and librarians. At the moment any sizable closing-down of youth centres or reductions in the numbers of youth workers is very unlikely.

Third, new strategies have been applied to combat a potential reduction in the visibility of youth work. Specifically addressing the question of how a small service like youth work can make itself better known in a siloed city, one successful strategy adopted by Helsinki Youth Services was through collaboration with other sectors, in an incorporation into the Helsinki City *Children and Youth Welfare Programme 2009–2012*. The Child Care Act (13.4.2007/417) stipulated that the Social Services must prepare a four-year plan to be adopted by the City Council. The Child Care Act also strongly recommended the services working with children and young people to co-operate with each other in designing their respective strategies. As a consequence, youth work became a significant player within the *Children and Youth Welfare Plan*.

The next success was the decision of the City Council to make the Welfare Plan its top strategic priority. It was the strong cooperative approach and collaborative spirit among the

Social, Health, Youth and Education sectors that impressed the City Council most. The positive cooperative atmosphere and the strong political support had a particular impact on youth work (Siurala, 2015; 55–56). First, it increased the visibility and recognition of youth work within the City Council, the City Hall and among the other sectors. Second, it increased youth work resources. Third, it created new service concepts such as inter-professional work with vulnerable youth and young people on the internet. Finally, it provided a good basis for future co-operation (such as recognition of the skills and competences of youth workers, and good collegial relations between the direction of education, social, health and youth services). True, in this process youth work did have to make compromises and became to some extent dependent on other sectors, but it also created its own relatively free 'interstitial practices' (Besse and Carletti, 2016; 145–146), or, in other words, gained 'autonomy through dependency' (Siurala, 2016).

It is argued that the Finnish context appears to have benefited from adopting a strategy based on resilience and patience, and compromising with government priorities, developing and modifying existing working methods, as well as actively cooperating with bigger sectors – a more successful strategy than attacking the government and refusing to make compromises.

Measurement and evaluation of youth work in Finland

Since the 1990s there has been increased pressure on youth work, in Finland as elsewhere, to *prove* its value. The public support for youth work has, to some extent, become dependent on its demonstrated outcomes through indicators, quality assessment and impact studies. However, in Finland commitment to youth work has traditionally been value-based, not outcomes-based. There has been a shared understanding in the Youth Acts and other policy documents that youth work is good for young people. This is one reason why indicators and quality assessment arrived in Finland relatively late. Historically there have not been strong pressures to measure the volume or outcome of youth work, or to assess its quality. Rough indicators of the number of visitors in youth facilities, of group-based activities and of those young people who have received long-term individual support have been used for some time, but indicators linked to the government or the City Council priorities have only begun to emerge over the last decade. As late as 2012 the Kanuuna youth service network (of the twenty-seven biggest cities in Finland) started to gather joint indicators for their youth work. Quality assessment measures were launched in the Helsinki Metropolitan area in 2009, spreading later to other municipalities. Interestingly, they were not introduced as a means to assess municipal youth work objectives or priorities, nor to convince the City Councils or the government of the high quality of youth work. The quality assessment tool was introduced and used as a method to improve youth work. The instrument was developed together with youth workers (Hovi et al., 2009; Siurala and Nöjd, 2015). In consequence, youth workers in Finland, as a rule, are very positive, even enthusiastic, about being assessed. They see it simply as a way of getting acknowledgement for their work and as means to develop it.

Accountability mechanisms are to a large extent absent in Finland. As previously mentioned, as the municipal youth services support and fund local youth organisations and the Youth NGOs, they must report back on the use of such funds. Importantly, there is a relationship of trust between the funders and the youth organisations to the extent that the contents and the

quality of youth work is, by and large, left for the NGOs to decide. Recently the City of Helsinki youth service did develop a European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) based tool[3] for the Youth NGOs to assess their overall administrative and operational capability (Nöjd, 2015: 57–60). Since 2005 the tool has been implemented by the City's youth organisations every three years. The process involves the NGOs carrying out a self-evaluation using the EFQM grid and is followed by discussion with the Youth Service. The outcome is used for three purposes (Smahl-Laurikainen, 2008). First, it forms the basis for deciding the amount of funds allocated for staff costs in the organisations. Second, it helps organisations develop their organisational capacity and learn from other organisations. Third, it helps the Youth Service to understand the NGOs and find better ways to support them. Importantly, the use the EFQM tool remains a non-intrusive approach, and it does not guide the objectives and contents of the youth organisations.

At a national level in Finland various measures are used to assess the living conditions and aspirations of young people. This is mostly to assist youth work actors and youth policy makers to fully understand the lives of young people in Finland. The measures also form the basis upon which evaluations of how well youth work and youth policy meet the needs of young people. The key publications include:

- Living Conditions of Youth (bi-annual, Finnish Youth Research Network)

- Youth Barometer (annual, first published in 1994, Finnish Youth Research Society)

- The School Health Promotion Study (bi-annual, between 1996-2017, nationwide survey with aproximately 200,000 respondents (National Institute for Health and Welfare)

- Evaluation of the Youth Policy Programmes of the Government and the Ministry of Education and Culture

The government has recently been developing indicators to assess its children and youth policies. In 2011 a committee commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2011) published a report on children's welfare indicators. The National Institute of Health and Welfare has further elaborated these indicators (Räikkönen et al., 2014). The indicators typically measure poverty, unemployment, income support, school drop-out rates and other school related problems, depression, use of drugs, alcohol consumption etc. Arguably, however, this is not about the *well-being* but what might be called the *unwell-being* of children and young people. The indicators tend to conceptualise and construct the life of children and youth as a risk and a problem. In Finland, as elsewhere, children and youth indicators are being constructed in the context of social work which is more *problem-focused* than youth work, which, according to the European youth work rhetoric (see for example Siurala, 2005), is on the contrary *opportunity-oriented*, building on the idea of *youth as a resource*. It is argued strongly that young people deserve indicators which measure their strengths, the positive aspects of their lives as well as the opportunities that children and young people are afforded as a result of their involvement in youth work.

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[3] EFQM is a tool for private and public sector organisations to evaluate how their organisation works.

More recently the Ministry of Education and Culture funded a research project to outline national indicators for youth work (Gretschel et al., 2016). The research project, faced with what it regarded as the versatile and ambiguous nature of youth work, decided it could not arrive at shared indicators, and instead produced a 'definition of youth work' and some suggestions for possible indicators. The Kanuuna network of the youth services of the twenty-seven biggest cities in Finland[4] has also constructed a list of key concrete indicators of youth work. However, it was soon discovered that it was extremely difficult to compare the indicators of different cities. The figures meant different things to different cities, as their respective youth work priorities varied, and as there were many city-specific reasons for rising or falling indicators. Indicators are evidently highly contextualised. To enable basic comparisons of data the network decided to produce, attached to the annual statistics, an explanatory contextualisation report to help understand what the indicators actually meant in a given city.

The *Youth Welfare Report* of Helsinki City is an interesting example of local-level indicators on youth, which tries to meet the above-mentioned limitations of both the problem- and risk-oriented nature of indicators and the social and cultural contextualisation of them. The Helsinki indicators are based on the theory of basic human capabilities developed by Nussbaum (2011), modified to the context of youth in the city of Helsinki. They include statistical and experiential data on not only the problems and risks of young people, but essentially the opportunities for young people, such as:

- Sports and recreational opportunities for young people, including statistics and experiential reports of young people on how they have made use of those opportunities

- Educational level of young people and young peoples' own accounts of the meaning of education in their life strategies

- The proportion of young people having good relations with their parents, number of friends, frequency of good school atmosphere

- Participation opportunities and experiential reports on the variety of ways young people have applied those resources

- Sustainable development measured through indicators like the number of educational institutions certified to promote sustainable development and the proportion of young people using public transport

The *Youth Welfare Report* challenges the notion of indicators, statistics and research data as objective facts. It rather treats knowledge as essentially *socially and culturally constructed*. The knowledge production of the report develops in steps. First it gathers the available statistical and research data, then modifies it for the young people to discuss and complements the statistics with their experiential knowledge. This is followed by the youth workers providing their own interpretation of the data, and then the key youth policy decision makers from the Social, Health, Education, Youth and the Cultural Office (Arts and Arts Education) of the city drawing their policy conclusions. Finally this bulk of interpretational and experiential knowledge is translated into proposals for administrative and political decision makers to improve the services for young people.

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[4] For further information, see www.nuorisokanuuna.fi

Another recent form of challenging the supremacy of quantitative data and the authority of professionalism is the way quality indicators of youth work have been designed, gathered and interpreted by young people themselves. While it is standard procedure in the quality assessment of youth work to use professional youth workers or their superiors as external or peer evaluators, they did it differently in the city of Lappeenranta. There, young people were asked to develop their own criteria for assessing the quality of open youth work, as well as functioning as the evaluators and as those deciding on the fit between the criteria and actual practice of youth work. The young people then became the authorities on evaluation (European Commission, 2017).

Most recently the Kanuuna network has decided to adopt a Swedish youth work Log Book, a user-friendly database to record the key events and characteristics of each day in the Youth Centre. The Log Book has the potential to produce reliable and updated key indicators on youth work.

European youth work policy and Finland

Finland has been an active member in the youth structures of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum (the umbrella organisation for European youth organisations and National Youth Councils). This has involved participation in administration, in statutory bodies, and in youth research co-ordination bodies.[5] Finnish youth work has not only been influenced by European youth policies; it also been influential in shaping them. For example, Finland introduced National Youth Policy Reviews as a successful form of learning from other countries, as well as developing youth work and youth policy Europe-wide. More recently the EU has adopted the 'Youth Guarantee' as its key measure to combat youth unemployment based on the Finnish initiative and experience. While it has become fashionable in some countries to criticize European institutions, Finnish youth work has made good use of the programmes, recommendations, networks and educational opportunities of European organisations.

The messages of the Council of Europe, and its youth field, on human rights, democracy, the rule of law, social equality and tolerance are even more relevant today than they have ever been. Increased poverty among young people, persistent urban segregation, refugees, intolerance, nationalism, right-wing extremism, movements violating human rights, and the general neglect of global solidarity all call for value-based youth work and respective training of youth workers. For example, recently the Kanuuna network in Finland launched a large human rights education offer to its employees to function as a guideline in work with young asylum seekers and refugees (Kanuuna, 2017).

However, the European Union is a political body underpinned by Neo-Liberal economic policies. These reflect priorities on employability, labour mobility and the integration of risk groups. These priorities are also inevitably reflected in the EU youth policies and the programmes for implementing them. Such policies and measures focusing on 'youth at risk' are often promoted to the detriment of a reduction in universal services based on active citizenship, cultural innovation, tolerance, solidarity etc. Although there are some positive effects of these new developments including innovative services to support NEET young people's integration into education and working life discussed above, any shift away from traditional universal provision needs to be countered.

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[5] For example, the author has been the Director of Youth and Sports (1998–2001) at the Council of Europe (CoE) and the first chair of the Youth Research and Documentation network (CoE), while representatives from Finnish youth organisations and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth have held key positions in European Organisations as Chairs of the Co-managed bodies of CoE; the CDEJ (representing the government) and as Chair of the Advisory Council (representing the youth) and so on.

The EU youth programme also places a priority on better recognition of non-formal learning in youth work and the development of 'quality youth work'. These have prompted not only this project on 'Developing and communicating the impact of youth work', but also a large number of other innovative projects on identifying, measuring and making transparent high quality youth work.

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Chapter 4:
Youth Work in Estonia
By Marti Taru[1]

Historical overview

Modern youth work in Estonia has its origins in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[2] although young people mainly participated in existing adult organisations, not in designated youth organisations. The main motivations included education and self-improvement, framed first by fostering 'good' members of an agrarian society and later by an endeavour to establish an independent Estonian state. In this process of ethnic identity development, choirs and orchestras were established in parishes, and literary, musical and theatrical societies brought together Estonian intellectuals. Young people were attracted to these activities too, and as schoolteachers often led the societies, the link between societal life and youth was straightforward. In addition, sports societies were attractive to young people. The church also played a role, but in general neither the German nor the Russian church was particularly popular among Estonians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, some youth-led youth organisations began to emerge.

The first period of independence, 1918–1940, saw the growth and flourishing of youth associations and youth organisations. In schools hobby groups were organised outside the formal education curriculum, but pupils were supervised mainly by teachers and controlled by school management. However, a range of other youth organisations emerged, some independent, but more commonly linked to, and dependant on, large powerful adult organisations. In both categories, imported formats dominated. Significant independent organisations included Scouting, both for girls and boys, the Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies and Pupils' Societies (until the mid-1920s) and student corporations. Prominent youth organisations linked to existing adult organisations included the Red Cross, hobby activities at schools, the Countrywide Union of Rural Youth, Defence League Boys' and Girls' Corps, the Youth Temperance Movement, and organisations with religious background including the YMCA and YWCA. These organisations offered a range of activities, independently of the organisational setting, although the most popular activities were sports. The main motivations for young people to participate in youth organisations were self-improvement, self-fulfilment, integration into society, as well as opportunities to spend time with like-minded peers, enjoyment of one's favourite activities, and learning something useful for later life. In 1920s and 1930s these youth organisations were the main focus for young people's free time, often with an aim of helping socialisation and integrating into wider society. As in several other countries the state attempted to use such youth organisations for political purposes, and by the end of the 1930s attempts were being made in Estonia to give control of them to the President of the country. However, this did not happen as the Soviet Union occupied the country in 1940, after which all youth organisations were disbanded and then banned.

During the Second World War Estonia was occupied three times: by the Soviet Union from 1940 to 1941, by Germany from 1941 to 1944, and then again by the Soviet Union in 1944. During the German occupation, specific activities were organised for young people. For

that purpose, an organisation called Estonian Youth was established in October 1942. Its activities were mostly 'work education', which resulted in children and young people being recruited to work in agriculture to support the wartime economy. Activities also involved military training as well as some leisure time activities. The organisation was dissolved when Soviet troops invaded the country in 1944.

During the post-war Soviet occupation, from 1945 to 1991, all former youth work activities were banned and the former youth work structures were replaced by centralised structures. Organising young people's free time became the responsibility of the Communist Youth League – Komsomol – which was the youth organisation of the Communist Party. The main goals of Komsomol were to support the Communist Party in the upbringing of a Communist-minded young generation and prepare young people to live in a Communist society. Communist youth organisation was divided into various age-based sections: the Communist Youth League or Komsomol was an organisation for youth aged 14 to 28 years, and the Pioneer Organisation was a children's organisation for 10-to-15-year-olds. There was also a separate division for children 6-to-10-year-olds, called October Kids. Hence, Komsomol covered the entire age range from 6 to 28 years. Almost all leisure time opportunities were either organised or controlled by Komsomol or the Communist Party.

The Communist Party deemed it important to socialise children into the Communist ideology, and therefore controlling them through leisure time activities was essential. Komsomol organised youth events such as festivals, summer days and contests in various spheres ranging from sports to arts and music, including social and political activism. These events and initiatives were quite popular among young people. Sputnik, Komsomol's travel agency, provided tens of thousands of young people with travelling opportunities. Komsomol also influenced life through Komsomol committees that were established in universities and larger enterprises, as well as in towns and rural municipalities. They could been seen as a sort of youth council, without the function of enabling 'youth voice' to be heard but rather socialising (some would argue indoctrinating) young people into Soviet realities as well as helping to form administrative and political elites.

A new system of hobby activities was set up. Pupils were offered opportunities to participate in technical, agricultural and creative groups; the latter were the most popular. Pupils could participate in these activities in schools but also in Pioneer Centres, which began to appear immediately after the Soviet occupation. After the Second World War specialised schools of music and arts were set up where children could learn particular skills or a musical instrument, although the schools also provided general education. Some of the schools were reorganised from pre-war private schools, but most were newly founded. Similarly, specialised schools for sports were set up, and during the Soviet era sports in general enjoyed considerable investment.

In 1960s two 'work education' youth movements were established. These were known as the 'building brigades'. In 1964 Estonian Student Building Brigades were started for college students, mainly aged from their late teens to mid-twenties. The Estonian Pupils' Work Brigades for secondary school students aged 15 to 18 years began in 1967. Though the explicitly cited reason for establishing the schemes was work education, a strong motivation was to alleviate the shortage in the labour force in the Soviet Union. In the 1970s the Work and

Vacation Camp began. It was intended to provide time for socialising and leisure activities as well as a working environment for elementary school pupils aged 12 to 15 years. All three became immensely popular among young people, but ceased to function at the end of the 1980s as a result of economic hardships in the Soviet Union and the widening spectrum of opportunities in young people's free time.

During the Soviet period, youth work's principal task was socialising young people into Soviet realities, but nevertheless significant resources were allocated to improve leisure time opportunities and many children and young people did enjoy and benefit from the opportunities offered by hobby activities, summer camps and other youth work structures.

After the restoration of independence in 1991, a process of restructuring youth work started with the aim to transform and modernise it into a system to meet the needs of an independent state. Previous structures, which were formerly mostly centrally and state organised, ceased to exist and gradually new organisations emerged based on civic initiatives. The municipal level also started to gain importance as the main administrative level where youth work activities were offered. However, in the 1990s the society was focused on large-scale reforms such as property reform and changes to the main social and political institutions, so youth work received less attention. Nevertheless, several forms of youth work maintained their place in society and evolved gradually, such as youth councils at schools, hobby education and hobby activities, youth associations and organisations and youth camps.

In 1999 the Youth Work Act was adopted. For the purposes of youth work, a young person was defined as being aged between 7 and 26 years old; a definition that was retained when the act was amended in 2010. According to the 2010 Act youth work is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young people that enables them to be active outside their families, formal education and works on the basis of their free will and autonomy (State Gazette, 2010).

In 1998 the first open youth centre was launched, signalling that open youth work principles aiming to give all youngsters access to youth work services had become one of the central principles of youth work in the country. A significant marker was the creation of the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC) in 1999, and following this a nationwide event for youth workers and youth called *First Youth Work Forum* took place.

Youth worker training was also initiated in 1992. As of 2017, youth workers are trained in three institutions of higher education: Tallinn University (since 1992), the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy (since 1995), and the University of Tartu Narva College (since 2004).

Key features of practice

Hobby education
Hobby education and activities – extracurricular activities in young people's spare time – have traditionally been an important aspect of youth work in Estonia. Participation in hobby education and hobby activities is by far the most popular way for young people to spend

their leisure time. Hobby education is a mainly group-based activity. It takes place after school hours in specially designated premises. Each particular activity in hobby education has concrete goals, grading systems and teaching methods, which usually come close to formal education methods. Subjects are taught by a range of specialists, including professional teachers and youth workers, and a full study programme may last as long as eight years.

In study year 2016/2017, in the country of 1.3 million inhabitants and 535 general secondary education schools, the number of licenced organisations offering hobby education programmes was 597, the number of programs was 3,596 and the number of students was approximately 116,420. 40% (241) of the hobby schools offered programmes in sports, 22% (133) in arts, 4% (22) in technology or the environment, and 33% (201) in other areas of hobby education. The largest age groups engaging in hobby education are 7-to-11-year-olds (52,410 or 45% of all students) and 12-to-18-year-olds (35,306 or 30%). The number of 19-to-26-year-old pupils was 4,228 (4%) (EEIS, 2017). Many of the hobby schools are successors of Soviet-era specialised schools.

The Hobby Schools Act regulates hobby schools and the associated activities they offer. As a rule, hobby education is largely financed from the budgets of local municipalities, but the contribution of parents plays an important role as well.

Outside hobby schools, different youth work providers offer hobby activities. Hobby activities are less organised and less structured than hobby education given in hobby schools, but in terms of subject areas both hobby education and hobby activities offer similar experiences. Hobby activities are offered in open youth centres, hobby centres, youth associations, non-profit associations, NGOs etc., as well as in schools. Due to the less formal nature of the hobby activities there is no such detailed overview of participants available as in the case of hobby education. According to the Estonian youth monitoring system, approximately 70% of 7-to-11-year-olds, 40% of 12-to-17-year-olds and 5% of 18-to-26-year-olds participated in hobby activities in 2014 (EYMS, 2017).

Youth organisations constitute an important sector of youth work. As of 2017, there are more than sixty youth associations and organisations in Estonia. Their size varies from several to thousands of members. There are organisations for different age groups, ranging from 4H for younger children to political youth organisations for young adults. Currently, political youth organisations are among the largest youth organisations. The membership age limit in these organisations may be 30 years or older, exceeding the definition of a young person in the Youth Work Act. Many youth organisations belong to larger international organisations, like the Scouts, Guides, the YMCA/YWCA, or AIESEC. There are also youth organisations that have only local or national focus. Most youth organisations belong to an umbrella organisation of all youth organisations – the Estonian Youth Council – which in April 2017 had fifty-eight member organisations (EYC, 2017). There are also a few bigger organisations which do not belong to the Estonian Youth Council. One example is NGO Open Republic, which is mainly oriented to Russian speakers. The organisation strives to support cross-cultural integration and democratic participation of youth in society (OR, 2017). Other examples include the Defence League youth corps consisting of the boys' corps Noored Kotkad (Young Eagles) and the girls' corps Kodutütred (Home Daughters), both of which are motivated significantly by national defence ideals. All three are large

organisations, the Defence League youth corps being the largest youth organisation in the country.

Youth Councils constitute a special form of youth organisation and are currently given a high priority. Starting from 2018, there will be two types of youth council in Estonia: student councils in schools and colleges, and local youth councils in municipalities. Student councils in schools belong to the umbrella organisation of the Estonian School Student Councils' Union, which in April 2017 had 177 members (ÕL, 2017). There is a college student council in all higher education institutions, which all belong to the Federation of Estonian Student Unions (FESU, 2017). County and municipal councils are quite active; in 2016, 75 youth councils were operating (Martma, 2017: 24).

Open youth work and youth centres

Youth centres, which operate on the basis of open youth work, are a relatively new phenomenon in Estonia. The first two centres opened in 1998 (in Narva) and 1999 (in Saue). Open youth centres offer a range of activities for children and young people including games and hobby activities as well as information, advice and guidance from youth workers who are always present when the building is open. Specific activities, like certain hobby groups, or counselling may be carried out by other professionals. Usual opening hours are from midday until early evening each weekday. Many youth centres are closed at weekends. Those which are open start later and close earlier than on weekdays. The majority of young people who attend youth centres are aged between 10 and 15 years, although the centres design and promote activities for the full range of youth, i.e. from 7 to 26. The background of participants at youth centres tends to reflect the general population rather than a particular social group. Youth centres also participate in national policy programmes. From 2014 to 2016, a selection of youth centres implemented the EEA grant-funded 'Children and Youth at Risk' programme, in 2015–2016 the project 'Breaking Point' (EAOYC, 2016), and in 2016–2018 the 'Youth Prop-Up' programme, which is linked to the Youth Guarantee. These programmes have a priority of addressing the problem of NEET young people (those not in education, employment or training) as well as young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2016, there were 263 youth centres operating in Estonia (Martma, 2017: 24). In 2001, the umbrella organisation Eesti ANK (Association of Open Youth Centres) was founded. In April 2017 the umbrella organisation had 154 member youth centres run by 97 different organisations (EAOYC, 2017).

Targeted Youth Work with At-Risk Groups has become a growing area of youth work in Estonia in the last five years. This corresponds to an increasing focus on youth anti-social behaviour and crime prevention. Starting from 2016, the coordination of under-aged offences has moved to the Department of Children and Families in the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), which addresses the entire field from prevention to child protection. The locus of addressing issues of youth crime has shifted away from Committees of Juvenile Issues (within the Ministry of Education and Research until 2016) as it was decided they lacked a preventative role, only dealing with young people who had already committed acts of misdemeanour. The third player, the Ministry of Justice, focuses on resocialisation of young detainees during and after their period of imprisonment. All three ministries have

their own areas of responsibility, but cooperate to create the legal and financial environment for work with at-risk groups. An example of this new cooperation is the European Economic Area-supported programme 'Children and Youth at Risk', which is aimed at improving the well-being of children and young people up to the age of 26. The main aims of the programme are prevention and cross-sectoral cooperation (EYWC, 2017i). The Ministry of the Interior also implements activities and programmes targeting anti-social behaviour and youth crime, for example the STEP and the Expect Respect programmes (MI, 2017). These programmes utilise youth workers.

Information, Advice, Guidance and Counselling is another significant strand of youth work in Estonia. In 2016 there were twenty-three county and local-level information and counselling centres (Martma, 2017: 23). Innove, the National Resource Centre for Guidance of the Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development, offers career advice services for the young in counselling centres called Rajaleidja, which translates as Pathfinder.[3] As of 2017, the system is being redesigned. The national strategy involves developing all the youth centres into basic information centres as the skills of youth information and guidance are deemed an important part of youth workers' professional standards in Estonia. A significant amount of youth information and guidance is available via the internet, such as Stardiplats (Starting Point)[4]. Therefore an important skill of the youth worker may be in suggesting reliable sites for youngsters. The biggest annual event in youth information is the national youth information fair – Teeviit (Signpost)[5] – but there are also regional and local level fairs.

Youth Camps

Youth workers also work in Youth Camps. In 2016, there were twenty-six licensed permanent youth camps in Estonia (EYWC, 2017iii), as well as many other non-permanent or project camps. They offer leisure time facilities for children in their early to mid-teens, mainly in the summertime. The Estonian Youth Work Centre coordinates youth camps. Managing the youth camps and supervising the youth groups in the camps are the only youth work interventions in Estonia that have a compulsory minimum level of competences set in the occupational standards and in the Youth Work Act. As youngsters stay overnight at camps for a week or longer without parental supervision, the youth workers have to pass a First Aid course, have to have special competencies for open-air activities, and have to be able to overcome pedagogical difficulties if needed.

Young People's Work Education Programmes (work brigades)

The aim of 'work education' is to improve the employability of young people, utilising youth work methods to increase young people's preparedness for employment. Work Education Programmes can vary and respond to the target group and local situation, but the most common method is the 'youth brigade' – a youth summer project camp that combines a vacation with work. About 4,500 young people (mostly 13-to-19-year-olds) take part in young people's working brigades throughout Estonia (YWB, 2017).

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[3] Homepage of Rajaleidja/Pathfinder, www.innove.rajaleidja.ee, last accessed 3 June 2017.

[4] Homepage of Stardiplats/Starting Point, https://www.stardiplats.ee/, last accessed 3rd June 2017.

[5] Homepage of Information Fair Teeviit/Signpost, http://www.teeviit.ee/, last accessed 3rd June 2017.

Key policy documents that have shaped youth work

In 1999 the Youth Work Act was approved by Parliament, and this enacted a commitment to the development of youth work in Estonia. As a part of this process, the Estonian Youth Work Concept (MOE, 2001i) and the Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001–2004 (MOE, 2001ii) were developed in 2001. These documents formed the 'ideological' basis of youth work, spelling out its basic values and methods. This underpins both the training carried out in youth work in universities and youth work practice in the field. The commitment to youth work in Estonia was reinforced when the Amended Youth Work Act was approved in 2010. The new act increased and emphasized the provision of 'developmental opportunities' for young people, and for the first time gave a legal definition of a local youth council.

In 2006 the Government approved a new Youth Work Strategy for the period 2006 to 2013. The objective of the strategy was to respond more directly to the actual needs and challenges of young people in a variety of spheres of life. It was also an explicit attempt to begin an integrated youth policy (ME&R, 2006). At the end of 2013 the Government approved the 'Youth Field Development Plan' for 2014–2020. The general goals of this policy document are holistic, aiming to ensure young people have wide opportunities for development and self-realization, which supports the formation of a cohesive and creative society (ME&R, 2017).

Measurement and evaluation of youth work in Estonia

In 2010 the Estonian Youth Work Centre, together with Ernst & Young, developed a youth work quality monitoring and assessment model, which provided a methodology for carrying out youth work self-assessments in municipalities and at a local level. A group of public officials, youth workers and NGO representatives from the participating municipality and a group of assessors from other municipalities and organisations carry out assessments. The quality of youth work in a designated municipality is evaluated using a pre-defined standard, specified in the model. The model seeks an assessment of the quality of the youth work in an entire municipality, giving an overview of different aspects of youth work but not focusing specifically on any particular setting or institution. For municipalities, participation is voluntary. The project was piloted from 2010 to 2013, and over that period 73 municipalities took part in the assessment exercise. Starting from 2016, municipalities have again started to carry out evaluations, and in 2016 53 municipalities carried out youth work quality assessment (EYWC, 2017i).

Estonian Youth Work Centre has commissioned research on different aspects of youth work evaluation and published the results of the research in the annual Estonian Youth Monitoring Yearbook. Over a period of ten years the municipalities of Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu have commissioned a variety of surveys to gauge participation in youth work activities, the assessment of the developmental effects of youth work participation, and young people's satisfaction with youth work (EYWC, 2017iv). The effects of targeted youth work programmes are usually assessed in accordance with programme guidelines and with the associated financing regulations.

For the purposes of monitoring the implementation of European 'Youth in Action' programmes (2006–2013) and now Erasmus+ Youth in Action (2014–2020), an international

consortium of National Agencies was formed in the mid-2000s, in which Estonia was a founding member. The consortium has been expanding gradually and in June 2017 it consisted of thirty-one NAs (RAY, 2017). The consortium has been carrying out online surveys among project participants and project leaders, mainly to monitor satisfaction with participation in and administration of projects and their self-assessed effects. One project has also used a control group design (Taru, 2013). Overall, the results of the surveys tend to show that that majority of young people involved in a project gain from their participation. The self-reported benefits are mostly linked to general cultural competences and personal development in areas such as self-confidence and courage.

However, the evaluation of youth work impact is still in its infancy in Estonia. Looking to the future, one can anticipate the development of evidence-based evaluation and attempts to evaluate youth work interventions through pre- and post-evaluation, as these are considered desirable in the Estonian system of public administration (MJ, 2017). Youth work, which is based mainly on public finances, is expected to follow the suggested pattern of evaluation.

Influence of European youth work policy

Throughout its history, external forces have significantly influenced youth work in Estonia. Prior to 1918, the activities for young people had to meet the regulations stipulated by the Russian Empire. During the first period of independence, 1918–1940, learning and policy transfer from other countries still dominated. During the Second World War and from 1945 to 1991, coercion from the Soviet Union (and Nazi Germany) was dominant in shaping youth work. Since the late 1990s and 2000s, although the country is now autonomous, different forms of peer learning and policy transfer have still influenced Estonia. After the restoration of independence in 1991 the development of youth work was stimulated by Finland, but the influences of Germany and the UK were also significant.

European structures have influenced youth work and the entire youth field in Estonia through a number of mechanisms. In the late 1990s, even before the start of EU accession, the Youth in Action programme was launched and cooperation with the Council of Europe started. Since joining the EU, Estonia has embraced its policy direction. For example, the current Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020, which responds specifically to the national competitiveness strategy Estonia 2020 (GE, 2014), strongly aligns to the European Union development goals (EC, 2014), perhaps the most notable of which are the objectives to reduce the rate of youth unemployment and to reduce the number of NEET young people (those not in education, employment or training).

The implementation of public policy initiatives in the youth field and youth work have also been influenced by European funding. The largest single policy programme to date was 'Increasing the Quality of Youth Work'. This ran from 2008 to 2013 and was financed mostly (85%) from the European Social Fund (EYWC, 2015). Between 2007 and 2015 the facilities of nearly fifty youth centres and hobby schools were renovated and improved with help from the European Regional Development Fund (EYWC, n.d.). From 2014 to 2017, the EEA grant-funded programme 'Children and Youth at Risk' was running, which aims to improve the well-being of children and young people aged to up to 26. The main approaches are

prevention and cross-sectoral cooperation. The programme is 85% financed from the European Economic Area (EYWC, 2017ii).

In recent years, both government ministries and youth work organisations have started to import a variety of targeted youth work programmes from other countries, for instance the 'Veel parem mina' ('Even better me') programme from North America, the 'Kiusamisest vaba' ('Free from bullying') programme from Finland, the SPIN Programme which originated in the UK, and the STEP programme which was imported from Denmark.

The European Commission civic youth education programme, which has been running under different labels – Youth, Youth in Action, now Erasmus+ – has been implemented in Estonia since the late 1990s. This has been influential in Estonia, notably through the training and development of youth workers, the development of youth policy and youth work, as well as improving the quality of services offered to young people. National youth field development plans have also taken into account European youth policy initiatives and recommendations, including the European White Book on youth, European Youth Strategy, and the Eurodesk youth information provision. Estonia has also implemented the Council of Europe campaign 'All different, all equal'.

Conclusion

It may appear as if youth work in Estonia is relatively new, given its recent formal embracing of the concept through the Youth Work Act in 1999/2010. However, Estonia, despite its turbulent history, has consistently prioritised the needs of young people and developed a varied array of services and responses to meet young people's needs. Estonia has had the opportunity of mixing a variety of different influences to develop a rich and diversified youth work landscape for Estonian young people. Following the amended Youth Work Act in 2010 and the strategies that have been implemented since, Estonia is now very well placed to develop its youth work provision both within Estonia and as a leading player in the wider European Union.

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Chapter 5:
Youth Work in Italy
By Daniele Morciano

Historical overview

To begin, it is important to point out that the term 'youth work' has limited currency in Italy, and is not explicitly recognised within public or policy discourse. However, there are a number of practices and institutions which can be compared favourably with what comes under the banner of youth work in other European countries, particularly those countries within this study. The history of 'youth work' in Italy is primarily the history of association-based youth education outside schooling (Baris, 2011; Cruciani, 2011; Dal Toso, 1995; Dogliani, 2003; Fincardi and Papa, 2007). This is mainly located within what is best described as the Third (or Voluntary) Sector.

Earlier origins were in the out-of-school leisure activities adopted in the early 1900s, often by the upper classes, as a means of educating young people in the values of Nationalism or as a form of religious education (Fincardi and Papa, 2007). The secular pacifist Scouting Association (*the Ragazzi Esploratori Italiani*), founded in 1910, also provides a significant marker. However, this movement quickly divided into a Catholic wing integrated within the church (*Associazione Scoutistica Cattolica Italiana*) and the nationalistic *Corpo Nazionale dei Giovani Esplorator*. The latter was a form of paramilitary association supported by the official national patriotic network (Trova, 1986).

Similar youth associations were also promoted by socialist and communist political movements to provide new spaces for young people within the new parties. Youth associations among the working classes developed 'People's Houses', which were places to integrate political education with leisure activities. These developed within the tradition of mutual aid, association and worker cooperatives and developed from the 1850s onwards (Degl'Innocenti, 2012).

The role of the Third Sector was cemented in the immediate post-war period when the state began to recognise the third sector as a key provider. This was a direct response, by the state, to the previous widespread and systematic totalitarian state intervention established by the Fascist regime prior to and during the Second World War. The Fascist movement placed youth at the heart of its political programme, with the goal to exploit young people's vitality for an expansionist and militarist national strategy (Dogliani, 2003). To this end, the Fascists placed an emphasis on mass youth education in young people's leisure time, alongside a gradual suppression or marginalisation of the traditional youth associations. This was done in combination with the exploitation of schools as a means of ideological indoctrination (La Rovere, 2002).

The anti-Fascist resistance and the post-war reconstruction can be considered a key marker in the history of youth participation in Italy, with the gradual emergence of youth as a 'social subject'. For example, the *Fronte della Gioventù* (FGD) aimed to become a mass anti-Fascist youth organisation open to different political parties, including the Catholic spheres.

However, the spirit of social cohesion promoted by the FGD did not survive the Cold War, and effectively ended up in competition with the Catholic youth education organisations. For example, the political victory of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in 1948 led to the breakaway of the *Alleanza Giovanile del Fronte Democratico e Popolare* (formed from a merger of the FDG and other youth organisations on the left)[1] and the Catholic *Movimento Giovanile Cristiano per la Pace*. The ideological contrast between East and West was symbolically reflected in Italy by the division between the religious and communist youth movements. On the one hand was the Catholic Scout movement, which had been re-established after the war following its forced closure by the Fascist regime, and on the other the *Associazione Pionieri d'Italia* (API), established in 1950 in Milan following an associative model adopted internationally by the Communist movement. The API would end up being strongly opposed by the Catholic Church and *Democrazia Cristiana* due to its atheist pedagogical orientation. Therefore, without ever becoming a mass organisation as in other Communist countries, the API disbanded in 1960.

Post-war Catholic youth education in Italy could count not only on the newly reconstituted Scout movement, but also on the *Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica* (GIAC). GIAC had had a continued presence among young people despite Fascism, since during the Second World War it had become 'the largest organisation of Italian Catholic laity and, at the same time, one of the strongest youth movements in the country' (Boscato, 2011: 249).

Pluralistic youth work, developed by not-for-profit associations after the Second World War, was often linked with (mainly left-wing) political parties as well as (mostly Catholic) religious institutions, and developed thanks to some limited direct public funding. Allied to the increasing trust in the Third Sector to develop publically funded youth centres was a policy of non-interference in such 'youth-led' spaces – although there was a tendency to isolate them when they were considered excessively critical of the *status quo*, as happened, for example, during the student protests in the 1960s and 70s (Cruciani, 2011).

Despite the immediate focus on participation in the post-war period – on experiences shared by young people and adults coming from both political and religious organisations during the post-war reconstruction – the 1950s were dominated by an increasing cultural climate of adultism, where the priority of the new democratic order seemed to be avoiding any possible sources of inter-generational conflict. Importantly in this regard, the Fascist regime seems to have left a tacit fear that mass youth participation would be seduced by new political movements of totalitarian orientation (Dogliani, 2003). However, in this climate young people began to claim the right to be recognised as active 'social subjects'. Often inspired by new cultural stimuli from Europe, influenced strongly by the '*Angry Young Men*' (Taylor, 1962), this emerging 'youth culture' contributed to the process of secularization of Italian society.

The generational divide intensified in the 1960s, characterised by the student protests. This created a tremor within what could be described as youth work organisations – those involved in informal education and the engagement of young people outside formal institutions. During this time the student movement developed autonomously based on the direct initiative of young people, developing participative practices and becoming intensely critical of youth organisations linked to political parties or the church hierarchy. Anti-authoritarianism became the watchword of this new youth culture, where institutions (above all schools)

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[1] Including UISP (Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti).

came to be seen as agents of the reproduction 'of bourgeois values such as authority, order, meritocracy, respectability' (Dal Toso, 2011: 85).

The new youth culture also influenced the Catholic youth associations. Both *Azione Cattolica* (which established a youth wing in the 1960s) and the Scout associations (AGI, ASCI) found themselves being criticised for the centralised decision-making power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as well as their political complicity with the *Democrazia Cristiana*. Greater recognition of local communities (dioceses, parishes) and a de-politicization of the educational and social commitment of the participants was urged at a local level. This resulted in greater attention being paid to young people as individuals, to the enhancement of their talents, and their active contribution to the community. This was seen as a breakthrough in the educational proposals of *Azione Cattolica*. Similarly, the pedagogical principles of non-directivity, co-management and co-education (what would later be referred to as *peer education*) began to spread within the Scouting sphere.

The climate of violence that would follow during the 1970s, as well as the sense of failure or betrayal of the ideals pursued by the youth movement of the 1960s, contributed to widespread negative attitudes towards any kind of 'totalitarian ideology' within the youth sector. Sociological studies on youth and society from the 1970s highlight a process of anthropological mutation in which the values of 'naturalness or secularity' replace the 'transcendent' (the political or religious). (Dal Toso, 2011).

Dal Toso (2011) suggests several core elements of the new forms of youth participation which begin to emerge during young people's leisure time. These include:

- The 'intrinsic value' of the efforts to address current social problems (of disarmament, peace, environmental protection, women's rights, marginalization and social fragility)

- The importance of involving young people in voluntary work (until the founding of the civilian service as an alternative to military service)

- Community and associative life understood as a tool for meeting social needs and relationships, as well as a tool for engagement and social action

- The decline of youth participation in organisations related to the political parties as an expression of a widespread need for the 'socialization of politics understood not as militancy within a party' (Dal Toso, 2011, p. 185)

From the 1980s ideological or religious pluralism gradually became widely accepted, but this merely compounded the difficulties in establishing a common, shared understanding about the principles of youth work practice. However, within this pluralist practice there has been a tendency to limit the education of young people in critical thinking – and the promotion of freedom of choice – replacing it by an adherence to specific religious or political ideology. As a result, one of the main peculiarities of youth work in Italy is that practice tends to reflect the interests of the youth work organisation, not necessarily that of the young person. This problem is further compounded by the insecure foundations of 'professional' youth work.

Key policy documents that have shaped youth work

The 1980s witnessed a notable intervention by the State with the launch of explicit youth policies. This could be seen as an attempt to respond to the variation of practice identified above. However, these new initiatives were mainly situated within the wider social policy priorities of local authorities, and therefore primarily focused on a reparative approach to health issues or a wide range of 'youth issues' which were perceived as social problems (such as delinquency, early school leaving, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, sexual education, teenage pregnancy and unemployment) (Bazzanella, 2010) – what has in some discourses become known as targeted youth work.

This occurred, for example, with the *Progetti Giovani*, and soon after with the *Centri di Aggregazione Giovanile* (CAG)[2]. Until the 1990s the *Progetti Giovani* youth projects were, for example, promoted by more than half of the local councils in areas or cities with over 10,000 inhabitants. They developed from the need to address issues facing young people; the Progetti Giovani have often provided meeting spaces where young people could express their creativity, but also places where informal education on particular issues could take place (e.g. drugs and alcohol, sexuality etc.). The 1980s and 90s also saw the spread of the national *Centri di Aggregazione Giovanile* (CAG), centres funded by the L.285/97 law which, by the year 2000, had created around nine hundred projects across the country. These projects represented 35% of the total expenditure of the aforementioned L. 285/97 law. Research on the issue is still lacking in Italy, however, despite the growth of such initiatives in both urban areas and more rural town councils. In 2006 the presence of 1,400 youth spaces was estimated at a national level (Bazzanella, 2010).

Another significant milestone was the reorganisation of the social services system initiated by Law 328/2000.[3] This placed the centres for young people in the sphere of social and health local services. However, management of the new centres was still mainly entrusted to Third Sector organisations.

Much of the 'youth work' practice in these early youth centres predominantly focused on the prevention and control of 'perceived' youth problems, within the wider policy assumption that young people should be supported during their transition to adulthood. The prevailing orientation was therefore to compensate for 'individual failings' that were preventing the full social integration of young people into adult society; namely by focusing on basic and vocational skills, information and guidance, addressing issues harmful to health, and the promotion of a sense of responsibility or civic virtue.

However, this was followed by a new progressive era of youth policy at the turn of the century, which was more emancipatory and youth-led, allied to the widespread construction of new youth centres across the country. This initiative, oriented toward youth empowerment and emancipation, was launched in 2006, when a Ministry of Youth was established for the first time together with a new national fund for youth policies. This has led to financing the development of new public youth spaces in cooperation with the Third Sector.

Increased powers granted to the regions in the field of youth policy also stimulated new programming directed towards overcoming the fragmentation and localism of educational work in youth centres or in the voluntary sector at a municipal level. Through the tools provided

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[2] Funded by Law 285/1997 (*Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for childhood and adolescence*).

[3] (*Framework law for the realisation of the integrated system of interventions and social services*).

by the Framework Programme Agreements (APQ) of 2006, new youth policy interventions began to build upon principles of cooperation between central government, regions and organisations operating in the youth sector. Importantly, the APQ held a different vision of its work, which saw young people as active citizens able to express their own unique potential at a young age – a vision attempting to overcome the dominant discourse previously underpinning publicly funded youth work, which had been based on compensating for perceived individual deficiencies that hamper the transition to adulthood.

Examples of this new era of youth policy included financing the development of new public youth spaces under Third Sector management, such as the *Laboratori Urbani Giovanili* in Apulia (Morciano et al., 2013; Morciano, 2015), *Visioni Urbane* in Basilicata and the *Officine dell'arte* in Lazio. The peculiarity of these spaces is represented by their attempt to provide learning experiences closely connected with young people and explicitly focused on young people's interests, motivations, passions and projects. These new spaces contain a plurality of resources (equipment, information, relationship networks, learning experiences etc.) that young people can use in order to create their own projects or collaborate in the implementation of existing projects. An underlying principle is the attempt to diversify the range of services on offer and develop opportunities for the active use of the spaces, ranging from the ability to cultivate a hobby to the realization of projects aimed at business creation. These new centres therefore tend to develop as *incubators* of new projects based on youth initiative, through the internal creation of a *hub* of diverse range of both tangible and intangible resources.

This new era of publicly supported and funded 'centre-based youth work' would however be short lived, and would soon be faced with the challenge of drastic cuts to its dedicated public funding. For example, the annual budget of €130 million in 2006 was reduced to €13 million by 2014. Italy's youth work provision, like that of the UK (as we saw in Chapter 2), has been hit hard by the impact of the global financial crisis and so-called 'austerity'. The abolition of the Ministry of Youth in 2011 is further evidence of this uncertain period for youth work and youth policy in Italy.

The ongoing challenge for these new youth centres is that of breaking away from a dependence on public funding through the diversification of financial resources (through, for example, the sale of products or services, identifying donors and sponsors, public commissioning, crowdfunding etc.) while avoiding management geared towards the creation of a market which would put at risk their social mission.

The lack of national support for 'youth work' in Italy includes a lack of public recognition or regulation of the specific professional role of the youth worker or the youth informal educator. A number of regulated professions in the sphere of education are recognised by the State in Italy (such as professional educator, socio-cultural educator, community worker, social worker), but as in France (see Chapter 6) these are not specifically focused on young people. The creation of a professionalised youth work training and certification system regulated by the State on the basis of specific accreditation systems (as, for example, in countries such as the UK, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) also seems a challenge that the various associations and institutions in Italy are still failing to tackle (Bazzanella, 2010; Dunne et al., 2014). What happens in Italy is that the different political or religious associations tend to train educators

within their respective ideological traditions. Experience in the field is often the only viable pathway for specialising in youth work. This shortage seems indicative of how a vision still prevails in Italy of youth work understood as a practice based primarily on voluntary and 'front line' activity, education oriented towards specific (religious or political) ideologies, or the ability to plan and implement projects financed by EU youth policy programmes.

The result is a considerable legislative *vacuum* in Italian youth policy at a national level. However, within this context there is the delivery of some high quality youth work, either in the form of out-of-school youth education (often in the religious sphere), in the many youth spaces geared towards youth participation and empowerment, or through the youth sub-cultures developing youth-led projects oriented by a radical opposition to the political and economic system.

Key features of practice

The religious or faith-based sector remains a key player in Italian youth work. This is dominated by the Catholic educational spaces known as 'parish oratories', in which religious education is combined with recreational activities and initiatives in social volunteering. The *Forum Oratori Italiani* (FOI) was established in 2009 in order to support the development of the 6,500 oratories designed as 'reception spaces, for time dedicated to the younger generation, of meaningful pathways that aim towards the growth of the entire being, human and spiritual' (Forum Oratori Italiani, 2017). An indication of the scale of the opportunities offered by the Catholic oratories is that they compare in number to first grade middle schools (which number 7,247) (ISTAT, 2011). Among the best known is the educational tradition inspired by St. Giovanni Bosco, still followed by the Salesian Society. Specific areas dedicated to the informal education of young people are found within *Azione Cattolica*, the oldest Catholic Association in Italy (founded in 1867), which has local branches in almost every diocese (219 of 226) with 360,000 members.

The largest Scouting association in Italy, the *Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani* (AGESCI), is also explicitly Catholic and has more than 180,000 members. The AGESCI refers to itself as 'a youth education association that aims to contribute to the development of the individual in their free time, according to the principles and methods of Scouting' (Agesci, 2017). Conversely, non-Catholic Scouting in the form of the *Corpo Nazionale Giovani Esploratori ed Esploratrici Italiani* (CNGEI) is explicitly anchored to the principles of secularism, presenting its objectives as promoting 'secular educational action, independent of any religious beliefs or political ideologies, which engages young people in the obtaining and deepening of personal choices' (CNGEI, 2016). They have around 12,000 members.

Some Catholic youth associations have a clearer orientation towards political commitment – for example, the *Giovani delle Acli*, a movement active in the *Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani*. They aim to promote 'the aggregation of young people under 32 years of age in educational courses and political training, civil commitment and active citizenship'. *Associanimazione* is another Catholic association particularly committed to the promotion and development of youth workers' skills through the practices of social animation or association. One major initiative on a national level involved the organisation of five occurrences

of the 'National Meeting for Operators of Centres, Spaces and Youth Aggregation Contexts' between 2005 and 2013. Finally, another significant Catholic presence can also be identified in not-for-profit services for young people. In order to estimate such a presence, a census by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) revealed that ecclesiastical institutions that manage health, social care and education facilities in Italy numbered 14,241 in 2011 (CEI, 2011), almost 40% of the total not-for-profit sector of 36,010 (ISTAT, 2011).

In the secular sector the *Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana* (ARCI, 2017) is one of the largest national networks of cultural spaces engaged on a political and social level. ARCI defines itself as the 'heir to a tradition and a long history of mutual association, of the popular and anti-Fascist movements which helped build and consolidate democracy founded on the Italian Constitution' (ARCI, 2017). In 2011 it counted 4,987 local branches, of which 1,020 (21%) were youth associations (Monticelli, Pincella and Bassoli, 2011). In 2013 ARCI numbered 1,115,747 members (ARCI, 2013). The national mission contains commitments to 'new generations and youth creativity' (along with culture, welfare, immigration, law and the Mafia, the environment, peace and international cooperation). Until recently ARCI had not developed an educational tradition explicitly aimed at young people. However, it has a growing awareness of the educational value of its activities for young people. In 2013 in its annual report ARCI began to consider itself as an association of 'a strong inter-generational nature that … never really put into focus, let alone valued [its work with young people]'. In the same year, stemming from this development ARCI produced its own 'Pedagogical Manifesto' on childhood and adolescence, while implementing the '*Giovani in circolo*' project for the creation of a network of clubs run by young people under 35 years of age. The pedagogical manifesto recognizes the presence of 'a movement of associations, clubs and committees within ARCI that, in recent years, has given rise to (formal, non-formal and informal) educational and training pathways'.

Other explicitly educational associations involving young people (as well as children) include *Arciragazzi*, founded in 1983 and federated with ARCI. *Arciragazzi* has around eighty affiliated clubs in almost all Italian regions, in addition to ten social cooperatives for the management of foster homes for children and adolescents, educational services and training (Arciragazzi, 2017).

There is also a strong tradition within youth culture in Italy of opposition to the establishment and dominant institutions, which is critical of the dominant models of economic development. Developed from the 1970s, those initiatives can be found in a number of self-managed social centres and spaces. Distinctive features of these spaces include self-management, autonomy from institutions, employment, as well as the re-use of public spaces for activities ranging from cultural production to social action. Although primarily born from radical leftist movements, there are also some right-wing social centres, such as those that gave rise to the Casa Pound political movement of the extreme right. The historical political youth organisations of the right came together in 1996 in *Azione Giovani*, which in turn merged with *Giovane Italia* in 2009, connected to the *Partito della Libertà*.

Measurement and evaluation of youth work
and the influence of European youth work policy

The recent government initiatives to create new youth work centres and the brief attempt to formulate a national youth policy were unable to generate sufficient momentum to create a strong identity for youth work in Italy. During the last two decades the European Union has provided a range of support measures for the development of youth work competences, skills and practices, of which Italy has been a notable beneficiary. For example, the Youth programme 2000–2006 and Youth in Action programme 2007–2013 (European Union, 2007) provided a range of support measures for the training of youth workers, which included support for capacity building in the field of youth. However, despite a number of projects supported by these European Union programmes, in Italy there is still no specific national public policy or programme with the specific purpose to develop youth work professionals, services, practices or evaluation. As highlighted in the last European Union report on youth work in Europe (Dunne et al., 2014), the priority assigned to youth work by the national government seems to be 'slightly increasing … [however] no law defining or regulating youth work [exists] and youth work is generally not perceived as a policy priority' (Dunne et al., 2014: 216).

Equally importantly, however, particularly in the context of Italy, Dunne acknowledges that 'given the decentralised nature [of youth work], it is more important what is happening at local level' (ibid.). Despite the lack public national support, training projects for professional youth workers have started to be implemented at local level in recent years (e.g *Associani-mazione*[4]). However, these training opportunities are not linked to any public accreditation or recognition framework. As stated in the last European Union youth work report: 'it is not only the scarcity of training prospects in some cases, but also where opportunities exist, gaining recognition or having those experiences validated. Any training system that sets standards should ideally be coupled with recognition for practitioners, whether this is in the form of recognising individual competencies or the issuing of a certification' (Dunne et al., 2014: 128).

In Italy there is an emerging trend for the creation of new spaces both for and with young people, where coaching, tutoring or mentoring is provided to help young people in the implementation of a project in a career-related sphere (such as business creation), in their leisure time (such as developing a hobby or interest) or social commitment (such as volunteering). Some of these new youth spaces have a specific focus such as the Fab Labs, which are spaces dedicated to digital media production (e.g. utilising 3D printers), art-based youth centres, or new sports-based spaces (such as parkour) and community hubs based on co-working principles. In these emerging new spaces, youth work is at risk of being limited to guidance on practical issues and facilitating activities, rather than being concerned with reflection and dialogue of a social and political nature. There is therefore a danger that a fundamental shift in ethos could take place from the creation of a relational space in which the youth worker and young people *co-construc*t meanings (*sense-making*) to the development of technical abilities to produce specific results (*productio*n).

This variety of provision causes difficulties when research in the youth sector aims to 'identify the pedagogical choices that guide the internal life of associations' (Dal Toso, 2011: 286). Despite participation in associations continuing to significantly affect the free time of

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[4] Youth work courses such as School for youth and community were work implemented by the Bollenti Spiriti programme, as well as the project 'Youth worker, an unknown job'.

young people (Forum Nazionale Giovani, 2010; Leone, 2011), as noted earlier, youth work in these youth associations tends to reflect the concerns and interests of the associations themselves and is not necessarily person-centred and dedicated to the creation of independent critical thinking. In part, also for this reason, Italy still lacks evaluative research on the effects that participation in projects, services and associative spaces during leisure time can have on the educational life paths of young people.

To conclude, despite the insufficient professional recognition of youth workers, there is some recognition of the pluralistic 'youth work' provision within the Third Sector, although this seems to have failed to encourage either the development of a common professional base for youth workers or a tradition of evaluation or research on youth work outcomes or methods (Morciano, 2015). Evaluation of youth work practice is still in its infancy, although conversely youth workers in Italy have a high degree of autonomy and are largely immune from managerial interference and bureaucratic regimes which often impede rather than develop practice (Ord, 2012).

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Appendix: translations of Italian acronyms in text

API: Associazione Pionieri d'Italia (Pioneers Association of Italy)

ARCI: Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana (Italian Recreational and Cultural Association)

ASCI: Associazione Scoutistica Cattolica Italiana (Italian Catholic Scout Association)

CAG: Centri di Aggregazione Giovanile (Youth Aggregation Centres)

CNGEI: Corpo Nazionale dei Giovani Esploratori (National Body of Youth Scouts)

DC: Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy)

ENAL: Ente Nazionale Assistenza ai Lavoratori (National Body for Assistance to Workers)

FDG: Fronte della Gioventù per l'Indipendenza Nazionale (Youth Front for National Independence)

FGC: Federazione Giovanile Comunista (Communist Youth Federation)

FGS: Federazione Giovanile Socialista (Socialist Youth Federation)

FOI: Forum Nazionale Oratori (Oratories National Forum)

GIAC: Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica (Italian Youth for Catholic Action)

GIL: Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (Littorio's Italian Youth)

GUF: Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (Fascist University Groups)

ONB: Opera Nazionale Balilla (National Balilla Action)

ONL: Opera Nazionale Lavoro (National Action for Work)

REI: Ragazzi Esploratori Italiani (Italian Boy Scouts)

UISP: Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti (Italian Union of Sport for All)

Chapter 6:
Youth Work in France
By Marc Carletti and Christophe Dansac

This chapter will provide an insight into what is broadly regarded as '*youth work*' in France, despite acknowledgement that there is a widely-held view that the literal translation for youth work is 'generally considered as not applying to the French context' (Oberheidt, 2014: 4). It needs to be understood that work with young people is complex, and associated youth policies are multi-faceted notions in France and relate to a variety of disparate economic, cultural, social and political phenomena. As one recent government report attests, they are the most 'fragmented' of all public policies (Comité Interministériel de la Jeunesse, 2013: 14). Indeed, Loncle (1999) concludes that successive attempts by governments to build coherence in the youth field have repeatedly failed. However, France, like many other European countries, has a long tradition of working with young people in informal and non-formal settings, and it is therefore possible to identify and present an ensemble of practitioners who engage with young people outside the fields of employment and formal education.

Young people in France are broadly regarded as being between 11 and 29 years of age,[1] and this chapter will provide an historical overview of the key features of youth policies affecting this age range. It will also provide an overview of a number of the central-government youth-related initiatives which continue to shape work with young people to this day. The chapter will focus on three major ensembles of practitioners who, it is argued, one may recognise as youth workers:

- Animateurs
- Éducateurs spécialisés
- Niche players

Historical overview
The early days of youth work in France were characterised by the central role of the voluntary sector. From the mid-nineteenth century to the late 1930s, initiatives concerned with youth, other than in the field of state-funded formal education, developed independently at local level, in either the Christian-led '*Mouvements de jeunesse*' or the secular ones. Throughout this period a number of organisations (called *associations* under the Waldeck-Rousseau Act of 1901) were established to address health and moral concerns.[2] Examples include *scoutisme* (imported from Britain as early as 1909) and the ACJF (*Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française*) founded in 1886, which later developed into specialized bodies such as the JOC (Young Christian Workers), JAC (Young Christian Farmers) and JEC (Young Christian Students).

However, in those early years education was specifically intended for 'all sections' of the population across a wide age range. Therefore, adults (and particularly workers) were often targeted as participants in the various education and welfare programmes. The term *Mouvements d'Éducation Populaire* was established as an umbrella term for this 'popular work of

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[1] In accordance with the most common age bands within the fields of national statistics.

[2] Association' is a legal status, like 'charity', created in the 1901 Act. Under this status, hundreds of thousands of associations have emerged independently since the early nineteenth century.

education' (Maurel, 2010). Various initiatives emerged in late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries which attempted to foster active participation and knowledge sharing through experiential learning methods. A long-lasting commitment to both youth and adult education is one of the key defining features of French popular education, along with the ambition to question and redefine the very nature and purpose of education in its broadest sense. Equally important is the desire to give a voice to all citizens in the making of society. However, youth participation was often limited, with the notable exception of a few radical socialist organisations whose ambition was to build 'true democracy' through summer camps where children and young people were actually involved in the decision-making process[3] (Downs, 2009).

The first state involvement occured in and around the war years. In 1936 the socialist government of the *Front populaire* initiated a number of significant policy measures and funding schemes for the development of leisure and sport, and it is noteworthy again that these were not exclusively directed at the younger sections of the population. The first central-government policy explicitly directed at young people dates back to the collaborationist governments under Maréchal Philippe Pétain. In 1940 the first non-ministerial department in charge of youth first appeared – the *Secrétariat d'Etat à la Jeunesse et à la Famille* – with a specific agenda to enrol and control young people to defend and promote the patriotic values of the Vichy regime in the fascist spirit of the German and Italian states. After the German defeat and the restoration of a democratic Republic, the Vichy experience acted as a foil, which partly accounts for the ensuing weakness of central government action in the field of youth as the heads of the major political parties and progressive civil society leaders tended to associate state-controlled youth policies with totalitarianism.

At this point, several distinguishing traits of French youth policy begin to emerge, which arguably still have relevance to this day:

i) A long-lasting reluctance to implement strong and direct central-government control over youth policy

ii) A key role envisaged for the voluntary sector in engaging with both mainstream and 'vulnerable' young people

iii) A tradition of keeping the notions of 'youth' and 'community' together, often under the blanket term jeunesse et *éducation populaire*

Examples of the third point above are reflected in the choice of the names of the variety of state departments where the word *jeunesse* (youth) is never used in isolation, but only combined with terms referring to other sections of the population or services: *jeunesse et famille, jeunesse et sport, jeunesse et éducation populaire, jeunesse et vie associative, jeunesse et cohésion sociale*... Moreover, many of the most influential voluntary sector organisations are set to engage with children, young people and adults alike within a single organisational framework. In this regard, the so-called *Maison des jeunes et de la culture* and *Maison pour tous* provides a good illustration of a stated ambition to address the needs and interests of young people as part of the broader community.

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[3] A socialist youth movement created in the 1930s on the model of Scouting, *Les Faucons Rouges*, were part of an international network of similar organisations which claimed their ambition to experiment with direct democracy with children and adolescents aged 8 to 16 during summer camps and other out-of-school activities. See http://www.fauconsrouges.org

Central government led policies continued apace in the late 1940s and 1950s, beginning what is referred to as the 'Thirty Glorious Years' (Fourastié, 1979), a period of optimism and consensus when politicians and decision-makers saw state intervention as a necessary and efficient way to ensure the well-being of a booming post-war society. In this period the state-commissioned and funded *mouvements d'éducation populaire et de jeunesse* thrived (*Francas* in 1944, MJC in 1944, *Les Foyers Ruraux* in 1945, *Peuple et culture* in 1945, and *Fédération Léo Lagrange* in 1950). An increasing amount of time out of school or work was made available for leisure and cultural activities, and both the state and civil society (associations and federations) strived to meet the needs of this new post-war society. These were the heydays of the *fédérations d'éducation populaire* which operated in agreement with the state to cater for French youth. Through procedures of accreditation and certification, and with significant funding, the successive government departments delegated their authority, trusting the *Fédérations* to develop work in the fields of non-formal education, sports, leisure and culture. As for the 'most vulnerable youth', central government commissioned voluntary networks (often with a Christian background) to run residential centres staffed with trained social workers or educators.

Professional roles and professional fields

From the late 1950s onwards, gradual administrative and professional distinction began to emerge between both *animation, éducation populaire*, and social work (Lebon, 2009). A clear dividing line appeared between the secular *fédérations d'éducation populaire* and the public schooling system (*éducation nationale*) on the one hand, and the *service social* on the other, with the former based on educational group-work and the latter on individualised therapeutic case-work. In this period, the institutions of social work allied themselves with the health sector and were subsequently grouped within a single Ministry of Health and Social Care (1956), as they still are today. The *mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire* tended to relate more closely (if not always happily) to the sectors of education, culture, leisure and sports (Richez, 2011). Youth and sports have subsequently been 'bouncing around' within disparate government departments ever since they first appeared in the 1940s, although sport is more often given a greater priority. Importantly, this period, as Richez argues, was a time of 'missed opportunity' for developing cooperation between the two emerging sectors of *éducation populaire/jeunesse* and *travail social*. This is now characterised by division between mainstream youth non-formal education associated with *animation*, and work with 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' youth entrusted to *éducation spécialisée*.

The 1960s were thus a time of professionalization and institutionalisation for the two main groups of youth workers trained to engage with the two politically 'constructed' categories of young people: the ever-growing numbers of mainstream youth and the 'at risk' or vulnerable youth. Engagement with mainstream youth, which historically had been the role of volunteers and activists in the *mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire*, was increasingly replaced by paid *animateurs* to design and carry out open-access sociocultural projects and activities. However, the *animateurs* still needed to balance priorities between the universal demands of the new urban population of the large housing estates (the *grands ensembles*) and targeting resources at the perceived growing number of what were regarded as 'threatening' young people (Augustin and Ion, 1993). In 1959, as the *Blousons Noirs* (the French Teddy Boys) were hitting the news, Maurice Herzog, the French Secretary of State

for Youth and Sports, called for the development of the *Maisons des jeunes et de la culture* (MJC) among other collective facilities. Concern was felt by political and intellectual élites about the use of leisure as a means of channelling youth culture to avoid unrest. In the late 1950s and 1960s, fifteen MJCs a month were inaugurated and the number of *centre sociaux* multiplied five-fold between 1956 and 1968 (Besse, 2014). Proponents of *animation* had an ambitious vision of its role in the newly-built *grands ensembles*. *Animation* was to operate as a new paradigm for French society by giving life, creating, facilitating and activating: 'a vital process through which individuals and groups [would] affirm themselves and get going' (Théry, 1965, quoted by Cupers, 2010, p. 107). *Animation*, Théry claimed, would 'generate a dynamism […] at once biological and spiritual, individual and social' (Théry et Garrigou-Lagrange, 1966, p.14, quoted by Éloy, 2009), although again such an approach was not exclusively focused or even necessarily prioritised on young people.

Street-based or detached youth work began to appear as early as the late 1940s and early 1950s, often to deal specifically with 'unattached' youth. Such enterprises were mostly undertaken by volunteers and supported by workers from the fields of health, justice and social care. In the 1960s the *clubs de prévention* were created within the Youth and Sports sector, but were gradually drawn outside the scope of open-access youth work. In 1972 a social work approach to preventative work was officially defined, which led to a differentiation between 'natural prevention' (*prévention naturelle*) carried out by the *animateurs* in the purpose-built sociocultural facilities or in public spaces (outreach youth work) and 'targeted prevention' (*prévention spécialisée*), a form of detached youth work entrusted to third sector prevention teams mostly staffed with *éducateurs spécialisés* and commissioned by local authorities at county level (Peyre and Tétard, 2006).

As we move towards present times, two other distinctive features of French youth policy may be highlighted:

> i) Enduring State support for the existence of a recognizable professional workforce composed of two dominant groups whose missions, qualifications and legal frameworks derive from the two distinct 'categories of youth': those regarded as 'in need or likely to cause trouble', and the majority who are perceived as 'ordinary young people'. It is the role of *animateurs*, administered through Youth and Sports, to engage with mainstream youth, whereas the role of *éducateurs spécialisés*,[4] administered through the Ministry of Health and Social Care, is to respond to the needs of young people causing serious trouble or with major developmental or social problems. Overlapping missions assigned to both professions may include prevention work to curb anti-social behaviour and unrest in deprived neighbourhoods and priority areas. On the whole, policy control over welfare and social care issues is much tighter than it is over the Youth and Sports sector; the former also tends to have a higher status and professional recognition.

> ii) Increasing role of central-government in setting the broad legal parameters/frameworks for youth work. Responsibility for control and accreditation procedures is delegated to state administration offices at regional and local level. Central-government also exercises significant indirect influence on policy orientations and the voluntary sector through targeted programmes and incentive funding.

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[4] Several job titles are included under the term *éducateur spécialisé: moniteur éducateur, éducateur technique, éducateur de la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse...*

Modern times: the 1970s to the present

Changing priorities emerged during the economic and social crises of the 1970s which brought soaring unemployment and the gradual breakdown of the new urban paradigm of the *grands ensembles*. This, together with the urban riots of the early 1980s, can be seen as a critical turning point in the shaping of both policy and practice into their present profile. Five key strands can be outlined. First, there is an increased categorization of people into 'target groups' with a focus on social inclusion through employment (known as *insertion*). Second, there has been a transfer of *animation socioculturelle* and social work provision from central state to local authorities,[5] reinforced by the *lois de décentralisation* (devolution) (initially in 1982 and then again in 2003–2007). Third, we have seen the emergence and growing importance of urban development policies (including targeted youth schemes), formulated in a multitude of central government designed programmes and implemented by the local authorities and regional state administration offices.[6] Fourth, there has been an increased role for departments other than Youth and Sports in the designing and carrying out of targeted youth initiatives. Finally, a shift in the relationships between public authorities and the voluntary sector with the enforcement of new public management procedures has resulted in a gradual move from grant funding towards commissioning and tendering in the various policy areas, such as employment, health, sports, social care etc.

In recent years the influence and power of the voluntary sector has been receding, although a long-standing tradition of networking and lobbying has allowed the more powerful organisations to retain some influence. In the field of *jeunesse* and *éducation populaire* (and its professional offshoot *animation*) most of the voluntary organisations are members of the CNAJEP, a national umbrella organisation founded in 1968 to represent the interests of the sector in national policy-making.[7] By and large, actual policy-making is shared between the State and the local authorities whose importance has grown significantly with the devolution process initiated in the 80s. Local governments (mainly city councils and municipalities) have become key players although they have never actually had a statutory duty to secure recreational or educational activities and services for young people outside of formal education and social care. Still, most municipalities of more than 10,000 inhabitants now operate some kind of youth service through a *service jeunesse* either staffed with statutory *animateurs* or through a variety of state-initiated schemes involving agreements between those local authorities and the voluntary sector.[8]

Although fragmentation or segmentation are therefore probably the key defining features of French youth policy, an increasing theme has been a shift from *animation* to *insertion*. This was given impetus by the now-famous government report *L'insertion professionnelle et sociale des jeunes* (Schwartz, 1981) published following the riots early that year, wherein the *raison d'être* of French *animateurs* was redefined away from their leisure and cultural focus towards more employment and housing-oriented practice.

New services were designed and delivered through the *Missions locales* early in 1982 to help integrate young people aged 16 to 25. The new 'youth workers', *conseillers en insertion* (literally employment counsellors), employed by the *Missions locales*, were to engage with young people alongside the *animateurs* who were gradually drawn towards enhancing the new socio-economic dimension of their mission. *Insertion* became a French priority and a recurring topic along with the renewed theme of citizenship education, which was seen as

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[5] Devolution to the French *départements* but mostly to the *communes* and later to the *communautés de communes*.

[6] These are particular to the French context – they are decentralised central government offices staffed with civil servants and representing the state at regional level (régions and départements).

[7] The Comité National pour la Jeunesse et l'Éducation Populaire (CNAJEP) currently regroups more than 70 youth and popular education national organisations or federations.

essential to help build a society whose cohesion was perceived to be under threat. The socio-economic factors contributing to a more global 'social inclusion' were therefore brought forward while policy was increasingly aimed at enhancing youth employability. As a result of this shift, youth policies gained a form of legitimacy, especially at local government level, but their ambition shrank as they tended to focus on deprived and at-risk youth (Becquet, Loncle and Van de Velde, 2012). Like in many other European countries French professional youth work was encouraged to develop forms of practice where 'problematic' people were divided from 'normal' people' (Coussée, 2009: 11).

Policy directed at the younger sections of the population has thus become increasingly multi-levelled and cross-departmental as the successive programmes and schemes often involved two or more departments and included funding to the voluntary organisations and the local authorities for implementation. *Animateurs* came in for specific criticism; prominent figures in the cultural and sports sectors supported the view that traditional *animation* had failed for lack of appropriate training and expertise. Arts education and targeted sports programmes, they argued, were far more beneficial to the development of youth than the loosely-designed recreational activities of the *animateurs*. A multitude of training paths and vocational qualifications subsequently appeared in the fields of sports and culture to provide skilled professionals for non-formal intervention projects funded by the State or by the local authorities. This ongoing process has gradually led to the birth of a third significant ensemble of practitioners to complement and compete with the *animateurs* and *éducateurs spécialisés*. The cross-sectoral nature of youth policies, combined with a diversification of funding streams accessible through tendering or contracting procedures, as well as the commonly shared assumption that specialized modes of intervention are more efficient than more open-ended educational or recreational approaches, have spurred the development of a variety of new professional profiles, such as: *chargés de projet, médiateurs culturel, éducateurs sportif* and so on.

Key features of practice

As previously identified, 'youth work' occurs in three distinct fields of practice in France – the two principal historical professional fields of *animation* and *éducation spécialisée*, as well as the new emerging field, what the authors are calling *niche players* (with *animation* arguably being the most similar to the existing youth work sectors found in European countries such as the UK, Finland and Ireland). See Table 1 in next page for more details.

It should be noted, however, that *animation* is a blanket term covering such a wide range of professional activities that agreeing on a comprehensive definition of the word seems hardly possible. The data below relates to those activities most commonly regrouped under the terms *animation sociale, animation socioculturelle, animation socioéducative,* and *animation jeunesse*. However, it should not be forgotten that *animateurs* are trained to engage with all age-groups, with a high proportion of them (approximately 50 per cent) actually working with children under 11. These two facts make it difficult to isolate accurate data on the practices and working conditions of those *animateurs* working with young people aged 11 to 29.

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[8] Examples of such programmes include: *Projets Educatifs Locaux* (PEL) in the 1990s, *Contrats Educatifs Locaux* in the 2000s and the more recent *Projets Educatifs Territoriaux* (PET) in 2013.

	Animation	*Education spécialisée*	*Niche players*
Main State/Government regulating bodies for practice	Youth and Sports	Health and Social Care	Various (according to project and context of intervention)
Intervention framework	Mission-led commissioned services/ State initiated schemes and programmes Contracting with local authorities and following local policy orientations or guidelines	Mission-led commissioned services State initiated schemes and programmes Contracting with local authorities and following local policy orientations or guidelines	Opportunity-led sessional or project-based work Including one-time projects funded by targeted programmes, short-term contract
Priority modes of interaction with young people	Collective through group-work and socializing activities	Individual through informal conversation, mentoring and counselling	Collective
Main target groups	Broad Young people in general May vary with context	Specific At-risk or potentially 'problematic' youth	Broad Young people in general. May vary with context
Evaluation	Reporting of projects and annual activity reports External procedures for Youth and Sports accreditation	Mandatory internal and external evaluation procedures since 2002	Reporting of projects to funders

Table 6.1. Features of Practice

It should also be noted that *éducation spécialisée* is a social work profession. The vast majority of the practitioners operate in residential centres catering for young people with disabilities or severe behavioural problems. Their function is to carry out educational activities and mentoring work which includes daily life support within multidisciplinary teams. However, young people do not attend those facilities on a voluntary basis; they have been referred, and have often been officially labelled as 'in need'. By most standards, therefore, including those proposed within the Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality (European Commission, 2015),[9] such work is not regarded as youth work. Nevertheless, there is a small but significant group known as *éducateurs de prévention spécialisée* engaging with young people through street-based work in priority neighbourhoods. Contact with young people in such settings is not through a referral order and is exclusively at the young person's will. This work is similar to detached youth work delivered in a variety of other European countries such as the UK and Finland.

The third group, *niche players*, is an aggregate of more recent disparate professional profiles, a direct consequence of the fragmented youth policy environment. The authors have called those practitioners *niche players* because they are mostly specialized in using specific methods (such as sports, music, drama) or focus exclusively on one particular topic or issue (for instance, environmental education, employment) as opposed to the two other categories

[9] 'As long as young people take part voluntarily, non-formal education methods are used and the aim is personal and social development, it is still youth work. If the same work is done but the young people are obliged to participate it is social work using non-formal education methods' (2015: 14).

of professionals whose purpose is more explicitly educational in a broad sense and whose approach tends to be more holistic. Another difference lies in the very loose connections the *niche players* usually have with the historical *mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire* or with the traditional voluntary sector organisations. Moreover, the niche organisations are generally run by a limited number of staff, and although they necessarily relate to partners and networks, they are often keen to preserve their independence from the major organisations (with the exception of the *Missions Locales* whose national federation is more influential, although forming part of neither the social nor the *jeunesse et éducation populaire* sectors).

Tables 2 and 3 below provide information about professional context and training and qualifications of the three main groups of practitioners.

	Animation	*Education spécialisée*	*Niche players*
Most common job titles	*Animateur (socioculturel)*	*Educateur spécialisé, Moniteur-éducateur*	*Chargé de projet, éducateur sportif, Médiateur artistique et culturel*
Estimated numbers of professional practitioners	150,000 to 180,000 including 100,000 in the statutory sector in 2013	80,000[10] including 4000 *éducateurs de prévention spécialisée* working exclusively with youth	No data available
Proportion of paid volunteers (*service civique*)	No data available but increasing	Virtually non-existent	No data available but increasing
Gender ratio	70 % female Lower for management positions	68 % female	No data available
Professional status	Unregulated profession Statutory and voluntary sector	Regulated profession (social work) Mostly voluntary sector	Heterogeneous Voluntary sector

Table 6.2. Key Figures and Facts of Professional Context

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[10] L'observatoire et UNIFAF (2012). Enquête Emploi 2012, Résultats et enseignements pour la Branche sanitaire, sociale et médico-sociale, privée à but non lucratif.

	Animation	Education spécialisée	Niche players
Training programmes and qualifications	All-types for lower status jobs Pre-secondary and post-secondary State diplomas in *animation, jeunesse et sports* delivered by voluntary sector training providers University diplomas and degrees in *animation*	Post-secondary diploma (3 years) delivered by voluntary sector training providers Health and Social Care designed and supervised training	No legal requirements Heterogeneous Including degrees in sports, cultural management, project management, educational sciences, geography, sociology...
Key notions and themes in training	Activity/project Community profiling Community development Group dynamics Leisure and culture Participation Emancipation Social change	Individual needs assessment One-to-one relationship Mental health Disabilities Justice Empowerment Insertion and employment	Heterogeneous Project management Arts skills (music, performing arts, drama, filming...) Sports skills Physical activities Environmental education...

Table 6.3. Training and Qualifications

Key policy documents which have shaped current youth work

The current picture of youth policy today is highly fragmented, with significant but mostly indirect central-government impetus imparted through dozens of programmes and policy measures relating to several ministerial departments. In an effort to increase coherence President Hollande decided to set up a Ministerial Youth Committee with civil servants from sixteen ministries including Education, Youth and Sports, Culture, Health and Social Care, and with the intention to involve young people in the process through several regional and national youth meetings. The first Committee report was published in 2013 and listed forty-seven policy measures to be implemented. The Government plan *Priorité Jeunesse* was launched in the wake of the report and formulated a series of actions in line with the eight areas identified in the 2009 Council of Europe resolution on the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018):

•   Education and training
•   Employment and entrepreneurship
•   Health and well-being
•   Participation

- Voluntary activities
- Social inclusion
- Youth and the world
- Creativity and culture

The key players to implement such a scheme include state administration offices[11] at national and regional level as well as the local authorities, with voluntary sector organisations as commissioned providers.

At all levels, major policy focus areas are youth autonomy (with key themes including health, housing, education and training, employment, mobility, enhanced accessibility to welfare and social rights) and youth citizenship, a rather blurred notion which includes accepting the values of the Republic (tolerance and secularism, gender equality, environmental awareness, active participation). In that respect the most remarkable tendency in the last ten years has been the powerful national incentives to draw unemployed and unskilled young people into volunteering as the best means to keep youth unemployment rates stable while enhancing employability and hopefully limiting radicalisation and extremism. To this aim, the *Service Civique*[12] programme was launched in 2010 and was targeted at young people aged 15 to 25. It has become one of the top funding priorities – at the expense, it is feared, of some of the more traditional voluntary sector organisations (*mouvements de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire*). Central government expenditure on *Service Civique* alone[13] in 2015 was € 150 million, and this rose by 100 per cent in 2016 to € 300 million. This compares to a total of € 400 million devoted to the whole Youth and Voluntary Sector in 2016. *Service Civique* funding is expected to rise to € 1 billion by 2018, which raises concerns about the effect on the future funding of traditional forms of youth work.

Measurement and evaluation of youth work

In France, the development of systematic procedural evaluation and quality approaches in the field of youth work has been rather slow in comparison with other European countries (particularly the so-called Northern and Anglo-Saxon countries). One explanation is the absence of any coherent or clearly defined national youth policy. Moreover, there is no such thing as a well-established tradition of performance or impact measurement of public action in France. In 2005, a government report by the *Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales* (IGAS)[14] stated that political awareness of the need for public policy evaluation emerged towards the end of the 1980s with the Viveret report (1989) to the Prime Minister (Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales, 2005). In 1998 the *Conseil National de l'Évaluation* was created. As a State unit for the evaluation of public action, its mission was to set the priority domains for implementing evaluation procedures. In the last twenty years, however, public policy evaluation has aroused growing interest as well as heated debates regarding the dangers of it becoming exclusively concerned with cost-effectiveness and control, especially in times of annual reductions of public expenditure.

Where policy evaluation exists, the approach taken by central government in France is mostly top-down and outcome focused. An often-quoted definition of evaluation describes it as a

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[11] See footnote 5.

[12] A national programme by which any young person aged 15 to 25 can work for up to nine months as a paid volunteer (€ 500 per month).

[13] See *Projet de loi de finance pour 2015 – Politique en faveur de la jeunesse (Document de politique transversale)* and *Projet de loi de finance pour 2016 – Politique en faveur de la jeunesse (Document de politique transversale)*.

[14] IGAS is the French Government audit, evaluation and inspection office for health, social security, social cohesion, employment and labour policies and organisations.

process whose principal purpose is to appreciate the effectiveness of a given set of measures and programmes 'by comparing the observable outcomes with the pre-set objectives and the means devoted to implementation' (Décret, 1998). In the social, informal and non-formal education sectors, evaluation methods have therefore been accused of over-standardizing practice, at the risk of undermining the richness and diversity of the voluntary sector tradition, together with a lack of consideration for the expression of practitioners and young people alike (Bouquet, 2009).

Nevertheless, there are some differences between the three groups. First, as *éducation spécialisée* is located in *travail social* (social work) there are a number of obligations which result from legal changes (2002, 2005) which made both internal and external evaluation, as well as quality procedures, mandatory for all voluntary and statutory sector institutions under the Health and Social Care administrative authority. In those institutions, the practice of external evaluation through surveying, interviewing, reporting and observation gathering has developed significantly, with the *Agences Régionales de Santé* acting as the state regional offices responsible for overseeing management and practice alike.

A strong emphasis has also been put on the participation of service users in governance and evaluation processes in all social work services, including those directed at young people. Nevertheless, in spite of numerous innovative initiatives at local level and a stated ambition of policy-makers at national level to promote and support greater participation and genuine empowerment, there seem to remain significant discrepancies between 'discourse' (including the law itself) and 'practice' (Conseil Supérieur du Travail Social, 2012: 26). The other two groups – *animation* (located in the field of *jeunesse et sport*) and *niche players* – are not directly affected by the demands of current Health and Social Care legislation and have been largely unaffected by such developments. Procedures for these two ensembles generally include reporting to funders and administrative authorities. There are also some local initiatives to develop quality systems in both the statutory and the voluntary sectors which often pre-date legislation or central-government policy evaluation frameworks.[15]

A number of common features may be identified as regards evaluation and quality. First, accreditation and evaluation procedures are the responsibility of regional government offices (attached to two central government departments: Youth and Sports and Health and Social Care). These are meant to guarantee the terms and conditions by which young people are catered for. Second, a majority of practitioners (in both the statutory and voluntary sectors) tend to be distrustful or critical of external intervention when it comes to evaluating management or practice. As Bouquet (2009: 39) puts it, the main problem with evaluation in France is that it seems to cause 'perpetual misunderstanding'. Third, the tradition of active youth participation in either evaluation or decision-making (governance) – excluding tokenism – is arguably rather weak as compared with other European countries. Finally, evaluation is mostly carried out through staff reports focusing on quantitative indicators such as numbers of: participants in activities, activity hours, paid staff, volunteers, as well as gender balance, opening hours etc.

However, one should not overlook informal self-evaluation practices, a continuous self-reflecting but mostly informal process involving conversation with peers, young people or other stakeholders, either during work, in breaks or semi-formal team meetings. Such

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[15] Examples of joint initiatives (public/private) to develop quality systems in the Youth and Sports sector include: Charte Qualité Jeunesse (11-to-17-year-olds) – Département de la Nièvre, Fédération des centres sociaux, DDJS CAF, MSA, CG, Fédération des Oeuvres laïques (2012–2013), as well as Label animation enfance-jeunesse (3-to-17-year-olds) – Département du Calvados, CAF, DDJS, UFCV (2000–2010).

practices are mostly unplanned, unmonitored, non-compulsory and rarely documented. They may co-exist with the systematic procedural methods but may sometimes have an alternative agenda to the top-down directives issued by local or national policy-makers.

Influence of European youth work policy

French 'youth work' is complex. Arguably the very concept of 'youth policy' has been imported from other countries. In this respect, the European institutions, influenced by representatives with clearly articulated youth policies and where youth work is well-structured, have played a major role in encouraging national governments to build a more integrated approach towards youth-related issues (Plan Priorité Jeunesse, 2013). This has not always been widely accepted in France. The history of 'youth work' in France demonstrates reluctance to mark one specific policy area outside schooling and where young people would be identified as 'a distinct population with needs and aspirations different to those of children of adults' (European Commission, 2014, p. 53). The relevance of 'youth' as an official labelling term for a particular professional field or policy domain has often been challenged with the assumption that rather than isolating 'youth' as a specific target group, it would be safer and more inclusive to take young people's needs and interests into consideration within each of the various existing policy areas. Unfortunately this has often led to the dilution of youth-related matters into broader policy orientations. Arguably the European Commission and EU's focus on youth, and youth work, could act as further impetus on policy makers in France to prioritise the needs and aspirations of young people and to develop services specifically designated to meet their needs.

Conclusion

Despite the ambiguous relationship to youth within French policy, initiatives directed at the younger sections of the population have a very long tradition dating back to the early nineteenth century. Moreover, the State has at times been quite active in orientating and coordinating such intervention, especially since World War II. What has emerged are three groups of practitioners with distinct roles to engage with young people outside the schooling system and the world of work – the *animateurs* relating to the youth and sports administration and within the tradition of *éducation populaire*, the *éducateurs de prévention spécialisée*, a small group of social workers engaging with young people in priority neighbourhoods through street-based youth work, and the *niche players*; a heterogeneous ensemble of practitioners whose flexible forms of action bear witness to the growing specialization of intervention, as youth-related issues are increasingly perceived as critical and as short-term targeted funding streams are made available for youth related activities.

While formal recognition of the importance of identifying the quality of youth work is evident at a European level, the development of procedural evaluation and measurement is not yet seen as a priority in the French context. Where formal procedures have been adopted they are often mistrusted by practitioners for fear that they should undermine their core values and the nature of their work. New participatory approaches will no doubt therefore prove useful to provide French youth workers with an opportunity to reflect upon their practice and demonstrate the value of their work.

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Chapter 7:
Methodology of Transformative Evaluation
By Susan Cooper

An alternative approach to evaluation

As noted in the introduction, evidencing the difference that youth work makes to both the lives of young people and their communities has for many years been a challenge for those working in the field. To aid youth work practitioners to meet this challenge, considerable attention is being paid across Europe to developing evaluation frameworks, both at a European Level (see Chapter 1), as well as at a national level (see Chapter 3 on the Finnish context). However, one of the problems with a number of these approaches is they are 'technical' in nature and deny the context of the youth work practice which is being evaluated (Ord, 2014, 2016). If the aim is to develop a method of evaluation that both identifies effective youth work practice and illustrates the processes which elicited the outcomes of youth work, the evaluation methodology must be commensurate with youth work itself. It is argued that only then will we genuinely be able to articulate the value of youth work to policy makers and funders.

It is widely accepted that evaluation has three purposes: to determine accountability, to generate new knowledge, and to improve practice (Chelminsky, 1997). However, evaluation is not a neutral process; it is influenced by economic, political, historical and social forces. Importantly, all of these influence how Chelminsky's three factors – accountability, knowledge generation and practice improvement – are played out. In the current climate, especially in the UK but also in a number of other European contexts, evaluation is driven almost exclusively by accountability (Chouinard, 2013; Cooper, 2012, 2018; Vedung, 2010). Accountability in these contexts is understood as a desire to identify and demonstrate success – an abstract objective measure of 'quality'.

The current discourse of accountability has reshaped our understanding of the concept of accountability, which has shifted from a broad democratic sharing of responsibility for practice (from practitioners to both participants, to the organisations, to funders, to professional bodies, and to oneself) to a narrowly-formed technocratic concept, based on control, regulation and compliance (Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; Dalhberg et al., 2007; Cooper, 2013, 2018). This is problematic, as it skews the approach taken to evaluation in particular ways, favouring objectivity and privileging quantitative data. Setting measurable outcomes is quite straightforward when the 'product' is tangible, but this is generally not the case in youth work (Ord, 2004a, 2004b, 2016). The pressure to set outcomes which are measurable has led many organisations to focus their attention on those things which lend themselves to being counted (Bennet, 2005; Cooper, 2011, 2018). Rather than trying to force a square peg into a round hole, we need to consider alternative evaluative practices to find an approach which is not only congruent with youth work's values and ethos but more importantly enables evaluators to capture the depth, breadth and complexity of their work. Only then will youth workers be able to demonstrate the value of the work they do.

Transformative Evaluation (TE) Methodology

Origin and theoretical underpinnings

This particular Transformative Evaluation methodology (TE) was developed in 2010 through a doctoral research project based in a voluntary sector youth work organisation in England. The aim was to design a participatory methodology that could generate evidence of impact and redistribute the power inherent in the evaluation process. It is designed to empower practitioners to re-engage with evaluation. It is premised on a belief that although evaluation is an essential aspect of professional practice, practitioners have become alienated from important aspects of the evaluation process, in particular from its ability to inform and develop youth workers' own practice. TE was developed in order to build a model of evaluation from practitioners' own accounts rather than superimposing an abstract, ideal model, which merely tests for standardisation and conformity (Shaw, 2011). TE resonates with a wider tradition of evaluation developed by Freire (1972) and Mertens (2009).

TE is based on the 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) technique which was developed by Davies in 1996. It is participatory and dialogical in nature, and it is intended to be ongoing practice, rather than a 'one-off' activity. It is also designed to be shaped by those who use it as they reflect and learn from its application. Essentially it involves the generation of a number of participants' Significant Change stories during a given time period and the systematic collective analysis of those stories (see Davies and Dart (2005) for detailed information about the MSC technique).

Transformative Evaluation synthesises three essential aspects – the transformative paradigm, appreciative inquiry, and participatory evaluation – to create a methodology that engages a range of stakeholders in identifying and evaluating impact.

The transformative paradigm's central tenet is inclusion. It prioritises groups who tend to be marginalised or neglected (in this case young people, youth workers and community members) in the evaluation process with the aim of achieving social justice (Mertens, 2009). Transformative Evaluation is not exclusively designed for marginalised groups, in that it has the potential to enable any young person to better realise their potential as well as enable any youth worker to better understand the impact of their work on the lives of young people, but it is particularly effective in allowing the voices of the marginalised to be heard. Working within a transformative paradigm allows evaluation to become a part of the intervention and enables it to be used as a reinforcing rather than discouraging feedback mechanism (Eoyang and Berkas, 1999).

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is based on the theoretical framework of positive psychology. As such, it is a strength-based approach explicitly taking a positive stance in an effort to counterbalance the deficit discourse of problem-solving (Zandee and Cooperrider, 2008). Essentially, appreciative inquiry focuses on strengths rather than deficits within a given community or practice setting.

Participatory evaluation can be understood as a process of collective action that involves a range of stakeholders in reflection, negotiation, collaboration and knowledge creation. Importantly, participatory evaluation is not simply a matter of using participatory techniques;

it is about rethinking who initiates and undertakes the process and who learns or benefits from the findings (Guijt and Gaventa, 1998). Linked to the transformative paradigm, participatory evaluation attempts to redress the power imbalances inherent in dominant evaluation methodologies.

Drawing on these theoretical foundations, Transformative Evaluation offers a methodology which promotes interaction and communication between a variety of stakeholders. It establishes a dialogue between the 'evaluators' and young people, youth workers and stakeholders. Its central purpose is to both enhance learning as well as evaluate practice. Transformative Evaluation therefore has the potential to do more than provide evidence of impact; it also develops practice. This occurs on a variety of levels. First, in 'real time' youth workers receive authentic feedback from young people about how their practice has impacted on their lives. Second, both youth workers and stakeholders have an opportunity to reflect on what is working and therefore improve and develop practice accordingly. Finally, transformative evaluation facilitates a wider development of organisational learning and knowledge creation in the longer term, creating a culture of evaluation built on collaboration and trust between all stakeholders, supporting organisational learning and sustainable practice. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1.
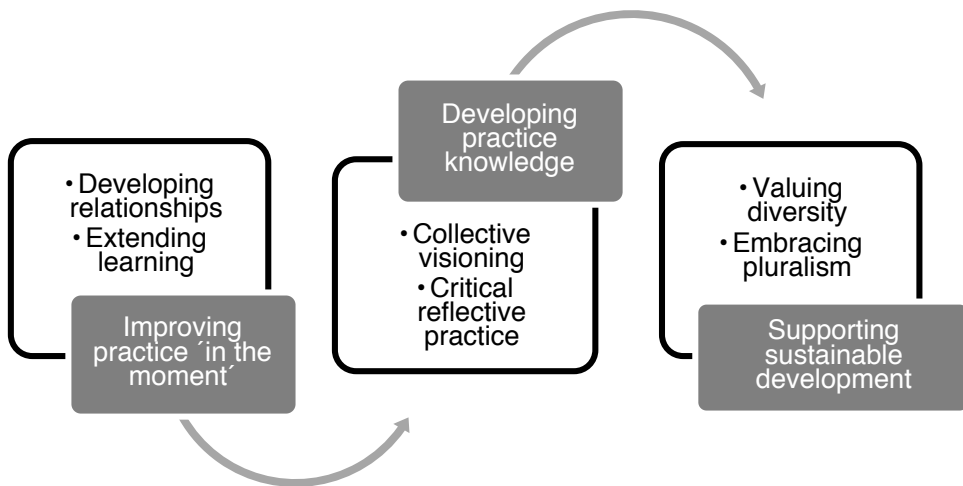
Figure 7.1 Organisational and Practice Learning through Transformative Evaluation (Cooper 2018: 86)

Four stages of Transformative Evaluation
TE follows a four-stage process which is repeated every three to four months (see Figure 7.2 overleaf). The four stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Generation of 'Significant Change Stories'
Stage 2: Youth worker selection and analysis of 'Contextualised Significant Change Stories'
Stage 3: Stakeholder selection of 'Most Significant Change Story' and feedback
Stage 4: Meta-evaluation
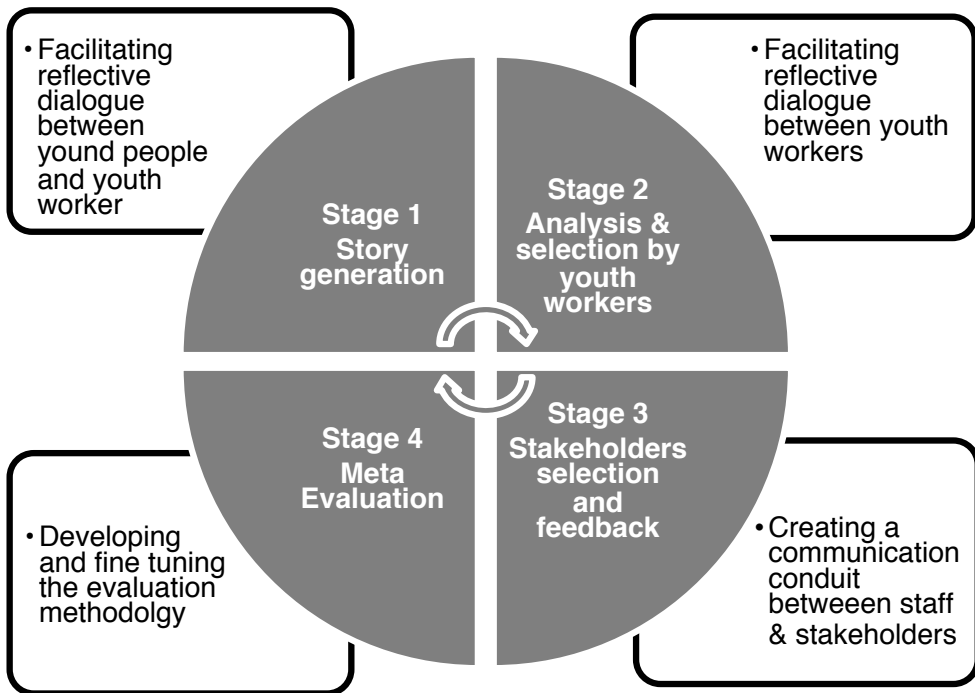
Figure 7.2 The Transformative Evaluation Process (Cooper 2014)

Stage 1: Generation of 'Significant Change Stories'

This involves youth workers generating 'Significant Change Stories' with young people. These are collected by youth workers who engage young people in conversation, beginning with the following question as a prompt: 'Looking back, what do you think has been the most significant change that occurred for you as a result of coming here?' Youth workers record young people's responses in their own words. The young person is encouraged to explain why the change was significant to them. This promotes reflective dialogue between the young person and the youth worker.

Stage 2: Youth worker selection and analysis of 'Contextualised Significant Change Stories'

Stage 2 involves a process of analysis and selection of the young people's significant change stories. This can be a challenging part of the process but is rich in learning for the youth workers involved. This stage has three steps:

- Step 1 involves the sorting of stories into groups or domains by the youth workers who recorded the stories. Sorting the stories and assigning domain names leads to reflection and in-depth analysis.

- Step 2 begins the process of co-construction. Each youth worker adds context and professional commentary to the young person's story. Engagement in reflective dialogue

with peers about their understanding of the young person's story and their intervention supports the youth worker in the co-construction of the story. These stories are then known as 'Contextualised Significant Change Stories' (CSCs). This process promotes learning among the group of youth workers about the significant changes taking place in the lives of young people as a result of being involved in youth work.

- Step 3 requires the group to reach consensus on the most significant change story for each domain. This promotes shared visioning and team work. The reason for the selection is added to each story and these contextualised stories are then presented to the stakeholder group.

Stage 3: Stakeholder selection of 'Most Significant Change Story' and feedback

Stage 3 involves the stakeholder group receiving the chosen contextualised significant change story from each domain. It is their task to discuss, review and select the 'Most Significant Change Story' for that cycle. The cycle is completed by the return of the most significant change story to the youth worker group together with their collective reason for selecting that particular story.

Stage 4: Meta-evaluation

This is the concluding stage and involves a process of meta-evaluation. At the end of each cycle the youth workers review their experience of using the evaluation methodology with the purpose of developing skills and understanding to inform both their practice and the next cycle of evaluation.

Transformative Evaluation project

The Erasmus-funded project entitled Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe (DCIYWE) engaged three youth projects in each of the five countries of England, Estonia, Finland, France and Italy. Each of these fifteen youth work projects identified and trained a group of (between four and six) youth workers and a group of (between three and five) stakeholders in the use of transformative evaluation. Each youth work project then implemented three cycles of transformative evaluation over a period of one year, between July 2015 and July 2016. The identification of youth workers and stakeholders was left to the discretion of individual projects. Each project followed the process as set out below.

Stage 1: Generating Significant Change (SC) Stories

In each cycle each youth worker aimed to generate twenty significant change stories using the following prompt question:

> *'Looking back, what do you think has been the most significant change that occurred for you, you and your peers, or you and your community, as a result of coming here?'* [1]

Generating quality stories is not necessarily straightforward, and it is acknowledged that good research skills are needed; although these skills are commensurate with the skills of

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[1] The additional aspects of change related to 'you and your peers' and 'you and your community' was added to the original question to avoid an exclusive focus on individualised stories and try and ensure the process elicited wider changes at peer group and community levels as well as on a personal level.

competent youth workers. Experience of the process suggests that some young people struggle with the word 'significant' and it may be necessary to re-phrase the question to ensure it is accessible. It may be that the young people find the word 'significant' difficult because they are interpreting it in some sort of absolute sense. It can help to prompt young people to think about what is 'different now' and then to identify what they think is the most important, in relative terms, of all the changes they have noted. Facilitating young people to reflect on the outcome of their involvement with the worker and the project through these reflective conversations supports them to recognise and articulate their learning. Importantly, young people's learning is extended or solidified as a result of this process.

- **Practical considerations when generating SC stories**

Recording stories can be done in two ways. First, handwritten notes can be taken during the conversation; however, it is essential that any notes are read back to the young person to check that they accurately reflect the essence of their story. The story is more valid when recorded in the young person's own words. Alternatively, the young person can write their story directly. Where possible, a story should be written as a simple narrative describing the sequence of events that took place and their significance to the young person.

In terms of story length, generally the young people's stories tend be a paragraph (three or four sentences) but some may be much longer and some shorter. They should not be so short that vital information is left out. A story should include:

Description of the change – What happened? Who did what, when and how?

Significance to the young person of events described in the story. This is a key part of the story. The process is attempting to discover how the young person feels they have changed as a consequence of their engagement, and how this change has come about. Some young people will naturally tell their stories this way, but others may need to be prompted. It is also valuable to know how this change has impacted on their wider lives beyond the project as this enables those reading and discussing the story to fully appreciate the significant of the change to the young person.

- **Ethical considerations when generating SC stories**

An ethical approach to story generation requires us to be open about what we are doing. Youth workers need to apply professional judgement as to when to introduce the idea of generating a story; it does not have to be the opening line of a conversation. Rather, this is about being alert to the potential for story generation. It may be that during a conversation with a young person, the youth worker sees the potential for a story; they may decide not to act at that moment, but feel it is more appropriate to return later. The next time they see the young person, they may remind them of the conversation and ask if they would like to generate a story.

The young person needs to be able to give informed consent for their story to be used for evaluation purposes. This involves explaining how their story will be used and checking that the young person is happy for the story to be used in this way. Because of the emergent

nature of the 'narrative' it is good practice to re-confirm consent after the story has been recorded and checked. All the stories are anonymised at Stage 2 and pseudonyms are attached to each story; encouraging the young person to assign the pseudonym themselves reinforces anonymity. Care needs to be taken to remove identifying details of the story, for example in the use of names, projects, location.

Steps need to be taken to ensure as far as possible that young people are telling 'their' story rather than what they might think the youth worker wants to hear. Again, this is a matter for professional judgement and awareness. Youth workers needed to consider the influence they have as evaluator and think about how they can reduce this. The DCIYWE Transformative Evaluation project was scrutinized and passed by the ethics panel of the Plymouth Marjon University.

- **Sampling**

Transformative Evaluation is a selective rather than inclusive process. Instead of providing information on the 'average condition' of participants, it provides information about successful circumstances. This is referred to as purposive sampling. Selecting young people based on prior knowledge that they have experienced a change as a result of being involved with the organisation is purposefully 'biased', not to make the organisation look good but in order to learn from those cases of good practice (Patton, 2002).

Stage 2: Analysis and Selection of Significant Change Stories
This stage involves three steps:

1. Allocating domains
2. Co-construction
3. Selection

- **Step 1: Creating domains**

Domains are broad, but they are attempts to categorise the changes taking place in the lives of young people involved in the youth work projects. They are established after the stories have been collated and are agreed upon collectively by the group of youth workers working together in discussion. This involves sorting the significant change stories into meaningful groups based on their content and then agreeing a title for each group. In other words, the domains emerge from the generated stories.

The process of developing domains is illustrated in Figure 7.3 (overleaf). It requires each youth worker to read aloud their generated stories, just as they are written, no ad libbing or editing, or adding further comment – solely the young people's words. Once all the stories have been read, the group discusses and agrees on four or five domain names (titles that describe the content of the stories). The stories are read out loud again and each one is placed in the most relevant domain. This is a discursive process and may take some time. It is an important step and requires sufficient time for the youth workers to listen to and develop understanding of the views of their peers in order to reach a consensus.

Generally four or five domains will emerge, and it is likely that the number of stories in each domain will be different. This is not a problem; however, if one particular domain has a large number of stories (for example more than eight of the twenty stories), then it may be necessary look again at the domain itself to see whether it is too broad. Care should also be taken to ensure that there are not too many domains (more than five is probably too many); this is sometimes indicative of the group struggling to reach consensus, and if this should happen, it may be necessary to review your group decision-making process. As the process makes use of emerging domains, it is likely that the domain names will change in the next cycle.
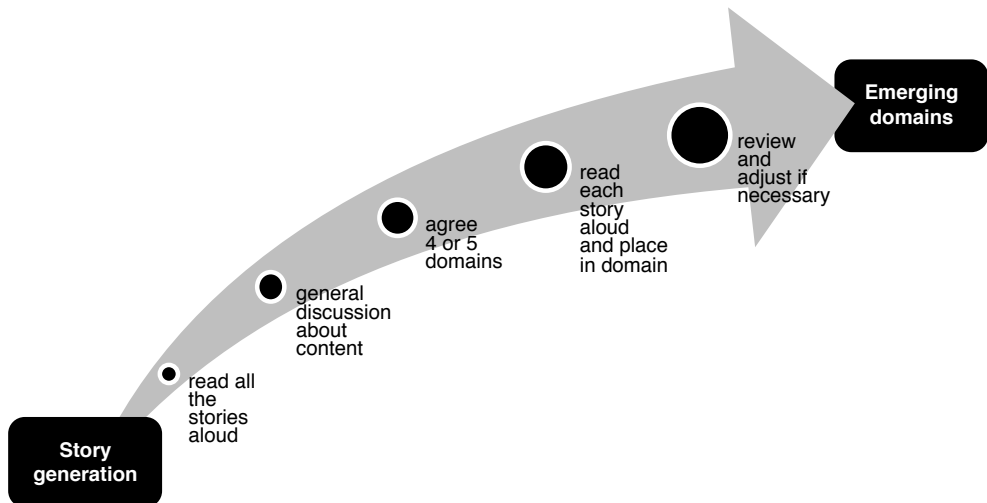
Figure 7.3 The process of establishing domains (Cooper 2018:95)

- **Step 2: The co-construction of stories**

This step begins by looking at one domain. Each story in this domain is read aloud by the youth worker who generated the story, as in the previous step. This time, however, the youth worker who generated the story adds their professional commentary to the young person's story, giving some context to the story. The professional commentary should provide an overview of the young person and their story; it may elaborate on what the young person has said or just add the worker's professional opinion in terms of the significance of the change. The purpose is to provide as full a picture as possible of the young person, their journey or 'distance travelled', and a professional opinion in relation to the significance of the intervention or interventions that enabled the change. In doing this, the youth worker becomes a co-author of the story. This process is repeated for all the stories in each of the domains.

- **Step 3: The selection of contextualised significant stories for each domain**

Selection requires each member of the group to offer their opinion and the reasons for their choice. It is important that there is full participation at this point as individual views are important and valuable to the group. If there is a difference of view, it is even more important to share this. The group needs to reach consensus as to the most significant change story for each domain, and to document the reasoning for this. The collective reason is then added to the story. This process can feel uncomfortable for some, particularly as those involved in the selection are also those who generated the stories, and this needs to be taken account of when working through this step.

By the end of this stage, the co-constructed story contains the following elements:

- The young person's story in their own words;
- The context and professional commentary added by the youth worker who generated the story;
- The group's reason for selecting the story as the most significant in that domain.

The selected contextualised stories for each domain are then presented to the stakeholder group.

Stage 3: Selection of Most Significant Change Story for the Cycle
In stage 3 the stakeholder group receives one contextualised significant change story for each of the domains. Their task is to discuss and select what they regard as the 'Most Significant Change' story for that cycle. They also work to reach consensus and attach their reasoning for selection to the story. The cycle concludes when the selected story, together with the reason for selection, is returned to the youth worker group.

Stage 4: Meta-evaluation
Meta-evaluation is generally understood as the 'evaluation of evaluation'; in other words, it is a process of review and adjustment of the evaluation process (Stake, 2004). By evaluating the experience of transformative evaluation, both youth workers and stakeholders can share, reflect on and resolve any concerns about the methodology. Through this ongoing review process, the youth workers' and stakeholders' understanding and skills in the use of Transformative Evaluation are enhanced.

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Section two:

The Impact of Youth Work

Background to the Research and Analysis of Findings
By Jon Ord

Ethical considerations

The ethical constraints and parameters of the research project reflect the ethical approval process required at the University of St Mark and St John,[1] Plymouth. Within this the ethical dimensions of the proposed research were scrutinised, and it was confirmed that every effort was being taken to ensure that participants' or researchers' physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing was maintained and that no harm came to any of the youth workers or young people during the project. The project is congruent with youth work practice, and youth workers already had established relationships with the young people. No sensitive subjects were discussed other than the kinds of issues that the youth workers would have been discussing with them as part of their ongoing conversations.

Participants in the research

The youth workers were self-selected from within designated youth work organisations, and their participation was optional. Young people were recruited through a process of purposive sampling by the youth workers based on their prior knowledge of them. That is, youth workers would identify young people who they thought may have a 'story to tell' based on their knowledge of the youth work they had been doing with them over a period of time.

It is noted that there were pre-existing relationships between the young people and the youth worker as a researcher, and it was made explicit through the informed consent process (see below) that the choice to participate or not in the research would not in any way influence the relationship between the young person and youth worker (that is, if they chose to participate they would not be thought of more positively, or if they declined there would be no consequences).

No incentives were offered to take part in the project. The process of 'story collection' was not 'out of the ordinary' – it was intended to be consistent with youth work practice. The premise was therefore to engage young people in conversations about the impact of the project. This is congruent with 'everyday' youth work, and the kind of thing that youth workers could and perhaps should be involved in. The only thing that was different was how this was systematised and recorded. However, the participation of the individual young people was voluntary, and they could opt of out the process up to stage 2 of the particular cycle (when the stories were discussed among the youth workers).

The young people were not considered to be vulnerable,[2] and they were not targeted because of any particular need or issue. They attended open access youth provision based on the principle of voluntary participation, and the projects are not specifically concerned with identifying or responding to 'problems'.

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[1] Also known as Plymouth Marjon University

[2] Although the French organisation 'A' does focus on young people with designated issues or needs, it is based on voluntary participation.

Informed consent

The young people were made fully aware of the nature and purpose of the research. Youth workers were encouraged to be open and honest at all times. The young people involved were considered to be 'Gillick competent'[3] (Morrow & Richards, 2007) and were therefore able to provide their own consent, as they all attended the projects voluntarily and gave their own consent to participate in the project's activities. Participants were made aware of their rights (for example, their right to withdraw, to confidentiality and to anonymity), and were told what the study was about and what would happen to the data collected.

They were not asked to sign a consent form as this was not considered to be congruent with youth work practice, and would have unnecessarily formalised the process and potentially skewed the kinds of conversations that the young people had with the youth workers. These kinds of conversations were considered an 'everyday' part of practice, and it was essential that this informality was ensured and maintained.

The following statement was agreed to ensure that young people were informed and able to give consent for their stories to be used to communicate the impact of youth work:

*   Explain the wider context of the evaluation (across five countries) and its purpose in celebrating the value of youth work and the changes they have experienced. Young people will be informed that participation is optional for them, and there will be no pressure to provide a story. The youth worker will make clear that they won't mind if the young person doesn't want to give a story, and it won't change or affect their relationship if they decide not to.
*   This will be verbal and textual, e.g. poster in youth project, information on youth project website.
*   Explain the process of the evaluation, what will happen to their story and who will be involved in the process.
*   Explain that all stories are important, regardless of whether they are selected at stage 2 or stage 3.
*   Explain that the stories will be anonymised and that they can choose their pseudonym.
*   Explain that they are in control of their story and can withdraw it at any time, without giving a reason, up to the point at which the national reports are written.

Additionally, consent would be checked again after the story had been recorded to confirm the young person was in agreement with the text.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Young people were identifiable up to and including the group discussion stage within the designated group of youth workers, at which point the stories were contextualised and selected for discussion among the stakeholder groups. The young people were involved in the process of choosing their own pseudonym as the final act of generating the story and so were active in the process of anonymising their data. In the write-up the data utilises the pseudonyms, and so the young people are not identifiable. The stories were hand-written and then typed up by the youth workers. Voice recording was not utilised as it risked formalising the informal youth work space.

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[3] Gillick competence is an important legal concept in the UK which defines a young person's ability to consent to medical treatment under the age of 16. It underpins the Fraser guidelines which advise on the interpretation of the legal ruling in the Gillick case. It is now used beyond the remit of medicine in other social spheres to decide whether young people are able to provide their consent.

The youth work organisations were also not identifiable to avoid the possibility of inadvertently identifying the young people.

Approach to analysis

As explained in the introduction, there was considerable coordination between the five countries in the initial establishment and implementation stages of the project, through for example the transnational learning activities and the training manual, which was translated from English into the other four languages. However, the analysis was undertaken entirely independently, with the specific intention of ensuring that the analysis of the data from one country was not influenced by any of the other four country groups.

At the final transnational learning activity in France in September 2017, after the third cycle of transformative evaluation was complete and all the stories had been collected, all members of the project met to formulate an approach to the analysis. At this meeting an agreement was reached on an approach to coding which was broadly based on Saldana's (2016) methods of analysing qualitative data. This included the collation of a set of initial codes, and the production of a list of six to eight final codes based on this initial set.

Coding is a form of content analysis. It aims to make sense of qualitative data. That is, it attempts to answer the question: what is the data telling us about the phenomena we are studying? However, as Saldana (2016: 5) makes clear: 'Coding is not a precise science, it's primarily an interpretative act.' There were some reservations within the project about the potentially reductive nature of the coding exercise, but as Saldana points out: 'A code can sometimes summarise, distil or condense data not simply reduce [it]' (ibid). Coding is also concerned with seeking out patterns as well as identifying idiosyncrasies. It can also 'add value'. Coding is a heuristic process – from the Greek meaning 'to discover' – and as such it attempts to discover what the data means. As Charmaz (cited in Saldana 2016: 4) points out, coding is 'the critical link between data collection and the explanation of meaning'.

No claims are being made that this is an objective process, but it is a genuine and authentic attempt to interpret the stories and to undertake a closer examination to discern what themes and patterns emerge. During the analysis of the young people's stories every effort was made to ensure that the voice of young people was central. The authors (although coming from diverse backgrounds including sociology and psychology) were aware that this is a subjective process, and that their own perspectives may have influenced their interpretations. However, it was agreed that the authors would endeavour to be reflexive and minimise any bias, prioritising the voice of young people.

Importantly, the analysis of the data was undertaken independently within the country groups. The final lists of codes were only shared on completion of the draft reports in January 2018. Comparison of the data began after that date. This was achieved initially by the sharing of the draft national reports, and then a more detailed comparison was undertaken at a project meeting in March 2018.

Inevitably there were some minor differences in the process of coding across the various countries. Although all the country groups involved the lead youth workers in the initial

coding, in some cases, often due to practical considerations, the final coding was undertaken by the country coordinators. One country also involved the managers of the youth work organisations. Other differences included the approach to the cycles. For example, some groups analysed cycle 1 as a separate data set and then analysed cycles 2 and 3 in terms of the initial set of codes identified, adding new codes where necessary. Other groups analysed all the stories together as one data set. One group also utilised a software programme called Atlas to help classify the stories into codes and look at their relationships. Despite these differences, rigour in the analysis was paramount, and in almost all the cases at least two people read each of the stories.

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Chapter 8:
The Impact of Youth Work in UK (England[1]): 'Friendship', 'Confidence' and 'Increased Wellbeing'

By Susan Cooper

The Education Act (1944) placed a legal obligation on Local Authorities to provide out-of-school educational facilities for young people (Davies, 1999), and this commitment was reiterated in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. However, since the devastating cuts to Local Authorities in 2010 much of the resulting youth work provision is now delivered by voluntary sector organisations. The implementation of this project in England reflects this shift.

Transformative evaluation was applied in three different youth settings in the south west of England. All three projects were either based in the voluntary sector, had developed partnership work with it, or had shifted entirely from the statutory sector to the voluntary sector.

	Project A	Project B	Project C
Sector	Voluntary/Charitable Sector	Voluntary Sector and Local Authority Partnership	Voluntary/Charitable Sector
Age range	10–25	11–25	11–19
Location	Mainly rural	Urban	Rural and urban
Funding sources	Combined grant funded and commissioned work (LA and Health)	Local Authority (LA)	Mainly commissioned work (LA)
Type of work	Open access (centre-based and detached), IAG, targeted, community development	Open access (centre-based and detached), IAG, targeted and specialist (young carers and school-based)	Open access (centre-based and detached), targeted (1:1 and groupwork), alternative education
Participating youth workers	7	5	7
Participating stakeholders	5 stakeholders including Local Authority officer, commissioner, CEO of local voluntary sector organisations	3 stakeholders including professional colleagues from other organisations and a young volunteer	9 stakeholders including Local Authority officers, commissioners, trustees and 2 young people

Table 8.1 The three youth work settings

[1] Whilst the Erasmus partner country is the UK, youth work is a devolved responsibility in each of the four nations, so this chapter will only talk about youth work in England, as the data was collected in the south west of England

However, all three still deliver varying amounts of work commissioned by the Local Authorities. As a result the traditional split between the statutory and voluntary sectors has become increasingly blurred.

Nineteen youth workers participated in the research, fifteen of whom were professionally (JNC) qualified in youth work. The three settings delivered predominantly open access youth work. The commissioned work they delivered was directed by a 'preventative' agenda, with a focus on addressing societal concerns such as youth unemployment, 'anti-social behaviour' and lifestyle choices.

Findings

In all, 143 stories were generated across the three evaluation cycles, each from a different young person.

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Org. A	14	14	20	48
Org. B	13	13	12	38
Org. C	22	18	17	57
Total	49	45	49	143

Table 8.2 Generation of stories in England by organisation and cycle

Among the 143 stories collected, 36 stories were selected by the youth worker groups to become contextualised change stories and were put forward to the stakeholder groups. Of these, 9 were selected by the stakeholder groups as most significant change stories, one for each of the cycles (see Table 8.3 below).

Story Type	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Significant Change stories (total number of stories collected)	49	45	49	143
Contextualised Significant Change stories (total number of stories selected by the youth workers and presented to the stakeholder group meetings)	12	12	12	36
Most Significant Change stories (number of stories selected by the stakeholder groups)	3	3	3	9

Table 8.3 Types of stories generated

Age

Traditionally, Local Authority youth work in England was aimed at young people between the ages of 11 and 25, whereas voluntary sector organisations often worked with young people from the age of 8. This age range was narrowed to 13 to 19 years with the introduction of the Connections Strategy (DfEE, 2000). While most organisations work primarily with 13-to-19 year olds, in some cases the age range is extended to include younger age groups and those aged up to 24. Almost all (99%) of the young people who participated in the study were aged between 10 and 19, with 50% aged between 13 and 15 (see Table 8.4). Organisation A has an even distribution across the age range, whereas Organisations B and C have a greater difference across the age range; for example, in Organisation B 48% of the stories were generated by young people aged between 13 and 15, and in Organisation C 65% of the stories came from this age range.

	10.	13-15	16-19	20-25	25+	Total
Org. A	14	18	16	NA	NA	48
Org. B	11	17	10	NA	NA	38
Org. C	2	37	17	1	NA	57
Total	27	72	43	1	0	143

Table 8.4 Story generation across age

Gender

The gender of the story-tellers is set out in Table 8.5. Slightly more stories were generated by young women (57%) than by young men (43%) across all projects. Organisation B showed the biggest difference with 61% of the stories coming from young women. Further discussion on age and gender is included in the analysis section later in this chapter.

	Male	Female	Totals
Org. A	22	26	48
Org. B	15	23	38
Org. C	25	32	57
Total	62	81	143

Table 8.5 Story generation by gender

An example of a Most Significant Change Story in England

Bill's[2] story (aged 16, from Organisation C, Cycle: 1)

'When I first started volunteering at the youth centre, I found the volunteering role really tricky and didn't really pay much attention to others' opinions and thoughts, so I had a tricky start. I was in the tuck shop lots as I was nervous to leave there to do activities and interact with the young people. I was a very selfish person and had a 'my way or no way' attitude. I would get wound up easily if things didn't happen my way. Over the past six months, the youth workers at my youth centre have given me confidence and motivated me to feel comfortable in my volunteering role. I know they have helped me to change my attitude for the better. They have shown me how to interact with the young people, run activities and not to be so self-centred when working with others. Now I have been volunteering for seven months. I feel I can now listen to instructions, interact better with others and take in their opinions. Now, when youth workers give me advice on how I can improve in my volunteering role, I don't kick off, I listen and act on what they say.'

The youth worker's commentary

'Bill first started volunteering with us as he heard it would be a good thing to put on his CV. Youth workers knew that interacting with other young people was tricky for Bill so decided he would be trained in the café bar for the first few weeks to help build his confidence. Despite having good intentions for volunteering, he underestimated how much he would need to be involved in the session and the jobs he would need to do. For the first few months of volunteering, Bill struggled to stay on task and would often use the café bar as an excuse to sit on his phone most of the evening, only talking to his friend. Bill struggled to use his initiative and would need to be very guided by youth workers and reminded what his roles and responsibilities were. Bill would often be rude to others, get angry quickly and get involved in arguments with other young people.

The youth workers were honest with Bill and asked him to take a period of time away from his volunteering role as he was making sessions more challenging for us rather than being a senior helper. Bill continued to attend sessions, this time as a young person instead of a volunteer. During this time, youth workers engaged Bill in curriculum-based activities around friendships, social skills and how actions and behaviours can affect situations and moods of others as well as himself. After a while, Bill decided he was ready to try again at volunteering. In order to ensure this was successful the youth workers put on specific training and used a Peer Educator to work alongside him to develop the coffee bar area on his own sessions. This enabled Bill to feel a sense of ownership of the project. He took this challenge on and thrived in his own sessions, and so he was then ready to volunteer on the Junior Sessions. During this session the youth workers and the Peer Educator pushed Bill to step away from his comfort area of the café bar.

Although this took a bit of time, Bill's relationship with the youth workers gave him the motivation to take on activities that would support the youth workers to lead a session. This also persuaded him to work on his interacting skills with other young people,

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[2] All names are pseudonyms chosen by the young people.

*knowing he would be supported by the youth workers. Bill is now a completely differ-
ent young person and he has grown in confidence immensely. Bill now has ownership
over the café bar, takes pride in his space but can equally step away and use his other
skills elsewhere. Bill now gives peer support to other young people who decide to take
on the challenge of volunteering and has learnt volunteering comes with extra work
but more reward!'*

Youth worker group's reason for selection of the story

*'A very difficult decision, we had many examples of young people managing their be-
haviour. We believe that part of our role is managing expectations of young people and
timing is everything. The young person was asked to stay in open access as a member
as opposed to taking a volunteer role. He accepted the feedback from staff and saw it
as an honest reflection of where he was in his development, and was then presented
with the opportunity when the time was right. This story also highlights the long-term
process and patience involved in our profession. It reflects one of our organisational
values: to be determined and give young people a second, third and fourth try.'*

Stakeholder group's reason for selection as the Most Significant Change story

*'We chose this story as we feel it highlights the nature of youth work, it is long term
and it reaches young people that may not be noticed by services that are 'targeted'.
This young person obviously needed some help to learn the social skills needed for
employment and engagement in society, and the youth work process provided them. We
also feel this is a very typical example of what youth work can do.'*

The impact of youth work: Analysis of young people's stories

Cycle 1 stories were analysed to identify themes and an initial set of codes. This initial set
of codes was then applied to the stories from cycle 2 and cycle 3. The codes were amended
and adapted as necessary to produce a cumulative set of 'final codes' as shown in Table 8.6.

Initial Codes (from cycle 1)	Additional Codes (from cycles 2 and 3)	Final Codes
Making friends More friends Different friends	Belonging Making friends through activities	Enhanced friendships
More confidence Able to do more things Able to interact with others Talk to people		Increasing confidence
Feeling better about self Understanding emotions Happiness Fun	Managing feelings	Improving sense of wellbeing
Feeling included Safe Trust Respect Taking up opportunities Volunteering Helping others	Non-judgmental relationships Honest dialogue Recognising achievements	Mutuality
Reduced involvement with risky behaviours	Boundary-setting	Reducing risky behaviours
Learning to cope Understanding behaviours Accessing support		Increasing resilience
Increased engagement with specialist services		
Improved engagement with education/ employment		

Table 8.6 Initial and final set of codes

Discussion of final codes

Of the six codes, five relate to the impact of youth work on the lives of the young people (Enhanced friendships, Increasing confidence, Improving sense of wellbeing, Reduction in risky behaviours, and Increasing resilience). One code – Mutuality – relates to the process of youth work that enables these impacts to be achieved. Stories tended to include two to three codes; Figure 8.1 below provides an overview of the number of stories for each code.
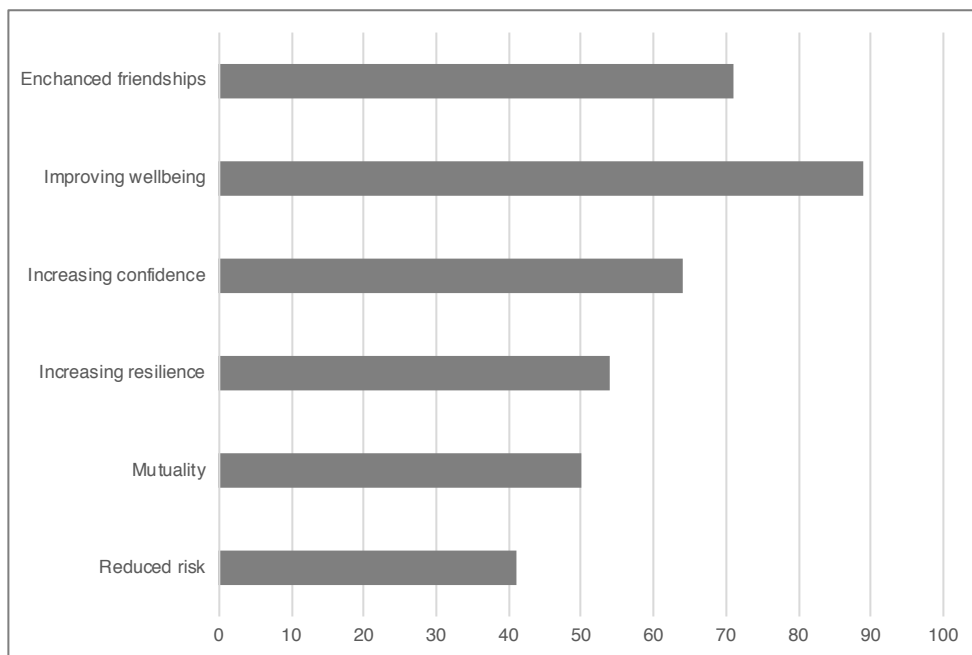
Figure 8.1 Number of stories containing codes

The direct quotations included in this chapter come from thirty-five individual stories which illustrate the multiple voices of the young people in the study.

Enhanced friendships

Feelings of social connectedness relate to the existence and extent of the meaningful relationships and bonds we have with peers, families and communities. Positive social connections and relationships are recognised as vital to long-term physical and mental health (Mental Health Foundation, 2016). The young people's stories collated in this study reveal that young people value the opportunities that the youth work settings provide to meet people and socialise as well as cultivate friendships. This is important because for many young people, the youth projects provide the only social space they have.

> *'Making new friends, before I didn't have any, I also go out more now and meet up and play in the park.'* (male, 12, story: 27)

'I have become more social, as I would just sit in my room if I didn't come to sessions and have nothing to do and not speak to anyone.' (female, 14, story: 29)

Importantly, however, in addition to young people talking about meeting new people and making new friends, they also talked about being 'helped' to socialise with others and build relationships.

'Being part of this group has made me feel part of something! I now have more friends in school, people are nicer to me and I feel better.' (female, 14, story: 100)

Others talked about having gained a 'trusted' circle of friends and how this had enabled them to engage in social activities with their peers beyond the youth projects.

'I have got to know other people my age that live around the area and we now hang out on other nights when the youth workers are not there.' (male, 15, story: 28)

'I see my friends outside of school a lot more, I go outside to see them. Before I was on my laptop.' (male, 10, story: 41)

The impact of these enhanced social connections has ramifications beyond the youth setting and demonstrates the sustainable impact of youth work interventions, as one young person clearly articulates:

'I have become more happy and sociable and interact more and go to other places. Most of the time I used to stay in my room or be out on the streets. Just makes me a happier person being here and meeting people.' (female, 14, story: 135)

Seventy-one stories contained explicit reference to youth work increasing young people's social connectedness; this represents 50% of the total number of stories. The gender balance of the story tellers was evenly spread with 48% of young women and 52% of young men reporting greater social connectedness. The age and gender breakdowns of the data for the young people who identified this impact are shown in Figure 8.2.

Enhanced friendships support a sense of belonging. It is important to note that while many young people are 'connected' through social media, research has shown that this is no substitute for 'real time' contact, as face-to-face contact is what creates the neuro-chemical response that contributes to wellbeing (Griffin, 2010). Social isolation impacts across the life course, and as such, interventions to reduce this in adolescence will reduce the burden on health and social care in later life, and as such they are cost-effective (Durcan and Bell, 2015).
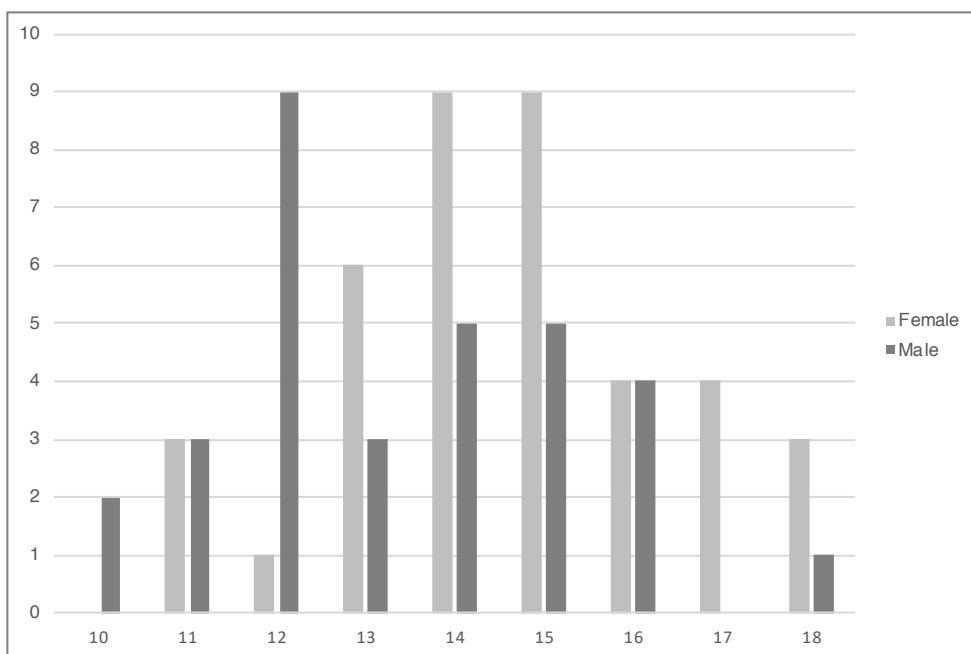
Figure 8.2 Age and Gender Data (Enhanced Friendships)

Increasing confidence

Confidence is a broad concept that is generally understood to relate to a combination of self worth (being aware of, and valuing, your true self) and self-belief (belief in your own ability to do things). People with self-worth are less likely to give up when they fail at something and less likely to become despondent when something negative happens to them. Self-belief (sometimes referred to as self-efficacy) enables optimism, and the sense that you can generally achieve what you set out to do. Self confidence is an essential prerequisite for an individual to exercise their own power and develop a sense of agency. Conversely, an underlying lack of self confidence is often linked to offending behaviour (Jeffrey, 2011).

Increased confidence was identified as a significant impact by the young people in this study. This was expressed in terms of 'feeling' more confident and of 'being' more confident.

> *'I think youth club has helped me in many ways, I feel more confident with myself.'* (female, 15, story: 56)

> *'I like the way I feel more confident and active within the community.'* (male, 12, story: 92)

A number of young people talked about the way in which their increased self-confidence had enabled them to improve their interactions with others and to respond more positively to situations they had previously found difficult:

> *'I have grown a lot of confidence by talking to new people and making new friends. I can meet new people and have a good conversation with them.'* (female, 15, story: 58)

'It's changed me as a person, I feel more confident with others and interacting with the public.' (male, 14, story: 80)

'Being more confident has meant that I am able to do everyday things that I wouldn't have been able to do. Like the other day I had been charged for something I didn't buy and I was able to phone the company myself and sort it. Also I made a phone call as part of my college course which I would have struggled with before.' (male, 16, story: 3)

In sixty-four stories young people explicitly referred to an increase in confidence; this represents 45% of all the stories generated. Slightly more young women reported feelings of increased confidence than young men; 51% of young women and 37% of young men in the study identified this impact. It is interesting to note that the majority of stories from young women that referred to increased confidence were generated by those aged 14 to 15 years (51%), whereas for the young men the stories are more evenly spread across the age range. The age and gender of the young people who reported significant changes in relation to their confidence are shown in Figure 8.3.
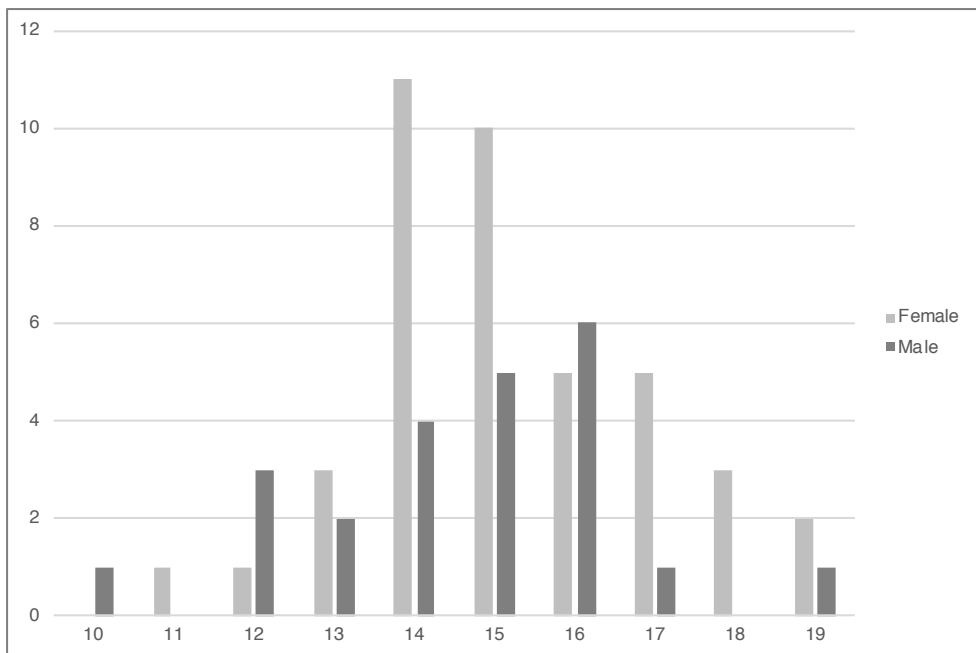
Figure 8.3 Age and Gender Data (Increasing confidence)

There is a link between self-confidence and positive outcomes (Goodman and Gregg, 2010). A lack of confidence or low confidence may well prevent young people from seeking the necessary help and support they need, as illustrated in the BBC School Report (2017) which identified that 34% of 11- to 16-year-olds did not feel confident enough to ask for help or support at school when they experienced negative feelings. It should be remembered, however, that confidence is not something that can be 'taught' (Ord, 2016). It must be developed

and nurtured. This study has demonstrated that young people's confidence can be significantly and consistently enhanced in open access settings when a person-centred youth work approach, based on developing trusting, non-judgmental relationships, is used.

Improving sense of wellbeing

Wellbeing is a multi-dimensional and complex concept which is difficult to define, but Shah and Marks (2004) offer a useful conceptualisation of it, arguing that in the first instance it is about feeling satisfied and happy. However, they argue it is more than this; it also means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community. Their definition of wellbeing therefore includes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Wellbeing is also subjective and dynamic and difficult to measure. Shin and Johnson (1978, cited in Dodge et al., 2012) therefore propose that wellbeing should be assessed according to the individual's own chosen criteria.

An improving sense of wellbeing is evident in many of the young people's stories, where they have talked about feeling happier, having a more positive attitude, a greater belief in themselves and an enhanced understanding of their emotions. The following extracts show the range of ways in which young people expressed this impact:

> *'The most significant change for me is that I have been happier.'* (female, 16, story: 95)

> *'Before I attended the project, my mood was usually at a low point and I struggled to get along with certain people. Since I have attended, my mood has improved and I feel more myself.'* (male, 16, story: 22)

> *'I feel I have developed a more positive attitude to things. I feel I have been listened to.'* (female, 14, story: 110)

> *'I have found that I have started to believe in me more and have a better attitude in myself and a more willing attitude.'* (male, 14, story: 96)

> *'I have been more able to understand myself and learnt more about my emotions and stuff.'* (female, 19, story: 43).

Eighty-nine young people talked about an improved sense of wellbeing as a result of their engagement with the youth projects; this represents 62% of the study population. This impact was slightly more prevalent in stories from young women. 67% of the young women involved in the evaluation identified this impact compared to 56% of the young men. The age and gender of young people who identified an improved sense of wellbeing is shown in Figure 8.4.

Dodge et al. (2012) provide a balance model to capture the dynamic nature of wellbeing. It places the individual's resources (psychological, social and physical) on one side and the challenges they face on the other. They suggest that if the challenges outweigh the individual's resources, then their wellbeing is negatively affected. Young people clearly face many challenges, for example increasing academic expectations, unemployment, bullying,

changing social relationships with family and peers, as well as the physical and emotional changes associated with adolescence. They are not necessarily equipped to deal with these challenges and may well need support to face them, and in so doing become better equipped to deal with similar challenges in the future.
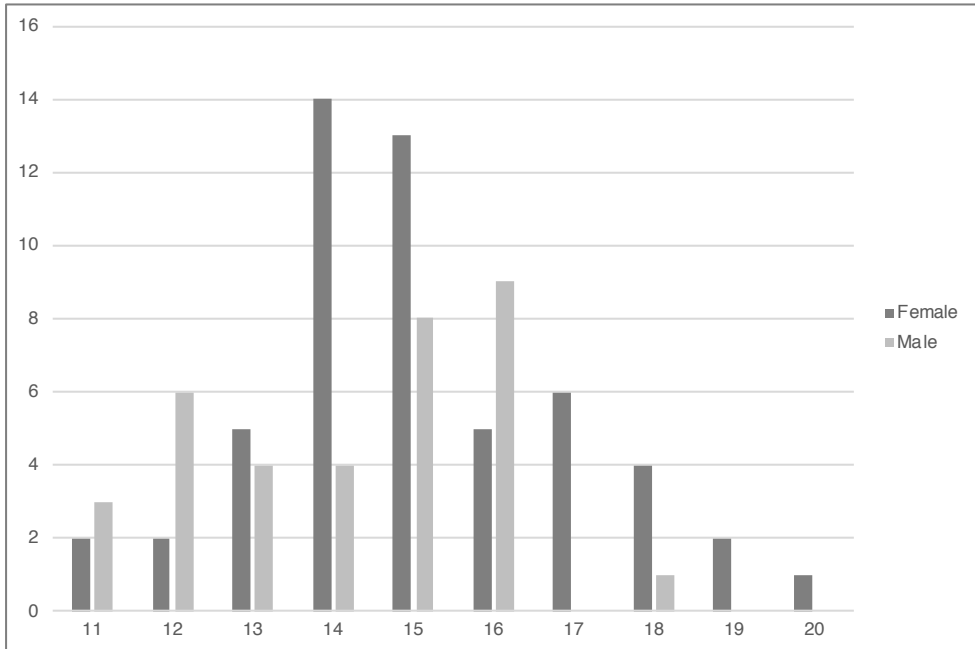
Figure 8.4 Age and Gender Data (Improving sense of wellbeing)

A recent report on children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing by the Department of Health (DoH, 2015) found that many young people found it difficult to discuss their problems with their GP. Young people also reported that their school was not an environment in which they felt safe to be open about their wellbeing and mental health concerns. Youth work in England has a fundamental commitment to the promotion of wellbeing; it is a core value (Jeffs and Smith, 2005) and is included in the National Occupational Standards. The stories from young people in this study provide substantial evidence that young people are able to talk to youth workers about their health and wellbeing, but more importantly they support the view that universal services delivered in open access youth work projects play a key role in promoting health and well-being as well as preventing mental health problems (Wright and Ord, 2015).

Reduction in risky behaviours
The traditional view of adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress' has been challenged (Jeffs and Smith, 1998/99). Most commentators now agree that the teenage years are best conceptualised as a period during which young people negotiate major transitions (Wyn and White, 1997), both internally in terms of self-development and with the external world

in terms of housing and employment. Despite this, however, 'youth' is still associated with heightened risk, and although it is important to note that risk-taking in itself is regarded as part of normal development; it can result in positive and negative consequences. Youth is therefore often still seen as a period within which young people may engage in negative behaviours. Evidence also suggests that the nature and success of the transition are influenced by class, culture, material and social resources and that socially disadvantaged young people face greater exposure to risk and are more likely to engage in risky behaviours that result in negative consequences (Sharland, 2006).

In forty-one stories young people stated that their engagement with the youth workers had supported them to reduce or desist from risky or negative behaviour. This represents 29% of the young people in the study. These behaviours include 'causing trouble' in the community or at school, drug and alcohol misuse, self harm, fighting and bullying. Examples include:

> *'I feel I have a nice space to come to and because I want to talk to the workers I come here sober.'* (male, 17, story: 77)

> *'It's kept me out of trouble and made me start behaving in school.'* (male, 14, story: 85)

> *'Before I came here I was a real bully and since I came here I've stopped.'* (male, 13, story: 31)

> *'I used to do a lot of drugs and hang out with bad people and basically be a bad person. With youth club I feel safe and it helped me by talking to people that understand and don't think of me differently. They make me feel appreciated and they told me I can change and helped me keep that promise and helped me accomplish that.'* (female, 14, story: 4)

The majority of the stories in this study that include reference to a reduction in risky behaviours came from young men; 37% of the young men involved in the study talked about this impact compared to 22% of the young women involved. This may relate to the different ways in which male and female young people externalise their response to stress and anxiety in terms of antisocial and risk-taking behaviours, although more analysis of the types of risks involved in these cases would need to be undertaken. In relation to the age range the majority of the stories came from young women aged 14 to 17, whereas in the male population the spread was more even across the age range, as shown in Figure 8.5.

Young people's understanding of and engagement in risky behaviours is fluid and open to external influences such as peers, family, role models and the wider community, as well as internal influences such as self identity, self-worth and self-belief. Within this, youth work provides a non-judgemental and safe space where young people can be encouraged to reflect on their actions, behaviours and attitudes. Through reflective dialogue young people gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their social context and are supported to make their own choices. Importantly, it is not the aim of youth work to merely 'correct' deviance, or to get young people 'back on track', though as the stories attest this is often the eventual outcome. The aim is to enable young people to make informed choices through awareness-raising and reflection, achieving a more long-term and genuine impact. Over time this

process of engagement enables young people to come to see themselves and their behaviour in a new light and to make significant changes. For example:

'The youth workers taught me a little bit about the rights and wrongs, and they used to talk to me in a way that I understood, and help me see things in a different way and put myself in other people's shoes. This helped me understand other people's emotions and understand my own emotions.' (male, 15, story: 126)

'The youth workers helped me to take ownership for my behaviour and helped me to get back on track.' (male, 15, story: 21)
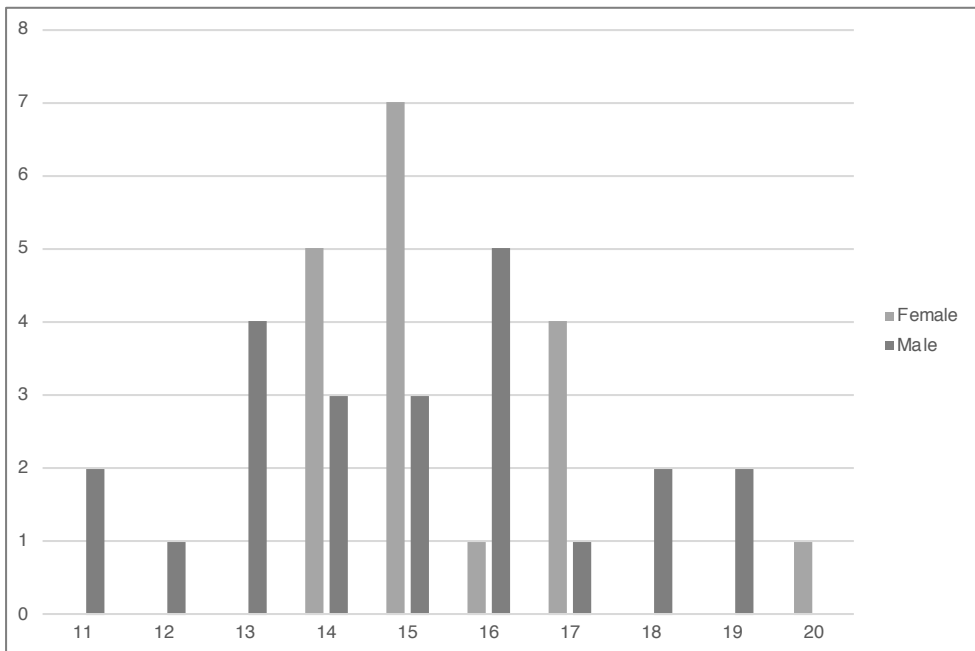
Figure 8.5 Age and Gender Data (Reduction in Risky Behaviours)

Increasing resilience

There were some reservations about utilising the word 'resilience' as it tends to empha-sise the individualised policy discourse which masks the structural reality of many of the problems young people face, and this was not intended. Other words such as 'agency' were considered, but it was accepted that finding one word to sum up the myriad processes of personal and social change that young people have undergone was an insurmountable problem.

Resilience is generally understood as a person's ability to cope in the face of adversity. It is not an innate quality, not does it mean going through life without stress or pain. Resilience exists in the interactions between the individual and their social context. In other words, our family, community, social, cultural, and economic context, the opportunities available to us

and our experiences across the life course, all impact on our capacity to respond to adversity (Friedli, 2009). Developing resilience involves working through the emotions of stress and pain and developing coping strategies that minimise adverse effects. Importantly, research has shown that those who face the most adversity are least likely to have the resources necessary to build resilience (Allen, 2014).

A number of stories evidence increased resilience, and contain young people's accounts of how their engagement with the youth projects has enabled them to develop coping strategies to overcome the difficulties they face and develop a sense of efficacy. For example:

> *'Now I feel powerful and confident. I find that things are easier for me at home and school because I was able to talk with someone.'* (female, 14, story: 40)

> *'Youth club helped me to escape the problems I have been going through such as relationship and family problems. I honestly wouldn't be in a good place if it wasn't for my friends and the whole youth centre. It has made me feel like I'm part of my own amazing family. If I didn't have youth club to turn to I think I would be sat in my room thinking of a good way to opt out, or even I wouldn't have a home as a result of me running away.'* (female, 14, story: 11)

A recurring theme in many of the stories is the issue of anger and anger management:

> *'When I first came to the youth centre I didn't know how to control my anger. The group helped me to control my anger because they taught us ways of dealing with our anger and ways of coping with things that made us angry. I have learnt that getting angry is not the solution to my problem. Now if I feel angry in a session I speak to a youth worker and get it out through talking. I've learnt this is easier than kicking off and them getting myself in trouble. But really I'd say I don't even get angry anymore anyway.'* (female, 14, story: 1)

> *'Before coming to the youth centre I struggled with my anger, and how to deal with what was happening in my home life. I have learned to deal with my aggression and not to take it out on people and get rid of it in the right way. This has made me a happier person as I'm a lot calmer now and feel like I can talk about my emotions.'* (male, 16, story: 59)

Other stories demonstrate how young people's engagement has supported them to manage issues such as mental ill health, family conflict and bereavement:

> *'I am able to talk to youth workers about private things and this relieves a lot of stress for me. Like the time I spoke to my youth worker about my stepdad who died. I was feeling really bad about things and just felt I couldn't deal with it which had a bad effect on lots of things like school. Talking to the youth worker really helped... she helped me with ways of coping by talking to me and supporting me with new ways of thinking about things.'* (female, 15, story: 53)

54 young people identified this impact; this represents 38% of the total number of stories.

The gender balance of the story tellers was evenly spread with 37% of young women and 39% of young men reporting this impact. The ages and genders of the young people who identified this impact are shown in Figure 8.6.
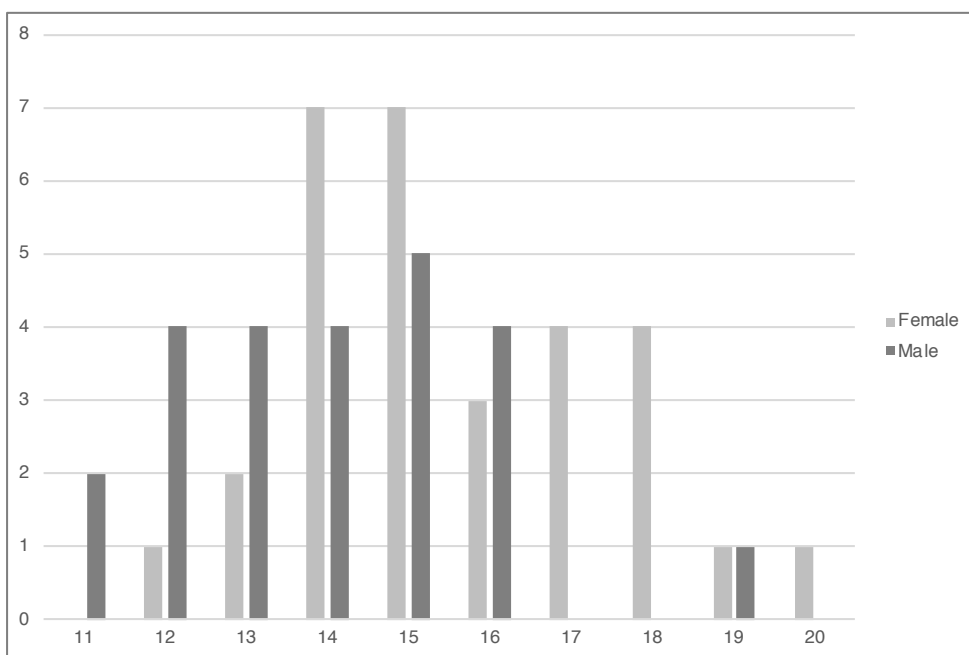
Figure 8.6 Age and Gender Data (Increasing resilience)

Resilience consists of a combination of thoughts and feelings as well as behaviours and actions that can be learnt over the life course. How an individual feels about themselves – their sense of wellbeing – is important. Having positive relationships with others and the degree of social connectedness are also important factors. Such protective factors, which were discussed earlier, are not only outcomes of youth work in themselves but also enable other outcomes such as greater resilience to emerge.

Mutuality

While the focus of the study was on the impact of youth work on the lives of young people as they experience it, the data additionally provide valuable insights into young people's views on the youth work processes that brought about this impact. These processes have a number of different aspects which include the quality of the relationships and the level of trust between young people and youth workers. The code identified to summarise this aspect was 'mutuality'. Jeffs and Smith (2005) argue that youth work is fundamentally about building and developing relationships through mutuality and trust. Young people in this study clearly felt the relationships they had with youth workers were significant. They perceived these relationships as authentic and genuine and this mattered to them, as demonstrated in the following quotations:

'I trust the youth workers and I know they care about me and don't just see me as another number on a spreadsheet.' (female, 15, story: 2)

'The youth workers have always helped me, always listened to me, were always fair when I was in the wrong and showed they cared about my problems instead of it just being a job for them.' (male, 15, story: 21)

The consistency of approach and the youth workers' commitment to listen to young people in order to gain understanding of their perspective underpins this authenticity:

'Even when I'm really horrible and swear at my youth worker, I know she will always be there to listen.' (female, 14, story: 57)

'I can talk to workers who listen to me rather than tell me off.' (male, 11, story: 72)
'The youth workers always check in on me to see if I'm ok, they are nice, don't judge me and make me feel comfortable.' (male, 18, story: 61)

Trust was also undoubtedly an important aspect. Trust operated on two levels; first, young people talked about feeling safe, welcomed and respected. The belief that they would be accepted and not judged enabled them to trust the youth workers and be open with them:

'As I entered the youth centre I felt welcome and accepted for who I am.' (female, 16, story: 130)

'If you don't know something or can't do something, they don't ever judge you for it.' (male, 15, story: 123)

'I know I can talk to a youth worker without being judged.' (female, 17, story: 47)

'The youth workers are always helpful and don't ever judge me.' (male, 14, story: 5)

'I can trust the people that work there and I have really bad trust issues.' (male, 14, story: 131)

Second, trust was noted as being 'reciprocal', and this often appeared to be an important part of the youth work process. For example, young people talked about the empowering nature of 'being trusted':

'When the youth workers gave me extra responsibility it made me feel they could trust me and this made me feel grown up.' (male, 16, story: 18)

'I think the thing that helped me most to build my confidence was the encouragement they gave me and the faith they had in me to do things. They believed in me when very few others did and encouraged me to believe in myself.' (female, 16, story: 62)

Another aspect of this process was enabling young people to 'give something back' – for example:

'I wanted to give others the same feeling that I had when I first started coming and give something back to them so I started volunteering.' (male, 15, story: 123)

'The reason I wanted to help out here was because it helped me so much, I wanted to try and help others that might be in a similar situation.' (male, 15, story: 55)

'Giving something back' has dual benefits, operating on both intrinsic and extrinsic levels. The intrinsic benefits include an increased sense of self-worth, of being respected and valued, and the feeling of being part of something beyond one's self.

The involvement of young people in volunteering provides opportunities for them to increase their autonomy and the positive experiences that follow from this, but it also enables young people to feel like they are making a 'real' difference and positions young people as co-creators of change.

'It makes me feel part of something, it makes me feel cared about and has raised my self esteem but also made me better as a person. I can now help others like the youth workers helped me.' (male, 15, story: 126)

Recognition of the mutual nature of the youth work relationship was evident in 50 stories; this represents 35% of the total number of stories. 61% of these stories came from young women, and most came from young people aged between 14 and 16 (75%). The ages and genders of the young people who identified the mutual relationship as important are shown in Figure 8.7.
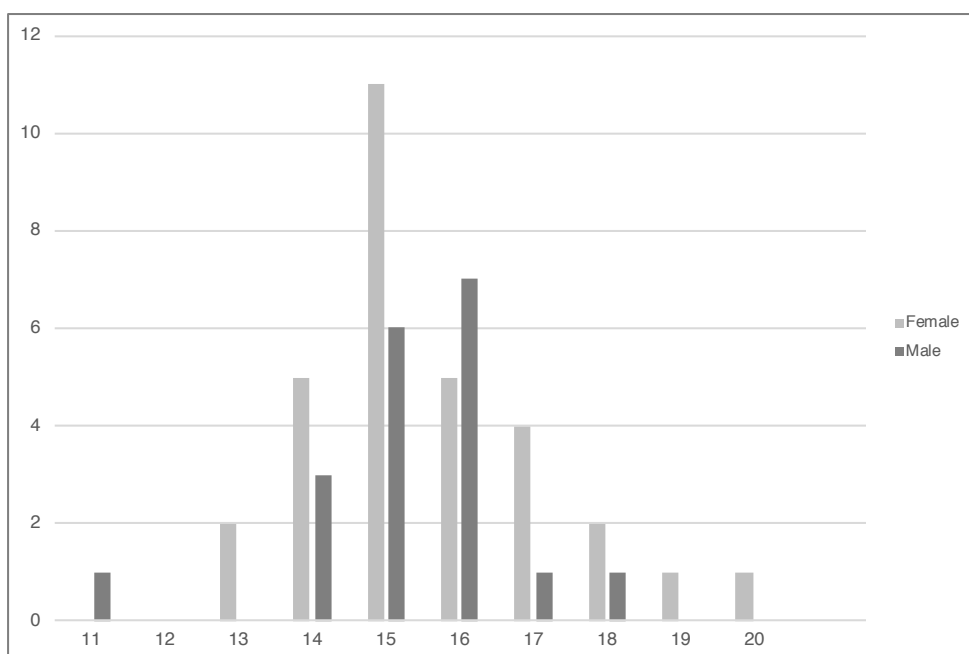
Figure 8.7 Age and Gender Data (Mutuality)

The Relationship to Youth Policy

The theme of youth policy in England has increasingly been one of 'prevention', with youth work conceptualised as a means of providing constructive recreational activities to preserve the social order (see Chapter 2). This is in contrast to the Albemarle ethos upon which the youth service was established, the purpose of which was a broad 'social education' based on open access, young people's voluntary engagement, association (especially with peers), as well as 'challenging' activities and programmes. Since 2010, despite the government's claim to be 'Positive for Youth' (DfE 2011), youth work has lacked government support and suffered a significant erosion of funding. The promise of a new three-year national youth policy statement in 2016 has not been realised; instead in 2017 it was announced that youth work would merely become a part of wider civil society strategy. This lack of progress suggests youth policy, and youth work within it, is 'not a government priority' (Davies, 2013:26). Despite this, youth work continues to be delivered by youth workers who struggle with meeting targeted intervention-based policy agendas while retaining the core principles that form the foundation of youth work (Mason, 2015). The young people's stories of change generated through this research are a testament to their commitment.

The three most common themes arising from young people's stories of change are: improved well-being (evident in 62% of the stories), enhanced friendships (evident in 50% of the stories), and increasing confidence (evident in 45% of the stories). These themes are perhaps unsurprising; indeed, they reflect those identified in the Impact of Youth Work survey conducted more than ten years ago (see Merton et al., 2005). They could also be said to reflect the key role of youth work, which to an extent supported Positive for Youth in promoting young people's personal and social development and strengthening their relationship with their communities. However, the contemporary policy discourse over-emphasises what young people need to do for society, prioritising society's needs over the needs of individual young people. Structural inequalities are ignored and critical practice is suppressed.

The two themes of increasing resilience (38%) and reducing risk (29%) mirror some of the objectives of targeted personalised support, which is often framed as helping the 'vulnerable' and enabling those perceived to be in need of correction to change their ways. However, while there are some superficial similarities between the outcomes of resilience and reducing risks, there are also some clear differences, most notably in how they are brought about. As such, the young people's stories of change provide an interesting insight into the notion of 'personalised' support.

Importantly, young people talk about how their involvement in open access youth work and their participation in informal groups through youth work led them to develop an ability to reflect on both themselves and others, gain an increased sense of self-control, and access mutual support (through both peers and youth workers). This is quite different from a view of 'personalised' support based on a casework approach. Open access youth work shifts the focus from reform (of an individual or group) towards the development of an individual within a group (Batsleer, 2008).

While these two themes (increasing resilience and reducing risk) appear less regularly in the young people's stories of change, there are important in that they demonstrate that these outcomes can be achieved in open access youth work. Youth work starts in the young person's

'here and now' and supports them to make informed 'future' choices, thus reducing the risk of developing problem behaviours and increasing the likelihood of healthy adjustment in the future (Mahoney et al., 2005, cited in Wilson et al., 2010). It is evident from the stories that young people relate these changes to the longevity and consistency of their relationships with youth workers, providing a useful insight given that most targeted interventions are short-term.

The theme 'mutuality' relates to the youth work process and appears in 35% of the stories. Within this theme young people highlight the importance of the relationships they have with youth worker. Young people highlight differences between their relationships with youth workers and those with other adults, such as parents, teachers and social workers, in terms of authority and hierarchy. They value the way in which youth workers work with them, particularly the way they talk with them. These relationships are built over time as young people develop trust and come to feel safe, valued and included. This developing process of involvement leads to greater participation and provides opportunities for young people to take on responsibilities such as volunteering and supporting peers. The focus on 'outcomes' dominates youth policy, while the importance of process continues to be overlooked and consequently de-valued. Arguably, while current (and previous) youth policy recognises that youth work makes a valuable contribution to society, the lack of understanding that the youth work process is a key factor in achieving these outcomes has undermined its ability to realise this contribution.

Conclusion

This study begins to articulate the impact of youth work in England, something that has previously not been adequately evidenced (Jeffs and Smith, 2008; Ritchie and Ord, 2017). It demonstrates what individual young people bring to and then take away from their encounters with youth workers, and the patience, care and skill that this demands of workers. Importantly, it also brings to the surface many of the outcomes that young people themselves see as important, which often remain hidden especially from current ways of 'measuring' outcomes. What the analysis of the young people's stories has shown is that these impacts are not distinct and separate, but rather are intertwined and to various degrees inter-dependent. As such, attempts to separate these impacts in order to more clearly articulate them can be problematic. This will clearly be difficult for anyone seeking a straightforward list of impacts as a precursor for creating a simplistic measurement model. The stories generated through this study evidence the complexity of the youth work process, but also allude to a number of its essential features: genuine respectful and authentic relationships, and the importance of trust as well as open and honest dialogue. Undoubtedly there are differences in how individual youth workers practice, and clearly young people also differ widely. However, what is striking is the consistency of the responses from young people about the impact of youth work.

Youth work makes a difference to young people's lives in the 'here and now' as well as in their futures. Young people feel better about themselves and their place in the world. As a consequence of this they are more socially connected, have more agency and are positive in both their outlook and in their responses to others. They are better able to navigate the challenges they face, and more inclined to want to 'give something back'. As Do et al. (2017) argue, when young people feel safe, socially connected and valued by their community, their motivation to want to 'give something back' to the community and serve others

is enhanced, and youth work clearly lays those foundations. Further longer-term extrinsic benefits of youth work are seen in the reduction of negative risk-taking behaviour and increased engagement in education and work. Open access community-based youth work has much to offer young people, their families and the communities in which they live, as well as society as a whole.

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Chapter 9:
The Impact of Youth work in Finland: 'Learning', 'Diversity' and a 'Cool Atmosphere'

By Lasse Siurala and Eeva Sinisalo Juha[1]

Transformative evaluation was applied to three Finnish youth work settings in southern Finland. These were two separate parts of a large statutory city youth service (organisations A and B) and a voluntary sector digital youth work organisation (organisation C). Details of the settings are provided in Table 9.1 below:

	Organisation A	Organisation B	Organisation C
Sector	Statutory Sector/Local Government	Statutory Sector/Local Government	Non-Governmental Organisation
Age range	13 to 23	12 to 25	14 to 29
Location	Urban	Urban	Urban and Rural
Funding sources	Local Authority	Local Authority	Government funds, project funds
Type of work	Open access	Open access	Digital youth work, open access
Participating youth workers	5	5	15
Participating stakeholders	3 line managers from the Youth Services, a Planning Officer from the Youth Services and Chair of the Youth Board of the Youth Services		Director of National Development Centre for Online Youth Work, 2 ICT experts and 3 online youth work volunteers

Table 9.1 The three youth work settings in Finland

In all the youth workers gathered 123 significant change stories over three cycles of TE. Roughly one third were from those participating in the online activities via organisation C (such as open evenings of the virtual youth centre). Two thirds of the stories were from participants in youth centre activities (see Table 9.2).

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Org. A	14	17	21	52
Org. B	1	20	14	34
Org. C	20	7	10	37
Total	34	44	45	123

Table 9.2 The generation of stories in Finland by organisation

All the 123 stories were contextualised by the youth workers by adding a commentary to provide the context and background. Of these, 38 contextualised significant change stories were put forward to the eight stakeholder group meetings, and the stakeholders selected the eight most significant stories, one for each of their meetings (see Table 9.3 below).

Story Type	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Significant Change Stories total number of stories collected)	37	41	45	123
Contextualised Significant Change Stories (total number of stories selected by the youth workers and presented to the stakeholder groups meetings)	8	15	15	38
Most Significant Change Stories (number of stories selected by the stakeholder groups)	2	3	3	8

Table 9.3 Stories generated per cycle

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[2] Due to operational problems organisation B was unable to collect stories in the first cyle.

Age

Half of the stories were written by 16-to-19-year-olds. Very few stories were produced by those under 13 years or those over 24 years of age. Organisation B received stories quite evenly from all age categories between 13 and 24 years of age.

	10.	13-15	16-19	20-24	25+	Total
Org. A	0	14	36	2	0	52
Org. B	4	10	10	9	1	34
Org. C	0	4	21	6	6	37
Total	4	28	67	17	7	123

Table 9.4 Story generation across age groups

Gender

Discounting the eighteen young people who did not define their gender or for whom it was not recorded, the gender balance across all those studied was broadly equal, with 46% girls and 54% boys (see Table 9.5 below). This well reflects the gender balance in youth work in Finland. There were 47% girls in youth organisations and 43% girls in municipal youth work is Espoo and Helsinki in 2009 (Paumo, 2009: 22).

	Male	Female	Undefined[3]	Totals
Org. A	18	22	12	52
Org. B	12	22	1	34
Org. C	18	13	5	37
Total	48	57	18	123

Table 9.5 Story generation across gender

Example of a young person's Most Significant Change Story

Johanna's[4] story (female, aged 13, chosen from cycle 1, Organisation A)

I had never visited a youth centre before. In the 7th grade I was 13 years old, everything changed. I was having lunch at the school. The time lapsed quickly and I was late to catch the lesson. Hurriedly I rushed up the stairs to the second floor towards the class room. I was stopped by a youth worker. She asked me what I know about Ruuti[5] – the youth participation format of the city, about the local youth centre and about youth work. She gave me a piece of paper, which told about the the local youth participation group. The first meeting was due to take place in the local youth centre in two weeks at 8.30 pm. Just out of curiosity I went there, and since that day I have been actively

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[3] Undefined does not denote non-binary gender; these were stories which were not identified with a gender when entered in the database.

[4] All names are pseudonyms chosen by the young people.

*engaged in participation. I became more courageous and active than before. I present-
ed myself as a candidate for the (city-wide) Core Group in 2015 and I went through.
Now I work for young people in the city and actively influence their matters. If the
youth worker had not stopped me and told about Ruuti, I wouldn't ever have gone to a
youth centre or participated in deciding on matters concerning young people*

The youth worker's commentary

*Before joining in the youth work activities she lived in a world of her own, did not have
friends or a community to link with. She appeared as being different from the mass of
other young people. Also the school was concerned about her.*

Youth worker group's reason for the selection of this story

*During the activities she has participated in, she has changed into a more cheerful and
open person and her social skills have been enormously developed.*

The stakeholder group's reason for selection as the Most Significant Change story

*In [the city] there are many young people who experience loneliness and who do not
have friends. The story describes how a well-timed simple and ordinary intervention of
youth work can be extremely effective. The story also shows how it is possible to work
with a challenging age group and reach and mobilise such a young person, even if they
have not been raised under the close influence of youth work. The story exemplifies the
kinds of significant changes facilitated by youth work, through which a young person
has become more courageous and active, and, more than anything, in this case how
she has become a person who has learned to care for others. The story communicates
the vision of youth work in the city: how a young person learns through engagement
with others to see the world through the eyes of others, how [the city] has become a
better place for him or her. The story tells about hope!*

The impact of youth work in Finland: analysis of young people's stories

The research team, consisting of two researchers and three youth workers, read through the
stories and their contextualisations and identified the specificity of each change story. The
team wanted to ensure that the voice of the young people was central in the analysis of the
stories and picked up expressions of the young people to reflect the essence of their experi-
ence. A content analysis programme (Atlas) was used to generate 53 preliminary codes for
about 350 extracts or key words in the stories.

The initial and final codes

The analysis established fourteen initial codes which were then amalgamated into six final
codes (see Table 9.6 below).

Most key words (30% of all key words) refered to 'learning opportunities'. About 15%
to 18% of key words made a reference to each of the following three categories: 'Cool

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[5] The name of the city-wide participation group, 'Ruuti', is difficult to translate. One possible translation is *'gunpowder'*, but it is
more analogous to the English expression *'to put a rocket or a bomb up something'* – in order to make significant changes.

atmosphere', 'Diversity of youth settings' and 'Filling the gaps'. These were seen as the most significant meaning of youth work. Note that there is an apparent link between the two most popular categories: the more there is diversity in youth work settings, the more likely young people are to learn new things. About 10% of the key words implied that the

FINAL CODES	% of key-words	INITIAL CODES
Learning opportunities	30 %	Finding one's identity and personality
		Life management, social skills
		Agency
		Doing and understanding new things
		Work-related skills
Diversity of settings	18 %	Variety of hobbies
		Diverse participation opportunities
Cool atmosphere	17 %	Relaxed, warm and safe place to meet others
		To be accepted as oneself
Filling the gaps	15 %	Job-related competences
		Co-parenting
Encountering empathetic youth worker	11 %	Advice and support
		Discussing problems and anxieties
		Well-timed intervention
		Long-term support
Finding new friends	9 %	Long-term friends
		New hobbies
		Social skills and networks
	100 %	

Table 9.6 Initial and final codes and percentage of key words referring to them

most important thing for young people was either 'Finding new friends' or 'Encountering an empathetic youth worker'.

In what follows, we will discuss in more detail the final codes and their relevance to youth work and youth policy in Finland.

Learning opportunities

'Thanks to the Theatre (of the Youth Services) I have moved forward on my path to find myself. Now I know what I want to do when I grow up.' (female, 16)

- Learning who you are – finding one's identity and personality

'Nowadays I talk a lot, I have got courage, self-confidence and I have found what I want to do. Through youth work I recognise myself better.' (female, 15)

'This summer job [in the Youth Services] has changed me into a better, happier and a friendlier person.' (female, 15)

- Life management and social skills

'The theatre has made me more self-confident and nowadays I already dare say what I think and how things could be improved.' (female, 17)

'Youth workers have helped me realise that I am a good person. Thanks to that I appreciate myself more and I am bold enough to be more courageous among other people.' (female, 22)

'I learned many new things. About living with other people, making food and how to share a flat with four other people.' (female, 22)

'I have learned a lot, how to communicate with young people.' (female, 17*)*

'Through theatre I have learned to work with different kinds of people.' (female, 17)

'I don't make hasty decisions anymore. Through the training to become a peer youth leader I learned to take responsibility.' (male, 17)

'I learned to do the basic things in life and to lead a chess club for the younger kids.' (male, 24)

'In the summer camp I learned to tend animals and trust myself.' (female, 17)

- Agency

'The youth participation system of the city taught me skills: when there was something one wanted to change, I learned how to make that change possible.' (male, 17)

- Doing and understanding new things

  'After my summer job [which I got through the Youth Services] I have begun to understand that my parents are tired after their work.' (female, 15)

  'Thanks to this summer job my life has been essentially changed, because I realised how difficult it is really to earn money, so that after the job I did not dare to ask my mom for money just like that.' (female, 15)

  'I have learned how to row[6] and write official documents.' (female, 22)

  'I have learned cooking, I have learned to organise events, I have learned to better understand other people and animals.' (female, 16)

- Work-related skills

  'I learned to write job applications and write a CV.' (male, 14)

  'I learned to stress less in recruitment interviews and to use the text editing programme.' (female, 16)

  'In summer jobs, which I got through the youth centre, I learned gardening and arriving in time at the working place.' (male, 17)

Youth work as a learning context?

As the stories above demonstrate, young people learn many diverse things in youth work. For example, young people learn about their identity, their strengths, talents and capabilities, their personality clearly develops, their life-management and social skills improve and so do their empathy and working life competences. As young people learn in youth work, youth work is a serious learning context. The question raised for Finnish youth work is: how consciously do the youth workers realise this, and how intentionally are they planning youth work activities as learning contexts or non-formal learning curriculums? To what extent do youth workers set learning objectives for their activities, and are the activities evaluated to identify the young people's learning gains?

The diversity of youth work settings

  'Here [in the Youth Centre] one can do everything.' (male, 16)

Youth work is normally associated with a youth centre, and this is the dominant setting for youth work across Europe. However, even if youth centres at first sight appear very similar, the closer we look at them, the more we can identify the differences and varieties in how they operate. The young people's stories in this study show that, in addition to youth centres, there are many other settings for youth work. For example, the stories mention cultural youth work (drama, music, media production), summer jobs, training courses for work-based skills, participation forums, camps, a domestic animal farm, training courses for peer

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[6] The young person is referring to rowing a boat – and wanted to relate the diversity of her learning 'from rowing boats to writing reports'

guidance, sustainable development facilities and digital youth work. In fact, these remain only examples of the variety of activities and settings provided by modern youth services. The significant change stories listed more than thirty-five different forms of activities or youth work settings. Furthermore, a large city youth service lists around 800 possible things young people can get involved in through youth work.[7]

In this study many young people referred to the wide variety of activities available through youth work. For example, one young person said that '*at the Youth Centre there was a whole bunch of different things to do*' (female, 19), while another said, '*I was surprised how many things youth work can offer to young people … I became excited to experiment with new hobbies*' (male, 17). Typically the stories of young people described their 'careers' through a variety of activities and the new responsibilities which youth work offered them. As an example, a youth participation activist described how he first came to a youth centre, then moved forward to youth participation and became not only a member of the city's Core Group for youth advocacy, but also a member of the Events Production Group, a member in an expert Working Group in the city on 'the situation of young people', and finally a member of a Working Group giving awards to projects against racism, all of this taking him '*very much around the city, its streets and the city hall*' (male, 19). These experiences were meaningful: '*I was engaged in many activities and it felt important*' (female, 18). A 19-year-old female who said youth work has helped her find her identity and strengths concluded, '*All that is a result of the fact that youth have been provided all these activities and given the opportunity to try and test everything.*'

Young people's stories suggest that it is important for them and for the variety of their developmental needs to have access to a wide selection of attractive activities.

Youth work: The Scylla and Charybdis of concrete and open definitions
There are those who argue that one cannot meaningfully and consistently communicate the meaning of youth work if the definitions of it are too general and abstract. However, there are also those who argue that simple, clear-cut and concrete definitions of youth work render the field inflexible and rigid, unable to react to unexpected challenges. Thus we have to choose between two dangers: eclectic openness and concrete inflexibility. Youth legislation typically faces these dangers: should one define concretely what methods constitute youth work and which competences are needed for a professional youth worker, or should the legislation define youth work through objectives and approaches and refrain from listing youth worker skills and competences? As Joyce Walker puts it, 'the more we prescribe the requirements for a youth worker and require pre-service credentials, the more we restrict entry into the field and the more we distance ourselves from volunteers, partners and young people' (Walker, 2016: 19; see also Petkovic and Zentner, 2017).

Young people's stories indicate that qualified youth workers are crucial, but they also show the increasingly individualised need for versatile activities which require manifold competences of the youth workers to master. Apparently it will be ever more difficult to nail down concrete competences or even quality assurance criteria for youth workers. Moreover, it seems that 'eclectic openness' is the only way to be sure that youth work will in the future remain flexible and open to whatever new arenas the young people might be expecting.

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[7] See the search robot for hobbies at: www.nk.hel.fi/harrastushaku.fi

Perhaps the way to pass Scylla and Charybdis is to settle for a generic characterisation defining youth work through clear objectives?

'Jeba meininki' – cool atmosphere[8]

> *'Relaxed and positive hustle.'* (male, 18)

This category has two important dimensions which help to explain why youth work is perceived to be important. First, the youth setting was seen as a cool, relaxed, warm and safe place to meet both other young people and the staff. This first dimension was exemplified in following responses:

> *'An atmosphere of cool chatting.'* (female, 18)

> *'Relaxed and positive hustle, everybody was encouraging and happy.'* (male, 18)

> *'When you are in [the online youth space], you do not have to be alone. [It's] great to chat with other people and follow other people chatting.'* (female, 14)

> *'A safe, warm and jolly place to pass time with new and less new people.'* (female, 16)

> *'A safe place to hang around.'* (male, 17)

The second aspect of the youth work settings being seen as 'cool' places was that young people felt that they were accepted as themselves:

> *'I always felt that they were looking at me as an individual. In a way, through the youth centre and its youth workers you could be who you are.'* (female, 13)

> *'I can love myself and be myself.'* (male, 18)

> *'Youth workers have helped me to perceive that I am a good person. Because of that I appreciate myself more and I am more courageous with other people.'* (female, 22)

> *'An online youth centre is a terribly wonderful place, because one can participate through a pseudonym and nobody is prejudiced. You can act exactly as you would wish.'* (male, 16)

An important element of a cool place is that external educational pressures are not constantly imposed on young people. As one young person pointed out: '*One does not always want to actively participate*' (male, 15). In this respect young people felt a strong difference between a formal educational context and a informal context. One person stated: '*Youth workers are different from, for example, teachers; youth workers accept you, one does not have to know anything and they still accept you*' (male 17). Another pointed out: '*Thanks to youth centres and youth workers one can be who you are, even if at school one cannot.*' (female, 16).

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[8] The stories often used a Finnish youth slang expression, 'jeba meininki' or perhaps 'hyvä pöhinä', which are difficult to translate directly into English; they mean something like 'cool', with connotations of 'positive activity' or 'a positive vibe'.

Being young together

Greetje Timmerman, a Dutch youth researcher, has looked at the history of youth and youth work in the Netherlands (2012: 24-29). She makes a distinction between two kinds of definitions of youth, the *cultural* and the *sociological*. She argues that particularly from the 1970s onwards youth has been interpreted as a cultural, subcultural or countercultural phenomenon. Youth are therefore seen to be distinquishing themselves from adult society through their own cultural and popular cultural expressions, through the formation of subcultures or acting through countercultural movements. Importantly these interpreters were adults – youth researchers, the media and youth policy makers. Even more importantly, the cultural interpretation of youth is not one that young people themselves necessarily subscribe to or recognise (Rupa Huq, 2006). However, this adult interpretation of 'youth' persists in many forms in today's contemporary youth policy and youth work; integrating young people to education and the labour markets, combating social exclusion (integrating NEETs, 'at risk' and vulnerable groups etc.) as well as some of the rhetoric of 'participation'.

Timmerman argues that before this period, after WWII the *sociological interpretation was dominant*. According to this, youth meant 'being young together', a social phenomenon or category defined by young people as their 'own social space'. Young people wanted to be distinct from adults, but not through empirically defined sub- or countercultures or characterised by deficits and requiring societal integration. Rather, they defined themselves through an 'intangible distinctness' of talking about 'we, the young ones' in their own social and cultural spaces. Young people were not explained away as 'cultural protestors', 'identity searchers' or as 'integration challenges'. Rather 'the concept of youth implicates a social world of young people themselves' (Timmerman, 2012: 29) – a concept defined by young people, not adults, whether they be youth researchers, youth policy makers, the media or the wider society.

'A cool atmosphere', a place where young people are received as they are and where they meet other young people, is a place devoid of adult institutional expectations and definitions of them. A cool atmosphere is where you do not have to learn motivational skills to perform at school, develop labour market competences, become an active citizen or participate in group activities which enhance your social skills and improve your physical condition. A cool place is where one can 'be young together', meet and chat with old and new friends, and be yourself.

Therefore, the question for youth work is: to what extent it is the task of youth work and youth workers to impose on young people active participation, learning social skills or developing working life competences and experiences? For example, a few years ago Helsinki City Youth Services decided that open evenings in youth centres should be increasingly replaced by participation in organised group activities (dance, theatre, media, cooking, local participation, a variety of sports etc.). Participation in activity groups has dramatically increased, with 2131 organised small group activities in 2016 (Annual Report 2016: 78). However, this change has taken place at the cost of reduced attention and provision to open activities – opportunities to enjoy the 'cool atmosphere' and to 'be young together'.

Filling the gaps
– supporting working life integration, providing social empowerment and 'co-parenting'

> *'I have been going to the youth centre for a long time. Partly through it I also found my occupation.'* (male, 19)

As the quotation above indicates, youth work has helped this young person to find his occupation. A significant number of the young people's stories indicate how supportive youth work had been to them in finding a job and pursuing their careers. This is acheived in a range of ways, including motivating young people to find work, improving their skills in job-seeking and in the job application process, including building competences in inteveiwing. This is illustrated by the following young people:

> *'I was with the city's participation Core Group for three years… One thing has always led to the next one – at the moment I study Social Sciences at the University.'* (male, 19)

> *'The youth centre has taught me competences to apply for a job and life-management skills.'* (female, 15)

As many would agree, youth work is not primarily concerned with enabling young people to find employment, but evidently vocational guidance and the existing labour market training and support offered by the employment authorities is not sufficient and youth work is filling the gaps.

Other ways in which youth work is 'filling the gaps' include keeping young people out of trouble and finding alternatives to deviant behaviour, thereby filling the gaps in the judicial system. Examples include:

> *'Going to the youth centre has kept me out of trouble.'* (male, 16)

> *'Earlier I used to have a lot of difficulties with the police. Youth workers have helped me to understand that it pays off to behave oneself, then it is easier.'* (male, 15)

Another example is 'filling the gap' left by parents by providing young people with an alternative place to call home, where youth workers meet the needs that ought to be met by the parents. Thus youth work takes on a co-parenting role, as the following quotes show:

> *'The youth centre has been a second home to me.'* (male, 18)

> *'In the youth centre I have had an educational relationship for 16 years, which has even replaced the relationship with my parents.'* (male, 23)

Finally, youth workers are supporting young people who have problems at school:

> *'The youth centre convened a boys' group on Thursday mornings, where I got support for school, to continue my studies and for other problems.'* (male, 18)

Youth work has traditionally been leisure-focused in Finland, but since the depression of the 1970s it has been expected to shift its focus towards labour market integration with special emphasis on at-risk groups. As a result youth work has developed a number of 'space or gap filling' measures. These have included targeted youth work (outreach youth work seeking NEET[9] young people and running youth employment workshops; see Youth Act, 2016) as well as other measures to improve the employability of young people (such as coaching in job searching, providing training and summer jobs). Furthermore, youth work has been active in the Youth Guarantee and in the more recent cross-sectorial One-Stop-Guidance Centres (an easy-access place for young people to meet a variety of employment, education, social, health, leisure services and specialists). As the stories above show, youth work also runs successful activities to support vulnerable youth through social empowerment and 'co-parenting', and through improving young people's motivation and the competences needed in working life. Many of the empowerment and 'co-parenting' measures are actually the responsibility of their own family or Social Services, but because the holes were there, youth work has done a patching job.

Encountering an empathic youth worker

> *'They pay attention to everybody and listen to all.'* (female, 17)

Young people's stories show the importance of youth workers who are genuinely unprejudiced and positive in meeting young people as they are. Aspects of this encounter include:

• Empathy

Young people's stories appreciated youth workers who are kind, easy to approach, listen to them, pay attention to them, ask how they are, are trustful, supportive, and who play with them:

> *'When I tell my own plans to the youth worker, I get encouragement, [the youth workers say] 'you can do it'.'* (female, 18)

• Giving advice and support

> *'Youth workers give advice on everyday issues.'* (male, 14),

> *'Getting support from an adult who is not your parent.'* (female, 18)

> *'If an outsider believes in you, it feels more credible.'* (female, 18)

• Somebody to discuss one's problems and anxieties with:

> *'At the youth centre I have got support in many things which have been both personal and difficult.'* (female, 17)

> *'One day the youth worker at the online service listened to my worries.'* (female, 21)

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[9] NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training.

- Ability to provide well-timed interventions:

The story of Mika (male, 15 years old) illustrates the importance of a well-timed intervention of the youth workers very well. This is also recognised by the young person:

> 'One day, as I started the 7th grade, a youth worker asked me to come for a chat at the office. I was asked to join in the youth participation activity of the city, and I agreed. At the moment I have participated in this activity for two years and it has been absolutely great! I have made friends and social contacts. Without the youth workers I might not have necessarily had the opportunity to do and see all the things I eventually experienced during my years in the secondary school! I have just decided to start studies to become a youth worker myself!'

Often we think that whatever youth work does has to be an initiative of the young people themselves. However, as the example above shows, sometimes it makes sense for a skilled youth worker to take the initiative.

- Build long-term supportive relationships, if needed:

The following story describes how a 17-year-old girl with a challenging family background has engaged in a long-term relationship with a youth centre and its youth workers. Trust in youth workers, in particular, has helped her manage a variety of growth challenges.

> 'At the youth centre I got support for many things, which have been personal and harsh. Youth workers have supported me on bad days. Every time I go to the youth centre and have heavy burdens on my shoulders, I get to vent them there. And the youth workers can listen to me and give me advice.'

The youth worker framed this story by saying: 'She started to come to the youth centre already as a child. She was vigorously searching for her identity, for example by using heavy make-up already as a young person. Nowadays she has got hold of her life. She is studying ardently. She has always had a strong trust in youth workers. She came to youth workers for lengthy discussions of her problems. Her family relations are extremely challenging. Alcoholism, abuse and crime in the family.'

Youth work as the art of sensitivity and flexible reaction
The empathetic youth workers valued in the stories call for a specific professional approach which is sensitive to the unique situation and personality of the young people. Part of the professional wisdom is not only to act on the wishes of the young person, but also to be flexible to recognise when a suitable intervention is needed or when longer-term assistance should be put in place. Youth work is the art of sensitivity and flexible reaction. In other words, youth work is not so much following the youth work manual as it is using youth workers' practical wisdom to act sensitively and flexibly.

Clarifying the grey area between staying back and intervening

There is a grey, often undefined area between passively waiting for the young people to take the initiative and the active intervention of a youth worker. The former approach is based on the principle that the key agents are the young people, and youth workers are just facilitators if required. This is consistent with what many young people in this study felt – that youth workers should not impose expectations or educational objectives on them, but instead receive them as they are (see the discussion of 'cool atmosphere', above). However, this study found stories from young people which described how a youth worker had made a conscious intervention – for example, suggesting to young people that they should become active members of the participation system in the city. Young people said explicitly that if the youth workers had not intervened, they would have missed the greatest experiences of their lives.

However, it may not be clear where the line should be drawn in the relatively large space between the 'everything must come from the young people' approach and proactive professional interventions. It is suggested that youth workers and their organisations should seriously discuss their role and provide guidance for youth workers as 'standby facilitators' or 'active intervenors'.

Finding new friends

> *'Through the theatre group I have made new friends, who have been crucial in my later life.'* (female, 17)

The stories very often referred to the importance of 'finding new friends'. Friends met in youth work are essential to express one's identity. Social gatherings of peers was also the reason given to visit an online youth centre: *'When it was open, the best thing was that everybody gathered there and one could meet new friends'* (male, 19).

Friends are important, but why are they important? How do young people describe the meaning of 'new friends'? How do friends promote young people's personal and social development? In young people's stories their valuations of 'new friends' were followed by other positive things such as life-long and life-wide support. For example, a 22-year-old girl, a youth centre visitor, said, *'I have made good, probably and hopefully life-long friends… This has affected my entire life very positively'* (female, 22). Also, friendships created in the online youth centre have developed into longer-term relationships: *'I have made new friends whom I have also later been in contact with and met'* (male, 18).

•   Hobbies

Meeting friends can develop into individual or group-based hobbies in the youth centre or outside it.

> *'I have made a lot of new friends, and an opportunity for great experiences and a hobby.'* (female, 16).

- Empowerment, 'courage' and 'moving forward'

A youth centre activist said: '*I got into a group where we applied for summer jobs and practiced related skills (drafting job applications and learning interview techniques). I got to know some new friends and now I am braver to talk to other people. After that I was not so nervous to go to a job interview*' (female, 16). Similarly another young person said:

> '*My biggest change has been that I have become acquainted with a new group and I have got my life a step ahead, so that it feels that I am moving forward in my life instead of becoming trapped, and through this group I got a new flat and a new roommate.* (male, 18)

The story of Eetu, a 14-year-old boy, is also illustrative of meeting new people and acquiring new friends as part of the process of development: '*Prior to my 8th grade I had hardly anything to do with youth work. As a timid kid I did not dare to go to the youth centres as they were a place for the 'tough kids'. I joined youth work activities ... and the youth participation system (and) ... came to know many new people, and I became more courageous than before.*' The youth worker contextualised Eetu's story: 'He lived isolated in his own world, did not have friends or a community to belong to. He was a different kid. Also the school raised worries about him.' The group of youth workers concluded that 'youth workers were capable of having an effect on Eetu's prejudices and were able to widen his views, as he became more courageous and as his social skills improved'.

- Networks and social skills

New friends can multiply and lead to doing things outside one's home and the youth centre. A good example of this comes from the story of a disabled young girl: '*[Youth centres] brought me new friends. I go out with friends more easily nowadays ... I have the courage to socialise with others.*' There were numerous similar reflections: '*Since joining the activity, I have made new friends and been accepted and I have become more open*' (female, 14); '*I have made friends and social contacts*' (female, 15); '*I have made friends and learned social skills*'; '*I have learned from others how to talk to them*' (male 16).

Youth group dynamics created in the Youth Centres seem to catalyse openness, further social links, networking, social skills and the courage to act.

- An alternative to unconstructive leisure

Many stories explained that one of the best things about going to the youth centre was that it was an alternative to drinking alcohol or hanging about in the streets with young people with fewer opportunities. '*I have made a lot of new friends here, and my family appreciates it that I spend my leisure time here rather than drinking alcohol*' (female, 16).

Friends as social capital
Young people's stories highlight the importance of meeting friends. They have had a positive effect on young people's social development and have brought them new positive experiences,

empowered their working careers, developed their social skills and brought them hobbies. Some stories tell how friends have moved their lives forward. Others have described how their network of friends has developed into an interactive community with common purposes. '*The entire group has grown mentally. We have got new friends. We trust (each other) and others trust us. One feels like belonging to a community*' (female 17). Putnam (2000) was influential in launching the concept of Social Capital, which Wikipedia (2018) defines as 'a form of economic and cultural capital in which social networks are central, transactions marked by reciprocity, trust, and cooperataion … for a common good'. In youth work it is about doing things with friends and friends of friends, who trust and help each other – a resource which supports young people in many of their everyday and developmental issues, such as finding a hobby, a flat and a roommate.

However, the stories did not always elaborate whether making new friends was about 'bridging or 'bonding' or both. Bridging refers to links between heterogenuous people and groups, thus creating social trust across the diversity of social groups, while bonding refers to links between like-minded groups and people, which can include anti-social youth. Youth centres have even been accused of being 'academies of crime' as they link anti-social youth and strengthen their deviant behaviour, and as activities are often unstructured with low adult supervision (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000: 559; Mahoney, Stattin & Lord, 2004: 122-123). In addition, youth work in general has historically been accused of having problems working with difficult young people (Coussée, 2009: 8). However, research by Stattin, Kerr and Eriksson (2009: 27-28) has shown that this only happens in the absence of structured pedagogical youth work.

Some of the young people's stories describe the depth of these friendships. However, one could assume that further research might demonstrate how 'finding new friends' can be seen as something more – as social capital which has helped young people face challenges in their lives, as one young person made clear: '*Through the theatre group I have made new friends, who have been crucial in my later life*' (female, 22).

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Chapter 10:
The Impact of Youth Work in Estonia: 'Friendship', 'Experiences' and 'Development'

By Marti Taru and Kaur Kötsi[1]

In Estonia, three organisations have been involved in the project and carried out the activities:

- Estonian Youth Work Centre: overall coordination of the project, assisting with the collection of stories in northern Estonia

- Association of Youth Workers: responsible for story collection

- Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres: responsible for story collection

The Association of Youth Workers (AYW) and the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEOYC) are umbrella organisations which unite open youth centres and youth workers who are employed by youth centres. There were two main reasons why umbrella organisations became partners in the project, which were youth work policy-related. First, it was easier to recruit youth centres to carry out the phase of collecting stories through umbrella organisations. Second, sharing the transformative evaluation practice was more effective via umbrella organisations than it would have been in the case of individual youth centres participating in the project. The two organisations recruited fifteen youth centres to participate in the project. The AYW organised the collection of stories in two regions, in the southern and western parts of the country. The AEOYC was responsible for collecting stories in another two regions, in the northern and south-western areas.

During the story collecting phase, thirty-five youth workers were employed at the participating youth centres and interacted with young people to record their stories of change. Youth workers' professional backgrounds are given in Table 10.2 (overleaf).

Story collection was arranged by area managers who were members of either the Association of Youth Workers or the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres. They gave youth workers in participating youth centres an introduction to the project and carried out training so that they were aware of the overall goals and methods of the project, as well as of the method for collecting stories from young people. Stories were collected in youth centres by youth workers at their own youth centre. The distribution of stories by organisation is displayed in Table 10.3 (overleaf).

In the story collection phase of the project, stories from 164 different young people were recorded. Out of these, 164 Significant Change stories (SCs) were collected, and a total of 71 Contextualised Significant Change stories (CSCs) were selected and presented to the fourteen separate stakeholder group meetings (approximately five CSCs per meeting). This resulted in the selection of the fourteen Most Significant Change stories (MSCs). See Table 10.4 (overleaf) for a breakdown of the stories by type and cycle.

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[1] The majority of this chapter was written by Marti Taru. Kaur Kötsi assisted in its production and was instrumental in the delivery of the project as well as in the analysis of data.

	Association of Youth Workers	Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres
Sector	Municipal/non-profit sector	Municipal/non-profit sector
Age range (open youth centres are open to all young people)	7 to 26	7 to 26
Location	Both urban and rural locations were represented	Both urban and rural locations were represented
Funding sources	Membership fees Earmarked state grants Earmarked funds (project fees)	Membership fees Earmarked state grants Earmarked funds (project fees)
Type of work	Youth centres are open to all young people, based on voluntary participation in activities Activities include targeted youth work, street-based work, youth work camps, hobby activities, training and information activities, and the like	Youth centres are open to all young people, based on voluntary participation in activities Activities include targeted youth work, street-based work, youth work camps, hobby activities, training and information activities, and the like
Participating youth workers	24	11
Participating stakeholders	19 stakeholders in 4 groups: School representatives Child protection officials Police representatives Municipal social work department representatives Youth workers and hobby education teachers Municipal government representatives Other professionals	25 stakeholders in 5 groups: School representatives Child protection officials Police representatives Municipal social work department representatives Youth workers and hobby education teachers Municipal government representatives Other professionals

Table 10.1 Characteristics of participating youth centres per organisation

Professional background/ qualifications	Association of Youth Workers	Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres
Youth worker professional certificate	30 %	25 %
Youth worker BA degree	10 %	38 %
Attended short-term youth worker training in Estonia	80 %	50 %
Attended short-term youth worker training abroad	30 %	25 %
No youth work education or training	0 %	13 %

Table 10.2 Youth worker professional background per organisation[2]

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Association of Youth Workers	43	20	27	90
Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres	21	33	20	74
Total	64	53	47	164

Table 10.3 The distribution of stories per organisation

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Significant Change Stories (Total number of stories collected)	64	53	47	164
Contextualised Significant Change Stories (Total number of stories selected by the youth workers and presented to the stakeholder group meetings)	29	21	21	71
Most Significant Change Stories (Number of stories selected by the stakeholder groups)	4	6	4	14

Table 10.4 The types of stories generated per cycle

[2] Table 10.2 presents column percentages, calculated on a yes/no basis. This means that in each group there were some who did not meet any of the criteria and there could have been some who satisfied all criteria. Also, there is some overlap between memberships of the orginsations. However, this does not affect percentages since percentages were calculated separately for each column.

A similar number of stories were collected by both of the umbrella organisations, although slightly more stories were collected by the Association of Youth Workers (90) compared with the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (74); see Table 10.5 below.

	All Significant Change stories	Contextualised SC stories	Most SC stories
Association of Youth Workers (AYW) Southern Estonia and Western Estonia	90	40	6
Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEOYC) South-Western Estonia and Northern Estonia	74	31	8

Table 10.5 The distribution of stories per organisation

Age

The Estonian Youth Work Act defines young people as a 'natural person between 7 and 26 years of age'. A small number of the stories (9%) were generated by young people in the younger age range (age 7 to 9 yeras). The majority of stories (36%) were generated in the 16-to-19-year-old category, followed closely by the 13-to-15-year age range (32%). Therefore, over two thirds of the stories in Estonia were generated by young people aged 13 to 19 years. A small number (4%) were collected from young people over 20 years of age, and the remainder (20%) were from people aged 10 to 12 years. See Table 10.6 below for a breakdown.

		7–9	10–12	13-15	16-19	20-24	25+	Total
	AYW	0	13	29	43	5	0	90
	AEOYW	14	21	24	13	2	0	74
	Total	14	34	53	56	7	0	164

Table 10.6 Story generation by age

Gender

There was a fairly even distribution across gender within the collected stories, although slightly fewer stories were generated by girls. Overall, 47% of the stories were from girls and 53% were from boys. For a breakdown of gender see Table 10.7 below.

	Male	Female	Total
AYW	47	43	90
AEOYW	40	34	74
Total	87	77	164

Table 10.7 Story generation by gender

An example of a Most Significant Change story:

Kris's story[3] (male, 17 years, from AYW, cycle 2)

'I have been visiting the centre for five or six years. I come here often, always when I have time. We help our friends or younger people every time they need help. There's always something to do; we play board games, tennis, pool, table football and much more. We take part in competitions and win prizes. I have made new friends and I keep in touch with them. Thanks to the youth centre, we no longer hang around on the streets and behave like hooligans. Since I started coming here, I have a second home where I'm always welcome. I like spending my free time here. When I have problems, I come here for advice. The people here always hear me out and help me. I am glad that I started visiting this place. They organise so many events here that we can participate in and we learn so many new things. In summer, we can work via the youth centre to earn some money and learn discipline. Young adults, who used to spend time here before, often come to the centre. We can always ask them questions about their time here and what they're doing now. The youth centre offers training courses that help us develop and learn new things. They're always happy for us and very good to us. We look after the youth centre by helping with repairs and always helping when they need it. We help to organise various events. They organise all kinds of trips for us, which is really great.'

The youth worker's commentary

'He's been visiting the youth centre for six years. Kris struggled at school and his behaviour was a problem. This was one of the reasons why he moved and changed schools. He also had problems with his speech.

Prefers freedom, his family doesn't try to control him. He's had problems and been asked to do community work as punishment, which he did conscientiously and honestly.

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[3] All names are pseudonyms chosen by the young people

He understood that he deserved the punishment. Kris has become more open over time. He spoke a lot about personal things during the private conversation and we could see that he was missing attention and care, especially open conversations where he could speak out about his problems and listen to them himself. Now we can say that he's become a more open, responsible, disciplined and enthusiastic young man. He is good with computers, adores pool and tennis, helps us organise events and competitions, and is always ready to help when we need it. He sometimes works to have his own money.'

Youth worker group's reason for selection of the story
'A young person who learned from his mistakes and dared to admit them.'

Stakeholder group's reason for selection as the Most Significant Change story
'There has been a big change for the better in terms of his attitude towards work, admitting problems, looking after 'his own home'. Respects others and the youth centre where he spends time every day.'

The impact of youth work: analysis of young people's stories

Initial codes were developed by youth workers who collected the stories jointly with area managers and young people. Coding was carried out in accordance with the guidance notes prepared by the project coordinator, based on Saldana (2015) and adopted at the third Transnational Learning Activity held in France in August 2017. The guidance was translated and adapted for Estonian circumstances. Below are presented the initial codes that resulted from the coding process. Coding was carried out separately in the four different regions where the stories were collected.

Southern Estonia (total of 43 stories)
Analysis of the change stories collected in southern Estonia elicited nine categories of changes that young people reported as resulting from visiting a youth centre.

Broadening of the spectrum of (leisure time) experiences
This theme was mentioned in fifteen stories, which constitute 35% of all the stories collected in the region. This code captures a range of experiences that young people obtained from youth work: participation in teams, volunteering for a cause, presentation and communication, writing a project application, participation in youth camps and other similar experiences.

New friends and contacts
As the code implies, this captures a change in the number of new acquaintances and friends made by the young people. It was mentioned in fourteen stories, which constitute 33% of all the stories collected in the region. A significant number of young people therefore refer to the power of youth work to enable them to build and develop their social network, increasing the number of new people that a young person meets and spends time with.

Development of interpersonal communication skills
Developing interpersonal communication was identified in twelve stories, which equates to 28% of all the stories collected in the region. Development of interpersonal communication skills refers to the courage to both talk to and initiate contacts with other people, as well as communicating with other people in one to one situations or in small groups.

Development of socially desirable and recognised personal features
This code was also identified 12 times and therefore occurred in 28% of the stories. Youth workers included development of the sense of responsibility, general openness in social situations and courage to act in such situations. Increased tolerance was also included in this category.

Development of specific values
This is a broad category which ranges from capturing changes to a more positive attitude towards other people and being more tolerant, to improvements in time management skills. It was mentioned in nine stories, which constitute 20% of the total. It also includes philosophical features such as searching for and finding the meaning of or purpose in life, meaning that youth work had helped young people to make sense of their lives.

Development of relationships with adults
This category refers to an improvement in the relationships young people had with youth workers and other adults working in youth centres. Young people said that they had developed quite close relationships with youth workers and other adults in youth centres. It was mentioned in six stories, constituting 14% of all the stories collected in the region.

Development of specific skills
This was identified in five stories, constituting 12% of all the stories. This set of skills is related to improvements in general social and civic competences and to related cognitive skills like self-monitoring and behaviour management.

Strengthening of mentality
This was another relatively small code which was found in only four stories, or 9% of the total. Nevertheless it was thought to be significant, as it included a reduction in worrying, increased self-confidence and better moods. Improvements in these features constitute a notable improvement in one's general wellbeing.

Development of pro-social behaviour
Although this was the smallest code, identified in only three stories (7% of the total number), it was thought to be significant as it captures a change and a reduction in undesirable behaviours like stealing, lying and swearing.

South western Estonia (total of 53 stories)
Increased participation in organised leisure time activities
This was the largest initial code identified in south western Estonia, which occurred in twenty-three stories or 43% of the total stories collected. Young people mentioned a variety of leisure time activities they had got involved in as a result of attending a youth centre. The

spectrum of their leisure time activities was wide-ranging and included participation in and organising youth projects, spending time in youth camps, going to trips, participating in hobby activities, playing games, and socialising with peers.

Improvement of interpersonal social skills
This code was mentioned in fifteen stories (28% of the total number). By this code, young people appeared to mean an increase of two interlinked features:

- An increase in the number of friends and people with whom they interact
- Interpersonal communication skills and courage to be in contact with others

Evidently both qualities are correlated, but it is hard to point out a causal direction between them.

Increased self-confidence
Six stories were identified as featuring increased self-confidence (11% of the total number of stories). This appeared to become visible mainly in situations where young people had to participate together with peers, where they had to express their opinions. Since this requires some courage, it does not come easily to all young people.

A decrease in bad habits
In a small number of stories, five in total (9% of the total), young people mentioned that their smoking and alcohol drinking had decreased because of attendance at the youth centre.

Sense of responsibility and trustworthiness
Another small number of stories (four, or 8%) were identified as improving a sense of responsibility – notably in situations where young people had been given responsibility to organise an event, or when a youth worker had been absent from a youth centre so that young people themselves had to make sure that everything was fine in the centre.

Personal development
The smallest initial code, contained in three stories (6% of the total), related more generally to self-development but also included such changes as learning new skills as well as increased interest in learning new things.

Western Estonia (total of 47 stories)
Acquisition of new skills and new knowledge
The highest proportion of stories in western Estonia (featuring in twenty-one stories, 45% of the total) contained information about young people developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge. This was primarily as a result of increased access to leisure time opportunities and hobbies.

An increase in the number of friends
The next biggest code, contained in fourteen stories (30% of the total), related to growth in young people's peer networks. Interestingly, young people mentioned that they had become acquainted with many new people, both Estonians and non-Estonians.

Enhanced communication skills
In a significant proportion of stories, thirteen in total (28%), young people identified that they had become more talkative in general, making contacts with and talking to people more often than before.

Increased self-confidence
A similar number of stories (twelve, 26%) identified an increase in self-confidence, often related to an increase in courage. This often surfaced in situations when a young person had to be in contact with other people – for example, when organising an event or having a role in a specific youth project.

Increased self-control
Almost one fifth of the stories (nine, 19%) mentioned that young people are more in control of their negative emotions, feeling that they have more control over themselves and are therefore less likely to act on a whim.

Development of helpfulness
Eight stories, 17% of the total, specifically identified the development of behaviour where young people supported and helped other people.

An increase in perceived youth worker support
Identified in six stories (13% of the total), in a nutshell this code captures messages that young people had searched for support and received this from youth workers.

Stronger sense of responsibility
The smallest but not necessarily the least significant code (occurring in three stories, 6% of the total) identified a sense that the young people had developed a stronger sense of responsibility. This often developed in the context of teamwork and cooperation with others, for instance when organising an event or a competition.

Northern Estonia (total of 21 stories)
Improvement of social skills
The most frequently reported change in northern Estonia was an improvement in social skills. This was identified in thirteen stories, 61% of the total number. For example, young people referenced attendance at the youth centre as contributing to them becoming more open and having more courage when communicating with others.

Making new friends
The next largest initial code, identified in more than half of the stories (twelve, 57% of the total stories) referred to an increase in or development of friendship among the young people. Not only had the number of people whom they considered as friends increased, but equally importantly, they told youth workers that the quality of their friendships had also developed. The young people's stories mentioned that their friendships had become closer and they had developed more intimate relationships. Some said that they had found their best friend in a youth centre.

Self-development
Twelve stories were identified with this code (57% of the total), and it relates mainly to an increase in awareness of one's own knowledge and skills. These most often developed through participation in hobby activities, as well as through the development of artistic skills and creative activities.

A positive change in life-skills
A smaller number of stories (four in total, 19%) identified a change in life skills, including an improvement of some of the basic skills that are necessary in daily life, such as discipline and politeness, but also practical things like sewing.

Improved learning skills
Three young people's stories (14%) related to their marks at school having improved thanks to support from youth workers.

Youth centre as a site for leisure time activity
Likewise, three young people's stories (14%) perceived the youth centre as a safe place where they can meaningfully spend their leisure time without being afraid of getting into trouble. It was evident that before they started going to youth centres these young people had had no place to go after school or to spend their free time.

A positive change in lifestyle
Although this was the smallest initial code in northern Estonia, occurring in only two stories (10% of the total), it captured some significant changes that young people had made to their behaviour. This included taking part in positive activities such as going to skateparks, as well as reductions in smoking and drinking alcohol.

Final codes
The next step involved further analysis of the thirty-one initial codes described above, in which they were grouped together to establish a smaller group of final codes. Grouping of the initial codes into more general categories was based on two frameworks: a sociological and developmental framework, and a public policy framework. The first framework drew attention to features which describe youth as a social category. Personal growth and maturation constitute important aspects of the transition from childhood to adulthood, which ideally leads to becoming an active and contributing member of society (see Cote, 2014 on the ways in which youth is constructed or defined). Public policy measures support young people in these transitions. In Estonia the two main documents of relevance are the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020 (MER, 2014) and the youth worker professional standard.[4] The first document describes general goals of the youth field, including youth work, and the second document describes professional expectations of youth workers. These documents, and the goals and standards described within them, also frame the work and activities of the youth centres where the project was carried out.

According to the development plan, the youth field should provide young people with opportunities that lead to a broadening of their positive experiences, so that they become more aware of their interests and capabilities. It also emphasises young people's gaining of more

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[4] In the context of this project, level 4 of the professional standard is relevant. This level of the professional standard describes the work of youth workers who work directly with young people, as was the case in the project. Other levels of the standard add additional aspects of the work beyond the immediate contact work with young people. This professional standard is in force from 15.11.2017 to 14.11.2022 (https://www.kutsekoda.ee/et/kutseregister/kutsestandardid/10667774

confidence in themselves, so that they can take more informed decisions regarding their lives. Youth work is seen as the main arena where this aspect of policy is enacted, and youth centres are significant players in the youth work landscape of Estonia. Policy goals include a reduction in youth unemployment and school dropout rates. According to the youth worker professional standards, youth workers should create a relationship with young people that

Final codes	Initial codes
Broadening of the spectrum of experiences	Broadening of the spectrum of (leisure time) experiences
	Acquisition of new skills and new knowledge
	Self-development
	A positive change in life-skills
	Youth centre as a site for leisure time spending
	Increased participation in organised leisure time activities
New friends and contacts	New friends and contacts
	An increase in the number of friends
	Improvement of interpersonal social skills
	Making new friends
Improvement of social and communication skills	Development of interpersonal communication skills
	Enhanced communication skills
	Improvement of interpersonal social skills
	Improvement of social skills
Development of pro-social behaviour	Development of specific values
	Development of specific skills
	Development of pro-social behaviour
	Development of helpfulness
	Increased self-control
	A decrease in bad habits
	A positive change in life-style
	Development of socially desirable and recognised personal features
Increased sense of responsibility	Stronger sense of responsibility
	Sense of responsibility and trustworthiness
An increase in self-confidence	Strengthening of mentality
	Increased self-confidence
	Increased self-confidence
Development of relationships with adults	Development of relationships with adults
	An increase in perceived youth worker support
Increased interest in learning	Personal development
	Improved learning skills

Table 10.8 The relationship between final and initial codes

is based on trust. Youth workers should also strive to support the development of a sense of entrepreneurship and responsibility, so that young people become contributing members of society.

Based on these considerations, the thirty-one initial codes identified above were grouped into more general categories. This produced a set of eight final codes. Table 10.8 below gives an overview of how the initial codes were combined into final codes.

The frequency distribution of the final codes is given in the graph below.
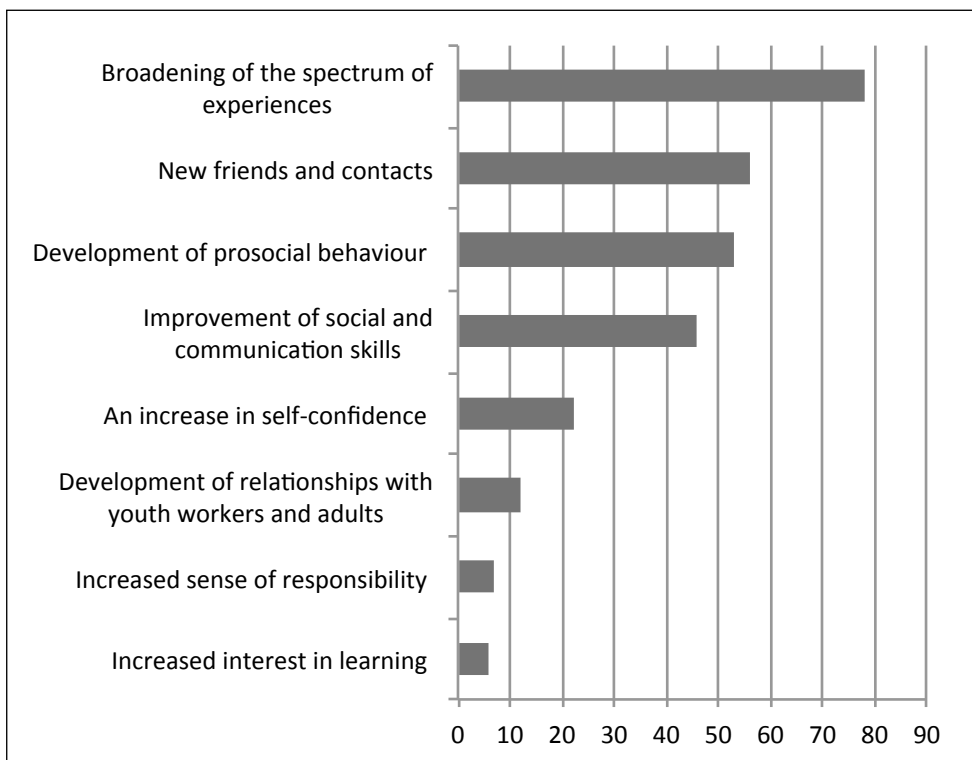
Figure 10.1 Final codes with the number of stories per code

On the graph, one can clearly see that four final codes appeared in a higher number of stories than the other four. What this tells us is that for the majority of young people who provided stories, going to youth centres increased their spectrum of experiences, the number of friends and quality of relationships, improved their prosocial attitudes and behaviour, and also improved their social and communication skills. An increase in self-confidence is also clearly visible, although it appeared in a smaller number of stories. The remaining three codes appeared in an even smaller number of stories: development of relationships with youth workers and adults in general, increased sense of responsibility and interest in learning. Below, each of the codes is discussed in more detail.

Broadening of the spectrum of experiences

The most frequently mentioned change was the broadening of the spectrum of experiences, which occurred in half the stories collected (identified in seventy-eight stories). This change resulted from a broadening of leisure time opportunities. Young people clearly acknowledged the opportunity to take part in the new activities that were available at youth centre. Through participation in these activities, young people became more aware of and developed their skills. Hence, participation in the youth centres actually widened their understanding of themselves and of the world around them, as well as providing a boost to their skill-set both by giving an opportunity to develop new skills and also by improving already existing skills. Importantly they did link these increased leisure time opportunities with personal development. The following quotes illustrate this:

> *'They [the youth workers] organise so many events here that we can participate in and we learn so many new things. In summer, we can work via the youth centre to earn some money and learn discipline.'* (male, 17)

New friends and contacts

Making friends with other young people in a youth centre was mentioned in a third of all stories (identified in fifty-six stories). These new friendships arose within the leisure time spaces provided at the youth centre. Many activities occur in groups, and friendships are an important part of the development of other qualities like teamwork skills, sense of responsibility, time management etc. Some stories also mentioned an increase in the quality of relationships with other people, not only acquiring new friends but also appreciating people outside their friendship groups. For example:

> *'Coming to the youth centre has been a priority for me since 2011. I have made a lot of new friends and acquaintances, met the great and open-minded staff members.'* (male, 17)

Development of prosocial behaviour

An increase in pro-social behaviour occurred in nearly a third of stories (identified in fifty-three stories) and was evident in all four regions. Pro-social behaviour refers to behaviours that are generally assumed to be needed in order for an individual to be able to function as a full-member of society. This includes the absence of negative as well as the presence of positive behaviours. Young people's stories evidenced that negative, antisocial behaviours like stealing, violating rules (in the case of younger children this includes smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol) and swearing had declined, while prosocial behaviours like controlling one's emotions, helping others had increased. For example:

> *'I started coming here more often in autumn 2016 and I think things at the centre started getting better at that time as well. I now feel better when I'm here. At first, I was rather quiet and rude. I'm not afraid to talk to the others anymore. I am brave, helpful, open, active and polite. I like my current self more. Since I started visiting the youth centre, I drink less alcohol, actively attend events and take part in the activities that take place here.'* (male, 17)

Improvement of social and communication skills

Improvement of social and communication skills is another feature that was mentioned in the stories in all the regions where stories were collected, identified in forty-six stories. Young people said that they had become more social, more talkative to peers and to other people in youth centres. Also, they had developed courage to talk to other people. Many young people were shy and quiet initially when they started going to the youth centre, but the activities that they participated in supported the development of their communication capabilities, both in the sense of encouraging them as well as teaching concrete ways of talking to other people or to a wider audiences. For example:

> *'I've started to communicate more with people. I've made some friends and acquaintances at the centre. I've learned to use my time better; otherwise, I'd probably just sit home alone. It's positive that I can communicate with people a couple of years older than myself at the centre. I've learned how to behave in general from them, as well as how to communicate and be polite.'* (male, 16)

An increase in self-confidence

The development of self-confidence, which was identified in twenty-two stories, appeared to be closely related to the development of social skills, which are necessary for functioning in group situations where people have to work together and where one encounters diverging or perhaps conflicting opinions. Self-confidence was developed through the organisation of events and projects in youth centres, but also through communication with other people. For example:

> *'Various city camps, projects and just visiting the centre have given me a lot of confidence… I became especially daring after I was put on the big stage at the X Festival – host of the day. I'd never have thought that I could do something like hosting an event. What amazed me most was how much I liked it.'* (female,15)

Development of relationships with youth workers and adults

This code refers to the relationships young people have formed with youth workers and other adults working in youth centres, and was identified in twelve stories. Young people's stories reflect the idea the youth workers are kind to them and the overall environment in a youth centre is supportive. Though the number is not very high, it is significant as it coheres with the youth worker professional standard, which sees a good connection established between a youth worker and a young person as a precondition for a fruitful and successful interaction between them.

> *'The teachers at the new centre are my friends. We study and play together.'* (male, 11)

Increased sense of responsibility

An increase in the sense of responsibility occurred specifically in connection with being involved in organising various events and projects. This featured mostly in group situations when young people worked together with others. It was in this context where young people

learned that they must be dependable so that others could count on them – for example, when starting a project, an event or any other situation where the ability to cooperate effectively was important. Though this feature did not occur in very many stories (in only seven stories) its significance derives also from its importance in youth work policy.

> *'I like being active. I always want to do something. What I like about youth centre is that here I can get involved in different activities. Here I am responsible for my team. I like this. What I like specially is that I can get involved in things that I like. The most significant change is an increase in the sense of responsibility because I must manage my team. I have become more independent.'* (male, 10)

Increased interest in learning

This code refers to an increased interest in learning new things and it also captures participation in hobby activities, which in Estonia are seen as sites of non-formal learning. An increase in interest toward new things as well as increased learning may also support school attendance and behaviour in school, as well as academic performance. Though this feature did not occur in many stories (identified in six stories) its significance also derives from its relevance to youth work policy.

> *'Together with other people from the youth centre, I have taken part in participation café and in related trainings, so that I have educated myself. Also, through youth centre I took part in a project management training.'* (female, 16)

The Relationship to Youth Policy

Open youth centres in Estonia operate using the method of open youth work. This means that all young people can go to a youth centre and participate in activities taking place there. One of the features of these youth centres is a room where all young people can get involved in a variety of activities, including playing games (such as pool or snooker), interacting with each other and/or the youth workers. Each youth centre has also a kitchen corner. In each youth centre the young people will have an opportunity to participate in hobby groups as well as in events organised by youth workers. They can get information and advice on a range of topics, including school, work and youth rights, as well as how they spend their free time and travelling. In general terms, young people have an opportunity to take part in developmental activities and spend time in an environment that supports the development of a range of personal features, like social competences, and other similar qualities. Youth work in youth centres is organised around several areas of youth work (e.g. information, counselling, hobby education etc.) (Estonian Youth Work Strategy, 2006–2013).

At the level of a national strategy, the main features and roles of youth work in Estonia are outlined in the Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2010 (YFDP). The overall goal of the development plan can be summarised as: the young person has ample opportunities for self-development and self-realisation, which supports the formation of a cohesive and creative society. Youth work is seen as one of the main methods in the field of youth, and youth centres are seen to support achieving sub-goals 1, 2 and 3 of the development plan:

- Sub-goal 1: young people have more choices in terms of discovering their own creative and developmental potential. The main indicator for measuring achieving this goal is the involvement of youth people in youth work (a percentage of the total number of young people).

- Sub-goal 2: young people are at a lower risk of exclusion. The main indicator for achieving this goal is the regional availability of youth work provision, and this also includes the number of youth centres.

- Sub-goal 3: greater support for the participation of young people in decision-making (YFDP: 11–13). Although youth centres are not directly connected with the fulfilment of this sub-goal, participation in youth centres will nevertheless help to a raise young people's awareness and increase relationships with peers, which are part of preconditions for participation.[5]

The findings of this study indicate that youth work in youth centres contributes to achieving these goals. The young people's stories allude to both direct and indirect ways in which the activities in the youth centres contribute to these goals. Among more direct links are an increased interest in learning, increased self-confidence, and increased competences that might prove useful in the labour market. More indirect mechanisms include the wider range of experiences afforded to young people which may lead to a more thorough understanding of themselves, so that they will be better able to make decisions for themselves and hence lead to more adequate educational and work plans. This in turn would reduce the likelihood of dropping out of school or becoming unemployed.

It could be argued that these individual micro level effects can potentially translate to the macro level of society through the volume of young people participating in youth work. Young people's participation in youth work in Estonia has increased, which includes young people who participate in youth centres. For example, regional access to youth work, measured as the number of young people per youth centre, has improved over recent years. In 2016, 263 youth centres operated in Estonia, of which 154 centres were members of the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (MER, 2016). It has been estimated that 50,000–90,000 young people aged 7 to 26 years old participate in open youth work (E & Y, 2016: 8). Visitors to youth centres are mainly aged 7 to 15 years old; above that age, attendance at youth centres starts to decrease. According to Youth Monitor, in 2011 approximately 50% of 7-to-15-year-olds visited a youth centre at least once, and 12% visited at least three times per week on average.[6] In 2015, 82% of young people were satisfied with open youth work where they had participated, with no major differences across age, gender or home language (E & Y, 2016: 13-22). As such, youth centres and youth work carried out in and around youth centres constitute a very significant part of youth work in Estonia.

The policy drive in Estonia places a priority directly on youth work to shape the lives of young people in a positive manner, so that young people are better prepared to face up to and

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[5] To provide youth information and to support non-formal youth groups are one of main activities of youth centres. This links directly to YFDP sub-goal 3: greater support for the participation of young people in decision-making, which is to be achieved by implementing measure 3: support for the active participation of young people in the community life and decision-making. Key activities of the measure are: 3.4. new forms of youth participation are developed and supported so as to devise a great many methods used in youth work institutions and organisations that support participation and for learning to participate, focusing, among other things, on developing youth leaders', youth workers' and civil servants' competence; 3.5. awareness of young people as a basis for quality participation is raised by supporting the national youth information system and enabling it to operate effectively in cooperation with various parties (YFDP: 13).

[6] Youth Monitor, Visits to youth centres in 2011, http://www.noorteseire.ee/indicators/410, last visited 26.11.2017.

deal adequately with the challenges of life. It is also envisioned that as a result of youth work participation a number of other wider social issues will be addressed, such as a reduction in school dropout rates and reductions in youth unemployment. The findings of this study, which utilised the voices of young people themselves to communicate the effects they perceive youth work to have had on their lives, appears broadly consistent with these policy goals.

Based on an analysis of the results, it can be estimated that young people's participation in youth centre activities has expanded young people's choices in terms of discovering their own creative and developmental potential – as we saw, '*broadening of the spectrum of experiences*' was mentioned in seventy-eight stories, which is approximately half of the stories. In addition, it has been demonstrated that the participation of young people in youth centres helps to reduce the number of young people at risk of exclusion. The results support the involvement of young people in youth work and promote the regional availability of youth work provision.

Initial responses to the project have been positive, and the Youth Affairs Department at the Ministry of Education and Research has been impressed by the results of the project. As a result, the Ministry has decided to implement the methodology for youth work impact assessment.[7] The project methodology will be shared in youth workers' training, and supporting activities will be carried out with an aim to distribute the methodology to youth centres after the end of the project.

Conclusion

In Estonia, significant change stories were collected from young people who were mainly aged 13 to 19 years old; this accounted for 66% of the total number of stories. 53% of the stories were generated by young people aged 10 to 15, and 21% of the stories were from young people aged 10 to 12. The study was carried out in youth centres in four different regions of Estonia: in the southern, western, south-western and northern regions. Altogether 164 stories were collected from 164 different young people. Analysis was carried out following a rigorous process of coding (Saldana, 2015), the aim of which was to study the stories in depth and try to establish what the key features of the story are saying about the impact of youth work on the lives of young people. This analysis of the stories showed that young people thought that the experience of youth work in youth centres had produced four key changes, each of which occurred in at least a third of the stories:

*   Broadening of the spectrum of experiences
*   New friends
*   Development of prosocial behaviour
*   Improvement of social and communication skills

In addition to the above changes, other changes were identified. Although occurring in a fewer number of stories, these were no less significant; they included:

*   Increase in self-confidence
*   Development of relationships with youth workers and other adults,
*   Increased sense of responsibility
*   Increased interest in learning

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[7] It is foreseen that the method will be used for assessing the impact of Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020 sub-goal 4: the youth field operates more efficiently; measure 4: ensure the development of high-quality youth policy and youth work; key activity 4.7: emphasis in society is placed on the impact of youth policy and youth work and a greater awareness thereof is encouraged among various parties (including parents).

In general, most stories referred to more than one change, meaning that young people's stories indicated that the changes were complex, multi-layered and not limited to only one feature. The findings provide direct support to the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020. For example, in the plan the first sub-goal can be interpreted as linking directly to the 'broadening of the spectrum of experiences'. The findings of this study clearly resonate with many aspects of the plan, as the responses show that young people clearly acquire new experiences as well as new friends from the youth work that takes place in youth centres.

Although there is some research demonstrating that quite a large proportion of 7-to-15-year-olds visit youth centres at some point in time, the same research also shows that fewer visit youth centres on a regular basis (Taru et al., 2010; Taru, 2017). Although this research using transformative evaluation is very promising, more research is needed to shed light on the the impact of youth work – in particular, how young people acquire experiences and how these experiences benefit them, as well as how young people develop relationships including making friends and the wider benefits that accrue from this. It is reasonable to assume from the evidence of this study that higher regularity and longer participation in youth work will have a stronger positive impact than irregular and short visits to youth centres. However, these patterns remain to be investigated in future research projects.

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Chapter 11:

The Impact of Youth Work in Italy: 'Self-determination', 'Community connectedness' and 'Improvement in job chances'.

By Daniele Morciano and Fausta Scardigno[1]

Introduction

This project involved three youth centres in the south of Italy, in the region of Puglia. They are characterised by a vision of young people as drivers of innovation and change in society (Skott-Myhre, 2005). The focus of their activity is the promotion of young people's ideas, projects and capabilities, rather than prioritising their problems. The principle of working '*with and for*' young people promoted by the European Union is at the core of the mission and approach of these youth centres. The project, therefore, has been carried out from a sociological perspective that sees the young as one of the most significant forces of change available to society (Mannheim, 1944: 41).

There are some difficulties in considering the professional workers that participated in this project as *youth workers* due the limited currency of this term within public or policy discourse. In Italy there is no public recognition or regulation of the specific professional role of a youth worker. However, in addition to various volunteers working in the youth sector, there are a number of professions working in the sphere of non-formal/out-of-school education which are recognised by the state, such as professional educator, socio-cultural educator, community worker and social worker. The professionals involved in this project included community psychologists, sociologists, community workers and art-based educators.

Transformative Evaluation (TE) was applied to these three separate organisations working in the youth sector over a period of a year. See Table 11.1 (overleaf) for a summary of the organisational context of the three organisations.

Organisation A is an arts-based youth centre utilising cinema as an educational medium. The youth centre is located in a suburb on the outskirts of the city and has a high rate of crime. The centre runs courses in film production and has a drop-in area. A range of professionals is associated with the centre including film experts, social educators and a psychologist.

Organisation B has become an incubator of new youth-led and community-based projects – for example, community self-build projects as well as a nursery and a café. It provides a platform to develop and initiate self-directed projects from social volunteering to creative expression.

Organisation C has a community-based and project development approach similar to Organisation B. Initially this focused on art and cultural projects (such as live music and dance shows), but more recently their focus has been focused on enterprise involving product design and the use of 3D printers, as well as fashion and photography.

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[1] This research project was a joint effort by both the authors. In this chapter, the *Introduction, Improvement in job chances, Sense of belonging to the local community* and *Conclusions* sections are the work of Fausta Scardigno, while the rest of the chapter is by Daniele Morciano.

	Organisation A	Organisation B	Organisation C
Sector	Voluntary/Charitable Sector	Statutory Sector	Statutory Sector
Age range	17–34	17–35	14–35
Location	(Sub)urban	Rural and urban	Urban
Funding sources	Mainly public commissioning, also Local Authority (annual grant)	Mainly public commissioning, also income from paid services	Mainly public commissioning
Type of work	Open access (centre-based and detached), training programme (school of cinema), community development	Open access (centre-based), community development, hub of youth and/or adult enterprise projects (profit and no profit)	Open access (centre-based), community development, hub of youth and/or adult enterprise projects (profit and no profit)
Participating youth workers	3	3	3
Participating stakeholders	3 stakeholders including a councillor for youth policy (LA), a councillor for tourism (LA) and an external trainer	3 stakeholders including local entrepreneurs and a councillor for youth policy (LA)	3 stakeholders including representatives of local charities

Table 11.1 The three youth work settings in Italy

Three cycles of Transformative Evaluation were implemented in each of the three organisations and in total 151 Significant Change stories were collected from 151 different young people who attended the three youth centres. Among these stories, 45 Contextualised Significant Change (CSC) stories and 9 Most Significant Change (MSC) stories were selected.

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Org. A	15	19	17	51
Org. B	13	14	19	46
Org. C	19	20	15	54
Total	47	53	51	151

Table 11.2 Generation of stories in Italy by organisation and cycle

The Contextualised Significant Change stories were chosen by the youth workers in cooperation with the manager of each youth centre. They were presented to the group of stakeholders who selected the Most Significant Change story for each cycle. Stakeholders included local council members, officers of the youth services and members of associations working

in partnership with the centre. The stakeholders met in the youth centres and shared their decision with the youth workers.

Story Type	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Significant Change stories (total number of stories collected)	47	53	51	151
Contextualised Significant Change stories (total number of stories selected by the youth workers and presented to the stakeholder group meetings)	15	15	15	45
Most Significant Change stories (number of stories selected by the stakeholder groups)	3	3	3	9

Table 11.3 Types of stories generated

Age

The majority of stories were collected from young people over the age of 19, representing 88% of the stories; 7% were from those aged 16 to 19; and 5% were from young people aged 13 to 15. The largest group was young adults aged between 25 and 35 years old, which accounts for 56% of the total number of stories. The next largest group was young people aged 20 to 24 years old, representing 32% of the stories. See Table 11.4 for a breakdown of ages across each of the organisations.

	10.	13-15	16-19	20-24	25-35	Total
Org. A	0	0	3	30	18	51
Org. B	0	0	3	13	30	46
Org. C	0	7	5	5	37	54
Total	0	7	11	48	85	151

Table 11.4 Story generation across age

This reflects the general age range of the young people attending youth centres who participated in the project. Furthermore, the extension of the age range up to 35 is usual in Italy where youth policies tend to involve an age range that starts from adolescence (15 to 19) up to young adulthood (25 to 34). There is no specific law defining the age range of youth, but specific youth policies tend to define the age range depending on the addressed needs.

Gender

There were more stories generated by males than females: 84 by young men, which represents 63% of the total number of stories, compared to 67 by females, representing 37%. This

represents the gender balance at the youth organisations, where young men tend to slightly outnumber young women.

	Male	Female	Totals
Org. A	26	25	51
Org. B	26	20	46
Org. C	32	22	54
Total	84	67	151

Table 11.5 Story generation across gender

Example of a Most Significant Change Story

Vincenzo's story[1] (27, male, collected from Organisation A cycle 1)

'I have been coming to the Academy[3] since I was 14 years old. A youth worker at that time convinced me to have a look at the centre and see which activities were inside. When I decided to enrol on the cinema training programme, I was more motivated to attend the place and that was the beginning of my real journey here. I attended courses, I participated in the creation of short films (including one of my own), I entered the true spirit of the Academy. With the boys in the neighbourhood, we set up a rap music project and after a year the coordinator suggested I join the centre as a volunteer, especially to cooperate in projects with children. The Academy for me was a chance for growth: first of all as a person and then as an individual interested in art. This change process first of all helped me to face my shyness. As a boy I used to raise 'a barrier' when someone asked me something, no matter how small. I could not talk about myself, the drama of my family blocked me, but at the same time enabled me to find the resources, with the help of the people in the centre. I did not know it, I did not think I had any effective skill in communication, but I felt I needed to express myself in some way. I did not think of myself as having the resources or the potential that I have now realised since joining the centre. People in the community see me as a guy who, despite the difficult place he lives, has been able to express himself and get accepted by the neighbourhood. The Academy is a safe place to be yourself, here we all feel at home.'

The youth worker's commentary

'Vincenzo is a boy who has grown up in the neighbourhood since he was 6 years old. He has a troubled family history, he does not go into detail because there is pain in the story that I did not consider appropriate to investigate further; he currently lives with his mother and sister.

He took part in the theatrical workshops and has performed in several shows. He likes dance, music and stage art. He is a young man who has changed in many respects, especially in his temperament. He used to be very hostile and had a ruthless relationship

[2] All names are pseudonyms chosen by the young people

[3] This is a 'Cinema Academy' run by Organisation A.

with others during his youth. Today he is a very sweet, sensitive and particularly sociable person, well known throughout the neighbourhood.'

Youth worker group's reason for selection of the story

'The story of Vincenzo is difficult to include in one specific category of outcome as it encapsulates a change that extends throughout his life for more than ten years. Vincenzo shared the story of his adolescence, by focusing on his internal and identity struggles with a whole neighbourhood where the Academy represents a second home, a second life school, a second family. Its change embraces his relational world, overcoming prejudices, stereotypes, and overlapping the concepts of value. Vincenzo developed a new identity thanks to experiences at the centre despite a life path that often involved suffering. However, today Vincenzo is a young boy perfectly integrated and aware of his own value.'

Stakeholder group's reason for selection as the Most Significant Change story

'The Stakeholder Group chose this story because it is the most emblematic of a change experience, taking into consideration the disadvantaged context where the young person grew up. It reflects his determination to emancipate himself, which is in no small part thanks to his participation in the activities in the youth centre.'

The impact of youth work in Italy: analysis of young people's stories

The stories were analysed by the authors using the agreed approach to content analysis or coding (Saldana, 2015) to identify the common themes in the stories. The young people's own words were central throughout the process. The preliminary analysis of the stories produced 33 initial codes. Further analysis collated these initial codes into 6 final codes, as detailed in Table 11.6 (overleaf).

The most common theme was 'improvement of job chances' which occurred in 57 out of the 151 stories, representing 38% of the total number of stories. This was closely followed by 'sense of community' which occurred in 55 stories, 38% of the total. Two other final codes, 'self-determination' and 'relating to others and valuing diversity', were also commonly occurring and were both contained in 48 stories, 32% of the total. The last two codes were a little less frequent; 'developing or discovering new skills' occurred in 32 stories, 21% of the total number, and 'participation in innovation and change' occurred in 30 stories, 20% of the total; see Figure 11.1 (overleaf).

Gender differences

There were some small differences when the codes were analysed by gender. Change related to sociability – 'relations with others', as well as 'self-determination' and 'employability' – were slightly more prominent in the stories from young women. The male stories tended to feature 'new skills', 'participation in innovation and change' and 'sense of community'. However, these differences were not marked and it is not the intention to draw any particular significance from them. They are illustrated in Figure 11.2 (overleaf).

Improvement in job chances	Sense of belonging to the community	Self-determination
• Enterprise creation • A job in the youth centre • Career support	• Utilising your capabilities in the community • Being aware of the positive resources in the community • Sense of belonging to the centre as a community	• Capacity to face changes • Autonomy from your own family • Self-fulfilment • Self esteem • Radical change in your own life course • Decision making skills • Motivation and determination • Social emancipation
Relating with others and valuing diversity	**Developing or discovering new skills**	**Participation in innovation and change**
• Overcoming shyness and diffidence • Open mindedness • Understanding the value of cooperation • New emotional bond (friend, love etc.) • Overcoming social prejudice – able to build a relationship with people seen as 'different' • Feeling of 'being respected' – beyond prejudices	• Practical skills • Ability to learn from experience • Mediation skills • Public speaking skills • Critical thinking • Discovering new traits of their own personality	• Motivation to contribute to a social or cultural change • Practising and developing innovation skills (i.e. creativity, curiosity, exploration, connection of ideas etc.) • Joining a social innovation project • Innovations in a professional sphere

Table 11.6 Final and initial codes
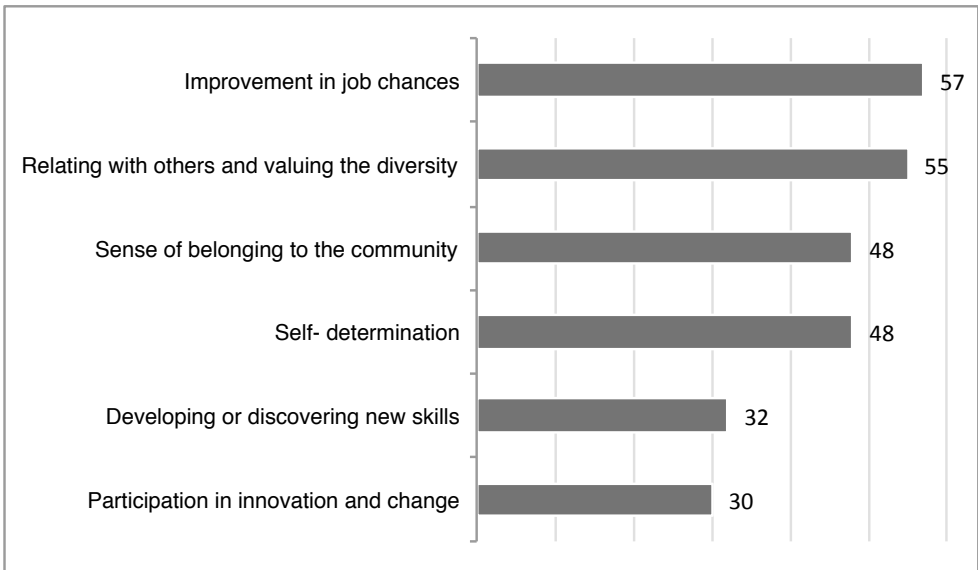
Figure 11.1 Number of stories per final code
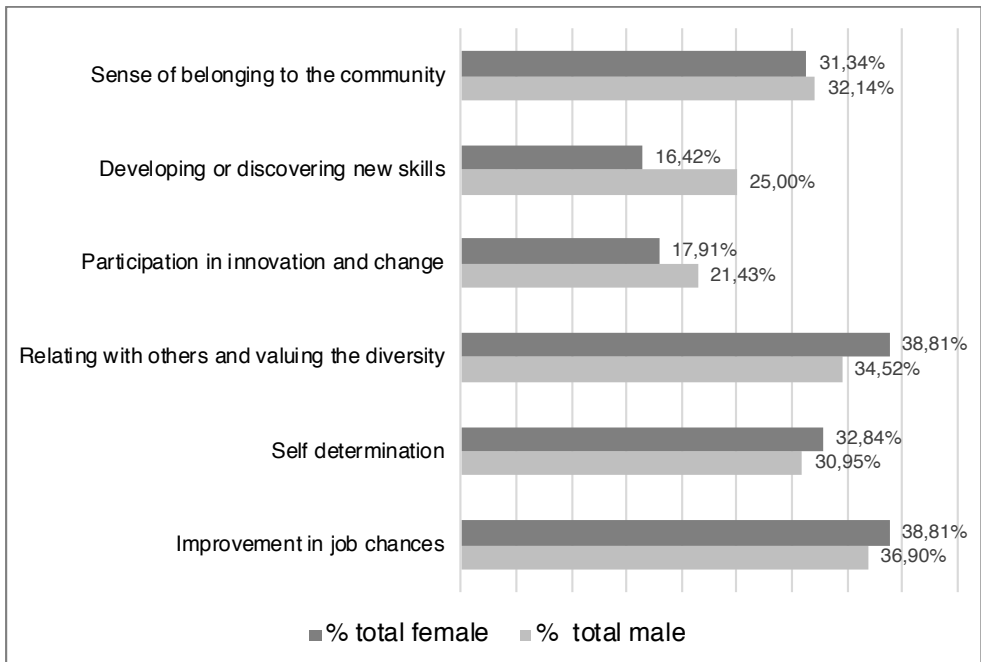
Figure 11.2 Gender breakdown of the stories

Discussion of final codes
Improvement in job chances

A positive effect on employment arose in 57 change stories, 38% of the total number of stories. For 28 young people this meant having had a job opportunity in an activity at the youth centre, for example as a technician, chef, working in the servery, secretary, trainer or educator. A group of 9 young people considered the youth centre as an important source of help for the creation of a new enterprise (for example, in the field of film production, green building,[4] eco-design or artistic production).

A distinct contrast was evident in the young people's stories about their positive experiences in the youth centre versus their formal education or job backgrounds. For example, Antonio (male, 24) '*discovered*' his vocation for photography even though he had no previous experience, saying: '*I've never imagined that photography could become my job'.* The story of Edi (female, 21) also illustrates how, unlike formal education, the youth centre had improved her professional competences in filmmaking where she had wanted to work for a long a time: '*I've learnt a lot of things that I didn't even know or had any experience of.*' Another young adult with some previous experiences in the cinema sector started to cooperate with the centre as a trainer:

> '*The change I feel resonates with my background and experience and gave me the opportunity to learn new methods in the centre, especially about how to use cinema as a medium for encouraging meetings between those who live in the area and the artists.*' (male, 34)

Even when the youth centre did not offer a direct job opportunity, youth work activities acted as a mediating mechanism (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) that helped young people to develop their own professional path. This was the case in a number of stories that focused on increasing both social bonds (Dahrendorf, 1981) and relational capital (Donati, 2006) as resources that open access to the labour market. For example, one story tells how the youth centre helped a young woman to gain '*access to a specific job network which would have been difficult to connect with*' (female, 24). Another story tells how joining the training courses at the centre was a chance to understand a job that a young person really liked, and to communicate this to his family:

> '*The centre gave me the chance to discover a new world and a possible career that I did not consider and that now I want to start.*' (male, 18)

The opportunity to create connections with other people and to try to turn a hobby into a job was also important in this story:

> '*I had a small handicraft activity, no more than a hobby. However, thanks to the enterprise lab that I'm attending in the centre, now I feel less alone and the group is helping me to try to transform my hobby into a real job.*' (female, 25)

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[4] Green building (also known as green construction or sustainable building) is a term which refers to environmentally responsible construction.

Relating with others and valuing diversity

In over a third of the stories – 55 in total, representing 38% of the total – references were made to how the experiences of youth work in the youth organisations had helped to develop young people's abilities to relate to people from different backgrounds. This was especially relevant for young people who were part of a minority group that was affected by social prejudice. An essential condition of this process appeared to be the creation of a '*non-judgemental space*', where young people felt they were accepted. One story dramatically describes the tearing down of the '*wall between himself and the other*' (male, 27). This was confirmed by the youth worker, who recalled that the young person '*used to react to every ordinary question by raising a wall to diminish his own self and the other person*'.

As a result of being helped to overcome the barrier between their own world and the social world around them, many of the young people had started to actively participate in the activities of the youth centres. They felt '*free to talk*' (female, 21), to '*not be just a silent spectator*' (male, 20). This means the young people are actively expressing themselves and in so doing they are improving their communication skills and their ability to be in dialogue with other people. They are less wary and more curious about their '*own diversity as well as the other young people's*' (24, female). Interacting with people from different backgrounds (in terms of age, geographical origin, culture, lifestyle, as well as ways of thinking etc.) became for one young person an opportunity to open her '*mind and view*' (female, 35).

For many of the young people involvement in the youth work projects provided opportunities to open up to others and a chance to understand the value of diversity. For example, as one story explains:

> '*I now really understand the meaning of learning how to see life differently, not just seeing things from your own point of view.*' (female, 24)

From the following story we can also explicitly see how young people become aware of developing a special relationship with a new and diverse peer group in the centre:

> '*We were all very different in terms of age, interests, lifestyle, and ways of thinking. After the summer break, we realised we have become something more than simple individuals in the same training course.*' (female, 25)

This story also illustrates how it was the group experience that helped this person to understand '*what it means to cooperate and, at the same time, have respect for the space of others*' (male 32). Another points out: '*every individual will have more value if situated in a collective project*' (male, 24).

In some stories an awareness is present of the distinctly different culture between youth centres and schools, with the former founded on cooperation and the latter promoting competition. Young people acknowledged that at the youth centre it is possible to discover what it means '*not to leave anyone behind, helping each other, listening to who is by your side, [whereas] the school system pushes students to compete for the highest score*', going on to argue that '*cooperation helps you to learn more than competition*' (female, 22).

Sense of belonging to the local community

For a number of young people the youth centre in itself became a small community to which they feel they belong. In several stories the youth centre was described as a 'second home' or a 'great family', a place where young people could share their passions and their interests with other people. Being involved in the youth centre also provided the chance to discover the local community as a positive resource. For example: *'I had the chance to meet good people, enjoy good situations, in an atmosphere of buzz and novelty'* (female, 32).

Some young people discovered the vitality hidden under the sense of tragedy of a socially problematic suburb where the youth centre was located. They discovered:

> *'A world made of little things, of lively children and surprisingly curious, of women that are strong like rocks and that bring on their shoulder the weight of difficult family, but without leaving themselves to be overwhelmed by sadness.'* (female, 25)

In a variety of ways the youth centres enabled experiences which nurtured a sense of belonging to the local community. For example, in one case the opportunity to start a project in the centre that was connected with the wider community actually became more important than looking for a job opportunity elsewhere. It appears that, certainly for some of the people, the greater their sense of feeling that they are a part of a community, involved in positive collective change (which transcends the own individual issues), the less they feel the need to escape their immediate surroundings. Being involved in a community project also seemed to reduce the imperative for personal self-fulfilment by placing more value on the building of a social self:

> *'I feel part of a social change that we are carrying out with [org B]. I feel I am part of this process, otherwise I would have gone away.'* (male, 24)

The sense of community also appears to empower people to overcome barriers and to develop new relationships with other local actors. Young people are therefore encouraged to look outside the youth centre and to implement outreach projects throughout the surrounding area:

> *'For me, the next step is developing meaningful relationships with other elements of the community, so to go outside the youth centre and live outside in the public space. In this way, we can share with the community the activities and the life of the youth centre.'* (male, 35)

The following story is also interesting as it acknowledges the importance of connecting different parts of the community. It illustrates how the initiative was taken to challenge the prejudice of the young person's own faith-based community by encouraging cooperation between his Christian group and the youth centre through a specific project. This affirmed to him that: '*it is not true that the life of young Christian is a churchy life, limited to the parish or the church. I feel that also Christian youth can make a contribution to community development thanks to this project*' (male, 27).

Self-determination

The final code of self-determination covers a number of related aspects of social or self-emancipation identified in the initial codes, which included the 'capacity to face changes', 'self-fulfilment', 'decision making skills' and 'motivation and determination'. In all, 48 of the young people's stories alluded to this theme. For example:

> *'I feel I have reached a deep awareness about myself and of my desires, now and for the future. In this centre I felt that my intuition about my real job interest was right.'* (female, 22)

> *'For the first time in life I have a sense being in the right place to do the right things.* (male, 26)

Evidently the youth centre support is perhaps best described as a *subjectivation* process, namely the ability to take possession of one's own thoughts, desires, and identity, while using one's knowledge and skills to free oneself from the need to be accepted by others at all costs (Cahn, 1998; Wainrib 2012). According to Dubet (2007), subjectivation is related to the ability to become the creator of one's own social experience, actively affecting one's own life course.

For example, the training course on arts run at one of the centres provided the opportunity to use art as a medium for self-exploration and self-understanding, as well as understanding others. Art at the youth centre became a means of expressing a range of ideas, insights, emotions, feelings, desires and life styles. In the words of one young person, art becomes '*a medium of the soul*', as he goes on to explain:

> *'We all look for a medium for our own soul, a means to express ourselves. Probably, I completed what I wanted to express with the audio-visual. But the important thing is to continue to look for new mediums that can help us to express new aspects of ourselves, theatre, music, engineering, architecture, information technology… if we love what we do and we can communicate something of ourselves with the job that we do, we have found the right medium for us in that moment.'* (male, 24)

Some stories highlight how young people have been assisted in rising to the challenge of a disadvantaged family background (Besozzi, 2006), and have been able to achieve a sense of social and self-emancipation in overcoming both personal and social barriers. For example, one story tells of the transformation of a boy wrapped up in a defence of his feminine traits against social prejudice (traits which he defines as his *alter ego* and which he expresses in his artistic performances). However, thanks to the relationship and conversations with the youth workers, he eventually became an educator in the youth centre:

> *'People in the community see me as a guy who, despite the difficult place he lives, has been able to express himself and get accepted by the neighbourhood.'* (male, 27)

The inclusive nature of the centres provides an important foundation for their success. For example, one story describes how a young man was given a second chance following a probation order due to a drug offence. The centre provided '*a chance for rehabilitation* (male, 21). Another example includes a group of disabled young people who had the opportunity

to undertake work experience in the social restaurant. As one of them explains, despite '*no experience in cooking … it seemed to me crazy and, at the same time, beautiful when I found myself doing the job of the assistant cook*' (female, 27).

Developing new skills

In 32 stories (22%) the discovering of new skills, aptitudes or capabilities was evident in the learning experiences of the young people. These often appear to be associated with learning that is associated with a real life situations, or what may be termed situated or experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). For example, one young person got '*a feel for a task that I never thought I'd be able to do before*' (female, 22). Other examples included discovering relational skills that will be useful for finding a job, such as learning to be more patient, planning and coordinating a project, or working in the restoring sector and learning an artisan profession. Work experience in the restaurant at one centre helped one young man to '*see aspects of myself that I did not think I had*' (male, 22). The following story exemplifies the opportunities afforded to young people to develop new skills:

> '*What you discover in this place is the things that you are able to do or the things that you didn't know you were able to do. In this space you discover hidden qualities, here you can see them and you can put them into practice, or you can understand that you are not right for a particular activity.*' (female, 32)

The experience of 'doing things' can also lead to rediscovering '*abilities that you felt or thought you had … you can see them [and] practice them*' (female, 32). Learning from experience for some became part of their way of life; that is, '*a way to face everything, not just the activities that I take part in at [Organisation B]*' (female, 25). It is an approach that pushes young people to overcome their own perfectionism and to value mistakes as a way of learning. In this sense, it is also an opportunity to deal with the natural egocentricity and idealisation of the self that often characterise adolescence. This is what one young person realised, recounting her experience of producing her first short film: '*how many mistakes I made and how useful each of them were to me*' (female, 26).

Participation in innovation and change

A total of 30 (20%) young people indicated in their stories that they felt a change process had taken place as a result of attending the youth centre. For many of those young people the youth centre had supported 'active reflexivity' (Archer, 2003) in turning a desire for social and cultural change into a feasible project (Morciano and Merico, 2017). Some of them took the role of community educator by involving children, young people or adults in projects run by the youth centre. For example, one young women shared her experiences of running make-up workshops with a group of woman from the community; initially '*those women seemed so impenetrable. But they gave me respect as a woman but, also as a friend*' (female, 28). At the same centre a young man planned and implemented an educational project for children about cinema (male, 24).

'*Feeling themselves as a part of a change*' was a frequent expression in the collected stories, especially when the young people had participated in a project that they perceived as

innovative. For example, one young person set up a music education project for children aged 0 to 3 years old, which was the only example of its type in the area. Called '*Music in the Cradle*', the project involved '*an age range normally excluded by the music schools*' (male, 29). In the same centre, a group of young male musicians (aged 24, 29 and 34) launched a community music school together. Their objective was not only to create a learning space for music – learning how to play musical instruments – but inspired by the Abreu method[5] they wanted to create a community space for disadvantaged communities:

> '*At the beginning, we thought that having the best music teacher was the most important thing, but later we understood the importance of creating a community school.*' (male, 32)

Some of these innovative projects utilised existing skills which had previously been limited to the private sphere and their leisure time. For example, a group of young mothers came together with a young fashion designer and started to produce innovative textiles utilising their traditional handicraft skills. This project involved several members of the same family, as one young person reflects:

> '*I think of my aunt, she was a creative housewife and now she is part of this innovative project. I think of my mother – she was just a seamstress but today she is the seamstress at [organisation B]. A lot of people meet my mother and ask for her help with their needlecraft.*' (female, 25)

In some case projects were implemented without any financial resources, and these were only possible thanks to the work of volunteers. One such project on '*slow mobility*'[6] was '*launched and implemented by a group of young people and only later obtained a partnership with the local authority*' (male, 32). Developing creativity and critical thinking was important in many projects, as one young person identifies: '*developing my own language, my own vision, by giving a poetic meaning to every [cinema] image that I create*' (male, 26).

There were a variety of outcomes identified as a result of these innovative projects. They included increased participation by the local community in projects in which they could '*have a voice, share their own existence in an isolated neighbourhood*' (male 32), as well as a realisation in the community of the value of volunteering. An artistic event developed in one youth centre and implemented in the local context had an international resonance, and so gave a meaningful global context to the event. Expressed succinctly by one young person: '*we felt less isolated from the world*' (male, 26).

Youth work processes: what generated impact and change?

A second stage of analysis was undertaken with the Italian stories, which focused on themes relating to the processes that contributed to the generation of outcomes for young people. From the perspective of a theory-based evaluation (Funnel and Rogers, 2011), the analysis of the stories allowed the authors to identify some of the mechanisms and causal links associated with the changes identified by the young people.

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[5] José Antonio Abreu Anselmi (May 7, 1939 – March 24, 2018) was a Venezuelan musician, educator and activist who is best known for his association with El Sistema. In 1975 he founded El Sistema, formally called the Foundation for the National Network of Youth and Children Orchestras of Venezuela. With El Sistema he developed an innovative youth education method in which music acts as a means to social and intellectual improvement (Majno, 2012).

[6] Slow mobility projects encourage the use of bicycles and walking in the city, and work to improve cycle lanes and pedestrian areas.

A preliminary list of 26 initial codes was identified. Further analysis of these initial codes produced a list of 6 final codes which summarised the youth work processes associated with the change; see Table 11.7 below.

Relational space open to the community	Trust, participation, non-hierarchical relations	Holistic & experiential learning
• A space with a high frequency and variety of social relations • Developing relations with the local community • Promoting relations between the local community and people coming from outside • Creating a space of informal meeting for young people coming from the same neighbourhood	• Nurturing a sense of collective identity • Promoting trust and non-hierarchical relations • Free-of-charge activities • Autonomy from political parties • Creating opportunity for active participation	• Collective DIY experiences • Projects designed to learn from experience • Semi-leisure (spaces and activities)[7] • Flow generating experiences (challenging, stimulating curiosity, high density) • Maieutic[8] experiences
A space for the incubation of job-related projects	**A space for the incubation of projects for change**	**Relation with non-formal educators**
• The youth centre as a driver of development for the enterprises created and operating inside it • Relating with someone who believes in your effort to turn it into a project • Flexibility in sharing a space with other group's projects	• Using art to promote change • Offering a space open to the cultural expression of minority groups • Encouraging resistance and perseverance in a project of cultural and social change	• Relating with 'master' and learning a lot from them • Meeting trainers who are also able to be educators • Relating with teachers that are really interested in your learning experience • Meeting charismatic teachers • Relating with natural/ unaware non-formal educators • Counting on mentor in project development/implementation • Founding a positive reference point

Table 11.7 Initial and final codes associated with the processes of change

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[7] Dumazedier (1967) coined the term 'semi-leisure' to refer to 'activities, which from the point of view of the individual, arise in the first place from leisure, but which represent in differing degrees the character of obligations'. In the context of a youth centre, this term can help to understand those experiences that straddle freely chosen activities and social commitments, or spanning both freely chosen informal activities that facilitate direct contact with deeper vocations and an engagement in learning activities which may have an impact on career development.

[8] The Maieutic method is often associated with the Socratic method and involves increasing knowledge though dialogue.

Figure 11.3 below shows the number of stories associated with each of the final codes. The number of occurrences is less than those final codes associated with the significant changes, but this is to be expected as young people were not asked directly what they thought had caused the changes. The most pertinent mechanism seemed to be the openness of the youth centre as a space for the local community – summarised in the final code, '*relational space open to the local community*'. This is allied to the nurturing potential of the learning process which provides '*holistic learning*' (linking emotional, cognitive and practical learning). The next most important feature appeared to be the '*building of trust and non-hierarchical relations*'. The individual relationship with the youth worker appeared less frequently in the stories, although this may be implicit, remembering that young people were not asked to reflect on who had enabled them to achieve the changes. It may also be relevant that youth work does not have a specific professional or formal identity in Italy, so the youth work role is undertaken by number of different figures (experts, trainers, group facilitators, educators and community workers or social workers).
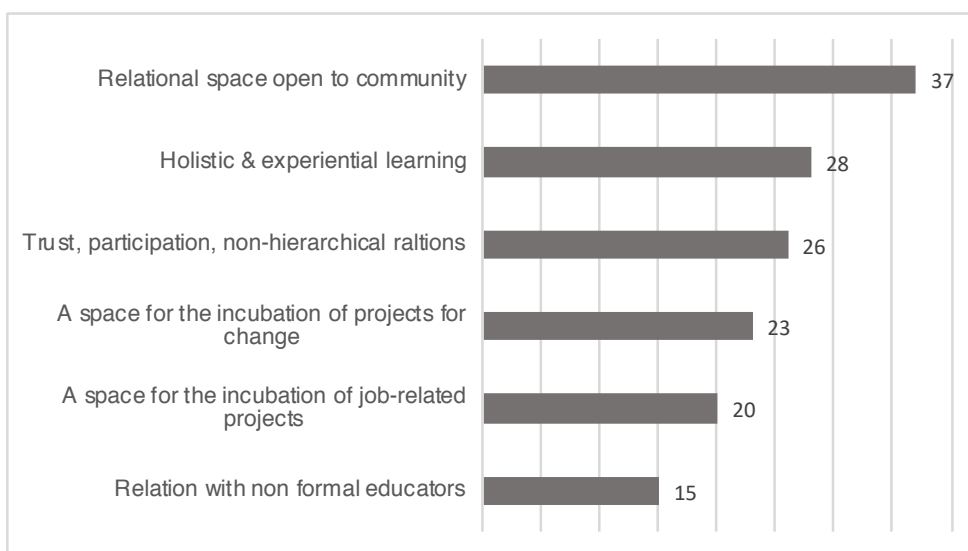
Figure 11.3 Initial and final codes associated with the processes of change

The collected change stories have begun to clarify what particular features of the youth work process have generated change outcomes in the lives of the young people. This is a complex process and many of the features interlink, but the coding process identifies some of the important features. The most prominent was the idea of the youth centre as a relational space.

Relational space open to the local community
Aspects of this relational space allude to the specific atmosphere of the youth centres – a feeling that echoes with what Smith (1988) referred to as the 'buzz', a sense of positive social energy as well as the feeling that new and interesting events may occur, which Smith refers to as an 'atmosphere and sense of occasion and of things happening' (1988: 52).

This was clear in some of the Italian stories; for example, one young person referred to the youth centre as '*a place full of people, dense emotions, fascinating, ready to offer a lot of experiences*' (male, 20), and another who said: '*things that are impossible in other places, in the youth centre they happen … [and] people exchange thoughts and ideas, meet and tell stories*' (female, 25).

It is perhaps the socio-relational fluidity and dynamism of the space in the youth centre that increases the probability of generating significant 'chance-events' (Shanahan and Porfeli, 2007),[9] where the *term chance* means something – either *accidental or unexpected* – which provides a positive opportunity. This is exemplified by the story of Roberto (male, 21) who explained that '*everything has been either fortuitous or lucky*'[10] when he relayed how an expert audio engineer had decided to open a work space in the youth centre. This enabled Roberto to offer his assistance, and to realise just how much he wanted to be involved in that kind of profession.

Openness to the wider community is also an essential feature of youth centres. This is particularly relevant in the case of organisation A, which is located in a socially problematic suburb with a high rate of crime (especially involving young people). It also has a lack of services and is isolated from the rest of the city (it has only one bus and an abandoned railway station). However, the presence of the youth centre in this difficult suburb caught the imagination of the young people. For them the youth centre was a significant 'exception' because it operates in a neighbourhood where, as one young person makes clear, '*nobody ever really believed that something good was possibl*e' (female, 24). In some stories, young people mentioned the intense 'humanity' that is hidden under the visible urban decay (which is too easily visible when you walk through the streets or when you read about gunfire, murders and arrests in the newspapers). However, for those involved in the projects this is an '*ideal environment*' for a project focused on social filmmaking because it is '*full of contrasts*' (male, 24). The wider community around the centre then become a '*forge of stories*' that can inspire projects where young people express themselves – their emotions, feelings, thoughts and personal stories.

Trust, participation, non-hierarchical relations

A feature of the process which appears to be an important component in bringing about the personal changes reported in many of the stories is based in relational experiences with youth workers as well as peers and members of the wider community. Some of the key drivers in the process appear to be trust, participation and non-hierarchical interaction. They are features of the 'open' environment which enable low threshold open access – that is, free-of-charge or low cost, not a targeted intervention, open access, and operating on voluntary participation. It also has a low standardisation of roles. One young person describes how it helped her to deal with her own fear to participate; her journey was '*from sharing, to trust, to active involvement*' (female, 25). Feeling that someone believes in you is also an important aspect; for example, for Leone (male, 21) the '*beginning of it all*' was when he was invited to cooperate in a collective do-it-yourself project to redecorate the youth centre.

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[9] The notion of the chance event refers to those type of events generated by social interactions that may have a positive effect on the trajectories of the life of an individual (Shanahan and Porfeli, 2007). The fluidity of the social environment of a youth centre focuses attention on the ability to generate unplanned events that may potentially develop into an opportunity. The studies of 'life courses' (Ross, 2005) that deal with 'life events', able to generate an impact on educational and career paths, are particularly useful from this perspective. Such events can be defined as a chance event when occurring as 'life events that instigate change' (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

[10] In the Italian language the two terms have the same root: *fortuito* (= fortuitous) and *fortunato* (= lucky).

Holistic and experiential learning

This particular relational environment seems to be able to nurture a specific kind of learning which may be best referred to as 'holistic learning', linking different levels of emotional, cognitive and practical experience with reflections on values, and developing sense-making (Cameron and Moss, 2011). This opportunity to learn in real-life situations is evidenced frequently in the stories, and is perhaps best described as 'experiential' or 'situated learning' (Dewey, 1938). Features of this include the following: the opportunity to experiment with something new, for example: '*start to test, verify if an idea can become an reality*' (male, 31); to be flexible and adaptable, '*without the obsession to standardise everything*' (female, 25); and having enough time to cultivate and develop know-how – '*they don't overfill the learning space, and they give you the time you need*' (female, 25). Other features include the possibility of making mistakes and being encouraged to learn from them – for example, *'you can learn more from a failur*e' (male, 26), and '*it is precisely the possibility to fail without feeling ashamed that school doesn't offer*' (female, 27). Finally, it also involves being able to do something that matches your real interests – for example, 'it reflects your desires (male, 26) as well as stimulating curiosity – '*[those] who come in the youth centre become curious people and always find something of interest*' (male, 25).

This kind of learning occurred, for example, where young people participated in a collective self-building project to build eco-sustainable furniture for the youth centre as well as constructing a playground in the local community. These opportunities to be a part of a fluid, informal and dynamic learning project produces, in some cases, events that are particularly meaningful for young people – what Krasnor (2008) describes as 'high-density experiences'. This was the case for one young person who joined a film festival, saying that: '*it really changed me into a more responsible person, it has not only been a job experience, it became part of myself*' (female, 22).

Integral to the potential of these learning experiences is the conception, planning and implementation of the projects – what is described as 'project incubation'. This is often a cyclical process which on the one hand builds on previous learning experiences, and on the other, the new projects are a new learning in themselves. The new projects also enhance the variety, intensity and frequency of social interactions both within the youth centre and with the surrounding community. The projects incubated in the youth centre therefore activate a virtuous circle of further development of the 'open relational space' and provide new 'holistic learning experiences'.

Figure 11.4 (overleaf) presents a model which incorporates the three integral features of the youth work process identified in the stories and discussed above. The model starts from the processes operating in the wider youth centre and its interaction with the community, and progressively involves individual and group experiencse, which also include relationships with the youth workers.

The model begins at the bottom with the 'open relational space' which encourages a variety of social interaction and a frequency of social events. It then develops specific holistic and experiential learning, which can in turn develop into the incubation of a number of new and diverse projects.
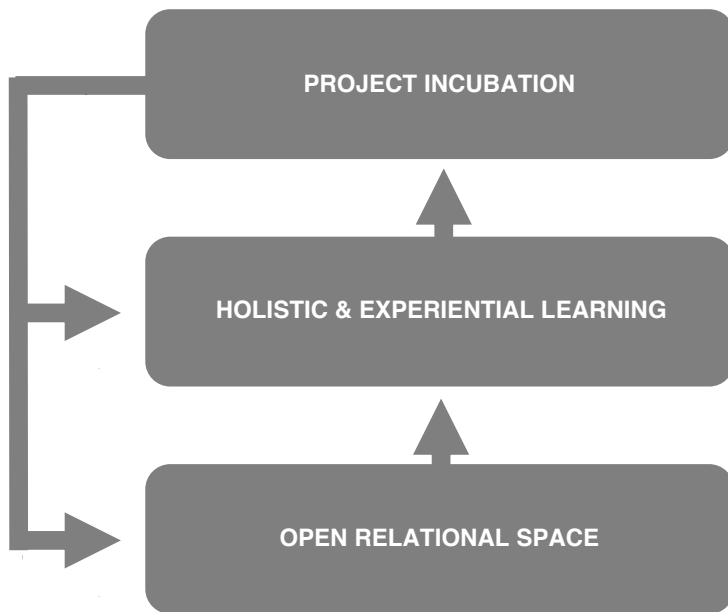
Figure 11.4 A model of youth work projects generating change

Conclusions

The key findings from the 151 stories collected in the three Italian youth centres reflect their aim to mobilise and promote the capabilities of the community and support innovation. This is exemplified in the most popular outcome identified by the respondents – '*improvement of job chances*'. However, this could also be further developed as the employment experiences created by the youth centre are often temporary and sometimes limited to the local context. Stronger links with the career's advice service would therefore be useful in order to develop these opportunities further. This is particularly important given the prominence of the shadow economy in the south of Italy.

The findings also illustrate the significant role the centres play in community development in the outcomes associated with increased '*sense of belonging*' and the '*valuing of diversity*'. The centres have clearly enabled an empowering process of change for both individuals – in promoting 'self-determination' – and within the community in supporting and facilitating projects which involve social and cultural change. This is particularly relevant given that in the Italian context young people are often derided as narcissistic (Cesareo, 2015).

Further analysis of the stories identified some of the mechanisms that generated these changes. Most notable appeared to be the frequency of the social interactions in the youth centre, alongside the involvement of the surrounding community characterised as the creation of an '*open relational space*'. This kind of relational space can nurture learning processes embedded in real-life situations, activating different levels of youth experience (intellectual, cognitive, emotional, practice etc.) and characterised as 'holistic learning mechanisms' (Cameron and Moss, 2011). Also crucial to the success of these projects appeared to be the conception,

planning and implementation of projects – '*project incubation*'. Overall, the main driver of the youth work experience seems to be the ability to generate spaces of proximity (Bottalico & Scardigno, 2007) through the building of a collective identity and a sense of belonging to the community.

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Chapter 12:

The Impact of Youth Work in France: 'Discovering Activities and New People' and 'Enjoying Positive Experiences'

By Christophe Dansac and Marc Carletti

Transformative evaluation (TE) was applied to three separate youth work organisations in the region of Occitanie, in southern France, over a period of a year. Each of the three organisations are distinctly different, and they were selected specifically to reflect the diversity of youth work in France as described in the context chapter. See Table 12.1 (below) for a summary of the organisational context of the three organisations.

	Organisation A	Organisation B	Organisation C
Sector	Voluntary/ non-profit sector	Voluntary/ non-profit sector	Voluntary/ non-profit sector
Age range	15–29	11–24	16–23
Location	Small town in very rural area (city centre and peripheral priority neighbourhood)	Small town in rural area Priority neighbourhood	Urban (regional capital city)
Funding sources	Grant funded (local government 80%)	Grant funded and commissioned work (public funds from central and local government)	Mainly EU funding (ERASMUS, YOUTH)
Type of work	Mostly targeted youth work – social inclusion through work-based experience (voluntary participation and detached youth work) with some educational activities	Open access youth clubs, community work, activity-based work (holiday camps, projects and structured leisure activities…)	Project-based work Environmental, European youth mobility and citizenship projects
Participating stakeholders	4 stakeholders including trustees, professional colleagues from other organisations, one state administration officer (youth and sports)	6 stakeholders including one local Councillor, trustees, professional colleagues from partner organisation, one state administration officer (youth and sports)	5 stakeholders including, trustees and members of partner organisations

Table 12.1 The three youth work settings in France

In line with the Council of Europe definition of youth work (Council of Europe, 2018) the national coordinators engaged with organisations corresponding to three possible instantiations of this definition in the French context (see Chapter 6 on national context). These

included a typical youth and community work organisation staffed with *animateurs* (Organisation B), an association working partly in preventative youth work (Organisation A with *éducateurs spécialisés*) and a popular education organisation working mainly on European projects and referred to as a "niche player" (Organisation C). Two of these three organisations are based in small towns in very rural areas, while the third is located in a large regional city. Two of them focus their activities in well-defined geographical areas, one in two separate places (priority neighbourhood and town centre) and the other in a priority neighbourhood.[1] The third organisation is based in a priority neighbourhood of a large regional city. However, its activities are wholly 'deterritorialised'[2] as they reach young people from other parts of the metropolitan area.

The three organisations have a number of features common to the French context, including low permanent staff numbers and youth workers from different educational backgrounds (types of qualifications include: National Diploma in *éducation spécialisée* (social work), Higher Education Diploma in *animation*, National Diploma *jeunesse et éducation populaire*). Two of the organisations had a team manager involved in story collection. In the other the staff team coordinator, who got the organisation involved in the project, played no part in gathering the stories. All the youth workers collecting stories were employees, in contact with young people for at least part of their time.

Three cycles of TE were undertaken in each of the three organisations, and in total 134 significant change stories were generated over the three cycles (see Table 12.2 below). A total of nine youth workers were involved in the three organisations across the three cycles, and between two to four youth workers were involved in each cycle.

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Org. A	16	12	16	44
Org. B	21	15	13	49
Org. C	14	7	20	41
Total	51	34	49	134

Table 12.2 Generation of stories in France

Among the 134 stories, 34 were selected by the youth workers' teams as contextualised significant change stories and put forward to the stakeholder group meetings. The stakeholders selected the nine most significant stories, one for each organisation, in each of the three cycles (see Table 12.3 below).

The organisations were free to choose which stakeholders to involve in the final assessment process – the selection of the most significant change story – although all (especially the organisation based in the regional city) encountered some difficulties in getting the right institutional stakeholders involved. The stakeholders who participated were commonly educational staff, colleagues or board members from other local organisations. Two organisations involved their supervisory authorities (regional *jeunesse et éducation populaire* state

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[1] Priority neighbourhoods are measured by disposable household income and eligible for targeted urban policy programmes.

[2] The notion of territorialisation is used in the context of French public policies where most commissioned voluntary youth work organisations are assigned specific geographical areas (city, neighbourhood…) to work in open-access facilities. Deterritorialised refers to those organisations that engage with young people from areas other than the one where they are based and with no dedicated facility other than their main head office.

administration officers). There was a (relative) absence of wider, or external, stakeholders (residents' associations, Councillors, formal school officials, departmental or regional decision-makers etc.). The stakeholder meetings did give those involved a good opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the process of evaluation and the outcomes achieved through the projects. However, wider involvement and commitment from stakeholders would have been more beneficial.

Story Type	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Significant Change Stories (total number of stories collected)	51	34	49	134
Contextualised Significant Change Stories (total number of stories selected by the youth workers and presented to the stakeholder group meetings)	10	10	14	34
Most Significant Change Stories (number of stories selected by the stakeholder groups)	3	3	3	9

Table 12.3 Generated stories

Age

The 134 stories were collected from 134 different young people. Although the young people who took part in the process ranged from 10 to 29 years old, they were not evenly represented across the study. Organisation C does not work with the 10-to-15-year-olds, and Organisation A also has limited contact with young people of that age. In total 72% of the stories were generated from young people between the ages of 16 and 25. 19% of young people involved were aged 13 to 15, and only 8% were aged between 10 and 12; only two stories were generated from young people over the age of 25. Table 12.4 below shows the age breakdown by organisation.

	11–15	16-19	20-26	Total
Org. A	3	14	27	44
Org. B	32	11	6	49
Org. C	0	30	11	41
Total	35	55	44	134

Table 12.4 Story generation by age

Gender

The two genders were equally represented in just one of the organisations (Organisation C, belonging to the "niche players" category), and perhaps unsurprisingly this organisation is the one that features the best gender balance in terms of frequency of attendance/participation. For the two other organisations, the young people interviewed were mostly boys, and this mirrors the reality of attendance and participation in these organisations and that of youth organisations in general. Boys are over-represented in the public arena in France (e.g. Bernard-Hohm & Raibaud, 2012), and they are also often over-represented in youth work organisations (Magne, 2011; Maruéjouls, 2011; Maruéjouls & Raibaud, 2012). See Table 12.5 below.

	Male	Female	Totals
Org. A	28	16	44
Org. B	34	15	49
Org. C	21	20	41
Total	83	51	134

Table 12.5 Story generation by gender

An Example of a Most Significant Change Story in France

Jérôme's[3] story (male, aged 25, from Organisation A, Cycle 1)

'After I went to the hospital, I became aware of things that made me change in a positive way. I'm less mistrustful of people, I trust them more. I don't get as nervous as I did before. Without [the organisation], I don't think I would have had the job 'cause I didn't accept anyone's authority. That's all better now because I thought a lot about myself, and also thanks to the trust I put in the youth workers.

The youth workers here, they don't have prejudices about young people. Other workers are different, they often judge us, they're around all day for every move we make, they're always shouting. Most workers think we'll never change. Here, every single youth is quite unique. If we have a problem, they'll always be here for us. When I was in deep trouble and all alone, the only people I could turn to were the youth workers. To me, no one else could really help me through. They suggested I should get transferred to the mental health unit at the hospital and, because I trusted them, I accepted although it was hard. Thanks to their support, I could hold through the hard times.

Today, I can take responsibility for my life, I'm an autonomous person. I've found a place in society although I thought I couldn't have any.'

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[3] All names are pseudonyms.

The youth worker's commentary

'I met Jérôme at the city day centre. He went through very difficult times. His father died in a car accident and he found his mother dead one morning. He then joined a small party of drug dealers. After the gang split, Jérôme could start trusting us, which led him to accept our support towards mental health services at the hospital. Jérôme has been in touch with us ever since. He comes to see us whenever he faces the slightest difficulty in his life. Jérôme has been in contact with our organisation for nine years.'

Youth worker group's reason for selection of the story

'The story perfectly illustrates the core meaning of our work: a relationship of trust as the starting point to young people's regaining control of their lives.'

The stakeholder group's reason for selecting this story

'The story best illustrates the organisation's mission as a public utility organisation. The story epitomises one of the cornerstones of its work: building trust-based relationships with young people. The story illustrates one of the organisation's core missions (preventive work) as it relates a young person's positive change to avoid emotional/personal breakdown. The story also illustrates both the capacity and necessity to maintain regular contact with young people.'

The impact of youth work: analysis of young people's stories

The stories were examined by the authors using the agreed approach to coding (Saldana, 2015) to identify commonalities in the stories. The young people's own words were central throughout the whole process. A total of eighteen initial codes was produced. All the initial codes resulting from this analysis are summarised in Table 12.6, with extracts from the stories to illustrate them.

Initial codes	No of stories per code	An example of a young person's story associated with each code
Learning	35	*'I had a tough start but I was taught into better planning and how to take others into account for all the tasks' (Org_C, cycle 2, story 3)*
Transferring skills	12	*'I was given responsibilities. I was in charge of a group and I had to make decisions about the setting of the common hall or the activity programme. As an elder brother, I've found it very useful; now I can take good care of my younger sisters at home' (Org_B, cycle 2, story 1)*
Changing behaviour	13	*'My parents too felt comforted when they saw that I had projects and I wasn't only hanging around' (Org_C, cycle 3, story 2)*
Inclusion through work	27	*'[The organisation] welcomed me well and provided a lot of useful information. They gave me my first job. I could get wages and thus move to a flat of my own for the first time' (Org_A, cycle 3, story 2)*
Sense of autonomy	23	*'[When I'm at the centre], I'm un-stressed. I feel more autonomous and the tree climbing helped me with this' (Org_B, cycle 1, story 1)*
Fulfilling material needs	33	*'I also know that getting some volunteering experience will help for my studies' (Org_C, cycle 3, story 5)*
Opening to others	29	*'I became more open towards the people I work with. I improved my French and I learned about other cultures' (Org A, cycle 2, story 2)*
Awareness	22	*'The most important change is about understanding, not having preconceived opinions but forging one's own and listening to other viewpoints. I'm more open-minded now' (Org_C, cycle 2, story 1)*
Making friends	27	*'We all had our own groups of friends where we lived but we all met at [the centre]. I made friends with people I only knew by sight before' (Org B, cycle 2, story 2)*
Building positive relationships	25	*'Moreover, I met the youth workers and we could build a relationship. They were great and easy to talk to. There was a lot of mutual respect and we could speak about anything' (Org_C, cycle 2, story 6)*
Meeting new people	50	*'Now, when I'm in a group with young people I meet for the first time, I talk to them… I don't keep to myself anymore' (Org A, cycle 1, story 11)*
Discovering new activities	50	*'I discovered new things, new activities' (Org_B cycle 1, story 14)*
Sense of belonging	35	*'Being here was like participating in some kind of citizenship training course that allowed me to become more actively involved, and enjoy convivial moments when we could share more in teams' (Org C, cycle 1, story 14)*
Active participation	16	*'I started as a mere attendee before I got actively involved with the other participants in the next project. I took on some responsibilities but I mostly acted as a group facilitator' (Org C, cycle 3, story 3)*
Positive memories and experiences	9	*'My best memory is at a holiday camp during Ramadan. That was a crazy camp! We weren't very far from home and the campsite wasn't real nice but what a great laugh we had!' (Org B, cycle 2, story2)*
Pleasure and leisure	38	*'There is a good atmosphere, never any problem' (Org A, cycle 3, story 10)*
Avoiding discomfort	30	*'We're lucky to have it. Otherwise, we'd be hanging around in the neighbourhood doing nothing' (Org B, cycle 3, story 9)*
Self-confidence	25	*'Here I met people who were good at helping me build self-confidence through their comforting attitudes and their providing me with some good contacts with other organisations' (Org C, cycle 2, story 5)*

Table 12.6 Initial codes

Following further analysis of the initial codes, which included the involvement of the managers of the youth work organisations, a final list of eight codes was produced. Table 12.7 below shows the number of stories in which each of the final codes appears, as well as the initial codes which make up the final code.

Final Codes	Number of stories	Initial codes
Discovering activities or new people	72 stories 54 %	Meeting new people Discovering new activities
Experiencing positive emotions	62 stories 47 %	Positive memories and experiences Pleasure and leisure Avoiding discomfort
Developing autonomy	61 stories 46 %	Inclusion through work Sense of autonomy Fulfilling material needs
Acquiring and transferring skills or abilities	48 stories 36%	Learning Transferring skills Changing behaviour
Creating bonds	47 stories 35%	Making friends Building positive relationships
Enhancing sense of group belonging and participation	47 stories 35%	Sense of belonging Active participation
Increasing awareness	44 stories 33%	Opening to others Awareness
Enhancing self-confidence	25 stories 19%	Self-confidence

Table 12.7 Final codes

Quantitative description

The stories collected vary in length from 8 to 225 words, with an average of 68 words long (median = 50). In terms of content, all the stories feature at least one initial code. The most substantial story contains 11, compared to 3.3 on average (median = 4). As for the codes, the stories contained between 1 and 7 of these, with 3 on average (median = 3).

Initial codes

More than one third of the stories highlight *meeting new people* and *discovering new activities* as a significant change, with each of these codes featuring in 50 stories (37.3%). Next come the initial codes *pleasure and leisure* and s*ense of belonging*, which feature in 38 stories (28.4%), and *learning* which appears in 35 stories (26.1%). The stories contain few references to *positive memories and experiences* (9 stories), *transferring skills* (12 stories) *or changing behaviour* (13 stories).

Final codes

The most common code in the stories is '*discovering activities or new people*'. This features in 73 stories, accounting for more than half of those collected (54%). The second most common code is '*experiencing positive emotions*', which features in 63 stories (47%), just ahead of '*developing autonomy*' which appears in 61 stories (46%). The least common code '*self-confidence*' features in 25 stories (18.6%). This is due to the fact that it stems from an initial code which we decided not to combine with any other as we considered it to be a sufficiently significant category on its own. Each of the other final codes are present in approximately one third of the stories.

Findings

Gender differences

Although the average age of the two groups is the same, girls are under-represented in the 10-to-12 and 13-to-15 age groups, and to a lesser extent in the over 20s category. The differences between girls and boys should therefore be viewed with caution as they could stem from the gender imbalance within the age groups. In terms of their form, the stories from girls were slightly longer than those from boys (75 words on average, compared to 64) and feature more initial codes (4.1 compared to 3.7) and final codes (3.2 compared to 2.8). However, these differences appear not to be significant. A comparison of the final codes across gender reveals only one significant gender-related difference concerning the final code, '*enhancing self-confidenc*e' (see Figure 12.1 below).

> '*I'm more self-confident now; I'm active because I work. It made me feel like getting to work instead of staying at home on unemployment benefit. Now I have the will and strength to keep on working. It did us good; we all improved our self-confidence; we finally managed to build a group in spite of all the prejudices we had against one another. I now have a true bedtime routine; I have a good reason to wake up in the morning.*' (female, 21)

'*Self-confidence*' features in 64% of stories from girls, but only appears in 36% from boys. However, as noted by Bleidorn et al. (2016), girls often display a lack of self-esteem compared to boys, and so perhaps it is not surprising to find that this significant change was more commonly mentioned by girls in this study.
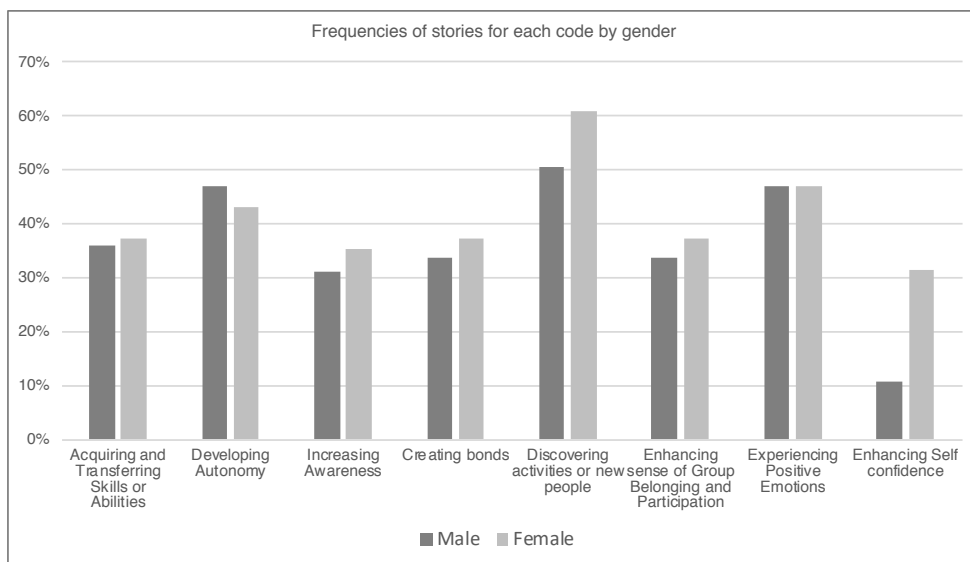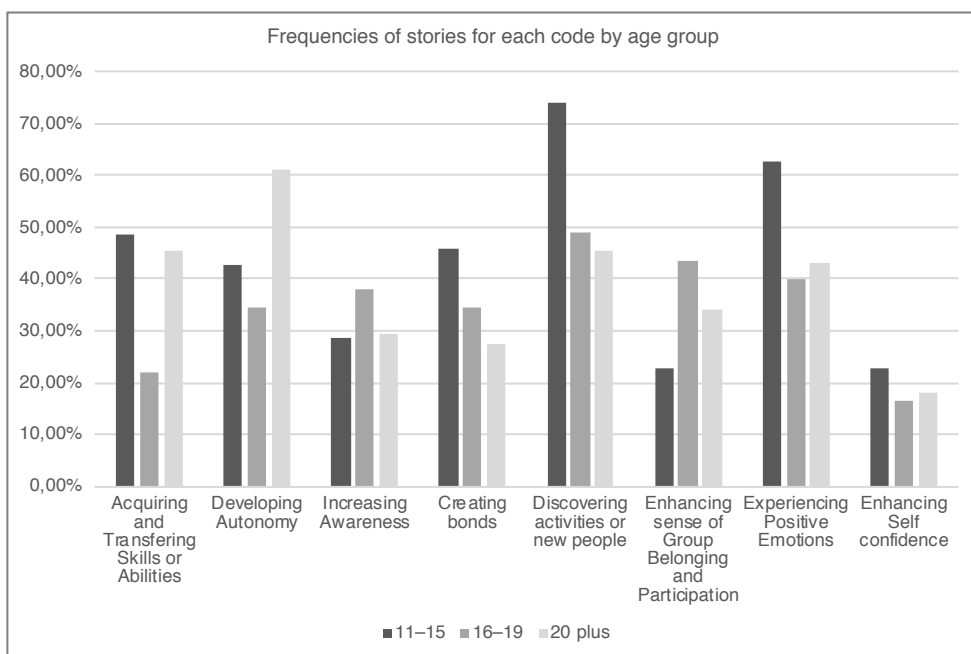

Figure 12.1 A comparison of final codes by gender

Age group differences

Identified differences between age groups need to be treated with a degree of caution, as the three organisations that took part in the project cater for different ages. As such, Organisation A mainly interviewed young people aged 20 and above, Organisation B mostly talked to the under-16s, and Organisation C dealt mainly with 15-to-19 year olds. Therefore, it is possible that the differences between age groups may be attributed to differences in the activities delivered by the organisations and the different approaches adopted. However, there are some interesting differences, and a comparison of final codes across the age range is provided in Figure 12.2 below.

In terms of their form, stories from 16-to-19-year-olds yield the shortest contributions, with the fewest initial and final codes. There are also considerable differences in the number of initial and final codes present in stories from this age group compared to those from the 11-to-15-year-olds.

The 11-to-15-year-olds and the over 20s referred to changes in '*acquiring and transferring skills and abilities*' more often than the 16-to-19-year-olds. The disparity may be due to fewer mentions of the concept of learning in the latter age category.

Figure 12.2 A comparison of final codes across the age ranges

An example of the '*acquiring and transferring skills and abilities*' code is:

> '*I was a loner before I came to the organisation, I preferred doing things alone, it's quicker. By coming here, I learnt how to work in teams; this allowed me to know other people. I feel happy. I have learnt plenty of things; it will serve me until I die. The activities, they are expensive, and I've been able to participate thanks to the organisation.*' (male, 13)

Stories from the over 20s most frequently refer to '*autonomy*' (61.4% compared to 34.5% and 42.9% for the 16-to-19 and 11-to-15 age groups respectively). Social pressures that exert an increasing influence with age may explain this change.

> '*[Organisation B] has been very helpful. I got more autonomous and more mature. I was given responsibilities. I was in charge of a group and I had to make decisions about the setting of the common hall or the activity programme. As an elder brother, I've found it very useful; now I can take good care of my younger sisters at home.*' (male, 15)

The youngest people commonly mention '*discovering activities and new people*' (74.3% compared to less than 50% for the other two age groups). However, it was mainly the mention of '*discovering new activities*' that resulted in a significant difference based on age group. As for '*meeting new people*', the frequency with which this appears in stories from the three age groups is the same.

'It allowed me to be more sociable at school. I'm better at approaching people and talking to them. We met a lot of people, both within and outside the organisation and I could learn how to communicate.' (male, 21)

The importance of '*making new friends*' drops with age, as 42.9% of the youngest mention this change whereas only 20% of the 19-to-19-year-olds and 2.3% of the over-20s actually refer to it.

'I could also meet people I didn't know before, of different ages and with different tastes and mindsets. Some are now among my best friends.' (male, 15)

'I've made new friends and I sometimes come here just for coffee and a good chat. I like the atmosphere ... coming here is quite soothing and makes me feel good.' (female, 19)

Differences between the organisations

As the research in France was specifically undertaken in three distinctly different types of youth work organisations (see the discussion of the French context in Chapter 6) it has been interesting to make some comparisons across these organisations (see Figure12.3 below)
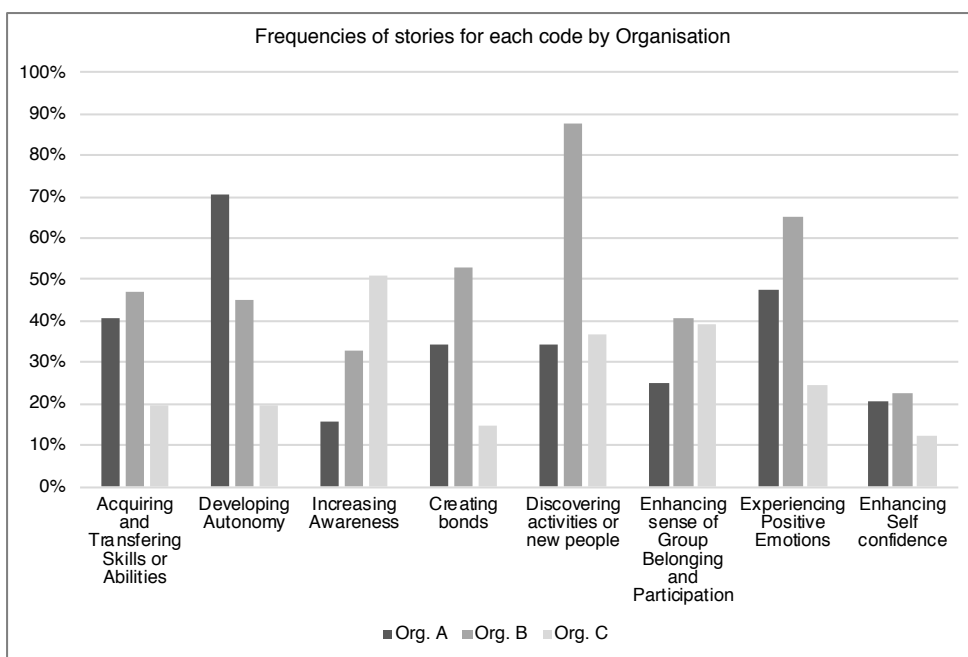
Figure 12.3 Comparison of final codes across the organisations

First, there are considerable differences in how frequently reference is made to *developing autonomy* (Org._A: 70.5%, Org._B: 44.9%, Org._C: 19.5%). This perhaps relates to the role of Organisation A, which focuses specifically on the employability of young people, while young people attached to Organisation C are probably already independent young people

who may not need this assistance, or at least may not regard it as the most important. Organisation C also lists the fewest mentions of *learning and transferring skills and abilities*, with 19.5% compared to more than 40% in the other two organisations.

By contrast, '*increasing awareness*' is very common in the stories of young people from Organisation C, where it accounts for 51.2%, ahead of Organisation B (32.7%) and Organisation A (just 15.9%).

> *'The most important change is about understanding; not having preconceived opinions but forging one's own and listening to other viewpoints. I'm more open-minded now.'* (male, 21)

The themes identified in part reflect the missions and purposes of the respective organisations. For example, Organisation C's activities are specifically focused on social issues (gender inequality), active citizenship and environmental problems (water pollution or sustainable development), and the codes to some extent reflect this.

> *'I've learned lots of new things about science and sustainable development ... and that's really interesting!'* (female, 20)

Creating bonds, which includes building positive relationships with either peers or youth workers, also differs strongly in the stories of young people from all three organisations. Those from Organisation B emphasised it the most (53.1%) compared to Organisation A (34.1%) and Organisation C (14.6%).

> *'At [Org. A], every single youth is quite unique. If we have a problem, they'll always be here for us. When I was in deep trouble and all alone, the only people I could turn to were the youth workers at [Org. A]. I think no one else could really help me through.'* (male, 25)

This perhaps again reflects the core purposes of the organisation. Organisation B is a more conventional youth and community work organisation, concerned with fostering association (Jeffs and Smith, 2005) among a wide range of young people. It might also be related to the participants' age, as this organisation's target groups are the youngest and therefore they are probably more involved in the process of forming their sociability networks. As the graph also shows, '*discovering activities or new people*' is much more common in stories from young people from Organisation B (87.8%) compared to the other organisations (34.1% and 36.6% for Organisations A and C respectively).

> *'I come here to have fun and enjoy myself. I remember the day at Cap Découverte, the coolest day I've ever had, because I had never been free in an amusement park before and it feels good'* (male 11)

This difference may be explained first by the fact that the young people attached to this organisation are, on average, younger, and second because this organisation offers a varied activity programme focused on structured educational leisure activities, seeking to maximise universal access to these activities.

While all youth work outcomes to some extent reflect the aims and purposes of the youth work organisations themselves, the outcomes of this study demonstrate that this is particularly pertinent in a French context, where the findings show that the effect of youth work must be analysed in relation to the type of organisation (its mission etc.), the sector concerned (social, sociocultural etc.), as well as the profiles of the young people that they reach.

Differences between selected stories and others

The present study has provided a unique opportunity to compare young people's narratives of the impact of youth work on their lives with the youth workers' perceptions of what positive changes should be valued the most. It is therefore useful to understand what makes the youth workers choose a story, insofar as it provides indications of the area of change that counts the most for them. We compared the selected stories with those that were not selected. To do this, we looked at quantitative measurements (number of words, age and gender) and compared the initial and final codes that feature in both groups of stories.

There were no differences in terms of gender or average age between the young people who supplied the selected stories and those whose contributions were not selected. The selected stories are, however, significantly longer than the others (84 words[4] compared to 61). They also feature more initial codes (4.3 compared to 3.6) and contain marginally more significant final codes (3.3 compared to 2.8). However, they are no more concise.

Analysis of the frequency with which codes occur in the stories reveals three significant differences between the stories that were selected and those that were not. These are understandable in the professional context of youth work in France.

First, the notion of 'awareness' appears to be an important point for the youth workers. The selected stories differ from those that were discarded in terms of the frequency with which they feature the code '*increasing awareness*'. This code appears in 46.5% of the selected stories, whereas it only features in 26.4% of the stories that were not selected. This can be linked to the subjective significance of activism among youth workers (Gillet, 1996; Dansac & Vachée, 2016; Virgos, Dansac & Vachée, 2017), for whom social change and emancipation happen through awareness raising, and the notion of critical thinking is therefore central to education.

Group belonging and participation also appear to be very important, as 51.2% of the selected stories feature '*enhancing sense of group belonging and participation*', whereas this code only features in 27.5% of the stories that were not selected. The presence of such notions in the selected stories clearly parallels the ubiquity of such terms as 'togetherness', 'social cohesion'[5] and 'active citizenship' in the rhetoric on Republican values and in the official discourse on youth work. Furthermore, youth work training as a whole, most particularly in the field of animation, strongly emphasises the professionals' role in enriching or preserving social ties. Indeed, it has been shown that *animateurs* often highlight group work in their discourse (Virgos et al., 2017).

It is interesting to observe that the theme of discovery ('*discovering activities or new people*'), which is widely mentioned as a positive change in young people's stories, does not

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[4] Calculated automatically by counting the number of spaces between words

[5] An umbrella term used at government level and within state administration bodies supervising youth work

seems to be a key criterion for selection. In fact, it seem precisely the opposite (even if the difference is not significant), since only 51.2% of the stories selected by the youth workers include this theme compared to 56% in those not selected. This theme is therefore less present in the group of selected stories than in the full set of young people's stories. The question arises as to whether this discrepancy is related to negative connotations linked to running structured leisure and play-based activities in a context where the professional legitimacy of youth workers may depend on them disregarding the recreational purpose of their activities.

In the French context leisure is primarily designed to be educational, and practices that are perceived or presented as purely recreational play little part in the recognition of professionals, who have a relatively negative image of the activity being an end in itself, or one that merely brings pleasure. For youth workers, highlighting the experience-based value of young people's discovery of new activities is perceived as representing a risk of straying from their mission into promoting the mere 'consumption' (Gillet, 1996; Vachée & Dansac, 2013) of planned activities without any educational purpose. To explain this fact, we may assume that the recreational function is not a purpose that youth workers can promote, since they feel compelled to justify their existence and professional standing by emphasising the educational value of the projects and activities that they carry out.

Universal access to new (collective) activities as a factor in the harmonious development and wellbeing of young people is not stated as a major guideline in French public youth policies (see below). By contrast, it seems to be more explicitly valued in other countries, such as Finland.

The Relationship to Youth Policy
The differences in findings between the three organisations can be paralleled with the various guidelines of French youth policy (which partially underpin their funding). The results suggest that impact of youth work in France is correlated with both the organisations' and the young people's profiles. The following themes correspond to national policy priority areas. All themes appear in all three organisations in various proportions. However, one may identify for each organisation the most recurring themes and match them with corresponding national policy areas.

1. Organisation A (social sector): Employability and autonomy
2. Organisation B (animation*, jeunesse et éducation populaire*) : Social skills, wellbeing and learning through educational leisure activities
3. Organisation C (niche player): Citizenship initiatives, participation and engagement

In the French government's *Plan Priorité Jeunesse* (PPJ[6]), being implemented at the time of the project, five out of thirteen priority areas for action make specific reference to employability, while only one priority seeks to promote the wellbeing of young people with reference to health issues, but with no explicit relation to open-access leisure activities or socializing as relevant means to improve it. Another priority (priority 8) mentions access to sporting and cultural activities with the aim of promoting universal access and reducing inequalities. Priority 8 makes provision to 'encourage youth access to quality educational leisure activities'. Based on the frequency with which the theme of discovery ('*discovering activities and*

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[6] The role of such national policies is crucial, as funding directly follows to both voluntary organisations and local authorities through related national programmes via commissioning (see context chapter).

new people') occurs in the stories, we can indeed discern an improvement in young people's access to leisure. Examples include:

> *'I have more fun, I feel better. Here, we always go out, we even improvise when there is nothing to do. I love going on camps. I have more confidence; I feel more serene thanks to [Organisation B]. I discovered new things, new activities. I'm lucky I can come to [Organisation B]. I made many new encounters.'* (female, 16)

> *'[Organisation A] is great. We do lots of things, it brings life to the area. Without it neighbourhood life can be boring at times. The activities are cheap and anyone can join.'* (male, 15)

The findings of this research bring into focus the role of structured extracurricular activities to facilitate positive youth development. Although leisure activities have attracted little attention in developmental psychology in France (Kindelberger, Le Floc'h & Clarisse, 2007), studies in the English-speaking world provide good evidence that 'participating in extracurricular activities is associated with both short and long term indicators of positive development' (Eccles et al., 2003). However, importantly there is no dedicated indicator in the PPJ that could enable the organisations to demonstrate the impact of their activities or assess progress in this area. The only figures that count for evaluation are those relating to sports club membership, attendance at an artistic or cultural activity (mostly through school-based arts programmes) and visits to heritage sites or museums. Footfall in such youth work organisations as represented in this project and participation in the educational leisure activities they run are, therefore, largely overlooked as they are not explicitly linked to this priority area.

The second most common code, '*positive emotional experiences*', also testifies to improved access to educational leisure as it includes many stories relating positive emotions to such activities. These positive emotional experiences can also reasonably be assumed to enhance young people's wellbeing. For example, young people expressed the following:

> *'My best memory is at a holiday camp during Ramadan. That was a crazy camp! We weren't very far from home and the campsite wasn't real nice but what a great laugh we had!'* (male, 21)

The promotion of positive emotions is largely overlooked when it comes to policy development. Policy response tends to emphasise potential risk or the prevention of health problems, rather than supporting initiatives where young people will experience joy, interest and contentment. In the PPJ, the notion of 'wellbeing' only features in a problem-solving or risk-avoidance perspective as it connects with priority 3 ('Improving young people's health and access to prevention and care') rather than priority 8 ('Promote young people's access to sports, arts, culture and quality digital and audiovisual resources').

'*Experiencing positive emotions*' is the second most significant change identified by young people in the present study. As such, it certainly calls for more attention from both policy makers and practitioners in the designing and carrying out of national and local policy. There is evidence that positive emotions can help build personal and social resources as they fuel psychological and physical wellbeing. They are essential elements of optimal human

functioning (Fredricson, 2004) and need to be fully recognised as contributors to youth development.

'*Developing autonomy*' (which includes employability, but also aspects of autonomy such as having a driving licence) comes third in the stories.

> '*Since I got in touch with [Organisation A], I've gained more and more autonomy. I found my first seasonal job. I could help at home with the money I earned. It helped me pay my share of the driving licence training fees. I can also treat myself once in a while and be more self-sufficient.*' (male, 20)

Developing young people's autonomy through access to employment and the fulfilment of basic material needs (housing, food etc.) has been a dominant theme in public discourse since the mid-seventies. In France the policy agenda is still largely inspired by concerns about youth employability. This theme is therefore consistent with employability goals that are repeatedly stated in the 2013 PPJ, and especially in priority 5, which explicitly seeks to encourage youth access to employment. Similarly, it should be noted that some stories explicitly relate to priority 11 of the PPJ ('Promoting and valuing young people's engagement'), although their number is not significant. As regards other priority areas for action, few stories directly illustrate the influence of youth work to reduce school dropout rates (priority 2) or its impact on promoting access to housing (priority 4).

On the whole, although the *Plan Priorité Jeunesse* does refer to popular education (*éducation populaire*), a major historical source and present distinctive trait of French *animation*, the forms of youth work presented in this study are somewhat under-represented as compared with the professional sectors of culture and sport, especially so as regards to formal evaluation indicators.

Conclusion

The findings of this project suggest that impact of youth work in France is highly context-dependent. The differences that have been observed in the themes reflecting changes in young people's lives vary with young people's profiles (age, gender) as well as with the distinctive traits of each youth work setting (organisations' missions, frames of practice, youth workers' qualifications and training and so on). The essentially diverse nature of youth work arenas is thus mirrored in the very outcomes of this research.

However, one may also identify meaningful common features and recurring themes in the collected stories. The study has provided unique insight into young people's own perception of youth work's positive impact. In France, the voice of young people is seldom called upon or heard. The present study confirms that young people can have a say in defining what works for them. When they were asked about youth work's value in their lives, their answers clearly highlight its role in broadening their experience as well as arousing their interest and positive emotions. Frequent mention of enhanced 'sense of belonging' shows that collective activities are also recognised as significant contributors to young people's wellbeing in a holistic educational perspective. For those identified as potentially at risk or living in priority neighbourhoods, access to basic material resources through work experience programmes is

perceived as a factor of positive change that youth work can uniquely offer through relationships of trust and on the basis of voluntary participation.

The positive changes identified by young people themselves confirm that policy guidelines are pertinent when channelling part of youth work practice toward fostering youth autonomy and employability. However, there is more to be learnt from these stories. It seems that the sense of wellbeing, a key contributing factor in the harmonious development of individuals and communities alike, partly relies on youth work's capacity to provide young people with spaces and opportunities to open up to new experiences, socialise with friends and engage in structured educational leisure activities. In times of political and economic turmoil, such broad educational aims tend to be left aside to the profit of assumingly better-targeted objectives. However, the value of well-designed leisure activities and free socialising when carried out in an educational perspective should not be overlooked, particularly for the younger ones and those living in priority neighbourhoods (Vieille Marchiset, 2009). The forms of open-access youth work represented here have developed an expertise in providing spaces which seem to meet the needs and expectations of many teens. Their ability to advance several national youth policy guidelines has been convincingly highlighted in the many stories that were told.

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Chapter 13:
A Comparison of Youth Work in England, Finland, Estonia, Italy and France

By Jon Ord[1]

At the outset the country coordinators were sceptical about the prospect of drawing comparisons across the five countries. Initially this was due to an appreciation of the very small sample size, studying only three youth work organisations in each of the countries.[2] Clearly this does not give a sufficient basis for a robust comparison, and certainly not one from which we can make any generalisations. This scepticism was also based on an increasing awareness of the diversity of youth work practice across the different contexts. These concerns are entirely legitimate and need to be addressed before any similarities or differences in the data gathered on the project can be considered.

In response to the questions over the sample size, it is acknowledged that this is a very small study, given the size and scope of youth work in Europe. The project is very aware of the danger of 'over-claiming' and does not seek to make bold sweeping assertions about youth work in Europe, or indeed about youth work in any particular country context. However, it is a unique study unlike anything that has been undertaken before, and it can therefore offer interesting insights. It is a piece of qualitative research grounded in a constructivist methodology (Bradford and Cullen, 2012), which does not seek, or even necessarily believe in, an objective reality or truth, but which provides authentic descriptions and analysis of particular social phenomena – in this case youth work. It can therefore shed light on the practice of youth work in the different contexts, and offer insights, if tentatively asserted, as well as raise questions that need to be addressed.

Therefore, this chapter is in part a comparison of the coding process undertaken independently in the five countries and described in previous chapters. It is acknowledged that the coding process can be seen as reductionist, and therefore in its attempt to seek commonality it eradicates differences. This is perhaps most evident in the production of final codes, and in the overarching themes which are used in this chapter to compare the five countries' final codes. Although this reductive process has its weaknesses, the study needed to find some way in which to both make sense of, and compare and contrast, the 715 stories collected throughout the year-long process. The process of coding is a widely accepted approach to identifying commonality in qualitative data (Saldana, 2016). However in order to ensure that the differences between the youth work settings is retained, this chapter will also explore the contrasts both within the data and by providing the impressions gathered by the twenty-five project members on the diversity of youth work practice witnessed during the project.

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[1] Thanks to the other coordinators for their input in the production of this chapter, in particular to Marc Carletti for his comments on the sections on 'Activities, leisure and or learning' and '1-1 versus collective', and his thoughts on the conclusion.

[2] Estonia was not limited to three organisations because the youth work partners were umbrella youth work organisations.

'Impressions' of youth work's diversity

As we saw in Chapter 1 when critiquing the often commonly held assumptions among European policy makers, youth work in Europe is far from a singular entity (Schild, 2017). The five countries in this study have a number of distinct differences and the project members involved in visiting each other's countries and organisations have been given unique insights into some of these differences.

Perhaps the most striking difference is that not all the countries have well delineated youth work fields. English, Finnish and Estonian researchers/coordinators could translate the project directly to their national contexts, in part because youth work is 'professionalised' in those contexts. The French and Italian contexts, as we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, are more complicated. For instance, France does not have any youth work – or at least, youth work as a term has no direct translation. Therefore, there is no single well-identified group of professionals trained to work exclusively with young people. Instead there are *animateurs* (the dominant group), *éducateurs de prevention spécialisée* and other types of professionals whose work with young people may fit the European definition of youth work, and it is far from clear how these various practices compare. This study can offer some initial thoughts on how these differing sets of practices cohere, but it is beyond its scope to comprehensively account for the many undoubted contrasts. One impression that was left with the members of the project, however, was that the French '*Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture*' (MJCs), where *animateurs* work, have many similarities to the English, Finnish or Estonian youth clubs. Nevertheless, despite this similarity, it became apparent to project members that there appear to be subtle differences in the approach of *animateurs* which seems to focus more on the collective – the bringing together of young people in social and cultural spaces – without a particular emphasis on the individuals. Other settings, in particular in England, although working in and with groups of young people, seemed to have much more emphasis on individual relationships and personal development.

Youth voice and empowerment

Another contrast which became evident during the project was the differing approach to young people's voice and youth empowerment across the five countries. A good example of this was exemplified by the aghast expression on an English youth worker's face when the Italian coordinator responded to her complaint that she only had sufficient resources to open the centre once a week by asking, 'Why don't you give the young people the keys?' This was by no means a throwaway comment, as Italian youth work has a distinct culture of 'youth-led' projects where young people are given a lot of responsibility for the ownership and control of the facilities. In part, as will be seen shortly, this could be explained by the higher age of the young people associated with the Italian youth work in this study. However, the attributing of greater ownership and control also occurred in youth work organisations on this project which worked with young people in their mid-teens. Finland appeared to be the most advanced in terms of youth empowerment – for example, through the Finnish youth work empowerment model '*Ruuti*', a participative budgeting process in Helsinki Youth Department which devolves significant proportions of its budget to a group of young people to decide how it is spent.

Professionalisation

It became increasingly evident during this project that there is a split between the partners in relation to the professionalisation of youth work. On the one hand the field of youth work is clearly defined in Finland and Estonia, as it is to some extent in England (as well as the wider UK). All of which have qualification frameworks which help underpin their professionalisation. National policy also helps to delineate the field in these countries, as does the existence of national occupational standards and quality assurance frameworks., although in recent years this has been undermined in the UK (Grace & Taylor, 2017; Ord, 2016). This is the opposite in both France and Italy, which share a common absence of any sense of agreed national policy or professional framework for youth work. France does operate under the two spheres of *animation* and *éducation spécialisée*, but the relationship with what may or may not be referred to as youth work is complicated (see Chapter 6 and Besse et al., 2017). While there are national policy priorities which refer specifically to the professional sectors of *animation* and *éducation spécialisée* in France, arguably youth work in Italy is even more fragmented (see Chapter 5 and Morciano, 2017).

Resources

Similarly the resourcing of youth work was very different across the five countries. It appeared that Finnish youth work was perhaps the best resourced, with what were (by English standards at least) eye-watering amounts of money being made available for comprehensive city-wide youth work. The difference in resources is clearly important when comparing the impact of youth work on the lives of young people, not least because a large activity budget, almost certainly absent from the English youth organisations in this study, can enable a wide range of additional opportunities and experiences.

Health and safety/safeguarding

The visits to youth work organisations that were undertaken as part of the Erasmus-funded 'Transnational Learning Activities' during the project provided specific insights into some of the differences in relation to both health and safety and safeguarding across the different country contexts. An example of health and safety illustrates this very well. A visit was made to a large thriving underground skate park in Finland, where well over 100 young people were skating. Immediately many of the project participants noticed, some with astonishment, that very few if any of the young people were wearing helmets. In particular, the English youth workers commented that this would never happen in their organisations. Interestingly, however, when the lead youth worker in the project was asked why it was that they did not insist that young people wore helmets, he replied, 'We advise them to wear them but it is their choice, and they had only had one minor injury (a broken arm) in the last two years.' This project, and it appears Finnish youth work in general, appeared to prioritise the youth work principle of autonomy – the primacy of a young person's choice – over any particular organisation's requirement to adhere to externally imposed health and safety regulations. In the English context at least, fear of culpability and litigation tends to dominate the youth work organisations. It would appear that Estonia has a balance of these priorities as although it has a number of concrete parameters set by specific policies and acts of parliament, the organisers of youth work have considerable freedom in their choice of methods and ways of working. In this sense legislation frames practice but does not directly control it.

Differences in relation to the prioritisation of the safeguarding of young people were also evident across the different country contexts. For example, contrasts were observed between some settings in France that were not bound by age categories and delivered 'all-age' activities, such as an evening music event which both adults and young people could attend, or the Italian projects which worked from the mid-teens to the age of 35. In other contexts, for example in England and Finland, strict age categories applied that in the main prevented young people from 'mixing' with adults, either 'for their own protection' or 'to be young together'.

An example from France illustrates these contrasting approaches. A visit was undertaken to a youth camp in a rural setting in a remote wooded location. Young people of varying ages mixed freely with limited supervision. One parent commented that she 'was going to leave her children here for the weekend but had decided to stay and hang out and help'. The idea that an adult, whether a parent or not, could decide to stay in a residential setting would not be possible without the necessary checks and their registration as an official volunteer in the UK, Finland or Estonia, all of which have Child Protection legislation which excludes those convicted of certain offences from working with children under eighteen years of age.

The differences in approaches between the different countries interestingly highlight the difficult balance that needs to be struck between protection and safeguarding, on the one hand, and young people's freedom, expression and autonomy on the other. This project offered participants insights into some contrasting approaches to what can often seem like a dilemma, and suggests that at least in some settings, such as those in England, the emphasis is too much on protection and control which inevitably limits autonomy. France appears the most liberal.

Activities, leisure and/or education?

The occurrence of references to leisure and activities varies in the coding of the stories across the countries. Generally speaking, the codes from Estonia, Finland and France identify activities and leisure as examples of significant changes, whereas the codes from Italy and England do not. This may not be immediately apparent as only one of the final codes has an explicit mention of activities – the French code '*discovering activities or new people*'. There is also a limited reference to 'leisure' in any of the final codes. However, analysis of the initial codes illustrates some of these differences, as the terms 'leisure' or 'activities' are implied in a number of initial codes in Finland, Estonia and France but not in England and Italy. For example, three of the initial codes which make up the Estonian final code '*broadening of the spectrum of experiences*' make explicit reference to leisure, including '*youth centre as a site for spending leisure time*' and '*increased participation in organised leisure time activities*'. The French code 'experiencing positive emotions' also has the initial code '*pleasure and leisure'.* Although the Finnish codes contain no mention of leisure or activities, they do contain two initial codes relating to hobbies: '*variety of hobbies*' and '*new hobbies*'. There is no mention of hobbies, activities or leisure in any of the Italian or English codes.

Although no definitive conclusions can be drawn from this observation, at the very least it raises interesting questions about some of the differences across the contexts. It also raises questions for youth work as a whole about the role and importance of leisure time activities. Clearly young people in the Finnish, Estonian and French contexts value the opportunities

they have had to take part in new activities, hobbies or leisure time pursuits. However, this role for youth work is not valued highly, with more of an emphasis placed upon the educational value of activities. As made explicit by the European Commission below:

> *'The term 'leisure' ... only describes the time frame within which some kind of work takes place ... and is not directly connected to any specific aim or objective. Due to this the term has no real significance in relation to the setting of indicators and creation of quality systems [in youth work]. The term "leisure work" refers to work aiming at providing leisure activities that are fun and attractive but does not have their motive in the personal and social development of young people. Running an amusement park is an example of leisure work. Informal learning might of course take place in such a setting, as it could anywhere else, but that is not why it is run, and thus it is not youth work. Nor would offering young people 'a space', for example a room with some tables and chairs, where they could spend their time after school, but without any ambition or support for non-formal learning and personal development, be considered as being youth work.'* (European Commission, 2015: 14)

It is possible that youth work in Finland, Estonia and France places more emphasis on leisure based activities than youth work in England or Italy. This difference was exemplified by a visit to an exceptionally well resourced Finnish youth club, where the Italian coordinator was principally concerned not with the wide variety of activities on offer, but with what the educational purpose of the activities was. This was not clear to him or made explicit by the lead youth worker in the setting. While this is not a conclusion that can be drawn with any certainty from this study, it is a question that is certainly raised by it. What is certain is that young people from Finland, Estonia and France identified leisure time activities and hobbies as being of significance to them. However, what is also not clear is the extent to which those leisure time activities were educational, and what roles the youth workers envisioned for the activities. Just because young people valued an activity in itself does not necessarily mean the activity did not have other legitimate educational purposes. Youth work is multi-dimensional, and the activities and the learning associated with them cannot be easily differentiated.

Questions also need to be asked about the absence of references to activities and leisure time from the Italian and English codes. Perhaps the reason for the absence in the Italian context is in part due to the significantly higher age of participants (a point discussed in some depth below), as well as the specific focus on the development of skills and opportunities for employment. Of course, these organisations may not be entirely representative of the whole of Italian youth work.

The reasons for the absence of references to leisure and activities in the English context may be two-fold. First, there has been a drastic reduction in the resources available to youth organisations in England post-2010 and the imposition of austerity-based policies (Unison, 2014), and so the scope for providing a wide range of activities and experiences has been significantly reduced. Perhaps if this study had been undertaken in the mid-2000s, when significant additional funds were available for Positive Activities, the stories may well have been different. Second, the emphasis on outcome-focussed practice may well be influencing the kinds of programmes that youth workers in England are now undertaking.

A complicated relationship exists within youth work between leisure-based or learning-based activities which it is not possible to explore in full within this text. However, perhaps the youth organisations and the stories generated in this project exemplify this tension, which is more formalised in French 'youth work' through the work of *animateurs* in youth centres like the MJCs, which is primarily activity-based with a strong focus on the development of the collective (the peer group, community or society) rather than a focus on individual issues. This contrasts with *éducation spécialisée*, which is a social work profession in France and is more problems-focused and based on one-to-one interventions. One could see English youth work as a mix of the two French professions, but this may be too simplistic. It is certainly the case that more research needs to be undertaken on the role of activities in youth work.

• The proactive educative role of youth work

A corresponding question is raised concerning the extent to which youth work organisations as well as individual youth workers, both within and across countries, prioritise the proactive educative role of youth work. It appears from the results of this study that those countries which least prioritise leisure – England and Italy – place more emphasis on education. Those who place more emphasis on the provision of leisure activities – France, Estonia and Finland – could perhaps learn something about being more proactive in the youth work setting. This point was illustrated in Chapter 10, where the Finnish youth workers were asking for guidance on when and how they should intervene in young people's spaces. Whether this distinction is the case or not, and the sample size means that this is only tentatively asserted, this does highlight a tension at the heart of youth work practice between 'proactive educational' youth work and 'laissez faire activity based' youth work.

1–1 versus collective approaches to youth work

Another tension which was apparent, to some extent in the findings and confirmed by observations of youth work practice across the different contexts, was the degree to which youth work focused on individuals or collectives (such as peer groups and the wider community). Accepting the previous caveats, the impression gained from the project was that there are some substantive differences. English youth work appeared more inclined to focus on individuals than some of the other countries, most notably France, where youth work[3] was more inclined to focus on the collective. This contrast is most noticeable when comparing the MJC (*Maison de Jeune et de la Culture*), a traditional French youth club, with the English youth clubs in this study. Ostensibly they are very similar, but a comment made by a French youth worker during the evaluation of the methodology was illuminating. He observed that the research project had given him a unique opportunity to engage in individual conversations, which is not something he would not normally be encouraged to do; in contrast, this is something that is actively encouraged in the English context.

The extent to which English youth work is individualised is arguable, but it has certainly been explicitly criticised for becoming more individualised (Smith, 2003). The English final codes support this view to some extent, as only one of the final codes ('*enhancing friendships*') relates to others and the other codes are all individualised. By contrast, both the French and Italian final codes are more focused on the collective, each having two codes

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[3] This does not refer to éducateurs spécialisés who only work one-to-one

relating to this: '*creating bonds*' and '*group belonging*' in France, and '*relating with others and valuing diversity*' and '*sense of belonging to the community*' in Italy. However, it should be noted that in all countries the majority of the final codes are focused on individual changes.[4] To some extent Finland and Estonia fall somewhere in the middle; they both yielded codes that refer to others, such as the Estonian '*development of relationships with adults*' and the Finnish '*encountering an empathetic youth worker*', but neither embraced the collective to the same extent as France and Italy appear to.

Differences across age

Perhaps the most tangible difference in youth work between the countries in the project was the age of the young people who provided stories. Differences were minimal between the organisations within each country, as most organisations operated within similar age bands. The French organisations did vary a little, having two similar organisations working with young people from 15 to 29 and from 16 to 23 respectively, while another started earlier, from the age of 11 up to 24. However, there was much less unanimity in age ranges between the countries. The official parameters for youth work in the countries also varies and to some extent the ages of the respondents reflect this. For example, as we saw in Chapter 5, in Estonia youth officially begins at 7 years of age and ends at the age of 26, where as in England (as well as the wider UK), Finland and France youth tends to start in secondary school and therefore begins at around 11. In Italy youth policy is aimed at young people from the age of 15 and extends up to 35. In the main the age ranges of respondents correlates with the parameters of their respective policies on youth; see Table 13.1 below.

	Official age range of youth work in country	Age range of youth work organisations in the project	Age range of respondents in the project
Estonia	7–26	7–26	7–23
England	13–19[5]	10–25 11–25 11–19	10–20
Finland	Under 29[6]	13–23 12–25 14–29	12–29
France	11–29[7]	15–29 11–24 16–23	11–26
Italy	15–34[8]	17–34 17–35 14–35	14–35

Table 13.1 Age ranges of youth work and organisations across countries

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[4] See the note in chapter 15, page 236 about the critique of the methodology that it focuses too heavily on individual change rather than collective (peer, group or community) change.

[5] This is a priority age range and is a residue of the government's DfES (2002) Transforming Youth Work Policy, although traditionally youth work operated from 11 to 25.

[6] The latest Finnish Youth Act (2017) stipulates 'under 29', but does not have a lower age limit.

[7] The age range of youth in France is in accordance with the most common age bands within the national statistics.

[8] There is no specific law defining the age range of youth in Italy, although youth policies specify age ranges according to perceived needs. The typical range 15 to 34. This age range is also validated by the official national statistics on the young population (http://dati-giovani.istat.it/).

The age ranges identified above begin to indicate some of the differences across the countries in this study, but closer observations of the ages reveal greater differences. For example Tables 13.2 and 13.3 below illustrate quite marked differences in the ages of the young people who provided stories in this project. However, before looking at these in more detail a caveat must be noted. The reader is reminded that this is a small sample and no direct generalisations can be made. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the organisations that were chosen were broadly representative of youth work in their localities, and there is no obvious reason to conclude that they are not typical. The differences are also so marked that at the very least they raise questions about the target age of youth work, both in these countries and across Europe as a whole – and therefore about what can be learned about the potential of youth work for certain age groups of young people who are either excluded by policy or in practice in a given country.

	7–9	10–12	13–15	16–19	20–24	25–35	Average Age
Estonia	14	34	53	56	7	0	14.2
England	N/A[9]	27	72	43	1	N/A	14.6
Finland	N/A	4	28	67	17	7	17.7
France	N/A	10	25	55	42	2	17.8
Italy	N/A	N/A	7	11	48	85	25.3

Table 13.2 A comparative table of the number young people in each age group

Although there is no data on the ages of the young people who actually attend the organisations in this study, there is no reason to believe that the respondents were not typical of the young people who attend, and in fact it would be a little strange to think that the majority of people who attend are radically different to those who provided the stories. Given this and bearing in mind the caveats mentioned above regarding the small sample size, the data contained in Tables 13.2 and 13.3 do raise some interesting questions.

The clearest differences in age occur between England and Estonia on the one hand and Italy on the other. The average ages of the respondents in Estonia was 14.2 and for those in England it was 14.6, whereas in Italy it was 25.3. In Italy 88% of the respondents were over 20 years of age, and 56% of those were over 25. In Estonia only 4% of respondents were over 20 and none were over 25, and in England less than 1% of respondents were over 20 and none over 25.

The French and Finnish youth work organisations appear to have had a more balanced and representative sample of young people providing stories. The average age of the French respondents was 17.8 with 33% over 20 years of age, and only 1.5% of those over 25. In Finland the average age was 17.7, with 20% over 20, 6% over 25 and 26% under 15.

Given these differences it would perhaps be easy to presume that the project was not comparing like with like, and clearly there are some distinct differences between the countries – for example, between the hobby clubs of Estonia and the independent film projects of Italy – and these will be explored in more detail later when a comparison of the final country

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[9] N/A – not applicable.

codes is undertaken. However, one of the strengths of this study is that it explicitly reflects the diversity of youth work in Europe. Age is clearly one of the primary differences, at least across the projects involved in this study, and a question must be asked as to whether this is the case across the respective countries in a broader sense. Additional research is also needed to identify differences in other countries across the wider European youth work field.

	% aged under 15	% aged over 20	% aged over 25	Average age
England	69 %	0,70 %	0 %	14.6
Estonia	62 %	4 %	0 %	14.2
Finland	26 %	20 %	6 %	17.7
France	26 %	33 %	1,50 %	17.8
Italy	5 %	88 %	56 %	25.3

Table 13.3 Percentage of respondents under 15 and over 20 and 25 years old

Age and the outcomes of youth work

A comparison of the final codes for the countries at the opposite ends of the age spectrum provides some interesting insights. The two countries who have the two youngest average ages among the young people providing stories (Estonia, 14.2, and England, 14.6) also had some similarities in the final codes produced. For example, the second most commonly occurring code for both countries related to friendship; Estonia produced 56 stories relating to '*new friends and contacts*', equating to 34% of the total number of stories, and England produced 71 stories relating to '*enhancing friendship*', equating to 50%. They also both produced a code related to the adaptation of individual behaviour to wider social expectations – in England 'r*educing risky behaviour*', and in Estonia '*promoting pro-social behaviou*r'. Again, however, the similarities must not be overstated, as the most commonly occurring codes in these countries were different. Estonia's most popular final code was '*broadening of the spectrum of experiences*' (78 stories, 48 %), and England's was '*improving sense of wellbeing*' (89 stories, 62%).

The country with the highest age of respondents – Italy, at 25.3 – was the only country to have a final code related to employment. This was '*improving job chances*', and interestingly it was the most commonly occurring code with 57 stories relating to it, equating to 38% of the total. Italy's second and third most commonly occurring codes did refer to relationships with other people – '*relating to others and valuing diversity*' (55 stories, 37%) and '*sense of belonging*' to the community (48 stories, 32%). However, there is a sense that these codes reflect a slightly different aspect of relating to others with an appreciation of the wider community and diversity, which perhaps reflects the age of the respondents.

Another final code which was distinct to Italy, which again may reflect the age of the participants in the projects, was '*participation in innovation and change*' (30 stories, 20%), since young people were encouraged to create innovative and autonomous projects (see Chapter 5). It is notable that no other country has any code (either initial or final) referring to innovation; this is something that other countries could perhaps learn from the Italian findings. Although Italian youth work focused on older young people, their innovative practices could no doubt be applied to other ages and contexts.

'Impressions' of youth work's similarity

It would have been easy to have chosen organisations which were similar, but actually this would have given the wrong impression, suggesting that youth work was more coherent across the continent of Europe than it actually is. However, despite the evident differences, there are also some striking similarities. The first impressions of many of the research participants involved in the project was how comparable the approaches to youth work were across England, Finland, Estonia and France, although it was less clear how similar Italy was, as that was the only country that was not visited (and as we have seen, both the age range and the aims of these projects appeared to have some distinct differences). We are not suggesting that youth workers are all the same in these different countries, but the similarities were noticeable, if perhaps difficult to quantify. A common feature appeared to be the importance of the creation of informal spaces which allowed young people to both be themselves and express themselves, exemplified by Finland's final code of '*cool atmosphere*' and referred to explicitly by one of the Italian young people as the '*buzz*' of the youth centre.

A comparison of codes

As mentioned previously in the introduction to coding, it is acknowledged that the coding process is inevitably reductionist, and there is therefore a possibility that the depth and richness of the data, as well as the subtle differences, can be overridden in attempts to make sense of the data and find commonality. Given these concerns, there was some reluctance to attempt an overall comparison of final country codes. However a comparison of the final codes was undertaken at a project meeting in March 2018 – not least because there were some very obvious similarities, such as the final codes '*friendship*' and '*confidence*' appearing in three country's final codes.

First, it should be reiterated that the initial individual country coding was undertaken in isolation and the findings were only shared when the final codes had been produced. Therefore, an authentic comparison was possible. The process of inter-country comparison involved the project lead providing a group of five coordinators with a separate copy of each of the thirty-four final country codes decoupled from their countries of origin. The task was far from simple, and the initial process of linking and un-linking codes took a considerable length of time, although straightaway there were some very obvious similarities – for example, England, Estonia and Finland all had final codes related to '*friendship*', and France, England and Estonia each had a final code of '*confidence*'. Some clarification on the meanings of the final codes was sought by referring back to the initial codes that had been used to construct them, to ensure that the full meaning of the code was understood. While this occasionally identified the origin of the final code, it did not distract from the process of searching for commonality.

Once agreement had been reached on the grouping of the final codes the task of naming them was attempted, and this proved even more difficult (see discussion below). However, eventually a list of five overarching themes was produced. The codes were then reacquainted with their country of origin. The resulting overarching themes are shown in Table 13.4 (overleaf).

Final country codes	Overarching theme
New friends (Estonia)	Relating to others
Enhancing friendships (England)	
Finding new friends (Finland)	
Sense of belonging to the community (Italy)	
Enhancing sense of group belonging and participation (France)	
Relating with others and valuing diversity (Italy)	
Creating bonds (France)	
Enhancing self-confidence (France)	Sense of self
Increased self-confidence (Estonia)	
Increasing confidence (England)	
Experiencing positive emotions (France)	
Improved sense of wellbeing (England)	
Self-determination (Italy)	
Increasing resilience (England)	
Encountering an empathic youth worker (Finland)	Creating places and spaces for young people
Cool atmosphere (Finland)	
Mutuality (England)	
Development of relationships with adults (Estonia)	
Filling the gaps (Finland)	Social inclusion
Developing autonomy (France)	
Participation in innovation and change (Italy)	
Reducing risky behaviours (England)	
Development of pro-social behaviour (Estonia)	
Increased interest in learning (Estonia)	
Improvement in job chances (Italy)	
Increased sense of responsibility (Estonia)	Experiential learning
Development or discovery of new personal skills (Italy)	
Discovering activities or new people (France)	
Diversity of youth work arenas (Finland)	
Broadening of the spectrum of experiences (Estonia)	
Acquiring and transferring skills or abilities (France)	
Increasing awareness (France)	
Improvement in social and communication skills (Estonia)	
Learning opportunity (Finland)	

Table 13.4 Table of overarching themes and associated final country codes

Relating to others

A number of the initial and final codes allude both implicitly and explicitly to young people's relationships with others. It is of note that of the seven final codes identified within this theme, there was at least one from each of the five countries. Three of the final codes (from Estonia, Finland and England) explicitly referred to friends and friendship groups. However, references were also made to other adults, youth workers and to members of the wider community. In a sense the French effectively summarise this as '*creating bonds*' – but the process is the creation of both '*bonding capital and bridging capital*' (Putman, 2000). That is, it strengthens existing commonality but also develops bridging capital, enabling us to 'connect with others unlike ourselves' (Putman, 2000: 411). This is explicitly summarised by the Italian final code '*relating to others and valuing diversity*'.

Sense of self

A number of codes referred to changes felt by individuals 'in themselves'. A common feature of this was increased confidence. This was independently identified as a final code within the French, English and Estonian stories. Both France and England also found that more girls than boys expressed a growth in confidence. This theme – sense of self – also included references to improvements in wellbeing, resilience, self-determination and experiencing positive emotions. This theme was less representative of the five countries, as Finland did not have a final code located within this theme and Engalnd had three codes placed under the theme 'sense of self"– although closer analysis of the English final code '*resilience*' indicated that it might well be have been better placed in '*social inclusion*', as its initial codes included '*increased engagement with specialist services*' and '*improved engagement with education/employment*'.[10]

Creating places and spaces for young people

This was the smallest theme with four final codes, two of which originated from Finland and one each from England and Estonia. During the coding process, initially one final code – '*cool atmosphere*' – was placed on its own, as it seemed to communicate something quite distinct. However, analysis of this final code and an exploration of its initial codes suggested links to the relationships that youth workers create within young people's spaces and places. So the code was concerned with buildings and places, but it was also concerned with the relational spaces contained within them. For example, the final code '*cool atmosphere*' is not only informed by the initial code '*relaxed, warm and safe place to meet others'* but also by '*to be accepted as oneself*'. In the latter code the role of the youth worker is essential in making the young people feel accepted and in ensuring that young people accept each other.

Links were then made to other final codes which communicate the role of the youth worker in this process, such as English final code '*mutuality*', which is based in part on the initial code '*being included*'. The Estonian code '*development of relationships with adults*' also refers to '*youth worker support*'. Although the French code '*experiencing positive emotions*' was not placed in this category, it includes the initial code '*positive memories and experiences*', and the stories refer specifically to '*good memories at the youth centre*' so it may well have been placed here[11].

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[10] Because the code resilience was placed in '*sense of self*' in the initial comparison process it remained there.

[11] The French code '*experiencing positive emotions*' was placed in '*sense of self*' in the initial comparison process so it remained there.

Social inclusion

This code contained distinct and tangible outcomes related to specific changes the young people had made in their lives as a result of youth work. These included finding employment and returning to school, as well as being able to act more autonomously. This theme also included features which might be loosely referred to as young people's socialisation or meeting socially accepted standards of behaviour, such as England's final code '*reducing risky behaviours*' and Estonia's '*development of pro-social behaviour*'. Each of the five countries had final codes which were placed under this theme.

It ws very difficult to find a title for this group of final codes. None of the coordinators particularly liked the title '*social inclusion*', but it was felt that this was the '*least unpalatable*'. The title was chosen as an umbrella term for the variety of changes young people had made in their lives which were linked in some way to wider society or society's expectations. It was noted that many of the final codes under this theme come under the auspices of European policy objectives which aim to 'reduce the social exclusion of young people, addressing the interlinkages between e.g. young people's education and employment and their social inclusion' (European Council, 2009 311/ 8).

Experiential learning

This was the final code that was produced, and in some ways it formed a 'catch-all' for the remaining codes which appeared to relate to the variety of experiences, activities and learning that youth work offers young people. It is the largest theme, encompassing a total of nine final codes from four of the five countries (the exception was England). France and Estonia had the most codes in this category, both with three, Finland had two and Italy one. The themes range from acquiring new skills to being able to take part in new activities, as well as the Estonian code '*broadening the spectrum of experiences*', which a number of coordinators felt articulated many of their young people's stories too. For the English coordinators it appeared a little strange that no English code appeared in this category, given the importance of experiential learning in youth work in both Enland and the wider UK (Jeffs & Smith, 2005, Ord, 2008). Possible explanations of this include the increasing emphasis on youth workers to translate the experiences of young people into tangible outcomes – hence the appearance of the English codes in both '*sense of self*' and '*social inclusion*'. Another explanation may well be the drastic reduction in resources available to youth organisations in the UK post austerity, and so the scope for providing a wide range of activities and experiences has been significantly reduced.

'Complexity and ambiguity'

There is a sense of ambiguity underlying this process of comparison and in the production of these overarching themes which can sound contradictory. That is, it is both illuminating and offers meaningful insights, and at the same time it is perhaps a little arbitrary and caution is required. Both of these are true. Readers who have an intolerance of ambiguity will find this situation difficult to comprehend, but complexity and ambiguity are at the heart of understanding youth work in Europe.

The production of overarching themes is illuminating in the way it has enabled the creation of five distinct categories of outcomes for young people which summarise their experience

of youth work. Through the process of separating final codes and in creating links between others, the coding process and the production of overarching themes has highlighted distinct aspects of these outcomes. However, they should not be reified. Despite the difficult and painstaking process of producing the overarching themes, as well as the genuineness with which this process was engaged in, if it was undertaken again by another group of people it may well produce different results.

One might also argue that certain codes could be situated under different overarching themes. For example, the French code '*developing autonomy*' could be equally grouped with the Italian code '*self-determination*', and the French code '*discovering activities or new people*' could equally have been placed under the theme of '*relating to others*' rather than '*experiential learning*'. Indeed, there were some suggestions that the process misrepresented certain country's data – for example, in the absence of Italy from the final code '*creation of spaces and places*' and the absence of England from '*experiential learning*'. Importantly, it also tends to ignore the interrelated nature of the process of youth work – how the various aspects highlighted by different codes and themes work together, as well as how young people's outcomes emerge from this interrelationship between the spaces, places and activities, and within the context of the relationships that are built between both youth workers and young people and among the young people themselves. Ideally none of the initial codes, final codes, or overarching themes would be seen in isolation. They are part of a holistic process. However, this comparison, even if it is perhaps too reductive, does begin to shed some light on some of the key outcomes of youth work for young people. At the very least it begins to ask some questions about what may be distinctive about youth work in particular country contexts.

Conclusion

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be stated is that European youth work is a diverse phenomenon which varies within countries, between countries, and across Europe as a whole. This was a foundational premise of this study, and was a point made at the outset (in Chapter 1) which argued that this diversity is not always fully appreciated within European youth work policy. It would have been misleading to have chosen countries which were overtly similar.

The most striking difference between the countries in this study was the age of young people that come under the auspices of youth work – from the age of 7 in Estonia up to 35 in Italy. Inevitably the kinds of outcomes identified by the young people involved at those ages will differ. In Estonia the focus tended to be on what might be regarded as developmental tasks such as making friendships, building confidence and developing pro-social behaviour, where as in Italy there was more of a focus on belonging to the community and finding a job.

Other differences include the extent to which youth work is professionalised and has formal recognition through qualification frameworks, and how far it is supported by specific youth work policies. Finland and Estonia are notable for their formal recognition of youth work, whereas Italy and France this is limited. England (as well as the wider UK) is somewhere in between; although it has formal qualification frameworks and national occupational standards for youth work, at the current time it does not have the same support through national

policy. What follows from this formal recognition is the extent to which youth work is resourced in the different contexts. Needless to say, Finland and Estonia are considerably better resourced than both England and Italy. France is somewhat different as it has a network of funding streams through the work of *animateurs*, often in the '*Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture*' (MJCs) and through *education spécialisée* (but it does not have specific fuding for youth work)

Other more subtle differences emerged within this study, such as the role and purpose of leisure activities and the extent to which youth work is conceived of as being explicitly educational. Young people in Finland, Estonia and France all identified the opportunity to take part in activities as being of significance to them, although youth work does not tend to see itself as the provider of purely leisure-based activities.

The study also revealed the tension within youth work practice, between autonomy and freedom on the one hand and protection and control on the other. Different country contexts appeared to approach this situation differently, and it can often appear as a dilemma (Barber, 2007). In England, for example, the focus was on safeguarding young people and the primacy of their health and safety, which emphasised the minimisation of risk. Other countries such as Finland and France appeared much more liberal and were prepared to delegate authority to young people's ability to make decisions, and to place a greater 'trust' in both the practitioners and the setting. Finally, the extent to which practice emphasised the individual was evident, with perhaps France and England at the two extremes – England emphasising one-to-one relationships and France the importance of the collective.

Despite this diversity, however, there were some remarkable similarities, not least that the final codes of '*friendship*' and '*confidence*' appeared in three of the five country's lists of final codes. The process of producing overarching themes also enabled some clear messages to be articulated about what young people identify as the benefits of youth work, enabling them to:

- '*relate to others*', including their peers and other adults;
- develop a '*sense of self*', in particular to gain in confidence;
- improve their transition both through school and into employment, as well as resolve difficulties in their lives, there by promoting '*social inclusion*';
- broaden their spectrum of experience, through a variety of activities and '*experiential learning*' opportunities.

All of this is premised on the '*creation of places and spaces for young people*', where they feel ownership and feel valued for who they are

However, these outcomes cannot be seen in isolation, either from each other or from the process that brings them about. Youth work is multi-layered, and the different aspects interlink to create a holistic educational experience. Such factors as the broadening of experiences, discovering new activities and the structuring of informal time are important, but so is the fact that young people participate on a voluntary basis – it is open access, open to all. It is also important that young people help create the space, so that it is important and meaningful to them and they can express themselves within it. The role of the youth worker is also important as are the relationships they build, as well as the fact that the youth workers are

not overly concerned about problem solving. The practice 'starts where young people are at' (Davies, 2015).

Despite the diversity of the settings both within and across countries in this study, these features of practice were common to all fifteen settings, and it is upon them that the young people's outcomes are premised. Aspects of youth work – processes or outcomes – cannot be seen in isolation. Indeed, one of the problems of some contemporary youth work policy is that it disconnects outcomes related to improvements in social inclusion, such as employability or educational success, from the circumstances which brought them about. Youth work outcomes emerge out of a dynamic practice which facilitates the creation of young people's spaces and places, within which young people are enabled to take control of their lives, develop autonomy and bring about change. Any given intervention whose top priority is problem-solving and where young people are not totally free to participate is not youth work, and is unlikely to bring about the kinds of outcomes identified by young people in this study.

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Appendix:
Reflections on the Transformative Evaluation Methodology

By Susan Cooper

The Transformative Evaluation (TE) methodology was designed specifically for youth work settings. It engages a range of people in identifying and evaluating the impact of youth work on the lives of young people through dialogue between the 'evaluators' and young people, youth workers and stakeholders. The methodology is informed by three aspects – the transformative paradigm, appreciative inquiry and participatory evaluation – and aims to enhance learning as well as evaluate practice (see Chapter 7 for a full explanation of the methodology).

This project provided the opportunity to reflect on the application of the methodology in a range of different contexts in the five European countries. The TE methodology, over the three cycles during the year-long project, produced 715 stories of change generated by young people. This chapter reflects on feedback from the researchers and youth workers to assess the utility and identify the challenges of the methodology. It concludes with a summary of various actions and recommendations from across these contexts.

Utility

Following training in the use of the methodology at the first Transnational Learning Activity[1] in June 2016, the researchers translated the materials and youth workers provided training to their teams. All the country groups reported that they were able to implement the methodology with only minimal adaptation. In the main, any reported changes to implementation referred to language use. This supports the view that the methodology can be applied in a variety of contexts. The methodology is uncomplicated, and thus accessible and useful to youth workers regardless of whether they are working in a youth centre in Estonia, an online youth project in Finland or a street-based youth work project in France.

It is important to note that while the process itself is uncomplicated, it does have some challenges, particularly in the analysis stage where youth workers come together to discuss the stories. Story generation with young people also requires a high level of interpersonal and communication skills. While it may be assumed that youth workers have good communication skills, these may need to be adapted to ensure the methodology is implemented successfully. Using the methodology can also enable these skills to be further developed.

Enhancing the youth work relationship

A key benefit of TE is its ability to enhance youth work relationships. Generating stories of change facilitates meaningful conversations between youth workers and young people; it involves a process of 'looking back' and 'looking forward' together to create a mutual understanding of change and the contributing factors that enabled it. In the French context, where the focus is on the collective rather than the individual, the process created new spaces for one-to-one dialogue with young people:

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[1] Transnational learning Activities are Erasmus-funded events that last a minimum of five days and are utilised for the implementation of projects.

> *'The most useful element of the TE methodology for us is the different ways of meeting and exchanging with the young people. Usually, in our organisation the youth worker works with the group, we have a collective approach of youth working.'* (French youth worker)

The Estonian group identified that the story generation process had given youth workers a deeper insight into the 'personal' world of young people:

> *'It certainly helped to create better contact with young people (creating a trusting relationship). In addition, it provided an easy opportunity for young people and youth workers to discuss youth work content and its outcomes. To give young people feedback about the goals of youth work.'* (Estonian youth worker)

The generation of stories of change provides youth workers with authentic feedback from young people about how their practice has impacted on their lives. Hearing this directly from young people has a morale-boosting effect, as shown in the following extract:

> *'It has also boosted morale and given us a lift to know that so many young people feel that we have helped them make significant changes in their lives.'* (English youth worker)

This effect was also reported by the French group, who identified that the increased awareness and visibility of youth work outcomes can be a positive factor in a context where youth work occupations are poorly valued.

Learning through collective reflection

The collaborative nature of the transformative evaluation methodology provides spaces to explore the various (and sometimes conflicting) conceptualisations of the value and quality of youth work and the desired outcomes held by practitioners, organisational leaders, funders, policy makers and young people. Working towards a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the service being delivered through collective dialogues reflecting on 'what is working' creates an opportunity and an environment to improve and develop practice (Cooper, 2018; Bushe, 2010; Patton, 2002).

Feedback from Estonia and France identifies the benefits for young people with regard to engaging in reflection during story generation. The French group noted that young people develop a self-awareness of previously unnoticed changes, supporting the argument that the process of generating a story in itself provides a learning opportunity for young people (Cooper, 2013). The Estonia group reported that the methodology provided a good mechanism to enable young people to reflect on and construct the role of a youth centre in their lives. The methodology helped young people to become more open about themselves and more knowledgeable about the changes that had taken place for them as a result of going to the youth centre.

The opportunity for youth workers to engage in collective reflection occurs during stage 2 of the methodology. At this point, the youth workers analyse the young people's stories by

reviewing the content, sorting them into domains based on what the stories are about, labelling the domains and selecting one story from each domain to be sent to the stakeholder groups. In all five country groups the youth workers highlighted the opportunity to come together to reflect on the outcomes of their work as the most useful aspect of the methodology:

> *'The workers were able to stand back from their professional practice and analyse the impact of their action on the young people.'* (French youth worker)

> *'The most useful element was the reflective dialogue with other youth workers.'* (Estonia youth worker)

> *'The most useful aspect was getting staff from all levels and different centres to reflect on their impact, and the different methods they use to enable change.'* (English youth worker)

The Italian group reported that collective reflective dialogue and the analysis of the content of the stories helped to develop their understanding of how youth centres worked to generate outcomes and changes in the lives of young people. It also enabled them to identify some of the mechanisms and causal links that generated positive change. The Finnish youth workers reported that many 'intensive discussions' about youth work had taken place during the project. Importantly, the outcomes of this process of collective reflection was seen as having a 'real' impact; for example, the Italian group reported that reflection about the 'process' of youth work helped the youth workers to better understand how they can be effective in their practice. Opportunities for reflection have all but disappeared in many contexts (Cooper, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Otteson, 2007) and as noted in the French report, team meetings often tend to focus on projects, with discussion about young people losing out to technical considerations about schedules or logistics. The collective reflective aspect of the TE methodology provides the space to work towards a common understanding of context-specific practice, informed by young people's voices. These spaces provide rich learning opportunities that lead to practice improvement, as shown in the following extract:

> *We had very experienced staff working alongside fairly new two-night-a-week part-timers, who were clearly not as robust in their statements or understanding of the wider impact of youth work, so it was a real-life exploration and induction to the power of youth work straight from young people's voices, but also crucially the peer group were able to unpick what it is that they actually do in the work that enables such changes – very powerful.'* (English youth worker)

Raising awareness of the impact of youth work

The scope of the methodology for raising awareness beyond the profession is raised in three of the five country groups. The Estonia group talked about this as a 'potential' rather than an actual benefit, suggesting that creating a mechanism to bring together youth workers, stakeholders and young people to share experiences would serve to raise awareness of young people's learning and the youth work process that facilitates this. The French group noted that TE can raise awareness of the outcomes of youth work and its methods, but suggested that this can only happen if the organisations manage to involve stakeholders that are remote

from their activities. The English group was the only one to report that they were specifically using the stories to inform others about the scope and impact of their work. For example:

> *'We have done the coding on the stories and I have set up dashboards which map the stories to the themes and topics discussed so we can find and share stories among colleagues really quickly and use them to inform our partners about the scope and impact of our work.'* (English youth worker)

Challenges

While the transformative evaluation methodology has many and significant benefits in terms of improving our understanding of youth work outcomes and the processes through which these are achieved, it is not without its challenges. As stated earlier, the methodology is uncomplicated, but that does not equate to being 'easy' to implement. The following challenges are worthy of further consideration, although they were not encountered consistently across all contexts.

Training

The Estonian group reported that insufficient training had been their biggest challenge:

> *'The training courses for the method should have been given more emphasis in the beginning. We organised information days and distributed translated training materials. It seemed very simple and understandable to everyone at the beginning. Later, it turned out that there was a need to clarify further some of the details or different stages of the methodology.'* (Estonian researcher)

It became evident during the collection of stories and the group discussions in the first cycle that not all workers had fully understood the process. This was remedied by offering further clarification. A possible explanation for this situation may be that those trained in the methodology and leading the implementation of the project in Estonia were 'umbrella organisations', and so the methodology had to be transmitted from them to the youth organisations – a step that was absent in the other projects. However, this example provides a useful reminder of the value of and need for sufficient preparation in participatory evaluation. There can be a tendency to 'rush' preparation in order to proceed with the task. It could also be assumed that because the methodology is aligned with youth work practice the youth workers are 'experts', requiring little support and guidance. Importantly, the TE methodology supports 'learning on the job', and as such those involved develop their understanding and skills as they use them. Thus, any shortcomings are generally picked up after the first cycle of evaluation.

Time

Four of the five country groups identified time constraints as a challenge. Youth workers expressed difficulties in finding:

- time to engage young people in reflective conversations to generate stories, particularly in contexts where the work is group-focused;

- time to identify and engage stakeholders;
- time to come together for the analysis stage (stage 2) of the methodology, particularly where workers were spread geographically.

Time is a resource that is managed like any other resource. The use of 'time' is political, and the question of how time is spent is not always within the control of the practitioner. Evaluation is often perceived as a 'one-off' activity, relegated to the end of a project or programme, and in many cases it is not budgeted for. In some contexts youth workers, as with many other social professionals, are experiencing time-poverty as reduced resources have shifted emphasis to direct delivery. When workloads are high, time spent engaging in reflection (with young people or with peers) can be seen as a luxury, yet as Thompson and Pascal rightly point out, 'the busier we are, the more reflective we need to be' (2012: 320). Participatory evaluation can be considered costly compared to other forms of evaluation, particularly in regards to time, yet the benefits are far more wide-ranging than traditional evaluation approaches. Organisational commitment and a valuing of evaluation as a tool for learning and improving practice is necessary to ensure these benefits are gained.

Stakeholder engagement

Involving stakeholders also requires time and puts additional demands on the 'evaluator'. It is therefore essential to both understand as well as communicate the purpose of their involvement and explain the remit for their engagement (Gujit, 2014). The aim of stakeholder engagement in TE is threefold: to inform, to educate, and to influence. The guidance provided to the country groups suggested that each youth work project should recruit between three and five members who met some or all of the following criteria: people who have a stake but who are not directly involved in the delivery; people who the organisation wanted to know more about their project; people who had local influence, perhaps funders; and people who are able to commit to the process.

The French group posed the question of whether the membership of a stakeholder group should be consistent throughout, and this is worthy of consideration. Arguably, if there is continuity across the cycles, relationships with stakeholders are developed at a deeper level, learning is enhanced through engagement over time as changes are observed, and thus the potential to influence is enhanced. Conversely, it could be argued that engaging different stakeholders for each cycle widens the circle of stakeholders that are familiar with the organisation's activities. However, this option would require more time in relation to recruitment and training.

Ultimately this is an issue of depth versus breadth. The communication conduit between youth workers and stakeholders is an important part of the methodology as it supports two-way learning. As a result the stakeholders have the potential to develop a deeper appreciation of both the impact of youth work and the youth work process. The youth workers can also develop an understanding of what it is that stakeholders value. Continuity of membership will enhance this depth of learning, whereas a changing membership will limit this. On the contrary, utilising a range of stakeholders would create a vehicle for wider dissemination of a project's activity. The TE methodology is flexible and designed to be shaped by those who use it as they learn from its use; any decision in relation to stakeholder engagement needs to be informed by a consideration of the purpose of engagement.

Story generation

Two aspects of story generation were raised as challenges. The first relates to young people's capacity to act as storytellers, and the second to the role of youth workers in story generation. Storytelling as a means of generating evaluation data has grown in popularity, driven by a desire to collect more authentic information about complex interventions (Cooper, 2018; Rooney, Lawlor & Rohan, 2016; Shabbar, 2015). It can be particularly useful in identifying unanticipated outcomes. Storytelling can be seen as a means of sense-making for both the storyteller and the listener, involving the teller looking back (reflecting) and looking forward (imagining alternatives)[2]. This requires a level of skill in both the teller and the listener. Evidently this method of data generation may not necessarily be accessible to all young people; for a number of reasons they may not be 'ready'. For example, feedback from the Estonian youth workers identified a number of features that they found supported young people to act as storytellers. These included young people's ability to talk about their thoughts and feelings as well as analyse their experiences. They also identified the importance of having a good relationship with a youth worker and the need for regular attendance at a youth centre. Importantly, they reported that the method is well-suited to engage young people who may be timid or shy, the intimacy of the process providing a 'safe' engagement space. This insight is useful, as it may be the case that young people are generally selected because they project a confident nature.

The role of the youth worker in story generation is an important one, in that enabling young people to 'make sense' of their experiences supports their learning. Through facilitative dialogue, active listening and probing questioning, young people create their realities through storytelling. However, the role of 'story generator' also presents youth workers with a degree of challenge. As well as making decisions about which young people to select to tell their story, there is a need to consider how the youth worker's influence may affect the story the young person is able or willing to tell. The subjective nature of the methodology requires full attention to be paid to minimising 'evaluator' influence during the story generation. Developing a clear understanding of how this is done and articulating this to the external audience will enable youth workers, and organisations, to alleviate any scepticism about the evaluation findings.

Transformative evaluation was designed to engage youth workers as evaluators of their own practice, and in all but one of the youth projects this is how it was implemented. In one project in Italy the methodology was adapted to engage an external expert with a youth work background to generate the stories. This youth centre had experienced a recent change in the management group and the youth work staff, and some of the young people at the centre were dealing with difficulties associated this change. The managers of the organisation took a mediation role to facilitate the relationship between the external expert and the young people. They reported that enabling the young people to tell their stories to a 'neutral' external professional encouraged them to talk about problems and difficulties related to the youth workers in the centre. While a key driver in the design of the TE methodology was practitioner engagement, this useful example demonstrates the flexibility of the process and its potential wider use, particularly in contexts where relationships between youth workers and young people are strained.

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[2] Although a lot of the stories appear to be concerned with what has happened retrospectively, the reflective conversations also provide the opportunity to ask the young person how the identified change will enable them to do things differently in the future.

Individual, group and community based change?

A criticism of the methodology surfaced early in the project, when during the training phase both the French and Finnish groups made the case for the generation of group-based stories. An interesting debate ensued which considered the possibility that the existing approach restricted the types of stories being generated. For example, the Finns shared an example of how a group of young people became concerned with how they were treated while travelling on public transport in a large city in southern Finland, and instigated a campaign to smile at bus drivers which significantly improved relations. It is acknowledged that with the question "What is the most significant change for you?" there is perhaps an implicit emphasis on the 'intra' rather than the 'inter' (changes within an individual rather than between individuals). As such, the methodology could be at risk of conforming to the dominant individualised discourse of youth work in the UK (Smith, 2003) which has been apparent since Transforming Youth Work (DfES, 2002). With concerns to limit the number of variables associated within the data and ease the comparison process, it was decided to keep the original focus, but with the compromise that the question could be extended to ask: "What was the most significant change for you, your friends or your community?"

The analysis process

Stage 2 of the methodology involved the youth workers in a process of analysing the stories with other youth workers, through collective reflective dialogue. The methodology requires youth workers to sort the stories into domains based on their content, to label those domains, and to select one story from each domain to be sent to the stakeholder groups. The identification of emergent domain names facilitates the youth workers to critically and consciously 'name' their practice and practice outcomes. Through critical reflection, youth workers can 'unpick' and potentially reclaim the youth work discourse.

This process works best when there is full participation, when dissenting views are freely expressed, and when workers engage in critical questioning of one another. The skilful facilitation necessary to establish a group environment where these things can happen was noted by the French and English groups. Power relations within the groups need to be attended to if less experienced workers are to feel able to speak out and competing values or different understandings of youth work are to be expressed and explored. Engaging in collective reflective dialogue may be a new experience for some youth workers; it may be experienced as an uncomfortable or even unsafe space if it is not facilitated well. Taking the time to establish the 'ground rules' and conducting an ongoing review of the group process (stage 4 of the methodology) will create a learning space that is rich and rewarding.

An important point worthy of further consideration was raised in the French report in relation to employment issues in the youth work sector. The size and the stability of the youth work teams have implications for the effectiveness of the methodology. In small teams the collective analysis process as outlined above may be less useful because there are fewer voices and less debate, and consequently the learning potential may be reduced. Job insecurity and staff turnover may also reduce the incentive to engage in the first place.

What next?

All five country groups have indicated that they have continued to use the transformative evaluation methodology, or that they intend to do so. The methodology is designed to be adapted by those who use it, taking account of the learning gained from its use. This section provides an overview of what each group is either doing or planning to do.

Estonia

At a local level, one region has already continued with the methodology, and several youth centres and youth workers who participated in the piloting stages are also planning to continue. Plans are in place to adopt TE at a national level once the methodology has been adapted to the Estonian context. An analysis of the specifics of youth work in Estonia will inform any adaptations.

Actions and recommendations

- National level guidance is required to achieve a common understanding of the goals and methods of TE.

- Training needs be carried out for a more effective implementation of the method, including story generation training and further guidance for selecting young people.

- The analysis process will be completed at national level.

- Seminars will be used to facilitate the exchange of experiences between youth workers, stakeholder group members and young people, in order to raise awareness of young peoples' learning experiences and share youth workers' and stakeholders' views on the youth work process.

Finland

Locally, projects reported that they found the methodology so useful that they wanted to find a way to continue this more broadly. Based on the initiatives of the youth workers from projects A and B, the plan is to integrate TE into the wider organisation in the first instance. A Finnish modification is currently being drafted ahead of a meeting with evaluation and indicator experts and the head of the organisation to discuss how this model would fit in the with the organisation's evaluation and staff development methods and plans. If this is favourable, a pilot will be launched during the period from autumn 2018 and spring 2019. The further vision is that if successful, the methodology will gradually spread through the Kanuuna[3] network to the rest of the municipalities.

Actions and recommendations

If a national application is supported, TE will be adapted based on following principles:

- The main rationale for the use of the methodology is *developing youth work* rather than *showing its impact*.

- The methodology is not used as an alternative to existing evaluation methods but as complementary to and linked with them.

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[3] Kanuuna network is a network of youth services in the twenty-eight largest cities in Finland.

- The unit of storytelling can also be a youth group.

- In addition to successful narratives, the stories can cover negative or unfortunate experiences.[4]

- In analysing and reflecting the stories it is acknowledged that the discussions between the youth workers may not achieve a consensus, but the process of decision making will be democratic.

- The overall process of analysis of the stories will be simplified.

- The analysis of stories will be used as means of strategic management in the organisation, providing a key role for managers and political decision makers to guide youth work through their interpretation of the stories.

- Content analysis (coding key words and expressions) of the entire stories will be used as a means of describing the process leading to significant changes.

France
Locally one project confirmed that they would continue using the methodology to demonstrate the value of their impact to partners, but for specific projects rather than the organisation as a whole. The youth worker also reported that he had presented the method to the National Federation of the MJC,[5] who had expressed interest. The researchers highlighted the usefulness of the method as a tool to improve and transform practice. However, with regard to its efficacy for promoting youth work by demonstrating its impact, they saw this as more limited, arguing that there is strong resistance in France to evaluation approaches informed by appreciative inquiry as a means to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth work to funders and decision makers. It was felt that criticisms which question the credibility of such approaches would need to be addressed before implementation would be viable. There are no plans for national implementation.

Actions and recommendations
- The methodology could be adapted to enable youth workers, as well as stakeholders, to select the most significant change story in each cycle to see if there is agreement between them. This comparison could provide fruitful discussion.

England
All projects are committed to continuing their use of TE, and have already engaged in disseminating the methodology to local and regional youth centres. One worker has presented the methodology at a national level, and reported that the Centre for Youth Impact expressed interested. There are no plans for national implementation at this stage.

Actions and recommendations
- The methodology will be shared at a local and regional level.

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[4] Although interesting, it should be noted that this runs counter to the 'appreciative inquiry' basis of the methodology – a strengths-based approach – and the implications of this need to be considered in other aspects of the methodology if 'negative experiences' are incorporated.

[5] *Maisons de Jeune et de la Culture* (MJCs) are very similar to youth centres.

- A comparative study is currently being completed in Scotland to enable a broader picture of the impact of youth work in the UK.

Italy

The effectiveness of TE as a learning tool for the youth workers and its adaptability to the peculiarity of the context were appreciated by the youth centre staff (managers and youth workers) and by staff of the regional youth service. All the participating youth projects have expressed an interest to further reflect on the collected stories, and to use them as a means to communicate the impact of their own work. Moreover, the need to equip the youth centres with a self-evaluation tool has been shared with the regional youth service. In this case, specific interest has been expressed in possible triangulation among TE as a goal-free evaluation tool and the use of indicators of specific change outcomes and processes which could have priority for the each youth centre.

Actions and recommendations
- Youth centres will use the generated stories as a mean to communicate the impact of their work.

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This book is the culmination of an Erasmus + funded project which aimed to independently identify the impact of youth work in the UK (England), Finland, Estonia, Italy and France. It applied a participatory evaluation methodology entitled 'transformative evaluation' which collated young people's own accounts of the impact of youth work on their lives – collecting their stories. Over 700 stories were collected in total over a year long process. The stories were then analysed independently through a process of coding and only then was youth work in each of the five countries compared and contrasted. The findings reveal both the diversity as well as the similarity of youth work in Europe.

Differences include the variety in age ranges across the five countries, where youth begins at 7 in Estonia, but extends to 35 in Italy. Other differences revealed include the differing levels of resources available to youth workers and therefore the variety in opportunities that this creates for young people in the different contexts. Other differences include the extent to which youth work focuses on recreation or education, the variations in youth empowerment, as well as the varying levels of professionalization in youth work across the five countries. Despite these differences there were also some remarkable similarities across the diverse contexts. For example both 'friendship' and 'self-confidence' were identified as final codes in three of the five countries. Another important similarity was the extent to which youth work enabled young people to make positive changes in their lives. Analysis of the stories however reveals that many of these changes are premised upon the creation of a safe space for young people to meet and 'be themselves'.