A Concept Paper for the 5th Seminar on the History of Youth Work and Policy
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AUTONOMY THROUGH DEPENDENCY:
Histories of Cooperation, Conflict and Innovation in Youth Work

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A Framework for Policy Reflections on Youth Work

Over the past six years, youth work professionals across Europe have gathered on four occasions to share the history of their nation's experience with youth work, youth programs, practice methods and policy directions. This paper is intended to lay the groundwork for a 5th History Conference to be held in Helsinki, Finland in June 2014. First, it serves as an overview of the main conversations, insights and questions that emerged from the four earlier convenings. Second, it proposes an organizational framework for the Helsinki Conference that is based on the theme "Autonomy Through Dependency." Last, it proposes a series of Critical Considerations that are ripe for discussion and intended to stimulate new ideas pertinent to the theme of autonomy and dependency.

Establishing the Groundwork: Review of History Conferences since 2008

The 1st history conference in Blankenberge, Belgium in 2008 (Verschelden et al 2009) looked at *the identity of youth work* through various national historic perspectives. Youth work was seen to be constantly constructed in time and between two apparently opposing interests of *emancipation* and *control*. Youth work was about young people, their autonomy, aspirations, problems and living conditions, but it (whether that means youth organizations, public youth services or other varieties of youth work[2]) also operated in a given society with its own problem- and integration-oriented expectations to youth work. The conference explored the ways in which the society exerted its influence on youth through youth work (control) and the ways that youth work tried to cater for the life worlds of the young people (emancipation). It was largely concluded that due to these conflicting pressures, youth work was not able to establish an autonomous space for itself and was felt to be in *identity crises*.

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[2] As Filip Coussée puts it "This includes all the hybrid shapes from recognised youth work in some countries to virtually non-existent youth work, child care, extended schooling, sports and culture, health care or even the Red Cross, military service or fire brigade in other countries."

Youth work appeared to be more about social integration than about societal change. It was suggested that in its efforts to help young people integrate into the existing social order youth work easily became *instrumentalized, formalized* and *pedagogisized.* In a number of direct and indirect ways, a pedagogical youth work intervention became an instrument of the society to see to it that young people are efficiently socialized. As an example the Scouts were seen to use "guidance without direction" to promote political passivity and social dependence. Youth work has developed methods to work with young people which seemingly are objective and good-meaning, but which in the end have an open or hidden agenda to keep young people quiet, passive, dependent and controlled. For example, a Finnish study (Juvonen, 2012) on street work shows that the relationship between a street worker and a young person is not – contrary to what we might think - open, equal or operating on the terms of the young person. Professional street workers have certain status, authority and practices which, subtly used, make the encounter between the two asymmetrical. Formalization and a pedagogical orientation toward youth work works for the society, not necessarily for the young people – or to be more precise it works for the majority, but not for the marginal or dissenting groups.

The 2nd history conference, also in Blankenberge (Coussée et al 2010), explored in more detail the role of youth work between youth/private interests and social interests/public. Youth work is about managing the tension between individual expectations and public interests. The way youth work is defined between the private and the public is also affected by both *professionalism* and *methodization* within youth work. That is, strong professionalization (specialization in this and that method) leads to the elimination of political and pedagogical aspects of youth work (Walter Lorenz 2009). Emphasizing expertise and specialized knowledge leads to understanding youth work as a methodological or technical practice. This is in contrast to those who understand youth work as ethical practice, not as technical practice. This again is a form of *instrumentalization* of youth work which erodes the autonomy of youth work to function freely between the private and the public spheres. In relation to the public sector, youth work professionals become instruments of social policy, using their expertise to make the young people understand what the society wants from them.

The discussion on the identity of youth work cannot be purely introspective. The essence or primary tasks of youth work cannot be understood without reference to the public which includes political concerns and policies, other alliances within the youth field be they researchers, practitioners or policy makers, the state, and the neighboring disciplines and sectors such as social, health, employment and education. One possibility for further research would be to map the development of the identity of youth work through its strategic alliances. What role have the different corners of the Magic Triangle (research, practice and policy) played in constructing the essence of youth work? How have the strategic and administrative alliances of youth work with the school, social affairs, cultural affairs, employment authorities and others modified its identity?

A corollary to the idea that the identity of youth work is inseparable from the development of the public (politics) and the private (the world of youth) is that the identity is constantly under construction. *In this sense there is no fixed ahistorical identity of youth work.* Things appear in the lives of young people which demand or urge youth work to become political (make young people's concerns public), or things may happen in the society (government youth policy programs, youth legislation) which push youth

work to find pedagogical ways to implement the social concerns. Depending on how these actions take shape, the identity of youth work will be accordingly redesigned and reconstructed.

Coussée et al (2010) conclude that the seeming contradiction between emancipation and integration -- or *social forum* and *transit zone* as the authors call it -- is not an either/or question, but a both/and question. At best their relation is dialectic: that is, their internal tension is useful to the reflection of the identity of the entire youth work field.

The 3rd history conference (Ghent, 2010) took place under the Belgium EU-presidency (Coussée et al, 2012). The conference report is a rich collection of views at youth work and youth policy. The dialectic relationship between young people and the society as manifest in youth work was labeled, figuratively, as "youth work as oxymoronic practice" or "youth work as an oxymoronic blend". Youth work can only be understood as a practice which desperately tries to find the right blend between working *with* youth and *for* the society. In a broad historical perspective after WWII the task of youth work was to integrate young people into the existing social order (transit zone). After 1968 it was increasingly agreed that the youth phase is valuable as such and for the independent growth of young people (social forum, youth as an actor of change). In the UK the youth conception was to understand youth as a separate phase of life on which society and youth workers should not impose their educational ideas. The youth worker had the task to link the life-worlds of young people and create a dialogue with the adults (the society). At the same time in Finland legislation made municipal youth structures obligatory and the state heavily sponsored youth organizations and the building of youth centres as young people's own zones. After the recessions of the 1990's in Europe, all this has changed. The task became rather "to monitor, predict and control the individual development of young people" (Coussée et al 2012, 319).

A significant number of historical studies and contemporary research gave the overall impression that youth work tended to assume an integration role and that it was increasingly difficult to maintain autonomy or promote emancipation of youth. In fact, emancipation increasingly appears to take place outside the youth field, in the streets (the occupy movement), on the internet (social media), in the arts (like artivism) and through everyday actions, campaigns and life style choices of young people. The Ghent conference report concludes (idem, 323) that "The only way out seems to be to recognize the oxymoronic nature of youth work". Youth work must keep on reflecting the conflicting pressures from youth and society and keep on finding innovative solutions to retain autonomy. Finally the authors suggest that perhaps the recognition of youth work could be renewed through understanding youth work as *a third socialization environment between the family and the school.* This, in fact, is the 20 year old agenda of the youth structures of international organizations (most notably Council of Europe) to recognize youth work as a non-formal learning context. The agenda has been dominated by the interests of the international youth organizations to legitimate their societal role. Despite these political efforts not much has happened to the recognition of non-formal learning and the youth field still remains 'leisure', 'recreation', 'hobbies' – something secondary to formal education. However, many educationalists agree that formal learning has colonized the learning concept and made the recognition of other learning contexts difficult (Hager & Halliday 2009). Would a history of young people's learning contexts help understand this discrepancy and contribute to better recognition of non-formal learning?

The 4th history conference (Tallinn, Estonia 2011) "enriched and deepened our awareness of the tapestry of ideas and practices that inform work in the space between young people and society" (Williamson & Coussée 2011). This space is unclear and does not provide youth work a solid, recognized identity, perhaps not even a name. For example in Romania there is no such thing as "youth work" or "youth policy". According to Howard Williamson it is only Finland that consistently uses the term youth work. How can we deal with the invisibility of youth work?

The concluding discussion at the conference went in two directions. On the other hand, as the conference continued the work of previous conferences, it identified more tensions within youth work. It also repeated the strategy to critically reflect the tensions, search for new solutions and decipher 'sacred cows'. There might be 'cherished values' (like established forms of youth participation) which may turn into 'sacred cows' as the times are changing. This conversation points to a more thematically focused approach for future history conferences, one that looks at the tensions identified so far. A second conversation took another direction and proposed a next step of mapping what youth work is and where should it go? Is youth work about recreation, individual support or social learning? Is youth work about leisure or integrated youth policy? Is it about transferring values or questioning them?

Helsinki 2014: Autonomy Through Dependency

The previous history conferences identified youth work through its positioning in the space between private (life worlds of youth) and public (society). There is shared understanding that the core identity of youth work must be about capacity to operate between private and public with a sufficient degree of autonomy - but definitely not without links to both private and public - hence the oxymorons (both features present but incompatible) *autonomous dependency* or *dependent autonomy*. This has proven to be a useful framework to understand the pursuit of identity of youth work, or to understand how easily youth work becomes an instrument to the ongoing political concerns.[3] The choice of "Autonomy Through Dependency: Histories of Cooperation, Conflict and Innovation in Youth Work" is intended to open up a space where both seemingly contradictory features of youth work might indeed coexist. The framework should be kept in mind as the conferences are moving towards thematic discussions.

[3] The public conceptualization of youth as a problem is definitely reinforced through the recent discussion of the use of the word "youth" in the Oxford English Dictionary: **"word trends: Youth** was once the ultimate state, envied and romanticized by those who had left it behind, with **youths** themselves celebrated as the possessors of beauty and potential. But that time has passed, with the Oxford English Corpus telling a sorry tale of the state of today's **youth**: *unemployed*, *disaffected*, *nuisance*, and *drunken* are some of the most common modifiers, while almost all of the verbs associated with **youths** are violent or threatening, with *attack*, *smash*, *vandalize*, *intimidate*, and *assault* all scoring highly. And **youths** cannot simply meet—they *congregate*, *gather*, and even *plague*: *intimidating gangs of baseball-capped youths congregating around the newsagents a shopping parade plagued by nuisance youths*. **Teenagers** fare equally badly, commonly being the object of verbs such as *kill*, *stab*, *arrest*, and *molest* and described as *troubled*, *rebellious*, *spotty*, or *pregnant*."
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/youth?q=youth

The strength of the analysis in the history conferences and workshops has been to identify where youth work has run into too deep dependencies with the public (instrumentalization, depolitization, ahistorical youth work, pedagogization, professionalization etc). Less attention has been on youth work's incredibly strong dependency on young people. In defense of young people, youth work can compromise its public support and credibility. It is extremely useful for any youth work at any point of time to be able to critically reflect these dependencies in the effort to find "autonomy with balanced dependencies". In addition there are the questions raised in the 4th conference: What is youth work? Where is youth work going? We are able to identify where youth work goes wrong, but can we identify when it is doing the right things? What is good youth work – in a given socio-historical context? Even if we accept that this is changing and relative to its context, it should be described.

To organize a forum that balances order with the space for wide-ranging conversation and ideas, the following three streams will guide the dialogue and debate at Helsinki:

Histories of Grand Narratives: The Rhetoric and Practice of Collaboration - The youth field sometimes makes a collective assertion about its internal collaboration between research, policy and youth work – the so-called The Magic Triangle. A success story has been the youth organizations and their national and international structures to represent and cater for the interest of young people. They work in close cooperation with the policy makers, sometimes through specific arrangements like 'co-management' (Council of Europe) or 'structured dialogue' (European Union). But how can it be historically understood that other youth field actors like youth research, other youth experts in the life of young people, municipal youth work, others working with young people, youth movements and other non-ngo youth actors have been in the shadows of youth policy or have had a supportive role at the best?

The history of The Magic Triangle and youth participation can also be seen as a history of cooperation and conflict in the youth field. What are the internal and external conflicts within youth research, youth policy and youth work that have held back co-operation between the corners of the Triangle? We know from previous history seminars that youth work has struggled with its identity. Sometimes the tensions have resulted from the orientation of youth work to youth and the society. There has been internal debates about the proper pedagogical approach, about the proper working methods and about the proper target groups. What have been the effects of these internal tensions and conflicts to the capacity of youth work to be a strong actor of the Triangle? The same applies to youth research, which also has an obscure identity. It is not a recognized academic discipline. Many researchers who study youth defy being called 'a youth researcher'. Keith Roe, a well-known Nordic 'youth researcher' started his key note speech to the 2nd Nordic Youth Research Symposium saying: "I do not regard myself, or wish to be regarded, as a youth researcher" (Ehrnrooth & Siurala 1991, 14). Academics who study youth are split to a spectrum of disciplines and research fields with very little common elements. Typically, youth are very differently conceptualized and studied in, for example sociology and social and health studies. How has the indistinct identity and internal tensions of research on youth affected their role in the Triangle?

As another example, when and how was the legitimation of youth and youth organizations as the sole sources of knowledge, representation and method in youth work constructed? What was the role and

the resulting recognition and mandate of other youth field actors like youth research, non-organized youth, non-NGO youth workers, adult organizations, youth experts in other fields? What kinds of youth structures were established on the credo "there are no better experts on youth than young people themselves"? How did these structures shape the approaches, methods and the identity of youth work and youth policy? What kinds of tensions were created between collaborative relations (within the Magic Triangle)? How do the historically defined roles, mandates and power positions of the corners of the triangle meet the current youth policy challenges? Is it possible to imagine alternative histories and futures? How authentic is the triangle?

The Magic Triangle is one Grand Narrative of the youth field. Another Grand Narrative is integrated youth policies. A historical approach should look at how and why the concept of integrated youth policies was originally initiated. What was the role of youth work and the different actors of the youth field in the birth and propagation of this idea? What were the reasons for their success or failure of implementation? Are the shortcomings linked to the isolation of youth work from more mainstream youth provision and interventions in the lives of young people? Do we have successful examples of integrated youth policies? What are their success factors? How has this co-operation affected the image, approaches, working methods, resources, dependencies and the autonomy of youth work? To what extent have the alliances been a conscious policy of youth work, something imposed on youth work or simply a result of unintended succession of events?

Histories of Existence: Recognition or Invisibility through Cooperation - The history seminar also looks at different stories and experiences of cooperation, some successful and others disappointing failures. The youth field is often a relatively small field. Within a public sector it constitutes 0.5% of the municipal budget at the most. In small and rural municipalities the public youth service is either very small or nonexistent, often with very few youth organizations. Youth field actors and services struggle with their existence or at least with a minimum amount of services, facilities and support. Thus the question: Has youth work been able to create alliances to preserve its existence? For example, through cooperation with the school youth work can expand its clientele, promote recognition of non-formal learning and make wider use of its working methods. The alliances are often other bigger sectors or external funders, which lead to another kind of questions: What is the threat of these dependencies? For example, strong engagement with the social sector can put more emphasis on work with marginalized young people and their families, and make the youth sector appear as an instrument of social work or as social work itself. The consequence of alliances can also contribute to dissolution of youth work. The positive and negative consequences are often long-term effects on the services, working methods, pedagogy, competence, image and the profile of youth work, thus requiring historical analysis.

Histories of Innovation: Determinants of Renewal and Deterioration - Thirdly the seminar considers processes that contribute to or undermine renewal and innovation. Competence and its continuous development is the key factor of a discipline to establish its recognition, identity and autonomy. What kind of processes have contributed to renewal and innovation in youth work and youth policy? What has been the pressure of societal concerns to develop new measures and policies to

combat issues like marginalization and unemployment? What are the internal incentives to renewal, like finding ways to work with youth in the Internet? How have the established ways of thinking and working given way to innovations and new ways of thinking? Are there 'sacred cows' to be slain or 'cherished values' to be defended? What role has the field's dialogue with the policy makers and co-operational relations with other actors played in its renewal and innovations?

Critical Considerations Underlying the Paradox of Autonomy and Dependency

The second section of this paper is intended to raise issues and pose questions that can inform the conference discussions. The topics which follow were contributed by the author, several reviewers and analysis of reports and articles which raised issues from the previous conferences. There will certainly be more ideas and insights presented at the actual conference, but these topics are intended to get the ball rolling.

The Nature of Autonomy: Implications for Youth Work

Defining Autonomy - Dictionaries define the word *autonomy* as immunity from arbitrary exercise of authority: political independence, liberty, self-determination, independence - freedom from control or influence of others. Autonomy, according to Wikipedia, is the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision. Dictionaries define autonomy, but also seem to imply a normative statement: The inherently rational individuals and societies based on representative democracies run by rational citizens, with the help of science, are able to direct the world we live in. Individuals and societies are able to resist "arbitrary exercise of authority" and "control and influence of others" and become gradually more autonomous. There is a strong faith in the progress of Enlightenment, reason, rationality, individual agency and democracy. At this point, it would be fair to also remind us of the critical ideas of current social philosophy about social change which feature agency, power and autonomy.

This critique may be squeezed into two essential questions:

1. To what extent is the world we live in a rational construct that can be rationally explained?
2. Are the existing forms of representative democracy enough to govern the world?

Complex and Uncertain Worlds - William Connolly (2011) argues that both nature and society are characterized by complexity, plurality and uncertainty. He looks at the difficulties to explain natural phenomena like biological evolution and cites the Nobel Prize Winner Ilya Prigogine to make his point: "Our universe is non-linear, full of irreversible processes and far from equilibrium" (44). Human agency based on rational thinking cannot sufficiently deal with all this uncertainty. The same applies to social phenomena. Connolly refers, as an example, to the difficulty of predicting societal phenomena like the after-effects of the collapse of Soviet Union. He goes on to suggest that we are witnessing the clash of religious systems, political ideologies, escalating 'minorization', as well as the collision between neoliberalism and global warming - social phenomena (called "abstract machines") which largely avoid scientific scrutiny and which nobody seems to control. Connolly could have added his list by the recent rise of Nationalism and the Right. Thus both natural and social phenomena are very difficult to explain, predict and govern. This complexity and uncertainty of the world makes it difficult to identify the power

which threatens rational agency and autonomy of individuals and societies. Furthermore, according to Connolly, to adapt to uncertainty and to respond to changes difficult to predict, we need actors outside of established science and traditional representative democracy. We need people who are able to interpret 'weak signs' of change – artists, dissident scholars, innovative scientists, social movements, sub-cultures, non-governmental organizations and, yes, young people. At least, the established science and democracy need to open up to other kinds of perceptions and actors.

The New Mechanics of Power - Michel Foucault (1977) writes that the power limiting the agency of a rational individual is "fluid and ubiquitous". The key point of Foucault is that it is increasingly difficult to identify where the power is and thus know how to deal with it. "The new mechanisms of power', as he calls them, have penetrated everywhere "beyond the state and its apparatuses". Foucault has been criticized for not leaving much space for the individual and social agency. However, he says that also those governed utilize power expressed as "multifaceted forms of resistance and action" (Foucault 1978, 93). For those governed, autonomy appears simultaneously as an externally created framework of action and as something that can be negotiated. Blanchard (2012) points out that Foucault thinks that through a critique of the ideological forces present in our social structure, it is possible to link with others doing the same and achieve "moments that can potentially be transformative of those agents involved in such moments". Foucault himself carried out historical studies to critically explore "the ideological forces present in our social structure".[4] To sum up, Foucault and other critical thinkers cited the argument above to caution us to regard autonomy as something that can be easily captured through scientific analyses of the (social and natural) world. Autonomy is intricately linked to societal power relations, which do not easily open up to ordinary rational citizens. They *can* be reflected and acted on, even if the dictionary defined autonomy of individuals, organizations, public agencies and policies is very limited.

The Democracy Deficit - Dictionary definitions of autonomy seem to assume that liberty, independence and self-determination can be reached through rational individuals (with the help of scientific knowledge) which exert their influence through representative democracy. 'Democracy deficit' is the term to describe the lack of ability of current democratic structures to engage and have a dialogue with the citizens, their movements and organizations. Could it be that the procedures of representative and deliberative democracy are too restrictive within the complexity, variance and conflicts of civil society, and within the diversity of life worlds among young people? This is exactly what Chantal Mouffe (2000, 2005 and 2009) and others (Honig, 1993; Tully, 2008; Connolly 2011, Glover 2011) maintain when criticizing representative and deliberative democracy. According to Mouffe (2000) both Rawls and Habermas overemphasized the capacity of rational procedures to arrive at consensual decisions. Instead

[4] Foucault distanced himself from the traditional historiographical sense of uncovering historical truths. In a critical overview Richard Rorty (1968) summarizes Foucault's view on historical analysis: "do not look for progress or meaning in history; do not see the history of a given activity, of any segment of culture, as the development of rationality or of freedom; do not use any philosophical vocabulary to characterize the essence of such activity or the goal it serves; do not assume that the way this activity is presently conducted gives any clue to the goals it served in the past."

we need 'the availability of contending forms of citizenship identification' (Mouffe, 2000, p 10), tolerance and dialogical spaces. That means structures for continuous, open and tolerant dialogue between the complexity of civil society and the government. Furthermore agency is not only about rational behaviour, it is also about passion and emotions. Connolly adds that we also need action which crosses boundaries of the public and the 3rd sector, different professions, art and science, organizations and movements: "We must therefore work on mood, belief, desire, and action together" (147). Without going into more detail in this debate, it may be concluded that autonomy as an ideal for a youth service needs to be critically considered. A youth work actor (local, regional, national or international) needs to negotiate its autonomy in relation to other actors in "the public" and in relation to "the private", the young people. To respond to the multitude of young people, their passions and desires, the challenge is to create room for diverse expression and dialogical spaces between them and youth policy – and not only to rely on representative structures of the public sector or the organisations.

Autonomy reconsidered - Autonomy is increasingly about managing uncertainty and emotions rather than organizing reason and facts. - Understanding autonomy as *the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision* puts a strong faith in reason, evidence, free individual agency and democracy. An autonomous individual (or group) manages life through evidence-based reasoning and through the system of representative democracy. We assume that life is a rational system from which you can get objective facts. Using reason, individuals and societies (and their representative democracy) can make informed and un-coerced decisions to manage their world as autonomous individuals and societies.

Then, there are those like William E Connolly who argue that life is essentially not a rational construct and defies rational explanation. Facts and evidence are interpreted differently by those in different power and cultural positions distorting our possibilities to acquire objective evidence-base. "Un-coerced" decisions are difficult to make as "power is everywhere" (Foucault) and as it is hard to identify due to its "fluid and ubiquitous" nature. Alternative research (like Chantal Mouffe and Robert Glover) suggests that democracy is not essentially about rational decision making of elected representatives than about "mood, belief and desire" of people and about the power of collective emotions and assumption that have a tendency to spread as movements (religions, individualism, nationalism, rise of the Right, 'Indignados' and the 'Occupy' movement, etc.). The phenomena of 'democracy deficit' has highlighted the experience of people of not being heard by City Councils and Governments as well as their mistrust for these bodies. The "people" are the civil society characterized by "complexity, conflict and difference" (Cinefogo, 2011, p 3). In sum, the autonomy as the capacity of a rational individual to make unformed, un-coerced decisions has been questioned by those who do not think the world is rational, can be managed through rational individuals with objective evidence-base. Perhaps autonomy is not about 'organising reason and facts', but rather about 'managing uncertainty and emotion'.

Autonomy[5] and Youth Work - As Howard Williamson[6] has noted, "autonomy or identity of youth work can be a self-definition, a result of external expectations or something in between. Youth work tends to

[5] I am thankful to Tomi Kiilakoski for linking this discussion to the philosophical debate on positive and negative freedom. Dating back to Berlin (1969, 2002) freedom has been conceptualized as negative freedom, the area of

define itself as an autonomous and unique profession working with young people to promote their active citizenship and social change. All this rhetoric is grand-sounding, but can be perceived differently by, for example the general public, other professionals and policy makers, who might rather think of youth work as table tennis and pool, lacking any real body of knowledge, hanging around, avoiding outcome and impact measurement and assessment, colluding with young people's deviance, alienation and opposition" (Williamson 2013). Under the external pressures to do something useful and relevant, youth work can become the handmaiden of other agendas (of social, educational and employment policies) – and try to avoid 'splendid isolation', 'self-exclusion' and 'celebration of a spurious autonomy'." In between these approaches, in the gray area between self-defined autonomy and modifying youth work to meet the expectations of the others to promote integration and work with vulnerable youth, youth work tries to find ways of defending its baseline (of active citizenship, seeing youth as a resource rather than a problem, empowering groups rather than 'individual coaches' etc.) while at the same time working in joint plans and projects using these as means to find recognition and to exert subtle influence on the practices of fields.

Finally, there is the question to what extent youth work is any longer a unique approach. Many think that a distinct competence of youth work is the capacity to encounter a young person. However, if you google "encountering youth", you can get a hit on "youth work", but you also get about 40 other professionals or specialized organizations which argue for their distinctive capacity to encounter a young person concerning this and that subject. What is youth work good for any more?

One grand task of the youth field is to keep track on the living conditions and aspirations of young people in different fields of life, and to establish co-ordinated activities, plans, policies and services to meet the needs of young people. This is the integrated youth policy mission. It is very challenging for a small field or service to get other and often bigger services and actors to collaborate. In principle it is a possibility for youth work to gain recognition and strengthen its autonomy. In practice, the engagement

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freedom from the interference of others and as positive freedom, the role of the interference to inhibit free action. Sometimes these are formulated as 'freedom from' (constrictions) and 'freedom to' ('doings'). The dichotomy has been accused of being confusing and even false (Carter 2012), but it has been widely used to describe the difference between the liberalist idea of an individual as the core of liberty, agency and society versus the welfare society (or sociological) idea of the actual competency of different individuals and social groups to act freely, and, notably, the need of the society to balance these inequalities. The dichotomy can provide a framework for the analysis of "autonomy through dependencies" in youth work. There is the controversy between those who emphasize the internal development and the financial and organizational independence of youth work, and those who underline the importance of networks, inter-agency collaboration and need for external input. Perhaps this controversy can be thematized as a historical development of youth work as negative freedom - autonomy best served through freedom from external interferences (pressure from other fields of government, other actors, political decision makers, legislation) and as positive freedom – autonomy through dependencies (the pursuit for cooperation)?

[6] Howard Williamson's commentary on the draft of this paper, October 2013

of youth work in cooperation can lead to isolation, modification of youth work and/or to increased autonomy:

- *No dependencies.* This may be a result of not even searching for co-operative action with others – conscious policy to keep others at arm's length or just lacking interest in linking with others. It is also possible that there have been explicit efforts to form alliances, but for some reasons, they have not been successful. In the latter case it would be useful to analyze the reasons for the failure to connect.

- *Dependencies modify the working methods and image of youth work.* The nature of these co-operative relations affects the services, working methods, pedagogy, competence, image and the profile of youth work. The task of historical analysis is to decipher these effects.

- *Dependencies affect autonomy*. In principle the dependencies can either reduce the autonomy of youth work or they can promote its recognition and autonomy. For example strong ties with the social sector can put more emphasis on work with marginalized young people and their families, and make the youth sector appear as an instrument of social work or as social work itself. For example, in the Dutch youth policy main focus is early intervention on families with young people which have been notified by school or other authorities to have problems. This has led youth policy to actually mean social work with families of youth with problems. Youth work in the meaning of interacting directly with ordinary young people or with the identified problem youth is still underdeveloped. As a result 'youth work' has an image very close to 'social work' (Coussée, Siurala & Williamson 2011). On the other hand, through the partnerships youth work can negotiate itself recognition and resources; that is, more autonomy. For example through cooperation with the school youth work can expand its clientele and make wider use of its working methods. Or, through a joint youth welfare program the youth field can bring in its expertise in working with young people, engaging them in service production and underlining the importance and good return for investments of basic services and early general prevention, and consequently gain respect and freedom to act. Through time youth work's commitment to youth agency and successful methods to work with youth contribute to the field's recognition as an autonomous actor. These kinds of changes materialize themselves in time and are best discovered through historical analysis.

Autonomy and Organizational Culture - The final implication concerns the relational nature of organizations. Even if organizations prefer to describe themselves as autonomous, much of independent influence and status is essentially negotiated, or, to say it more bluntly, is a result of conscious fight for power and recognition. How have the organizations negotiated (fought) themselves power or, not doing it, let the competing organizations establish that space? In the youth field these negotiation processes take place within the Magic Triangle: In a historical perspective, how have the youth policy makers, youth organizations, other youth work organizations, youth researchers and the different youth groups negotiated or fought for power, recognition and mandate to represent youth? Another line of similar

questions is: How have the classical/established youth organizations resisted the entry of newer organizations[7] or non-organized youth groups or movements into the youth field?

Peverelly and Verduyn (2011) have studied how organizations cope with increasing complexity and ambiguity. Authors maintain that people want to make sense of the ambiguity through social interaction, linking with other actors: "The reduction of equivocality (ambiguity, complexity) by actors through ongoing social interaction in order to couple their behavior in ways that suit the joint performance of certain activities" (Peverelly & Verdyun 2011, 5). In other words, organizations try to control uncertainties and create autonomous space for action through social interaction and networking. In the private sector companies establish clusters with different kinds of organizations, even with competitors and those with differing objectives as far as the overall result of the co-operation reduces equivocality. In a cluster, competition and co-operation can co-exist. These findings have two implications.

First, autonomy does not mean isolation. In the era of uncertainties autonomy is created through negotiating interdependencies with other actors. Through interdependencies organizations gains influence, recognition and power, and thus autonomy. Instead of incapsulating oneself in internal practices of youth work, the youth field should engage in collaborative relationships with other actors and the young people. The art of youth work is to establish relationships and dependencies which improve the recognition and influence of youth work and contributes to its relative independence of agency – its autonomy. A broader framework of interdependencies is the European and the Global. As a rule the unit of youth policies is either national or European: national youth policies seldom extend to other countries and European youth policies seldom link to other continents or to global issues. This type of 'autonomy' or rather 'isolation' is sometimes called "methodological nationalism" or "methodological European policies" (Wimmer and Schiller 2002). The idea of levels of government (national – European) and the vocabulary that goes with them do not capture the interconnectedness of social activity and social systems; phenomena like transnational protest movements, transnationally spreading populist nationalism, commercial youth cultures, Internet communities, global warming, clash of religious systems, global capitalism etc.

Second, it is not necessarily a threat to the autonomy of youth work to collaborate with 'competing sectors' like the sports, health, social and education sectors, adult organizations, private companies etc. One recent (2011 - 2012) example, which revolves around this issue, was the debate on the integration of youth affairs in the Erasmus for All –program (later Erasmus+). The Commission wanted to create more synergies and cooperation between the formal education (Erasmus) and non-formal education (Youth and Sports) programs through an integrated program, but national youth exchange agencies,

[7] Howard Williamson links this to 'the renewal of the youth field'. Classical, often adult led, youth organisations (the Scouts, the YMCA, the 4H, some Church –based organizations etc) with strong structures and long-standing principles and values do not always welcome new actors in the youth field. In UK organizations like Youth at Risk, Drive for Youth, Include, the Weston Spirit, Fairbridge, which have emerged to provide services for political priority programs around 'social inclusion' have been criticized by the established organizations for their 'opportunist business outfits'.

youth organizations and many governments strongly opposed it. The argument was that integration into a big program will result into the loss of its independence and to a gradual disappearance of the youth program and the sector. However, it is possible to add another approach to this issue: Instead of the youth field playing it safe and protect its current autonomy within the larger program, it could consider of negotiating its recognition and relative freedom through partnerships, networks, activities and projects with those with the big money and educational authority of the Erasmus for All (Erasmus+) program.

In our effort to learn from the history of youth work and based on the above, we may have to go beyond established assumptions of rationality, progress, agency and democracy. We are tempted, perhaps too easily, to rationalize history and regard it as progress. Within the light of history the present tends to appear as the most advantaged phase of development. The various youth field actors; youth organizations, youth services (like local youth departments) and youth policy institutions like to write their own history, also, to celebrate and legitimate their excellence today. In this framework history-writing is to explain how the course of events and the eminent leaders and members of the organization, service or institution in the past logically and inevitably have contributed to their present competence and recognition – their autonomous specificity. However, considering the advice that events and people might not always behave rationally or consciously move towards a better state of affairs, history writing should perhaps be open and sensitive to competition, contingency, chance, uncertainties and unexpected external effects and actors: What are the unforeseen and contested events modifying the history of the youth field? Bearing in mind the plurality, large array of forms and types of actors using power, it might be reasonable to extend a historical account beyond the decisions and acts of organizations and their leaders: How have the organizations tried to maximize their influence within given historical context, within given power relations? How have the organizations and their leaders reacted to opposing and parallel sentiments and passions of the plurality of citizens' groups, sometimes the marginal ones? Whose history are we writing? Most possibly Youth Policies are not enough to reflect concerns of young people. This resonates well with some of the critical voices of the Belgian Youth Policy Review (2012) saying that we need "less policies and more politics". Perhaps we need less consensual documents and more action of versatile citizens' groups.

The Hope for Integrated Youth Programs, Policy and Plans

The most extensive and ambitious policy effort of the youth field has been *integrated youth policies through local or national youth policy plans or programs.* These programs have typically had a broad scope. They have been targeted at a large range of youth questions with a broad range of actors, often to improve the living conditions of young people in a municipality or a country. Integrated youth policy plans and surveys – national and local – have quite a long history dating back to the golden era of social planning of the 60s and 70s[8]. For example in Finland the concept of integrated youth policy plans was

[8] At this time youth work 'extended' to youth policy. Perhaps there has not been enough reflection on how this focus from youth work as an educational practice to support young people to become active citizens to the focus of youth work as a public advocate of the aspirations and conditions of young people, actually materialized itself. Was youth work able to coherently work on the side of the young people on both fronts, or did it start to use the

launched by Kari Rantalaiho in 1969 (“Youth polices for the 1970s”) and Juha Vartola who drafted in 1975 a guide to integrated youth policy plans for local governments. It was followed by nearly hundred municipal integrated youth policy plans during the subsequent decenniums.

According to follow-up studies on Finnish and other European policy plans very few of them actually were used as an efficient implementation tool. “Experience from some countries suggests that youth policy plans have promoted the visibility of the youth sector and youth affairs across other sectors, but that it has been difficult to commit the other sectors to actually implement the proposed actions.” (Siurala 2006, Sörbom 2004, Schillemans 2003).

In 1995 the Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) of the Council of Europe decided, on the proposal of Finland, to start running national youth policy reviews – with Finland as the first country to be reviewed in 1997. Since then about 20 surveys have been carried out. No studies on the actual impact of the surveys exist. Howard Williamson has authored two follow-up reports based on the survey documents themselves, some questionnaires and his experience as rapporteur to many of the reports of the international evaluation teams set up by the Council of Europe. One of his overall conclusions is that: “What is written in national reports may bear little relation to practice on the ground” (Williamson 2008, p 55). Williamson’s words signal two things. First, the use of the word “may” indicates that we indeed do not have enough research data to arrive at that conclusion, and, two, there is a grounded expectation that national reports do not necessarily reflect the reality and that they have not trickled down that well. A most recent format has been government youth policy programs (Swedish Government Bill 1999, Youth Policy Program of the Finnish Vanhanen II government 2007- 2010).

A historical approach should look at how and why these initiatives were originally established. What are the reasons for their failure of implementation? Are the shortcomings linked to the isolation/lacking connectedness of youth work? Do we have successful examples of integrated youth policies? What are their success factors? How has this co-operation affected the image, approaches, working methods, resources, dependencies and the autonomy of youth work? To what extent have the alliances been a conscious choice of youth work, something imposed on youth work or simply a result of unintended succession of events?

Alliances with other sectors are not uncommon. They have been established on thematic basis with one or only few partners; co-operating with school on youth participation, with health authorities on

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youth policy instruments (like integrated youth policy plans) to defend its own interests (and the interests of their members and stakeholders), not the interests of young people? Filip Coussée, when commenting the draft of this paper, raised this intriguing question.

substance use prevention, with social sector on youth at risk[9], with employment authorities on youth integration into labor markets and so on. Youth unemployment became the key youth policy concern after the exceptionally high youth unemployment rate at the latter half of the 1970s. The main measure of municipal youth work became youth workshops, first developed at Helsinki City Youth Department in 1983. As the other resources to local youth work were reduced, the workshops became the instrument of survival for many local youth services. At the same time youth work became very close to employment policies, organizations and funds. This alliance has undoubtedly affected the public image of youth work and youth workers' perception of what is youth work. Similar historical analysis could be helpful in understanding youth work that has been allied with social sector, the school or the cultural sector[10].

Across Europe youth work (whether that means youth organizations, municipal youth work or social youth work) has had close links, not only to various sectors of the local public administration, but also to the state (government), the church, the ruling Party, trusts and foundations etc. What is the historical origin of these alliances? How have they modified the role and tasks of current youth work? For example, in Estonia under the USSR administration youth work was closely linked to the youth organization (the Pioneers) of the Communist Party, which wanted to bring youth work at the schools. After the collapse of the soviet regime Estonian youth work still kept youth workers at the schools and have developed this asset to meet contemporary challenges of youth work.

The Magic Triangle: The Mysterious Threesome[11]

[9] I some countries youth work is an independent service within the City administration. In this case it is relevant to consider the identity of youth work in relation to other services like the social services. In other countries youth work refers to organizations or the church which provide social services for young people or to youth work which is integrated in social work. In these cases the relationship between youth work and social services appear different.

[10] At the time of writing this paper 2 years have elapsed since the amendment of the Finnish youth law. As a response to the increase of youth unemployment, the amendment urged municipalities to recruit mobile youth workers to reach young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and forward them to further services. As the Ministry substantially funded the street workers, most municipalities started recruiting them. Outreaching youth work started to profile local government youth work. In many small municipalities street workers even outnumbered ordinary youth workers. This change of focus cannot but have an effect on the profile, services, pedagogy and the image of local government youth work. The UK has a long tradition of youth work designed to reach out to excluded or troublesome youth and support their labor market integration and engagement in more constructive activities. However, this affects the profile and image of youth work: These kinds of 'youth workers' were not seen as youth workers by young people themselves (Davies 2009).

[11]The relationship between research, practice and policy is sometimes called the Magic Triangle (Chisholm 2006), the Golden Triangle (Jacobs, Lambert and Bockstal 2010) or even the Eternal Triangle (Smith 1997). The concept is mostly used to discuss the relations between the corners of the triangle and their actual or expected effect on the development of the entire youth field. Some of the authors (Coussée, Siurala 2012) argue that the Golden Triangle is golden only in official rhetoric. As Filip Coussée has mentioned (see also Berg 2006, 21), perhaps too little notice has been on the internal tensions *within* the corners; in the research corner the tensions between developmental psychology, social pedagogy and youth sociology, in the practice corner the tensions between youth organizations

The youth field sometimes makes a collective assertion about its internal collaboration between research, policy and youth work – the so-called The Magic Triangle. The core actors of the youth field; municipal youth work, youth organizations, church, youth research, youth worker education and youth policy makers, can establish between themselves a variety of alliances and networks. This is sometimes called the Magic Triangle, the Golden Triangle or the Eternal Triangle of practice, policy and research. It can have an effect on the visibility, recognition and autonomy of youth work, and on the relative position of each of the youth field actors. However, the history of The Magic Triangle can also be seen as a history conflict in the youth field.

Lynne Chisholm (2006) well describes how distant are the relations within the Magic Triangle of research, policy and practice. There are differences of logic, language and normative understanding. She and many others (Williamson 2006) think that better cooperation between the corners is of mutual benefit and can be promoted. Chisholm argues for (1) better recognition of the grass-root youth work knowledge and competence, (2) "bringing the research community closer to the campfire" (p 38) and (3) creating better information exchange channels (like the European Knowledge for Youth Policy) between corners of the Triangle. Despite these tensions there seem to exist shared optimism in the promise of the Triangle. Chisholm's optimism bases on "learning to use difference positively" (p 39). Williamson (2006, 181) encourages the Triangle "to make some sacrifices to their own independence and autonomy" for gains to outweigh the losses.

However, there are also those, who are not convinced at the actual capacity or willingness of the practice, research and policy to converge, share and make sacrifices. Siurala (2012) argues that the tensions between the corners of the triangle can even be described oxymoronic: there is the rhetoric of "a network promoting joint interests", but also practices indicating rather "a battlefield of social closures maximizing their own interests". We need a critical historical assessment of the development of the Magic Triangle. We know something but the picture is still very incomplete.

In 1972 the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation were founded within Council of Europe (CoE). "Youth" meant "youth organisations". The 70s and 80s were Youth NGO time. Consequently, as Peter Lauritzen notes (Milmeister & Williamson 2006, 15) "Researchers and experts were practically out, because "…there are no better experts on young people, than young people themselves… as the Zeitgeist of post-'68 would tell us". Since then the NGOs have been in charge of the CoE youth agenda.

The governments became stronger in the 1980s when the ad hoc Committee (CHJE) becomes a Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ). Within the co-managed structure of the CoE youth field the governments

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and local government youth work and in the policy corner the tensions between different governments on youth work and youth policy development.

became the balancing power to the youth organisations. The CDEJ also started to look favourably at new partners. Youth research came on the agenda at the 1st Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth in 1985. The final text mentioned "research and documentation on youth issues" (Proceedings 1988, p. 130), recommended "securing information exchange between youth research workers and research facilities (idem. p. 134) and the attached medium-term plan mentioned "initiation of a network of co-operation amongst youth workers in Europe on research issues" (idem. 151). Note the idea of networking youth workers on youth research, but not networking researchers on youth work issues.

However, the pressures to create networks also with youth researchers became stronger. First, the CDEJ mandated the first Expert Committee on Youth Research, which gathered prominent youth researchers and also some government and NGO representatives. Second, the 2nd Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth titled "Strategies for European youth policies in the approach to the year 2000" and held in Oslo, Norway, April 1988 consisted of a presentation by the Finnish Minister of Culture Anna-Liisa Piipari on strengthening the role of youth research in the Council of Europe youth field. The presentation was commissioned by the CDEJ.

Through this strong political support the research co-operation gradually developed into a regular meeting of youth research correspondents reporting back to CDEJ and expanding its activities through the programs of the two Youth Centers. The first partnership agreement with European Commission signed in 1998 later also included youth research.

The magic triangle - policy, practice and research – started to come together. However, it is already 45 years since the 1968 Zeitgeist. The argumentation for NGO legitimacy was indisputable at the time. It is reasonable to have a historical look at the developments since. How has the legitimacy of youth NGOs, youth research and youth policy since been articulated? How do the historically defined roles, mandates and power positions of the corners of the triangle meet the current youth policy challenges?

Sacred Cows and Cherished Values: Tradition and Change in Youth Work

During recession and uncertainty it is customary to search for security. In youth work that means a pursuit for the essence of youth work; something safe and permanent, untouchable to outside actors and external influences, a solid core of methods or approaches – autonomy through essence. Some argue that youth work is essentially about youth worker's individual face-to-face encounter with a young person[12], many maintain that it is about providing young people a space of their own (a youth center) and those focusing on social youth work might argue for street work as the core of youth work. But youth and their living conditions and expectations are constantly changing. It is probable that many of the working methods we cherish as basic, can rather be sacred cows which we should critically asses. Maybe it is more important to work with youth groups than face individual young people, maybe we

[12] The suggestions arising from the first Ministerial Conference on the Youth Service, in England and Wales (In 1989) that youth work was about *groups* were rebutted by the Thatcher Government. Youth work worked with *individuals*.

need more spaces for intergenerational encounter than spaces isolated for youth only and, maybe we should reach young people through the social media rather than in the streets only?

Youth work methods and approaches can have a long history. During that history things happen and decisions are made which produce different outcomes in different countries. Today's youth work methods might not be a result of a necessary succession of historical events.

Take the example of the history of mobile youth work in Finland. It originally started at Helsinki in 1964 as "gang work" under the co-ordination of the Youth Department. The first gang worker Pirkko Fihlmann had studied in USA and brought the tradition of going to the streets and mingling in the youth gangs (Ilves 1998). However, it was not until 1991 when a project on outreach youth work was established in Tampere that the current Finnish forms of mobile youth work were established. The project in Tampere was inspired by Norwegian mobile work which, at that time, had been carried out at the big cities of Norway for 20 years. There were two types of mobile youth work; *uteseksjonen* –work which was individual and problem oriented and *feltarbeit* which was close to community work based on empowering the local community to support youth at risk. Mobile work in Tampere took the form of *uteseksjonen* –work, which then became a national model (Huhtajärvi 2007). The individual and problem oriented street work was finally established as the Finnish format of mobile work through the amendment of the Youth Act on outreach youth work enacted 1.1.2011. Today, in some municipalities outreach youth workers outnumber ordinary youth workers. The development of the concept of mobile youth work in Finland and its final institutionalization through legislation has modified the public and professional image and role of youth work: youth work is more about integrating (individual) young people at risk to the existing social order than about supporting ordinary young people to develop and experiment with their identity to make grounded choices in their educational and employment career – and maybe change the existing social order to meet those choices. If mobile youth work had taken on the Norwegian *feltarbeit* approach or the German concept of mobile youth work (Walter Specht 2010), the image of youth work in Finland could have looked very different.

Another example of cherished values and sacred cows is youth participation. Youth participation is a truly cherished value, but are some of its practices rather sacred cows? Youth councils have become the most popular – even hegemonic - way of youth involvement in local decision-making in Europe. In Finland out of the 336 municipalities (in 2011) 200 have set up a youth council to express the views of the young people. The Union of Youth Councils in Finland is a powerful national lobby organisation. Youth councils in Finland represent the dominant discourse on youth participation and also restricts experimentation with other forms of youth participation. When the Department of Youth at the City of Helsinki decided in 2010 to search for an alternative model for local youth participation, the local and national lobby organisations started a large campaign against this decision. Lobbyists met City Councillors, parties of the City Council and high civil servants to speak for an elected youth council. Media was frequently used to attack the alternative plans of the Youth Department (Siurala and Turkia 2012).

The Finnish experience has to be put into a historical and cultural context. A comparative study of youth participation in Finland and Germany found marked differences in the two countries (Feldmann-

Wojtachnia etc. 2010). In Germany youth participation was understood as civic activities and projects carried out by young people in NGOs, while in Finland participation was about activities in formal representative structures like youth councils and youth parliaments. The authors recommend that Finland should promote youth agency outside the pre-defined top-down frameworks of representative structures, enhance diversity in the forms and methods of participation, improve accessibility to youth participation and offer a variety of ways to act, exert influence and become involved (idem., 65-75).

Cherished values easily turn into sacred cows. That is a problem when organizations would instead need to change. Sacred cows become what organization researchers call 'sticky configurations', 'lock-ins' or 'fixations'. Peverelly and Verdyun use the term *social and cognitive fixations* to refer to ways in which an organization, an institution or a field of activity or service sticks to its sacred cows: "Cognitive fixation means that the constructed reality is seen as the objective reality and no new views are accepted" (2010, 86–88). In such case the organization's focus is on internal dialogue and rhetoric, hostility and suspicion towards external actors and ideas, overemphasis on 'own' identity and fight against 'others'. It is suggested that such organizations should replace their social and cognitive fixations with *social and cognitive variation*. In youth work that would mean conscious creation of opportunities to work with other sectors and other professionals, youth researchers and young people who do not go to youth centers or join youth organizations – other people who could bring in new ideas and stimulate cognitive conflict. The history of youth work is also about understanding why sacred cows persist and how they can be overthrown.

Internal Dogma Driving Splendid Isolation

In the 4th history workshop in Tallinn 2011 Williamson and Coussée (2011) warned the youth field from 'splendid isolation' – from becoming too autonomous and too much oriented to its internal dogmas. Historical analysis is needed to decipher how cherished values have established themselves and how some of them have developed into sacred cows? Or, it could be that the values are still valid and do deserve to be cherished, while the problem is that some of the concrete working methods which have been created to implement the value have become assimilated into the value itself. Youth participation is a value, a youth council is one instrument to implement it, but sometimes a youth council has become equivalent to the value itself.

A story of sacred cows must be a story of power and influence in the youth field. What kind of intellectual orientation, professionalization, methodization and lobby interests and structures are involved? What are the conditions for critique, unveiling and overthrow of a sacred cow? What kind of 'social and cognitive fixations' have there been and how have they developed? How can you tell the difference between a cherished value and a sacred cow? How can you identify a sacred cow? Are there 'sacred cows' to be slain or 'cherished values' to be robustly defended?

The paper argues that in the broader context of social change, agency and democracy we should rethink our assumptions of the rationality of events, transparency of power, scope for agency, legitimation of representative democracy and trust in the capacity of organizations to change. As a result, organizations - also those in the youth field – have to cope with pluralism and uncertainty, establish their strategic

location within their field of action, find ways of legitimating their activities among their members and become more responsive to changes. Sometimes the answer is to involve in cooperation with other actors, sometimes one has to find the specificity or competitive advantage of the organization itself.

In conclusion, previous history workshops and conferences have generated the concepts of autonomy and dependency as critical elements impacting youth work over time. In light of this history, current practice, pertinent research, and the context of youth work in 2013, what is our new vision of a healthy, sustainable, relevant youth work practice and system? How are both autonomy and dependency balanced or accommodated to achieve success?

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