Youth work and youth policy in France

Patricia Loncle

Introduction

To understand the specificities of French youth work under a European perspective, it can be referred to the current situation of youth work in Europe. In this regard, the Youth partnership contributions are obviously very significant. The following quotations are particularly useful to enlighten the French situation:

> "To describe the nature and scope of youth work in Europe it is first of all necessary to stress 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. (…) In general we can state that in all countries youth work is defined as a domain of 'out-of-school' education and thus linked to non-formal or informal learning. (…) We can see that most of the definitions contain two basic orientations reflecting a double concern: to provide favourable (leisure time oriented) experiences (of social, cultural, educational or political nature) in order to strengthen young people's personal development and foster their personal and social autonomy, and at the same time to offer opportunities for the integration and inclusion of young people in adult society by fostering societal integration in general or preventing the exclusion of disadvantaged groups. (…) Regarding the target groups we can state that in all countries youth work addresses young people in general as well as disadvantaged or socially excluded groups. Although there are certainly different priorities in general youth services and targeted services, it can be argued that the aspects of participation and protection are given in all countries" (Youth partnership, 2004).

The French situation echoes to these statements: there is no single law that regulates the intervention of youth workers, the aim of their intervention is largely implicit and depends predominantly on the work context of the persons (which means both on the local decision making process and on the particular difficulties that affect young people).

Under "youth work", at least four professions can be gathered:

- the most numerous are the "sociocultural activities' coordinators" (animateurs socioculturels): these professionals are the core group of youth workers. They are about 120 000 of them currently in our country (Lebon, 2007). They work mainly for local authorities (Municipalities and Départements – local and meso levels) or for NGO's that are funded by public grants (among which a large part of local grants). Their profession was progressively organised during the sixties but in a rather informal way. They principally provide leisure, cultural, sportive activities for young people in a specific territory.

- the second group is composed of the "special needs workers" (éducateurs specialisés): these professionals are currently about 55 000 of them[31]. They work for the same types of actors than the sociocultural activities' coordinators but their main founding sources come from the Départements which are responsible for the struggle against delinquency since the first decentralisation laws (1982-1983). Their profession appeared at about the same time than the coordinators' one but it is regulated by a professional agreement (which were signed in 1966). They intervene in favour of disadvantaged young people (who are at risk of delinquency of who are endangered by their family).

- a third group consist in the "operations managers" (chargés de mission) of Youth job centres (the Missions locales pour l'emploi des jeunes). Around 11 000 persons work in the 480

---

[31] http://educateurspecialise.lesocial.fr/exerciceprofessionnel.php

structures that are implemented in all the major cities of the country. They are funded by a multiplicity of public actors[32]. Introduced in 1982, the "operations managers" aim at providing support for the 16-to-25-year-olds to enter the labour market. In 2006, they encountered 1.2 million of young people among which 40% beneficiated from a job or a training session.

- a fourth group is constituted by new figures of youth workers who are specialised in the field of health. Named "health organisers" (animateurs de prevention or animateurs de santé), they are the last professionals to emerge. Their profession is not regulated at central level. They are employed at local level by Municipalities, Departements or NGO's. Yet, there is no statistics available on their exact number. They work principally, but not exclusively, in favour of young people and are focused on the prevention of risk behaviours (alcohol, drugs, road safety…).

To synthesis this brief synopsis, we can quote Francis Lebon who developed a recent synthesis about the professionalization of sociocultural activities' coordinators:

> "The professional group does not – or only hardly – constitute a profession defined as an organised body, with its rules, its identification procedures and its careers. Some authors consider that the professionalization process exists but that its outcome is uncertain; they mention both brakes and progresses. Other authors limit themselves to the description of the reality: they consider that the diversity of work conditions and the variety of jobs profiles does not permit to affirm the existence of a profession. On the other hand, the strong division of work distributes persons according to unequal positions and segments the professionals' groups. Besides, the professional identity causes problem. It appears fragmentized, fragile, and pulled apart between the various institutional worlds in which the activities are developed: cultural action, employment policy, tourism, sectors of social, education, sport, disabled people, elderly people, etc" (2007, pp. 17-18).

In order to appreciate the different elements that led us to this rather difficult situation, I propose to analyse the history of youth work through a threefold perspective: the evolution of youth work; the changes of the youth question; the local implementation of youth policies by youth workers. To do so, I lay my work on a various and multidisciplinary material based upon history of youth work, youth policy (at national and local level with a special attention to the latter) and, youth sociology. This material is a mix of secondary analysis of existing data and of empirical material from my own researches.

To develop my argumentation, without pretending to establish an exhaustive history of youth work in France, I focused on the three periods that seemed the most relevant to explain the current situation in my country. As a consequence, my presentation is divided into three points : a first point is dedicated to the emergence of the youth question at the end of the 19th century; a second point is focused on the incomplete professionalization of youth work during the sixties; a third point deals with the challenges of youth work in the contemporary French society.

From the late 19th century to the Second World War: youth movements' influences on the emergence of "the youth question"

The period between the late 19th century and the Second World War is characterised by four elements, at least:

---

[32] They receive 470 millions euros fublic founding, 84%.
The principal activity : the European social found 8% ; the State 40% ; the Regions 17% ; the Départements 5% ; the local authorities and the groups of local authorities 23% ; public and private organisations 7%.
http://www.cnml.gouv.fr/le-reseau/

- Under a global viewpoint, it is largely influenced by: the industrialisation process; constant concerns about armed conflicts; the necessity of strengthening the population sense of belonging to the nation;

- More specifically, it is the period during which youth is considered for the first time as a problematic and identified population (Ariès, 1960; Loriga, 1994);

- The awareness of the difficult fate that was commonly reserved for French young people (Villermé, 1840) leads to the emergence of numerous youth organisations whose first aim was to support young people both with regard to social and health issues;

- Even if youth organisations frequently had a national and even an international audience, the development of actions addressed to young people (their scope, their content, their proximity to public actors) depended largely on the territories and on the community in which they were operating.

During this period, one can underline the State's relative absence (except in the promotion of patriotism and in the setting of a national, compulsory and free educational system) as well as the predominance of notables in youth care. Another remarkable fact is the matter of the acute ideological opposition between religious and non-religious groups which appear to struggle to dominate youth.

The formulation of "the youth question"

From the late 19th century, the formulation of the "youth question" occurred closely linked to the urbanisation process that happened in several French regions (mainly the Northern and Eastern regions for the manufactures and the mines and secondarily the Western region for the fishing).

The urbanisation process generated various global phenomena (Topalov, 1995):

- a persistent problem of poverty that affect large parts of the urban population that grows significantly and suffers from underpaid jobs and from an insecure labour market;

- the industrialisation of work (difficult work conditions, strictness of managers, low salaries, uncontrolled hours of work,…) which is not regulated nor compensated by social benefits, yet;

- housing's insalubrity and large epidemics (of cholera, for instance);

- insecurity of work places, increase in work accident with a dramatic diminution of life expectancy in the most urbanised areas;

More specifically, the urbanisation process gives rise to various consequences on young people's life:

- for those who come from rural areas, it leads them far from their family in Cities where they know nobody, where they encounter difficulties to acquire proper (and not too dangerous) jobs, to find training and housing;

- these young people experiment difficult life conditions heavily influenced by poverty and insecurity;

- its also have for consequence the decline in the traditional forms of youth culture (through the carnivals and the *charivari*) which permit young people to express themselves, including their disapprovals against adults' society, in their rural communities (Pellegrin, 1979);

- in urban areas, one of the effects is the apparition of youth bands that scare the population (already!) (Perrot, 1986)

- beyond these phenomena, some actors begin to worry about young people who, in their contact to urban life, may be at risk of immorality, poor health, poor housing…

It may be underlined that the knowledge about the effects of the urbanisation process comes from the development of various research methods (such as statistics, demography or psychology) that are developed simultaneously in various large cities (e.g. London and Chicago) and that permit to reveal several important elements. Among them, this knowledge brings into the open the existence of "pauperism" (poverty that affects workers) which results in new conceptions of poor and poverty and to a progressive acceptation of social and public intervention. Until then, poor people were divided into two categories: the good poor (i.e. the ones who had objective reasons to be poor: orphans, unmarried mothers, disabled persons…) and the bad poor (i.e. the ones who were valid and who did not work). This new perception of poverty will have a great impact on youth care: it justifies youth organisations involvement in other fields than plain charity.

The mobilisation of youth organisations and youth movements and their competition

Youth organisations and youth movements tended to be created all over the territory between the late 19th and the Second World War. They shared some particularities: they appeared to struggle with each other to dominate youth (in number and under a proselyte viewpoint); they were largely affected by hygienist and social preoccupations; most of them were created under the influence of international movements[33] and were representative of the existence of a youth international network. Way ahead from public authorities, they were also the first actors of youth care.

On the other hand, they presented strong differences:

Considering youth organisations and youth movements, the period that stretches from the late 19th century to the Second World War could be cleaved into two parts:

- Before the First World War, a large panel of youth organisations emerged almost everywhere in our country (but firstly in the cities). Beyond their differences, they presented the particularity to be led by adults –principally notables- who addressed to young people as a population to be protected without taking youth specificities into

---

[33] The first YMCA was created in London in 1844 and spread progressively in all the big cities of the world; The first patronage was initiated in Turin by Don Bosco in 1840; The first holiday camp was founded by the Pasteur Bion in Zurich, in 1876; The Scouts were originated by Baden Powell in the UK; The "working-class catholic youth" was established by Joseph Cardjin in Belgium in 1926; The Youth hostels were created by the German Richard Schirman in 1907…

account. Their action was influenced by strong moral principles (it could be either religious, non-religious but also patriotic, for instance).

- During the interwar years, another kind of organisations arose that were called "youth movements". These movements presented the particularity to be conducted by young persons and to stress on young people's autonomy and development. They proposed their "troops" to adhere to a collective identity and to improve themselves. To do so, they developed specific tools and recognition means (uniforms, rites and songs for instance).

To enter the details, it is possible to draw up the following list:

Table 1 : Main youth organisations

Name	Date of creation	Obedience	Audience/organisation	Aims
The UCJG (YMCA)	1867	Protestant	International with a national organisation	Cooperation in social, religious, intellectual and physical fields Elitist movement
The Patronages (Youth clubs)	1830	Mainly catholic Some are protestant and Non-religious	International with a community organisation	Not centrally determined : it depended on the needs of the community Mainly culture and sport Mostly popular
The Catholic Association of the French Youth	1886	Catholic	National	To strengthen the catholic church through an elitist movement
The Education league	1866	Non-religious	National	To sustain the creation of the national school system and then to organise extracurricular activities for young people A mix of elitism and popularity
The holiday camps	1881	Protestant first and then catholic and non-religious	International, several national movements and local organisations	To deliver "healthy" stays for urban (poor) children and youth Popular movement

Source: Loncle, 2003, pp. 90-97

Table 2 : Main youth movements

Name	Different branches	Date of creation	Obedience	Audience/ organisation	Aims
The scout movements	"les éclaireurs unionistes"	1910	Protestant	International to local	To develop young people's autonomy, resourcefulness and collective spirit Popular movement
	"les éclaireurs de France	1911	Non-religious	National and local	Idem Popular movement
	"les scouts de France"	1920	catholic	National and local	Idem but in a more elitist way
The specialised catholic youth	The working-class catholic youth	1926	catholic	International to local	To develop autonomy, social class pride, self-esteem, and collective spirit Popular movement
	The student catholic youth	1929	catholic	National to local	Idem Elitist movement (due to the small number of students)
	The rural catholic youth	1929	catholic	National to local	Idem Popular movement
The youth hostels	The French league of youth hostels	1929	Catholic (in an open way)	International and national	To sustain open-door activities and to develop young people's autonomy
	The non-religious centre of youth hostels	1933	Non-religious (in a leftist way)	National	Idem + pacifism and gender diversity promotion

Source: Loncle, 2003, pp. 96-100

Developed in a very disparate way (in a very competitive logic and far from public authorities) at the beginning of the period, these movements tended to cooperate increasingly with each others and with local and central authorities at the end of the period. In this regard, they played a critical role by sustaining the first public policies addressed to young people.

The influence of local authorities in favour of youth and the State's progressive organisation

During this period, public actors' influence and role appeared unquestionably secondary compared with private actors' one. Nonetheless, local authorities have sometimes been considerably helpful. In 1936, for the first time, the State was endowed by a public agency that was responsible for the intervention toward young people.

- The contrasted influences and roles of local authorities in favour of youth

As in the field of youth almost all actions were implemented at local level, as these actions depended largely on local networks of actors, to propose an analysis of the influences and roles of local authorities in favour of youth, it appeared necessary to focus our attention on particular examples. To do so, we realized a comparative study of the implementations in Rennes and Lille under five points of view (the contents of the local "youth question"; the local youth organisations and movements; the ideological conceptions of youth intervention; the types of public interventions and realisations; the relationships with youth organisations and movements). These two cities appeared rather different : Rennes is a medium size city, regional capital of the Brittany Region, it is since this period an administrative city, rather wealthy, characterized by slight social problems; conversely, Lille which belongs to a huge metropolis, is one of the first urbanisation place, thus, since this period it has to contend with bottomless social problems. This comparison can be summarised in the following table:

Table 3 : Influences and roles of local authorities in favour of youth

	Rennes	Lille
The local "youth question"	A certain rural exodus, poverty and housing problem Still a relatively wealthy situation	Deep urbanisation process: problems of unemployment, poverty, housing, health, dangerousness of workplaces
The local youth organisations and movements	Two main organisations : a religious and a non religious patronages They developed a very open approach of youth care	Almost all the panel of youth organisations A strong influence and both catholic and non-religious organisations Some are very popular, some other try to develop an elitist approach
Ideological conceptions of youth intervention	Moralism and patriotism Catholicism is very dominant	Anti-poverty and hygienism Leftists movements are important
Types of public interventions and realisations	Modest: the Municipality supported the non-religious patronage by promoting its actions in the local newspaper, by lending its infrastructures (the stadium, the swimming pool, the City hall)	Substantial: The Municipality organised and founded its own equipment (e.g.: a day care centre, a holiday camp, a large charity "agency") The Municipality belonged to the trend that has been called the "municipal socialism"
Relationships with youth organisations/movements	An exclusive link with the non-religious patronage	A clear preference for non-religious, leftists organisations

Source: Loncle, 2003, pp. 58 and following.

This table shows clearly the contrasted public interventions that could be found according to the Municipalities. It introduces already the question of territorial inequalities upon which we are going to discuss in more detail in the third part.

- In 1936, the creation of the Undersecretary to leisure and sport

If we make an exception with the Vichy period that appeared as exceptional, the State's intervention was not very developed during this period. Still, the creation of the Undersecretary to leisure and sport has to be mentioned: it was founded in 1936 during the Front populaire's Governement and entrusted to Leo Lagrange. This man was commonly designed by the youth movements' leaders as the "Youth minister". He had a strong charisma and has become a myth in the field of youth work and of youth policy. During his three-year commission, with the close collaboration of youth movements, he encouraged many public interventions that are still considered as significant: he supported the delivery of allocations to youth hostels, to camp grounds, to stadiums; he introduced the "popular sportive brevet"; with the train company, he negotiated a reduction of travel tickets for young people… Above all, the man was obsessed by the respect of freedom and choice as far as youth care was concerned. He appeared as an exception in a period where authoritarian forms of youth movements were spreading in Italy and in Germany. To illustrate this period, I would like to quote Leo Lagrange:

« Our simple and humanistic goal is to permit the whole French youth to find, in the sport practice, cheerfulness and health, our goal is also to build a leisure organisation where workers can find the

relaxation and the recompense to their hard labour. (…) Sportive leisure, touristy leisure, cultural leisure have to be associated and completed by the joys of stadium, the joys of walk, of camping, of travels, of spectacles and feasts. We wish that the worker, the peasant, the unemployed will find in the leisure, the cheerfulness of living and the sense of dignity. To build this immense project, to animate it with the powerful energy of popular life, I rely upon the active collaboration of all the existing organisations and especially of the working class organisations. Moreover, I rely on youth itself to create the tools of its strength, health, and joy»[34].

The sixties: the concomitant professionalization of youth work and the decline in youth movements

The second part of this presentation is dedicated to the sixties because of the fundamental role this period played in the constitution of youth work and of youth policies.
Certainly, the sixties was a strange period under various viewpoints:

- It was a period of economic growth during which the public action tended to be largely developed following the idea that modernity and planning will permit to eradicate poverty and all forms of maladaptation. Consequently, the urbanisation process knew a new boom as well as social policy and professionalization of social workers of all kinds.

- Regarding youth, it was a period of paradoxes. Young people were seen by adults as strangers that did not easily accept mainstream norms and that were potential delinquents. At the same time, the surveys led on them showed that this generation was extremely conservative and eager to reproduce social norms.

- Youth movements and youth public intervention seemed to experiment a kind of honey moon: they appeared very dynamic, proposing new principles and ideas of intervention; they worked under the principles of partnership and proposed an attempt of transversal public policy. It was during this period that the first attempts to professionalized youth workers were developed.

- Nevertheless, the honeymoon was short: with the May 1968 events and their consequences youth movements were rejected by the State and began to decline.

I propose to enter the details of these different elements:
Young people: a menace for social peace, a generation in struggle
During the sixties, there are two successive figures of youth: at the beginning of the decade, a figure of delinquents, the "black jackets" that haunted the mass media and traumatized public opinion; at the end of the decade, the figure of the students in struggle for which part of the adults' population showed some sympathy. When one examines retrospectively the influence of these figures on youth policies and youth work, the situation appears a bit contradictory. Whereas the "black jackets" were in reality few of them, they were used largely by the press and were transformed in a kind of allegory of the time period and contributed to deep changes

---

[34] Léo Lagrange, cité par Jean-Louis Chappat, *Les chemins de l'espoir, ou combats de Léo Lagrange*, Liévin, Editions Fédération Léo Lagrange, 1983, p.173 .

in youth care. On the other hand, the students involved in the May 1968 events were a lot of them; they engendered large social evolutions but nothing very specific in the field of youth care.

- The "black jackets" was the name given by the mass media from 1959 to the middle of the decade to designate youth delinquency organised in bands. Several violent events led to the emergence of this new figure that was largely built by the press: originally they designated a handful of young people who deteriorated public spaces during the summer 1959; by extension, they became a generic term to name youth organised delinquency. Few of them really wore black jackets... but the question is not there. They were considered as "rebels without causes" and were used as a metaphor to explain the social crisis; an educational crisis and a political one. If the "black jackets" existed: it was because their parents were permissive, they mismatched tolerance and weakness. It was also because our country was experimenting a fratricide war through the Algerian war, these young people were in war against themselves as well as the French society was in war against itself. To answer to this phenomenon, the State proposed a rather plain solution: youth work.

- The students' movement of 1968 appeared as a radically different phenomenon. First of all, it was real, significant and had its own political cause. This movement was no longer a metaphor of social crisis but social crisis itself. The students who were gathered in this movement blocked the country during several weeks, they organised strikes and demonstrations, they claimed for more freedom, more tolerance, more places in society. They were more or less supported by working class trade unions and gave birth to several leftist organisations. They constitute a clear reject of the Vth Republic regime and of the General de Gaulle's government. In front of this, the public answer was also different: the State does not propose youth care; the problem overcame this kind of solution. The French society would be transformed durably by this events but not the youth sector, if we except the fact that youth movements which mainly supported students, lost the State's trust.

The relationship between youth movements and public actors

For the French youth researcher, the 1960s appear as an extremely interesting and rich period: at both national and local levels, many actions and initiatives were developed, new movements emerged, and partnerships were built between public actors and youth organisations. The new urbanisation process represented an opportunity to think new methods, principles and places of youth care. The expansion of women' work brought about much considering on the place of children, and on the organisation of extracurricular time. It was also, but we will come back to this in the following point, the beginning of the professionalization process. Here again we will examine separately what is going on at national and local levels (using the same comparison between Rennes and Lille).

- 1958-1966 : Maurice Herzog and the High commissariat of Youth and Sports

The most interesting period, or at least the period during which a real attempt at structuring a significant youth sector existed, was the period that stretches from 1958 to 1966. The field was placed under the responsibility of Maurice Herzog who was nominated High commissaire of Youth and Sports. This man developed a real project that was both ambitious and transversal. Based on the twofold principle that youth policy had to be organised with youth movements and in an inter-ministerial way, he proposed partnerships with youth actors and with close ministries (such as education, social affairs…).
Concerning the partnership with youth actors, it was organised through a close and systematic partnership where youth actors were seen as co-producers of public action. It consisted in the creation of a High committee on Youth that aimed at creating and coordinating new orientations in the field of youth policies.
Concerning the inter-ministerial approach, it was symbolised by the creation of the FONJEP (inter-ministerial funds in favour of youth and popular education) which gathered 13 Ministries and whose aim was to develop public actions that answer to youth needs in the framework of the planning and urbanisation process.
As underlined by Françoise Tétard:

> "The youth sector and in particular the popular education sector has been constituted in a reasoned and subtle articulation between associations representing various ideologies which claimed for recognition and a State that needed a plural interlocutor guarantying pluralism. This obligated alliance has known ups and downs for fifty years but it is unquestionably constitutive of the identity of the sector" (Tétard, 1998, p. 3)

Thus, this golden age did not last: Maurice Herzog's departure in 1966 was the end of this ambitious policy addressed to youth. Its successors did not beneficiate from the same support from the youth movements and they intended to develop a policy addressed directly to young people. Under the influence of May 1968 events and under the evolution of the French society which tended toward more individualism, youth movements and then the State itself weakened progressively during the 1970s and more dramatically during the 1980s.

- The contrasted situations of Rennes and Lille in the field of youth care

In Rennes and Lille, some forms of partnerships between the Municipalities and youth actors are also experimented. Nevertheless, deep differences remained that were linked to the accuracy of poverty and unemployment problems in Lille, in particular. The latter Municipality had to manage serious problems that seemed then relatively far from youth care. In Rennes, the situation was more favourable but the trend was the same than in central level.

Tableau 4 : Local youth care in Rennes and Lille during the sixties

	Rennes	Lille
Position of the Municipality toward youth policy	A will to have the leadership in the framing of local youth policy The Municipality expresses the will to work with the whole network of youth actors	A delegation to youth organisations
Creation and implementation of new youth organisations	A multiplicity of new organisations: the centres for youth and culture ; the Léo Lagrance clubs, the youth clubs But the permanence of the old organisations and movements	The permanence of old organisations Due to tensions and ideological battles, a difficulty to implement the new forms

Quality of the youth network	A very organised youth network, based on consensus, on stability of a few local actors	A close network characterized by its many tensions
Spaces of formulation of the local youth policy	Organisation of a local network of youth actors (the CLOJEP) and a counterproposition from the municipality (the OSCR) (1961-2006)	Organisation of a Youth Municipal agency but which lasted only 6 years (1965-1971)
Fields of actions addressed to young people	Disposals in the socio-cultural field, implementation of structures in the new areas	Struggle against poverty

Source : Loncle, 2003, pp. 249 and following.

The emergence of youth workers and the difficulties to build an homogenous profession

During the sixties, to answer to the needs that emerge from the urbanisation process but also to the belief that public intervention may resolve any kind of poverty or of social maladaption, a wave of professionalization tended to affect all social sectors. In the field of youth care, two types of profession emerged.

The most constituted one was the profession of special needs workers: it was formalised in 1966 but was the result of a process of negotiation between the State and the associations that fand its roots during the Second World War. Actually, it was during this period that the needs of youth delinquency and youth disability appeared in their all extent: at the beginning of the conflict underage prisoners and disabled children were mixed with adults in prisons and institutions in terrible conditions. As a consequence, some individuals, almost all coming from the scouts' movements got organised and alerted judges to find specific answers to the situation of these underage persons. During two decades, "special needs workers'" schools were created and led to the progressive definition and organisation of this profession.

The second profession, far less organised, in spite of the proximity of their roots, was the profession of sociocultural activities' coordinators. The sixties are the decade during which the considering on the definition of this profession was the most active, at least at central level. It came from the partnership that we mentioned and in particular from the FONJEP. Many trainings and schools emerged during this period that aimed at regulating the access to the profession. The first diploma is created in 1964 and is called the DECEP (national diploma of popular education councillor). Since, many kinds of denomination have followed the DECEP until the DEFA (national diploma for the function of animator) that is currently in reformulation.

Nevertheless, the definition of this profession remained confusing. As an illustration, one can quote Joffre Dumazedier in 1971:

> "one can designate by animation any action, in or on a group, a community or a milieu, that aims at developing communication and at structuring social life, based on semi-directive methods; it is a method of integration and of participation. The animation role can be defined as an adaptation to the new forms of social life with the twofold and complementary aspect of remedy against maladaptations and of support to individual and collective development" (Dumazedier quoted by Loncle, 2003, p. 198)

If it seems rather difficult to establish a clear defined profession of coordinators, national public actors organised progressively the answers to youth needs through the collective equipments that appeared in almost all new urban areas. There was a strong belief in the capacity of public intervention to regulate youth behaviours through these equipments and their professionals. Consequently, new youth organisations tended to increase dramatically as well as the professionals who were allocated to their management.

Table 5 : The belief in the State's capacity to organise young people

	Organised youth	Unorganised but "organisable" youth	Unorganised and "unorganisable" youth
Types of youth	Young people engaged in youth movements	Young people with no particular problem but with no specific activities	Youth delinquents, black jackets, youth bands
Types of organisations/structures	Youth movements	Youth and culture houses, youth clubs, Leo Lagrange clubs	Prevention clubs
Types of professionals	Youth leaders (voluntary sector)	sociocultural activities' coordinators	special needs workers

Source : Tétard, 1986, quoted by Loncle, 2003, p. 188.

The new organisations were principally: the Youth and culture houses, the Léo Lagrange clubs, the youth clubs. The Youth and culture houses were very symbolic of this period: they beneficiated from a significant impulse in 1959 due to the "black jackets" movements. The 40 MJC with professionals in 1959 became 517 in 1965. They were mainly implemented in the cities that counted more than 10 000 inhabitants.

To summarise this period, it is possible to quote André Philip (the MJC's founder at the end of the Second World War) when he explained his vision of the relationship between the associations and the State in 1961:

> "We tend toward a contractually organised society, freely organised by its associations and that engage with the State's administration the necessary dialogue on the whole issues; this approach permits to accomplish a work in which everyone participate in and for which a convention is concluded and signed. In this convention, one can find the responsibilities of each group of participants but also trust for the realisation of the tasks that has been distributed. It is this approach that is becoming luckily becoming central in our country today and which has inspired our action in favour of popular education for fifteen years" (André Philip, 1961, quoted by Laurent Besse, 2008, p. 61).

Youth work and its challenges in the contemporary French society

This optimistic view point is no longer dominant today: youth integration and youth participation appear to be problematic if not a failure. Youth unemployment stays high, the rates of youth delinquency and of risk behaviours appear to be increasing or at least to represent public problems. Regarding these rates, one has to be prudent to affirm their increase: as their examination is rather recent, it is very difficult to assess an actual augmentation. On the other hand, what is certain is that adults do no longer accept these "deviant" behaviours. Regarding youth turn out to elections, one has to recognise high abstention rates and a generalised feeling of distrust regarding politicians. On all these matters, we must underline the emergence and the extension of the youth age and of the period of youth integration. Consequently, the "youth question" appears as being still in process as well as the expectations of public actors toward youth and youth workers.

The recent changes in the "youth question" and in youth policies

The care for young people in France appears today extremely complex to describe. It seems to be strongly affected by a twofold paradox. On the one hand, youth represents one of the major concerns of public authorities at all levels of the decision making process and in numerous fields of public action (security, health, employment, housing, transport…). In this respect, youth gives rise to many passionate discourses and burning ideological stands.

> Regarding these aspects, the debates that took place in the framework of the presidential elections and the law of struggle against delinquency (5th march of 2007) are good examples.

Regarding the presidential elections, young people were in all cases subject to the candidates' interest: each of them explains his/her concern about the future of youth and about youth delinquency and violence.

The bill preamble is also very enlightening: "Particularly turned on minors, this policy [of struggle against delinquency] is based on a central pillar: education. One ought to learn to children, from their youngest age, why some rules are necessary to live in society and why it is imperative to respect them. (…) The identification and the appropriation of these limits represent an indispensable pedagogy to build oneself and to learn life. This process supposes that each actors of children's world are gathered: education field, medical and paramedical fields, associative and judicial fields. This educative action is going to permit to explain the necessary dimension of the sanction in order that it is admitted and in order to avoid reiterative behaviours. The protection of the more vulnerable, in particular minors, women, disabled and elderly people, is the direct corollary of this policy". This preamble proposes a threefold shortcut: young people are mainly responsible for delinquency in our county; among them migrant young people are particularly involved –those who do not know the rules are migrant young people- ; young people are keen to attack old ladies…

The public debate is obviously hot and is kept alive by politicians, researchers and various experts (youth workers but also psychiatrics, judges…).
Youth is generally credited with three dominant figures. The first one is the figure of dangerous youth: it is currently dominant which explains the increase in repression policies addressed to young people and in particular to young people with migrant background. This figure is promoted by rightist parties and reactionary movements but it tends to affect the whole range of political formations. The second one is the figure of youth as a vulnerable part of the population. This figure is also important today because it justifies the development of most of social and health policies which suppose that young people need to be particularly protected and have to beneficiate from specific disposals. The third one is the figure of youth as a resource. In this concept, youth is considered for its potentialities of dynamism and social renewal. This figure is traditionally defended by leftist parties; it is nowadays used by local authorities to justify their interventions toward young people.
On the other hand, youth policies occur to be more and more fragmented. This remark is true if one considers the fields covered by policies addressed to young people but also the levels of decision-making and implementation. Regarding these issues, youth policies have deeply changed from a socio-cultural and social conception in the framework of the economic growth of the 60ies and 70ies to a will to struggle against poverty and multiple forms of exclusion in a context of economic decline from the beginning of the 80ies. Concerning the levels of decision-making process, the State has operated a strong withdrawal in two steps (in 1982-1983 and in 2004 with the laws of decentralisation). As long as young people are concerned, it is only competent today for the educational system and the questions of justice and police (and for this latter, to some extent only). Since 2004, local authorities of the different levels (regions, departments and municipalities) are supposed to care for their young people in the other fields of public actions (access to work, housing, social affairs, struggle against discriminations…). Health affairs are shared by the State and local authorities.
This situation leads to an extremely complex system in which youth workers and young people themselves are confronted by a general reduction of public budgets and by public authorities which, for a large part of them, avoid as much as they can to get financially involved.

The mobilisation of local authorities and the expectations toward youth work
At the beginning of the 1980s, a turning point was marked in youth care with a threefold aspect: the beginning of the withdrawal of the State of many social affairs; the fostering of integrated and territorialized dimensions of public action; a perception of young people which were more systematically considered both as victims of the economic crisis and as potential delinquents. Because of these concomitant changes, youth policies presented a new frame:

they were more and more locally implemented with a will to take into account territorial specificities. They were also less oriented toward socio-cultural affairs and more turned toward social preoccupations, in particular toward access to labour market. From this period, the unemployment rate of young people began to concentrate most of the political concerns. During the last decade and since the last decentralisation wave, these trends have been reinforced. The State went on transferring social competencies to local authorities (in particular: the totality of apprenticeship and part of the missions locales (local institutions in charge of access to work) to regions; the so-called Fonds d'aide aux jeunes (an allowance which aims at supporting young people in case of emergency) and the social housing founds to the departments; the municipalities are still responsible for the social integration and the social action in favour of young people. The local authorities for their part have developed new focuses toward young people. Among them, the questions of struggle against unemployment, of civic participation, health and repression are central. Again, the limit of this trend is that these initiatives are partly facultative and not always well developed or properly integrated at local level. They have introduced a greater risk of territorial inequality: from a place to another young people may not beneficiate from the same care.

As an example, we can present a recent study that we developed last year on the decentralisation process of the Fonds d'aide aux jeunes (a social allowance for the most excluded young people) in six French departments. This study permits to highlight strong differences regarding the access to this allowance. This is true both for the funds dedicated to the allowance and for the criteria used to determine if young people may or not access. The following table clearly establishes that the amount of the budget is not correlated to young people's proportion in the local population.

Table 6 : the local inequalities of treatment in the access to social provision (the exemple of the Fonds d'aide aux jeunes – a social allowance for the most excluded young people)

	Rank according to the number of inhabitants	Rank according to the ageing index (from the youngest to the oldest)	Rank according to the budget dedicated to the FAJ
Département F	1	1	1
Département D	2	2	2
Département C	3	4	6
Département E	4	6	4
Département A	5	3	3
Département B	6	5	5

Source: Loncle and al., 2008, p. 233

As shown in the second and third columns, the amount of money dedicated to the FAJ is not automatic and does not depend only on the number of young people. It is more the result of the political will of the President of the Department, who is a locally elected person. For instance, in the Department C, where young people are not considered as a priority, we can assess a rather low budget : it is the third department for the number of inhabitants but only the sixth one for the budget allocated to the FAJ. On the contrary, in the Departement A, which is the fifth one for the number of inhabitants, the dedicated amount is the third one. In this department, young people are seen as a resource for which the local authority has to get engaged.

The following table is focused on the modalities of access and on the perceptions of the FAJ. One can see that three groups of departments emerge from our study. Their conceptions of the allowance tend to vary considerably:

Tableau 7 : modalities of access and perceptions of the FAJ

	Group 1 : to give a means of subsistence	Group 2 : to foster professional integration	Group 3 : to promote a global integration
Inscription in an integration route	Taken into account but not determinant	Determinant	Determinant
Social situation	Determinant	Taken into account but not determinant	Determinant
Parents wages/family support	Determinant	Taken into account but not determinant	Taken into account but not determinant

Source: Loncle and al., 2008, p. 233

As shown in the table, three rather different perceptions of the FAJ can be distinguished among the six territories. For two of them, it is seen as a means of subsistence (for housing and food, mainly); for two others, it has to be used to foster a professional integration (the question of social integration is put aside); finally, for two departments it is considered as a way to promote young people's global integration. When we know consider the criteria that are used to allow the access to the allowance, here again we can underline strong differences: in some cases, the inscription in an integration route is determinant, in other cases, not; in some cases, what is predominant is the young person's social situation or his/her relationship with his/her family.

Consequently, young people are not treated in the same way from a territory to another: it is true for the money that is allocate, for the perception of the allowance, and for the used criteria. In this framework, youth workers (and in particular Job centres' "operations managers") who are responsible for the constitution of young people's files appear in some places extremely powerless to defend their beneficiaries, even if they are fully aware that in other territories, they would have obtained the funds…

> ### The new roles and functions of youth workers

In this framework, youth work changes in various ways: it evolves for the two "ancient" professions but also with the introduction of new professions.

The changes concern the professionals' profiles: they correspond to an attempt at entering in better contact with young people. It means for coordinators for instance a more systematic recruitment of youth workers coming from the migrant communities (the so-called "big brothers") from which one supposes they are more likely to answer to youth migrants' expectations.

The changes are also thematic. At the beginning of the 1980s, under the pressure of youth unemployment, a new profession is introduced through the "operations managers" (chargés de mission) of Youth job centres. For the last five years, consequently to the growing concern on youth health, health organisers are also created. In the two cases, the aim is to overcome special needs identified as non-covered in the former youth care framework.

Finally, the changes are also structural. These changes are due to the decentralization process: the funds come increasingly from local authorities but in a rather complex way (as far as, most of the time, several of them contribute to the jobs funding with sometimes various objectives). In this regard, the case of "health managers" is very illustrative: in Brittany, for instance, they are funded by the State, the health insurance and the local authority that is called the "pays". Each of these authorities follows its particular objective: the State aims at supporting health promotion; the health insurance wants to foster patient's education in chronically disease; the local authorities intend to operate actions from prevention to cure… consequently, health managers are placed in a very difficult situation where no one knows who has the leadership for orientating their actions and where they have to struggle with each

of their founding authority to defend their viewpoint. About the same demonstration could have been developed with the three other professions, as soon as they received a multiple funding.
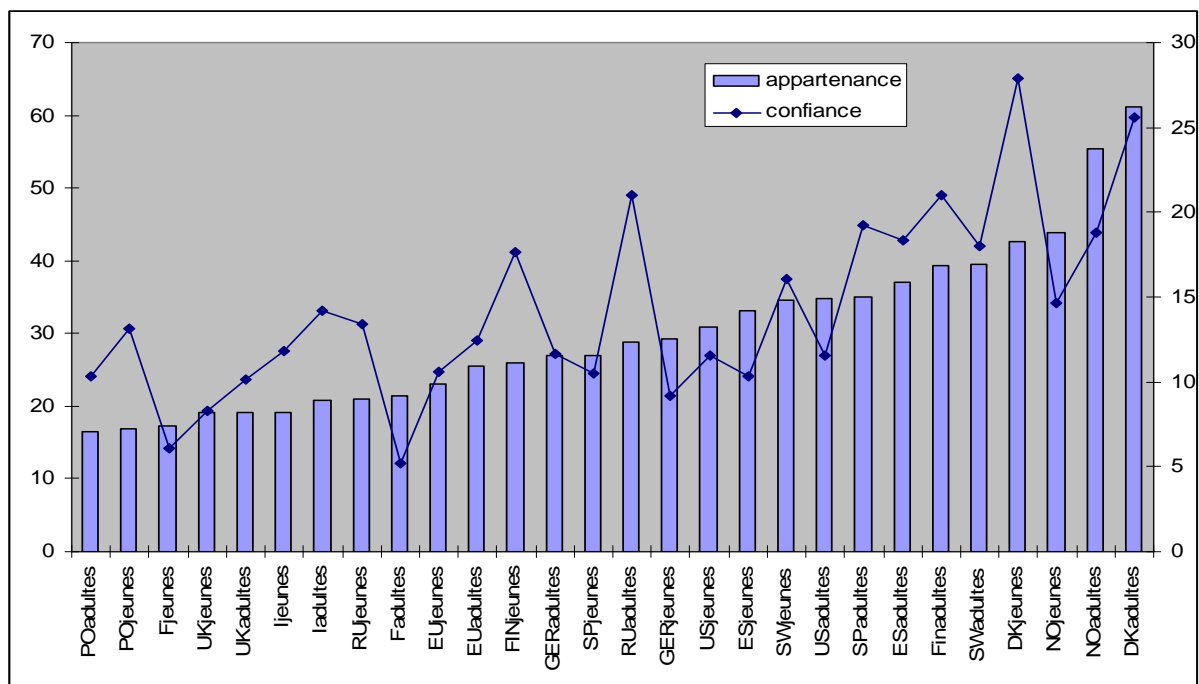
This evolution appears has very preoccupying if we have in mind the already very fragmented state of the profession. If you add the lack of unity of the profession and the multiple objectives of the funding authorities, you can imagine both the complexity of action for youth workers and their incapacity to influence decisions. As long as public authorities present constructive projects, the situation is complex but not problematic, but as soon as one of them develop an expectation that does not correspond to the usual values of youth care (cost reduction or repression for instance), youth workers may appear particularly defenceless to organise an individual or *a fortiori* an collective opposition.

The gaps between public actors and young people

This aspect is all the more preoccupying that it echoes to the development of an important gap between young people and public actors.

A recent survey on young people's values in Europe leads to reveal a preoccupant situation as far as French young people are considered. They appear on the one hand very pessimistic and mistrustful toward society as a whole and on the other hand not to feel bind on the rest of the society.
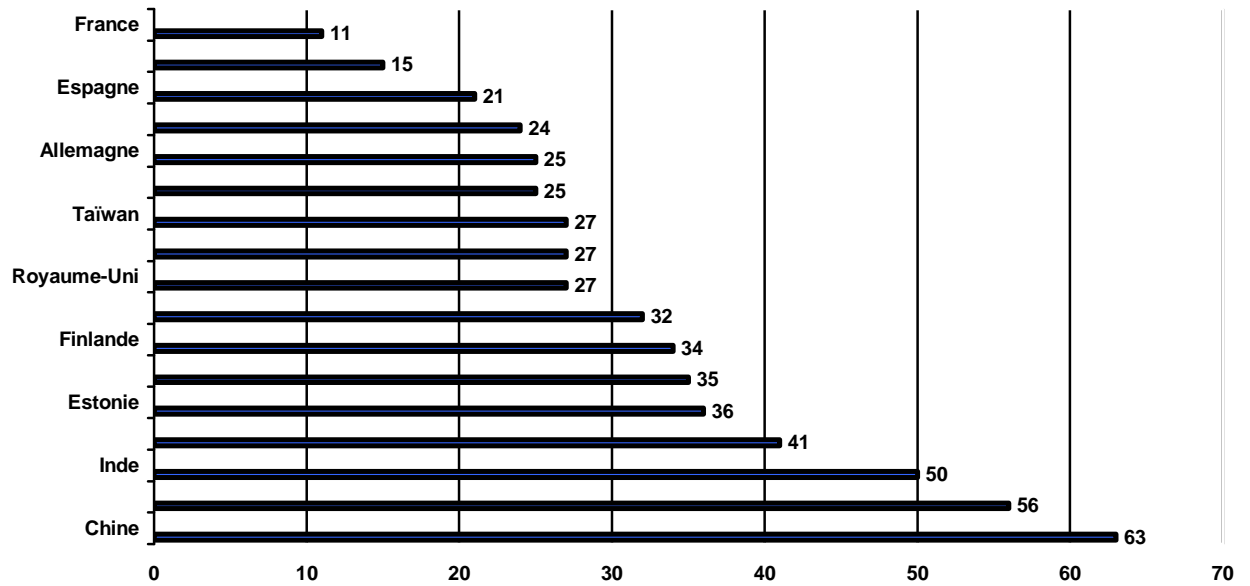
Figure 1 belonging feeling and trust toward institutions

Source : Galland, 2008, p. 34

Figure 2 : are you ready to pay for elderly people of your country?

France 11
15
Espagne 21
24
Allemagne 25
25
Taïwan 25
27
27
Royaume-Uni 27
32
Finlande 34
35
Estonie 36
41
Inde 50
56
Chine 63

source : ?

To conclude, it appears important to emphasize that the lack of unity of youth workers represents a real weakness under several viewpoints: these professionals seem powerless, fragmented, and unable to constitute a potential opposition force; this aspect is all the more preoccupying that young people are growingly considered as a menace in the contemporary French society and that they are very unequally treated from one territory to another. This statement is particularly distressing if one has in mind the fact that youth work has always stand up for young people in our country, but currently no longer seems to have the power to influence these negative perceptions.

References

Abbé Ménard, *Un grand patronage breton, la Tour d'Auvergne*, Rennes, Oberthur, 1947.

Amiot Michel, « L'État et la jeunesse, la Fédération française des maisons des jeunes et de la culture démantelée par son ministère de tutelle », *Esprit*, 1969, n°387.

Ariès P. (1960) L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime, Paris, Plon

Bantigny L. (2007**),** *Le plus bel âge ? Jeunes et jeunesse en France de l'aube des Trente Glorieuses à la guerre d'Algérie,* Paris, Fayard.

Bailleau F. & Cartuyvels Y. (2007) *La justice pénale des mineurs en Europe : entre modèle Welfare et inflexions néo-libérales*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Besse L. (2008) *Les MJC, de l'été des blousons noirs à l'été des Minguettes, 1959-1981,* Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Bordes V. (2007) *Prendre place dans la cité, jeunes et politiques municipales*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Boussemart Christophe, *L'échappée belle, les Ch'tis à l'assaut des loisirs*, Lille, Publi-Nord, 1986.

Bradley H. & Van Hoof J. (2005), *Young people in Europe, labour market and citizenship,* Bristol, The Policy press.

Cacérès Benigno, *Histoire de l'Éducation populaire*, Paris, Seuil, 1964.

Cavalli A. & Galland O. (1993) *L'allongement de la jeunesse*, Arles, Actes Sud.

Chappat Jean-Louis, *Les chemins de l'espoir, ou combats de Léo Lagrange*, Liévin, Editions Fédération Léo Lagrange, 1983.

Chauvière Michel, « L'efficace de Vichy.... », dans *Les Cahiers de l'animation*, n°49-50, 1985.

Chauvière Michel, *Enfance inadaptée : l'héritage de Vichy*, Les Editions ouvrières, Paris, 1980.

Chéroutre Marie-Thérèse, « Les Guides de France, notes sur l'évolution d'un mouvement », *Les Cahiers de l'animation*, n°57-58.

Cholvy Gérard, *Le patronage, ghetto ou vivier?, Actes du colloque des 11 et 12 mars 1987,* Nouvelle cité, 1988.

Cholvy Gérard, *Mouvements de jeunesse, chrétiens et juifs : dans un cadre européen, 1799-1968*, Cerf, 1985.

Furlong A. & Cartmel F. (1997) *Young People and Social Change. Individualisation and Risk in late Modernity*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Galland O. (2008) « Les jeunes et la société : des visions contrastées de l'avenir », in Stellinger A. (dir.) *Les jeunesses face à leur avenir*, Paris, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, pp. 25-54.

IARD (2001), *Study on the state of young people and youth policy in Europe*, Final reports.

Koebel M. (2000) « La politique noble des conseils d'enfants », *Lien social et politiques*, n°44, pp. 125-140.

Lebon F. (2007) *Les animateurs socioculturels et de loisirs : morphologie d'un groupe professionnel (1982-2005)*, Marly Le Roi, Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire.

Lebon F. (2005) *Une politique de l'enfance, du patronage au centre de loisirs*, Paris, L'Harmattan.