The History of Youth Work in Poland. The Ideological Background.

Marcin Sińczuch

The aim of studying social history can be perceived from practical perspective. Collected historical knowledge can give prolific insights into solutions and activities currently developed and introduced in contemporary societies. Practical outcome of such historical studies can be especially appreciated when building reflexive theoretical background aiming at drawing frameworks and defining possibilities of potential or prospective actions.

From historical perspective, especially when one wants to look back at the periods of the 1950s and 1970s, some currently approved definitions of youth work seem to be inaccurate in scope of social reality in the past. In the following text I assume that youth work includes every possible action intentionally dedicated to young people and including youth active participation (direct or indirect). From this perspective youth work can be examined according to its goals, form, contents, actors and its general structure in time and space.

Youth work seems to be a highly contextualized area. It is written into everyday routine of each social group that consists of representatives of different age cohorts, but also can be seen among young people and sometimes its forms and contents are designed by groups of adults that are not contacting young people directly. According to many definitions, youth work can be presented as institutionalized action, but also it may include elements of spontaneity, subcultures, can be carried out by youth, for youth and according to the youth's expectations and plans.

Although we face many approaches to defining youth work it is apparent that youth work is in practice a set of loosely interconnected forms of activities, which are defined, redefined, tested and modified by successive generations. Undoubtedly, "youth work" is both shaped by its own, internal tradition containing grounded forms of work with youth and for youth in a given country, cultural areas or organizations, but is also determined by general trends and ideological projects existing in public and political spheres.

The third element influencing youth work, which is strictly connected with the two above, is recognition of the role of youth in a given historical moment. Friedrich Tennbruck (1962) distinguished three forms of the existence of young people in social system appearing in different historical contexts. Although his theory regarded Germany, it possess a dose of generality. In a chronological way the first one is the generation of youth movements regarding the situation in the beginning of the twentieth century, when young people realized the need of affiliation through participation in mass youth organizations aimed at civil, cultural and social targets not related with direct political engagement. The next one can be called "the generation of radical political solutions" taking the responsibility for the fate of society, the metaphor of which describes the situation and attitudes of young people engaged in revolutionary movements aiming at changing the world and featuring it with youth traits. This ideological engagement in the post war societies gives place to salience and retirement from political or even public sphere and focuses on private, family and occupational life featuring the post war generation of stagnation.

The history of youth work can be illustrated by two curves – sinusoidal one, describing returns or circulation of three dominant narrations: a) organized, but rather apolitical youth - working for their own environment, b) youth organized for social change with clear and conscious political involvement to c) disorganized youth, apolitical and running away to private sphere. The other is a growing straight line reflecting the increase of individualism, autonomy, self reflexivity and rationalization of places and activities of individuals in a society. Thus, it can be said that among youth work there exist different

paradigms which come to front from time to time, but in the meantime the whole domain is subjected to social and cultural changes.

In the following article I present the situation in Poland, which can be easily used as the preliminary model of the processes of youth work formation in whole Central-Eastern Europe, with special emphasis on countries like Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and, in some aspects, also Romania and Bulgaria, not excluding even Soviet Union and Germany. However, character of the presented material restricts the main focus and presents examples and evidences to Poland itself. First of all, the article is devoted to the presentation of ideologies which have been influencing contents and forms of youth work in Poland since 1900 to the present times.

1. Time of youth organizations 1918 - 1947

Youth work in the earliest time of its activity did not recognize youth as an independent social group, because the meaning and position of young people in society were determined by its prospective potential. Thus, the meaning of "being young" was to prepare for the future position in society (Gillis 1974). This view also determined the forms of social participation that at the time being was focused around education, self-arrangement, and restricted socialization. Young people were supposed to prepare for adult life and belong to such kinds of communities (social, class, professional) that will add an adult value to their life. It might be emphasized that the development of youth work in central and eastern Europe was deeply influenced by the process of gaining national independences by many countries of the region after The First World War. This impact could be seen on three following levels.[23]

First, the historical delay in the process of nation construction had had to be supported by powerful, rapid and broad actions carried out by well prepared elites. Young people in the emerging nations constituted natural resource for the recruitment of leaders-to-be. That is why youth work was oriented towards the nation elites recruitment, education and due preparation. Youth organizations formed a system of ideological distribution from centre to peripheries. However, it turned out in practice, that on the very local level their resources were used for doing more „fun and benefits oriented" youth work, while their ideological principles were not of crucial importance.

Second, the construction of nation state was accompanied by the denial of other nations' values, while their cultures were treated as backward and not deserving autonomy. This idea was performed with different intensity in different places, but most of the time there could be recognized a strong model of competition between different groups of young people, youth organizations, undermined nations, religions and cultures. The idea of intercultural dialogue based on principles of equal rights was not so common and it hardly backboned real youth activities. However, among many Polish youth movements and organizations of that time one could observe a great diversity. The majority of youth organizations and movements were interconnected with different social backgrounds, possessed precisely defined political identification and treated their sets of values or ideologies very seriously.

Third, the majority of the population was in a poor economic situation and demanded different forms of help. In due fact, youth work of that period very often had included numerous and diversified activities of social service – food supply, health care and professional training. Other important dimension of youth work consisted of citizenship training – young people especially those from underdeveloped, often rural areas were taught

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[23] The selected particular examples of youth work and youth organizations of the midwar period in Poland can be found in the recently published book: Tomaszewski P., Wołos M., Organizacje młodzieżowe w XX w. Struktury, Ideologie, działalność, Toruń 2008. (English abstracts of articles included)

their civil rights and duties, regulations, law and bureaucratic procedures necessary for functioning in society. This kind of youth work was located in different institutional forms. In Poland there was a big focus on citizenship training during obligatory military service. Young soldiers were trained in writing and reading, principles of personal hygiene and medical prevention, they learned about innovations in agriculture, received a basic knowledge of entrepreneurship, accountancy and technique. Apart from these pragmatically oriented activities great attention has been paid to formation of patriotic attitudes, historical consciousness and national identity (Odziemkowski 1996).

In summary we might characterize youth work of that time as based on centralized youth organizations, tied with their social backgrounds (national, class, religious) among which competition was a common activity. Among other important factors there can be pointed pluralism of organizations, mass membership and strong identification with the organization and its values. The dominant ideologies of youth organizations often referred to nationalism (defined as patriotism) or values featuring particular social groups. They were focused on education of future elites that could take part in the social conflicts in the differentiated world, where nations, social classes and cultures were struggling (Sińczuch 2002).

2. Time of great ideologies 1948 – 1956

The Second World War resulted with suspension of youth work in its current and manifest form. Simultaneously, youth eagerly got engaged in the activities conducted against German and Soviet occupants. In consequence, youth organizations, which acted undercover, unified their means and complied with common aim – preparation of young people to fight for the preservation of national identity. In this field there can be mentioned resilient activity of the underground scouting, which among many other activities engaged in war propaganda, being a kind of patriotic *street art* of that time.

After the Second World War, the communist party continuously conquered more and more dimensions of social life erasing their autonomy and diversity. The communist regime relatively early started to dispose of many youth organizations including scouting and aimed at replacing them with one, mass, totalitarian and controlled movement. Its organizational form existed as Union of Polish Youth (ZMP), organization founded in 1948 on the basis of socialist and communist organizations, which were massively terminated at that time, and officially consisted of over two millions members at its peak (Wierzbicki 2006). In scope of its activity ZMP promoted ideas of education through labor, domination of an individual by the collective, public sphere over private, engagement in political life and building of new socialist regime.

One of the main communist ideas was to create a new mankind and the relevant way was located in the process of "socialist upbringing and education" that lead to creating a new individual, a new collectively oriented man (Walicki 1996). Not surprisingly the rank and value added to the youth work in ideology and practice of totalitarian communism was extremely high. The materials and instructions for youth workers of state organizations of that time were full of quotations from Marks, Engels and Lenin emphasizing the importance of youth: "Future of working class and future of socialism itself depends on the education and formation of young generation" (Marks 1960 s. 212).

In the 1940s and 1960s methods and theories defining model of youth work propagated at that time were grounded in classic, orthodox Marxist perspective, according to which youth did not exist apart from the system of the class struggle. In due fact, the main stress was put on youth originating in labor class or coming from indigent country

environments, but the remaining groups of youth were not excluded from the focus of the regime. It can be read in one of the official documents of the Polish United Workers' Party: "although the labor youth is closest to the party, it never sets forth the interests of only this group, focusing on creating conditions enabling remaining youth environments to reach positions of the representatives of labor class" (Gąsiorowski 1983).

The centralization of youth work in consequence effected with the creation of massive infrastructure. On central and regional levels there were created so called *palaces of youth* – institutions offering diverse activities varying from sport to cultural and artistic activities regarding painting, sculpture, photography, music, and dance to chosen, skilled individuals who showed the appropriate attitude for the new regime. However, this offer was inaccessible for majority of youth living in smaller cities and rural areas. Various cultural clubs or centers were founded, but they suffered from the lack of staff, equipment and - very often – ideas and approaches regarding attractive forms of youth work.

3. Time of pragmatism and deideologisation of communist state 1957 - 1989

Changes in the regime which originated due to the death of Stalin, especially after the 20th conference of CPSU have started in Poland an era of deconstruction of socialism understood as a homogenous project of total social change (Kurczewska 1992). In 1956 ZMP was dissolved, what took a form of spontaneous act, and there could be seen the retreat to formal pluralism. In this context one of the most important acts was to revive scouting, which in Poland resembled classical forms and visions of Baden-Powell much more than in other socialist countries.

Along with the deconstruction of socialism in its orthodox form, there appeared new tendencies in defining place of youth in society, which was accompanied by creating new forms of youth work. Next to ideologically conservative trends, there emerged postulates of liberal course toward youth. We should point at approaches to revive youth movement through activation and increasing freedom in case of such organizations as Union of Socialist Polish Youth (ZSMP) and Union of Polish Students (ZSP). These environments were much more popular among young people than communist party itself (Adamski 1980). Many have found there their own place, especially those who looked either for the possibility of political career, inaccessible through proper party structures, or for way of realization of their own aims not connected with politics, varying from cultural activities (musical, theatrical or literary), through necessity of goods of first need (e.g. flats, patronage construction sites of ZSMP) to market activities.

One of the proofs of the essential revolution in the perception of the unique situation and particular problems of the young generation was to recognize it as a "quasi social class", what was even seditious from the orthodox Marxist point of view.

The postulates of relative liberalization and respective change of the party and government attitude towards the problems of youth constituted an approach to change a longitudinal process, though (which eventually failed). Although in the beginning of the 1970s more than one fourth of the members of a communist party was thirty or younger, in 1980 there were only 10% of members in this age group (Jarosz 1986, 214). Simultaneously there were fewer and fewer students in universities coming from labor or peasant classes, what clearly indicated the failure of basic assumptions of party policy towards youth (1986, 150).

In the 1960s and 1970s the role of school as an institution of youth work increased. Because the popularity of mass youth organizations focusing solely on cultural activities and sparse network of cultural centers decreased, school became the environment of the sole

activities oriented towards youth: occupational training, prevention and distribution of social help. Youth work became an activity conducted by teachers (in scope of their additional activities) on the school premises and with aid of school infrastructure. Such a state of matters unfortunately ended with schematization, lack of spontaneity and identifying youth work with the idea of formal education, although it was supposed to be its mere supplement.

In the meantime youth organizations underwent a significant change. First, their activity modes changed. Ludic elements became more and more important in youth work. Decision makers became at last aware of the fact, that young people have a simple right to enjoy their spare time without the necessity of studying, work for the collective and other ideological additives. Simultaneously the scope of activities which young people could do for themselves increased. Young people could conduct own projects with the means of the infrastructure of youth organizations and schools. In that way youth work partly met the wishes of officials. For example, young people agreed to conduct in school orchestras, thanks to which headmasters offered them auditory to rehearse rock music.

4. Time of contestation and social protest 1970-1989

The 1970s are a period of rapid modernization in Poland. The experiment, in scope of which, there was a try to introduce consumption elements to the system of socialist economy in Polish reality ended up with failure. Before that time there occurred a cultural opening which changed the perspective at the place of youth in society. The most important element of change in scope of youth work was to break the state monopoly for this area. As early as in 70's there turned up several initiatives and projects engaging youth and often prepared by youth itself which had nothing in common with official youth work performed by state. The source of inspiration were often subculture movements, while the subject of activities remained most often in the area of artistic expression, such as music, theatre, visual arts, and various forms of psychotherapeutic activities (Jawłowska 1975). Since the beginning of the 1970s the role of Catholic Church increased. The Church institutionally supported many youth groups even tolerating young people whose beliefs and views differed from catholic world view. Among such activities there were subculture pilgrimages (e.g. hippie pilgrimage) to Jasna Góra or dissemination of the religious movement Light and Life (Dzięcioł 1996). The foundation in 1980 and development of the social movement "Solidarność" became the impulse for the civil activation of the whole Polish society. It was then, that formal youth organizations came to life independently from the government, such as Independent Union of Students (NZS) or Student Solidarity (Anusz 1991). In the same time young people began to express their own opinions in public and political affairs. More and more people engaged in ecological and pacifistic movements, and one could observe exceptional outburst of youth subcultures (Fatyga 2001). Alternative and subcultural movements gave birth to a group of leaders, who having a tacit conciliation of the state, began to introduce new forms of youth work. In its early times they were aiming at youth endangered with social marginalization and pathologies (especially drug addiction), but soon they took the form of "activating" movements trying to push young people to "take control". Although today we may talk about ostentation or naïveté of many of such undertakings, they constituted an important factor of change, while some of them created new forms of young people social activities[24].

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[24] One example can be "the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation", initiative aiming at engaging young people into the collection of money for charity, in which every year about 120 000 young volunteers take part. This foundation endorses social engagement of youth and conducts courses and trainings for volunteers. Every year it also organizes a free concert "Woodstock Halt" which every year becomes a more and more important open forum for unconstrained dialogue of elites (political, cultural, religious) and youth. Its founder,

Undoubtedly in the late 1970s and early 1980s there were turning up new topics and forms of activities on the scene of youth work. Young people had won their right to talk about important issues, sense of life, engagement and their world views. Youth work scene also welcomed actors featuring informal groups, often coming from subcultures, and the repertoire of their activities expanded to street work, outreach, detached youth work, events and performances. The ideological dimension of youth work became once again apparent, but this time the ideology (or even ideologies) was brought up by youth itself.

5. Change and modernization – new challenges and new structures? 1989 – 2008

For the last twenty years youth work has undergone more evolution than revolution. In its contemporary forms we can indentify traits typical both for mass movements and youth organizations and traditions of informal engagement, *ad hoc* activities and spontaneous creativity. Presumably, the latter will become more meaningful, especially due to growing distance of youth towards solid forms of engagement and participation.

Contemporary youth work is subordinated to pragmatism, as it is supposed to bring particular outcomes regarding competences, skills and gaining experiences. Among its ideological message young people are not directly told what the world looks like but rather they gain a set of tools enabling to try to answer this question themselves. The scene of youth work in Poland is very diversified. Next to mass youth organizations and schools the most important role is played by non governmental organizations, various foundations, and societies dealing with multiple activities varying from sport and recreation to fighting discrimination. According to statistics most of the non governmental organizations in Poland, also dealing with youth work, focuses on sport. On the one hand, there is an agreement on recognizing engagement and spontaneity of youth as main aims and values to achieve. On the other, existing structures are not yet ready to open for a real dialog with young people and to recognize them as coauthors of youth work practice.

Conclusions

My intention was not to draw the detailed history of youth work in Poland but to sketch main orientation points, most important trends and tendencies. It is worth highlighting that many forms of youth work often coexisted and coexisted simultaneously, although some of them are sometimes more popular than others. However, it should be remembered that work with youth should create a sphere of diversity of forms and essences of the practices, one could say, out of its own definition. Below there is presented a table with detailed descriptions of most important featuring youth work which turned up and often – but not always – dominated particular times.

Jurek Owsiak as early as in the 1980s organized surrealistic happenings and manifestations very popular among youth endorsing subcultures but often criticized by contracultural orthodox followers.

Table 1. Polish youth work formations and their characteristics; 1918 – 2008.

Name	Period of youth organizations	Time of great ideologies	Time of pragmatism and deideologisation of communist state	Time of contestation and social protest	Change and modernization – new challenges and new structures
Period	1918 – 1947	1948 – 1956	1956 – 1989	1970-1989	1989 – 2008
Forms of social participation of youth	Education, activity in youth organizations, time of moratorium, youth not recognized in society as an independent value.	education, participation in youth organizations, involvement in political activities. Youth treated as extremely important group of society - focus on youth; generosity and demands	legitimization of (limited) consumption approach, drive for stabilization and social advance within the framework of socially accepted norms and patterns.	contestation of patterns and norms (education, lifestyle, consumption), "locked out generation" syndrome, establishing of subcultural enclaves and their legitimization, withdrawal from officially promoted forms of engagement ("inner emigration")	education, consumption, entering the labor market, gaining experience and competences, "better quality youth"
Forms of youth organizations	centralized organizations, tied with its social background (national, class, religious); confrontation and competition between organizations of different background; pluralism of organizations, mass membership, strong identification.	mass, dominating, subordinated to one ideology, unification of different organizations, central, bureaucratic control, involvement in political actions.	mass, differentiated (urban, rural, student, scouting), tendency to enlarge attractiveness for young people, focused on rapid and prolonged profits.	local, informal groups, rebel-oriented, informal forms of formal youth organizations' actions, "one event" and network approaches, new forms of youth work provided by Catholic church	non governmental organizations, non-formal groups
Patterns of youth work; model of youth worker	professional youth work animators, and local enthusiast of youth work (youth and adults)	professionalisation, strict regulation and bureaucratization, impact of ideology in every detail of youth work, Syndrome of "socialistic" work, education, sport, fun, competition etc. Promotion of young leaders.	orientation towards career in organization, pragmatism, (objectualisation) instrumentalisation of youth organizations (both by young people and youth workers).	subcultures as a base for youth workers recruitment, informal actions in formal youth organizations, therapeutically oriented approach, focus on troubled youth.	voluntary basis activity, young leaders with professional background, project oriented approach, new forms of youth work
Ideology	nationalism, ideologies of particular social groups, creation of elites, differentiated world, perspective of social conflict (nations, classes)	one appropriate ideology (communism), new men and new society, education and formation in collective actions, emphasizing of work influence, "control as a highest form of trust" principle.	functionalism and pragmatism, cooperating, centralized society, assumption on coincidence of individual and collective needs	action for action, utopian projects, overestimation and fascination of spontaneity, creativity and fresh view offered by youth subcultures,	cooperating non-centralized society, knowledge and evidence based actions, more networks than hierarchies, procedures of auto reflection and evaluation, activity and involvement as values for themselves.
dominating/ new introduced forms of youth work	community youth work	centre-based Youth Work	school-based work	detached, outreach youth work	youth development

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