The History of Youth Work in Europe. Youth Work, Integration and Youth Policy. The German Perspective

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Historic processes are often difficult to describe, mostly there can be found competing perspectives in different sources. The history of youth work in Germany encompasses a longer time period with many different protagonists and a variety of interests for influence and power. Bearing this in mind one can no longer look for objectivism in history but rather try to describe and reflect the relevant protagonists in the contexts of their social roles and interests (Ricoeur 1974, 64). In this sense I have tried to describe the most important outlines of youth work in Germany within the characteristic social contexts of each phase. To gain a clear structure I tried to describe the events within eight characteristic chronological phases.

Phase 1 – Pre-professional forms of youth work (17th – 19th century)
Many decades before we can talk about first forms of professional youth work in Germany, we can identify different forms of public associations for young people that can be characterised either as informal or as semi public meeting places.
The establishment of own *informal public meeting places* for young people can be seen since the late 17th century (Thole 2000, 34; Gängler 2005, 503). These places were situated in towns and villages and were mostly frequented by the young and unmarried in the evenings after working hours. As the girls were often spinning there the meeting places were called “Spinnstuben” (spinning rooms). Also they were named “Lichtstuben” (light parlours) because of the illuminated rooms during the evenings. The big novelty of these establishments is that they were organised without direct participation of adults. Young people started to find own forms of gathering and went beyond the control of adults and public institutions like the state, the church, employers, schools or the military. Also these new forms of self organised communities enabled the young people to establish own rules, rituals and forms of culture that were more liberal than the ideas of the adults.
The second form of pre-professional youth work can be characterised as *associations* that established semi public meeting places for young people. Along with the changes of industrialisation during the late 19th century an increasing number of young people left their families to become workers in the factories of the big new industrial towns. Due to the lack of grown socio-cultural networks the new industrial towns could not offer many meeting places for young people and adults without families. Their inhabitants therefore started to establish own forms of associations for sports, education and sociable leisure and dancing (Thole 2000, 36). Especially the “Schnapskasinos” were regarded critically as their visitors were often consuming higher amounts of alcoholic beverages and established contacts to the working class movement of the social democrats. Priests like Adolph Kolping, teachers and officers started initiatives to gain more influence on the youth that was regarded to be threatened by moral decline. Around the associations emerged the typical debates about control and emancipation of young people and the concepts of a ”sensible” or “useful” leisure that were to become typical debates in youth work until today (Spatscheck 2007).

Phase 2 – Volunteers as professionals (1890-1933)
The late 19th and early 20th century saw the establishment of youth as an own phase of life during the passage from childhood to adulthood (Krafeld 1984, 10; Schäfers 1994, 53). At the turn of the century also youth work was more and more established as a special form of sociability with the character of informal socialisation. In general we can differ between three typical forms of early youth work: The youth movements, the youth associations and first forms of public youth work (Gängler 2005, 506; Thole/Küster 2005, 497).
The newly emerging *bourgeois and proletarian youth movements* can be seen as self organised counter movements against the increasing public control over self organised youth

groups (Krafeld 1984, 23 and 42; Thole 2000, 40; Spatscheck 2006, 150). Especially the "Bündische Jugend" with their most known form of the association "Wandervogel" (wandering bird, founded in 1904) was soon a very strong group that united up to 30.000 members (Giesecke 1975, 19; Thole 2000, 41; Niemeyer 2001). The bourgeois youth movement can be seen as a counter movement to the industrial culture of the late 19th century that was regarded as feudal, double-minded and too hierarchically organised by the young people. They appreciated and cultivated the informal community of peers, searched for authentic group experiences, friendship, the simplicity of the wanderers and the voluntary commitment to the rules of the group (Hermann in Thole 2000, 40). Beyond the direct relevance for young people these groups influenced a new generation of teachers, artists, politicians and welfare officers very strongly and became a role model for different social contexts for many decades to come.

Parallel to the bourgeois youth movements there also emerged a *proletarian youth movement* that was formed by young people from the working classes (Giesecke 1975, 31; Krafeld 1984, 42 and 79). These movements were founded by young apprentices and workers especially in the industrialised areas of Germany. They articulated their basic workers' and citizens' rights to receive fair treatment in the factories and searched for ways to escape the huge demands from the authoritarian and dangerous working environments.

Since the middle of the 19th century there can also be seen an emergence of special *youth associations* around the fields of religion, sport, politics or leisure (Thole 2000, 42). Most of them were developed within existing adult organisations that opened youth departments with more freedoms and room for the interests of young people. The adult organisations also followed their own interests to reach the "endangered" youth and to broaden the membership base of the organisations. Compared to the youth movements the youth associations were much more dominated by adults and the ideologies of the institutions that were behind the organisations. The youth associations soon became very diverse in forms and encompassed all social and moral milieus. They could build a very active base of volunteers for their activities. The youth associations soon found much more members than the youth movements. Alone the catholic youth associations organised up to 800.000 members at the begin of the 20th century while protestant youth associations had 165.000 and sports youth associations could count 320.000 members (Thole 2000, 42).

Public youth work was organised directly by the state and got a big impact from the Prussian Youth Care Law reforms from 1911/1913 that established the public youth work formally in Prussia (Krafeld 1984, 102; Hafeneger 1992, 25; Kappeler 1999, 93; Jordan/Sengling 2000, 40). This type of youth work was mostly carried out by specially trained teachers, priests, officers and craftsmen in their leisure time. Most of them were working as volunteers without fully paid positions. The basic aim of the first forms of public youth work was to save the young people from the threats of moral and physical decline. Very common forms of "youth work" were war games, exercises, cultural activities, youth protection. It is very interesting that already these early forms could reach a lot of young people from the middle classes but soon found difficulties to reach the marginalised and poor young people and young people with "bohemian" or sub cultural life styles (Thole 2000, 48).

Phase 3 – The National Socialist's ideological youth work (1933-1945)

The takeover of the National Socialist's regime in 1933 led to a huge restructuring of youth work in Germany (Krafeld 1984, 111; Hafeneger 1992, 75; Kappeler 1999, 225; 2000, 61; Thole/Küster 2005, 498). Following the ambitions to create a "state youth" the National Socialists formed the "Hitler Jugend" (HJ, Hitler Youth) and the "Bund Deutscher Mädchen (BDM, Federation of German Girls) as instruments to form and infiltrate the minds of the young German generation. Most of the existing youth associations were declared illegal or were integrated into the structures of the HJ and the BDM (Ferchhoff 2000, 50). Due to the general obligation (Jugenddienstplicht) to become a member in the HJ or the BDM 8,7 millions out of 8,87 millions of young people aged between 10 and 18 were becoming members of the state youth organisations in 1939 (Möding/v. Plato 1986, 293).

Young people where identified as a special target group that could be influenced very easily and were regarded as the ideal future carriers of National Socialist's ideology. Youth organisations were fully integrated into all National Socialist structures and had the foremost aims to prepare the younger generation for the wars of the future, establish a blind dutifulness and reach the infiltration of young minds with the National Socialist's ideology about the creation of a "race of masters" that should dominate all other "races" (Spatscheck 2006, 151).

Most of the young people seemed to collaborate with the Nazi-regime or remain in silent inner protest (Thole 2000, 61). But some free and illegal youth movements still continued to exist. Especially the "Swing Kids" who loved the Anglo-American Swing and Jazz music or the "Edelweißpiraten" (Edelweiss Pirates) who still followed the ideas of the "Bündische Jugend" still managed to exist and survived during the whole Nazi-dictatorship (Klönne 1986; Möller 2000, 261). As these groups stood in open and direct opposition to the leading National Socialist's ideology they where hunted by the police and the youth authorities and faced sanctions like arrests, deportations to concentration camps and even death sentences (Spatscheck 2006, 153). But in the end even the totalitarian system of the National Socialist's dictatorship could not prevent young people to develop and pursue their own forms of youth cultures and subcultural values despite strong public control and drastic penalties.

Phase 4 – Youth work in post war Western Germany (1946-1989)

After the breakdown of the National Socialist's System the western part of Germany established forms of youth work can be characterised as an effective compromise between old forms of established youth work and the new ideas of the "German Youth Activity" (GYA) that was founded by the allied occupation troops (Krafeld 1984, 129; Hafeneger 1992, 103; 2005, 510; Thole 2000, 63; Thole/Küster 2005, 499). Youth work in the post war western part of Germany was mostly carried out by persons that were already youth workers before or during the National Socialist's dictatorship. Therefore youth work found strong personal and conceptual continuities from the pre-war era and even in some parts from the National Socialist's youth work. The allied occupation troops tried to establish programs for the democratisation and "re-education" of the German population. One part of these initiatives were the newly established 300 German Youth Activity homes in the British and US-American occupation zones that reached over 2.5 million of young people during the late 1940s. The GYA homes and the other German youth clubs followed the concept of the "open door clubs" and the ideas of socio-cultural activities around the arts.

Also the work of the youth associations started again and most organisations from pre-war times were re-activated in the way they operated before. As most of the youth clubs and youth associations can be characterised as strictly governed according to strong normative concepts of the adults there often was not much freedom for participation and the own ideas of the young visitors (Thole 2000, 65).

On this background youth work therefore was challenged strongly by the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Krafeld 1984, 165; Hafeneger 1992, 147; 2005, 514). Young people began to protest against their parent's generation, their authoritarian ideas and their former involvement in the National Socialist's dictatorship. The German youth demanded more liberation and self organisation in society and was influenced by the ideas of the social movements and emerging pop cultures. This new generation challenged the traditional forms of youth work intensively.

During this time a lot of new theories and models for youth work were developed by protagonists that were often connected to youth work, the protest movements and the academic world at the same time. The leading theory models for youth work in this phase can be characterised by three following approaches. Firstly the *emancipatory approaches* (Müller et al. 1964; Giesecke 1975), secondly *radical anti-capitalist and revolutionary approaches* (Liebel 1970; 1971; Lessing/Liebel 1974) and thirdly the more moderate *needs oriented approach* to youth work (Damm 1975, 1980, 1998). These theories and models reflect the strong impact of social changes on youth work during that time. A big remaining

question is how strongly these theory approaches really found their impacts within the concrete everyday youth work practice.

Phase 5 – Youth work in the GDR (1946-1989)

Only some years after the second world war the eastern part of Germany experienced a new attempt to create a "state youth" (Thole 2000, 69; Thole/Küster 2005, 499). After a re-extinction of all plural youth work structures the "Freie Deutsche Jugend" (FDJ, Free German Youth) was founded as the official youth organisation of the German Democratic Republic. The FDJ (including the "Pioneers" for children) soon got more and more members and reached the highest rate of organisation in 1987 when 86% of all inhabitants aged fewer than 18 were members. The FDJ was directly connected to schools and offered a variety of group and leisure activities, holiday camps and youth clubs. The FDJ facilitated a high grade of voluntary activities both from adults and young people, albeit the ideological design of the activities was mostly controlled by the state.

The FDJ was regarded as one key instrument for the transformation of the socialist state ideology (Schäfers 1994; Kappeler 1995, 259; Möller 2000, 270). Youth was regarded as the democratic and socialistic avant-garde, the FDJ followed the development and the promotion of the "socialist personality" that only would engage in "sensible" and "useful" activities. The main objective of the youth work in the GDR can be regarded as the education and formation of such young personalities that would follow and embody the government's ideologies.

After it soon became clear that not all young people would be ready to become such "socialist" personalities the state's activities of control were gradually increased. Especially members from oppositional groups, church groups and people who sent an application to leave the country where controlled by the police and the intelligent service "Staatssicherheit" (Stasi, State Security). Young people could be arrested, excluded from their rights to work or visit certain places and be sent to "educational homes" or jails (Kappeler 1995, 260; Leo 2003). Despite the often desperate activities by the government to keep control there still existed a variety of resistant youth cultures throughout the whole regime of the GDR that included Rock fans, Beatniks, Punks, Skinheads and other groups (Spatscheck 2006, 160).

Phase 6 – Modern youth work: Trends and developments I (1990-2000)

After the German re-unification three new paradigms started to dominate the professional debates about youth work in Germany.

Franz Josef Krafeld (1992) was receiving a strong response within the professional community for his approach of a *peer group orientated youth work*. He argued that youth workers no longer should try to organise young people into new groups but rather should refer to the already existing peer groups and their concrete interests and potentials. He demanded that youth workers should regard youth cultural styles and forms of expressions as normal phenomena and no longer as correctable problems. Also he stressed the fact that peer groups facilitate high grades of self-organisation and socialisation that should be used as potentials for youth work. Here youth workers should learn to be companions of peer groups rather than their teachers.

Krafeld (1996) also developed a second new model for youth workers that he named *accepting youth work*. This approach was especially designed to meet the "hard to reach youth" that were involved in sub cultural life styles and criminal behaviour. To gain relationships and access to these young people the accepting approach recommended youth workers to tolerate problematic and harmful behaviours and opinions of the young people during the first phase of establishing contact. The gained relationship and trust would be a prerequisite for the changes that would only be possible after a longer lasting social pedagogical process. The accepting approach was especially applied with young rightwing extremists and in the contexts of mobile youth work. In the eastern part of Germany this approach was sometimes misunderstood when some youth workers tolerated the crimes of young right wing extremists for too long and even enabled right wing organisations to establish youth clubs as bases for their activities.

The third new approach is named *subject oriented youth work* and was developed by Albert Scherr (1997). He re-connected to the emancipatory traditions of former decades and followed the question how emancipation would still be possible in a society that no longer believed in collective emancipation of young people. Scherr identified new potentials for emancipation on the individual level of the subjects and recommended the support for young people to develop themselves as full, autonomous and responsible subjects as a key task for youth workers.

Phase 7 – Modern youth work: Trends and developments II (2000-today)

During the last years the professional debates about youth work were dominated by the following three issues and approaches.

Firstly there can be seen a special professional interest around the *spatial approach to youth work*, also referred to as *social space orientation*. Founded by Böhnisch/Münchmeier (1990) and promoted by Deinet/Krisch (2006) and Reutlinger (2003; 2008) this approach follows ecological concepts that look beyond individuals or groups and stresses the meaning of local social spaces as key field for youth work practice and research. Like all institutions, groups and individuals also youth work and young people are inseparably connected to social environments. Youth work can be a mediator between the young people and the social spaces. In this role youth work can be an actor of change and innovation within spatial contexts. Deinet (2006) and Deinet/Reutlinger (2004) also show the importance of *acquirement* of space for young people in the context of their struggle for identity and subjectivity and show methods how youth work can accompany processes of acquirement.

A second trend is the increasing connection between *youth work and school* (Deinet/Icking 2006; Henschel et al. 2007). During the last years Germany saw a big increase of the establishment of whole day schools. So far nearly all the schools were only based on morning lessons and free afternoons. To increase the standards of education, support working parents and to find inclusion of risk groups more and more schools were changed into whole day schools. Most of the whole day schools combine forms of formal and informal learning and are therefore interested in the knowledge and potentials of youth work about informal education and social learning. Through these developments the question emerges how whole day schools and youth work could co-operate in optimal ways. Especially youth workers debate on how to contribute to a system of formal education without loosing the qualities of an informal character, peer group learning and the key standards of voluntary and interest centred learning. Cloos et al. (2007) have developed a “pedagogy of youth work” that stressed the special ways of communicative learning within youth work. Müller/Schmidt/Schulz (2008) have specified how the approach of informal learning can be concretised in youth work.

Within the context of the movement for an evidence based social work also youth work is facing demands to work with concepts that are based on *empirical research*. So far youth work in Germany is hardly working with theories and concepts that are directly based on research results. Most of the leading youth work concepts rather seem to be pedagogical ideas without empirical grounding. By referring to concrete empirical studies Lindner (2007) showed that there already exists a variety of empirical studies about youth work and its effects on young people, neighbourhoods and institutions. There seems to be first empirical evidence on youth work that still has to be expanded and systematised to strengthen the knowledge base and the public recognition of the positive effects of youth work for the society.

Phase 8 – Some challenges of the near future (2008-X)

What are the prospects for youth work in the future? Here I would propose three emerging topics that seem to be key challenges for youth work.

Firstly we can see an increasing *social inequality* in Germany. This inequality can be identified around the distribution of income and the decline of the chances for full participation in society, work life and education for all the inhabitants in Germany (Bundesminsiterium für Arbeit und Soziales 2005; 2008; for young people see

Corak/Fertig/Tamm 2005 or Hurrelmann/Andresen 2007). Youth work is directly challenged by these developments as it is getting more and more difficult to promote the social inclusion of young people. Young people that find no perspectives are threatened to become the new "hard to reach" clients that are getting lost for the integrating influences of society.

A second challenge emerges around the new meaning of *emancipation*. For decades young generations fought for their autonomy against the controlling influences of governments, adults and public institutions. Meanwhile the post-Fordist and globalised capitalism seems to demand a new type of worker and citizen. Instead of willing and subordinated followers to orders the new ideal seems to be the flexible and active "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling 2007, Arnegger/Spatscheck 2008) that is ready to care autonomously for himself by adapting to the rapidly changing demands on the markets on his own responsibility. In this context the question emerges whether and how emancipation in this context is still possible. It is a key question for youth workers how young people still could find their whole autonomy within these new demands without submerging to the market laws as the only reference. Connected to these questions the traditional role of youth work seems to be challenged in a fundamental way.

The third key challenge for youth work seems to be the *current changes in funding*. While youth work experienced a strong increase of financial support during the last 30 years the figures of professional youth workers are meanwhile declining. In 1982 there were 17.004 professional youth workers in Western Germany (Pothmann/Thole 2005, 348). Until 1998 the number of professional youth workers increased up to 49.967 for the re-unified Germany together but the newest figures from 2002 show a decrease of nearly 9% down to 45.514 professional youth workers (Pothmann/Thole 2005, 353).

Regarding these new challenges youth work in Germany has to search for new strategies to keep its unique approach for informal, voluntary and leisure based education and the connection to local social spaces and neighbourhoods. Only if youth work will succeed to show its positive effects for young people and society and only if youth work will manage to stay an independent, critical and self-critical agent of socialisation with clear and useful concepts the history of youth work can be continued as a story of success on the base of a long lasting tradition.

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