Belgian / Flemish Youth Policy

May 2009

The Creation of Belgian Youth Policy

- AFTER WW II: worries about "today's youth"
  - Collaboration
  - Nazi socialisation
  - Pre-war attack on the "gerontocracy" (Rex) – cult of "youth" in Nazism
  - Juvenile delinquency
    › Poverty
    › "Normal notions of law and moral did not apply"
  - New (American) cultural values are greeted by some and give worries to others (materialism, consumerism, sexual moral)

Encouraging citizenship

- Looking backwards: promoting citizenship through heroic tales of an illustrious past (but whose illustrious past?)
  - Coincided with imagery of youth movements (chivalry)

- October 1944: meeting of youth organizations at the Ministry of Education to advise on a new youth policy
- December 11, 1945: National Youth Council

A New Role for Government

- After the War: end of "laissez faire"
- Government active in more sections of public life
- In consultation with partners (foundation of a great number of "councils" to advise government)
  - 1938: founding the council for cultural affairs (including education)

1945

- April 6 1945: National Youth Service (within the Ministry for Education)
- Government: Left wing coalition of Socialists, Liberals and Communists (no longer a government of national unity)
- Distrust among catholic youth organisations: fear of a youth movement created by the government (rumour?)
- Other view: catholic youth organisations used in a political strategy that was against the interests of young people

Pillarisation

- **Pillarisation** (*verzuiling* in Dutch, *pilarisation* in French) is a term used to describe the denominational segregation of Dutch and Belgian society. These societies were (and in some areas, still are) "vertically" divided in several smaller segments or "pillars" (*zuilen*, singular: *zuil*) according to different religions or ideologies.

  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillarisation

Pillarisation

- "These pillars all had their own social institutions: their own newspapers, broadcasting organisations, political parties, trade unions, schools, hospitals, building societies, universities, scouting organisations and sports clubs. Some companies even only hired personnel of a specific religion or ideology. This led to a situation where many people had no personal contact with people from another pillar"

  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillarisation

Pillarisation

- "Verzuiling" (Dutch) = compartmentalization along socio-political lines (Van Dale's dictionary)
- "Master of the house, but the house at the expenses of the community" (Van Doorn)
- Freedom of education, but paid for by government
- "Soul of the child"
- "From the cradle to the grave"
- One of the three great divisions in Belgian history and society (the others being: language and social status)
- Catholic, socialist, pluralist, liberal, … youth organisations

Youth organisations in the Fifties

Divided by language, gender and ideology

- Interfederale Scoutsbond van België

- Nationale Verbindingsraad van de Gidsenbeweging

- Boy-Scouts en Girl Guides van België

- Koninklijke Associatie der Baden-Powell Scouts van België

- Vlaams Verbond der Katholieke Scouts

- Fédération des Scouts Catholiques

- Katholieke Meisjesgidsen van België

Youth organisations in the Fifties

- **Divided bij class and gender**
  - Kristene Arbeidersjeugd (Christian Young Workers)
  - Katholieke Burger- en Middenstandsjeugd (Young Catholics of the Middle Classes)
  - Boerenjeugdbond (Young Farmers)

Youth organisations in the Fifties

- **Belgian, Dutch speaking / Flemish or French speaking / Walloon**
    - Belgische Jeugdherbergfederatie (federation of youth hostels)
    - Vlaamse Jeugdherbergcentrale
    - Centrale Wallonne des Auberges de la Jeunesse

1956

- Interdepartmental Commission for Youth: no success

- A new start for the National Youth Service and for the National Youth Council

- National Youth Council:
    - advised all ministers on youth problems,
    - all youth organisations from all ideologies,
    - had to find ways of giving a voice to young people not represented.

- National Youth Service (administration)

National Youth Service - tasks

- Support of the National Youth Council and of the Interdepartmental Commission for Youth
- A go between youth organisations and the government and between the various youth organisations
- Support voluntary youth organisations
- Focus on the training of youth leaders: *"The task of the youth organisations is to train the future leaders of the country in the spirit of civic duties" (Collard, 1957)*
- To support schools with extracurricular activities
- Information on youth matters
- To found or support local communities or voluntary organisations in founding cultural houses, training centres,…

Youth Policy in the Sixties

- NYS: understaffed
- Information (for the youth and for the youth organisations)
- Youth training centre, lending service for camping equipment etc.
- Trainers for youth organisations (creativity training)
- Circa 1960: financial support youth organisations
- Professionalization (teachers)

Supporting Youth Organisations in the Sixties

- Circa 1960: financial support for
  - non-local youth organisations (cf. federations of local youth organisations) and
  - certain types of local youth organisations:
    › Amateur art, creative youth workshops, youth music workshops (Carl Orff)
      – Inspired by "creativity movement"
    › Youth houses / youth clubs
      – Trying to organise "unorganised youth", by making compromises

Make compromises: problem of unorganized youth

- 195?: "The youth movement is the most perfect form of youth organisation" (National Youth Council)

- ± 1960: Youth houses, youth clubs

- ± 1978: Youth work for deprived young people

- Engagement of members

- Professionalization

"1968"

- Waning of the unquestioning acceptance of authority
- Mental depillarisation delegitimized ideology of pillarised social organizations
- Increase in grassroots action groups and new social movements
- 'the spirit of 1968'

(Louis Vos)

The effects on Flemish youth policy

- Political confirmation of pillarisation ("cultuurpact") vs. mental and sociological depillarisation
- "New social movements" often founded by young people: youth advisory organisations, youth centres for social change, others
- Increase of pluralist or neutral organisations
- More independence for certain pillarised youth organisations
- Waning of those organisations that take class division as a source of their identity (Young workers, young farmers,…)

Youth policy as a form of cultural policy

- 1970 – 1971: Constitution created the "cultural communities" (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking communities)
- The end of Belgian youth organisations
- Responsible for their own cultural policies: e.g. the arts, public libraries, sports, … and "youth policy"
- "Youth policy" = non-formal education of young people

- Cultural policy severed from educational policy

"Cultuurpact"

- Agreement among the major political parties aimed at the protection of "cultural minorities" (Catholics vs. Non-Catholics)

  - Limits executive government
  - Participation of all cultural organisations (inc. youth organisations) in cultural politics (inc. youth politics)
  - Recognises and promotes pillarisation

The Seventies: new forms of youth work are funded

- In the wake of the sixties:

  › youth centres for social change "have a critical view on the contemporary neo-capitalist system, which they question radically" (definition, approved by a Flemish Christian-Democratic minister in the seventies)

  › youth information centres, youth advisory centres

  › experimental (forms of) youth work

The Seventies: new forms of youth work are funded

- Youth work for deprived young people: persons who have less opportunities because of a number of social causes (structural)

- Training centres for working (and unemployed) youth

- Crisis centres for adolescents/young adults
  › new institutions search how far they can go within the limits of their competencies

Building and recruiting a (future) elite

- Fifties:
  - "The task of the youth organisations is to train the future leaders of the country in the spirit of civic duties" (Collard, 1957)
  - "Youth leader" = leader of a youth movement = leader of the youth = future leader of the country

- 1969: 5 members of the (Flemish part of the) youth council were to become cabinet ministers (2 of them prime minister)
- 1979: only 1 member of the Flemish youth council was to become a cabinet minister

Role of Government

- The growing wealth creates new expectations vis-à-vis government
- Participation (sports, libraries,…): limitations to what NGO's can do
  › A more active role for government is required
- "Gebruikspluralisme" (pluralistic use of infrastructure, …)

Some characteristics of youth policy

- No planning, no pro-active policy
- Quantity, not quality
- Objective criteria, no pedagogical, moral, cultural, … appreciation
- No common values imposed upon the organisations by the government
- The aim of the youth administration is "supporting youth organisations", but to what end? (cf. nineties: NPM)

1975 legislation

- Decree on the recognition and subsidisation of Flemish youth work
  - No definition of "youth work"
  - Youth work = youth organisations = organisations for the youth (6 – 35 years old), led by young people (at least 2/3 of the members of the board had to be under 35)
  - Objective criteria to recognise organisations
  - No steering possibilities for the government
  - Financing costs, not output, nor outcome

Typology of Flemish youth work

- Member organisations
  › Youth movements (scouting, …)
  › Young adults movements (youth organisations of political parties, trade unions, farmers,…)
  › Student movements
  › Specialised youth movements (e.g. "Youth and Music")
- Youth services ("services" for the youth)
- Umbrella organisations (Catholic Youth Council, Union of Socialist Youth, …)

Funding Flemish youth organisations

- Funding not based on output or outcome, but on the amount of money the organisations spend
  - Max. 75 % of overhead-costs
  - Max. 90 % of cost of 1 professional, max. 75% of the second professional en max. 50% of others
  - …

  Conclusion: More financial support for organisations that were able to raise income in other ways (Matthew 13:12: "To those who have shall be given")

The Eighties

- 1980: Constitutional change: communities also competent for "assistance to persons" (aspects of welfare policy, not social security)

- Crisis in youth work:
  - Growing importance of youth work for deprived youth
  - Decrease in membership of youth movements
  - Youth movements tend to become children's movements
  - Decrease of number of youth houses / youth clubs
  - Identity crisis in various forms of youth work: youth clubs, youth music workshops, creative youth workshops, …)

The Eighties

- Minister Dewael:

  - "It's not the task of government to subsidize ideologically or philosophically inspired institutions or organisations"

The Nineties

- Dewael (centre right liberal): (I want) "a Flanders that needs no political holdings or "netwerken" (systems), but a Flanders where emancipated citizens can make a choice out of a number of pluralistic offers"

- Martens (Christian-democrat): "The increased individualisation results in a situation where those who participate in cultural and social life are often not emancipated enough to do this in a autonomous and responsible way: he or she selects the most accessible and consumes this unquestioning" (from his policy plan "Werken aan Netwerken" = Working at Systems)

1993: the first definition of youth work in legislation

- "**Youth work**: group-oriented socio-cultural work based on non-commercial objectives for or by young people, who participate voluntarily in this initiative, in their leisure time and under educational supervision; this work is being set up by private youth associations or by municipal public authorities"

The 90's – action is reaction

- Definition limits youth work to **group-oriented** work: favours youth movements

- The major legislative changes favoured major (mainly catholic) organisations (above smaller organisations)

  "To those who have shall be given in abundance, but **those who do not have shall be taken away even that which they do have**" (Matthew, 13:12)

- Dewael "netwerken" versus Martens "Werken aan netwerken"

The 90's – action is reaction … is action

- "Youth work" changed from a collective name for "youth organisations" (organisations by and for the youth) into a term used to refer to a not so specific number of activities, that were not easy to define
- Local policy plans: participation leads to a more demand driven policy. More youth work by local authorities

The 21st Century

- Depillarisation
- Shift from power from parliament to the government, minister for culture
- Decrease of legal security
- Focus on ethnic minorities and the poor (≠ persons facing various social problems) (identity politics: age, ethnicity, …)
- A shift from social inequality to inequality in social participation (Coussée)
- Proliferation of policy plans
  › More active role for government