Regaining Europe
The role of youth work in supporting European Cohesion

The current developments in Europe with it implications in the youth field

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Structure of this short* introduction

• Context, past & present
• Illness & remedy?
• Radical choices
• What about youth and youth work?

* Count the slides, only 18
Why this issue?
A classical sociological hit parade

SOCIETY
• Globalisation
• Individualism & egoism
• The risk society
• Ideological poverty, losing values,
• Uncertainties everywhere
• Hedonism & consumism
• Failing systems & governments
• Vanishing solidarity & increasing exclusion
• Fragmentation instead of cohesion
• Into fascism & stupid nationalism

YOUNG PEOPLE
• Indifferent ... extremism
• Lazy ... careerism
• Reckless ... to obedient
• Bad sperm
• To much drugs & sex
• Radical ... to conservative
• Etc.
Why this issue? Young people & Europe

The pessimistic approach
• Taking the benefits (open borders, easy travelling, Erasmus, the EURO...) for granted – it's normal
• What’s in it for us?
• Overwhelming negative (fake) news on immigration, open borders, cheating with support, unfair solidarity
• Vanishing sovereignty, eating the national pride and identity

So: between dislike and indifference, no benefits only for the happy few

The optimistic approach
• Never before so much international mobility by young people
• A natural global communication, virtual and physical
• Eruption of engagement (climate)
• A lot of initiatives in local surroundings
• Many opportunities and lots of support to go international
• No learning without an international dimension

So: international is natural & necessary, part of being young
Context: past & present
Development of a system – 3 decisive phases

Makeability of society
... 18th century:
Enlightenment
Science, empirics
Optimism: to master
nature & reality
Belief in constructing,
building a society,
feasibility

State of law, democracy
... 19th century
Nation states,
Humble democracy,
Developing & broadening
citizenship (right to vote)
Separation of powers,
State of law
Increasing rights and
equality for all people
Invention of society

Welfare state
After WW II
Combination of free
market & (strong)
correction
organized solidarity
Protection against
calamities,
life long insurance,
equalizing chances
There is something rotten in the state of ...

**Makeability of society**
- Hubris: the boundaries of science & planning,
- Inability, failures, modesty, pessimism
- Club of Rome, poverty, dying continents, climate changes, warming up, pollution, impotence to solve severe crises...

**State of law, democracy**
- Eroding of democratic values, boundaries of delegation democracy,
- no sense of ownership,
- increasing cynicism, disbelief in dialogue,
- emerging anti-politics, uprising ultra-right,
- decreasing tolerance, hardening of the discourse

**Welfare state**
- Unbearable to finance, cold bureaucracy, no more commitment
- Abuses all over, buccaneers Suspicion towards immigrants (profiteers)
- Shift of values and explanation: the individual guilt model ...

...
The nineties: the “active” welfare state as a remedy
• Reinventing, revitalization of the welfare state
• U. Beck & A. Giddens
• An answer & counterattack against ultra-liberalism (Thatcherism) and reconquest of the uncorrected free market ideology
• Activating: more involvement of citizens
• Regaining, rebuilding a sense of co-ownership & commitment

But... the economic dictatorship & prioritising utility for the market
• One sided emphasis on economic – market driven – activation: jobs, jobs & employability
• Total denial of social, cultural, political, ethical activating (creating active citizenship, co-ownership, involvement... )
• Even – especially – by social political families (socialists, Christian-democrats...)
• Effects: increasing poverty, broadening the gap between richness & poverty, more cynicism and dislike of solidarity
• More ultra liberalism... sneak poison, increasing raw capitalism
What now?
*Kleiner Mann, was nun?* (Hans Fallada)

Recapture / reconquest of values

Europe as an ideological project

Young people & youth work as a vanguard
Radical choices! Yes

Admitting the mistakes – rephrasing the active welfare state

• Yes, activation... but explicitly on social, cultural, political and ethical dimensions (beyond economics)
• Only by an active democratic approach (co-ownership of citizens)
• Adding elements of direct democracy in the framework of the delegation democracy (hybrid, collaborating, deliberating...)
• Creating common - mutual projects with different actors
• Structural and sustainable, not only by democratic “projects” or “events”
Admitting the mistakes – rephrasing the active welfare state

• A responsibility of governments: creating a structure and culture of debate, interaction and co-ownership in all environments

• Broadening the system of “cold” solidarity (social security…) with warm solidarity: volunteering, philanthropy… without weakening the solidarity system (more achievements, less bureaucracy)

• Giving “positive discrimination” new chances, but only as results of public debate; no routine, this creates antagonism against solidarity

• (pro)active facilitation, support and guidance for CSO’s based on the hypotheses of “promising” – not on false causal evidence
Choices become policy by

1. Creating and facilitate active citizens / civil society organisations
2. Modest, serving & inviting, tantalizing, stimulating governments
3. Steering by networks – admitting interdependency
4. Interactive, active democratic governmental approach
5. Redefine participation: form “taking” towards “having” part
Redefine the playing field
Redefine the playing field

Civil society (o)

Politicians

Government
Public sector

Citizens

Experts

Common project

Citizens & private sector

Democratic axis

Expertocratic axis

Democratic axis
Redefine participation

CONTINUUM OF PARTICIPATION on the road for STRUCTURAL & INCLUSIVE SOLIDARITY

Non participation

Making part: developing practices of solidarity, an inclusive, active democratic community

PARTICIPATION

Taking part

Having part
Redefine participation

Participation = taking part
- you take your part
- you have interest, being a “stake” holder
- you a user or a client
You take part in somebody else's project
Your have a kind of a contract
We and they: not common interests

Non participation
- you have/own your part
- a co-owner, ergo a share holder
- a partner, a compagnon
You have a shared project, there is a shared responsibility
A partnership relationship
A WE project, jointly

Participation = having part

MAKING PART on the road for solidarity & inclusion
And youth ??

No radical choices without severe impact & consequences on all educational systems: schools, youth care, juvenile justice, youth work...

Treating children & young people as full-fledged co-owner of all systems
An other view/approach needed:
  • **Reducing age limits on civil law aspects** (voting, sex...) to be negotiated with young people
  • **Increase age limit on criminal justice** aspects to 23 y because the human brain grows until that age (drift control)

A fundamental change in school education:
  • Less emphasis on employability and economical utility
  • More emphasis on social, cultural, political and ethical discussion & activation
And youth work ??

Youth work
• A vanguard & explorer of a radical educational (pedagogical) concept (sometimes already doing so)

• Approach of youth work as an ideological (concept of coherent values, much more than a methodology...)

• A specific, distinguished vision on creating an active democratic environment for children & young people
And youth work? Towards an ideological concept

Strong ideological identity of youth work

• Offering plenty of time, opportunities... for debate, discussion, doubts
• An authoritarian system cannot reproduce democracy and solidarity
• An emancipatory approach: guiding towards greater autonomy
• Youth workers are mainly young themselves: a atmosphere of being young together. Also for the vast majority of youth workers??
• Playful, offensive and optimistic: creating their own leisure time
• Guidance working from self-evident solidarity. The political (ideological) approach is not a top down dictate but grows bottom up
• Explicit dealing with inequality, exclusion, deprivation: intern and in de nearby societies/environment
Thanks for listening, curious about your reactions