Young People's Participation in Public Decision Making in Selected Countries Abroad
"Mobile Youth Work", Berlin, Germany

Mobile Youth Work

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Translator's note: youth work in Germany is part of the social work system, as explained in chapter I. The English term 'youth work' can be translated into four different German terms, meaning youth work, youth social work, social work and social pedagogy. Whilst there are different concepts behind those terms, the practice is often the same. I have used all four terms and translated them as they appeared in the German original.

CONTENTS

> *Politics is made by many old men*
> *and a few old women*
> *(Jasmin, 15)*

I) Introduction

Where are young people in German society, when their interests are being discussed? Where are young people in this society when decisions about their future are made? Where is their voice when current political decisions are made?

To shed some light on these questions, we begin by explaining the terms of reference for the participation of young people in German society.

Following that, we analyse the special situation in Berlin, so that we can then characterise the system of 'youth help' (Jugendhilfe). In particular, we place emphasis on the opportunities for young people to participate in decision making.

We then describe two themes that are relevant to he current debate within society, and therefore also within youth work. This is undertaken with the aim to place these themes within the context of participatory models.

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The social policy framework
The development of the German political and social system cannot be seen in isolation to the history of the past century. Lessons learnt from the experience of German fascism have contributed to the fact that there is no longer a centralised state executive but that we find instead a division of powers and a federal state. That means that the individual layers of Government
(at national, regional and local level) have certain rights and duties, which are distinct. That also means that the different levels are obliged to co-operate and co-ordinate as well as share their duties.

The Federal State of Germany understands itself as a pluralistic democracy based on a multiparty system. The pluralist system emphasises the necessity of differing opinions and institutions as an underlying principle.

Another important aspect of the current German federal society is the experience of a forty year existence of two German states. This is connected with the development of two systems of society that were diametrically opposed and also part of a polarised world order. We now see new experiences from the ten year old reunification process influencing the development of social and political structures.

The federal structure of the state brings with it the fact that the individual regional and local governmental structures are to a high degree and in many areas responsible for policy making. This has led to the development of very diverse and varying concepts and directions in the different fields of education and culture. This is also and in particular true for concepts in the field of youth work.

Despite the diversity, however, there are "ground rules", which are binding for the whole of the country. In particular, one can regard the German constitution as a catalogue of norms and values that is obliging for all.

With regards to the field of children and youth work one has to mention first and foremost the "KJHG" (children and youth support act), which as federal law determines the legal framework for all youth support and youth development measures.
In addition, we must also consider the valid principle of subsidiarity that determines the relationship of the public sector to private initiatives. This determines in detail the priority and responsibility of individuals and the voluntary sector in the work on necessary public and social tasks.

The framework for youth work
Before we can examine the terms of reference for youth work we must give a precise definition of the term 'youth'. People who are 14 but not yet 18 are defined as young people in the eyes of the law. Those who are 18 but not yet 27 years old are defined as young adults. This considerable age range corresponds with a development in society where socio-economic independence is achieved in ever later years.

The systems of youth work can be distinguished as follows:
The youth support system in Germany has two fundamental elements.
a)   the element that emphasises the developmental aspects of youth work and

b)   the element that emphasises youth support and therapy. This also contains a range of legal rights, which young people and their families can ask the Government to enforce.

The organisation of both elements is the responsibility of one single youth office.

This office also has responsibility for the overall planning of a relevant programme of youth support in the regional and local authorities.

The important distinctions for the context of this study are:

1) youth work with emphasis on:
- informal education with general, political, social, health, cultural, environmental and science education,
- youth work in sport, play and leisure,
- youth work related to employment, school and family
- international youth work,
- holidays for children and young people
- youth information, advice and counselling

2) youth social work with emphasis on:
- measures to tackle individual disadvantage and social integration as well as
- measures to support integration in employment

3) support of education in the family with emphasis on:
- advice and counselling
- help with upbringing as well as day care, social group work, family therapy and residential care[1]

Whilst the responsibility for planning lies with the local authority youth office, the service delivery can well be the responsibility of a diverse range of providers or communities themselves. This is determined by the principle of subsidiarity which has led to the development of a broad and diverse voluntary sector that is active in the delivery of a large section of youth work and youth support in Germany. This is especially true in Berlin.

Social statistics for Berlin

We will predominantly limit our account to the city of Berlin, as we believe that the experiences of the city can stand as an example for certain developmental tendencies of German society.

Berlin is Germany's largest city with a total population of 3.38 million. The share of young people aged 14 to 21 is about 260,000 people. The city is characterised by a continuous process of people moving away, which is leading to an increasing decline of the city's population.[2]

Traditionally, Berlin is an immigrants' city and multicultural with people from 183 countries. The largest group of immigrants are people from Turkey (see below).

The city was and is exposed to extreme change processes. One of the most significant was undoubtedly the division (building of the Berlin Wall) and reunification since the beginning of the nineties.

One of the main problems at the moment is the structural change of the city's economy and therefore also of its social sphere. Between 1989 and 1997 the number of industrial jobs in West Berlin was reduced by 30%. At the same time, East Berlin lost almost 100% of these jobs. This

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[1] Münder, Johannes et al.: Frankfurter Lehr- und Praxiskommentar zum KJHG, Münster 1993 p.24ff

[2] Statistisches Landesamt Berlin 2000

development has led to an explosion of the unemployment figures in both halves of the city. At the moment they stand at about 18%.[3]

The city is divided into twelve districts, all similar in size (about 300,000 people). In each of these districts there is a youth administration, which is largely responsible for youth work in its area. Over and above, the regional youth office is responsible for youth support in the whole of Berlin.

II) Policy Basis for Decision Making

In recent times, a stronger consciousness has developed, even in the political arena, of the fact that children and young people are independent persons with rights of self determination and opinions that have to be taken seriously, with ideas for the design of their communities, for the way they live with others and for the organisation of their daily life. This development has been influenced by the new social movements, which have fought in West Germany against patronisation and paternalism since the seventies and, as part of the process, generated a multitude of their own projects. These projects became part of children and youth work or at least had influence on the field. Other impulses came from the German Democratic Republic's peaceful revolution as part of which many people demanded and implemented their right of self determination.

Finally, it is necessary to take a look at newer legislation that demands the participation of children and young people. Significant here is the "Children and Young People Support Act" (Kinder und Jugendhilfegesetz - KJHG), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as further regulation and initiatives at european level (European Charter of Children's Rights). Within the law, i.e. within the area covered by the KJHG, there are different regulations out of which evolve "involvement duties". The following are an example:

- the explicit right of service users - including that of children - of preference and choice (§5),
- the participation of children and young people (§8),
- the participation in the service design and decision making within children and youth work (§11 section 1 sentence 2) and
- the involvement of children and young people in the design of the support plan (§36, section 1).

As part of the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child "[4]

All legislative regulations remain abstract, however, and still general even in their more specific commentaries. They do not offer any models for participation and involvement in decision making or suggestions as to how representative structures for young people should be developed.

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[3] Häußermann/Kapphan: Berlin: von der geteilten zur gespaltenen Stadt?, Opladen 2000, p.105

[4] UN-Commission for the Rights of the Child (1995): Concluding Observations. In: National Coalition (Ed.) (1996) Ergebnisse des ersten Dialoges zwischen dem UN-Ausschuß für die Rechte des Kindes und der Bundesregierung über den Erstbericht zur Umsetzung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention. Bonn, p.110-113

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Nevertheless, in recent years we can see how especially local authorities have responded to the impulses of the legislation by demonstrating increased efforts to provide children and young people with opportunities to articulate their interests, and sometimes to participate directly in planning processes.

The establishment of children's and youth parliaments, youth forums, projects such as neighbourhood explorations or visioning workshops on themes like playground or school yard design are testimony to these developments. According to a representative survey by the German Youth Institute there are opportunities for participation of children and young people in over a third (38%) of all local authority areas. The rule is: the larger the city, the more pronounced the efforts to initiate the development of different forms of participation. In every fifth local authority that offers opportunities for participation there are representative structures such as children's and youth parliaments. More common, however, are more open forms of participation such as projects designed to facilitate involvement.

Youth Organisations

Youth Organisations have come together at regional level to form "Landesjugendringe" (regional youth councils), which together form the "Bundesjugendring", the national youth council. The Bundesjugendring aims to influence the development of youth policy and to respond to current political developments that affect young people. It has assumed the task of representing the interests of young people with Parliament and Government. Within youth organisations and movements themselves there have been efforts for some time to anchor self determination and participation as integral to the structures, programmes and philosophies of the organisation. However, these organisations regularly face the problem that the funding programmes of central Government (against their own verbal assurances) frequently reward greater centralisation and clear organisational structures, rather than efforts to give room to the interests of children and young people. Youth movements, therefore, often find it difficult to to work in ways that convince children and young people. The significance and influence of traditional youth organisations has been in continuous decline for over twenty years. This is expressed in reduced membership figures as well as in declining political influence. They cannot be regarded as a central representative structure of the interests of children and young people. This does not exist in Germany.

In summary we can assume that there have been increased efforts in recent years at local authority level as well as in the voluntary sector, to adopt the concept of participation and translate it into practice.

Despite this positive development we notice that still only a few children and young people use the attempts to promote participation and self organisation as they are quite often formally organised and therefore remain alien. Children and young people have a very fine sense of whether they are really being taken seriously or whether they are used as an alibi. Fundamentally there appears to be now, as then, a lack of trust in the capability of children and young people to make decisions.

We can recognise that despite all attempts to institutionalise concepts of participation the alienation of young people from the practice of politics is ever more increasing.

The making available of formal structures for participation is not sufficient on its own. Youth policy too has to reposition itself in Germany if it is really interested in the participation of young

people. The concept of 'mobile youth work' can act as a model for such a repositioning as it has already completed a move from youth clubs and centres into the community.[5]

Following an account of two relevant themes for social politics we introduce a successfully practised concept of mobile and community youth work (best practice), which helps, in our view, to ensure real participation.

III) Key Issues of the present youth policy debate

Young people and the new right

A central theme, which cannot be ignored in Germany at the moment, is the increasing orientation towards the right of a growing number of the youth population, which in many cases becomes apparent through extremist behaviour. Jolted by the hounding of foreign citizens, by assaults on hostels for resettlers and asylum seekers, by the desecration of jewish monuments and synagogues, and by protests during the last few years against the deployment (authorised by Government) of right-wing parties and groups, politicians feel forced to react and confront these problems in a more determined way.

However, xenophobia and racism show different facets and do not just appear on the right fringe of society, but reach right into the centre of society and therefore constitute a danger for democracy.

According to a survey by Silbermann and Hüser, "every seventh German shows ... a pronounced xenophobic attitude. A further 35 % are 'a little' xenophobic."[6]

The picture is a little more differentiated if one also considers the examination by Stöss of the potential for right-wing extremism. Across Germany the largest proportion tending to hold right-extremist attitudes are older people, whereas in East Germany these are more likely to be the younger age groups.

The proportion of potential right-extremist attitude within the different age groups in the Federal Republic of Germany as well as in West and East Germany, in comparison to the total population, May/June 1998 (%)			
Age groups	**Total population**	**West**	**East**
14 - 17 years	8	5	17
18 - 22 years	8	6	15
25 - 34 years	10	8	20
35 - 44 years	9	7	15
45 - 54 years	14	14	14
55 - 64 years	15	15	17
65 - 74 years	21	20	25
75 and older	22	23	16
Total	**13**	**12**	**17**
Source: Stöss, Rechtsextremismus, p. 35, from Xenos January 2001			

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[5] Neumann, Ulf: Hoffentlich nicht nur Pillepalle. In: Managementmethoden in der modernen Jugendarbeit, Marburg 2000, p.26 ff

[6] Alphons Silbermann, Francis Hüser, Der „normale" Hass auf die Fremden, München 1995, p. 42

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There are various attempts to explain this development. The following theories do not offer a comprehensive examination of the reasons for xenophobic attitudes but point towards societal contexts, which also have to be observed in youth social work.

The *theory of disintegration* starts from the assumption that the reason can be found in a process of disintegration that affects all aspects of society and that bears the consequences of individualisation, competition and money orientation.

The *communication theories* promote the hypothesis that social problems are only recognised as such when they have become part of the consciousness of groups or societies. They pose questions around the effect of the media and in particular the question of whether the media can trigger or prevent violence as an answer to social problems or whether they are completely neutral in their effect.

The basis of the *modernising theories* as explanation attempts for xenophobia and right-wing extremism is formed by the individualisation theory and the hypothesis that the disappearance of traditional socio - cultural environments also leads to the disappearance of environments that give meaning to people's lives. It follows, for example, that these theories regard as reason for the development of xenophobia the apparent lack of orientation and perspective following the collapse of the GDR that many, and especially young people, experience.

Other theories are based on the results of *research into prejudice and authoritarianism.*

Here xenophobia is combined with, amongst other things, authoritarian thought and behaviour patterns as well as with a lack of experience in democratic institutions and behaviour. Experts therefore assume that the increase of youth violence in the new regions (Bundesländer) is often also an expression of a clear dissociation from the democratic culture of Germany which is perceived to be imposed by the West and therefore as heteronomous.[7]

The call for possible "anti-violence – programmes" is loud and reaches in the meantime not only youth work but also formal education and the business, where social pedagogy with young people is embedded in a framework for action that includes appropriate measures to combat xenophobia and racism in the areas of employment, family, town design, police and justice as well as in political education.[8]

Within youth work demands to turn to the mostly younger followers of fascist thought have changed in content. Whereas in the beginning it was important to keep quiet the conspicuous hordes of young people who go on the rampage in public, today the task is a little more complex. Preventative youth work with this client group is gaining an increasing prominence. In addition to its role of watering down right-wing ideologies and the provision of support for young people so that they can take charge of their lives through training and employment placements, there is, in some cases, the provision of addiction therapy to help those that use alcohol excessively. There are different opinions amongst youth social workers as to the predominant aims and objectives of pedagogy as well as to good practice in working with right-wing and right-wing extremist young people. Everyone agrees, however, that these young people generally cannot be excluded.

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[7] See W. Heitmeyer, Die Gesellschaft löst sich auf, in: Die Zeit, 16.10.92, in Martin und Sylvia Greiffenhagen, Ein schwieriges Vaterland – Zur politischen Kultur im vereinigten Vaterland, München 1993, p. 142 ff

[8] See Martin Althoff, Die soziale Konstruktion von Fremdenfeindlichkeit, Opladen, Wiesbaden 1998, p. 11 ff

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From Bremen originates the approach of "accepting youth work" which has been practised since the eighties. Underlying principles are:

1.   to meet young people where they presently are,
2.   to place at the centre the problems that young people have, not those that they cause,
3.   young people see a sense in what they think and do – it must be an aim to give them the sense to change.

Acceptance does not mean the acceptance of political views but has to be understood as an attempt at critical dialogue of which a youth worker has to be capable. Where there is no active response to contradictions, there is a danger of "buddy pedagogy" which can lead very quickly to an exploitation of youth work for right-wing extremist interests. Some projects which practise this approach, also in Berlin, are not totally undisputed, as they provide opportunities for right-wing young people to meet, organise, listen to their music and to introduce their ideologies to younger ones if, and when, their youth workers are not engaging critically enough with the thinking and actions of their clients.

There is a clear limit to the work with the organised and increasingly well trained right. With those groups, social pedagogy is pointless.

"It could be an important insight for pedagogues that the work with perpetrators is also preventative protection of victims, that the occupation with racists and neo-nazis does not mean a redefinition of the perpetrator as victim with the help of social scientific theories but that the thought of protection of disadvantaged minorities can also be a basis for work with right-wing and violence prone young people."[9]

In the recent past and against this background, demands have grown, increasingly also from politicians, for stronger support of such projects that are designed to offer young people an outlook, the opportunity to participate actively, and an encouragement to be critical in their engagement and social behaviour and to adopt a humanistic way of thinking. The main aim of this preventative approach is to mobilise self help potential, to help young people recognise their own abilities and to adopt a perspective that supports and does not destroy the personality of young people.

It is possible with the potential thus created, to integrate step by step even those young people with an ideologically neo-fascist conception of the world that is not yet fixed, who are right-wing and prone to violence, and to bring them into different frames of thought and behaviour so that they become able to critically reflect on their actions and the reasons for that.

Migration

Migration is another central theme of the socio-political debate in Germany. Especially in the larger cities, and therefore also in Berlin, there has been immigration for forty years without it being acknowledged appropriately by politics. Quite the opposite: the fact that Germany has become an immigration country was negated over decades. At the current time there are about seven to eight million immigrants in Germany. But we have seen only in most recent times society debating the subject passionately and intensively. The political discussion centres in particular around the question of how immigration should in future be contentially directed.

We illustrate the current situation taking Berlin as example.

Migration to Berlin

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[9] See A. Curth: article in „Gewalt unter Jugendlichen, Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit",
Friedrich – Ebert – Stiftung, Erfurt 1995

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The migration to West Berlin only gathered momentum in the mid-sixties. It was mainly Turkish and Yugoslavian migrants that came as so called "guest workers" to Berlin. They included a comparatively high number of female workers who were in demand from the electrical and consumer article industry as untrained workers.

Following the end of recruitment (1973), the number of foreigners in Berlin continued to rise as the workers fetched their spouses and children. At the beginning of the eighties the unification of families was more or less completed and refugees followed to Berlin, predominantly from Iran, Vietnam, Poland and from the Lebanon. These refugees often travelled as families and asked for asylum. If their application for asylum succeeded they received an unlimited entitlement to stay; with the exception of the Lebanese and the Palestinians who were refused a relevant reason to claim asylum and therefore only tolerated as refugees.

The percentage of migrants in East Berlin was very low. In 1989 it constituted just 1,6%. Here people came mainly as contract workers from Mozambique, Vietnam, Poland and Angola.

In the nineties, because of the conflict in Yugoslavia, a large numbers of refugees came from civil war areas amongst them a large number of children and young people. The largest group in terms of numbers, however, comes from the states of the former Soviet Union. They are predominantly Jewish refugees und Russian speaking ethnic Germans, a large number of whom are families with children.[10]

The current situation is portrayed with figures provided by the State Office for Statistics, Berlin: "

	31.12.1991		31.12.1994		31.12.1998	
Total number of foreigners Proportion of population in %	355,356	10.3%	419,202	12.1%	437,936	13.0%
Turkey	137,592		138,959		135,159	
former Yugoslavia	42,174		73,050		66,526	
former Soviet Union	10,239		19,589		27,184	
Poland	26,600		27,627		27,934	
European Union	40,482		47,870		67,764	

Problems with Integration
The immigration numbers conceal specific problems as well as individual and collective fates, which are determined by the nature of migration to Germany:

Economic Integration
Immigration is usually connected to a devaluing of qualifications.
The social status of migrants therefore was and is equally in East as in West Berlin much lower than that of the german population.

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[10] Kapphan, Andreas: Jugendliche Zuwanderer in Berlin – zwischen Ausgrenzung und Integration

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The migrants of the so-called "gastarbeiter generation" were predominantly employed in industry as untrained workers. The second generation managed a modest social ascent, but had to fight rising unemployment as early as the beginning of the eighties.

- The structural change of the Berlin industry and, connected with this, the increase of unemployment has accelerated significantly since reunification (see above). This process affects all employees; migrants, however, are particularly affected: the total number of migrants in West Berlin who are in regulated employment declined from 1990 to 1997 by 26%, whereby at the same time the total number of the foreign population rose by 20%.

The chances for economic integration have extremely worsened in the nineties. Young people especially are affected by this development as career entry has become increasingly difficult under the conditions of workplace reductions. In some areas of Berlin the unemployment rate amongst young migrants exceeds 50%.

Social and cultural Integration

Apart from the worsening chances for economic integration, migrants experience in their daily lives the diverse range of exclusion and discrimination (police, authorities, neighbours etc.) On top of this, an increase of racist thinking and action amongst the indigenous population is noticeable.
As a result, the chances for social and cultural integration have worsened considerably in the last few years.

The following two examples serve as a visual expression of these developments:
1) Whilst it was assumed only a few years ago that language problems would have been resolved with the third generation of migrants, it is recognised today that the ability to communicate in German has got worse in the third generation.
2) Longitudinal research has proven that the amount of out-of-school leisure time that German and non-German young people spend together has significantly declined in comparison to the eighties.

This situation has led to the formation of ethnic communities in Berlin. These ethnic communities are partly based on informal relationships, but are mainly formed by institutions, organisations and companies which serve the specific needs of migrants and therefore hold a high degree of significance for them. In ethnic communities members are assured of an identity and solidarity and have the opportunity to follow their expectations in a familiar space.

Integration of young people from migrant families

Young people of the second or third generation of migrants face an even more complex situation. Whereas the generation of their parents was often still rooted in the society of their country of origin, this is no longer true for the current generation. At the same time there are few possibilities of integration into German society that can fill this vacuum. This situation is one of the factors leading to the development of a society of immigrants, the values and norms of which are derived from both, the country of origin and the country of arrival, and mostly correspond to the individual experience of migration.

Polarisation of social space

The immigrants of Berlin live in concentrated inner city districts. The proportion of foreigners in these districts is often above 30%, whilst the proportion of young people is often above 50%.

Combined with worsening economic conditions, especially for young people with a migrant background, the socio-economic conditions of this part of the population are declining immensely. A particular reason is that unemployment in these areas is very high and continues to rise, especially amongst young people. On the other hand there is a process in place in these areas which can be termed "selective deblending". This means that a part of the population leaves the community and that other groups move into the area. With regards to the inner city communities it is the economically advantaged who leave the area whereby those that move into the neighbourhood include a high percentage of people without work. The processes of impoverisation in these districts accelerate and the resulting social change is experienced by local people as social decline.

Public conflicts

In those communities of Berlin that are very significantly affected by these developments, there is a growing tendency for conflicts to emerge or be resolved in public. The way conflicts are resolved is often very aggressive. Conflicts usually arise from competing and mutually exclusive claims of public resources.

Apart from an increasing lack of perspective amongst young people with a migrant background because of the increase in youth unemployment, the larger amount of disposable time that is spent outdoors also plays a significant part.

The frustration that has emerged from lack of recognition by German society may be another reason for the increasing number of conflicts in specific communities.

We can ascertain an increased potential for conflict in these communities and as a result of that the demands on the public sector also rise.

Youth work that wants to be successful in these communities cannot supply jobs on a large scale neither can it motivate young people to change their behaviour with sales talk alone. The many concepts of open youth work that fail in these communities demonstrate this point.

Youth work can and must open up opportunities for young people, through which, despite their difficult daily lives, they can gain new experiences with themselves and others which might be useful in other aspects of their lives. Mobile and community based youth work with a participative approach is such a model. The self organised use of space for example, demands the ability to negotiate different interests. People who have learned to articulate their interests are far less likely to resolve their conflicts violently. The practice of mobile youth work is based on participation and has proven that it is perfectly suited for work with these communities and can prevent violent conflicts with its methodological tool kit of street work, group work, work with individuals and community work.

IV.   "Open youth work" and the socially excluded

Open Youth Work and Mobile Youth Work

The term **"open youth work"** describes services that are provided in youth clubs and centres to complement services for a defined membership or interest groups, with the aim of encouraging young people to spend their leisure time constructively. They combine leisure and entertainment provision with individual advice and general political and cultural education.

Open youth work in the main only reaches those young people who make use of youth provision of their own accord, who feel they belong to groups and have specific interests – often following trends of youth culture - within which they display behaviour that is partly determined by social

trends. It happens quite frequently that the open services of a youth centre are dominated by a clearly defined social group.

If we base our discussion on the model developed by Roger Hart in 1992 in the USA and by Wolfgang Gernert in 1993 in Germany, which propose a number of steps to participation (see illustration), we can assume that the opportunities for young people to participate in open youth work have so far been limited, and move between the steps involvement and participation, in rare cases reaching co-determination.

self-administration	complete determination and responsibility
self-determination	self-initiative which is supported by outsiders
co-determination	ideas come from outside but there is a right to p articipate in all decision making
participation	indirect influence through the articulation of opinions but no right to make decisions
assigned participation, information	participation in a project that is determined from the outside
involvement	over and above the involvement are possibilities to participate on an ad-hoc basis
token involvement	involvement with an apparent right to participate
decoration	involvement without knowing the aims and contents of the project
heteronomy	no knowledge of aims, activity is not understood
after R. Hart (1992) and W. Gernert (1993)	

There are strict rules in most youth clubs and centres that offer the open youth work approach, which is communicated to young people not as a necessary framework for communication and action but as a catalogue of prohibitions. As a result, young people spend more time outside of youth clubs and centres and (re)discover public spaces for themselves. Left to their own devices, they begin to be noticed, acquire a public image of being aggressive and drunk, and become excluded.

OUTREACH, a project of the Verband für Sozial – Kulturelle Arbeit has existed since 1992 and aims to cater for those who are excluded. In the first few years, it attempted to provide constructive leisure time opportunities for young people in public spaces or to reintegrate them in existing youth provision, using the approach of "**Hinausreichende Jugendarbeit"** with the specific techniques of outreach work and street work. During that time, the interests of young people became the focus of the work and their participation became a guiding principle. In contrast to approaches based on a deficit model, it was not important to get young people off the streets and therefore out of the public eye but, quite the opposite, to integrate them in their social environment through the use of local resources. The pedagogic aim of this approach is to combat the stigmatising and exclusion of young people using different levels of participation through the development of their potential for self help, thereby equipping them to articulate and claim their interests and entitlements.

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To be even more effective in the pursuit of this aim and to ensure the quality of the work, OUTREACH has used, since 1996, the concept of "**mobile youth work"**, which is based on a clear understanding of the young person's environment. Apart from street work, group work and the support of individuals, mobile youth work also uses community work as part of the tool kit. At local level – OUTREACH exists in nine Berlin districts – it has been shown that the approach of mobile youth work, based on the pedagogic aims detailed above, does not only demand a high level of young people's participation but also offers the best conditions for it.

For example, in the Berlin district of **Pankow** a group of young people aged 15 to 18 turned a dilapidated football pitch into an attractive public space for the whole of the neighbourhood. Young people gathered in the central square of a housing estate and ran into many conflicts with other local people. Through sustained street work and the provision of leisure opportunities it was possible to develop trust. Youth workers and young people then engaged in a joint planning process (Planning For Real) through which young people developed a realistic model for the square which could be submitted to the appropriate authority. In parallel, it was possible to gain a number of allies through targeted community work, such as the youth office, housing associations, the tenants association, parents and local people. Even some small local businesses supported the ideas. The project developed, and after three years a voluntary organisation was formed which enables young people to find solutions to the problems of their neighbourhood together with local politicians, local people and parents. They can, therefor, find a way of being active in society.

Models of Participation in Mobile Youth Work

Just as the example of Pankow illustrates, a number of 'models' developed as the approach of 'mobile youth work' gathered momentum, which placed young people's participation at the centre of its aims. An important aspect of effective work is also the building of networks through community work and the focus on clearly defined communities. This provides ideal conditions for the integration of young people in their communities, through the use of models of participation.

Social pedagogy is based on the belief that young people can only develop as "responsible and sociable personalities" (KJHG §1) if they are capable not only of recognising their very own problems, but of also finding appropriate solutions; if they are not just recognised in their community but also have a voice, and, if we succeed in generating their interests and participation not only in relation to youth issues but also in relation to issues affecting society as a whole.

The approaches of self-organisation and self-determination, practised in OUTREACH, are based on this commonly accepted belief. However, individual practice may differ and depends on local and cultural conditions, as well as the different preferences of individual youth social workers.

Youth social work today takes place against the background of a consumer society that is increasingly influenced by the media, resulting in a shift of common norms and values as well as an increasing lack of perspective and alienation from political processes. It is therefore difficult for youth social work to offer excluded young people alternatives such as opportunities to discover their (true) strengths, to examine their condition critically, or the opportunity to engage socially and politically.

In addition, many social workers are still convinced that they should be available at all times and are indispensable for the welfare of their client. This patronising approach is supported by central funding criteria, which prefer countable quantitative priorities to qualitative developments, and which offer social workers little trust and space for experiment placing the pedagogue under pressure to assume the exact role that is demanded.
"If youth work does not wish to address the consumer, dependent, or incapable young person but wishes instead to develop his or her potential for self realisation, it cannot present itself as a consumer or care service."[11]

At **Treptow - Altglienicke,** in the south of Berlin, the OUTREACH youth container has existed since 1998. This is a self-organised project that has, from its beginning, enabled young people to design their own leisure time provision. In contrast to more conventional work in youth clubs and centres (even if they have an open character) young people in the container are encouraged to take responsibility for the planning of the programme as well as its organisation. The youth worker assumes more and more the role of a manager in the sense of a facilitator who creates the appropriate conditions for self-organisation. This includes the representation of young people's interests in the eyes of the authorities, local youth politicians, working groups on youth issues, as well as parents and other local people.

The project is based on the recognition that young people organise themselves independently of pedagogic influences, maybe in their peer group, in a group of party goers at the weekend, or in specific interest groups. In the public eye, however, there are usually only the forms of self-organisation that have negative results, which very quickly lead to stigmatising and therefore also to the exclusion of young people. It was, and is, necessary to find a way of portraying young people positively, and not exclusively as conformist but as independent young people who have specific interests, strengths and weaknesses, which need to be accepted by society.
The young people of the youth container had this opportunity, and, in contrast to similar projects that allow young people to remain amongst themselves, were faced by the condition that this should become a public provision, which would offer other young people from the neighbourhood not just leisure opportunities but also opportunities for participation.

It is not possible here to describe in detail the different phases in the development of the project. After three years we can conclude that young people are able to follow the process of participation through their involvement in a leisure project designed by young people. Through the approach of community and social work, they are motivated to articulate their interests publicly, to become active and realise them, but also to understand them within the context of other interests.

Within the framework of self-organisation young people have the opportunity to,
I. experiment, discover talents and develop them,
II. experience democracy and power and try it out,
III. face conflicts and resolve them – without violence and always with the interest of a common cause at heart,
IV. to recognise that it is worthwhile to show commitment and to experience the feeling of recognition by other young people, but also by the public,
V. to see above their own horizon, even if it is "only" towards their neighbourhood.

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[11] Diethelm Damm, Deutsche Jugend, 11/99 in "Bedingungen jugendlicher Selbstorganisation"

Young People's Participation in Public Decision Making in Selected Countries Abroad
"Mobile Youth Work", Berlin, Germany

The involvement with the youth container has not just offered young people fun and sometimes stress, but also contributed to the development of their personalities and self-realisation in a "non-preachy" way. In light of increasing isolation and apathy apparent in the consumer and elbow society of today – and young people are even more affected by this than adults – the experiences that young people gain in a project that challenges and develops the individual as part of the pursuit of a common cause, are significant for their development.

There are further examples of projects that develop a high level of young people's participation to be found in OUTREACH.

About 15 young people manage and organise the provision "Das Blockhaus" (the cabin) in the district of **Marzahn - Nord**. The group has agreed a lease with the youth office. All issues, such as repairs, upkeep and landscaping are dealt with by young people themselves. They establish all the necessary contacts with the appropriate authorities.
Apart from regular general meetings, which they use to discuss all their problems and ideas, they independently organise parties, holidays and joint activities with a project that works with migrants, and supports young people from the former Soviet Union. OUTREACH youth workers at the project offer support to individuals with problems by mediating between young people and adults, by organising seminars on topics such as "self-management" and by initiating the integration of other groups from the local community. It has been possible, for example, to involve two rival groups in the project. In the meantime, young people are considering further independence by establishing the project as an independently constituted organisation.

Another project is being developed in the district of **Steglitz**. OUTREACH, in close co-operation with a community centre, took over a former air raid shelter, which is situated on a university campus. Funded by the Jugend – und Familienstiftung, a charitable foundation, and additionally supported by lottery funds, young people rebuilt the "Bunker", renovated it and turned it into a leisure provision offering many different opportunities. Young people here are only at the beginning of their attempts at self-organisation. The fact that there are different groups of young people causes problems. It is much more difficult to bring these groups together as they come from very different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In addition we find that the transfer of responsibility is a complex learning process for young people who have not only accepted but also lived with a consumer orientated understanding of society.

Finally, we would like to mention a self-managed project, which receives pedagogic support from OUTREACH social workers. About 20 young people aged 16 to 25 formed an interest group in **Treptow – Altglienicke** and converted an old fire station into a cultural centre. They started their project without any public funds and completely independently. Time and time again they lobbied politicians, represented their interests and claimed their entitlements. They finally achieved financial as well as moral support, i.e. the mayor of Treptow advocated the project and a Member of Parliament from Treptow acts as patron. The young people designed the project as open provision for the neighbourhood, organised street festivals, exhibitions and political forums, and, with the support of OUTREACH staff, received facilitator training in relation to youth issues.
As the group and their project was very active in the field of youth policy, they generated the interest of the political parties with the result that three young people were this year appointed to

act as advisers to the youth support committee of the district, which holds the responsibility for youth policy decisions.

This example shows that it is possible to integrate young people who can realise their potential within self-organised and self-determined projects in the relevant youth policy forums. This does not happen because they are part of party political structures but because they have learnt to represent their interests and claim their entitlements as independent persons.

Learning Points

Identification with the project from the beginning

Temporary structures such as the cabin in Marzahn or the youth container in Treptow can better support the development of creativity and commitment, and allow young people to identify with the project from the beginning, which is essential for the initiation of processes that may lead to self-organisation. In contrast, publicly owned and led institutions face the danger of enforcing consumerism. Any intent to get young people to identify with the provision has to be formulated as one of the first pedagogic aims.

Pedagogic Concepts should not be predetermined but developed in time to respond to the demands generated by young people's behaviour, therefore by themselves. In such a way it is possible to connect immediately to young people's experience of their environment und therefore also to their own personalities, which allows a critically reflective development of young people without stereotyping and exclusion. The approach of self-organisation does of course pursue pedagogic aims. However, our experiences show that it is important for such a project that these aims are not determined exclusively on the level of social work or as political will, which is difficult for young people to understand, but that they should be developed by young people themselves. Only then do the best conditions exist to enable participation in the sense of young people's co-determination, and to prevent the involvement of young people being abused as alibi for pedagogic ideas or as testing ground for social pedagogy.

The process of identification is easier if the rules of the organisation are established by young people themselves and in dialogue with them, and if they can be seen as a universally valid code of social behaviour.

Commitment is important but not specific age ranges.

A self-organised project is not always suitable to pursue for a group at the beginning of its life. Before questions of self-determination and autonomy can be addressed, a group must have developed a joint measure of social competence, which might well have been available to the individuals through their personal experiences. The belonging to specific youth or sub-cultures or a specific age range plays a less important part in the process. It has proven very useful to work with mixed groups.

Publicity is necessary for dialogue

Young people learn more effectively to articulate their concerns and claim their entitlements, if, on the one hand, this happens in relation to highly prominent issues, or if, on the other hand, they receive outside recognition for their action.

The concept of community orientation requires engagement with external influences, whether through other youth groups, local people or the police, and has demonstrated that young

people learn to take responsibility for their actions through these processes of engagement and thereby increasingly gain acceptance.

Young people should ask for the support of a youth social worker

Self-organisation needs the support of a youth worker who can help create favourable external conditions for development and who can act as conflict mediator, motivator and can protect young people from excessive demands, especially if they are engaged in a public project. Young people ask for such support.

It is important that the youth social worker has an unequivocal understanding of his or her role in the process of self-organisation, which can often be better defined within the frame of social management.

Young people's self-organised and self-determined projects convey another, less conventional, image of young people to the youth social worker as well as offer him or her the opportunity to become active in the field of youth policy.

Development of an understanding of democracy and political responsibility

Self-organisation does not only demand a certain level of social behaviour, but also teaches young people social competence and motivates them to show democratic behaviour.

Young people's understanding of democracy does not orientate itself towards party political power structures but more towards grassroots democracy.

With the help of funding for self-help potential and youth initiatives, young people develop their own structures independently, within which they practise debate and co-determination. Depending on the level of development of these structures, young people are put in the position to act above their own horizon in the interest of the public and to make their mark; this activity can lead to a political consciousness of sorts – naturally outside of party hierarchies.

As a consequence, such a project allows the integration of excluded young people, not least, of the right-wing young people who are not politically organised and who belong more to the margins of the right, but only if it is possible through pedagogic work for them to achieve an identification with the interests, contents and aims of the already established project and its young participants.

All the approaches of self-organisation and self-determination practised through OUTREACH aim to offer young people the opportunity to engage according to their interests and abilities, as well as develop social behaviour and a sense of responsibility thereby enabling them to reflect critically on their environment and to participate as independent and self-determined members of society.