**Outline Symposium:**

Talent development for 'Youth at Risk'

International conference on Youth Work and Youth Studies
"Positivity in youth work and youth studies"
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK.
28-30 August 2012

Sebastian Abdallah, Maike Kooijmans, Judith Metz, Timon Raven.

**Introduction:**

Influenced by the growing popularity of positive approaches and talent approaches, talent development becomes the central assignment for youth work in the Netherlands. Talent development in youth work consists of all those actions, interventions and activities that youth workers undertake to stimulate youth to develop and use their talents with the ambition to contribute to the empowerment of youth (Youth Spot 2009). Youth centres become production centres where youth are supervised by vocational teachers work on their personal development. The offer varies between tech and care, sports, media, art, music and dance. Youth work for 'youth at risk' uses talent projects to guide the NEET's back to school, work and housing. In those situations, youth work has the shape of programs that start with a positive approach and the lifeworld of the young.

What is the relevance of talent development approaches for the possibility of youth to become part of society on their own terms? Is it, like the many talent shows on tv, for the umpteenth time conformation that the sky is the limit and only achievements count? Or is talent development really helping young people to obtain their own place in grown up society? The little knowledge available on the working and results of talent development contrasts sharply with the enthusiasm and completeness in which talent development projects, partly forced by governments assignments, are part of youth work practice in the Netherlands. And that in a time where evidence based practice is becoming the standard, also for youth work.

For a better understanding of the functioning and relevance of talent development for 'Youth at Risk', Youth Spot started a four annual research program on the subject, in cooperation with Avans Hogeschool, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands Youth Institute, and six youth work organisations. The research is financed by Stichting Innovatie Alliantie "Raak Pro" and contributions of the participating organisations. With this symposium, we will discuss the first results of the research, exchange experiences with talent development within youth work in other countries and focus on (alternate) explanations of the functioning of talent development.

The symposium consists of four papers. Judith Metz opens the symposium with the presentation of a model for cooperation between research, education and youth work practice as a way to overcome the gap between science and youth work. The other three papers aim to provide further understanding of the functioning of talent development for youth and youth work. The presentation of Sebastian Abdallah focuses on the importance of success experiences for disadvantaged youth as well as youth workers in processes of talent development. Timon Raven offers examples of ways in which theory and practice of role modelling align in the
process of clarification and understanding of the potential of role modelling in youth work. Maike Kooijmans present a paper about how specific talent development projects in Youth Work (called 'talentcoaching') motivate youngsters in street culture to change their antisocial behavior in a positive way, so that they desist from crime and participate in society.

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Proposal to submit a workshop paper

I would like to present a paper with the following title:

**Energy Flows and Resonance in Youth’s Talent Development**

Synopsis of the paper (no more than 300 words)

(If your synopsis is accepted by the Conference Committee, you will be informed as soon as possible. The synopsis will be published in the conference programme to help participants choose the workshops they will attend.)

This presentation is part of a proposal for a symposium ‘Talent Development for ‘Youth at Risk’ by: Sebastian Abdallah, Maike Kooijmans, Judith Metz, Timon Raven.

This presentation focuses on the importance of success experiences for disadvantaged youth as well as youth workers in processes of talent development. While youth’s daily practices include rational choices, my research reveals that they mainly depend on 1) bodily presence and absence in peer groups to which they more or less gravitate on an emotional level, and 2) the co-creation of energy flows, which they evaluate as more positive or negative. Examples of these practices are meeting with the “right” people, participating in sports or cultural activities, and creating circumstances to advance their goals, among them: studying after midnight, working several part-time jobs, staying away from hang outs where age cohorts aren’t “productive enough.”

Understanding youth’s daily practices from the perspective of success experiences is essential for the debate within social work about effectiveness and how to establish this scientifically. My research shows that what gives social professionals a strong standing with youth groups, as well as other stakeholders (e.g. managers and politicians) is their ability to successfully contribute to youth’s experiences, described above, by facilitating interaction ritual chains (Collins 1993, 2004). The attention for physical co-presence, the intensity of group emotions, shared symbols, and the ways these resonate throughout different settings are key indicators for successful youth work and even youth work’s reputation with stakeholders and society. Contrary to popular beliefs, these themes are available for observation, research, and the empowerment of youth and youth workers. My findings and analyses are based on field research among youth and youth work activities in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and Beirut (Lebanon).


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Proposal to submit a workshop paper

I would like to present a paper with the following title:

**Partnership approach as alternate professionalization strategy**

Synopsis of the paper (no more than 300 words)
(If your synopsis is accepted by the Conference Committee, you will be informed as soon as possible. The synopsis will be published in the conference programme to help participants choose the workshops they will attend.)

This presentation is part of a proposal for a symposium 'Talent Development for 'Youth at Risk' by: Sebastian Abdallah, Maike Kooijmans, Judith Metz, Timon Raven.

Within the Netherlands there is a debate going on about the professionalization of youth work. The necessity and relevance of professionalization is broadly recognized. Opinions differ on the ways of professionalization. The difficulty of the classical professionalization strategy, with the standard of Randomized Control Trials, is that it does not fit to the complexity and flexibility of youth work practice. None the less government assignments in the Netherlands demand Evidence Based Practice. To find a way out, providers of youth work and study programmes social-cultural work in Amsterdam join forces and set up Youth Spot, the research and practice centre for youth work. This paper describes how the study programs, youth work organisations and researchers cooperate in the professionalization of youth work. On the one hand this article provides insight in youth work's own professionalism and, on the other hand, offers experiences with an alternate professionalization strategy. The paper is based on a combination of documentanalyses and literature research.

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Proposal to submit a workshop paper

I would like to present a paper with the following title:

**Talent Development and Desistance from Crime in Dutch Youth Work. What’s up?**

**Synopsis of the paper (no more than 300 words)**
(If your synopsis is accepted by the Conference Committee, you will be informed as soon as possible. The synopsis will be published in the conference programme to help participants choose the workshops they will attend.)

This proposal is a presentation. It’s part of a Symposium “Talentdevelopment for ‘Youth at Risk’” by:

This presentation is part of a proposal for a symposium "Talent Development for 'Youth at Risk' by: Sebastian Abdallah, Maike Kooijmans, Judith Metz, Timon Raven.

**Abstract:**
In my presentation I will talk about how specific talent development projects in Youth Work (called 'talentcoaching') motivate youngsters in street culture to change their antisocial behavior in a positive way, so that they desist from crime and participate in society.

Since the start of the 21st century, Dutch Youth Work is more and more confronted with a double assignment: to develop talents of the youngsters on the one hand, and to combat anti-social behavior of 'youth at risk' on the other hand. In the South of Holland, some talent projects have been developed with the ambition to combine both goals in one approach.

Shadd Maruna (2001) found out through empirical research that one of the most important common factors to desist from crime is the reconstruction of a new, pro-social and positive self-narrative. A tentative hypothesis is that talent projects in Youth Work can help to develop such a positive 'Me-narrative' and will motivate youngsters to desist from crime in a preventive way. In my talk, I will present a theoretical framework of the specific working (motivating) factors of sportive and artistic projects in the process of desistance from crime and their contribution to the empowerment of youth. I will focus on two theoretical concepts: the Flow theory and Positive Psychology (Cszickzentmihalyy 1999; Seliman 2002) and the paradigm of Desistance from Crime (Maruna 2001; Weaver & McNeill 2007). It will be illustrated by a case: the desistance-process of Mike, one of the youngsters of the research sample.

The presentation is part of my PhD-research about the relevance of Talentcoaching for desistance from crime and empowerment of youth.

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Proposal to submit a workshop paper

I would like to present a paper with the following title:

The Rise of the Role Model

Synopsis of the paper (no more than 300 words)
(If your synopsis is accepted by the Conference Committee, you will be informed as soon as possible. The synopsis will be published in the conference programme to help participants choose the workshops they will attend.)

This presentation is part of a proposal for a symposium 'Talent Development for 'Youth at Risk' by: Sebastian Abdallah, Maike Kooijmans, Judith Metz, Timon Raven.

Marginalised youngsters are often characterised by a lack of available role model relationships in their direct social environment, resulting in limited possibilities for social mobility and success. Ongoing individualisation and neo-liberalisation, grounded in a strong believe in meritocracy, increasingly emphasize individual responsibility in obtaining status and a favourable social position. However, if the distribution and quality of available role model relationships varies greatly among a population, the notion of a truly meritocratic society remains contested. Today, the need to create opportunities for marginalised youngsters to engage in fruitful role model relationships seems to be widely recognised. However, it remains largely unclear how role modelling brings about the effects we ascribe to it.

In this light we may regard the contemporary rise of interest in youth work interventions based upon processes of role modelling. Useful analytical tools to conceive of role modelling have yet been developed, but remain rather scattered and diverged. Moreover, their application onto the field of youth work remains limited. It is thus high time to facilitate the rise of the role model within youth work practices by providing it with a solid theoretical foundation. This endeavour is, however, deemed to fail if it would disregard the specific logic of practice inscribed in the active role model relationship in and of itself. In the proposed paper, I will present examples of the alignment of role model theory and practice -derived from my own PhD research that is part of the RAAK-PRO research programme- that might contribute to clarify and understand the potential of role modelling in youth work.

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