GET UP STAND UP

Supporting young people in their fight against injustice

MANUAL FOR THE TRAINING OF PROFESSIONALS
October 2022

This project has been funded with support from the Interreg 2 Seas Program

www.orpheusproject.eu

www.interreg2seas.eu/en/ORPHEUS

Title:
Get Up Stand Up. Supporting young people in their fight against injustice,Manual of the training for professionals

Authors:
Bart Van Bouchaute, Peter Cristiaensen
with the collaboration of Reyhan Görgöz, Peter Van Mullem and Denoix Kerger
(Training Social Work Arteveldehogeschool Ghent - Belgium)

Material produced by members of the ORPHEUS consortium does not purport to reflect the official policy, opinionor position of any individual organisation, agency, employer or institution, and thereby individual members of the consortium cannot be held responsible for material produced, authored and/or disseminated by other partners.

The ORPHEUS – Consortium
City of Mechelen – Belgium
Portsmouth City Council – United-Kingdom
University of Portsmouth – United-Kingdom
Artevelde University of Applied Sciences – Belgium
Greta Grand Littoral – France
Ceapire – Belgium
University College Roosevelt – The Netherlands
ContourdeTwern – The Netherlands

Project Management and secretariat
Project Manager: Hilde Lauwers, hilde.lauwers@mechelen.be
Administrative and financial expert: Kathy Marivoet, Kathy.marivoet@mechelen.be

---

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

What is the aim of this training?

During this training, we wish to dwell upon an important subject in which youth workers are involved when working with young people: what do you do with their grievances? Young people encounter situations which they consider as unjust. Often, they do not know how to react. Matters pass without too much publicity. But now and again anger leads to a reaction. Or to action. With or without the help of friends. Or of youth workers.

When the young people affect society with the expression of their grievances, we call that 'politicisation'. This training wishes to form professionals who wish to support young people in such processes of politicisation.

Objectives

General:
- Professionals feel more reassured in supporting processes of politicisation with and by young people.

Specific:
- Professionals understand the meaning and the importance of politicising work with young people.
- Professionals increase the space for young people to make their grievances audible and visible.
- Professionals have the starting point of a confidential relation in a safe climate in order to begin politicising processes with young people.
- Along with young people, professionals transform grievances into a shared problem formulation.
- Along with young people, professionals make strategic choices about objectives and activities within a politicising process.
- Along with young people, professionals analyse the network of supporters and opponents.
- Along with young people, professionals develop suitable forms of expression in order to make grievances public.
- Professionals deal in a flexible way with unexpected events, setbacks and opportunities within a politicising process.

Professionals are aware of their own perspective and role within politicising work.

How do you use this manual?

- **Target group**:
The training manual is intended for trainers who develop training courses for professionals who work with young people. We hope that via this training professionals will develop more confidence and skills in order to support young people when they come up against injustice.

- **Flexible use**:
This training comprises background information and possible exercises. In this way, you can compose a program from a few hours to one or more training days. The proposed approach is an example. Feel free to use your own insight, to skip and to combine parts, adjusted to your target group, organisation and the time and context of the training.

- **Extra material available**:
In addition to the information in this manual, there is extra material available for the training courses, **in the first place the textbook politicisation 'Get Up Stand Up. Young people at the forefront against injustice' (www.getup-standup.be).** PowerPoints are available for various parts.

- **Conclusion of the session**:
At the conclusion of the training, there is room for questions and concerns of participants. If necessary, there must be an opportunity for follow-up. A session can be the start for further training courses or intervision.

- **The importance of the context**:
This training cannot be applied just like that, independent of time and social context. In this training, our starting point is the context of the youth work, but this can also be developed in other contexts such as the school, the community work or the sports club. In order to help the professionals with this changeover, it is best to work with examples and experiences from their own practice.

- **Work in progress:**
The proposed approach is not the only one possible. This is not a cookery book with the 'menu' for politicising actions. The more you use your training in the practice, the more experience you will build up and the better you can elaborate the exercises.

Why this training?

Need for expression of grievances

Young people experience situations of injustice, inequality and subordination. If they express their grievances in public, this is often quickly dismissed as disorder. When young people let themselves be heard and seen, they are easily branded as 'problem youth', while they are precisely showing their involvement in society. It is therefore important to also take their voice seriously and to set to work with this. Young people also wish to be listened to and seen, make issues public and demand social change. They do so in various ways, from dialogue to action, on a small or large scale.

Precisely the public character of expressing grievances brings us to the concept of 'politicisation'[1]. Often, this word has a negative tone, but here it is used with a very specific meaning: politicisation points to practices which contribute to the public difference of opinion about how we organise our society together[2]. You will find more background at the back of this publication.

Professionals need support

With this training, we wish to support professionals who work with young people in order to reflect and practice politicising work. Because professionals often feel uncertain and/or incompetent in this type of work.

In order to contribute to the concrete question towards an approach, we bring three tracks together:
- Information from literature, research and existing training courses.
- Practical wisdom from professionals who work with young people.
- Observations and conclusions from our own Orpheus' Interreg research into cases of politicisation with young people.

[1] Van Bouchaute, B. e.a. (2019).
[2] Oosterlynck, S., Hertogen, E. & Swerts, T. (2017).

2 Training program: overview

We take the available time into account for the preparation, the training itself and the follow-up. This is why we work with SMALL, MEDIUM and LARGE versions.

A SMALL version for when your time is very limited. You can explain the concept of politicisation and the practical material.

A MEDIUM version to give a training of approximately 2 hours (120 minutes). From the experiences of the participants, you discuss a number of important considerations in 'going public' with the injustice that young people experience.

A LARGE version to give a training of at least 240 hours (a half day). On the basis of a concrete simulation of a case study, along with the group you run through a number of important steps in processes of politicisation and you discuss possible forms of approach.

You can also choose an **XL version**. Hereby the case becomes more complex. because within the process of politicisation we search for supporters and operate within a network.

Schematic

	S	M	L
Preparation	Questionnaire	Extra questions	Focus group
Training	Presentation training and manual (30')	Workshop (120')	Simulation with case study (240') XL: case study within network
Follow-up	Questionnaire	Custom-made follow-up	Custom-made follow-up

3 Before the training

Before the actual training, not only the participants but also the trainer must be well prepared. This is why in this part we first give a number of possibilities for the trainer to dwell on the needs and the questions of the group who will be trained. Then we will give a number of suggestions for the preparation of the professionals who will take part in the training.

Preparation for yourself as trainer

With the preparation for your training, give considerate thought to the following questions:

About the participating professionals
- Who are the professionals who will take part in the training?
    - Did they themselves decide to be trained?
    - What professional role(s) do they have in supporting young people?
- Contact the organisation and/or the professionals in order to gain insight into their needs and expectations in this matter.
- Find out how much experience the professionals have in processes of politicisation.

About the 'safe context' for this training
Reflect on ways of installing a safe climate for the training
- Do the participants know each other?
- Is the location where the training will be held safe?
- What is the situation regarding what the participants will contribute to this training - think about drawing up rules within the group such as 'what is said here remains here'.
- Will information about the training be shared with officials/external parties?

About the format of the training
- How much time do professionals have for this training? Adapt the version of the preparation, training and follow-up and inform the participants about this.
- How much live interaction is possible and how can this be combined with forms of online training/interaction?

About yourself as trainer
- How do you think that the group sees you?
- What is your relationship with the participants?
- What is your image of a good trainer?
- How certain do you feel about the material regarding politicization?

Preparation for the participants

The aim of this phase is two-fold:

- allowing the participants to reflect about experiences with politicisation in their approach with groups and in their professional life in general,
- and allowing them to gather information and case studies to work with during the training.

This can take place in a 'small', 'medium' or 'large' way.

The questionnaire below will be presented to professionals for participating in the politicisation training:

HOW CERTAIN ARE YOU OF YOURSELF IN...

General:

- setting up processes of politicisation with young people?

Specific:

- understanding the meaning and the importance of politicising work with young people?
- working on increasing the space for young people and making their grievances audible and visible?
- working on a confidential relation within a safe climate in order to begin politicising processes with young people?
- along with young people, transforming grievances into a shared problem formulation?
- along with young people, making strategic choices about objectives and activities within a politicising process?
- along with young people, analysing the network of supporters and opponents?
- along with young people, developing suitable forms of expression in order to make grievances public?
- dealing in a flexible way with unexpected events, setbacks and opportunities within a politicising process?

being aware of your own perspective and role within politicising work?

Furthermore, in advance you can email a few questions to the participants about experiences with politicisation in the past. They are intended to introduce the subject and to put the participants in the correct mindset. They can contribute their answers to the training.

Questions:

1. Have the young people whom you support ever taken an action **under their owninitiative** about a shared frustration? What did you do about it?
2. Did you ever take action along with young people about **frustrations/issues/problems** which one or more youths in the group had expressed?
3. Do you have experience with activities/actions whereby the **young people played aleading role** and you as a professional played rather a supporting role? How did thiswork out?
4. During one or more activities/actions, did you decide to openly approach **externalparties** (people, organisations, wide society, etc.)?

Another possibility is to email the **story of Zohra** from the introduction to the textbook 'No sorry, no apology, nothing') to the participants with the question: Do you know or recognise similar stories within your own practice? What would or could you do in order to support these young people?

If possible, you can prepare the above-mentioned questions from the medium version in the focus group. The questions in the M-format of the preparation is sent to all the participants. They prepare themselves for a focus group by answering the questions and bringing them along.

STEP 1: Individual preparation at home
The participants work individually on the questions

STEP 2: Collecting answers on flip charts (10 min)
Each participant brings along his/her individual preparation.
In the room. 4 flip charts are hung up with one of the above-mentioned questions on each flip chart. The participants are asked to add to the flip chart via core wordson post-its.

STEP 3: Discussion in plenum (50 min)
Here, we collect information about the degree of confidence of the professionals in their own approach, and possible questions to work on during the training.
The supervisor discusses the answers to each flip chart with the participants. A few possible questions for deeper reflection are:

1. Description of the situation:
   planned, unplanned, setting, subject, circumstances, type of young people, etc.
2. How did the process work out?
   How did you react as a professional? How did the young people react? What went well? What worked? What can you improve on? What made you unsure in supporting politicisation processes?
3. What would make you more self-assured in supporting politicisation processes with young people?

In the following phase, the training, the supervisor can refer to the discussion.

4 Training: medium (120 min)

In this version of the training, we go into the following in more depth:

- The content of politicising processes: with what forms of injustice are young people involved with? What do supervisors do with this?
- The course of politicising processes: what arguments are there to go public or not with this issue? And how do you deal with that?

In this workshop of approx. 120 minutes, an appeal is made to the own experiences and the imagination of the participants.

The workshop connects with Chapters 1 – 4 from the textbook 'Get Up Stand Up'.

Planning:

1. Welcome and introduction:
2. Background: what is politicisation?
3. 'At the forefront: against what?' Forms of injustice
4. What do we do with that injustice?
5. Can we go public with this issue?
6. Getting started: a plan of approach
7. Focus on the involvement of young people
8. Conclusion

Introduction (10 min)

- The participants come in and sit down, 4 people to a table.
- Brief round whereby the participants introduce themselves. Here, we will briefly go into the preparation which was sent in advance.
- Brief explanation of the content of the training and the approach: in groups of 4, together we will discuss various considerations and choices in the politicising work with young people.

Background: what is politicisation? (5 min)

- Brief explanation of politicisation (see PowerPoint and Chapter 1 of the textbook – What's in a name?)
- Today, we will delve deeper into the question how we can work in a politicising way with situations of injustice which our young people come across.

At the forefront against what? Forms of injustice (10 min)

- Individual reflection: reflect on your daily practice and the young people with whom you work. What issues do they come across which they experience as a form of injustice? Note down a few issues.
- Tell these issues to each other within your group and explain why youngpeople experience this as injustice.
- Plenum: a few questions are brought forward and noted on flip charts in three columns 'economic', 'cultural' and 'political'. The list is explained from the framework of 'forms of injustice (Fraser) - see PowerPoint and Chapter 2 (At the forefront: against what?)

What do we do with this injustice? (15 min)

- Individual: look again at the issue that you noted down. What did you do about this or what would you do about this? And why would you do/not do this?
- Exchange in plenum: everyone introduces a question and what he/she would do with this and why.
- Discussions and interpretation of the choices that youth workers can make (see PowerPoint and Chapter 4 of the manual). These considerations are influenced by a number of factors:

- How do you see your own **role** as a youth worker? Rather as an individual healthcare professional or priority group worker?
- What **space** do you have? How do your colleagues and your organisation look at this? Are you encouraged in this or ratherrestrained?
- What **thoughts and feelings** have the upper hand? A certain fatalism because the problems have been detected all too often? Orthe outrage that something must really be done with those stories?

Can we go public with this issue? (15 min)

- Introduction (see Chapter 3 textbook): there are different valuable ways, as a youth worker or as a youth work organisation, to chart a theme. However, there are several ways that we do not refer to as politicisation, because the issue is not made public. The question whether we 'go public' or not is therefore a central consideration in politicising action.
- Individual: look again at the issues that you noted down. Would you go public with (one of) these issues, or precisely not? Why? Immediately note down the arguments for and against.
- Exchange per 4 about the question: what are arguments for and against going public with matters of injustice? The lists will be presented and supplemented by the whole group.
  Exchange and interpretation: see textbook for the arguments whether to go public or not.
  Points of attention for the discussion:
- This is not a mere rational consideration but is connected to more normative or emotional motives. The consideration whether 'participants are ready for this' or the question whether 'we will not offend our policymakers' is indeed connected to visions on the relation with participants and with policymakers, or with feelings of anxiety or pride… It is important to also make these feelings and anxiety open for discussion during the discussion. Youth workers can be afraid that they themselves will be targeted, would lose their jobs, etc.
- Can politicising work rights be removed or limited for people who have not yet been heard, seen or recognised within the dominant power relations? After all, in a situation of powerlessness, acting in a politicising way, can lead to undermining these rights. Going public could lead in this situation to undermining rights.
- The consideration whether to politicise or not is so fundamental that it can best be made together with the participants.

Getting started: a plan of approach (50 min)

- Now we will move to 'how do we politicise this issue'? In order to practice in a very concrete way, we will draw up a mini plan of approach.
- Presentation of the core questions. What? Who? Where to? How? (see manual Chapter 4 and PowerPoint)
- Group work: choose one issue and elaborate a plan of approach for this issue.
- The plans will be briefly presented. Exchange and feedback.

Focus on involvement of young people (10 min)

- In the small groups, we will review the process from the central question how we can increase the involvement of young people themselves in these processes. Questions:
- The impetus may have come from the young people, but is it possible to formulate the problems not 'for' them, but 'together with' them? Are they intrinsically involved in the analysis of the problem?
- Are they in favor of going public, well aware that action can possibly also lead to negative reactions? What is feasible and safe for them?
- What role do they play in elaborating the plan: in choosing goals, approach, supporters, etc.?
- What role do they play in the concrete execution? …
- Discussion: how can we increase the involvement within our concrete issue?

Conclusion (5 min)

- Review of the training: what did we learn?
- Refer to the textbook and possibilities for further training.

5 Training: large (240 min)

In this longer version of the training, we work with a complex case study. In this case study, various facets of politicising work with young people are explored. This takes place via a realistic simulation.

- The case study is introduced in various stories.
- After each story, the participants are asked to reflect about a possible approach from the position of the youth worker.
- Then an exchange and an in-depth study will follow.
- Then the actual approach in the specific case study will be explained and the story will be continued.
- The input and involvement of the young people themselves is a guideline throughout this case study.

Format

In advance: is there a confidential relation?

Step 1: Is there an issue? From an individual to collective story

Step 2: What is our involvement?

Step 3: Can we go public with this issue? = politicising!

In this third step, a decision is made whether to go public or not with the issue. The following 4 steps are the further elaboration of this 'going public'.

Step 4: WHAT = Do we explore our insight into the issue?

Step 5: WHERE TO - What do we want to achieve?

Step 6: WHO - How do we determine our network of supporters and opponents?

Step 7: HOW - What strategy and action tools do we deploy?

When this has been determined, we will look at the execution

Step 8: How can we execute this action well?

Step 9: What does 'success' mean?

Step 10: Conclusion

Politicising work does not always take place in reality in such an orderly fashion and in steps, but in order to contribute insight and skills, we still work in a more or less procedural way. However, we provide a number of 'chance cards' in which unforeseen windfalls and setbacks are processed. They show to an extent the unpredictable, sometimes chaotic character of politicising processes in this case study (see Chapter 7 'Hete hangijzers' (Hot issues) in the Dutch version of the textbook - inserted in Chapter 4 in the French and English version).

Introduction (10 min)

- Brief round whereby the participants introduce themselves.
  Here, we will also briefly go into the first question from the list which was sent in advance. The intention is not too do so too thoroughly. The other questions will also be dealt with later in depth.
- Presentation of working with a realistic simulation. This simulation is based on a number of real case studies in the professional field. The case study has been built up in steps, based on a number of questions in order to successfully deliver the training. Of course, this division is artificial and in reality, the steps often coincide with each other. We work with numerous 'chance cards' which come along and disrupt the process to show this complexity during this training,

---

Case Study

We will start immediately with outlining the context and the issue of the case study.

The context: the case study takes place within youth work in an urban context. It concerns young people with and without a migration background. Within the youth work, the young people gather to relax and meet each other during their free time. A group worker works with about thirty young people who are continually present in a group of about twenty during group moments. The young people can also approach a course supervisor in order to deal collectively with individual problems which they come up against. On Thursday evening, there is a meal together and there is also a group discussion on a regular basis about an issue that is important for the group.

The issue: in the city there has long been a question of a housing crisis at the bottom of the housing market. Due to the large demand for rented accommodation or apartments and the limited offer, the rent prices are high and the quality low. Landlords can easily choose 'the best tenant' from the many potential tenants. Within this selection, young people with a low income usually draw the shortest straw. If they are able to rent anything at all, then they must choose between paying a great deal or living poorly, a choice they do not wish to make, and really should not have to make.

In advance - Safe climate and confidential relation as a basis (15 min)

<table>
<tr><td>

Case Study

Within the organisation, every Thursday the young people gather for a meal, to exchange experiences from everyday life, to tell what they come up against, to have fun, but also to share difficult emotions. After the meal, there is always a brief or longer group discussion. In this way, young people are just used to a number of agreements about how they communicate with each other, what is OK and what is not OK. A friendly atmosphere has emerged. The group worker is always present, gets involved in the discussion and sometimes intervenes to remind them of agreements about communicating with each other. In turn, he also feels supported by the coordinator. He can contact him in the case of questions or doubts.

With the course supervisor, the young people share individually their sometimes-difficult stories and problems. The young people respect her, especially because she really listens to them, is not too quick to judge and looks together for a solution. Often, they go together with her to school or work mediation or home owner or police or... to support them, to deal with difficulties, to support them or to make contact again. Thanks to the individual work, the young people have a great deal of trust in her. To be able to rely on her, she can be discreet about the things that she hears, but she really does something about it.

</td></tr>
</table>

Working with the stories, experiences and problems of the young people - and so therefore announcing these issues - can only happen if the relation between the course supervisor and the young people is a safe space. We therefore dwell in advance on what a safe space means for us.

Brief discussion in pairs:
What makes a climate safe/unsafe?
1. for you as a professional
2. for young people

Discussion within the group:

1. Safe space for the professional
- How important is it for a safe climate for yourself as a professional?
- What makes the climate safe/unsafe for you as a professional?
- How can you deal with this? How can the climate become safer?
- What support do you need? Who can give that to you?

2. Safe space for young people:
- What makes the climate safe for young people?

Here, you can refer to the double meaning of the ingrained tension between two forms of safety:
- the safety of being able to act on forceful agreements without a repressive reaction on the one hand;
- the safety of not being humiliated or damaged as a young person on the other hand.
- How can you deal with this? How can you become better at this?
- What support do you need? Who can give that to you? (see Chapter 5 'From safe to brave' in the Dutch version - Chapter 6 in the English and French version).

Step 1 Is there an issue? From an individual to collective story (25 min)

Case Study

During the past weeks, the young people often come to youth work with stories:
"This evening, I'm going to couch-surf at a mate's. I'm allowed to stay there for two days. Then I don't know where I will go."
"I shared the rent of a small apartment with my girlfriend. We have separated, now I can no longer pay the rent and I cannot find an immediate solution either." "Living at home is really no longer possible. I share the apartment with my parents and younger brothers and sisters, but I have no space for myself. The tension is increasing. I urgently have to leave but I don't know how."
"I would like to stay at the youth work this evening as long as possible. It is at least warm here. For a few weeks, I have lived and mostly slept in the park. I don't feel very safe there either."

- Starting questions:
  - Have you yourself already been confronted with similar stories of exclusion or discrimination amongst the young people with whom you work? What stories?
  - What do you do with that, as a youth worker? Do you work further with these grievances, or do you also deal with this collectively? Why did you do this/not do this? Or why would you do/not do this? What questions do you have in this regard?
- First, note this down individually within a few first reservations
- Exchange pairs
- Group discussion

During the group discussion, the first reactions are exchanged. These issues are then compared with the framework of Fraser about three areas of injustice: economic, cultural and political (see schedule of PowerPoint and textbook)

Then, we dwell on the reactions of the youth workers. The potential reactions are noted down. For every reaction, motives and questions are also noted down.
Here, try to have attention for the following:

- What **role perception** do participants have of their role as youth worker? E.g. I am an individual social worker so someone else should do something about this. Or: all the initiatives must come from the young people, I will see what happens...
- What **thoughts and feelings** play a role? E.g. fatalism on the part of the youth worker: we have detected this so often from the government in annual reports and other documents and yet that does not change, 5 years ago we already had a campaign and that misfired completely, we cannot exercise any influence on the political agenda regarding this issue, etc.
- What **assessments about the young people** play a role? E.g. it is their responsibility, they are barely aware of the situation, everyone is preoccupied with his own situation after all in a struggle to survive, etc.
- Who determines what happens with these stories? This points to the **power positions** between young people, youth workers and their managers. Whether or not going into these stories and, as a youth worker, making a collective problem of this with which you work together further with the young people does not just depend on the relation young people-youth worker, but also on the position of managers and the **organisation**: do they encourage or restrict? Why?

Step 2 What is our involvement? (15 min)

At this step, you give an explanation, then it is told how this case study unfolded.

To what extent are we already involved in this issue?
It is very likely that we are already engaged in this issue, for example because provision or regulation within our professional field is questioned, or more directly, because our own provision or approach is questioned.

Another possibility is that one of our employees, volunteers or participants immediately appeals for support from the organisation. However, we can also be asked by other organisations as a supporter, sympathiser, etc. These forms of involvement will also give direction to further considerations.

What is the importance of this issue for us?
To consider the intrinsic importance, it is obvious to test the issue against the mission and vision of the organisation. If the issue lies at the heart of the mission, it is more logical that the organisation gets involved.

Yet it is very likely that an issue will crop up which is relatively new and moves or motivates the organisation or workers very strongly. Then an open debate about possible involvement is appropriate. In this way, for many organisations in youth work Covid-19 was a reason to make the negative effects of both the pandemic and the measures for young people visible.

To what extent do we respond to this?
For the workers or volunteers, this means estimating capacity and motivation, knowledge and skills, possibilities for training or education, etc.

For the organisation, there are similar questions: available people, knowledge, skills, means, capacity, opportunities, risks, etc.

To be able to calculate the own involvement properly, it is interesting to find out what your 'zone of influence' is in this matter. You can roughly distinguish three zones of influence:

- What belongs to our direct sphere of influence: What can we change ourselves, on the basis of our own organisation and actions?
- What belongs to our broader, indirect sphere of influence: what do we have an influence on via pressure on other people?
- What do we have little influence on? Or do we have no idea whether we can have an influence on concrete changes?

What contribution can we make?

When the principal question about the involvement is answered positively, the practical question is of course: what can our contribution be? Of course, this has to do with available time, energy and means. Although such processes can never be completely planned and even less so controlled, it is still worthwhile having a good look at this. A few possible means that you can deploy are:

- information and expertise
- authority
- relations and networks
- funds
- organisational or administrative know how
- time and energy of employees and/or volunteers
- infrastructure, materials
- communication
- ...

Case Study

Within a few weeks, the course supervisor gets to hear so many distressing stories from young people that she feels the need arising to share this within the organisation and to ask what can be done about this. Although it is not her core task, she approaches the person responsible of the organisation with the urgent question to set to work with this.

The person responsible also involves the group worker. The three of them are already convinced that they cannot just let this lie. The situation has already dragged on for a long time and the need is only becoming greater.

However, the mission of the organisation gives direction regarding this choice: "We offer young people a trusted place for a group-oriented free time offer. We have special attention for the wellbeing of our participants. We are committed to the realisation of their social fundamental rights." The issue lies at the heart of the organisation.

However, it is still not clear what influence the organisation itself can exercise. In any case, there will be plenty of work in order to increase this 'zone of influence'. The organisation can deploy the commitment of the supervisors and volunteers, the support of the whole organisation, the good contacts with other organisations and their background knowledge about the issue.

Since they themselves are very motivated, the course supervisor receives the assignment and some space in her task package to set to work further with this issue. The housing problem must urgently be put higher on the public and political agenda, otherwise the problem will just ripple onwards... with very harmful consequences for the young people.

Step 3 Can we go public with this issue? (20 min)

There are different valuable ways, as a youth worker or as an organisation, to charta theme. You can take on board the defence of your young people and even go tothe services yourself to get something done. Or you can 'lobby' behind the scenes and go directly to policymakers. In order to detect matters, to provide them with information or to whisper suggestions to them. But we do not call this politicising. Because the public forum is not visited. Note, it can be very useful at certain timesnot to politicise.

Individual exercise:
Note down arguments about whether to go public or not with this issue.

- Group discussion:
- Collect the reactions.
- Elements to dwell on during this discussion

Arguments to not politicise:
- On the basis of **participants**: bringing matters to a head can work out adversely for the people involved, or the concrete individual needs are so high that all the energy is temporarily devoted to this, or you want to avoid people 'having their head against a wall'.
- On the basis of the **issue**: because the issue is still not clear, because you need more individual testimonies before you can make a public issue of it.
- On the basis of **policymakers**: because you estimate that discrete lobby work or acting as a 'mouthpiece of' or 'expert on' can deliver more, or because you do not wish to muddy a (potentially shaky) relation with policymakers.
- On the basis of the broader **society**: because you estimate that the public is not yet ready for this, or because you do not find support in broader networks or other actors in order to develop the necessary strength.

This is not a mere rational consideration, but it is a connection to more normativeor emotional motives. The consideration whether participants are ready for this orthe question whether we will not offend our policymakers is indeed connected tofor instance visions on the relation with participants and with policymakers, or with feelings of anxiety or pride.

However, it is a fundamental consideration. As a result of politicising work, can rights be removed or limited for the young people involved? After all, in a situation of powerlessness, acting in a politicising way, can lead to undermining these rights. When the dominant power relations do not allow winning this strategically, based on and for the target groups involved, acting in a politicising way here may lead to undermining rights.

The consideration whether to politicise or not is so fundamental that it can best be made together with the participants. Because, conversely, too cautious a consideration can lead to self-censure. If workers and their organisations assume harmony and dialogue by definition, if they particularly wish to present themselves as useful technical executors of policy decided by governments, if they are afraid in particular of losing support or subsidies, if they do not want to oppose the public opinion, then this will lead to all dynamics towards politicisation being nipped in the bud. And then this still happens before any pressure is applied. So politicising appeals to a considerable amount of courage.

Ultimately, you must of course take the plunge. Are you, both young people and youth workers, ready to step 'outside' with the complaints? In order to set up a politicising action, well aware that action usually brings about reaction? How did it work out in the case study?

Case Study
Heads are put together, and the decision is made: "We cannot keep quiet any longer. The situation is too serious for a considerable part of the young people of our group and many have nothing more to lose. A signal must be given and that is a role which our organisation must take on."

Chance card 1 "But we can't change anything about it anyway" (10 min)

But it can also work out completely different. This is why we dwell on an important problem in these types of issues: the feeling of powerlessness in young people and/or youth workers.

Case Study

In this case study, this issue also plays a role, both for young people and for youth workers:

- A colleague in the organisation tells the course supervisor: "This housing crisis has already lasted so long and is only getting worse, we can't do anything about it, can we?" - Young people often tell about their housing problems with a sort of resignation, their situation is bad, but this happens to be the reality. Often, they must fight to survive, to find a place every day to be able to stay the night more or less in peace. They do not have the courage to change this. - In a talk with a youth worker from another organisation, the course supervisor hears that this youth worker has been complaining for many years within the own organisation that the young people are having an increasingly hard time on the housing market: "I already detected this for many years, and then this is included in the signals in our annual report for the city council. And then I hear nothing more about it…" - A staff employee of the Housing Department of the city complains that analyses and reports are often not listened to much by the city policymakers: "It seems as if they have resigned themselves to the situation: this is not good, but we cannot do anything about it. And then looking away is sometimes easier than looking the uneasy reality right in the eye." - An engaged politician from the majority which governs the city realises that this is a huge problem, but: "Actually, as a city we have too little levers at hand to correct the situation. The financing of the city, but also of social housing lies with the higher governments and they let us down. This is why we can do very little about it."

Possible questions:
- Do you recognise these types of statements?
- If so, did these statements come from young people or from youth workers or other people involved?
- How do you deal with these types of fatalism? What are points of attention?
- What could be the added value or strength of a group here in the process towards a collective issue?

Tips for the trainer:
- Recognise that feelings of powerlessness/impotence play a role.
- Also pay attention to fatalism among supervisors, not just among young people.
- Here, there is also a link to (the importance of) results in the short term and celebrating (small) successes - see further another chance card.

> **Case Study**
>
> It is clear for the course supervisor that for young people, but also for supervisors, people responsible from both organisations and policymakers, a considerable fatalism is present. At the most, they see it possible to support a young person or a family individually here and there in their search for a suitable living space. In order to break through this fatalism, the supporter wishes to set to work with the young people, but also get other professionals and organisations involved in the action. She discusses this with the person responsible. They decide that the action against the housing crisis is not just aimed at the result: a strong campaign must not only put the housing crisis back high on the public and political agenda.
>
> However, at the same time there must also be attention for a strong process: by means of a strong and promotional action, the organisation wishes to break through the fatalism for all the parties involved. This must release the necessary dynamics in order to no longer sit back but deal with the housing crisis in a more powerful way.

Step 4 How can the issue be formulated? (20 min)

If you as a youth worker receive the assignment to set to work further with your group, it is important to reach a correct formulation of the question. It is important to gain better insight into the causes of the problem, the people responsible, the extent of the problem, figures, experiences, solutions which have already been tried… Here we bring this forward as a separate step. However, in practice that is rarely possible to delineate so easily. Often, the formulation also changes in the course of a case study, because for instance supporters contribute additional insight. So nothing such as a fixed 'step by step plan' exists for politicising work, but we will do it in this exercise to be able to think about it better.

Who formulates the issue?

Youth workers and organisations in social work are not only resolvers of problems, but they also often play a unique role in naming issues.

Just because they are close to the environment of their participants, they have a privileged position for making problems or ideals visible. In this way, they transform invisible, private needs and dreams of individual participants or groups to a public need or dream which requires a collective approach. But there is more. Professionals and their organisations sometimes have the inclination to formulate issues 'for' their people, less 'with' them. The question is here whether or how the young people are involved in the formulation of the issue. This involvement is also important because the young people can therefore become co-owner of the further action.

> **Case Study**
>
> During the weekly meeting with the young people, the supervisor begins with a round 'How is everyone's position, how are you getting on?'. With the round of the group, three young people tell - again and as usual - about their acute problem of finding a place to sleep.
>
> The course supervisor tells that after the group session she will set to work with them individually, but she starts a discussion about housing: "What do you come up against? What do you find the greatest problem?" In a round, all the young people tell what they think about this. That goes quite well, because a habit has grown within the organisation to discuss such matters with each other. The supervisor notes down a number of key words on a flip chart.
>
> After each contribution, she checks with the group whether there are new matters and what should be added to the flip chart. Similar statements are clustered on the flip chart. Then the discussion is about the core of the problem: what do the young people find to be the greatest housing problems? So where should something change?
>
> The supervisor writes down the main matters on the overview diagram. From this discussion, the following emerges as the core: there are too few affordable and suitable living spaces for young people, but also for families with children. The session is concluded with the agreement that the group wishes to further discuss the problem and what must change.

How can you formulate an issue?

Youth workers have the unique possibility of combining two tracks
in order to reach a clear description of an issue:

- In the analysis, you can process the **environment knowledge** of the participants. This can be done in various ways: conducting interviews, holding focus groups, using methods of participating action research, inviting experience experts or asking a wider group via forums and surveys.
- In addition, you can gain insight by processing **external information** from articles, TV programs, by inviting an expert who answers questions and helps search for clarification.

Whatever method you use, the aim is to reach a deeper insight into the issue.

EXERCISE

What questions could you ask regarding this issue?
- Noting down answers individually
- Drawing up an overview
- Comparing with the following schedule:

For example, ask yourself the following questions:
- How did the issue grow? What were the main themes in this history?
- What is the current core of the issue? What are the various aspects?
- Who is involved?
- What answers have already been developed and applied in this issue? What have they changed? Why were they changed or abandoned?
- this issue? What have they changed? Why were they changed or abandoned?
- What are the 'costs' (economic but also social) of failing to deal with this issue and what are the benefits of an alternative approach?
- Who has an interest in maintaining the existing situation? Who benefits from change? What are the power relations like between these groups?

An example of a method is making a problem tree. Here, young people and youth workers search for answers to three questions. This can be done by hanging post-it notes in a large drawing of a tree.

- What is the core of our housing problem? (the trunk)
- What are the main causes? (the roots)
- What are the main consequences for us? (the branches):

This gives the following result:

→ **The branches:**
children have to sleep on the streets or to go sofa-surfing.

→ **The trunk:**
a shortage of affordable and decent places to live.

→ **The roots:**
a shortage of social housing, landlords don't want young people as tenants, too many students take all the available places…

> **Case Study**
>
> They are soon in agreement about the core problem: in this city there are too few affordable and quality living spaces for young people, but also for families with children and with a low income.
>
> For the causes, they write: 'too little social housing', 'landlords do not want young people', 'racism', 'too many students go and live together in houses', 'the night shelter is not suitable for children', etc.
>
> For the consequences, they write: 'children in the street and in the parks', 'difficult to go to school', 'we are becoming ill', 'we never have peace', etc.
>
> They have few ideas about what has already been done and what should happen.
>
> After this exercise, the supervisor proposes going into the matter a bit deeper the next time. She shows a few newspaper articles, for instance an article from a local housing expert, and she has also recorded a report from the regional television network. She proposes that the young people read or look at this, they can also come and do this in the organisation, during the following week, alone or along with her. Next week, they will look at the matter further.

Chance card 2 "This is difficult and is going far too slowly" (10 min)

> **Case Study**
>
> A number of young people drop by and look at the information along with the supervisor. Some of them are really taken with the matter, they bring along information or produce new information themselves. However, the following Thursday, a few young people do not turn up either. Afterwards, the supervisor contacts them. They complain that it is all going too slowly, that it is too difficult to process all that info... and ask: "when can we really do something?"

Recognisable? What would you do with this?

It could be about

- what the young people want with such a matter and what we ask them,
- about focus and patience, about empathising with the impatience and the frustration,
- about the tension between 'ratio' (calmly analysing, gaining insight) and 'emo' (the real displeasure that a channel seeks in order to come out).

Case Study

The supervisor mentions the dropping out during an informal moment in the youth work. The young people who are dropping out tell what they are fed-up about. Other young people say that they still want to know what precisely is going wrong with housing in the city, so that they can also set better demands.

After some talking back and forth, they think that it must take place a bit quicker and more goal-oriented in particular. They ask the supervisor to ask someone the next time who knows a lot about this. She herself knows a young researcher who has recently written a good overview article. In this, he clearly explains how during the past 10 years in the city both the demand and the offer on the housing market has changed.

He tells the young people how more and more people are searching for affordable rented accommodation. This leads to an enormous pressure at the bottom of the rental market: small houses of poor quality are also rented at too high prices, landlords can easily choose a tenant and refuse others. This is why it is increasingly difficult for young people but also families with young children to find affordable and suitable rented accommodation. They seek temporary solutions or end up on the street.

Then is it about what has already happened? They find out that increasing the number of social housing would be a good approach, but in practice this will still take many years and meanwhile outdated social housing must also be renovated. So, this becomes difficult. Pressure will therefore be necessary in order to ask for this and other solutions, also in the short term!

In the case study, a choice was therefore made to invite an expert. It is of course important that this person can explain a complex problem in a comprehensible way and that the young people see him or her as 'someone who understands their problems'.

Step 5 How do you record a goal? (15 min)

What do you hope to be able to achieve? It is important to dwell on this. This canbe both about objectives in the short term and expectations in the long term. Youcan also dwell on what you want to achieve as a minimum and what would be the preference 'in an ideal world'.

An example of goals:
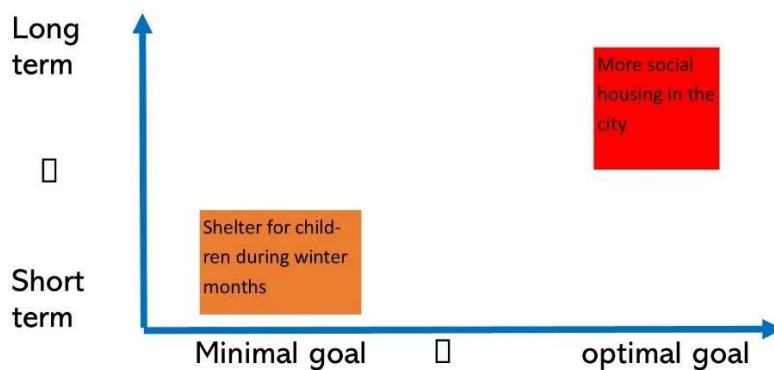
Spontaneously, we think when formulating goals of concrete changes in the policy, whether it concerns a government or institution, local or national. However, goals can also be aimed at fellow citizens and the public opinion.
Or at rules and structures. Or at perception. They can be very local, or very global,as with the climate crisis.

Exercise:
In this concrete case study, would could be goals and at whom are they aimed?
What do you wish to achieve with whom in the short term and in the long term?

Case Study
From a discussion, it appears that the young people at least want that during these winter months no children need any longer spend the night on the street. So proper shelter must immediately be available. At the same time, they realise that this is just a short-term solution. A lot will still have to change but now immediately there must be decent shelter for children onthe streets. The public opinion and the policymakers must be shaken awake, because this dreadful situation has already dragged on for too long. They decide to continue with an action.

Step 6 Who are supporters? Who are opponents? (10 min)

Case Study
In a meeting with the young people, the supervisor asks them to indicate who is still busy with this and who would be able to help. Someone knows a youth worker in her neighbourhood. Another person has seen that a community worker speaks to homeless families in the park. Apparently, this person is helping to search for solutions. A girl tells that she was helped by a social worker of the local health centre who told that the housing problem is getting seriously worse.   Spontaneously, about five people/organisations are mentioned. Together with the young people and a colleague, they chart the possible supporters and opponents.

Explanation:

Undoubtedly, there are also other organisations occupied with the same theme. Alliances can therefore be very useful. Although alliances also always lead to other questions. Even if you share the same viewpoint, not everyone is intrinsically and/or strategically on the same wavelength. There are methods to chart supporters and opponents in this way.
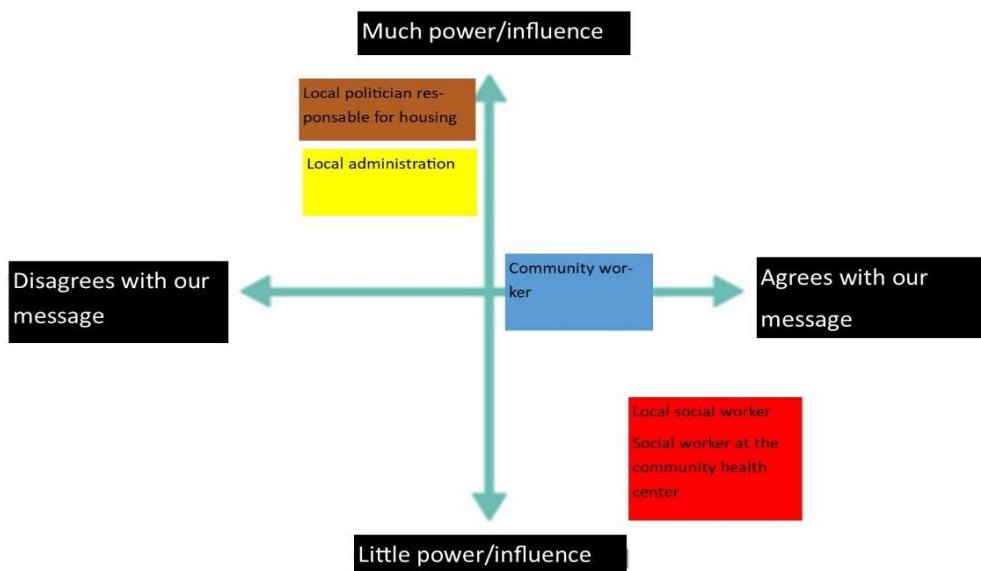
It can of course increase your clout by involving supporters in further plans. However, that also adds problems: how to organise consultations, how to decide, how to organise everything, etc.

For the sake of simplicity, we will not further chart this network in this version. We will however do that in the XL version.

Step 7 What strategy and what forms of action do you choose? (20min)

You can classify and explain strategies in all kinds of ways. Here, we choose for a simple overview.

Step 1 What basic strategy?

Diagram on PowerPoint and in the Manual:

The first strategy lays the base as it were for the other ones. Because not everyoneis immediately included, we speak of an important first step of **awareness**.
From there, ideas can grow to **make an issue visible**.A
step further is **demanding change**.
But you can also approach it differently and think how you yourself **can realise change**.
And all those forms can consist of **offline or online actions**, or a mix of both.

Exercise:
What strategy or mix of strategies would you apply here?

Case Study

In this case study, a clear choice was made for a mix of 'making the issue visible' and 'demanding change'. This means that there must be further reflection about which forms of action will be used in order to demand this change.

Step 2 Dialogue or conflict?

Demanding change can also be done in a great many ways: you can search for the **dialogue** or you can - carefully or resolutely - enter the **confrontation**. Many professionals and organisations almost automatically choose for strategies of collaboration and dialogue and are somewhat wary of confrontation or conflict. Sometimes, these are strategies which young people will rather choose from impatience.

Important questions:
- How do you feel about this choice?
- Did you ever have to make this choice?

Tips for the discussion:
- Gather arguments for and against both for dialogue and for conflict. Make it clear that both positions have strengths and weaknesses.
- Make the connection between strategy and the power relations and whether/how you will let them be overturned. In this way, a mere dialogue canbe insufficiently powerful in order to move a strong opponent.
- Clarify that conflict and dialogue can change in the same issue or with the same organisation, can be combined. It is a dynamic process and not a static fact.

Step 3 What form of action?

Now it is becoming more concrete. What forms of action would you choose? A 'good' petition or a 'naughtier' demonstration? An open letter in the local media or a sit-in in front of the city hall?

Sensibilisation action   Petition   Open letter   action on social media

Action picnic   Sit-in   Occupation   Demonstration

Consultation   Demonstration   Opinion piece

Protest song

! In his *The Activists' Handbook*[3], Aidan Ricketts sought for a way to make an overview of forms of action and their strategies. He arrived at four categories:

1) Forms of action which are aimed at obtaining support for your idea or your demand in society, for a particular target group or for 'the public at large'. Numerous sensibilisation activities and actions fall under this. Important to this is often the use of music, of humour, of elements from the popular culture, etc.

2) Forms of actions which are aimed at giving this demand resonance via the media. In the past, the challenge lay in convincing classic media such as newspapers or television to convey something of your action. Nowadays, almost all organisations have their own media which they can engage: a website, newsletters, social media channels, etc.

3) Forms of action that are aimed at addressing politicians directly. You can do this behind the scenes, far away from all possible attention. In this case, this falls outside our delineation of politicising. However, you can also carry out your action at the front door, so to speak, of politicians, with as many supporters as possible and covered in detail by the media.

4) Forms of action that are aimed at engaging legally foreseen possibilities.

Many actions are of course a combination of various forms of action.

Public	Media	Politicians	Legal procedures
Sensibilisation Networking Petitions Action picknicks Demonstrations Manifestations Humour Protest songs	Media actions Press briefings Opinions Reports Own media (website, social media, YouTubechannel,…)	Lobbying Negotiations Delivering letters, petitions, … to politicians Manifestations Strikes Digital activism Direct actions	Participation processes Legal objections Complaints
In practice often combinations			

---

[3] https://aidanricketts.com/the-activists-handbook/

Case Study
After some discussion, the following is decided: because the housing crisis is so acute, the problem must be brought as quickly as possible to the public and political agenda. So, we must carry out a public action, the concrete proposal will be: - A demonstration on the square of the city hall, with as many families, young people, youth workers and sympathisers as possible, in the late afternoon, at the time when the school day ends, and shops are still open. - After a concentration on the square and a short speech for participants and press, there will be a brief protest march through the central shopping streets. - Then as many tents and sleeping bags as possible will be provided on the square so that the demonstration will overrun into a sleep-in; a few artists will be asked to perform on the square that evening. - The atmosphere must be free of violence and friendly but decisive, the action must count on a large amount of sympathy from bystanders and public opinion. - The course supervisor and a young person will together act as spokespersons. They will be available to the press before, during and after the action. During the discussion, they will realise a slogan for the action: 'No child on the street'.

Step 8 How can you carry out your politicising action well? (15 min)

A script must be drawn up with lists of tasks, lists of materials, etc.
Various media can be engaged in order to give more resonance to the action, both classical media (via a press release) and own media (website, social media).

Exercise: discussion
Important the point of attention: how do you make sure that young people and children remain explicitly in the foreground themselves, during this politicising moment? Can one of them speak out? Talk to the press? How do you prepare them for that? How do you protect them (also on social media)?

Case Study

In the execution of the action, much attention will be paid to making young people visible and listened to.

The press release will be drawn up together with the young people. It will begin with a number of brief testimonies and quotations from young people. The contact points for the press for further information is a duo: the supervisor along with a young person who has been appointed by the group as spokesperson. Together, they will prepare possible questions/answers in a training (simulated interview by a journalist).

Furthermore, the young people along with the supervisor and with the contribution from other organisations which are collaborating in the action, will find all kinds of creative ways to make the issue visible and listened to themselves:

- Banners, signs and slogans
- Construction of a 'favela home' at the city hall
- Song and samba band for the demonstration
- Photos that the children take themselves - exhibition in the city hall

A few images of the action as it took place in reality:

Chance card 3 Setback: "We are not allowed" (15 min)

Case Study

During the preparation, the activists are involved with an unexpected setback. Theyoung people in particular wish to spend the night under the city hall. Within the organisation and via the city youth council, they launched an appeal in order to spend the night outdoors in a sleeping bag with as many as possible, as a clear protest against the homelessness of children and young people. However: the mayor forbids this because of a possible breach of the peace.This leads to discussion: a few young people just want to continue and put this ban aside. Other young people are a bit afraid of being arrested.

In the meeting of the network there is also discussion: a number of organisations want to avoid a fuss with the mayor, because quite a few politicians and officials are now sympathetic towards the action and they do not want to jeopardise this. Otherpeople find that this will seriously weaken the action.

Discussion:
What would you do and especially: why?

Tips for the discussion:
In addition to the question of dialogue or conflict, the issue of the 'civil disobedience' also plays a role: with an action, do we adhere to the legal limitations and imposed rules or do we consciously violate them? What are the advantages and the risks? Where does the boundary lie? And how can you let that take place well in practice?

Step 9 What is success in working in a politicising way? (10min)

Within such politicising work, 'success' or 'result' or 'impact' is difficult to predict and even less so to guarantee. That is also always the essence of politicisation.

Whether a politicising practice is successful or not, it can be measured by considering the results with the predetermined intermediate goals and end goals.

These results can lie at different levels:

- Intrinsic results: a change in the issue occurs in the direction of the predetermined goals. A strong social awareness is set in motion. Or a concrete requirement is realised, a provision changed, a game rule altered. Or you succeed in putting in place a concrete alternative practice.
- Process results: working in a politicising way also generates results as a process. They can be both at the level of the group and of the individual participants. The group can connect better, have acquired a better and stronger image with other actors or with the public opinion, gain more confidence in possibilities of exercising influence, etc. Participants can have more trust in the possibility to not merely experience matters, but to gain more self-control of them themselves. People can develop more self-confidence and even pride in expressing grievances and developing alternatives.

We are often inclined to measure the success of politicising work against the results or impact. However, this is difficult to predict and even less so to guarantee. Sometimes, the effects of a campaign only become tangible in society later. Often, the result depends on one delineated initiative, but it is a consequence of tracking various dynamics together.

It is important to get a clear picture of these results together with the participants in the politicising work. **Celebrating small successes** can thereby be very important and add extra force.

In addition, we must also recognise the value of politicising processes in themselves, so separate from results achieved or not. That people get the chance and seize it for taking part in the social debate about how we organise our small and large coexistence is important in itself. In this way, they become visible and listened to and they break through the existing (power) relations and the existing roles: who can and may speak, who can and may decide. With a limited result too, a politicising practice can be enormously valuable.

Case Study

On the same evening as the action, the young people sit together with the course supervisor on the city square. Food has been brought and the atmosphere is reasonably exuberant: "We did this ourselves."

The supervisor does a round with the question: "We have now done this together, what are you especially pleased about?" Everyone can tell something briefly and after each contribution the group applauds.

The supervisor listens attentively and briefly notes down what she hears. Then she gives a summary:

- It stands out that many young people first say how good they feel today because they did this together and because the action went so well. Also because the reactions from passers-by were so positive: "We had never thought that people had so much interest in what we are experiencing, seeing and feeling." The fact that the sleep-in could not go ahead shifts to the background with the good feeling that exists in the group.

- Some people also told things about themselves, how taking part in this has changed them themselves: as someone says: "I had never thought that I would dare to address passers-by during our action."

- During the action, some people spoke with someone from the city council and heard that matters must now soon improve, and that in any case the night shelter must work better for young people and families: "If we had not done this, then no one would lose sleep over this and the misery would still last for a long time."

Everyone adds something. In an excited mood, they return to their room. There a nice warm meal is waiting, there is music... and the evening is ended together in a festive way.

Step 10 Conclusion (10 min)

You can rarely consider a politicising process as 'finished'. Just as politicising rather 'occurs' and 'happens' than is systematically 'planned', a clear end cannot delineated either. However, there is the possibility to complete a strong phase of politicisation, a strong action or activity to establish what has happened and what was achieved and to look at what the future will bring along with young people.

Politicising is not something that young people or an organisation can always maintain and in an intensive manner. It is normal that it comes 'with moments' and in 'phases' of more or less intensity.

Case Study

This action was clearly a 'politicising moment': a moment whereby the 'existing order' - here the course of affairs on the housing market in a city - was questioned and disrupted. This took place by a group of involved young people, strongly supported by their organisation and the course supervisor. The support was especially aimed at the young people themselves in a way workable for them to express what frustrates them and what they wish to see differently.

During the meeting in the week after the action, the group dwells upon what the action has meant and where the group now stands. Together, they meanwhile see a few matters:

- Content/the matter: the housing crisis has been charted and the public opinion again realises that there is a housing crisis; the first visible consequence is that a specific shelter will come aimed at families with children and that more walk-in centres will also be opened during the day.

- Procedure/decision-making: other, strong organisations engage in order to, along with the young people and activists, to set up a 'city movement for the right to housing' to increase the pressure on the public opinion and the city council. The young people and their supervisors are systematically involved in that movement.

- Process/the young people: individual negative experiences and frustration have been transformed into a strong, collective action, which gave new energy. The young people find remarkable to have received so many positive, personal reactions from other people who were present during the action, and they establish that they have something important to say after all.

This discussion is rounded off with an agreement who from the group will follow the city movement and especially what must be said there.

---

6 Training: Extra Large

This XL version is intended for those who have at least a day. We keep the case study as a guideline but look at it from the perspective of a broader network. So, if you no longer work in a politicising way as a separate group or organisation, but first build up a network with similar organisations. In this version, from step 6 you will get other steps in the simulation.

Step 6 Extra exercise regarding building up a network (30 min)

Case Study
During the very first meeting, the supervisor has already asked the young people who in the city in their opinion is also engaged with this and who could help. Someone knows a youth worker in her neighbourhood. Another person had seen that a community worker speaks to homeless families in the park, apparently, she sought for a solution along with them. A girl told that she was helped by a social worker of the local health centre who had told that the housing problem is getting seriously worse. In this way, about five people were spontaneously mentioned. The supervisor had asked the young people about their names. In the coming days, she had called and spoken to these people. Via them, she had also made contact with other people: the scientist who had come to speak, a few housing activists who have already complained about the housing problem for more than 10 years, the city community work which coincidently also decided to chart the housing crisis more firmly, various organisations in youth work with socially vulnerable youth who noticed that various participants have no roof over their head, etc.

Within a short time, in this way there was a network of 10 people who- alone or with the support of their organisations - wanted to be part of the network in order to do something about the housing crisis.

During the first meeting of this network, the problem analysis is drawn up together. For its organisation, the supervisor has prepared this together with two young people. During the meeting, the people present add further to the analysis. Soon it appears that everyone is on the same wavelength and realises that the housing crisis in the city is acute and that children are also the victim of it. This is unacceptable.

During the second meeting of the network, a brief platform text is drawn up within which the problem, the consequences and the demands are formulated. Furthermore, the exercise is completed about who could be supporters. The result is that, in addition to the organisations already involved in youth work and community work, a large centre for general welfare work and an important school group which has homeless pupils have also become involved in the collective action.

The following week, during the third meeting, the group is expanded with a number of organisations and activists who declare themselves in agreement with the platform text and are prepared to collaborate. Meanwhile, there are already three organisations which young people work with.

The course supervisor and the young people of 'our' organisation keep on discussing systematically what was discussed, what the young people think of it, what they will contribute the next time. The young people are however pleased that a large group is engaged with 'their' issue. They are clearly not alone in this...

Of course, alliances and a broader platform can be very useful. Together, you can do much more than alone. However, a network leads to new questions. Even if you share the same viewpoint, not everyone is intrinsically and/or strategically on the same wavelength. There are methods to chart supporters and opponents in this way.

Extra exercise:
Make a list of organisations or bodies in your city which are engaged with the housing problem. Try to assess them on the basis of:

- Are they intrinsically on the same wavelength or not?
- Do they have a lot or little influence in this issue?

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Much power/influence   │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                              ▲
                              │
┌──────────────────┐         │         ┌──────────────────┐
│ Disagrees with our│◄────────┼────────►│ Agrees with our  │
│ message          │         │         │ message          │
└──────────────────┘         │         └──────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Little power/influence  │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
```

Then you get for example:

Much power/influence

Local politician res-
ponsable for housing

Local administration

Disagrees with our
message

Community wor-
ker

Agrees with our
message

Local social worker

Social worker at the
community health
center
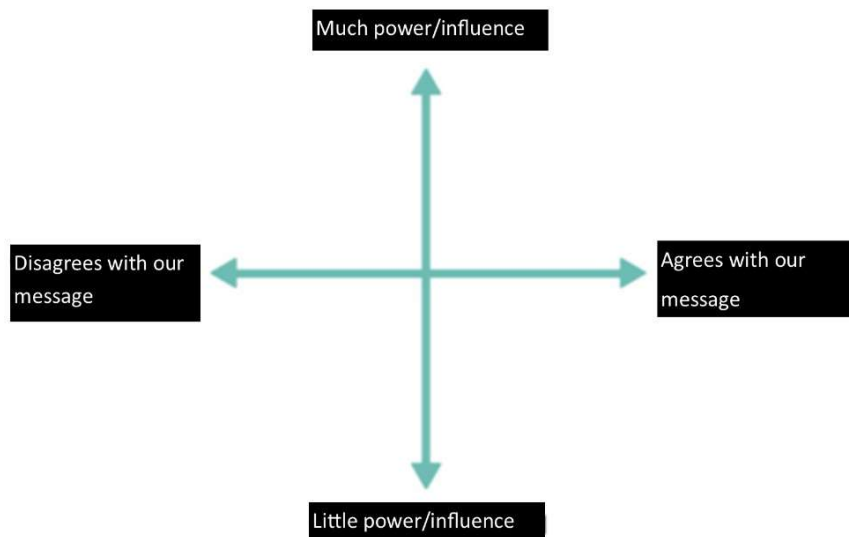
Little power/influence
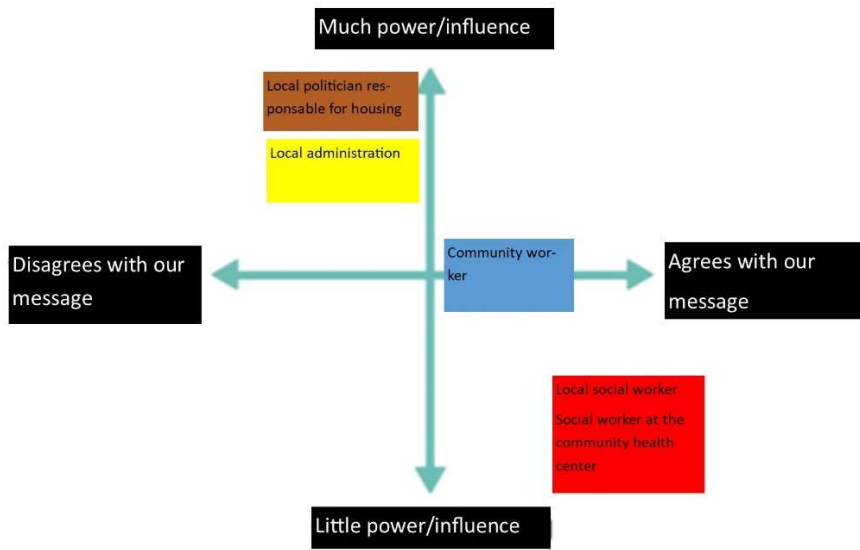
Step 7 Extra exercise regarding strategy and forms of action with anetwork (30 min)

We elaborate questions about the strategic approach and concrete forms of actionwith a role play.

Role play exercise:
- The group is divided into smaller groups. Each group thinks about strategy on the basis of a particular organisation. Possible roles:
- The young people on the basis of youth work
- The management of the comprehensive school with families who have to live on the street
- The organisers of the existing night shelter (barely accessible to young people or families with children), on the basis of the organisation for welfare work
- Activists who squatted in a few empty buildings last year in order to complain about the housing need
- Community workers from the neighbourhoods where the housing need is highest
- As a basic strategy, you have the choices which we already mentioned above:
    1. Awareness, making the issue visible, demanding change, making a change
    2. Dialogue or confrontation
    3. Numerous possible forms of action

- The various roles lead to the following questions:
    1. For what basic strategy would you choose and why?
    2. For what forms of action would you choose?
    3. What can be your contribution to this activity?

Group discussion:
- Each group presents the chosen strategy and form(s) of action.
- The proposals are discussed.

Case Study

Everyone in the network strongly agrees about the problems and the need for firm change. However, if the strategy is to be prepared concretely, there is more discussion:

- The representatives of the general welfare work want to hold a discrete consultation about the issue with key figures in the city council: they have good relations, organize the night shelter under the assignment of the city and do not wish to jeopardize this relation.
- The representatives from the schools have doubts: they do think that they can talk openly about the housing need of some pupils, but they do not want to upset politicians and public opinion either.
- On the other hand, the young people want tough action yesterday rather than today which will clearly illustrate the housing crisis and force a change.
- The activists and community workers associate with this and immediately give examples of concrete media actions in order to realise this.

Discussion:
- Is this recognisable?
- Do organisations choose more for dialogue or for conflict? Why?
- Can open conflict and protest also have a positive meaning? Why? How?
- Is the choice between conflict and dialogue in a politicising process a principal issue or a pragmatic one? Why? How?

Possible extra exercise:

What media would you engage in order to give more resonance to your action?

- What classic media?
- What own media?
- What social media channels?

Case Study

After some discussion, the following is decided: because the housing crisis is acute, the problem must be brought as quickly as possible to the public and political agenda. So, we must carry out a public action, merely lobbying behind the scenes has achieved too little. The pressure must be increased. The concrete proposal will be:

- A demonstration on the square of the city hall, with as many families, young people, youth workers and sympathisers as possible, in the late afternoon, right at the time when the school day ends, and shops are still open.

- After a concentration on the square and a short speech for participants and press, there will be a brief protest march through the central shopping streets.

- Then as many tents and sleeping bags as possible will be provided on the square so that the demonstration will overrun into a sleep-in; a few artists will be asked to perform on the square that evening.

- The atmosphere must be free of violence and friendly but decisive, the action must count on a large amount of sympathy from bystanders and public opinion; all the organisations must be able to recognise themselves in the style of taking action.

However, some people will collaborate more visibly in the foreground, other people remain in the background.

Step 8 Extra exercise regarding the place of young people in the action (15 min)

An action, certainly with various partners, requires good agreements, a clear division of tasks and a thorough preparation. Usually, this is all brought together ina script.

It is important not to forget the young people in this. It is easy and tempting to speak for them, instead of giving them the chance to express their lamentations.

Exercise:

Everyone thinks of two ways in which young people can be made visible within this politicising process (this can be both during the preparation and during the action). The ideas are combined and discussed.

Case Study

It demanded a great deal of consultation within the network in order to determine who would do what and in what way the issue could become visible. A number of organisations do support the action but prefer to remain calmly in the background. They do not wish to jeopardize their good relations with the city. Other people do wish to confront the city with the housing situation, with a flag and banner. Finally, the course supervisor and a community worker are appointed as spokespersons. They will be available to the press before, during and after the action.

- The young people make banners and slogans and are allowed to walk in front. In addition, they produce a song and they form a samba band which will ensure atmosphere and noise during the demonstration. Children take photos with which a small exhibition will be held at the city hall. During the discussion, they realise the slogan 'No child on the street'. Finally, it is decided within the network meeting to not spend the night under the city hall. A few young people are very disappointed about this. During the meeting with the young people, an alternative is therefore sought: on the day of the action a type of favela or slum district will be built under the city hall with wood, cardboard, etc., as a complaint against the situation. This favela will be picked up by passers-by and the media

---

Step 9 Success (20 min)

Within such politicising work, 'success' or 'result' or 'impact' is difficult to predict and even less so to guarantee. Within a network of partners, there will also be various assessments of this success.

- Some people perhaps only look at intrinsic results, others especially at the process with the participants.
- Some people see steps forward to goals in the long term (for instance, the city wishes to be more committed to social housing), while other people remain unsatisfied about too little steps forward in the short term (for instance, immediate additional shelter specifically for young families).

In order to carry out this discussion as a network, you are best to resort in any case to the proposed intermediate goals and end goals. This is why, earlier during this training, we emphasized the importance of determining the goal.

Even then, this assessment remains difficult. We are often inclined to measure the success of politicising work against the results or impact. However, this is difficult to predict and even less so to guarantee. Sometimes, the effects of a campaign only become tangible in society a few generations later. Often, the result does not depend on one delineated initiative, but it is a consequence of tracking various dynamics together.

It is important to get a clear picture of these results together with the participants in the politicising work. **Celebrating small successes** can thereby be very important and add extra force.

In addition, we must also recognise the **value of politicising processes in themselves**, so separate from results achieved or not. That people get the chance and seize it for taking part in the social debate about how we organise our small and large coexistence is important in itself. In this way, they become visible and listened to and they break through the existing (power) relations and the existing roles: who can and may speak, who can and may decide. With a limited result too, a politicising practice can be enormously valuable.

Case Study

This action was clearly a 'politicising moment': a moment whereby the 'existing order' - here the course of affairs on the housing market in a city - was questioned and disrupted. This took place here on the basis of a strong network with all kinds of actors. The young people played a central role, strongly supported by their organisation and the course supervisor. The support was especially aimed at the young people themselves in a way workable for them to express what frustrates them and what they wished to see changed. Since all the partners in the network also recognised this, this also clearly emerged during the action.

During a meeting of the network, we meanwhile see positive results:

- Content: the housing crisis has been charted and the public opinion again realises that there is a housing crisis; the first visible consequence is that a specific shelter will be set up aimed at families with children and that more walk-in centres will also be opened during the day.

- Procedure: organisations from the network enter the
housing task force in order to seek possible solutions as quickly as possible, along with city departments and all possible actors who can make a positive contribution;

- Process: despite their differences (in extent, style, demands, etc.), the organisations and activists involved worked together intensively on a strong collective action. This gave the network new energy to put their backs into the fight for the housing right in the city.

During the meeting, a few young people contribute: they are especially satisfied that so many organisations recognise their need and wish to fight together with them. They were surprised when, during the action, they received positive reactions from so many organisations involved. However, they point out that the young people are impatient: there may not be any more children on the street NOW. This has to stop. This is why they ask the network to not be lulled to sleep within the housing task force.

Step 10 Conclusion (10 min)

Within a broader network, more actors are involved, and the conclusion also takes place in a somewhat more complex manner than when you work on the basis of one organisation. The question during the conclusion and further action is in any case the perspective of the young people can remain strongly present.

Brief discussion:
During the conclusion, how can you make sure that not only the experience and the needs of the young people, but also the young people themselves remain visible and listened to within the network?

Case Study

During the meeting of the network, it is told that on the basis of the city council solutions will now soon be sought out-of-the-box (e.g. a large empty building of the university will become a temporary living space). The young people emphasise that it may not remain at just temporary solutions. For them, there may never be a 'child on the street' again. It is decided on the basis of the network to completely collaborate with the task force but at the same time to put pressure on all the political parties in the city. The result of this sustained pressure will be that the housing theme will become an important theme during the next election campaign.

After the formation of a new city council, housing will become priority number 1. In this way, the housing crisis will not be over, but work will be carried out on small and large, temporary and structural solutions with more *sense of urgency*.

A few young people follow the meetings of the task force with varying interest and with varying attendance. Sometimes, it is too technical and meetings with many specialists go on too long. Some young people pull out.

However, the supervisor continues to systematically give feedback to the group of young people about the course of affairs, what proposals are being developed, what viewpoints and demands are being discussed, etc., so that the young people continue to determine further the set-up of their organisation within the network.

---

7 Follow-up

In the follow-up, we want to evaluate the impact of the training and we want to provide an adapted follow-up for the participants.

Do professionals have more trust in setting up politicising courses after this training? In order to receive an answer to this, we want to repeat the same questionnaire as in the preparation phase and go in search of a potential evolution in the self-confidence of the participants.
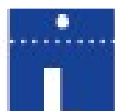
At the end of the session, reference is made to the politicising textbook 'Get Up Stand Up. Young people at the forefront against injustice' (www.getup-standup.be) that supports professionals in working with young people in a politicising way. This book can also be shared within the organisations of the participants.

After the training it is investigated what the needs are for a further process-oriented follow-up. A few possibilities are:

- An extended training: extra meeting(s) with participants with extra exercises from this manual or discussions about items from the manual.

- A custom-made coaching course of individual needs and challenges of participants.

- Setting up a peer-to-peer supportive network amongst the participants with the goal of sharing experiences, seeing each other engaged, coaching each other.

8 Background for trainers

Standing up with young people against injustice

Young people often express grievances about perceived deprivation and injustice. These can be economic grievances: no job or low income, poor or no housing, few transport options, side jobs to pay school costs, … Or they experience cultural grievances because they are not recognized: being refused in an entertainment venue, suffering hatred and humiliation because of skin color or religion, … Or they experience political grievances because they feel powerless: they feel that their opinions and their voice don't matter and that those in power don't take "people like them" into account. However different, these grievances can be the engine of the pursuit of social change[4].

Whether and how organisations and professionals support young people in their fight against injustice is directly related to their mission. In these missions we often find at least the intention to tackle forms of injustice. Organisations want to work for the realisation of children's rights or of fundamental social rights of this group. They often do advocacy, acting as a mouthpiece for and on behalf of the target group. But in politicizing work they go one step further: they also want to support young people to make their grievances themselves audible and visible onthe public and political agenda.

Wherever organisations include such objectives in their mission, politicisation can become a task for the organization and a task for the professionals. This practice must be anchored in a fundamentally democratic attitude of professionals and organizations: being alert and supporting young people to politicise themselves, looking for the right approach with them and making professional expertise available. Not speaking in their name. Protecting them so that they do not run too fast with their head against the wall, but not patronising them. This approach creates other demands on the role of the professional.

---

[4] Fraser, N., Honneth, A & Golb, J (2003).

Politicisation

What is meant by politicisation?

The concept of 'politicisation' is little known. For many people, 'politics' has a negative connotation. It is immediately reminiscent of 'what politicians or parties do', of 'political games' and 'abuse of power', of manipulating or recruiting people

for some political project. Moreover, in practice, it is often filled in narrowly, trying to 'bring young people closer to politics'. Many parties and projects are trying to do this, for example in the run-up to elections. They invite local youth and their organisations to put their questions on the table. In this approach, there is a clear distinction between, on the one hand 'politics', the structures that govern society, and on the other hand 'the others', those who are governed. In this approach, young people and professionals who work with them are merely seen as a conduit to the structures that govern society.[5]

Therefore, it is worth looking at politics in a different way, not as a political system or a bordered-down domain, but as 'acting political', an act that encompasses anything and everyone. In this way, anyone can 'do politics'.

Seen from this perspective, politicisation takes on a completely different meaning: everyone's contribution to the public disagreement about the organisation of our society. Anyone can 'go public' with what he or she thinks about the way of living together on a small or large scale. This can be done in many ways, on different moments and places. This can be done by and with many different people and can be aimed at policy makers, but also at parents, school management, real estate developers, all kind of communities, groups... Even broader, the issue can be brought to public opinion, directly in the societal debate.

Defined in this way, politicisation involves many types of actions and activities. Not every action will have a major impact on society, but managing to bring people together, collecting feelings, emotions, demands and signals and doing something with all this can be equally valuable. In this sense, we distinguish between impacts on the macro-, meso- and micro-levels (see below).

Definition

'Politicization refers to practices that contribute to the public disagreement about how we organise our society together. The public disagreement between individuals and groups is directly related to the underlying balances of power relations. Public dissent is necessary and desirable in a vital democracy.'

---

[5]This background contains a further elaboration of the magazine 'Ceci n'est pas normal', which was elaborated as an interim result of the action research by the Artevelde University of Applied Sciences as part of the Orpheus Interreg project. Van Bouchaute, B. 'Politisering in het hart van het jeugdwelzijnswerk'. In: Van Bouchaute, B. et al (2020).

When we define politicisation in this broad sense, various activities of consultation with professionals and organisations (as experts or stakeholders) or various discrete forms of lobbying or advocacy fall outside our delineation of politicisation. For us this doesn't mean that these activities are not useful or necessary, on the contrary.

We just don't see them as practices of politicisation – exactly because they lack the public character.[6]

'Anyone can politicize'

A consequence of this definition is that anyone can politicize. Everyone has the right to bring a problem or an issue into the public debate, including children and young people.

This approach is based on a concept of democracy, not so much as a system, but as a starting point.[7] This 'democratic principle' means that everyone can participate in the discussion about the organization of society, rich or poor, young or old, established citizen or newcomer, regardless gender… Everyone has the same right to 'speak out'. It is clear that this democratic assumption distorts, disturbs and undermines profoundly existing social hierarchies in society. Democracy in this sense is the 'promise' of the possible contribution of each of us as free and equal citizens to the debate on how we live together. Therefore, everyone can and should be permitted to question the existing order at any time.

In intensive moments of politicisation, invisible people become visible, silenced voices can be heard and people can make statements that have not been articulated before. Regardless the (successful) result of that expression, it is seen as a value in itself that a person or group can and may participate in the societal debate and that every human being is equal to anyone else.

This is very applicable in the case of children and young people. All too often, their young age, and their inherently supposed 'incompetence', is used as an reason to not consider them equal fellow citizens. They are too young, not smart or experienced enough, too naïve; they first have to learn and study a lot, learn what democracy is and how it works, etc … Democracy as a principle is at odds with this: it is not because they are 'only' children or young people, that they have nothing to say about the way we live together.

---

[6] Oosterlynck, S. e.a. (2017)
[7] Rancière, J. (1990, 2005).
[8] Rancière, J. (1990).

Questioning the existing order

Politicisation starts when people question and disrupt the existing or 'natural' order. The 'existing order' refers to the established positions in society, the existing perception of privileges of groups, the existing ways of addressing issues and so on. Most of the time we don't question the existing order. The majority within society even thinks this is 'normal' or natural. 8 At the same time, we must realise that any existing order – even if its aim is being honest and just – inevitably entails different forms of inequality, exclusion and injustice. Politicisation then refers to the moments when the existing order is questioned and disturbed.

Why is something what it is? Why do many people think it is normal considering children playing in urban areas to be 'a nuisance'? Why do young people have to couch-surf when they are homeless or living on the streets? Why should young people with a migration background be refused entry into the nightlife and leisure places? Why is it accepted that young people in some neighbourhoods are permanently undergoing police checks? From time to time someone questions this: "This is not normal." And then someone else. And another one. In that question on that moment processes of politicisation can start.[9]

An example: until recently few questions were asked about 'partner violence'. It was seen as a private matter. It wasn't until feminists and social workers publicly raised the issue in public, that attention in society grew. And ultimately in politics. It took nearly 20 years of struggle before marital rape became criminalized f.e. in the UK in 1991, in Belgium in 1979 and France in 1994. Today only 12 out of 31 countries in Europe have criminalized 'intimate partner rape'.

The same goes for the struggle for voting rights for the working class and the role of the labour movement, later on for the women's rights movement. This broke the idea that some do, and others do not have the competence to vote. Just as the sustained protest against apartheid in South Africa broke discrimination in the laws and minds, and ultimately led to the fall of the regime. Echoes of those movements are clear today in the *Black Lives Matter* movement, with a strong protest against the 'normality' of police brutality against citizens of colour.

But next to these global examples, there are equally a lot of 'small' examples. For example, the dangerous traffic situations for children on the way to school. It was only when parents, teachers and pupils made the dangers visible that the perception of our society tilted. And little by little also the policy. So, in the new 'existing order' local municipalities organise increasingly more 30km/h zones and traffic-free streets around schools.

---

[9] Van Bouchaute, B. (2020)

But today, the very vulnerable situation of many young people doing temporary work raises few questions. Day contracts, fake-ads in temporary employment agencies, long journeys, low wages and other violations of rights are more the rule than the exception. This is often seen as a 'natural' element of a flexible labour market in a competitive economy. From time to time we see processes of politicisation that ensure that public opinion and policy makers no longer consider this to be a normal thing in a modern, flexible labour market, but a societal problem that needs to be addressed.

Politicisation has different approaches

Politicisation practices take various forms and approaches, from small resistance to large campaigns, from conscientization and dialogue to struggle, from action on the streets to cultural expressions in movies or songs. In a particular situation, approaches can be chosen and combined, and they can shift throughout the process. They remain 'politicising' as long as they contribute to the public disagreement of the organisation of society.

We summarize these approaches briefly and explain some areas of tension.

- **The dynamics of politicization: dialogue or conflict?**

  Are we looking for a way out of the inevitable contradictions through dialogue towards a consensus or are we confronting these contradictions in opinions, perception and interests? Sometimes people and organisations have a clear preference for a certain approach, sometimes attitudes shift throughout the process: first seeking confrontation to get an issue very high on the agenda, then seeking public dialogue in search for further action.

- **The domain of politicisation: government or society?**

  Are we focusing on 'policy' and aiming at a change in policies by addressing issues to be on the political agenda? Or do we engage with the broader community by pursuing changes in people's behaviour or in public opinion, independent of politics? Many initiatives work on change independent of governments and institutions and try to tackle issues 'bottom up'.

- **The subjects of politicization: who 'does' politics?**

  Different positions are possible. There is the model of the 'vanguards' leading the processes and the participants who follow them. There is the 'advocacy' model where the professionals speak on behalf of the target group. There are the models of conscientization or awareness-raising in which people learn to break the culture of silence to speak for themselves. Finally, there is the more radical view wherein everyone can and should be able to speak for themselves.

- **The activity of politicization: demanding change or making change?**

  Politicisation is often seen as a process wherein people make demands on the government, on institutions, demands to change the public perception of them, etc ... But there is also a way of acting politically in which new initiativesare set up and, in the meantime, showing that things can be done differently and induce the desired change – often on a limited scale – in practice.

The layering of politicisation: micro, meso and macro

Politicising processes can be done and seen on different levels. In order to explain them, we pull them apart - but explicitly point at the importance of seeing the interdependence in practice. On each of these three levels, people interact with each other. The main difference lies mainly in the scope or effect of the outcome of the interaction or of the (collective) decisions that result from it. At every level there are opportunities for politicisation.

At the **micro level,** the focus lies on the daily practice of social work, often in interaction with users and participants. At this level there are always opportunitiesto engage in the process of public disagreement. The process from 'individual experience' to 'collective action' is often at the heart of a politicising process. For example, an action of the Flemish Young Workers Movement KAJ resulted in the publication of a 'black book' presented to policymakers and the press[10]. But this process started with numerous individual conversations between youth workers and young people working in these circumstances. They had always blamed themselves and considered their labour situation 'normal. Later on, when these young people were asked who they wanted to tell their story to, they chose their parents and friends. In this we clearly see the politicising process starting at the micro level and gradually evolving from the private to the public sphere.

At the **mezzo level,** we focus on the interaction between individuals in larger entities such as (healthcare) facilities, institutions, associations, public administrations, etc... Decisions that came out of struggle, cooperation or interaction within and in between these groups have broader consequences, because they apply to various groups. Politicisation at that mezzo-level happens at moments and during processes where obvious logics are questioned by workers and/or participants. We see this, for example, when self-organisations of people with a migration background question the institutionalized services. Or where self-help groups formulate their criticisms and demands about the approach in welfare and care organisations.

Finally, at the **macro level,** we focus on the level of a society or a community as a whole. Politicizing work at that level challenges the 'natural' or taken for granted rules in society or the prevailing culture. For example, the climate issue is politicisedat the macro level by pressure on governments to vote on mandatory climate lawsor by public campaigns to encourage fellow citizens to change behaviour.

---

[10] KAJ (sd).

Politicisation with young people against injustice

We can elaborate the broad concept of 'politicisation' in working professionally with young people in socially vulnerable positions.

Politicisation with young people against injustice

Politicization refers to practices that contribute to the public disagreement about how we organize our society together. Within this broad definition, we can refine the professional work supporting young people in their struggle against injustices:

- **Content**: forms of inequality, exclusion and discrimination are central. This can be concerning issues of access and distribution (economic), but also of recognition (cultural) and participation in decision-making (politics).
- **Strategy**: dialogue is a possibility, but forms and moments of confrontation and conflict are inevitable; the underlying imbalance of power relations are questioned, and counter-power is built up. The practice includes not only claiming rights to be developed by governments and other actors, but also developing alternative practices.
- **Domain**: the domain is broad and certainly not limited to governments. Politicisation practices are aimed at all kinds of actors and institutions, on a large and small scale, on different levels.
- **Subject**: the young people take the floor themselves, speak for themselves, become visible in a 'political' practice. The basic idea is that young people are equal citizens. The role of the professional is supportive. Often processes of conscientisation precede the public outing of the issues.
- **Pedagogy**: politicisation is not to be separated from the common pedagogical work with young people but stems from it. A safe climate and a confidential relationship with supervisors is not only the basis of good pedagogical work but also of practices of politicisation.

Layered process: the micro-level of the interaction with and between the young people always offers opportunities to initiate politicisation. In many cases the process from individual experience to collective action is at the heart of a politicising process that levels up to the mezzo and macro level. We elaborate further on these specific elements.

Safe climate and relationship of trust as a basis

Politicisation is not a project or method that is miles away from the common day-to-day activities. In these practices, a safe environment wherein professionals manage to build relationships of trust with young people is the basis for all activities, and this is not different for politicising work.

- **Safe climate, safe space**

A safe climate is an extremely important starting point: creating spaces and moments where children and young people do not feel rushed, stressed or watched. An atmosphere where they can participate in creating and discussing rules and where they can express their feelings and thoughts as they experience them. Where they can experiment, fail and learn.

- **Building relations of trust**

On the other hand, a certain degree of distrust from young people is very normal. Supervisors must gradually build a relationship of trust, by being trustworthy themselves. In this safe climate, a relationship of mutual trust can grow between young people and workers. In that relationship of trust, much can be told. Stories and emotions are given space. They feel comfortable to talk about what they have experienced, about things that make them angry, anxious, furious, confused or sad.

From an individual to a collective approach

In youth organisations we tend to pay much attention to the individual level of problems. We pay particular attention to the physical and psychosocial well-being of young people. Often workers will also build bridges to other facilities such as schools, welfare services, rental offices... to find solutions for problems or to mediate in favour of their young people.

Some individual issues just can't be resolved on an individual level, because they have structural causes. This becomes clear to young people when they notice and recognise that several of them are struggling with the same issues. Young people sometimes have to realise that the issue is not just their own responsibility or fault. Young people and youth workers must be able to recognise, name and identify the issue on the structural level. The shift from individual to collective level is an important process of conscientisation in politicising work. Youth workers are in a privileged position to recognise and identify with the young people all kinds of inequality and injustice they experience.

Politicisation: young people go public on issues

Youth work has the opportunity to turn individual stories, experiences and problems into collective issues. With these issues, youth workers will act to strengthen fundamental social rights of their target group: affordable and high-quality housing, access to education and training, equal opportunities in the labour market, access to aid and services, using the public space, a safe and healthy environment, democratic citizenship, etc...

There are several ways to do that- but not all of them are politicising. In our vision of politicisation, there are two main boundaries:

- Sometimes youth workers and their organisations will lobby behind the scenes or participate as experts in discrete consultation fora and represent the interests of young people. This is very important and useful work, but it is not included in *our* definition of politicisation. Politicisation always means: going public**.**
- Sometimes organisations, without involvement of young **people,** will bring out and signals. There is a political dimension, but this falls outside our view on young people as equal actors. The young people involved should at least be able to steer the politicising process together with the workers, and even better: steer the process with the support of professionals.

Challenging power balances

As young people question existing practices, structures, relationships… they also challenge the existing balance of power, exactly because these young people are in many cases less powerful in society. If they have to compete against powerful individuals and groups and structures, they can have bad experiences that reinforce their powerlessness.

In these situations, structural power and power relations are sharply reflected11 .

A clear example of the functioning of structural power in the lives and experiences of young people in socially vulnerable situations can be seen in the housing problem. Field tests and mystery calls showed that in many cases they fail in their search for a rental property.

If we want to explain this discrimination, we need to look beyond the personal attitude of the landlords. It is clear that the balance of power between landlords and prospective tenants is strongly determined by the structure of the housing market. When there is a shortage of social housing units, many vulnerable families are obliged to rent the cheapest homes in the private housing market. And if the private rental market has few rules and leaves a lot of freedom to landlords and tenants, they are able to discriminate between the so called 'good tenant' who might pay the rent punctually and keep the infrastructure clean.

In this context, the quest for a house becomes a 'survival of the fittest'. In this example it is clear that landlords are in a stronger position. In order to address these problems concerning the direct power relationship between landlords and vulnerable prospective tenants, structural solutions are needed. In concrete terms, this means a housing policy that is more strongly committed to the rental market, with more social housing, rent subsidies, rules for the private rental market…

---

[11] Hay, C. (1995)..

[12] See for Flanders e.g. Van der Bracht, K. & Van de Putte, B. (2013).

In this example, we see how structural power means that individuals and groups acquire a dominant position through the structuring of society. So, power relations depend on the context of society. For example, the power relations in our societies between men and women have evolved following to evolutions in the socioeconomic system. The power of women in relationships and families increased substantially after they entered the labour market. Their direct power has visibly increased due to the change in their structural dominance in society. Nowadays young people in socially vulnerable situations have less power because of their position in our society.

Building power together to reinforce claims is therefore badly needed. This can lead to conflicts. Striving towards 'power-free dialogue' might sound attractive, but it is seldom reality. Between the powerful and the powerless, confrontation and resistance are natural and necessary. Although the concept of 'conflict' is often dismissed as 'degrading' or 'negative', conflicts can indeed help 'building up' a better balance. We often see that only after that necessary phase of conflict, we can work towards a new compromise that is closer to the legitimate demands of the powerless.[13] As an example, take this action in de dining rooms of a secondary school. Young people from low-income families had to pay to eat their meals or sandwiches and a glass of water in the refectory. Only after they were carrying out a refectory blockade, it was possible to negotiate a fairer arrangement with the management.

Is there room for politicization?

Professionals seldom engage with the stories they hear. This depends on the vision, the role perception, the involvement and the experiences of the professionals themselves. But it would be a little short-sighted to place the responsibility solely on the individual professional. Politicisation requires space and opportunities in the organization and society.

It is very difficult to set up a politicising process by a single staff member, without the support of a **team** of colleagues and/or external experts. Team members can bring in substantive knowledge, methodical skills but also emotional support.

An important question is whether politicisation is at the heart or in the margin of the **organisation.** And is politicising work only 'on paper' part of the mission of the organisation, or is it effectively implemented in practice, especially in moments. where professionals desperately need support from their organisation?
Sometimes that space is limited in real life by the prudence of the organisation, the danger or fear jeopardizing government funding or cooperation and existing relations with institutions. They might even be scared to lose sympathy from public opinion.

---

[13] Van Bouchaute, B. (2020).

Partnerships in **broader networks** can strengthen the room for politicisation. Substantive experts can strengthen the analysis and contribute to building the case. Experienced activists can provide solid methodical approaches. A broad network can strengthen support in society or in the administration. Professionals can get better training, coaching, advice...

And ultimately, the space given by **government** and **society** might be limited. Policymakers may struggle with critical young people, or they may fear disruption of the order or more polarisation. Sometimes it is not desirable or possible to bringup an issue because it would worsen the perception of the public or policy makerson the target group and they would have even fewer opportunities. It could be a strategic choice not to 'go public' with the issue at this moment, in these circumstances, and lobby 'behind the scenes'. A troubling question here is if it is upto the youth worker or an organisation to decide whether to go public or not, without a discussion with the young people involved?

Politicising young people contribute to the vitality of a democracy

A vibrant democracy needs people who question the existing situation. Therefore, democratic authorities and institutions should not prevent or slow down these practices but should embrace and actively encourage them. This can indeed be disruptive concerning the existing facilities, the existing procedures, the existing relationships Politicisation can stir things up or turn things upside down. But in a democracy, this must be possible and even is necessary.

A democracy that does not allow its young people who feel like second-class citizens to denounce these situations and to demand changes is not worthy of the name democracy. Discontent will always be there, and quick solutions are rare. A democracy is by definition 'unfinished and imperfect'- but it must keep itself permanently open for voices and people who remind us of the ultimate promise of democracy: that we are all equal and free citizens.

9 This training in the ORPHEUS project

ORPHEUS - Offline and online Radicalisation Prevention Holding back Extremism and Upholding Security

In European cities the threat of violent extremism of all types, such as jihadi, extreme right and hate crimes, is a significant and rising social concern. The Interreg ORPHEUS project will develop alternatives to offline and online prevention of violent extremism. We propose an approach that is not problem oriented but wellbeing oriented. ORPHEUS will develop new integrated and aligned services by extending the prevention service together with private and social institutions, and with young people and their educators as central actors.

1. **We enhance the integral prevention model to address violent extremism**.

We create a new prevention framework: the ORPHEUS Prevention Pyramid. We combine efforts from general prevention to direct intervention. We target the interplay of different risk and protective factors.

2. **We develop safe spaces for and with young people.**

In our safe spaces approach, we stimulate and organise open dialogue, connect young people in balanced bonding with family, friends and institutions and support the public expression of their grievances.

3. **We build resilience, critical thinking skills and increase confidence of educators**.

We enhance key analytical skills within young people. We involve young people and educators as part of the solution. We empower educators to facilitate difficult conversations on sensitive topics.

4. **We integrate online work on different levels of prevention**.

We develop online alter-narratives to raise critical awareness. We also develop broader internet safety techniques to keep young people safe online.

5 **We provide guidance and policy recommendations for adoption of an integrated prevention method in the 2Seas area**.

Eight European partners, consisting of professionals, researchers and policy makers, participate: Stad Mechelen (BE) - Greta Grand Littoral (FR) - Portsmouth City Council (UK) - Ceapire (BE) - University of Portsmouth (UK) - University College Roosevelt (NL) - Arteveldehogeschool Gent (BE) - Contourdetwern (NL).

This training is part of the Orpheus project and relates to the key concepts and models in this project.

Safe spaces

In the Orpheus' application 'safe spaces' are defined:

> "In safe spaces delicate topics can be addressed comfortably, young people are stimulated to engage in social institutions, and are supported in the public expression of grievances. These safe spaces are organised in such a way that they enable us to offer a pedagogical support as opposed to a disproportional repressive reaction."

In the Orpheus' framework paper, the concept of 'safe spaces' is explained as a pedagogical approach:

> "The concept of safe space is not so much characterised by a location, institution, organisation... but by **the pedagogy** and philosophy behind it. The pedagogical view should be aimed at rebalancing protection and emancipation, and **(re)install 'safe spaces as laboratories'** where young people are in charge, working together in empowering ways and participate in the whole society."

A safe space can be described as, on the one hand, a confined space where a lab is set up for learning experiences with a freedom of expression that is not always possible in the outside world. This may evolve into what Diana Hess and Paula McAvoy[14] call a 'political class', a space where discussions about politics and society are given a central place. In addition to being a 'closed' space, the safe space is also a 'public space' connected to the outside world, and in that sense the lab is never completely closed. All conflicts in society can just pop up in the safe space. It is a small step from that interpretation of safe space as a lab for the public debate to the idea of 'making the debate public' in practices of politicization with and by young people. Practices of the politicisation of grievances can be considered as the external dimension of the safe spaces method in ORPHEUS.
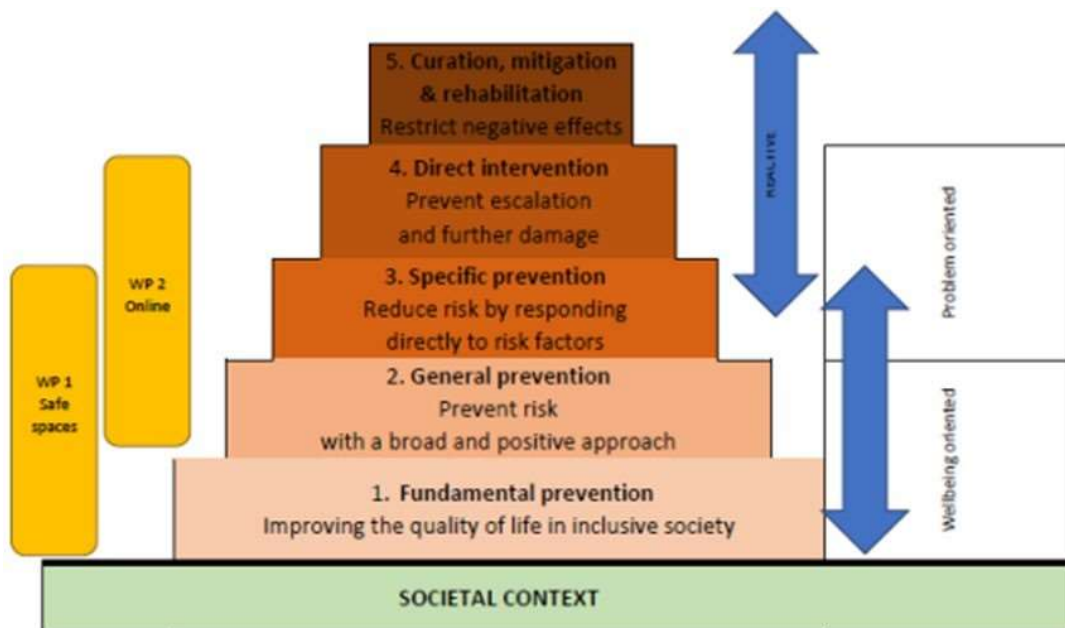
---

[14] Hess, D.E. & McAvoy, P. (2015).

Prevention pyramid

ORPHEUS uses a prevention pyramid as a framework for the integral prevention of violent extremism.

This training emphasises the general proactive and inclusive preventive goals in pedagogical environments (the lower layers of the pyramid) more than to the more problem-oriented and curative expectations in the fight against violent extremism (the higher layers of the pyramid).

5. Curation, mitigation & rehabilitation
Restrict negative effects

4. Direct intervention
Prevent escalation and further damage

3. Specific prevention
Reduce risk by responding directly to risk factors

2. General prevention
Prevent risk with a broad and positive approach

1. Fundamental prevention
Improving the quality of life in inclusive society

SOCIETAL CONTEXT

WP 1 Safe spaces

WP 2 Online

Framework for the integral prevention of radicalisation towards political violence - Görgöz, Vanhove & Van Bouchaute, elaborated on the model of Deklerck, J. (2006)

This training focuses on:

Fundamental prevention:

Supporting channels for the non-violent expression of grievances about injustice, exclusion, discrimination… helps to improve the quality of life for young people in a socially vulnerable situation and makes societies more inclusive.

General prevention

Upskilling educators and youth workers in supporting the public expression of grievances is based on the actorship of young people. Our starting point is that young people are entitled to have a voice in the public debate about society as equals. In our approach of citizenship, we embrace the significance of disagreement and conflict in a shared democratic space. The key issue is that citizens can approach each other as opponents in a discussion and not as enemies.

Specific prevention

This training supports educators in addressing the risk factor of grievances (see puzzle model).

Puzzle model on the risk factors for violent extremism

The majority of explanation models describe a **process consisting of sequential steps**, leading towards political violence and terrorism. These **linear process models** are well-known and broadly used but fail to grasp the unpredictable and diverse paths and timings towards political violence (e.g. 'flash radicalisation, petty crime...).

In an extensive summary of recent empirical literature on the causes and dynamics of radicalisation, Hafez & Mullins did not find evidence to justify this orderly image of a process. They suggest a '**puzzle' metaphor based on the combination of**

NETWORKS

GRIEVANCES

IDEOLOGIES

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS
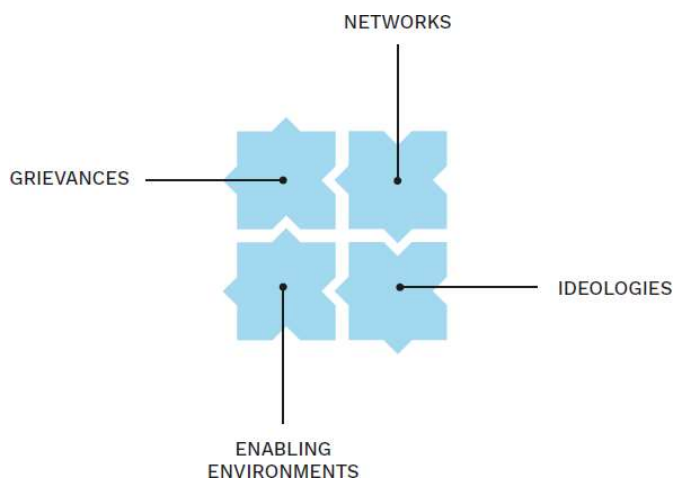
four components: grievances, networks, ideologies, enabling environment and support structures. They stress the interdepencies between these variables: "Just as similarly structured jigsaw puzzles can reveal different images once their pieces are interconnected, cases of radicalization can exhibit tremendous diversity even when the variables of radicalization are reoccurring. The puzzle metaphor is also useful to highlight the interdependent nature of radicalization variables, where one piece of the puzzle contains elements of the adjacent pieces."[15]

This training focuses on supporting legitimate and effective channels for the expression of **grievances**. Grievances concerning both objective and subjective injustice, inequality, discrimination, ... can become important drivers towards violent extremism. In a research summary Miller & Chauhan conclude: "Both the subjective perception and objective existence of unfairness, discrimination and injustice can be important drivers of violent behaviour both when it objectively exists and when it is perceived."[16]

---

[15] The puzzle model was developed by Hafez, M., & Mullins, C. (2015).
[16] Miller, C. & Chauhan, L.S. (2017).

Politicisation and citizenship

It is the public character of expressing grievances that refers to the concept of **politicisation**. Politicisation is concerned with practices that contribute to the organisation of the **public debate** and disagreement about how to organise society together in a democratic way. That public disagreement is intimately linked to a vital democracy.

The concept of politicisation refers to a specific interpretation of 'citizenship'. In the fight against violent extremism, citizenship education is being put forward as an effective way to strengthen the individual and collective resilience of young people. Within the RAN network this was made concrete in 2015, first in the "Manifesto for Education - Empowering Educators and Schools" and later in one of the nine RAN working groups under the name RAN-EDU. Both the Paris Declaration and the Manifesto for Education state that the contribution of education in the fight against 'radicalisation' lies in the promotion of citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination throughout education.

But with that emphasis on citizenship a new question raises: which view on citizenship is used? Too often, citizenship is seen as a fixed model, with clear expectations that can be placed on 'the good citizen'. A streamlined one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach should then ensure good democratic citizens. This view is close to the more 'securitarian' approach to prevention. More fruitful, however, is the approach in the 'agonistic citizenship model'. In the agonistic citizenship model, social and cultural conflicts are seen as fairly normal phenomena in pluralistic societies. These conflicts must therefore be given the necessary space tobe played out both in the internal dimension and the external dimension of safe spaces.

An agonistic view of politicisation re-evaluates the conflict as a source of a vital democracy[17]. A democratic society is too divided to allow a fixed consensus on the structure of society. Moreover, an imposed consensus covers those inevitable contradictions. An important challenge here is that these contradictions in a democracy do not lead to an enmity between 'we' and 'them.' That is the difference between 'agonism' and 'antagonism': in a shared democratic society it is important to be able to turn that enmity into a conflict between legitimate opponents. So we have to work on a shared democratic space where we can fight each other as opponents in a non-violent way. Otherwise contradictions become absolute and the 'enemy' is hated, attacked and destroyed.

[17] Mouffe, C. (2005, 2013).

Young citizens as part of the solution

In mainstream radicalisation approaches and policies, persons are perceived or as initial innocent, vulnerable subjects or as harsh criminals. Prevention policies focus young vulnerable people and construct them as victims of malicious recruiters/groomers: or they are victims as petty criminals who have nothing left to lose and continuing their criminal career in a more 'promising' context – from 'zero' to 'hero'. The other figure is that of the monstrous criminal, the malicious ideological driven radical is beyond the reach of social prevention policies. This leaves no other possibility than a defensive answer, signalising and separating.

Sieckelinck tries to avoid the dichotomy between fatalism and fanatism. With Sageman, Sieckelinck characterises radical young people as 'idealistic people', sympathising with simplistic jihadist or extreme right projects promising a strong moral and political identity with a goal. Avoiding the pitfall of the victim/fanatic dichotomy and focusing on the idealistic drive can help us to understand why programs with young people to mould them into 'normal citizens' fail[19]. 'Radicalisation', be it jihadist of extreme-right, can be seen as symptom rather than 'the real problem'. The drive of young people, and their questioning of the existing society must be taken seriously.

ORPHEUS acknowledges the pitfall of approaching young people as victim or as fanatic criminal. We consider the young people involved in the project in the first place as actors. As young equal citizens in our democratic societies they can be part of the solution, not of the problem.

[18] Elaborated by Sieckelinck, S., (2017)
[19] Sieckelinck (2017).

Interreg 2 Seas project ORPHEUS
Social innovation