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Art projects and youth on the edge: a new arena for agency

ABSTRACT

Formal education has become a core focus for inclusion of young people on the edge – both those at risk of falling out of schooling and those who have already dropped out. Schooling is without any doubt important – research shows that education plays a major role when youth in marginalized positions later succeed in work life and social relations (Socialministeriet 2016). Nevertheless it is significant to take into account the difficulties youth on the edge are experiencing in the educational system. Many can't find any meaning in school, they find school lacking relevant connections to the rest of their life and they often risk leaving secondary school with an experience of failure and without the necessary competencies to continue (Nordahl 2013).

Outside the educational system we find other kinds of social arenas trying to better the lives of youth on the edge. They are characterized by other ways of working with young people who have been marginalized, failed or haven't completed their education and thereby challenges the sense of insufficiency, shortcoming and lack that youth on the edge have often been met by in more institutionalized arenas (Pless 2009).

This presentation will focus on alternative social arenas making a change for young people in marginal positions. The presentation will include the findings from a recent research project looking at youth on the edge and their experiences in art projects (Nielsen & Nielsen 2017). It will show how these projects create a difference for them seen from their own perspective – and discuss what the potentials of art and alternative arenas for agency might be.