



Societal attitudes, service barriers and social norms as factors
in youth social exclusion -

Children of the Station as bridge builders towards the social
inclusion of young people and their families in Finnish society



Bachelor's thesis as Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Degree: Bachelor degree of International Social Work

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Date: 13.06.2026,

Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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Introduction to the Context

As part of the International Social Work (ISW) studies at HAN University of Applied Sciences, this Participatory Action Research (PAR) was conducted at Children of the Station, an organization based in Helsinki, Finland.

Finland is widely recognized as a welfare state in which social services and social security are important components of societal well-being. The Finnish welfare system provides residents with access to social services based on individual needs, with the aim of promoting well-being, participation and social inclusion (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland, 2024). At the same time, the Finnish welfare state is undergoing significant social and political changes. In recent years, reforms concerning welfare, labour and immigration policy have been introduced under the government led by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo (Palonen, 2025). These changes have raised concerns about increasing economic inequality and poverty. According to estimates reported by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the changes may increase the number of people living on low incomes, including children, and may deepen poverty among people who are already economically disadvantaged (Yle News, 2025). THL's survey also indicates that people living in Finland have concerns about their well-being and experience different forms of inequality (THL, 2025).

Within this changing welfare context, the social exclusion of young people remains an ongoing social issue. The public sector holds primary responsibility for addressing this issue and for providing social services in Finland. However, third-sector organizations also play an important role in supporting people whose needs may not be fully addressed through existing public services. Third-sector organizations can provide additional forms of support, community-based activities and low-threshold services, often reaching people who may have difficulties engaging with public service systems (Haapala et al., 2023). The third sector can therefore complement the public service sector by offering flexible and accessible forms of support. This is particularly relevant in youth work, where building trust and establishing relationships may require time, continuity and approaches that are not always possible within the public service sector.

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) examines a third-sector organization capable of providing low-threshold spaces where young people can encounter professionals voluntarily, bypassing the institutional thresholds associated with the public sector.

This study uses Participatory Action Research (PAR) combined with a Social Design Thinking process. These approaches were selected because they allow the research to remain closely connected to the practical knowledge of professionals while also creating opportunities for collective reflection and development.

PAR is a collaborative research approach that emphasizes collective inquiry, participation and action (Cornish, Breton, & Moreno-Tabarez, 2023). In this research, youth workers are treated as active participants whose professional knowledge forms a central part of the research process. Rather than positioning the researcher as an external evaluator, the PAR approach creates opportunities for employees to reflect on their existing practices and contribute to the interpretation of the findings.

Participatory approaches can also support organizational learning by involving practitioners in identifying existing strengths, challenges and possibilities for development. When employees are actively involved in reflecting on their own practices, the resulting knowledge can become more relevant to everyday professional work (Pain, Whitman, & Milledge, 2019).

Social Design Thinking complements the PAR approach by providing a structured, human-centred process for understanding experiences, identifying needs and developing possible responses. In this thesis, the five stages of Social Design are connected to the core questions of the PAR process:

- Empathize: What matters?
- Define: What is needed?
- Ideate and Prototype: What is possible?
- Test: What works?

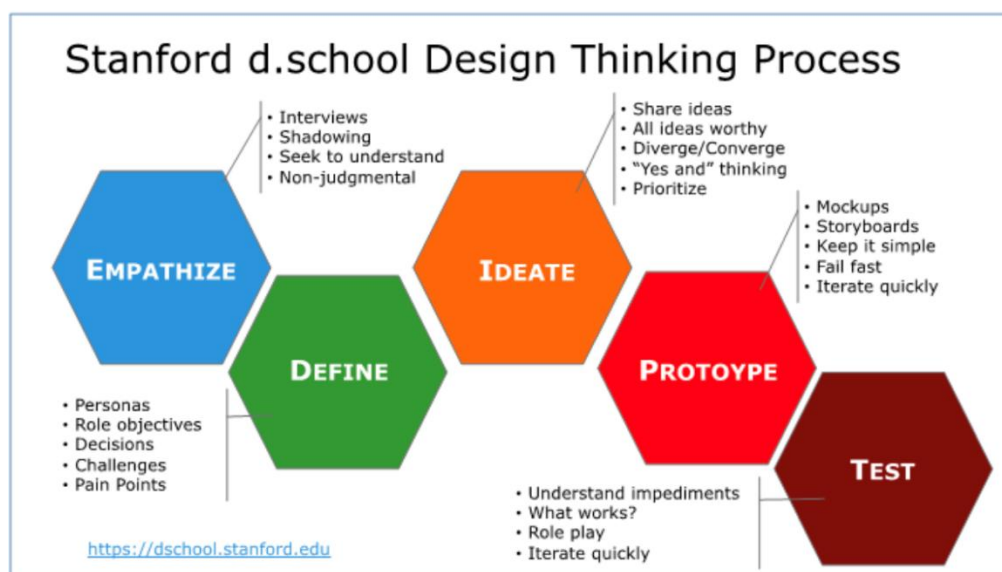


Figure 1 five phases of the Design Thinking-process (Plattner, 2010). This Social Design framework will be explored and applied throughout the PAR-research.

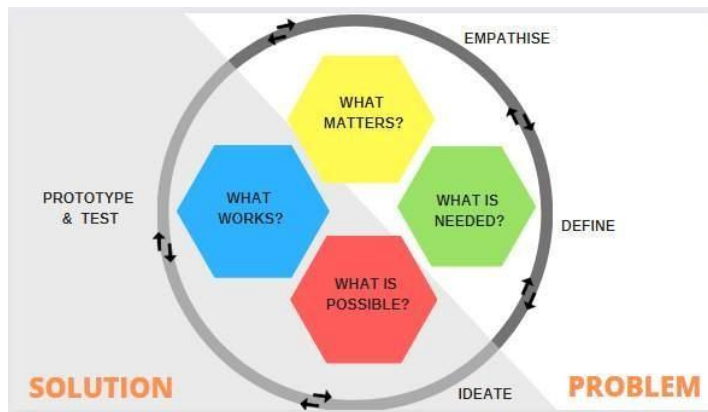


Figure 2 PAR- Design cycle with the four PAR- questions.

(Taken & Weijzen, 2020)

The Organization: Children of the Station

The third-sector organization under examination is Aseman Lapset ry, whose English translation is Children of the Station. This is a politically and religiously unaffiliated national organization founded in 1990. The organization works throughout Finland to support the safe growth and development of children and young people through low-threshold youth work, community-based activities and human-centred support (Aseman Lapset ry, 2024).

The organization consists of six teams, each with its own area of specialization. Despite their different areas of work, the teams share common organizational values and strategy. The main target group is young people aged 13 to 17 and their networks, including parents, family members, friends and professionals working with young people. In addition to direct youth work, Children of the Station provides training and support for other youth workers and professionals working with young people.

The organization's services are free of charge and voluntary for young people. Young people may be referred to, or connected with, the organization's activities through schools, mediation services, the police, public social services or other professionals. The organization works particularly with young people who may experience complex challenges, including

violence, substance use or other circumstances that can increase the risk of social exclusion (Aseman Lapset ry, 2024).

The Six Teams

The Conflict Team (Street Mediation & B-Stop) uses Restorative Justice as its primary philosophy. The team offers Street Mediation for youth involved in conflicts and the anti-bullying programme (B-Stop) to intervene in long-term school bullying, focusing on healing and accountability. The Conflict Team also arranges traineeships for teachers and other youth work professionals.

The Walkers Café Team operates a low-threshold youth café in Helsinki city centre, where trained adult volunteers and professionals provide a safe environment for social interaction and young people's empowerment, supporting youth in their daily challenges.

The Walkers National Team coordinates youth work across Finland using camper vans (Walkers cars). The team brings professional and volunteer-based adult support to areas where local youth services may be limited, and also trains and supports the volunteers who operate the Walkers cars and engage directly with young people in different communities.

The Friends Team implements the Friends Programme, a Cognitive-Behavioural (CBT) approach designed to strengthen emotional regulation and coping skills to prevent mental health challenges (Fisak, Griffin, Nelson, Gallegos-Guajardo, & Davila, 2022). Following the Friends programme, the team runs group-based workshops for different age groups as well as training on the Friends programme for other youth work professionals.

The Crime Team (Project Pasila, Project Ripa, Project Mönster) focuses on individual support and peer-led intervention. Project Pasila provides long-term, intensive support for youth involved in crime, helping them navigate daily challenges and legal processes to break cycles of offending. Project Ripa prevents the deepening of youth crime and substance abuse by pairing educated experts-by-experience with youth workers to motivate change and offer relatable support. The Mönster initiative supports and empowers Swedish-speaking youth by preventing and intervening in substance abuse, the risk of social exclusion, and criminal behaviour.

Discovery Youth Work (including the Sawian project) utilizes outreach and street-based youth work. This team focuses on encounters with young people in public spaces in Helsinki and also uses the Walkers bus to support and encounter youth outside the Helsinki city centre. In 2025, this team also included the Sawian project, which provides multilingual, culturally sensitive support for youth with an immigrant background.

Financial support is provided by various sources, including the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations (STEA), the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM), and independent donors. Funding is applied for annually, with the exception of EU-funded projects, which always have an

allocation for a set period, such as the Sawian project (Aseman Lapset ry, 2026).

Phase 1: Empathize

This chapter presents the first phase of the PAR cycle, focusing on the core question: What matters? It establishes the foundation for sustainable social change by empathizing with the context, exploring the organizational strategy, analysing the key concepts, and addressing the desired situation and the change issue (Pain, Whitman, & Milledge, 2019).

During this first Social Design phase, time was devoted to getting to know each of the six teams described above, along with the wider organizational context in which they operate.

The Research Focus

The research focus did not emerge from a single moment but developed through multiple experiences, observations and collaborations. During the six-month fieldwork period, a critical observation emerged regarding the organization's guiding document. Children of the Station operates on an official strategy authored by its board in 2015. While the strategy serves as a vital document for outsiders, funders and public relations, it is also meant to be a guiding light for employees in their daily work. At the same time, youth work has changed considerably over the past decade.

The context in which youth work takes place is continuously changing. Young people's lives have been affected by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization and changes in the global political environment (Kivijärvi, 2022). At the same time, increasing societal polarization has been identified as a broader challenge for democratic dialogue and social cohesion (McCoy & Somer, 2018). The Youth Barometer 2025 reports that young people's trust in the future of the world has fallen to an all-time low in Finland, with 60% feeling insecure due to the global political situation (Laine & Happonen, 2026). The fact that the strategy was developed in 2015 raises questions about its alignment with current youth work practices. Rather than assuming that the existing strategy is outdated, it is important to examine how the strategy relates to current professional practice and the changing needs of young people.

This research therefore focuses on the relationship between the organization's strategic commitment to preventing social exclusion and the everyday practices of its professionals. The aim is not to evaluate the organization or its employees, but to make existing professional knowledge

more visible and to explore how the prevention of social exclusion is understood across the organization.

Although Children of the Station has a shared organizational strategy, the everyday knowledge and practices through which employees contribute to preventing social exclusion are largely situated within individual teams and professional roles. This creates a need to make this practical knowledge more visible and to explore whether common themes can be identified across the organization.

The focus became more clearly defined through what was directly witnessed during the internship. Time was devoted to empathizing with young people in practice, which involved working alongside the teams. During the internship, observations and professional encounters highlighted situations in which young people appeared to experience significant distress in public spaces, schools and crisis situations. What became particularly evident was not simply that young people were struggling individually, but that the systems intended to support them did not always appear to meet their needs. The research therefore focused on how youth workers recognise and respond to social exclusion, and on the practical strategies used to support young people towards greater empowerment, resilience and overall well-being at a time when the public welfare safety net is increasingly under strain.

This PAR addresses the research gap between strategic commitments to preventing youth social exclusion and what is happening at the grassroots level, where youth workers daily encounter needs that the formal welfare system may not always be able to fully address, given the complex and changing needs of young people. Much of this reality remains invisible and undocumented at the organizational and policy level. The desired situation following this research is to make the invisible visible by surfacing the lived realities of young people's experiences of social exclusion and the practical knowledge of youth workers. In practice, this means translating these insights into shared knowledge, visual frameworks and clear narratives that help teams define social exclusion in their daily work. Understanding these practices can contribute to organizational learning and provide a basis for future reflection on how the organization's strategic commitment to preventing social exclusion can be articulated in the current context.

Key Concepts

Because PAR is grounded in the specific context of the organization, it is crucial to use definitions that align with its operational reality. In Finland, a bilingual country, concepts often carry nuanced meanings depending on the language used. Children of the Station defines its core mission across three languages in its official strategy (Aseman Lapset ry, 2026b):

In Finnish: “Me Aseman Lapset ry:ssä lupaamme toimia määrätietoisesti syrjäytävien rakenteiden purkamiseksi ja syrjäytymisen ehkäisemiseksi.”

In Swedish: “Det grundläggande uppdraget för Stationens Barn r.f. är att främja en trygg uppväxt för barn och unga, familjers välbefinnande och att bekämpa marginalisering.”

In English: “The core mission of Children of the Station is to support the safe growth of children and youth, enable the well-being of them and their families and inhibit social exclusion.”

The terminology varies across the three language versions of the organization's strategy. To maintain consistency in this English-language thesis, social exclusion is used as the primary analytical concept, while marginalization and exclusionary structures are addressed when they appear in the collected interview data. In the organization's strategy, social exclusion is connected to the prevention of exclusion and the dismantling of exclusionary structures.

Social exclusion is understood in this research as a complex and multidimensional process rather than as a fixed state resulting from individual characteristics. Social exclusion means that a person has limited access to resources, rights, goods and services, as well as limited opportunities to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political relationships and activities available to the majority of people in society (Levitas et al., 2007). From this perspective, social exclusion concerns both individual experiences and the wider conditions that shape people's opportunities to participate and belong in society. It can therefore be understood as a process in which social, economic, institutional and relational barriers restrict people's access to resources, opportunities and participation. Young people's experiences of exclusion may involve several interconnected dimensions, including difficulties in accessing education, employment, social relationships and support services. Youth social exclusion in Finland is not merely the result of individual circumstances but is rooted in societal structures. Researchers argue that an overly individual-centred approach is problematic, as it overlooks how the service system and structural inequalities actively contribute to excluding youth from society (Brunila, 2019).

It is also necessary to address another term that staff at Children of the Station use: marginalization (in Finnish, *marginalisoituminen*). This term shifts the focus to power and position. Marginalization refers to a process through which individuals or groups are positioned at the margins of society, with their social position influencing their access to resources and opportunities. The term is therefore useful when discussing power, social position and the processes through which certain young people may become increasingly distanced from social participation and inclusion (Baah et al., 2018).

The Finnish term *syrjäyttäminen* similarly shifts attention from individual circumstances towards the processes and structures that may contribute to young people's exclusion (Hamarus & Landén, 2014). This perspective is

relevant to the present study because it highlights that social exclusion can also be produced or reinforced by social and institutional conditions. However, social exclusion remains the primary analytical concept throughout this research because it corresponds with the terminology used in the organization's English-language strategy.

While this research centres on preventing social exclusion, it is equally important to define the desired outcome: social inclusion. The two concepts are inseparable — every intervention against exclusion is simultaneously an act of creating space for inclusion. Social inclusion, or active inclusion as defined by the European Commission, means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society (European Commission, n.d.).

For youth work organizations like Children of the Station, the prevention of social exclusion is recognized in everyday work. This prevention is reflected in everyday practices such as outreach, relationship-based encounters, restorative approaches and systemic advocacy. It is about actively constructing the conditions in which young people can participate, belong and contribute.

PAR is defined by its collaborative and participatory nature, in which practitioners and researchers work together to examine and transform practice through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014; Stringer, 2014). To obtain first-hand data on how Children of the Station works to prevent youth social exclusion in Finland, it was decided together with the action team that semi-structured interviews would be conducted with each team working directly with young people. During the internship, the empathize stage consisted of interactive group interviews across all six teams. This stage was designed to capture the tacit knowledge (*hiljainen tieto*) of the professionals — the wisdom gained through years of goal-oriented and method-based youth work.

Phase 2: Definition

The previous chapters established the foundation of this Participatory Action Research (PAR). This chapter transitions from the *Empathize* phase to the *Define* phase. Building upon the insights gathered previously, it synthesizes key findings into a definitive statement, establishing the groundwork for subsequent solution-oriented interventions. Specifically, this chapter presents the Point of View (PoV) formulated through co-creation, outlines the research questions that will guide the *Define* phase, and introduces the four multilevel PAR goals that will direct the forthcoming work.

To address the question of the PAR *Define* phase—"What is needed?"—it was necessary to obtain formal approval before proceeding with the research and conducting the interviews. Specifically, the main research question and the Point of View (PoV) required validation from the management team (Finnish: *johtoryhmä*), which is composed of team leaders and

representatives from organizational management. To secure this approval, a comprehensive project proposal was submitted, together with a description of the research topic. Based on the management team's formulated focus, the main question was as follows:

How do employees of Children of the Station understand and prevent youth social exclusion in their daily work with young people aged 13–17 in Finland?

The main research question is divided into three sub-questions, each exploring a specific perspective of the topic of youth's social exclusion in depth:

How is youth's social exclusion understood and perceived in the work of Children of the Station?

What kind of structural barriers are encountered in the prevention of social exclusion?

What are the key methods and professional approaches used by the Children of the Station employees to strengthen youth social inclusion and prevent social exclusion?

Point of View (PoV)

The Point of View for this research was co-created with and for the youth workers in the organisation. The workers already possessed rich, sophisticated knowledge about social exclusion. The chosen Point of View therefore is to recognise the strategy as a living practice, seen through the eyes of frontline workers. The goal is not to rewrite the strategy from above, but to visualize and articulate what the workers are already doing and connect that practice back to the organization's strategy, preventing social exclusion. This standpoint is justified by the PAR principle that sustainable change must be owned by the people closest to the work (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Phases 3 & 4: Ideation and prototype

This chapter addresses the third and fourth PAR question: What is possible? These phases form the action-oriented part of the PAR cycle, where the understanding developed during the previous phases is translated into concrete exploration, co-creation and development. Rather than moving directly from defining the problem to a predetermined solution, the Ideation phase was used to explore how youth workers understand, encounter and respond to social exclusion in their everyday practice.

As established in the methodology, the primary action stage consisted of semi-structured group interviews conducted across all six teams of Children of the Station. The interviews were designed to make the tacit knowledge (*hiljainen tieto*) of frontline professionals visible and to create a space where participants could reflect on their experiences, current practices, challenges and possible areas for development.

The semi-structured interviews therefore served a dual purpose within the PAR process. First, they generated empirical data about how employees understand and prevent youth social exclusion. Second, they functioned as an ideation and co-creation space in which participants could share experiences, compare practices and identify barriers and possibilities for development. In this way, the interviews supported the movement from the defined problem towards exploring what is possible and which practices could be further developed and tested in practice.

This approach reflects the iterative and non-linear nature of both PAR and Social Design Thinking. The process did not follow a strictly linear progression from problem identification to solution. Instead, insights emerging from the interviews informed the subsequent analysis and development of the prototype, while experiences from the research process also influenced how later interviews were conducted. For example, after the first interviews, redundant questions were removed and more time was dedicated to introducing the ISW research context, as this type of research process was unfamiliar to some employees. The interview questions were developed in collaboration with the action team, ensuring that the organization's perspective was incorporated into the research process from the outset.

The data collection and analysis were therefore not treated as separate from the PAR process but as an integrated part of the development cycle. The interviews provided the empirical material, while the thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, barriers and existing practices. These findings were subsequently used as a basis for developing the prototype. The prototype translated the analysed findings into a practical and visual format that could be brought back to the organization for collective reflection and further development.

Data collection

The primary action of this ideating and prototype phase consisted of group interviews conducted across all six teams of Children of the station between October and December 2025. In line with the PAR principle youth worker were treated as participants and co-researchers rather than data sources, the interviews were designed as dialogic encounters. Target Group for the interviews is focused on professionals engaged in direct daily work with the youth. To ensure consistency and academic approach, the core interview questions remained the same for all participating groups. The interview question you can see in appendix B.

To promote a safe and open atmosphere for dialogue, the interviews were conducted in naturalistic settings, specifically, at locations that were most convenient and familiar for each team. This choice of environment was

intentional by meeting the professionals in their own workspaces, the study aimed to minimize power imbalances and encourage the sharing of authentic, practical insights.

A total of 35 employees participated in the interviews, representing 62% of the organization's 53 employees. Participants were drawn from all six teams, providing a broad range of professional perspectives within the organization. However, the participation rate does not mean that the findings represent the views of all employees or the organization as a whole. Employees who did not participate may have had different experiences or perspectives. The findings should therefore be understood as representing the perspectives of the participating employees.

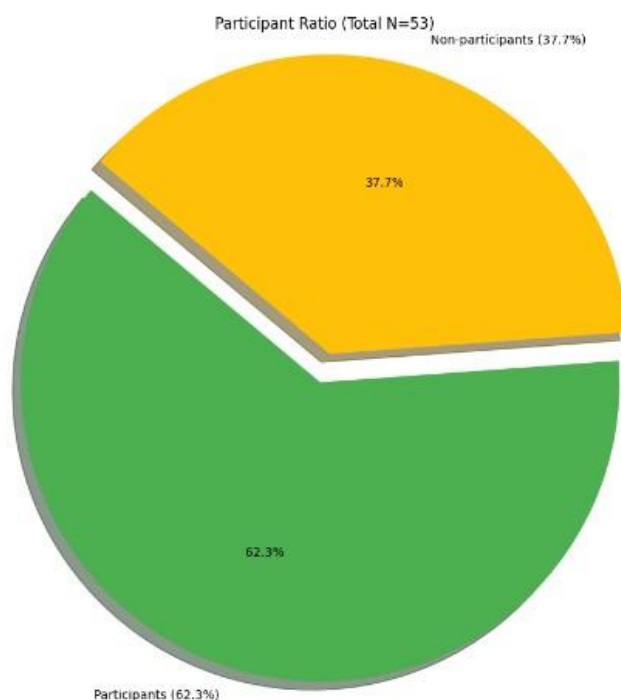


Figure 3

Visualization from the number of participants in the interviews. 35 employees provided a broad range of professional perspectives.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

To analyse the extensive qualitative data gathered, Thematic Analysis was employed. This method was used to systematically identify recurring patterns related to youth social exclusion, including the barriers encountered in the field as well as the practices employees use to address them (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). This categorisation also makes visible how

employees respond to these social exclusion challenges in their daily work. In this way, the analysis provides an overview of both the barriers young people may face and the ways in which Children of the Station seeks to prevent social exclusion.

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and concepts across the six teams. The interview data were coded by identifying relevant phrases and patterns, which were then grouped into broader themes based on their conceptual connections. These themes formed the basis for the research findings and addressed the three sub-research questions. Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify, analyse and report patterns within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

A significant part of the thematic analysis involved transcribing the interviews in Finnish and then translating the key themes and quotes in English. The analysis was conducted in Finnish to preserve the integrity of the workers' professional language, with key excerpts translated into English for the purposes of this thesis. The coding process involved reading all interview transcripts, identifying recurring phrases and patterns, and grouping these into initial codes, which were then clustered into broader main themes based on their conceptual connections. The average interview duration was approximately 60 minutes across all six teams. Given the substantial volume of raw data collected, not all quotes could be included in the tables. The quotes presented have therefore been selected deliberately, as they best represent and open up the key concepts and most significant findings emerging from the data. The findings were organized into three thematic groups, each answering one of the sub questions.

These themes are:

1. The many faces of social exclusion
2. The walls against inclusion - structural boundaries
3. The bridges – from social exclusion to social inclusion

Thematic analysis table 1: The Many Faces of Social Exclusion

1.Sub- question to be answered: How is youth's social exclusion understand and perceived in the work of Children of the station?

Main Theme	Coding	Original Quote (Translated)
Multi dimensional Symptoms	School dropouts, mental health problems, poverty, substance abuse, crime, learning difficulties, behaviour challenges	<i>"It's very easy for us to say, like that exclusion means this and that. In practice it's those school dropouts who stay home because of bullying or other disruptive behaviour. Or even because of inappropriate treatment at school, in a way they start to be excluded in our eyes, that is, when they start to fall through the safety net of society."</i> <i>"Mental health problems are what see in the work with the youth."</i> <i>"Probably poverty. Then there's no work, no school. Care services aren't working, things are bad at home. These are clear elements that may be seen as social exclusion"</i> <i>"They are so deep down a criminal path or in a world of drugs that society sees them as marginalized."</i> <i>"Behavioral challenges, such as acting-out behaviors, or instances of bullying-type conduct. Bullying behavior itself often stems from the individual's own lack of well-being or internal distress."</i> <i>"Regarding red flags; such as school absenteeism or difficulties in learning and studying."</i>

Structural Barriers	integration expectations, lack of family-centred work, rehabilitation gaps.	<i>"Not enough work is done with families."</i> <i>"I don't think marginalization is really defined anywhere. Or rather, it's very difficult to define what it really means. When we talk about statistics, we talk about unemployment or drug use or some kind of mental health problem."</i> <i>"It is not understood how much services and rehabilitation are needed after the young person leaves there (in the world of drugs)."</i> <i>"Certain groups of youth are all excluded from this society, meaning that all the children and young people who belong to it are already marginalized because they have not integrated into this society to the extent that we expect them to."</i>
Disconnection and breakdown of supportive relationships	Loneliness, lack of close networks, anti-professionalism.	<i>"The loneliness, which is of course a very radical thing in this matter. If you feel that you are being alienated from another person, then that is quite straightforward social exclusion."</i> <i>"That some youth doesn't have close network, their close network consists of these social work/ youth work professionals."</i> <i>"It's a certain kind of anti-adultism or anti-professionalism that people doesn't ask for or don't want to take that help."</i>
Othering & Prejudice	Racism, labelling, adult attitudes, digital hostility, school violence	<i>"What personally frustrates and pisses me off immensely is that when young people have criminal cases going on and even if the school finds out about it, how can the school label it as a crime. Not letting them come to school anymore."</i> <i>"Racism is recognized for one of the reasons for social exclusion"</i> <i>"Socioeconomic status. In a weak position, the family accepts what it gets from teachers or social services. They don't necessarily dare to demand it, because it can weaken that position."</i> <i>"On social media, generations are really being displaced and today it shows how adults treat young people."</i>

		<i>“A weak experience of inclusion is one of the biggest risk factors for both the bully and the bullied, so every time we start to intervene together in bullying acts. we are simultaneously rebuilding a bridge to such an experience of inclusion.”</i>
Focus on Lived Experience	Mismatched experiences, intergenerational exclusion.	<i>“A great many [young people] perceive themselves as being quite capable. The image that others have of them does not necessarily correlate at all with the young people's own lived experience.”</i> <i>“Some may be caught in a cycle of exclusion that spans three generations. In a sense, the family has been in a situation for so long that it becomes an intergenerational cycle.”</i>

Theme 1 Findings

Multidimensional symptoms

The thematic analysis indicates that employees of Children of the Station do not view social exclusion as a binary state. Instead, they identify subjective symptoms and risk factors. The most visible of these in daily work are school dropout, mental health challenges, poverty, substance abuse, and involvement in crime. However, employees are consistent in understanding these as symptoms of a deeper process a young person beginning to fall through the safety net of society. The child can be attending school and still be deeply excluded through bullying, labelling, or social isolation. Conversely, a young person outside all formal systems can still feel a strong sense of belonging in their community.

Structural barriers

The findings suggest that employees perceive youth social exclusion as being shaped by structural gaps in support and by societal expectations of integration. Participants highlighted insufficient family-centred work and gaps in rehabilitation and continued support, particularly after young people leave substance-use environments. At the same time, some participants questioned whether exclusion is partly produced by the expectations placed on young people to integrate into society. This suggests that social exclusion is understood not only through individual circumstances, but also in relation to the availability of support, family involvement and wider societal structures and expectations.

Disconnection and breakdown of supportive relationships

The findings suggest that employees perceive youth social exclusion also through the absence or weakening of meaningful social relationships. Loneliness and limited close networks were described as significant indicators of exclusion, while for some young people, youth and social work professionals may constitute their primary or only support network. At the same time, participants identified resistance towards adults and professionals as a potential barrier to receiving support. This suggests that social exclusion is perceived not only as a lack of social connections, but also as difficulties in forming or accepting supportive relationships.

Othering and prejudice

Workers also identified othering and prejudice as factors that may contribute to social exclusion. Labelling, racism and the stigmatizing are all described to push young people further toward the margins and inclusion. Also participants address that social media emerges as a new arena where intergenerational exclusion is performed publicly, with adult attitudes toward youth becoming visible and damaging in ways that were not present a generation ago.

Focus on the lived experience

The data points to an intergenerational dimension of social exclusion. Participants described situations in which poverty, unemployment and difficulties with services had continued across generations. This suggests that some experiences of social exclusion may be connected to longer-term structural and family-level conditions. Workers identified this dimension as requiring responses that go beyond individual support toward family-centred approaches in social service field.

Employees argue that there is invisible gap between how society labels certain youth as excluded and how those young people experience themselves. Young people who are perceived by others as socially excluded as one participant addressed: *"A great many young people perceive themselves as being quite capable. The image that others have of them does not necessarily correlate at all with the young people's own lived experience."* This disconnect between external categorization and young people's own perceptions highlights how exclusion can also be produced through the ways young people are viewed and treated by institutions, professionals, social media and the wider public.

Thematic analysis table 2: Walls Against Inclusion – Structural Boundaries

2. Sub- question to be answered: What kind of structural barriers are encountered in the prevention of social exclusion?

Key Concept	Coding	Original quotes translated in English

Systemic Siloing	Service compartments, rigid regulations, lack of holistic care and Bureaucracy	<i>"Our structures treat these issues as compartments, you must treat substance abuse before you can treat mental health."</i> <i>"Cooperation is sometimes difficult, so I think that often different authorities as if a little artificially pull a curtain in front of it, such as the disclosure of information and other things, which is a structural obstacle to that high-quality, good cooperation. And I say that artificial because nothing. would in a certain way prevent us from sharing information together with different authorities, especially when it is known to the family and those involved, but that the Child Welfare Act, for example, goes beyond all laws. A law that obliges us to do everything we can from the perspective of the child's best interests."</i> <i>"Resources are currently scarce everywhere. Children and young people with limited resources are not able to access the services they need quickly enough. There are simply not as many services available at the moment as they would need."</i> <i>"Bureaucracy and inflexibility in services, e.g. in schools or services. That the system or the structures in it are seen as more important than the individual and their needs."</i>
The Interaction Gap	Adult-youth disconnect, lack of representation, individualization, adult orientated society.	<i>"A structural barrier is the interaction gap between adults and young people."</i> <i>"that generations are pushing each other aside and today it is shown in how adults on social media, for example, treat young people."</i> <i>"The lack of representation in certain organizations, especially in the social service field."</i> <i>"Individualization is a bad thing. Then there is a danger that the more individualized society becomes, the easier it is for networks to leak out"</i>

		<i>to individuals. And that is the path that has been taken globally to a certain extent, especially in Western countries.”</i> <i>“Society quite adult-oriented. When you think about the fact that we need to reach young people, and if there's a young person who's really unwell, it happens that they don't come there. Which I don't think is terribly surprising.”</i>
Polarization	Political models, misinformation, Polarization, extremist thinking	<i>“Polarization, which is now strongly on the horizon. This is modern. Political. The right-wing model is pushing for it to become stronger and it becomes pushes stronger towards marginal those who are marginalized. The middle class is starting to crumble towards different ends and in a way the support that has been able to be given before. to that perhaps weaker end, it is decreasing all the time. and those who are marginalized are more marginalized.”</i> <i>“Today's youth receive misinformation, for example through social media, and extreme thinking. I believe that this is also part of the development of the world.”</i>

Institutional Discrimination	Stigma, labels, institutional discrimination.	<i>"I would say that we have a pretty youth-hating society at the moment. Young people's snobbery and seeking boundaries is not really accepted at the moment. Then there is also the stigma of crime and substance use, so even though they don't necessarily always see in the structures that we have some substance abuse services, but then in a way, in general attitudes, a lot of things like that are visible, which has a negative impact on young people and families."</i> <i>"Child protection notification obligation, from our perspective, the entire child protection act has been mislaunched or has the wrong name.</i> <i>It's like a criminal record. It's seen as a punishment, perhaps even for young people, and young people run away because of it. Just like maybe even youth workers stay away these days, because nobody wants to get screwed."</i> <i>"What personally frustrates and pisses me off immensely is that when young people have some criminal cases going on and even if the school finds out about it, how can the school label it as a crime. The school says you don't have to come to class."</i> <i>"World politics That too is hugely discriminating especially young people with an immigrant background."</i>
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Theme 2: Findings

Systemic Siloing

A dominant structural barrier identified by professionals is the compartmentalization of services. Participants described the service system as fragmented, with different areas such as mental health, substance use and education sometimes operating separately. This creates a sequential requirement for care, where a young person may be denied mental health support until a substance abuse issue is fully resolved: *"Our structures treat these issues as compartments, you must treat substance abuse before you can treat mental health."* This was perceived by participants as a limitation in addressing the multidimensional needs of young people, forcing youth to navigate a complex service field alone.

Structural obstacles are also evident in the difficulties professionals experience in multidisciplinary cooperation. Participants described confidentiality regulations and restrictions on information sharing as barriers

that can make cooperation between authorities more difficult. One participant described this as an “artificial curtain” that can hinder information sharing. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of clear coordination and cooperation between mental health, substance abuse and social welfare services in reducing barriers to young people's access to support (Huhta, Pitkänen, & Tourunen, 2023). The study also highlights that young people may encounter multiple thresholds throughout the service process, meaning that timely access to support and continuity between services are important.

The Interaction Gap

A structural barrier that workers consistently name is the growing disconnect between adults and young people. One participant characterized contemporary Finnish society as particularly hostile towards young people. This perception was linked to experiences of Society remains adult-oriented in its service design, when a young person in crisis does not show up, the system rarely reaches out: *"We need to reach young people, and if there's a really unwell young person, it happens that they don't come. Which I don't think is terribly surprising."* Workers also point to social media as a new arena where this intergenerational gap becomes publicly visible and damaging: *"Generations are pushing each other aside and today it shows in how adults on social media treat young people."*

Previous research suggests that demographic concordance between professionals and clients can support trust, communication and cultural safety (Kwok et al., 2024). In the present study, participants also identified a lack of representation in some service organizations as a structural barrier. Together, these perspectives suggest that representation may be relevant to young people's experiences of accessing and engaging with services.

Polarization

Beyond local service silos, broader societal shifts act as significant barriers. Participants perceived increasing political polarization as a broader societal factor that may contribute to the marginalization of already disadvantaged groups. *"The right-wing model is pushing for it to become stronger and those who are marginalized become more marginalized. The middle class is starting to crumble and the support that has been given before to the weaker end is decreasing all the time."* Workers also identify the spread of misinformation through social media as a growing risk factor, exposing young people to extremist thinking at a time when they are most vulnerable.

Institutional discrimination

The interviewed professionals describe institutional discrimination as an active mechanism of social exclusion. For example, participants noted that despite its protective purpose, the Child Protection Act can be perceived by some young people as punitive or stigmatizing. Consequently, this can lead to the labelling of young people within their communities. Furthermore, the employees highlighted racism as another significant form of discrimination. Although institutions, such as schools, attempt to combat racism effectively, there is a

researched need for more trained professionals and comprehensive, systemic efforts to address and eliminate institutional racism (Holm et al., 2025).

Thematic analysis 3: The Bridge – From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion

3.Sub- question to be answered: What are the key methods and professional approaches used by the empolyees to strengthen youth social inclusion and prevent social exclusion?

Main Theme	Coding	Original Quote & Translation
Relationship-Based Encounter	Walking alongside, presence, safe adults, relationship based approach.	<i>"The Walkers concept is a tool for encounter, strong walking alongside."</i> <i>"Bring more safe adults into the everyday lives of young people. That's part of our job. But I also think that the young people who are referred to us already have a lot of services and basic methods have already been tried for them that haven't worked. So we don't need anything other than time and the fact that we're there and we don't have the idea that we're not cutting edge in any way, that hey, we came to do this kind of process here. But that we just come and give them time to get to know each other and that trust is built there. And then we start from there, what can be done here."</i>

Accessibility & Outreach	Outreach approach to work, accessibility, low threshold.	<i>"So we make contact with young people, we go to get to know them, we go to find a contact surface."</i> <i>"An outreach approach means that we create the client relationships ourselves, So we make contact with young people, we go to get to know them, we go to find a contact surface."</i> <i>"Services are not available in every community. We go to the most remote areas where young people don't have any services. There may not be any other young people when we go to Sodankylä."</i> <i>"Their feedback is good. And in general, the fact that we go to them. So the young people are immediately asking, "Are you coming here because of us?" When we do something that involves walking or moving, especially, that experience comes quite repeatedly to the young people."</i> <i>"Low-threshold activities, so young people come here and tell what is in their minds And then through the discussion this becomes safe place to share and process."</i>
Restorative & Specialized Expertise	Restorative justice, street mediation, criminal specificity.	<i>"In Restorative approach in conflict team, the parties get to unpack the whole thing themselves. As experts of their own lives, they get to resolve the situation."</i> <i>"Crime-specific expertise, because we are not afraid in a way. Or yes, we can be afraid. in our own minds, but we go fearlessly into any processes, then suddenly we are expected quite a lot. very much broadly, even juvenile crime and substance abuse. Because, because we do not think in a way that we have something to limit too."</i>

Strength-Based Identification	Positive recognition, motivational interviewing, positive pedagogy	<i>"We have a positive recognition approach at Walkers. In that, we kind of see it as a way of working, regardless of who the young person is and what they bring up and what is related to them or what we know about them, we basically see and want to see the good in that young person. And when we first get to know them, we bring out that genuine interest and genuine desire to meet and get to know this person back there. No matter what problems they are in. And that can break the first ice."</i> <i>"Motivating interviewing, which is definitely meeting people and identifying resources and answering open questions"</i> <i>"Among the methods, for example, positive pedagogy is used in the work."</i>
Systemic Advocacy & Networking	Advocacy, networking, training of professionals	<i>"We can influence at least the attitudes of services. the service is very different if our employee is involved."</i> <i>"But then the network cooperation. We do what kind of message we spread through our work, through our own example, so that is at least one, but then in the governmental level, then we have a hard time. Our influence work as experts in all kinds of networks in the ministries. I don't know if it works in this political climate at the moment, but at least the effort is there. I think the good thing about Aseman Lapset is that we have educated experts, experienced experts who can use them to youth's advantage."</i> <i>"By training professionals. That is the biggest channel for our team, because they are the adults who need to be trained. Young people and children are not responsible for these things, but really the adults who need to either change themselves or change the systems that maintain such structures or attitudes or whatever it is, by training for example. They endure when it is spoken about by teachers. professionals from different fields who work with children and young people; teachers, early childhood education professionals, potential employees, healthcare types, child welfare workers."</i>

Youth Participation & Agency	Youth representative council, youth voice, participation.	<i>“Walkkeus Youth Representative Council this year. There are two from each location. Two young people are elected, they come with the youth worker and we will continue that next year. So it is then that we also hear somehow on a national level from the youth, which is completely new, what we are developing here. The aim is that at least one of these young people in each locality would be someone who does not really have this kind of influence experience or skills. It would also raise their self-esteem and they would get experience, proof of this and somehow it would work in the young person's process. as a positive and wonderful experience that would promote their life, which would make them move forward.”</i> <i>“We work hard to influence the everyday life of schools, creating a safe and healthy atmosphere, and everything else. What we do in the context of bullying and school violence, both with children, families and schools, is also something that strengthens, increases and restores social inclusion.”</i>
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Theme 3: Findings

Relationship-Based Encounter

At the core of all methods is the principle of walking alongside (rinnalla kulkeminen) being present as a safe adult without an immediate agenda. Employees prioritize building trust and giving time. With their own specialization method, they create a space where young people feel seen and heard for who they are, regardless of their history or the complexity of their situation.

Accessibility & Outreach

A defining feature of Children of the station approach is outreach work (jalkautuva työ) meeting young people in their own environments rather than waiting for them to seek help. This low-threshold approach can increase the accessibility of support for young people who may otherwise be difficult to reach. The outreach approach also means that practitioners actively create client relationships rather than waiting for referrals.

Restorative & Specialized Expertise

Practitioners employ restorative justice and street mediation (katusovittelu) to empower young people to resolve their own conflicts and take in management over their lives: *"In the restorative approach, the parties get to unpack the whole thing themselves as experts of their own lives, they get to resolve the situation."* This expertise extends to crime-specific work, where employees engage with complex legal and substance abuse situations that other services may avoid. Experience experts within the Pasila and Ripa teams bring lived knowledge of the system, further strengthening the credibility and reach of the work (Suhonen, 2023).

Strength-Based Identification & Methodical orientated approaches

Using positive recognition (myönteinen tunnistaminen), employees focus on identifying the inherent strengths in every young person regardless of their background or history: *"We basically see and want to see the good in that young person and when we first get to know them, we bring out that genuine interest and genuine desire to meet this person. No matter what problems they are in."* (Häkli et al., 2018). Practitioners also use motivational interviewing and positive pedagogy to help young people identify their own internal resources and break cycles of negative self-perception. The FRIENDS program, used by The Friends and the Mental Health team, is an cognitive-behavioural intervention designed to prevent anxiety and build resilience across all age groups, with efficacy supported by multiple clinical trials (Fisak et al., 2022).

Systemic Advocacy & Networking

Beyond direct youth work, Children of the station operates as a systemic bridge, training professionals such as teachers, police, and social workers to improve their attitudes; *"Young people and children are not responsible for these things it is really the adults who need to either change themselves or change the systems that maintain such structures or attitudes."* The organization also engages in network cooperation at ministerial and governmental levels to influence the policies that maintain social exclusion. Workers describe themselves as advocates who gather the 'red threads' of a young person's complex situation and seek to strengthen coordination between schools, social services and the legal system.

Youth Participation & Agency

The organization actively fosters youth agency through initiatives such as the Youth Representative Council, which gives a national voice to young people particularly those who lack prior experience in advocacy. According to participants, involving young people in school-based work and decision-making can strengthen their sense of belonging and self-esteem. By creating opportunities for young people to express their views, influence decisions and take active roles, these practices can be understood as supporting young people's agency and social inclusion while addressing barriers that may contribute to social exclusion.

Phase 5: Test

The Test phase marks the closing stage of the PAR- cycle and Design Thinking process, focusing on translating the research outcomes into concrete document and transferring ownership to the organization so that change can be sustained beyond this project.

In this PAR process, the prototype that was tested consisted of a co-creative workshop and a visual presentation of the findings for the staff. The three themes: “Many Faces,” “Walls,” and “Bridges” were presented back to the organisation to explore whether the staff recognised the practices and experiences in the findings. The strategy commitments and the change-oriented purpose of PAR were kept at the core of the process.

In this closing stage, particular attention was given to ensuring that the tacit knowledge captured during the interviews was translated into a shared and actionable tool. On 16 February 2026, a session was held at the organisation’s office in Helsinki. A total of 36 participants took part: 16 participated in person and 20 participated online via Microsoft Teams. Most participants were employees from the teams involved in the interviews, alongside members of the fundraising and communications teams and representatives of the management team.

As a final outcome, a visual tool map was presented to address the third sub-question: What are the key methods and professional approaches used by the Children of the station employees to strengthen youth social inclusion and prevent social exclusion?

The tool map shows the specific tools and methods each of the six teams uses to prevent social exclusion and foster participation and social inclusion. By visualizing these overlapping methods, staff could see how practices across the six teams related to the organization's broader strategic commitment.

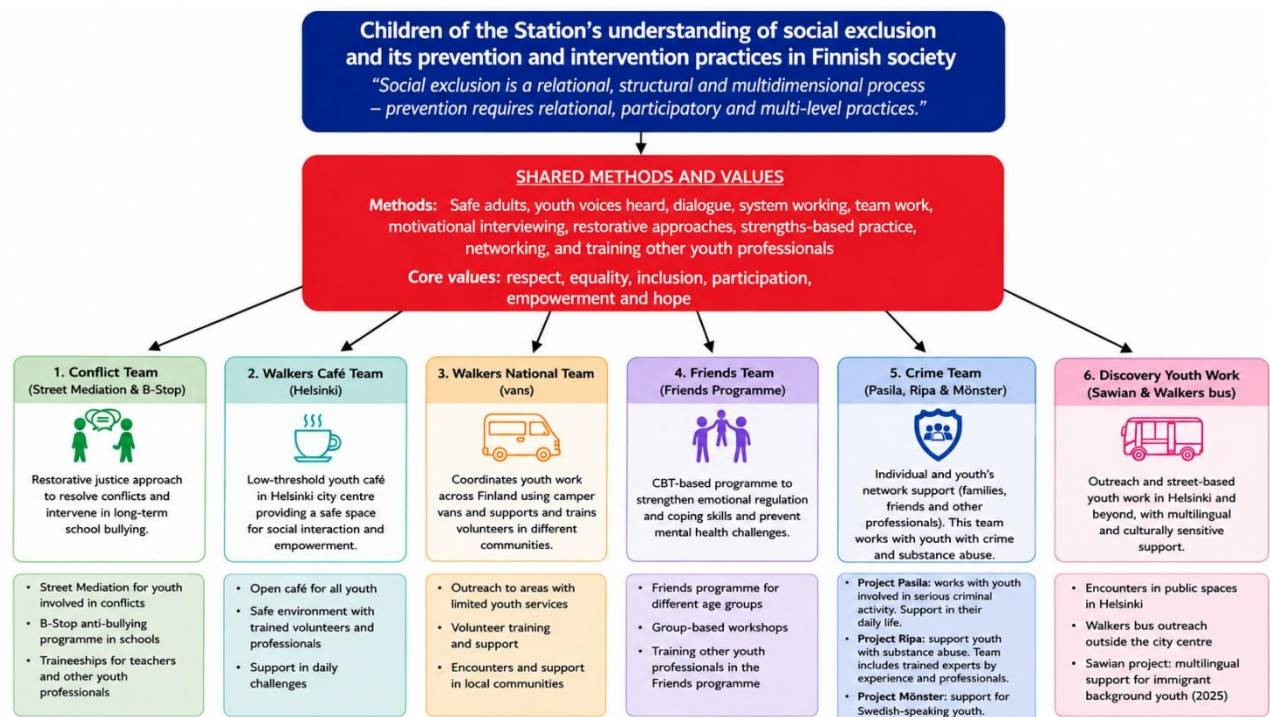


Figure 4

Tool map for visualize all the practices Children of station is using to prevent social exclusion in Finland. In the red box there are all the practices and values that each team shares. Each team have their own color and arrows shows which methods team is using to prevent social exclusion and create social inclusion.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the journey of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project. It brings together the theoretical framework and data findings. Looking back through the PAR questions the following conclusions can be drawn. Regarding the first sub-question, youth social exclusion can be understood as a multidimensional process through which some young people become disconnected from social networks, educational opportunities and support services. Rather than being defined by a single problem, social exclusion may become visible through interconnected experiences such as school disengagement or dropout, mental health difficulties, poverty, substance use and involvement in crime. These experiences can therefore be understood as indicators of young people becoming disconnected from the social and institutional safety nets intended to support them (Mertanen et al., 2022).

Data shows that social exclusion is also relational, as loneliness, weakened social networks and limited opportunities for participation can contribute to

young people's sense of being disconnected from society. Furthermore, processes of othering, labelling and stigma can reinforce exclusion when young people are categorised as problematic by institutions, peers or wider society (Deakin et al., 2022). Labelling may also influence how young people are perceived and treated, potentially reinforcing negative identities and limiting their opportunities for participation (Duxbury & Haynie, 2020). Finally, social exclusion can have an intergenerational dimension, as socioeconomic disadvantage and difficulties in accessing education and services may persist across generations rather than being solely the result of individual circumstances.

Regarding the second sub-question, the findings suggest that structural barriers to preventing youth social exclusion emerge from the way the wider service system is organised. Participants particularly highlighted fragmented services limited multidisciplinary cooperation and an adult-oriented service structure. These barriers may be particularly problematic for young people whose situations involve several interconnected needs. This is consistent with research highlighting the fragmented nature of youth support systems and the importance of coordinated responses to complex needs (Mertanen et al., 2022; Huhta et al., 2023).

From an anti-oppressive perspective, these findings are significant because they shift attention away from viewing young people's difficulties as individual failures. If a young person does not engage with a service, the reason may not simply be a lack of motivation. Instead, the organisation of services, eligibility criteria, professional boundaries, information-sharing practices and adult-centred structures may themselves create barriers to participation. Prevention of social exclusion therefore requires interventions directed at young people and changes in the service structure.

The findings further indicate that structural exclusion extends beyond formal services. Participants connected social exclusion with political polarisation, misinformation, racism and experiences of institutional control. Research in the Finnish context demonstrates that political polarisation and disinformation are increasingly visible within social media environments. What it comes to the affection of the stigma research on children's experiences of child protection indicates that contact with protective services can also involve experiences of stigma and challenges to children's sense of identity and participation (Svensson et al., 2023).

For the third sub-question Overall, the findings indicate that practitioners use a combination of relational, accessible, strengths-based, specialised, systemic and participatory approaches to strengthen youth social inclusion and prevent exclusion. These approaches operate at different levels but are interconnected. At the individual level, relationship-based practice, outreach and strength-based identification create opportunities for trust, belonging and agency. At the practice level, restorative approaches and specialised expertise enable practitioners to respond to complex situations that may not fit within conventional service categories. At the systemic level, networking,

professional training and advocacy aim to influence the structures and attitudes surrounding young people. Finally, youth participation creates opportunities for young people to exercise agency and influence decisions that affect them.

Taken together, the findings suggest that preventing social exclusion is not based on one specific method. Instead, it requires a relational and multi-level approach in which practitioners combine direct support with efforts to improve accessibility, strengthen young people's agency and influence the systems surrounding them. This is consistent with research suggesting that social inclusion interventions can support adolescent wellbeing and that meaningful youth participation can strengthen agency, leadership and social outcomes (Anyon et al., 2018).

The findings also connect directly with the structural barriers identified in the previous sub-question. Where fragmented services, inaccessible systems, adult-oriented structures and institutional discrimination can contribute to exclusion, practitioners respond by going to young people, building trusting relationships, recognising their strengths, working across professional boundaries and creating opportunities for young people to participate. The prevention of social exclusion can therefore be understood as both relational work with young people and structural work around them.

Taken together, these findings answer the main research question: How do employees of Children of the Station understand and prevent youth social exclusion in their daily work with young people aged 13–17 in Finland?

The findings suggest that employees understand youth social exclusion not primarily as an individual deficit, but as a multidimensional and relational process shaped by the interaction between young people, their social environments and the structures surrounding them. This understanding is consistent with wider research, which conceptualises social exclusion as involving multiple and interconnected dimensions of participation, relationships, resources and access to social institutions rather than as a single individual problem (Silver, 2015). From this perspective, difficulties such as disengagement from education, mental health challenges, substance use or contact with the criminal justice system are not necessarily understood as the causes of exclusion in isolation but may also reflect broader processes of marginalisation and disconnection.

The findings further indicate that practitioners understand prevention as extending beyond responding to individual problems after they have emerged. Prevention involves creating conditions in which young people can remain connected to relationships, communities and services. This is reflected in the organisation's emphasis on accessibility, early contact, meaningful relationships and opportunities for participation. Consequently, effective prevention requires attention not only to the young person but also to the family, peer, school, service and wider societal contexts in which the young person participates.

A central contribution of the findings is therefore the identification of a multi-level professional approach to social inclusion. Employees work with young people directly while simultaneously attempting to influence the networks, professionals and structures surrounding them. This means that intervention is not limited to changing the behaviour or circumstances of an individual young person. Instead, practitioners also seek to reduce barriers within services, strengthen cooperation between professionals, challenge stigmatising practices and create opportunities for young people to exercise agency. This understanding is consistent with participatory research demonstrating that meaningful youth participation can strengthen agency and leadership, while also creating opportunities for young people to influence the systems affecting their lives (Anyon et al., 2018).

The findings also highlight that relationships are a mechanism through which social inclusion is produced in everyday practice. The emphasis on trust, presence and safe adults suggests that practitioners understand inclusion as something experienced through meaningful social connections rather than simply through access to formal services. This is particularly significant for young people who have already experienced fragmented or unsuccessful encounters with support systems. By creating accessible and non-stigmatising points of contact, practitioners can reduce the distance between young people and services and create opportunities for further engagement.

At the same time, the findings demonstrate that practitioners cannot prevent social exclusion through individual relationships alone. Structural barriers, fragmented services, institutional practices and wider societal inequalities can constrain the possibilities available to both young people and professionals. This supports a broader understanding of social exclusion in which individual experiences are connected to institutional and societal structures (Silver, 2015). The practitioners' role can therefore be understood as operating between support and advocacy: they respond to young people's immediate needs while also attempting to influence the systems that contribute to exclusion.

Terminology

On the terminology finding introduced, the Finnish interview data also included the reveals a fluid cross-use of terminology in everyday practice, including *marginalisation* and various Finnish variants (e.g., *syrjäytynyt* and *syrjäyttää*). Despite this variation, the underlying structural understanding of the phenomenon remains consistent among professionals. In this study, *social exclusion* serves as the primary analytical concept to align with the organization's official English-language strategy. Making these differences visible could support future discussions about whether the concepts should be more explicitly defined and connected within the organization's strategic work.

Discussion

This chapter reflects on the findings in relation to existing literature and the trustworthiness of the research process, discusses the ethical considerations and limitations of the study, and closes with implications for future research and practice.

Ethics, trustworthiness and research limitation

This PAR research has several limitations that must be acknowledged. The most significant limitation was that young people could not be directly involved in the PAR process. In Finland, research involving minors is strictly regulated and requires research permits and, where applicable, ethical review (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity [TENK], 2021). Consequently, the primary focus was placed on the staff of the organization and, specifically, on youth workers. To ensure that young people's perspectives were nevertheless represented, existing research literature on youth social exclusion in Finland was incorporated into the study.

Related limitation is that the findings represent the perspectives and professional experience of employees at Children of the Station rather than the lived experience of young people themselves. They should therefore be understood as an exploration of how professionals perceive, understand and respond to youth social exclusion in their everyday work, and not as a direct representation of how young people themselves experience exclusion.

A further limitation concerns the dual role of the researcher as both an intern and a researcher within the organization. The insider position provided valuable access to the everyday practices, professional relationships and working environment of Children of the Station. At the same time, familiarity with the organization may have influenced which issues were perceived as particularly relevant and how participants' experiences were interpreted. The researcher's own experiences during the internship may therefore have shaped the development of the research focus and the interpretation of the data. Continuous reflexivity was used to maintain analytical distance, including reflection on personal assumptions, professional relationships and the researcher's position within the organization. Nevertheless, the possibility of researcher influence cannot be completely excluded.

Several features of the research process support the trustworthiness of these findings. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement: the six-month fieldwork period allowed for sustained, transparent contact with all six teams, during which the interview process itself was adapted based on participants' feedback.

The Test-phase workshop, in which the three themes were presented back to 36 staff members for open discussion, functioned as a form of respondent validation, allowing participants to confirm, question or nuance the analysis before it was finalised. Dependability was supported by using a consistent set of core interview questions across all six teams (Appendix B) and by conducting the thematic analysis in the original Finnish language before translating key excerpts, which helped to preserve the professional meaning of participants' accounts (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Participation in the interviews was voluntary for all employees, who were informed about the purpose of the research beforehand and were free to decline to take part or to answer specific questions. Direct quotations included in this thesis were selected and, where necessary, anonymised so that individual employees and any young people referred to in examples cannot be identified.

Future Research

For future research, a next step could be to obtain the necessary research permits to involve youth directly in a participatory process, bringing their lived experience of social exclusion into the centre of the research. Furthermore, one employee identified a need to further develop methods for demonstrating and evaluating the organization's impact. Specifically, this involves finding ways to show evidence requirements of large-scale funders without reducing the complexity of the work to mere numbers. An independent, external evaluation of the organization's methods and outcomes would therefore strengthen both its credibility and its internal self-understanding.

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Appendix

Appendix A

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PHASES

Empathise - understand people deeply through observation and engagement

Define — articulate a clear point of view by combining user, need, and insight into an actionable problem statement.

Ideate — concentrate on idea generation, going wide in terms of concepts and outcomes.

Prototype — build to think, to communicate ideas, and to start conversations with users.

Test — return to users with prototypes to get feedback and refine solutions.

Appendix B

Interviews questions for the 6 teams:

- In what ways is youth social exclusion visible in your daily work?
- Which specific methods or professional approaches have proven to be the most effective in preventing social exclusion?
- How do you strengthen the social inclusion and agency of young people within society through your work?
- What kind of structural barriers do you encounter in your work regarding the prevention of social exclusion?
- How can Children of the station influence these societal structures through collaborative efforts or advocacy work?
- How do you perceive the professional resources and opportunities available to you to prevent social exclusion within your own role?